



Kris Vallotton

BASIC TRAINING
FOR THE
PROPHETIC
MINISTRY



EXPANDED EDITION

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Foreword

A NEW GENERATION OF SOARING PROPHETIC EAGLES IS NOW HERE AMONG US. THESE risk-taking believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are not somewhere “out there” in the far distant future—they are with us now.

Kris Vallotton and his crew at Bethel Church’s School of the Supernatural in Redding, California seem to be leading the way! They have the highest level of impartation of any school of the supernatural that I know of anywhere today. Yes, that’s right!

This generation of radical warriors is cut from a cloth different from my generation. We came from religion and learned the supernatural. But this generation is birthed in the supernatural and is soaring high in the things of God at an early age.

Wow—so where does that leave those in my generation? Are we left to be the bystanders just applauding the exploits of the new Joshuas and Calebs? Absolutely not! There are new vistas for each of us. In fact, I tell some of my students, “You are going to have to run fast to catch me, ’cause I’m about to catch my second (or third) wind and I will outrun you all!” I think you get my drift.

Let me drive home my point by telling you one of my wife’s many significant dreams. There was a line of men and women all standing neatly in a row—my wife, Michal Ann, was positioned there among them. An invitation was given by the Holy Spirit for fathers and mothers in the prophetic to step forward. In the dream, all of the others took a step backward so it appeared as though Michal Ann had just volunteered. Then a strong gust of wind hit her from behind and flung her even farther forward.

She was awakened out of the dream knowing somehow that she had just been chosen, or had volunteered with help, to be a mother of the prophetic in her generation. It was amazing to watch what the Lord did with this once-withdrawn dear lady who had been thrust to the front of God's prophetic compassion army. If it could happen to Michal Ann and James W. Goll—it can happen to anyone! Remember—He is not a respecter of persons. He is looking for fresh volunteers at all times. There is room in His army for you!

That is what the manual you hold in your hands is about—*Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry*. It is one of God's tools for this time and day, written from the trenches of great experience. My friend, Kris Vallotton, is one of the fathers in the making. Yes, there are many fathers and mothers who are volunteering to raise up the voice of the Lord.

Want to join them? Then tear into this book. Lean in and learn all you can. Then take your hands out of your pockets, get your feet outside of the four walls of your church and home, open wide your mouth, and let the Holy Spirit fill it. Do something for Jesus' sake!

This manual is a call for passionate, consecrated warriors to arise. Therefore, it is with deep admiration and joy that I have the privilege of commending this training guide to you. Join Kris and I and a new breed generation who are learning to fly high in the things of the Holy Spirit and take others with them. Volunteer freely in the day of His power and join His call to war!

DR. JAMES W. GOLL

Cofounder of Encounters Network

Author of *The Seer, Dream Language,*

The Coming Prophetic Revolution, and many others

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Preface

I HAVE SPENT A LOT OF TIME TRAVELING THE WORLD, TEACHING PEOPLE THE “HOW TOS” of prophetic ministry—how to hear from the Lord, how to discern the different languages of God, and how to know *what* is prophetic and what is not. About eight years into this process, it dawned on me that I was teaching people how to *do* prophetic ministry, but I was not teaching them *why*. Therefore, when I wrote the original version of *The Basic Training for the Prophetic Ministry* ten years ago, it mirrored my early emphasis, which made it necessary to write an updated version. You will find this new version is a great blend of both the *why* and the *how to*.

This book was not written to be the final word on the prophetic ministry. My goal was to help develop and facilitate prophetic communities. In addition to teaching people how to minister prophetically, I also share a perspective that promotes a healthy community of believers. Therefore, I have intentionally emphasized instruction, which will assist leaders in shepherding the prophetic people of their communities.

With this in mind, there are thought-provoking questions and a Life Application section at the end of each chapter. The answers to the Questions to Ponder are found within the chapters. The Group Discussion Questions are not directly answered in the chapters, but are there to provoke thought and stimulate discussion. We often learn more through our own discovery than we do from someone else’s teaching. These questions should help facilitate the discovery process.

The purpose of the Life Application section is to help you get past the obstacles that keep you from moving ahead in the prophetic ministry. There are also ideas about how to practically apply what you are learning.

Here are a few ways you can use this manual:

- Personal, individual study
- Small group study
- Church class study (accompanying DVDs available)

My earnest prayer is that every Christian who reads this book will be drawn closer to God and will join us in destroying the works of the devil.

Let the journey begin!

KRIS VALLOTTON

Introduction

IN THE DAYS OF THE PROPHET ELIJAH, THERE AROSE A COMPANY OF MEN WHO WERE called the “*sons of the prophets*” (1 Kings 20:35). These men traveled throughout the world ravaging the powers of darkness, wreaking havoc on evil kingdoms. They had no tolerance for the destructive behavior of wicked kings but rather turned many to righteousness. They raised the dead, healed the sick, parted rivers, destroyed false prophets, and saw revival spread throughout their land. They were feared by many and respected by all. They walked in great purity, and God was their friend.

Today, all around us, wickedness continues to grow, taking root in the lives of those we love and eroding the very foundation of our country. Satanism is spreading like wildfire. Psychics laugh in the face of the church as they demonstrate the power of the dark side. Divorce is destroying our families and violence is corrupting our children. Sickness and diseases take the lives of so many. Yet the words of our Lord Jesus echo through the halls of history, “*These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues,*” and “*he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father*” (See Mark 16:17 and John 14:12).

In Acts 3:25, Peter says, “*It is you who are the sons of the prophets.*” It is time for the Body of Christ to rise up and receive our inheritance! We must rid ourselves of complacency and restore the ancient boundaries of holiness and demonstrations of great power. We cannot be satisfied with illustrative sermons, great music, and friendly services. We have been called to see the powers of darkness destroyed and our ruined cities restored.

In the days of Moses, God demonstrated His power to Pharaoh, but Pharaoh counter-attacked by having his sorcerers duplicate the miracles of God. Then the God of heaven, who

has all power, performed extraordinary miracles so that even the sorcerers said, “This must be God. We cannot perform these miracles.” Finally Pharaoh was overcome by God’s power and let His people go. (See Exodus 7–12.)

I believe that the pharaoh of this age is about to let go of our cities as God demonstrates His raw power through His Church. We are in the midst of the greatest revival in human history. Yet there remains a distance between what should be and what will be.

That distance is you! What will you be?

You are the bridge between history and *His* story.

You are the sons of the prophets!

The sick, the demonized, the poor, the blind, the lame, and the lost are waiting to see what you have learned.

Don’t disappoint them!



The Purpose of Prophetic Ministry

This chapter explains how New Testament prophecy should function, explores the impact that prophecy has on people, and identifies the core values that should motivate prophetic ministry.

Prophetic Ministry—Looking for Treasure

Many of us are familiar with Jeremiah 29:11, where God tells His people, “*For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*” God made this statement to His people while they were in Babylonian captivity for 70 years because they disobeyed Him. In spite of their behavior, the prophet Jeremiah spoke an encouraging prophetic word to them.

God often uses prophetic ministry in the same way today, addressing people’s potential and not necessarily their present condition. Some people, however, sadly use their prophetic gift to call out people’s sins. Yet, when we use the gift of prophecy to mine the treasure inside of everyone made in the image of God, a major shift begins to take place in him or her. That person no longer sees him or herself enslaved to their present identity or circumstance, but instead is introduced to heaven’s perspective. New Testament prophetic ministry speaks to the high value and divine potential God has given people. This is the true purpose of prophetic ministry! It must be rooted in love, immersed in hope, and motivated by faith. The price that Jesus paid on the Cross determined the value of the people He purchased. God saw something good in us even when we were sinners (see Romans 5:8). Jesus didn’t die for junk! Jesus made it very clear that He bought an entire field so that He could have the treasure in the midst of it. We are His treasure, and of course He is ours!

The price that Jesus paid on the Cross determined the value of the people He purchased.

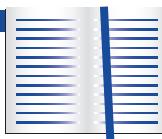
It doesn't take a prophetic gift to see the sin in sinners or the junk in the lives of Christians. It does require the eyes of God, though, to see broken people like Simon (*Simon* means "broken reed") and in the midst of their brokenness, call them Peter (*Peter* means "rock"). True prophetic ministry is looking for gold in the midst of the dirt in people's lives.

The gift of prophecy is not simply patting people on the back, telling them nice things about themselves, and pretending that there is nothing negative in their lives. Instead, prophetic words are so supernaturally powerful that they can actually unearth the gold in the hearts of people—gold that is hidden under the dirt of their lives. This often displaces their confusion and delivers them from guilt, shame, and sin.

Prophecy confronts false mindsets and sinful thought patterns with new options, which awakens new realities in the lives of people, often initiating the process of rethinking how they live, love, and behave.

From What Covenant Are You Prophesying?

Unfortunately, there are many believers who are prophesying as if they are still under the Old Testament system.



Matthew 5:43-45—You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Have you ever noticed that God is the One who said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy"? That's right! Under the Old Covenant, it was God who actually sent the children of Israel into the Promised Land and commanded Joshua to kill everybody in the land—it was the genocide of Gentiles. In the Old Covenant, your love for God was measured by your hatred for those who hated God. Even some of the familiar stories we tell in Sunday school, at their core, reflect this hatred toward the enemies of God. Why did David kill Goliath?

Because the Philistines were enemies of God. It reads like a good story until you consider what David was doing—killing people who didn’t love God. Goliath and the Philistines were the bad guys because they didn’t love God. In fact, Israel’s first king, Saul, was removed from his kingship because he extended mercy to a king who was condemned to death. Sometimes we try to skip over these realities, but it is very important for us to deal with them in a healthy way in order to make a proper comparison of Old and New Covenant realities.

The way we understand the New Covenant will determine our concept of New Testament prophecy. The Old Covenant taught, “love your neighbor, hate your enemy.” On the other hand, the New Testament mandate is to love everybody, even the people who don’t love us and who don’t love God.

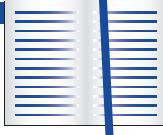
**True prophetic ministry is looking for gold
in the midst of the dirt in people’s lives.**

Remember, the prophetic communicates the love of God to people. If we are prophesying out of an Old Covenant perspective, we are going to release words of condemnation and judgment. Old Covenant prophets judged cities and nations. This was the prophetic mandate under the previous system. The moral of the Old Testament was that we couldn’t be good enough to get into heaven. We *need* a Savior. This is why everything we see under the Old Covenant is often so severe. The severity of the law confronts us with the severity of sin and, again, how desperately humankind needed a Savior. Sin is so severe that it deserves judgment; hence the reason why the prophetic voices under the Old Testament often released words of judgment. Time after time, the people of God were reminded through the prophets of God that they were in dire need of a Savior.

That was the Old Covenant, but now we have a Savior and everything has shifted. Jesus came and fulfilled the words of the Law and the prophets (see Matthew 5:17). Here is where we see the contrast between the two Testaments and how they give us different definitions of the prophetic. The goal of New Testament prophecy is that we would find treasure in the dirt of people’s lives. Jesus bore our sins. He carried our shame. He was condemned so we would never have to be. Things have changed now; and as a result, how we approach prophetic ministry is very different under the New Covenant.

Finding Treasure in the Lives of Sinners

Paul tells us in First Corinthians that prophecy reveals the secrets of unbelievers' hearts.



1 Corinthians 14:24-25—But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

Notice in this passage that the person who receives the prophetic word doesn't repent, but rather "will fall on his face and worship God." Most people know what is wrong with them, but they are unaware of the greatness that God has placed in their lives. This is the divine secret that prophecy identifies and calls out! Jesus didn't just die for our sins to be forgiven, but He offered up His life because we "fell short of the glory of God" (see Romans 3:23). Prophecy brings people into a revelation of the glory that God has assigned to them. Jesus died for our sins *so* we could actually step into this revelation of His glory. Too many times, people mistakenly think that the more they go on and on about the sin and junk in someone's life, the more inclined that "sinner" will be to repent and turn to God. This is just not true. Paul tells us that it is the *goodness of God* that leads people to repentance (see Romans 2:4 NKJV). This foundation of God's goodness should also be the foundation for prophetic ministry. Instead of calling out people's sins, we should tell them about the glory God has intended for them to live in. This exposure brings conviction in their lives that they are living below the glorious standard that God has set for them.

In First Corinthians 14:25, we read that prophecy discloses the "*secrets of his heart*" ("his" refers to the "unbeliever" in this text). If we are prophesying out of an Old Covenant perspective, we tend to look for negative or bad secrets to call out. That is not what Paul is talking about, for the context of prophecy is one of "*edification and exhortation and consolation*" (see 1 Corinthians 14:3). Calling out the dirt only releases condemnation, shame, and judgment, while revealing secret treasures invites people to reconsider the road they are on in life and come face to face with their identity in Christ.

Prophecy reveals the secrets in unbelievers' hearts.

Prophetic Ministry Can Reconcile People to God

2 Corinthians 5:17-19—Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.



The prophetic ministry empowers us to participate in the ministry of reconciliation that has been assigned to all Christians. The Father's heart is to reconcile all humankind to Himself—people, communities, and entire nations. The ministry of reconciliation involves “not counting people’s sins against them.” Every kind of ministry that we participate in, whether it is the ministry of helps, administration, healing, prophetic ministry, all of it is motivated by one central core—reconciliation. Whenever we step outside the ministry of reconciliation, there is a strong likelihood that we are carrying the wrong core values in our ministry.

Some who like to point out that certain people groups deserve to be judged because of their sin will often challenge the ministry of reconciliation. There is no question that sin deserves to be judged, and the Bible makes it very clear that there is a Day of Judgment coming. But what troubles me is that many seem to have forgotten that we all got into the Kingdom through Jesus’ works, and then these people want everybody else to get into the Kingdom through their own works.

