Intercessor or Prophet?

The difference between an Intercessor and a Prophet, and
What is distinctive about an intercessor?

**Intercessors stand in the gap**

The intercessor is one that stands in the gap between God and mankind and pleads on behalf of the people.

**Old Testament Priest**

In many ways this is also an accurate description of an Old Testament priest. Moses who was both prophet and priest had many episodes pleading on behalf of the people; Aaron as well.

Perhaps the clearest and ultimate picture of an intercessor is seen in Day of Atonement ceremony. The high priest intercedes for the people that their sin may be taken far away never to return. He pleads that their sacrifice would be acceptable so God would bless and not curse. The basic purpose of this elaborate ceremony was to remove the blockage caused by past sin, and this is still one of common tasks of an intercessor. You could say that what the Old Testament priest achieved through authority, ritual, prayer and supplication, sacrifice, and ceremony, is part of what the intercessor of today achieves through, relationship (to Christ), authority (of being heirs in Christ), prayer and supplication, and, the cleansing of the blood of Jesus.

**Intercessors really care**

We would do well to remember the example of Abraham as he argued the point with God's messengers (Gen. 18 and 19), and how he put his life at risk by pleading for God to save the whole city if there were 50, 40, 30, 20, and eventually even if there were just 10 righteous people in the city. Unfortunately there were not even 10, but Abraham did not know that, otherwise I'm sure he would have considered risking God's wrath and kept going. These actions and the generosity of spirit that he often showed, label Abraham as an Intercessor.
In other words, Intercessors identify with those whom they pray and intercede for because they are very caring people. For the most part intercessors have a great deal of empathy toward others. This gift of empathy is one of the key ingredients that enable them to keep passionately praying long after others give up, and then try again later. The rest of us may seek to emulate this, but it almost impossible to do, we just run out of steam.

**Humility**

2 Chron. 7:14 *...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face...*

This is the classic verse for an intercessor; it accurately describes the heart of God, and the heart response of the intercessor. They don't just pray off the top of their head. It's not just a thing they do when they are desperate, or something goes wrong. It's part gift and part relationship, a gift that is part of a natural expression of their faith. Just as some naturally want to take over and give orders intercessors have a great sense of empathy and this motivates them to humble themselves and appeal to God. They use their relationship as a friend of God to intercede for others.

The concept of genuine humility holds little value in today's society, in fact it is normally considered a weakness, the humble person is one that is reluctant to stand up for themselves because it holds little value.

**The context**

2 Chron 7:14 *...if my people ...turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

As usual there is a second part of the verse that is just as important as the first because it provides the context.

While most people just pray for themselves, immediate family and church (assuming they bother to pray), the intercessor goes for the big picture. Without fully comprehending why, they instinctively understand the real problem. The intercessor sees that the real problem can only be corrected by working with God on a larger community prayer based approach.

The Chronicles verse could be summarized as:

Humility - prayer - turn from sin - God response - forgiveness - healing of land/community

Perhaps a paraphrase is:

Willingly admit we can't fix it or make anything perfect - pray to the one that can - do the right thing (according to the one that is perfect) - ask for forgiveness (don't just say “sorry”) - and God will restore and create as we work in harmony with divine will.
A lack of national level (and accepted) prophets will mean there is little or no vision, so people will just drift along from one well meant bright idea to the next that the leadership votes on, because prophets are the vision of the community/nation. A community with no intercessors is in trouble because intercessors are the heart of the community. If there is no heart, the community is dead. If a church ignores the true value of its intercessors and treats them lightly it is in serious trouble. The consequences of continuing to head down this path is an on going decline true spirituality and everything that resembles church (It has been going on for decades so far).

Some think that enrolling in a prophetic instruction course may provide some perspective but it does not greatly assist intercessors because it only applies in part; there are basic differences that need to be understood. There is some confusion here, but only because there is little understanding of the prophet or intercessors heart response to God. When there is a prophetic movement happening in the church many intercessors end up thinking they are prophets. It is an understandable mistake because there is some overlap. This is damaging for themselves, the church, and the community because we are all missing out on the true and most effective part of their calling. On the other hand, when the book on Reece Howell's 'Intercessor' (by Norman Grubb) was popular 30 years ago, many prophets may have thought they were intercessors. Until there is true systematic teaching in the church this problem will continue to flourish.

**Forceful prayer**

The major difference between the international prophet and an international intercessor is expressed in a Scripture like Amos 9:1.

> I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said (to me):
> "Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake.
> Bring them down on the heads of all the people;
> those who are left I will kill with the sword.

This Scripture highlights the different motivations that set a prophet apart. Dramatic forceful prayer intervention may become a regular part of international prophet's prayer life. On the other hand the intercessor is one that stands in the gap between God and mankind and pleads on behalf of the people, understandably they would feel very uncomfortable praying regularly for God to smash things that are likely to result in injury and create messy situations; these are the very things they normally try hard to prevent.

**Prayer or Proclamation**

This brings us to the most basic difference of all. It's not just a matter of style or personality. It's not even a simple matter of job description, because both prophet and intercessor will be given a large variety of tasks to achieve. In a sense it is a combination of all the previous points, but however you choose to describe it, the difference is essentially one of different authority. Both intercessor and prophet can only be effective if they use the authority that is an integral part of their different jobs. It is very difficult for anyone to regularly exercise a type of authority that is not suited to them.
There are many ways of exercising the authority of both of these ministries, but there are some essential differences.

**An Intercessor faces towards God**

The intercessor stands in the gap - reminding God of his promises, pleading with God (without begging), praying with authority to God and claiming the forgiveness as available and stated in the Bible, claiming freedom (or whatever is appropriate or available). In this sense the intercessor faces towards God, because that is the most effective way to achieve the outcomes requested. However, even though a prophet may spend a great deal of time praying, their task is to either deliver the word to the people or deliver an outcome (depending on their type). In this sense they face away from God toward the people or situation they are addressing, and bring into being the outcome God desires. This is an essential difference that helps identify what gifts are present.

**Prophetic vision**

The prophet acts on God's active/now word ... as revealed by vision, dream or inspired verse. Assessing a suitable response and following through (whatever is required). On the international stage this often requires a direct prayer command to bring a situation into line with outcome acceptable God. The intercessor also needs to know or discover the will of God, but there is no particular need for a vision or dream; they can operate quite effectively without ever receiving one.

Both intercessor and prophet require boldness, the fruit and gifts of the spirit and many other things. Both are expressions of God's care and concern. Both are essential, but they are not the same. We can not command God's forgiveness, and there is little point in pleading when a 'now' command is required.

At a local church level there may appear to be very little difference, because there is nothing to stop an intercessor giving the occasional prophesy, or a prophet interceding on behalf of someone. Confusion only arises if an intercessor thinks they are a prophet (or visa-versa) and ends up missing out on the full blessing and authority that comes with growing into their own ministry.

Heaven knows the world is desperately in need of both.

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