Last Days' Prophetic Ministry

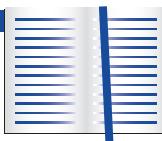
Acts 2:17-21—“It shall be in the last days,” God says, “that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord



shall come. And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

The apostle Peter connects the *last days* outpouring of the Holy Spirit with sons and daughters prophesying and calls it the *great and glorious day of the Lord*. The last days began on the Day of Pentecost and have continued ever since. For us to prophesy out of the right spirit, we must recognize the difference between the *last days* (plural) and *last day* (singular). Even though the difference seems pretty small, it makes all the difference in the world in how we approach prophetic ministry.

Four hundred years before the book of Acts, the prophet Malachi describes a different day.



Malachi 4:5—Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

This is the Day of Judgment, which is described nine times in the New Testament alone. Some passages that specifically address this single Day of Judgment are Acts 17:31, John 17:47, 2 Peter 3:7, Jude 6, 1 John 4:17, and 1 Corinthians 4:4-5. On that day, God is the only One who will judge the entire world. Some people have been trying to get rid of Judgment Day all together, even denying the reality of hell. But we would have to erase entire sections of Scripture and basically rewrite the Bible to avoid the reality of Judgment Day and hell.

To summarize the contrast between these two epoch seasons, we live in the last days and therefore we prophesy in a way that reconciles people to God by not counting their sins against them. Another epoch season called Judgment Day is coming when God will judge everyone. In that day, some people will be rewarded and sent to heaven, while others will be sent to the hell they chose. The important thing for us to remember when we are prophesying is to not pull the last day, which is “great and terrible,” into the last days, which are “great and glorious days.”

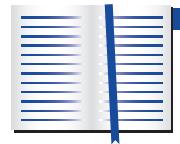
Prophetic Ministry Can Change People’s Hearts

In the ninth chapter of First Samuel, there is a stirring story of prophetic ministry that transformed Saul’s heart. Saul has been sent by his father to find their lost donkeys. After an unsuccessful venture, he decides to go to the nearest city to ask direction from a certain

prophet. Meanwhile, God tells the prophet Samuel that Saul is coming to him to find his donkeys, and amazingly, he is to anoint him king of Israel. When Saul finally encounters the prophet Samuel, the prophet informs him that his donkeys are already found. Then he stuns Saul by asking him to stay until the next day in order that he could tell him “all that is in his mind” because he is the man for whom all the desires of Israel are waiting (see 1 Samuel 9:19). Saul is shocked and said to Samuel, *“Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?”* (1 Samuel 9:21).

Like many people whose greatness has somehow gotten lost under low self-esteem and bad circumstances, Saul seems to be completely unaware of the nobility that lies in his heart. The story goes on to describe how the prophet Samuel anoints Saul king. He goes on to tell Saul that he will encounter a group of prophets coming down from the hills, and when he meets them he will be changed into another man!

1 Samuel 10:5-6—Afterward you will come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is; and it shall be as soon as you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre before them, and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.



Saul did not morph into a completely different person, but he came into alignment with his full potential he was created to be. By the time Saul turned to leave, he was changed into another man. He was transformed into the man he was designed to be from the beginning. The real man, who was hidden under low self-esteem and sin, was revealed and restored. This is the heart of true prophetic ministry!

This is a beautiful Old Testament picture of the miraculous work that the Holy Spirit wants to perform through New Testament prophecy. We are called to prophesy to both believers and non-believers in such a way that the prophetic words help them to catch a glimpse of the awesome nobility that often lies dormant in the hearts of people. This is our prophetic mission; that we call out the secret treasure in the souls of people, reminding them, like Samuel did with Saul, that there is a prince or princess living deep inside of them.

Does Greatness Promote Pride?

Some believe that calling out greatness in people promotes pride. True humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less. The truth of God's grace humbles people without degrading them and exalts people without inflating them.

Prophecy calls out the greatness in people.

Some time ago I was teaching on the purposes of prophetic ministry. Beginning with a few opening comments, I said, "Prophecy calls out the greatness in people."

Just then a pastor walked through the back door and said, "I have a question."

"What is it?"

"I believe that God is great," he said.

"Did I say something that made you feel that God wasn't great?"

"You said we are to call out the greatness in people. I believe that you are creating pride in people by doing that," he said.

I fired back, "I believe that for years the church has emasculated and castrated people in the name of humility." I pointed to a beautiful painting on the wall and said, "Let's pretend you painted that picture."

"OK," he said, looking confused.

"That's a stupid looking painting! Look at those ugly colors!" I yelled. "Now," I asked him, "did demeaning the painting glorify the artist?"

"No," he said.

"Isn't it true that the beauty of the painting actually brings honor to the artist?"

"Yes, that's true," he said.

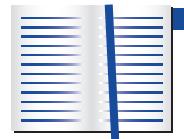
"You didn't paint yourself—God painted you," I told him. "Not only that, but Jesus is the One who sat in the chair and modeled for the portrait. We are created in His image and

in His likeness. Every time we demean ourselves we are talking badly about the Artist and the Model. The truth is that the beauty of creation actually gives glory to the Creator.”

True Humility Expressed

There is an interesting story in Daniel chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about a large, beautiful tree being cut down by an angel. Daniel interprets the dream to mean that “Nebs” is about to lose his mind for seven years because of his arrogance and pride. He will become like an animal until he recognizes that God is the ruler of the world. Twelve months later, the king is on the roof of his castle telling himself how awesome he is for having built Babylon with his own strength and power. Just then he goes insane. He becomes like an animal, living in the fields eating grass. After seven years, his sanity returns.

Daniel 4:36-37—At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.



Nebuchadnezzar is saying, “I am humbly awesome!” Humility is not demeaning yourself; it is exalting our God!

Questions to Ponder

1. What is the main purpose for prophetic ministry?

2. What did we fall short of when we were sinners?

3. What are the secrets of people's hearts?

4. What is the difference between the "last days" and "the last day" and how does this impact the way we operate in prophetic ministry?

5. What is true humility?

6. Who were you modeled after when you were created?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. What is the difference between Old and New Testament prophecy?
2. Explain how New Testament prophecy operates. What is the goal?
3. How can I be involved with sinful people and still call out the greatness in them?

4. Is there a time when it is wrong to show people the glory that God has hidden in them?

Life Application

Think of one person in your life with whom you have the most problems. Spend some time praying for that person. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you one aspect of the glory of God that is assigned to that person. Now, go tell that person what you see and observe how this affects your relationship.





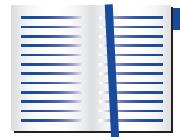
Prophets and Prophecy

In this chapter we will discover the difference between the Gift of Prophecy and the Office of the Prophet.

Understanding the Spirit Realm

The gift of prophecy is one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians chapter twelve. Before we understand the gift of prophecy and what differentiates it from the office of a prophet, it is important that we clearly grasp what Paul is teaching us in the following verses.

*1 Corinthians 12:1-3—Now concerning spiritual **gifts**, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*

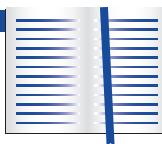


In your Bible, there is a good chance that the word “gifts” is italicized. The reason *gifts* is italicized is because it is not present in the original Greek language. This is how it reads in the original Greek: “*Now concerning the spiritual, brethren, I don’t want you to be unaware.*”

First, and foundationally, Paul was providing a correct understanding of the spirit realm to a people who were previously entrenched in paganism and polytheism. It is important for us to understand the context that Paul was speaking into so that we can correctly interpret the Scriptures. In verse 2, Paul writes, “*You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.*” The Corinthians were pagan, idol-worshiping polytheists (they believed in multiple gods). They worshiped many gods before they came to

Christ. It makes sense, then, that Paul wanted to retrain the way they understood the spirit realm. After all, coming from a world of paganism, the Corinthians' concept of the spirit realm was extremely distorted.

Second, Paul was helping people—who previously worshiped many gods—understand how one God could move in multiple ways. Pay attention to how Paul goes on to list the gifts of the Holy Spirit and some of the repeat language he uses in describing their operation.



*1 Corinthians 12:4-11—Now there are varieties of gifts, but the **same** Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the **same** Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the **same** God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the **same** Spirit; to another faith by the **same** Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the **same** Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*

The key operative word in these verses is the word *same*. This word is key in giving his audience an appropriate introduction to the spirit realm. Remember, they worshiped many gods. Even as believers, the Corinthians had to experience a renewing of the mind. Old ideas about spirituality had to be replaced with the truth about who God was and how He operated. For them to recognize that it was the same Spirit who performed each of these nine supernatural exploits was a huge shift. Without this understanding, the Corinthians—most likely—thought that there was a god for each gift. When a healing happened, the healing god was at work. When a prophetic word went forth, the prophetic god was in operation. When miracles took place, the god of miracles was up to something, etc.

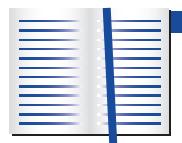
Even though we could argue that the Corinthians were some of the most spiritual people in the New Testament, they were also some of the most ignorant believers concerning the spirit realm because their understanding of the spirit world was rooted in Greek mythology. That is the reason Paul keeps repeating the phrase *the same Spirit* or *the same God*.

Paul is not so focused on the gifts of the Spirit as he is helping the Corinthians have an actual understanding of the spirit world and how it really works. Paul was ultimately saying, “Let me explain to you how His realm operates.”

The Gift of Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is one of the nine gifts of the *Holy Spirit* listed in First Corinthians chapter 12 that we mentioned in the previous paragraph. We are to earnestly desire spiritual gifts. *Earnestly desire* means to “lust after.” God wants us to pursue His gifts! He desires to give us His gifts more than we could ever want them.

*1 Corinthians 14:1-3—Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly** spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.*



Prophecy Is a *Gift*—Not an Award

One of the main things we must understand about the *gift* of prophecy is that we cannot earn it! We receive it by asking. It is not an award or reward; the gift of prophecy is given, by grace, as a gift. In other words, we can't work for the gift of prophecy, nor is it something we deserve. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are supernatural endowments that we receive without merit.

Here are two more important facts that we must recognize about the gifts of the Spirit: first, you can have access to all of the gifts because the Giver lives inside you. Although it is true that some people may gravitate toward certain gifts, such as those who move more in the gift of healing and others who move in the gift of prophecy, ultimately you have access to all of the gifts because you house the gift distributor.

Paul makes it clear that “*one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills*” (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Holy Spirit decides who gets to operate in the gifts. How does He decide to whom He gives them, you might ask? He simply gives the gifts to people who ask for them.

Second, this would imply that even very gifted people are not necessarily mature Christians. They may not even have good character. Therefore, it is important for us to recognize that the gifts of the Spirit do not validate our walk with God. They can never serve as the measuring stick for spiritual maturity. It is the fruit of the Spirit that is developed as a person matures in Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of maturity in our lives. This fruit grows in our lives as we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, not just through us.



Galatians 5:22-23—The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the Spirit is a sign that we actually have a relationship with God. Again, God is not just working through us, He is actually working on us as we embrace His growing work in our lives.

Furthermore, to live a well-balanced life, we should have the attitudes of the Spirit, (the Beatitudes, see Luke 6:20-22), the fruit of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit operating in and through our lives. Some mistakenly think that, because the *fruit* of the Spirit is the evidence of a believer's maturity, the gifts of the Spirit are not important. But the fact is that the apostle Paul gave us a very clear command to "*Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy*" (1 Corinthians 14:1). Therefore, it is the will of God for each of us to grow in love, character, and power.

When the Day of Judgment comes, there will be those who say, "*Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?*" (Matthew 7:22) These people moved in power, but they never actually committed their lives to Christ. This is why the Lord responds, "*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*" (Matthew 7:23).

The Goal of the Gift of Prophecy



1 Corinthians 14:3—The one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

We understand from this passage that the main purpose of the gift of prophecy is for edification, exhortation, and consolation. *Edification* means "to build up," *exhortation* means "to

call near,” and *consolation* means “to cheer up.” In fact, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are some of the love languages of God. When we prophesy over someone, that person should feel kissed by God. When we operate in the gift of healing, the person we are ministering to should feel embraced by God, and no one should have to be delivered from his or her last deliverance!

Prophecy Encourages the Church

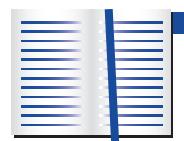
The primary purpose of the gift of prophecy is not to direct or correct the Body of Christ, but rather to *encourage* the Church. The book of Acts gives us a great example of this principle when Luke writes, *“Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren”* (Acts 15:32). New Testament prophecy encourages and builds up people; it doesn’t condemn or speak negatively to them. We should never allow people who are ministering in the gift of prophecy to speak negatively into the lives of others. As we have said many times before, the goal of the gift of prophecy is to *bring out the best in people!* If we see negative things in someone’s life to whom we are ministering, we are to ask the Holy Spirit to give us the answer to the problem that we discern. Then we prophesy the *answer*—not the problem.

For example, if we are ministering to someone and discern that they are struggling with pornography, the Holy Spirit will often give us a prophetic word for them, such as, “God is calling you to a new level of purity and holiness.” In this way, we have prophesied the answer without speaking about the problem; this releases grace to break the bondage of pornography in their lives!

Everyone Can Prophesy

Anyone who is saved and receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit can minister in the gifts of the Spirit. Paul wrote, *“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted”* (1 Corinthians 14:31). Luke echoed Paul’s exhortation with his account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the first century Church. Here is Luke’s record of Peter’s first message:

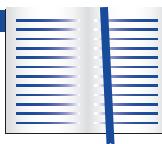
Acts 2:17-18—“It shall be in the last days,” God says, “That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.”



It is clear from these verses that the gift of prophecy is available to *everyone!*

The Office of the Prophet

The apostle Paul discussed the five-fold ministry offices in the book of Ephesians. He specifically calls these offices—apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, and pastor—gifts to the Body of Christ.



Ephesians 4:7-13—To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Notice that Christ gave prophets to the Church as a gift. In other words, they are not just gifted, as is the case of those who operate in the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy. They, themselves, are the gift, meaning it is *who* they are, not just what they *do*.

The main function of a prophet is not primarily to prophesy, but instead to equip the saints to do the work of service (see Ephesians 4:12). The prophet equips the saints with eyes to see and ears to hear. The grace that prophets impart can literally cause people to be able to hear the voice of the Spirit with clarity. The prophet can never substitute our need to hear from God for ourselves, but nor does our need to hear God for ourselves replace the need for the prophets in our lives.

The Calling of a Prophet

The office of the prophet is a life calling. Most prophets are called at birth or when they are born again. We cannot go to school to become a prophet or receive some type of diploma certifying us as prophets. Unlike the gift of prophecy, which we are exhorted to “earnestly

desire,” the Lord Himself chooses prophets. Therefore, we don’t strive or seek to be a prophet. However, if we are called as a prophet, we still have the responsibility to develop our gift.

A prophet is also a part of the government of God, and as such they also have authority and responsibility to correct and direct the Body of Christ.

Tridimensional Ministry Elements

There are actually three components to any mature ministry. These components include our calling, gifting, and anointing. Let’s define each element:

- Calling gives us our identity. “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (1 Corinthians 1:1).
- Giftings give us our ability. “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).
- Anointing gives us our purpose. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners” (Isaiah 61:1).

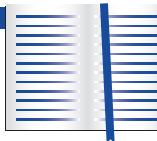
Therefore, we must realize that the calling on our lives describes *who* we are. The anointing of God provides us with our *purpose* in life. The gifts that God has given to us become the *abilities* through which we accomplish His purposes. The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable (see Romans 11:29), but the anointing of the Lord ebbs and flows according to the relationship we have with the Holy Spirit.

Below is a simple chart that contrasts the difference between the gift of prophecy and the office of the prophet and prophetess.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY	THE OFFICE OF THE PROPHET
Is a gift of the Holy Spirit	Is a gift of Christ
Is something you do	Is something you are
Every believer is exhorted to seek to prophesy	God chooses prophets; it is not our choice
Is for edification, exhortation, and comfort	Direct, correct, warn, govern, and equip
Prophetic ability is the gift	The prophet himself is a gift
Classified as a saint	Called as part of the five-fold team
The gift is for life	The calling is for life

Receiving the Prophet's Reward

In order for us to receive the grace that allows us to see and hear (which is the prophet's reward), we must receive the prophet in the name of a prophet. Jesus said:



Matthew 10:41—He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

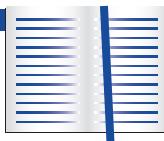
Each of us receives from people based on the role that we understand them to play in our lives. For example, someone seeking counsel from a prophet must realize that, unlike a pastor (whose best counsel comes after much listening), a prophet will often give his or her best insight with little or no prior information. People trying to receive this type of counsel without understanding the gift and role of the prophet may think to themselves, "How can you give me counsel when you don't even understand my situation?" Therefore, it is important for us to understand the various roles that each member of the Body of Christ plays in our lives.

Prophecy Defined

Prophecy in the purist sense is *foretelling* and *forthtelling*.

Foretelling—to know the future.

The following is an example of foretelling. Agabus speaks prophetically about a famine that will take place worldwide. It happens a few years later.



Acts 11:28—One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

Forthtelling—to cause the future.

A great example of forthtelling is in the following passages in Ezekiel. God instructs the prophet Ezekiel to prophesy to dead bones and they became a mighty army. Ezekiel didn't just tell the future, he caused the future!



Ezekiel 37:1-10—The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry.

He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, You know.” Again He said to me, “Prophesy over these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.’ Thus says the Lord God to these bones, ‘Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.’”

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God, ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.’’”

So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Difference Between Prophecy and the Word of Knowledge

People often confuse the word of knowledge with the gift of prophecy. A word of knowledge is information that is received from the Holy Spirit and is currently true. In other words, a word of knowledge describes something that took place in the past, a current circumstance, or a fact about someone's life. Sometimes when we prophesy, someone can mistakenly think that the prophecy wasn't accurate because it is not something that is currently happening or has ever happened in that person's life. But pure prophecy is about the future. If the prophetic word doesn't acknowledge something that has already taken place, this simply means that the word of knowledge was not part of the delivery.

The Three Parts of Prophecy

- Revelation: What is God saying? The person who delivers the prophetic word is responsible for the revelation of the word. It may come as a dream, a vision, or any of the ways that are explained in the next chapter.
- Interpretation: What does the revelation mean? Prophetic people need to realize that just because they received the revelation does not mean that they also have the interpretation. We often get into trouble when we try to interpret a prophetic revelation without first receiving God's direction and clarity.
- Application: What should we do with the prophetic word once we know what it means? We should always involve wise leaders in our lives when we receive directional prophetic words. They should help us to devise a plan to actually apply the prophetic word to our life and walk it out.

When God stops speaking, we should too! People who are prophesying often feel pressure to give an interpretation for every prophecy they have, particularly when the prophetic word seems ambiguous or even silly. It is astounding what some people think their prophetic words mean! The following is a profound example of a powerful prophetic word that was misinterpreted by the person who delivered it. Remember, we don't have to be profound to be powerful.

Some time ago several of us traveled to a Morning Star conference where they were training people how to prophesy. With about 70 people in the room, we were all prophesying to a woman in the front of the room. We completed the ten prophecies allowed in the prophetic exercise, and then began to judge the words given to the woman. Suddenly, a man in the back of the room stood to his feet and said, "You have a yellow shirt on!"

Immediately the woman fell to the ground, crying hysterically. The man continued to prophesy, saying things like, "The sun is yellow...the moon is yellow," and so on. When the woman finally regained her composure, the leader of the class asked her what the word meant to her.

She explained, "I have a son who is autistic and I told the Lord today, 'If You are going to heal my son, have someone tell me that I have on a yellow shirt.'"

The man who delivered this prophetic word stepped out of bounds and tried to give the woman an interpretation of the color yellow. Although the Holy Spirit used the word powerfully in the woman's life, the entire prophetic word was simply, "You have a yellow shirt on."

Questions to Ponder

1. Why do we need to correctly understand the spirit realm?

2. What is the difference between the gift of prophecy and the office of a prophet?

3. What is the difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit?

4. Who can prophesy?

5. What are the three parts of prophecy?

6. What does the word *prophecy* mean?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. How can we tell what our giftings, callings, and anointings are?
2. What are the ramifications of getting identity from gifting instead of calling?
3. What is the difference between a word of prophecy and a word of knowledge?
4. Define what forthtelling and foretelling are.
5. Why is it important for us to only share what we believe the Holy Spirit is telling us—and not give interpretations unless we are first given clear direction by the Lord?

Life Application

Take time now with the Holy Spirit to discover what gifts the Lord has given you. Now ask Him for gifts that you have never walked in. Go to someone who is gifted in the area that you are asking God to gift you in, and have that person lay hands on you and pray for you to receive this gift. Go out and try it!

Let the journey begin!



Learning to Hear the Voice of God

In this chapter we discuss why the voice of God can sometimes seem elusive or even nonexistent, and we investigate the different sources of voices that speak to us from the spirit realm.

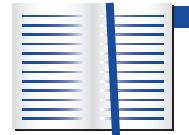
God Is Always Speaking

Jesus died on the Cross not just to forgive our sins, but ultimately to bring us into a relationship with God. Communication is probably the single greatest vehicle of any relationship. Although some people have a problem believing that God wants to talk to everybody, most believers understand that true prayer is not just petitioning heaven with a list of requests, but it is communicating with our Father in Heaven as a true friend.

Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice*” (John 10:27). Prophecy, in its simplest form, is merely hearing from the Holy Spirit and repeating what He said. Paul put it this way, “*For you can all prophesy one by one*” (1 Corinthians 14:31). Moses said, “*Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!*” (Numbers 11:29).

Knowledge is power, and God doesn’t want the prideful to be the powerful; therefore, God hides His word so that only the hungry and the humble have access to His voice. In other words, God’s voice is hidden from the arrogant and the proud.

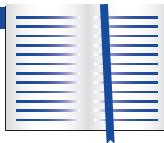
Luke 10:21—At that very time He (Jesus) rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.”



The fact is, God is always speaking. The question is, *are we in tune with His voice?*

The Example of the Parables

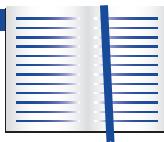
The parables of Jesus are some of the best examples in Scripture of how the Lord conceals His treasures from the arrogant and proud. Many have been taught that Jesus told parables to demonstrate spiritual principles with natural illustrations. However, Jesus made it clear that He told parables so that people would not understand truth and become powerful. God does not want the prideful to be the powerful. Parables were told not to reveal truth, but to hide it.



Matthew 13:10-13, 16—And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” …But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Those who are hungry will search out the treasures that God has hidden for them. The Greek word for “hidden” is *langanuw*, which means “to be ignorant or unaware.”

Solomon said it’s the privilege and duty of royalty to search out the secrets of our King.



Proverbs 25:2—It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

When we study the prophets of the Old Testament, we can easily become envious of how clearly they heard God’s voice. However, Jesus made it plain that those who are born again have a tremendous advantage over anyone who lived under the Old Covenant because God’s Spirit now resides *within* us and is in constant communication with our spirit.

Matthew 13:17—For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.



If we have not heard the Lord speaking to us in the past 24 hours, we probably missed His voice. Remember, it is the glory of God to hide things, but it is the glory of His royal sons and daughters to search out the mysteries of the Kingdom. God does not hide things *from* us; He hides them *for* us.

God's Goal Is Relationship

God does not want to simply impart information through the gift of prophecy, but rather the goal of all prophetic ministry is to draw us into a deeper relationship with Jesus and His Body. Malachi said that in the last days God would send Elijah the prophet and he will restore the hearts of the fathers to children and the hearts of the children to fathers (see Malachi 4:5-6). Here again, we see that God's goal for the prophetic ministry is deeply rooted in the restoration of relationships. Therefore, if we begin to use the gift of prophecy as a tool to expand our ministry rather than accepting it as an invitation to a deeper relationship with Jesus and His Church, He will "change His language" so that He can tutor us! As He teaches us His new language, He creates an opportunity for us to draw closer to Himself and more intimate with His people.

God is always speaking, but His first language is not English.

The Lord Is Always Speaking

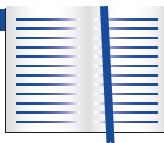
The Lord is more determined and excited to speak to us than we are to hear from Him. Again, we must realize that God is always speaking, but He is not human and His first language is not English, Spanish, French, or any other human language! Once we grasp this revelation, we will begin to realize that we actually do see and hear God much more clearly than we thought. All we have to do is "tune our receivers to His station."

For example, in the room we are in right now there is music playing all around us. But even if we close our eyes and listen very carefully, we wouldn't hear it. However, by simply

turning on a radio, we would perceive what was there all the time. The reason, of course, is that our human bodies were never designed to perceive radio waves.

Likewise, God is always speaking to us! The gift of prophecy is the equipment we need to tap in to the spirit realm that exists all around us, even though we often can't hear it with our natural ears or see it with our natural eyes. The gift of prophecy is like a radio receiver from heaven. It gives us the ability to hear what God has been speaking to us all along, but we were unable to perceive it before we received this wonderful gift.

Anointing to Perceive the Supernatural



2 Kings 6:10-17—The king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had told him; thus he warned him, so that he guarded himself there, more than once or twice.

Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?” One of his servants said, “No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” So he said, “Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him.” And it was told him, saying, “Behold, he is in Dothan.” He sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

In the verses above we see that Elisha's calling as a prophet gave him the ability to hear what the king of Aram was saying in secret to his troops. Elisha became a secret weapon to the king of Israel by revealing the plans of his enemy. This prompted the king of Aram to try and capture Elisha. On the day of the attack, Elisha's servant came out of the tent and saw that Aram's army had encircled them. In a panic, his servant ran into the tent and told

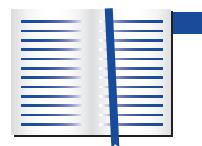
Elisha that they were in big trouble. Elisha calmly prayed for his servant. Immediately, the eyes of his servant were opened and he realized that the mountains were full of horses and chariots of God. Elisha's servant's eyes were open so that he could see what was always present in the spirit.

This is the kind of prophetic gift that each of us can receive from God. It causes us to have the ability to perceive what is happening in the spirit realm. Without this prophetic gift, we are like blind people in the Kingdom of God!

The War to Keep Us Deaf

Sometimes we struggle to hear the voice of God because there is a war to keep us spiritually deaf. In the parable of the sower, Jesus explained that often when God speaks to us, the enemy comes along and tries to convince us that we didn't hear God clearly or that it wasn't God's voice at all! Satan's objective is to prevent us from hearing the voice of God and thus keep us from bringing comfort and encouragement to people. If he can convince us not to speak the word of the Lord by making us feel foolish, or persuade us that it was just our imagination and not a prophetic word, then he has succeeded in stealing the fruit of God's word in someone's life!

Mark 4:14-15—The sower sows the word. These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.



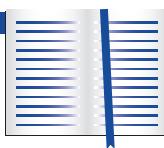
This principle is also true when it comes to receiving a prophetic word. If the enemy can persuade us that the word spoken to us wasn't really God, then we are robbed of the benefit! The value we place on the word will determine the power we will receive from it.

The value you place on the word determines the power you receive from it.

Valuing the Prophetic Word

The Bible says, "*He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward*" (Matthew 10:41). What is the prophet's reward? The prophet's reward is the ability to *see* and *hear*. Jesus would often stand before a crowd and shout, "*He who*

has eyes let him see, and he who has ears let him hear!” When He shouted these words He was demonstrating the role of a prophet, because everyone who valued Jesus as a prophet and esteemed the words He shouted received the ability to see and hear. In other words, a special grace was released with His words that actually opened their eyes and ears to hear God!



Matthew 10:41—He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.

The following story is a great example of how somebody valued a prophetic word that resulted in a supernatural ability from God:

Gene and Lisa took us to lunch after I spoke at their church one Sunday. They had just adopted two boys after several years of trying to have children. During our meal together, the Lord spoke to me and said, “Tell Lisa at this time next year she is going to have a baby.” I argued with the Lord and told Him I didn’t want to give her that word because I knew that they had prayed for years over this issue to no avail. He said to me, “If you do not tell her, she will not get pregnant!”

I submissively leaned toward Lisa and quietly told her what the Lord had spoken to me. Although they had been prayed for countless times to conceive children, they chose to receive the word of the Lord. Lisa loudly announced, “*I’m going to have a baby!*”

A few months later, we came home to a message from Lisa proudly proclaiming, “*I’m pregnant!*”

The next year she had a child, just as the Lord had promised.

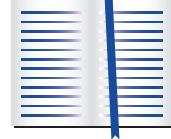
Lisa welcomed and positively received the prophetic word. As a result, she watched the power of that word produce the intended result in her life.

Valuing the word of the Lord also means that we make time to hear Him. Moses walked past the burning bush in the desert and heard nothing until he stopped and turned aside; we need to set aside time to diligently seek God ourselves with our whole heart.

Exodus 3:2-4—The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”



Deuteronomy 4:29—But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.



Even if God speaks audibly from Heaven, some people would still mistake His voice for the sound of thunder. The difference between the deaf and the hearing is not how loudly God speaks, but how open we are to hear Him speak.

John 12:28-29—“Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.”



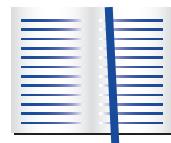
2 Chronicles 16:9—For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.



Testing the Spirits

As we learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, we must realize that not every voice that speaks to us from the spirit realm is from God.

1 John 4:1—Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.



In First John 4, we are instructed as the “beloved” to “not believe every spirit, but test the spirits.” In this passage of Scripture, John makes it clear that we—the beloved—are able to hear from spirits other than the Holy Spirit. John went on to warn us not to become false prophets by listening to the wrong spirit! Therefore, because it is possible to become a false

prophet by listening to the wrong spirit, it is vital for us to discern which voices are speaking to us.

Remember, the devil is stealthy in how he communicates with *the beloved*. If he were to make himself obvious (the classic horns, pitchfork, and red costume approach), no reasonable Christian would give him the time of day. The Bible tells us that, instead, he masquerades as an “*angel of light*” (2 Corinthians 11:14), and we are to be aware of his schemes (see 2 Corinthians 2:11).

Who Is Speaking to Us?

Voices that speak to us from the spirit realm come from four sources:

1. Our spirit
2. The Holy Spirit
3. Evil spirits
4. Angels

The Four Sources

1. **Our spirit:** We are a spirit that has a soul and a body. When we are born again, our spirit comes to life making it possible to hear from the spirit realm, but not necessarily hearing from the Holy Spirit. Hearing from our own spirit is still a spiritual experience and being aware of this will help us discern which voice is speaking to us.
2. **The Holy Spirit:** This is God’s Spirit, the one with whom we are building a relationship and learning to hear clearly.
3. **Evil spirits:** Spirits from the evil realm can speak to Christians just as they spoke to Jesus when He encountered satan in the wilderness.
4. **Angels:** According to Hebrews chapter 1, these are spirits sent to render service to the saints. Angels also speak to us about the things of God.

Practice Makes Perfect

In the following chapters, there is a more thorough discussion about how to recognize which spirit you are hearing from. It takes time to learn to discern what spirit is speaking to you, and there is no substitute for experience. Here are a couple great examples of the need we have for experience.

A banker who had reached the age of retirement was about to be replaced by a young man. Upon his arrival to take the helm from his predecessor, he asked the older man how he became successful. The man replied, “Good decisions.”

“How do you make good decisions?” the young man asked.

“Experience,” the banker replied.

The young man thought for a moment, and then inquired, “How do you get experience?”

With a warm smile, aged with wisdom, he replied, “Bad decisions!”

You cannot grow in the gifts of the Spirit without making mistakes! We gain experience as we step out in faith trying to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Many years ago I went fishing with a man who was several years my senior. We stood on the same bank, using the same bait, and I watched as he caught several fish while I was unsuccessful. Certain that the problem was the pole I was using, I asked if we could swap equipment and he graciously traded poles with me. Still I caught nothing, as he continued to reel in more fish!

I finally decided that the only fish I was going to catch that day was one that was going to commit suicide. He knew what the problem was, but it took me a while to realize that I did not know how it felt to get a bite.

You see, the older man had experience.

Questions to Ponder

1. List four reasons why we sometimes don't hear God's voice.

2. Why does God sometimes change His language?

3. What is the main factor in hearing from God?

4. What are the four different voices that try to communicate with us?

5. How does satan affect our ability to hear God?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. What is the relationship between knowing our identity and hearing God's voice? Why is this relationship so important?
2. Why is it important to clearly identify the four different voices we can hear in the spirit realm?
3. Is everything we hear from the spirit realm from the Holy Spirit?
4. Do you think we can prophesy out of the wrong spirit? What would this look like?

Life Application

Having a pure heart is vitally important in communicating with God. The pure in heart see God and can be trusted with His mysteries. Take some time now to ask the Lord to search your heart. Let humility and hunger be your guide.





The Language of God

This chapter is dedicated to understanding the different ways in which God communicates with His people.

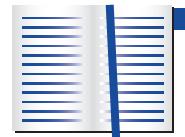
The Language of God

As we mentioned before, God's primary language is not English, French, Spanish, or even Hebrew or Greek. It is important that we know *how* He speaks in order for us to hear and speak accordingly. If we don't recognize the different ways God communicates with His people, we will miss His voice. If we miss God's voice, we will either a) not move in the gift of prophecy, or b) we will mistake other voices for God's voice. We want to avoid both of these pitfalls. In this chapter, we will review different ways God communicates with His people. This will provide a basic foundation for learning to hear *how* God speaks and, in turn, accurately share what He is saying.

Visions and Dreams

Two of the most common ways the Lord communicates with us are through visions and dreams.

Acts 2:17-18—“And it shall be in the last days,” God says, “that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.”



Visions

There are two types of visions. The first one is a *vision of the mind*, in which the Lord “projects” images and pictures onto the “screen” of our minds. This can be called a “sanctified imagination” or an imagination that is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Most often, this is how the Holy Spirit speaks to us. They often appear like hieroglyphics—pictures that require interpretation. So as the Holy Spirit speaks to us through these pictures and images of the mind, we must turn around and ask Him what the pictures mean.

For example, if you were asked to picture a pink elephant, you would see it in your mind’s eye. The Holy Spirit uses your mind as a blackboard on which He draws pictures or projects images into your mind’s eye.

The second type of vision is an *open vision*. This is an image that you see with your natural eyes. The following is an example of an open vision.

Many years ago, I took a group of about 37 kids from our youth group to Santa Cruz, California for a day on the beach. Among them was our foster daughter, Dee. It happened to be “Muscle Beach Day,” and the area was overflowing with people. Our group found a spot to settle and enjoy the day.

Not long after our arrival, I glanced up and saw Dee running along the beach being chased by a man dressed in full leathers. As they ran toward us, I could hear the man shouting to Dee, “I love you! I love you! I’m taking you with me.”

She ran to me for protection with this man close behind her. As she knelt next to me in the sand, he reached over and grabbed her by the blouse. He began to shake her, saying loudly, “I love you! I love you!”

Finally, I mustered the courage to grab the man’s arm. “That’s enough!” I yelled. The man abruptly dropped Dee in the sand, then turned and grabbed me, lifting me up off my knees! He screamed at me, “I love her! I’m taking her with me!”

Just then I saw an open vision appear above his head. Events of his life flashed over him in what appeared to be short video clips! I said to him, “Your mother is in the hospital dying, isn’t she?”

“Yes!” he exclaimed.

“Your dad died last year, didn’t he?” I shouted.

“Yeah,” he said.

Then I yelled, “And you blame yourself, don’t you?”

With a look of shock and disbelief he said, “Man, you’re scaring me!” He turned around and ran away.

I jumped to my feet and chased after him! The whole event turned into quite a scene for the other beachgoers as I caught up with him and tackled him three times. Each time I tackled him, I yelled, “*You need Jesus!*”

“I know!” he yelled back.

The outrageous event ended when he turned and ran toward his motorcycle gang. He stopped about a hundred yards from me, turned, and shouted, “You pray for me!”

“What’s your name?”

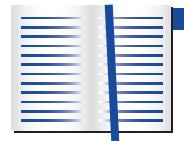
He shouted back, “Phillip.”

Dreams

Dreams are also the language of the Holy Spirit. There are at least two types of dreams. The first is what could be called a *virtual reality dream*. This occurs while we sleep and remains in our mind after waking.

The following is an example of a virtual reality dream that Nebuchadnezzar had in the days of Daniel. Notice that the dream is symbolic and needs an interpretation.

Daniel 2:31-35—You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.



The second type of dream can be called a *reality dream*. This is a real experience we have while sleeping that we remember after we wake up. The spirit world never sleeps. Therefore, our spirit can interact with the spirit world while our soul sleeps. An example of this type of dream is found in Genesis chapter 20, where it states, “*God came to Abimelech in a dream.*”

Notice in this reality dream it does not say that he dreamt of God, but rather that he had a real encounter with the Lord and that he remembered it when he woke up.



*Genesis 20:3—But **God came to Abimelech in a dream** of the night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.”*

Another example of a reality dream is in the familiar story of Joseph in Matthew. In this event, an angel of the Lord interacts with Joseph while he sleeps.



Matthew 2:13—Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.”

Dreams are multifaceted and have many purposes. The Book of Job speaks of dreams that keep us from hell.



*Job 33:14-18—Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. **In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride; He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing over into Sheol.***

A friend of ours told us how his son’s marriage was restored because of a dream! The night before they were to go to divorce court, his daughter-in-law had a dream. In it she saw the Lord hugging her husband and father-in-law in a field of flowers while she looked on from a distance. In the next scene, she saw herself standing in the field of flowers with Jesus walking toward her. When He reached out to embrace her, she woke up. The next morning,

she knew that the Lord wanted her to restore her relationship with her husband. She reconciled their marriage that very day!

Responding to Bad Dreams and Nightmares

Here are a few insights into bad dreams and nightmares.

Origin

First identify the origin of the dream; did it come from the Holy Spirit, an evil spirit, or your spirit? It is possible for bad dreams to originate from your spirit. If you worry or are fearful, you actually create an atmosphere in which your spirit will manifest your anxiety in dreams.

Keep in mind; your spirit is not the Holy Spirit. If you are a worrier and you are experiencing dreams filled with fear, worry, or anxiety, this does not mean that God is giving you these dreams. Instead, your human spirit is carrying the weight of worry from consciousness into unconsciousness. Your spirit is basically telling you at night what you are thinking about during the day.

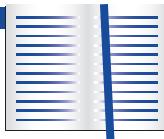
Purpose

If you do have a bad dream—like there is a major natural disaster coming—and it is from God, you must posture yourself as an intercessor. God would only give you a bad dream so you could pray against the disaster, like Abraham prayed against the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 or like Moses interceded for the Hebrew people in Exodus 32. When God informed both of these men that disaster was coming, they assumed the position of an intercessor. They knew God's character, relied upon His promises, and then stood in the gap.

Important Facts to Remember about Dreams

- 1 Not all dreams are from God. As we learned earlier, we can hear from all four sources of the spirit realm, even in our dreams.

2. Having powerful and illustrative dreams does not necessarily mean we are prophetic. Remember that wicked people in the Old Testament had dreams. Interpreting dreams is what makes us prophetic.
3. Colors, numbers, and other symbolic occurrences in dreams are very important to the interpretation of the dream but ultimately the interpretation of dreams belongs to the Lord.
4. A good way for us to increase our dream life is to be prepared to record our dreams before we go to sleep. Then pray to the Lord and tell Him, “Your servant is listening.” As soon as we have a dream, we should get up and record all of the details we can remember, including the way we felt about the dream while we were having it.



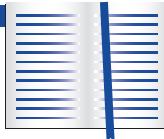
*Daniel 2:28—However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your **dream and the visions in your mind** while on your bed.*

Communicating with God

God's Still Small Voice

At times, the Lord speaks to us in a still small voice from within our spirit. This is not a booming, audible voice. This can be heard as a passing thought, sudden impression, or internal “sense” of something that God is saying. This still small voice is illustrated in the Book of First Kings. In this account, God is not in the strong wind or the earthquake, but rather He is in the gentle blowing (see 1 Kings 19:11-13).

This is an Old Testament example of the still small voice of God in operation. In the New Testament, we read of the inward witness of the Holy Spirit that bears witness with our human spirit.



Romans 8:16—The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.

Instead of describing an audible voice of God that we hear with our natural ears, we read that the Holy Spirit “*bears witness*” with our human spirit. In this context, the Spirit is

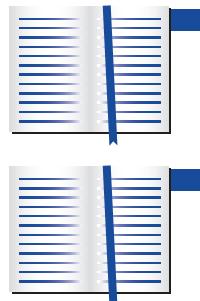
confirming that we are the children of God. The same gentle internal assurance that reminds us that we are sons and daughters of God also gently leads us in our everyday lives.

Earlier in this same chapter, Paul taught us that those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God (see Romans 8:14).

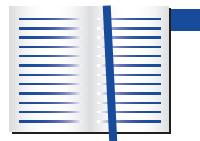
Angels

Angels are another voice that speaks to us from the heavenly realm. Throughout the New Testament, angels spoke to people and gave them instruction for their lives.

Acts 8:26—But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.”



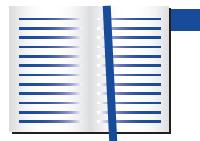
Acts 12:6-7—On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter’s side and woke him up, saying, “Get up quickly.” And his chains fell off his hands.



Trances

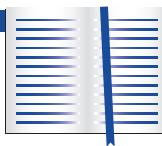
Trances are another way God speaks to His people. Trances are much like visions, except when we are in a trance, we are completely unaware of our surroundings. The Greek word for *trance* means “to be out of your mind.” Trances take us out of our natural minds and into the mind of Christ. Many Christians are convinced that because people in the occult have trances, all trances are from the devil. The truth is, satan can only copy the things of God. He is not a creator; he is a forger. Counterfeits simply reveal that there is an important source of truth that needs to be properly applied.

Acts 10:9-11—On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground.



Creation

Creation itself is a voice from the Lord and speaks to us in many ways. The obvious way is that God's creation tells us about who God is. The mountains speak of His strength, the rivers of His provision, and the flowers of His beauty.



Romans 1:20—For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.



Psalms 19:1-2—The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

Another way creation speaks to us is by God causing nature to do things that are actually prophetic acts. Here is a great story of God speaking this way through nature.

One year, every time Bethel church would meet to pray, a roadrunner would show up outside the glass door with a lizard in its mouth! This went on for months until we finally realized that the Lord was calling us to go out to the roads, the highways, and the byways and compel the lost to come in! He was literally calling us to evangelism!

One day the roadrunner managed to find his way inside the church. In a desperate attempt to get out of the building, he hit a window and died. The Lord showed us through this event that if we did not reach out to the lost, our church would die.

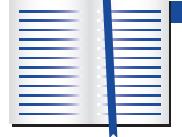
Scriptures

The Lord can speak to us in our daily reading of the Bible. He can also highlight a verse or story that speaks to us about our circumstance. Sometimes, it may even seem as if God is taking a Scripture out of context. It is vital for us to have a basic knowledge of the context of the Scriptures so we understand the full counsel of God.

God will never violate His Word, but He will often violate our understanding of His Word. The Holy Spirit may grant us fresh insight or application as we are reading through the Bible. Scripture is a divine blueprint given for instruction, but also for our protection.

If God gives us fresh insight or new understanding on a verse or portion of Scripture, it is important that it fits within the rest of the context of the Scriptures. It also cannot be in disagreement with the foundation of God's revealed nature and character.

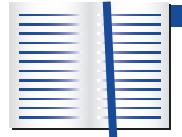
2 Timothy 3:16-17—All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.



Tongues

Tongues and the interpretation of tongues are both a gift from God and a voice from heaven. Notice that in First Corinthians 12, it is described as the interpretation of tongues—not the translation of tongues. In other words, the tongue can be quite lengthy while the interpretation of tongue can be quite brief or vice versa. If you like to have things your own way, I suggest you don't pray in tongues! For example, if we were to pray in English, asking the Lord for a Corvette, and then start to pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit could be praying, "Lord, don't give them a Corvette! They will hurt themselves in that car!"

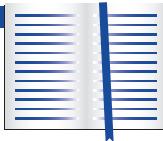
1 Corinthians 12:8-10—For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.



Impressions

Many prophetic people experience discernment through impressions without even realizing it. Oftentimes we can sense an evil spirit on someone just by sitting down next to that person. The evil spirit that is troubling the person who is next to us will begin to trouble us in the same manner. For instance, if a spirit of fear troubles a person in a close geographic area, we can actually begin to feel fearful as well. If we do not realize our prophetic ability and discernment in this area, we can begin to feel very confused or think we are crazy. It is

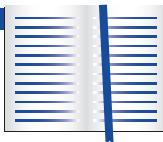
possible that some of those diagnosed as “bipolar” may actually be experiencing a powerful level of discernment, but do not, unfortunately, know how to use this gift properly.



1 Corinthians 12:10—to another the distinguishing of spirits....

Prophetic Acts

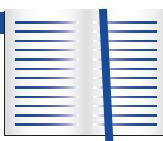
Oftentimes the Lord will direct someone to perform a prophetic act. This was common throughout the Bible. For example, Jeremiah set a brick in the middle of the city as a prophetic symbol of the enemy laying a siege wall against Israel. In the New Testament, Agabus tied a belt around himself as a way of showing Paul how he would suffer.



Acts 21:11—And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”

Signs and Wonders

Many times God will perform signs and wonders as a way to communicate His love or direction.



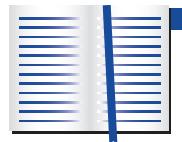
Judges 6:17-21—So Gideon said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You.” And He said, “I will remain until you return.”

Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them. The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

Mind Reading

Many assume that “mind reading” is solely attached to occult, New Age, or ESP phenomena. These are counterfeit expressions of something authentic. In the Gospels, we see Jesus reading people’s thoughts and using that information to interact with them. Jesus demonstrated this prophetic ability over and over again in His ministry. He would answer questions that no one asked because He knew what was on their minds.

*Luke 11:17—But **He knew their thoughts** and said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls.”*



There are times when someone is ministering to a person prophetically and they can read that person’s thoughts. Not realizing what just took place, the person prophesying may begin to reflect back to that person their thoughts thinking it’s a prophecy. For example, the person being ministered to is thinking, “I hope they tell me I am supposed to be a dancer.” The prophetic person reads their mind and thinks it is a word from the Lord. So they prophesy, “I see you as a dancer.” Understanding that prophetic people can sometimes read the minds of others helps to keep this dynamic out of our prophecies.

It’s important to note here that there is no special “mind reading” gift. We should not go out and try to read people’s thoughts. This is a special insight that the Holy Spirit gives to us as He wills.

Circumstances

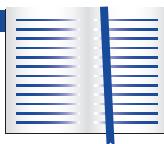
God can speak to us and direct us through the circumstances of our lives. This dynamic occurs as God opens and closes the doors of opportunity. It is easy to misunderstand this principle and think that any time we come up against an obstacle in our lives we are out of the will of God. However, keep in mind that oftentimes when we are doing something for God, the enemy will oppose us!

Revelation 3:8—I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.



Dance

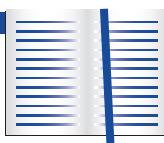
Many churches have dancers as part of their worship team. Oftentimes, the Holy Spirit will begin to choreograph a supernatural, spontaneous dance. This becomes a prophetic act in which the Lord begins to speak through the dancers to His people.



Jeremiah 31:13—Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together, for I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.

Prophetic Songs

Often during worship the Lord will give someone a spontaneous song that is from God to the people. It is common for the Holy Spirit to give prophetic people lyrics and melodies to sing over His people.



Colossians 3:16—Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Prophetic Body Checks

Sometimes the Lord will communicate His desire to heal someone else's body by causing pain or a sensation in a certain part of the prophetic person's body. This sensation correlates to the sickness in the person God wants to heal. When we receive this kind of information from the Holy Spirit, it is important that we are aware of what pain or discomfort is common to us. Without this clarification, we could mistakenly confuse our pain with a word of knowledge for healing.

Spiritual Happenings

Spiritual happenings are another way God speaks to us. These are supernatural incidents that correlate with natural events. Notice that in the Book of Numbers, Aaron's rod came alive after being dead and bore blossoms and ripe almonds as a sign from God that he was anointed to be a leader of Israel.

Numbers 17:2-8—“Speak to the sons of Israel, and get from them a rod for each father’s household: twelve rods, from all their leaders according to their fathers’ households. You shall write each name on his rod, and write Aaron’s name on the rod of Levi; for there is one rod for the head of each of their fathers’ households. You shall then deposit them in the tent of meeting in front of the testimony, where I meet with you. It will come about that the rod of the man whom I choose will sprout. Thus I will lessen from upon Myself the grumblings of the sons of Israel, who are grumbling against you.” Moses therefore spoke to the sons of Israel, and all their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers’ households, twelve rods, with the rod of Aaron among their rods. So Moses deposited the rods before the Lord in the tent of the testimony. Now on the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.



Here is an experience I had that demonstrates this same dynamic: Some time ago, every time I entered a worship service, I noticed that my watch gained an hour. After purchasing three different watches, all of which gained an hour during worship, I finally asked the Lord what this could mean.

He said, “It’s later than you think.”

Questions to Ponder

1. What is one way to increase your dream life?

2. How is the discerning of spirits a voice from God?

3. What is one of the most common mistakes people make when they allow God to direct them through circumstances?

4. Name two ways that creation can speak to us.

5. What is the difference between a vision and a trance?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. What is the most common way in which God speaks to you personally (based on the different categories you studied)?
2. What is the difference between dreams and visions?
3. Why is it important for us to not interpret a dream or vision unless God gives us the interpretation?
4. Was there a way God communicates to His people that was surprising to you?

5. Is there anything that has occurred in your life that, after reading this chapter, you now recognize is God speaking to you?

Life Application

Go on a Holy Spirit adventure! You can do this by simply taking a few minutes to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you where to go and who to talk to. He is eager to accompany you on this exploit. You will learn how to hear His voice—be ready for some surprises along the way!





Judging and Receiving Prophetic Words

This chapter examines the reasons why prophecy needs to be judged and the proper criteria by which prophetic ministry should be evaluated.

Prophetic Balance: The Holy Spirit and Our Humanity

We should all want to faithfully share what God is saying without adding our human reasoning, our own interpretation, and/or our advice to any prophetic word we receive from the Holy Spirit. It is important, however, that we understand that all prophetic messages flow through a human vessel. This means that the prophetic word will be filtered through our experience, the teaching we have received, our ethnic culture, our national origin, our gender, etc. All of these elements are a part of who we are, and unconsciously they flavor our prophetic words. This filtering process actually becomes a part of our prophetic experience. In other words, when the Holy Spirit gives us a word for someone, He is so brilliant that He actually factors in our unique “accent” so that it becomes a part of the prophetic declaration.

Consider the way God used the personalities of the Old Testament prophets. For example, God spoke through Jeremiah who was the weeping prophet; the guy cried all the time. On the other hand, God also spoke through Elijah who was bold and sometimes even brash. God actually used the specific personalities of the people He spoke through to help to clarify His message.

When we prophesy, there will often be a certain “prophetic style” or specific prophetic themes that can be traced throughout our prophecies. These styles and themes are actually

instilled in us by God and He intentionally uses our prophetic accent as a part of His divine message to the people He is prophesying to.

Judge All Prophecy

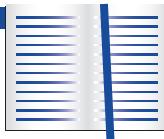
In First Thessalonians, Paul instructs us not to despise prophetic utterances. Any of us who have had a lot of experience in the prophetic ministry can easily understand why Paul would bring up the subject of despising prophetic ministry. Supernatural ministry can be messy and hard to lead at times. Many churches, in response to this messy ministry, have eliminated the gifts of the Spirit from their services altogether. But the apostle Paul teaches us to value prophetic words, examine them carefully, and hold on to what is found to be good.



1 Thessalonians 5:19-21—Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

In fact Paul goes on to say that the Kingdom of God does not consist in words but of power (see 1 Corinthians 4:20). He also reminds us that our faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God (see 1 Corinthians 2:5).

We are commanded to embrace prophetic ministry while also carefully examining, evaluating, and judging all prophetic words. This even includes prophetic words given by those occupying the office of a prophet or prophetess.



1 Corinthians 14:29—Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

Prophets Can Make Mistakes Without Being False Prophets

Many people in the church have a problem believing that a real prophet of God can make a mistake while prophesying. They assume only false prophets make mistakes. In First Corinthians, we are exhorted to let two or three prophets speak in a service and to let the other prophets pass judgment on the word. The truth is that even the apostles and prophets in the Bible gave prophecies that were not entirely accurate.

One example of this principle is in Acts 21, which involved the most famous prophet in the New Testament named Agabus. Agabus was able to accurately predict a famine, yet in another prophecy he gave about the apostle Paul, he messed up on a few details when he prophesied that the Jews in Jerusalem would bind Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles.

Acts 21:10-11—As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"



What actually happened was that the Gentiles rescued Paul from the Jews. Later on in the Book of Acts, the commander turned Paul over to the Jews. This is the opposite of what Agabus prophesied.

Acts 21:32-33—At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done.



Acts 22:30—But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.



It is obvious that Agabus was correct about the heart of what God was saying, but he got the details slightly mixed up.

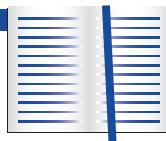
Another example of a prophetic word that was not entirely accurate can be found in Acts 27:10. Here Paul says, in essence, "If we sail on, we will lose the ship and we will all die." However, later in verses 22 and 23 of Acts chapter 27, Paul is corrected by an angel who said, "There will be no loss of life, but only of the ship." This may seem like a minor mistake unless you happen to be one of the men on the ship!

Some people quote Deuteronomy chapter 18 as evidence that a prophet is false if some of their prophecies are inaccurate. We need to understand the difference between the Old

Testament and New Testament prophetic ministry in order to make sense of what verses like this are saying.



Deuteronomy 18:18—I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.



Deuteronomy 18:20—But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.

Old Testament versus New Testament Prophecy

- In the Old Testament, prophets *received* the word of the Lord.
- In the New Testament, prophetic people *perceive* the word of the Lord.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God did not live inside humans, nor had the human spirit been brought to life. This transformation took place when we were born again. Therefore, when prophets in the Old Testament heard from God, it was an occasion because Christ was not living inside them.

In this new dispensation, our spirit is alive and the Holy Spirit lives inside us. Now, as Christians, we daily interact with the spirit world. It is easy to confuse the Holy Spirit's words with our newly regenerated spirit's words. Now we can have a spiritual experience without the Holy Spirit's participation because we are a spirit trying to have a temporary, human experience.

The reason why prophecy in the Old Testament was not judged (except to kill the prophet or to wait to see if the prophecy would come to pass) is because the people were spiritually dead. They had no spiritual paradigm by which to process spiritual information. In those days, their judgment was based on whether or not they liked the word. It is easy to see why, in the Old Testament, they killed prophets who misled them. These prophets had tremendous influence over their people, as well as entire countries.

In the New Testament Church, however, the Christian who receives the word has as much responsibility to judge the word as the one who gave it because both the giver and receiver have the same Holy Spirit living inside them.

Developing a Refuse Gate

Some people are overly sensitive to negative spiritual experiences. They spend their lives trying to stay safe and clean. God has made His people durable. In the city of Jerusalem there was a refuse gate—the area where all of the city garbage was dumped. Our own human body has a system of elimination that disposes of anything that does not nourish it. There is a need in the Body of Christ for a system of elimination as well. Otherwise, we will be poisoned by poor ministry or, worse yet, starved to death by those who refuse the Holy Spirit's work because they are afraid that someone might "slime" them.

Sadly, one of the barriers that hinder healthy prophetic cultures from developing is the fear of receiving "bad" prophetic words. We need to mature to the point where we learn how to disregard a word that does not bear witness with our spirit or align with the Word of God. When someone gives us a poor prophetic word, we should give him or her feedback about how their prophetic ministry negatively affected us. Otherwise, people will continue to deliver bad, incorrect, or inaccurate prophetic words to the degree that we refuse to engage them constructively in love. Most people mean well, but they just don't know that what they are doing is actually destructive or hurtful.

Order in the Church

The Bible tells us that the gifts of the Spirit should be practiced properly and in order (see 1 Corinthians 14:40). The first part of this commandment is that they should be practiced! There is no need for order if you never allow the Spirit to move. If you have ever witnessed the birth of a child, you realize that God's idea of "decently and in order" is far different from ours. New life can be messy!

Wherever people are ministering to one another there will be messes. Messes are one of the signs that life is happening. The most orderly place on the planet is the graveyard, but there is no life there.



Proverbs 14:4—Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox.

Think of what the manger is full of when there is much increase!

This does not mean that allowing the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in the church should be without guidelines. Jesus said that He pours new wine into new wineskins; He didn't say that He pours new wine into no wineskins. In First Corinthians, Paul instructs us to have order in the church. He tells us, "*the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets*" (1 Corinthians 14:32). This means that no one can say that the Holy Spirit made him or her act in a disruptive manner. The Holy Spirit subjects Himself to us.

Guidelines for Judging Prophetic Words

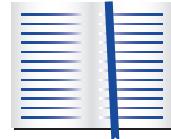
1. Biblical: The Scripture is our blueprint to evaluate whether or not a prophetic word contains the DNA of God. Anytime a "prophetic word" is in disagreement with the Scriptures it should be immediately discarded as a bad prophetic word.
2. Extra-biblical: The entire Bible is in God, but not all of God is in the Bible. We may say, "I don't believe in things that are extra-biblical" (meaning a practice or a process that is not specifically defined in the Bible). Yes we do! Most of what we practice in our everyday Christian life is not specifically outlined in the Bible. For example, what many of us know as an "altar call"—where we invite people to raise their hands, pray a prayer, and/or come to the front of the church to receive Christ—is not in the Bible. However, the principles that govern *why* we have altar calls are clearly outlined in the Scriptures. This is an extra-biblical practice that leads to a very biblical result—salvation.

An example of an extra-biblical prophetic word would be something like the Holy Spirit saying, "Go to Africa, work at this job, move to this city, or write these words to this person." While none of these instructions are specifically written in the Bible, the Author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, is the One who gives us clearance on whether or not the word is of God. We cannot go to the Bible and judge whether or not we are supposed to go to Africa. Even if someone gives you a prophetic word that comes directly out of Scripture, oftentimes the application is extra-biblical. For example, someone may say, "I see Isaiah 60 over you." This

Scripture was written to a specific group of people in a unique time period and placed in a strategic context. When it is applied to you and your life, it becomes extra-biblical.

3. Anti-biblical: Anti-biblical simply means *against the Bible*. Read how the apostle Paul considers this type of “revelation”:

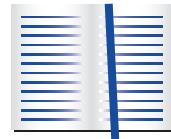
Galatians 1:8—But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!



It does not matter what type of spiritual experience we have or even if an angel appears to us in an open vision. If a message we receive is against what is clearly presented in Scripture, it is anti-biblical and must be rejected.

4. It must bear witness with the spirit of the one who receives it.

Romans 8:16—The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.



5. The fruit of the prophetic word must be that the person receiving it is brought closer to God and His people.

Philippians 3:8-10—More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.



6. The prophets and leadership that we are in relationship with should be in agreement with the word and its interpretation and application.

Hebrews 13:17—Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

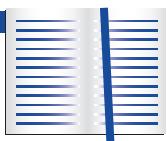


7. The interpretation of any prophetic revelation belongs to God, not to humankind. Therefore, we also need the Holy Spirit's anointing to know the meaning of the word as well as what to do with it.



2 Peter 1:20-21—But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Sometimes when we receive a prophetic word, we won't realize what it means until after it has been fulfilled. An example of this is found in Exodus, where Moses asks God for a sign so he can know for sure that it is God who is sending him to Pharaoh. The Lord spoke to him and said:



Exodus 3:11-12—But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.”

Another example of this is that Jesus' own prophecy about His death and resurrection was not understood until after He rose from the dead.



John 2:19-22—Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Judging the Interpretation

It is easy to misjudge a prophetic word by believing that it relates to our immediate circumstances or something close to our heart that we are hoping for. This is called selective hearing!

I have given thousands of prophetic words to people over the years, and sometimes I am bewildered by what people think they heard me say. Occasionally, what people hear from a prophecy and what the actual word described are not even close to the same thing!

A vivid example of this sort of misinterpretation is in a story recounted in the book of Matthew. The disciples had neglected to bring bread. When Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees,” they thought He was scolding them for forgetting the bread. How did they get that from the word, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?” They read their circumstances into His word!

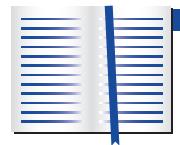
*Matthew 16:6-12—And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, “He said that because we did not bring any bread.” But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? **Do you not yet understand or remember** the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? **How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?** But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*



Looking Into the Heart of the Matter

In the Book of Exodus, God tells Moses that He is going to kill the people Moses led out of Egypt because they are obstinate and evil. Moses debates with the Lord reminding Him that they are the Lord’s people who God led out of Egypt. After a long discussion, God changes His mind and leads the people into the Promised Land. Why would God prophesy to Moses something He didn’t really want to happen? The reason is because sometimes when God speaks to us, He is testing our hearts more than He is determining our destiny. God was determining if Moses had the heart it would take to lead His people.

Exodus 32:9-14—The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.” Then Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With



evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

Sometimes when God speaks He is testing our hearts rather than revealing our destinies.

The Church has often had a single-dimensional perspective on prophecy. But God is calling us into a deeper relationship with Him. This will lead us into new ways of judging prophetic ministry.

Here is another example of prophetic ministry that was received in an unusual manner. Referring again to Agabus the prophet, he prophesied to the apostle Paul that if he went to Jerusalem he would be bound and arrested. Paul doesn't think the prophetic word means that God doesn't want him to go, but rather that God is telling him to count the cost. This emphasizes the need to look into the heart of God to truly understand what He wants instead of what He seems to be saying.



Acts 21:10-13—As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, “This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

How to Receive Prophetic Words

When we are given a prophetic word, we must judge the word to make sure it is from God. The next step is for us to learn how to receive the word. It is important to know when to get out of the way and when to prepare the way. This point is illustrated in the life of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 16–21. God told them that they were going to have a son. But the years rolled on and still they had no children.

It is worth pausing here and noting that God is often on a different timetable than we are. In fact, He doesn't even live in time. We have a beginning and an end, but God doesn't. God lives in eternity, and He is able to see the end from the beginning. When He gives us a word, we cannot assume that its fulfillment will take place within twenty-four hours. For example, Jesus said that He was coming quickly, but two thousand years have passed and we are still waiting. Perceived delay does not mean denial. Again, we need to recognize that when we receive a prophetic word we are actually receiving a word from a Source that is outside of time and in eternity. God may give us a word today that won't be fulfilled for decades.

This was definitely the case with Abraham and Sarah. Unfortunately, they decided to help God bring about His promise by having Abraham sleep with Hagar, Sarah's maid. This resulted in Hagar giving birth to Ishmael. Ishmael persecuted the child of promise the rest of his days (see Galatians 4:29).

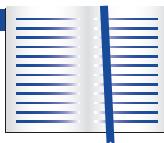
Finally God came to Abraham and Sarah and prophesied to them that they were going to have a son the following year. Sarah laughed and said, *"After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"* (Genesis 18:12). But despite her doubt, Isaac was born the following year. The amazing thing to remember here is that Isaac was not born through immaculate conception. Abraham and Sarah had to participate in the union of marriage in order to have Isaac. In one respect, they created an Ishmael by trying to make the prophetic word come to pass, yet they still had to co-labor with God to see His promise become a reality.

God seldom does things all by Himself.

We need to realize that God seldom does things all by Himself. He often requires us to be involved with Him to see our destinies fulfilled. The key here is to allow the Holy Spirit

to show us what part He wants us to play and what part God has reserved for Himself. Otherwise, we will create Ishmaels who will persecute our Isaacs!

We also need to learn how to receive prophetic ministry multi-dimensionally. In other words, when God speaks to us about doing something new, He doesn't necessarily want us to stop our current activity. Usually, He wants to add to our responsibilities. This is illustrated in the parable of the talents. When the stewards were faithful with a few talents, they received more, for they had carefully tended what they had been given. We need to be careful how we apply prophetic words to our lives because God wants to bless us abundantly.



Matthew 25:15-23—To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, "Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, "Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

Questions to Ponder

1. What is the difference between Old Testament and New Testament prophecy?

2. How is it possible to have a prophetic word from God that may have parts of it that are inaccurate?

3. Is it possible for a word to be scriptural but not from God? (Refer to Luke 4.)

4. Name the five ways that prophecy is to be judged.

5. Give two examples of people who heard from God and ended up asking Him to change His mind about a situation.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the Holy Spirit use human vessels (filtered through our personalities) to communicate a prophetic word?
2. What are some of the ways we should work with people who continually give inaccurate words?
3. What should we do if we give a prophetic word to someone in our leadership and they believe the word is wrong even though we believe we heard from God?
4. What is the difference between biblical, extra-biblical, and anti-biblical revelation?
5. What should we do if we receive a prophetic word that does not immediately come to pass in our lives?
6. Is a prophetic word always a word where God is defining our destiny? Do we have any say in the process?

Life Application

Team up with a couple of other prophetic people. Prophesy and give words of knowledge to each other. Ask those who received the words to judge them for accuracy. This is not the time to extend mercy to each other! Honesty is very important as we learn to hear the Holy Spirit's voice. We learn just as much from being wrong as we do from being right. So if the word that we received was not accurate, it is right and proper to tell the person who prophesied. We should also include the reason why we do not believe the word, or portions of it, are from God.



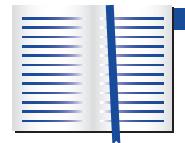
Receiving and Ministering in the Gift of Prophecy

This chapter reveals how to receive and grow in the Holy Spirit's gifts.

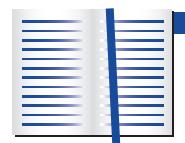
How to Receive

The most common way to receive spiritual gifts is by having someone who is already gifted lay hands on us and pray for an impartation of the gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit.

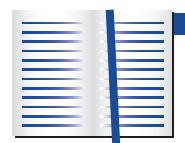
Romans 1:11—For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established.



Acts 19:6—And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

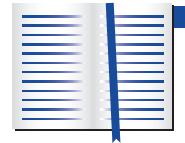


1 Timothy 4:14—Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.



One of the elementary teachings of Christ is impartation of spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands. This principle is found in the very roots of Jewish culture. In fact, it was the reason why Jacob was blessed and Esau was cursed. The significance of the laying on of hands is further demonstrated in the Book of Hebrews in that it is mentioned in the same context as resurrection and eternal judgment.

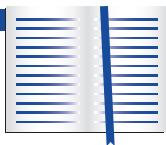
Hebrews 6:1-2—Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works



and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Equipped for Battle

Prophetic words equip us for warfare! Prophetic ministry actually gives us weapons to defend ourselves against the evil schemes of the enemy. For example, Paul commanded Timothy to revisit the former prophetic words that he had received and use them as weapons during times of assault. Prophetic words remind us of our destiny, confirm our calling, encourage, edify, and comfort us.

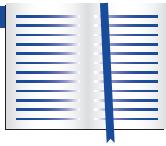


1 Timothy 1:18-19—This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

Receiving Gifts through Grace

The apostle Paul wrote; “*Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith*” (Romans 12:6). It takes different “flavors” of grace to impart different kinds of gifts of the Holy Spirit in each of us. In other words, grace is not just undeserved favor; it is also the operational power of God, and it is the grace of God that gives us supernatural abilities in Christ. The proportion of *our* faith determines the level or amount of grace we receive and hence the strength of our gifts.

The apostle Paul went on to say that we receive different flavors of “grace” from the five-fold ministers—apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, and teachers.



Ephesians 4:7,11-12—To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift...and He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

Therefore, it is the five-fold ministry that helps to equip us with spiritual gifts that flow from the grace of their God-given offices.

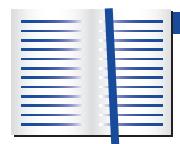
Let me explain this dynamic by using a metaphor. If we go to a soda fountain for a drink, the fountain determines the flavor of the drink. The grace that flows from a five-fold minister's life is like the soda fountain in that they (the five-fold ministers) determine the flavor of grace that flows from them. But the amount of the drink (grace) that we are able to receive from them is determined by the size of the cup (our faith) that we bring to the fountain.

You don't have to be profound to be powerful.

How the Gifts Grow

Jesus taught us how to grow our gifts through the parable of the talents. Simply put, if we *use* what we have received, more will be given to us. If we *do not use* what we have, even what we have will be taken away from us. This principle applies to every aspect of the Kingdom of God. If we want to receive a deeper level of prophetic revelation, then we must be faithful with the level of insight that we have now. Some people who have only received one talent spend all of their time trying to figure out why someone else received more, instead of stewarding what they have been given to attain more!

Matthew 25:14-28—For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

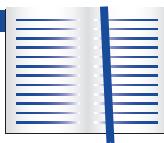


Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, "Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, “Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

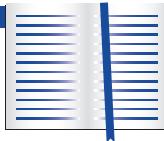
And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.” But his master answered and said to him, “You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.”

The key to growing in our prophetic gift is *faithfulness!* In First Timothy, Paul exhorts Timothy to “be absorbed in” and practice his spiritual gift so he would grow and set an example for others.



*1 Timothy 4:14-15—Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; **be absorbed in them**, so that your progress will be evident to all.*

In First Peter, we are exhorted to “employ” the gifts that have been given to us. If we don’t become good stewards of the gifts that God has given us, He will give them to someone who will take responsibility for them. God has no unemployment insurance!



*1 Peter 4:10—As each one has received a special gift, **employ** it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Gifts

Jesus told His disciples to wait for the promise of the Father which, when received, would give them power from on high. The word for “power,” in Greek, is the word *dunamis*, which is where we get the word *dynamite*. Therefore, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the power

behind the gifts. The gifts are like a motor in a car, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit is like the fuel!

Acts 1:8—You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.



Questions to Ponder

1. What is the most common way to receive the gifts of the Spirit?

2. What role does grace have for those who receive impartation from someone else?

3. What part does faith play in receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

4. How do we grow stronger in the gifts that we already have?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. How do prophetic words equip people for battle?
2. First Corinthians 12:11 says that the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts as He wills. How does the Holy Spirit determine to whom He will give His gifts?
3. Are you able to grow in the gifts of the Holy Spirit? The prophetic?
4. What is the key to growing in a prophetic gift/ability?
5. What would be some problems of experiencing growth and increase in our prophetic giftings beyond our ability to manage them well?
6. Share about a time when you experienced growth in a gift in your life. How does this development happen? What was the catalyst? (Examples: impartation, prayer, etc.)

Life Application

Ask the Holy Spirit if you have been faithful with everything that He has given you. If you have not, ask Him for a plan for the areas where you have been afraid or apathetic. Remember that courage is fear that has said its prayers! It's been said that, "A coward dies a thousand deaths, but a brave person dies only once."

Prophetic Etiquette

This chapter is dedicated to teaching you how to properly deliver the right prophetic word in the right season.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, KING SAUL DISOBEDIED THE LORD AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD departed from his life (thank God we live in the New Testament where God never leaves or forsakes us). Saul was so desperate to hear from God that He asked the witch of Endor to conjure up the prophet Samuel from the dead. The practice of divination and necromancy is forbidden in the Scriptures (see Leviticus 19:31). The witch of Endor caused something to happen in the spirit realm that God did not will or decree. (See 1 Samuel 28:7-20.) This story is a great example of a powerful truth: just because we can make something happen in the spirit world, it does not validate that God actually wants it to transpire. Once God gives us authority to operate in the spirit realm, it is possible for us to cause things to happen that God does not necessarily sanction.

Some ask, “Isn’t God in control of everything?” He is in charge, but He is not in control. Think about it; if God was in absolute control of the planet, there would be no sin, no death, no sickness, no child abuse, no murder, no hatred, etc. God is in charge of everything, but He has left us in control. In Psalms 115:16, we read, “*The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the sons of men.*” The earthly realm is under the dominion and control of humankind. Therefore we must operate responsibly in the supernatural realm and establish guidelines for the prophetic ministry.



Proverbs 25:11—Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.

Here is a great example of how *not* to deliver a prophetic word. Many years ago when we first started attending a charismatic church, there was a woman who would abruptly stand up in the middle of the pastor's sermon. She would shake, tremble, and then scream out a message in tongues nearly every Sunday. This was followed by an interpretation of equal volume, spoken in dramatic King James English. Her response to any attempt to bring order to her message was met with, "You are trying to quench the spirit." After many attempts to reason with her, she was finally ushered out of the church. She "shook off the dust from her feet" and never returned.

Guidelines to Proper Prophetic Ministry

The following guidelines are not meant to be laws, but merely intended to give some "banks to the river." Without banks, the river becomes a flood. In a flood, the water typically does more damage than good. Every culture has its own unique flavor and style, so these guidelines will vary with each ministry.



1 Corinthians 14:39-40—Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

It's important to understand that "*the spirit of prophets are subject to prophets*" (1 Corinthians 14:32). This means that the Holy Spirit normally subjects Himself to the vessel He is using. People are not acting according to the standard set by Scripture when they say things such as, "God made me do that," or, "The Spirit came upon me and I had to jump up and speak out."

The following examples illustrate times when it is *inappropriate* to give a prophetic word:

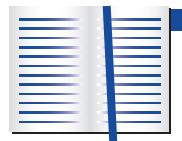
1. When we are angry or have strong, negative emotions or feelings toward the person or people for whom we have a prophetic word.
2. When we use prophecy as a "platform" to validate our personal doctrines or belief system.

Delivery of the Prophetic Word

The following are practical guidelines for ministering and delivering prophetic words:

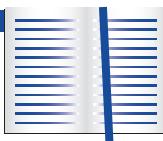
1. It is not necessary or recommended to use King James English when prophesying. King James English will not validate that what we are saying is from God. It simply means that we read the King James Version of the Bible. Incidentally, Jesus didn't speak King James English, nor did He sound like Shakespeare.
2. It is important that our demeanor matches that of the Holy Spirit's. In other words, it is just as important for us to correctly present the tone in which the Holy Spirit communicated the word to us as it is what He said. It is seldom necessary for us to yell—increasing the volume of our voice does not improve the prophecy. The tone of voice in which we say something to a person communicates just as much as the words themselves.
3. Love must be at the center of all we do in Christ. When we are ministering in the gifts of the Spirit, our motive must always be to bring out the best in people.

1 Corinthians 14:26—What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.



4. In a church service, the appropriate way to deliver a prophetic word is to submit it to the person or persons in charge of the service. At our church, prophecies are submitted to “gatekeepers” who are aware of what the Holy Spirit is doing with worship and what direction the sermon will take. These people are able to determine if a prophetic word will be fitting for a particular service. Remember, the goal of all prophecy is to present an accurate word in the right circumstance.
5. Phrases such as, “I the Lord say to you tonight,” or, “Thus saith the Lord,” are seldom necessary. What makes a prophetic word the voice of God? God is the one who initiated it—not a person. When the prophecy is judged, it will be evident whether it was the Lord speaking or not.

Negative and/or Judgmental Words



Proverbs 18:21—Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

The Bible is clear that life and death are in our words. When we give people negative words, we often release death over them. Our goal is to be a part of a ministry that releases life and calls out the best in people. It is best to avoid giving negative or judgmental prophetic words.

Remember also that just because the word ends positively does not mean that it is an encouraging word. Here is a good rule to follow: if you would not want to receive the word yourself, you should not give it to someone else.

A member of our prophetic team gave a pastor this word: “Like Job and his wife, you are about to endure a season of great loss; but in the end, the Lord will restore double to you, just like He did for Job.”

Thankfully, this word was given to a mature pastor; otherwise the word could have been very damaging. The pastor did the right thing by bringing this word to our leadership and the team member was redirected in love.

Warning or Judgment Words

The following guidelines will help you if you receive multiple warning or judgment words.

1. Ask yourself if negative words are common to you. If a high percentage of the prophetic revelation you receive is negative, you may be the problem.
2. Occasionally the Lord will warn of upcoming dangerous or negative situations. He informs us so we might pray for our or someone else’s safety. Pray until the burden lifts.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit for a prophetic word that releases life into the situation. Remember, prophetic ministry releases grace for things to change. Prophesying the answer will uplift our spirits and come against the darkness that is threatening us.

4. If the warning persists, we should submit the word to our leadership. Once it is given to them we must relinquished ownership of the prophetic word and let them be responsible to steward it. God will speak to them as we pray for Him to give them wisdom and guidance regarding the word.

Accountability

At times we may feel that the Lord has spoken to us about our own lives. In other words, we have prophesied over ourselves. As with any other prophetic word, this word should be judged. It is vitally important that we submit this word to those who have authority over us, just as we would if we had received it from someone else. This is especially true if the word involves direction.

When we articulate this type of word to leadership, we should not say, “The Lord *told* me to do this.” That opening statement dramatically reduces their ability to give us their input. After all, who wants to argue with God?

When people go to leadership for counsel and begin a conversation with, “The Lord *told* me to do this,” in reality what they are often saying is, “I don’t want your opinion; I just want your blessing for what I want to do.”

We only have as much authority in God as we are willing to submit to.

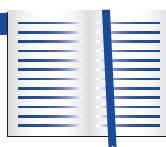
I was once speaking with a pastor who shared that he had divorced his wife because “God told me to.” He said that his son had a dream that he believed also validated his decision to leave his wife! While questioning him concerning his marriage, I asked him if his wife had committed adultery. “No,” he replied, “nothing like that...she just hated the ministry.”

I thought he was going to fall out of his chair when I told him that God did *not* tell him to leave his wife.

If we only do what those in leadership over our lives tell us to do when we agree with them, it is not called submission, but rather “doing our own thing.” We must invite leadership into our lives and learn to trust them more than we trust ourselves. Otherwise, if we ever become deceived in an area, the only way to find our way out of deception is to trust someone else more than we trust ourselves. The very nature of deception is that we do not

know we are deceived! If we know we are deceived then it's not called deception, it's called stupidity!

We should only follow leaders whose life and ministry has good fruit. We should never do anything that the Bible clearly tells us is wrong just because a leader tells us to do it. We are to only follow our leaders *as they follow Christ!*



Hebrews 13:17—Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Questions to Ponder

1. What are some reasons why it would be inappropriate to prophesy?

2. What are some things to watch for when delivering a prophetic word?

3. What is the proper procedure for delivering a prophetic word in a public service?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. Why do you think people sometimes yell or use King James English when delivering a prophetic word?
2. How do you determine the Holy Spirit's mood or attitude for the proper delivery of a prophetic word?

Life Application

Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you a prophetic word during a church service. Practice your prophetic protocol in delivering the word. Find the gatekeepers and give them the word that you believe the Lord gave you. Allow them to determine the authenticity and timing of the word. If you are given permission to deliver the word, be conscious of not just what to say but how to say it.





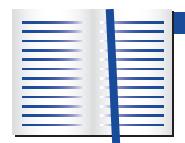
False Prophets

This chapter discusses the facts and fallacies surrounding false prophets.

What Makes a Prophet False?

There are two types of false prophets. The first type is comprised of people who have invited a spirit of divination into their lives. The gift, which enables them to prophesy, comes from an evil spirit and has nothing to do with God. The gift is from hell and these people have let their hearts turn to evil. It is important to note here that although a word is coming from a spirit of divination, it can still be accurate! Acts chapter 16 illustrates this principle through a false prophetess who has the right word, but the wrong spirit.

Acts 16:16-18—It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment.

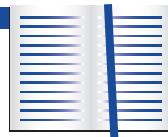


A psychic is an example of this type of false prophet. Sometimes psychics can be very accurate with their predictions, but they are not receiving their information from God. When someone gives a true prophetic word, it is being released and carried by the power of God. When we operate in the gifts of the Spirit, we are working in agreement with the angels of God. However, when a psychic or medium receives a prediction, this information is being delivered and ultimately fulfilled by demon spirits. A psychic, medium, or fortuneteller is operating out of a wrong heart and an evil spirit.

The second type of false prophet is the group of people who receive a call on their lives to be a prophet or prophetess from birth or after they receive Christ, yet they later fall away from God. Interestingly, in Romans 11:29, Paul states that the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable. Even if we fall away from God, we would still be able to operate in the gifts. However, these gifts would no longer be under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but would be turned over to the hands of the evil one. In Numbers 22–24, we read about a false prophet named Balaam. It is clear in the Scripture that Balaam is getting his prophetic revelation from God, but he is trying to use his gift to curse God's people for money. Balaam has a gift from God but a heart from hell.

Characteristics of False Prophets

According to Matthew, false prophets have certain characteristics.



Matthew 7:15-27—Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.

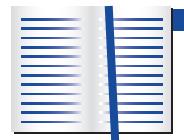
Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

The following are the common threads that run through the lives of the type of false prophet described in Matthew chapter 7:

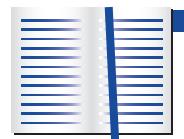
1. False prophets appear to be good—like sheep—but are really wolves. They are the enemy of the sheep. The bad fruit that they bear is not a false gift, but rather an evil heart. Remember, these people will say to Jesus, “Did we not prophesy in Your name and cast out demons in Your name?” But He will say to them, “I never knew you.” He calls them “lawless.” It is interesting how Jesus defines “lawlessness” in Matthew chapter 7 in the description of the two different men building houses. He considered the one who heard His words but did not act on them to be lawless! Notice also that the Lord equates knowing Him with keeping His Word. The inability to teach or instruct a false prophet is the fruit of lawlessness. It does not matter if these people are able to perform signs, wonders, and miracles; their true fruit is revealed in whether or not they know and *obey* God.

John 14:15—If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.



2. False prophets have their belief system founded on a few pet Scriptures (sand) and not the whole counsel of God (the rock). False prophets take certain Scriptures out of context that advocate their own agenda. They find Scriptures, pull them out of a story or an idea, and create a new doctrine.
3. False prophets have power. Unfortunately, their goal is to use their influence to lead people to themselves instead of to Christ. A false prophet makes his or herself the answer in place of God. Instead of teaching the body of Christ how to hear God for themselves, false prophets think they are people’s direct line to God. Sometimes this perspective is the result of immaturity and/or a misunderstanding of what prophetic ministry really is. However, if they exhibit the other signs we have been reviewing and intentionally present their prophetic voices as the exclusive way to hear from God, they are treading on dangerous ground. Some people have a desire to be needed so badly that they lead people to themselves through their ministries instead of leading them to Christ.

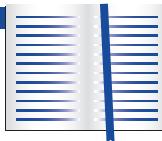
Matthew 24:24—For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.



It is important for us to be aware of this reality, as it is easy for people to assume that signs, wonders, and demonstrations of power confirm and validate certain people as authentic prophets.

Discerning Spirits

According to the apostle John, there are other ways to discern the difference between a true and a false prophet. In the Book of First John, the apostle gives us keys to discerning spirits. The first verse of the text warns Christians to not become false prophets by believing the wrong spirit. This caution is sobering. Many Christians do not believe that evil spirits can influence them. One of the greatest deceptions in the church today is the idea that Christians cannot be deceived by the devil. The following Scripture clearly dispels that myth.

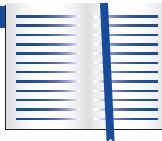


1 John 4:1-3—Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Five Tests of a True Prophet

1. Does the prophet believe in the redemptive work of the Son of God?

One thing to note is that false prophets are antichrist in nature. They are not anti-Jesus. The word *Christ* is the Greek word *Christos* and it means “the anointed one.” The anointing is always related to the power of God. Beware of people who try to tell you that Jesus doesn’t do miracles anymore. This is dangerous, because Scripture tells us “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). According to Paul in Second Corinthians chapter 11, there is another “Jesus” who is not the Christ (anointed one). The Jesus we serve was anointed yesterday, is anointed today, and will be anointed forever!



1 John 4:4-6—You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world;

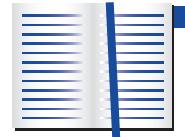
therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

2. False prophets do not like to listen to anyone; they believe that God tells them everything.

False prophets are hyper-spiritual. They begin most of their statements with, “The Lord said to me...” or “God told me....” I have found over the years that this is just a spiritual way of saying, “*I don’t want your input, leadership, or guidance in my life.*”

False prophets often make statements like, “the Lord is my Shepherd.” But the truth is if we are really submitted to God, then it must manifest in submission to real spiritual authority. If we claim to follow Jesus but do not follow the leaders He has put in authority in our lives, then we are deceiving ourselves. There are many times in our lives when we need another voice to give us guidance, direction, and maturity-producing discipline. When we resist authority, we rob ourselves of an opportunity for spiritual growth, which ultimately hinders the effectiveness that the Holy Spirit wants to release through our lives.

1 John 4:7-17—Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

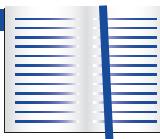


Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

False prophets view correction as persecution. They often say things like, “You know, they persecuted the prophets of old.” First of all, they have nothing in common with the prophets of old, because we are under the New Covenant now. There are no more Old Covenant prophetic voices, so the comparison immediately falls apart. In fact, in the New Testament the apostle Paul reminds us that, “the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32). The Amplified Bible expounds on this perfectly, saying that the spirits of the prophets are “*subject to being silenced as may be necessary.*” In other words, real prophets are willing to receive correction, whether they are delivering a message in tongues or sharing a prophetic word.

3. False prophets are not motivated by love, but are motivated by a need to be noticed.

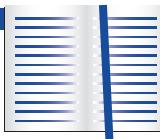
The central theme of all ministries must be the love of God. We must ask ourselves: Am I in the ministry for the purpose of bringing out the best in people? Do I have the kind of love that covers a multitude of sins?



1 John 4:19-21—We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

4. False prophets commonly use fear to motivate people.

“Doom and gloom” tend to be the central theme of a false prophet’s message. It’s also common for them to say things like, “God showed me something about you, but I can’t tell you what it is.” These kinds of statements breed insecurity in people. False prophets love to make you think that they “have something on you” that you don’t know about!



1 John 4:18—There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

Love is the central theme of the gospel. Anyone operating in the prophetic ministry who isn’t defined by love has missed the entire point of the gospel. We will make mistakes, mess

up, and even fail at times, but when love is at the core of our ministry it's always expressed in kindness, gentleness, and humility.

5. False prophets are not in a covenant relationship with the Body of Christ.

I have yet to observe a false prophet who has a healthy relationship with a local church they attend. As a matter of fact, many do not even attend a church at all. They wander from place to place looking for people who will listen to them. Often, their goal is to gain a following, stealing people from the flock. False prophets often use a combination of power and flattery to attract a following. And because false prophets are not in covenant relationships with the Body of Christ, they recruit others out of the church community to join them in their independent, distorted spiritual journey.

The word *covenant* means that we are not in a relationship for what we can get from people, but rather for what we can give. Covenant relationships are costly. Jesus, in John 15:13, says, “*Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*”

Leading People Out of Prophetic Deception

Confronting those who believe they are true prophets but are not can be a rather difficult situation. Most false prophets have been abused by authority much of their lives and therefore do not trust anyone. Fear is the number one reason why people become hyper-spiritual, and it results in religious deception. To make matters worse, many false prophets have a martyr's complex. The more they are confronted about their weirdness, the more validated they feel. They interpret attempts at correcting them as persecution that proves they are “standing for God” and against the unrighteous religious system! They say things like, “I don't believe in organized religion,” when the real problem is that they don't like boundaries. Remember, Jesus calls them “lawless.” Lawless people are those who want to live outside of authority.

So how can they be helped? First of all, the leaders of the flock must not be afraid to confront these people even though they may appear to be more spiritual than the leadership and may be intimidating. Remember, “All that wickedness needs to prosper is for righteous men to do nothing.” It is also important to not react but instead respond to these people; otherwise, the cure can be worse than the disease. People like this are accustomed to criticism and rejection and will use it to validate their “ministry.”

They can, however, be won over by true, godly discipline (not punishment). The difference between punishment and discipline is that punishment says, “I will get even with you for the damage you have caused,” but discipline says, “I love you too much to leave you broken.”

The only hope for these people is that they begin to feel loved. As they experience the love of God, they can begin to trust the leadership to lead them out of their deception.

If they refuse to repent and submit to correction, they must be removed from fellowship; otherwise, they will lead others astray. As mentioned previously, the primary weakness of false prophets is that they draw people to themselves instead of to God. There is a very narrow window of time for the leadership to deal with false prophets before they rally people to their defense against the leadership. Most of them have an uncanny ability to attach themselves to the young and/or hurting sheep and are able to divide them from the flock. Finally, like wolves, they devour the sheep in deception.

Beware of false prophets!

Questions to Ponder

1. Name five things that distinguish a false prophet from a true prophet.

2. What is one of the main reasons why people become false prophets?

3. Why does opposing false prophets somehow seem to validate their ministry?

4. Is a person who gives inaccurate prophecies always a false prophet?

5. Can a person give accurate prophecies and still be a false prophet?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. Why is it important for believers to be able to recognize false prophets in their midst?
2. Explain why the demonstration of power and miracles is not a sign of a true prophet.
3. Why do you think that false prophets are so opposed to submitting to authority?
4. In First John chapter 4, the beloved are warned not to become false prophets. How could someone who loves Jesus eventually fall into the category of a false prophet?
5. Do you see any of these tendencies in your own heart?

Life Application

Independence, fear, and pride all keep us from the deep relationships that we need with God and His people. It is so important that we have people in our lives that we trust more than we trust ourselves. Do you have a relationship with someone you would trust with your

life? If that person told you that you have a problem, and you were blind to it, would you believe that person even though it didn't feel true? We need to build these kinds of relationships to keep us safe so we can live on the radical edge. Go build a relationship with someone you can trust in authority.



Practicing Prophecy

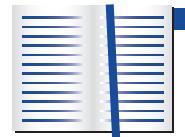
This chapter provides some practical lessons on various ways to practice the gift of prophecy and words of knowledge.

Practicing the Gifts of the Spirit

Unfortunately, some Christians misunderstand the definition of practicing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are not practicing so that the Holy Spirit can improve His gifts, but we are practicing to improve our ability to flow with what the Holy Spirit is doing.

In the Old Testament, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha mentored young men called “the sons of the prophets.” These young spiritual men studied under the guidance of these prophets in what was probably a school of the prophets. Although the sons of the prophets were based out of Naioth in Ramah, they wandered throughout the wilderness practicing their prophecies while being mentored by these renowned prophets.

1 Samuel 19:20—Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied.



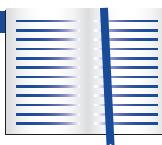
Practicing the gifts of the Spirit should take place in an atmosphere of love and a culture of spiritual authority. Without being in submission to true spiritual authority, we are like a contractor who builds a skyscraper without a foundation. The first time the wind blows, the whole building will crumble.

No Pain—No Gain

In the Book of First Timothy, Paul exhorts Timothy to minister in his spiritual gift beyond his comfort zone. Anyone who has ever performed physical exercise knows that there is little profit to exercising until your body feels a degree of pain. Therefore, if we wake up the morning after exercising and we're not sore, we would realize that the exercise only maintained our current condition!

Reach beyond your comfort zone.

The same principle applies to our spiritual growth. If we only do what is comfortable for us, we will fail to grow. Whenever we are truly growing, there will always be an element of discomfort. You can look at it this way: the dogs of doom stand at the doors of destiny. In other words, the things you are afraid of often hold the greatest rewards.

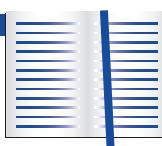


1 Timothy 4:14-15—Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.

Put the Gift in the Fire

Paul, in Second Timothy 1:6, reminds Timothy to “*kindle afresh the gift of God.*” According to the Greek, this phrase can be translated “put your gift in the fire.” The next verse makes more sense now in this context: “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*” (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV).

Whenever we step out in faith, we must step over fear! Fear is the guard dog that is protecting the fortress of spiritual prosperity. When the dog starts barking, we can be sure that the treasure he is guarding is near. Most people do not allow their gifts to be forged in the fire of risk. This results in gifts that are weak and not tempered.



2 Timothy 1:6-7 NKJV—Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Suggestions for Practicing Prophecy

The following are practical suggestions for practicing the gifts of the Spirit.

1. Prophesy your day.

When you wake up in the morning, pray and ask the Lord for information about something that will happen during your day. Write it down as clearly as you understand it. At the end of the day, check and see if the event that you prophesied to yourself happened. Also see how well you understood the specific details of the event(s).

2. Practice words of knowledge.

Go to a restaurant or public place of business and pray for the person who is providing a service for you. Ask the Lord for words of knowledge for the person. It is usually best if you do this when the person is not in your presence. Write down the words of knowledge on a piece of paper. Later you can “interview” the person concerning the words of knowledge you received.

For example, if you think the Lord showed you that the person you are receiving words for has three children, you can simply ask if he or she has any children. If the answer is yes, you can inquire how many, etc. When you are first learning, I would suggest you not tell the person that you have words of knowledge from God. In the beginning, this practice is more about you growing in your gift than about ministering. As your ability to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit improves, you will begin to step out in boldness and faith.

3. Team up with another person.

Enlist the help of a prayer partner. Pray for one another and ask the Lord for words of knowledge for each other. Take turns sharing what you believe God has shown you. Let the recipient judge the word you gave to him or her. Obviously this works best if both of you are trying to grow in your spiritual gifts. It is important in this exercise to be extremely truthful with one another so as to gain an honest assessment of how you are doing.

4. Words of knowledge for healing.

You can practice words of knowledge for healing in a group setting by simply praying and asking the Lord to show you anyone who is experiencing illness or pain. This will often come as a sensation in your body that directly coincides with the part of someone else's body that the Lord wants to heal. If it is appropriate in the meeting, ask the group if anyone has the specific problem in their body. Then afterward, you should pray for that person and experience the joy of seeing the Lord heal them!

5. Prophesying as a group.

Another way to practice in a group setting is to choose one member of the group and have the others prophesy to that person. As the words are given, ask a member of the group to write them down. After an adequate number of prophetic words are given, ask the person who received the prophetic words to judge the words and give feedback to the group about the accuracy of the word.

6. Prophetic intercession.

Prophetic intercession is practiced as we pray. Often in prayer the Lord will give you insight into people's lives. Prophesy the answer to each of the issues that you see in the lives of these people and then ask the Lord to let your paths cross that day. You will be amazed at how many times the Lord will bring people to your mind to pray for—people you haven't seen in months or even years. Most likely, you will soon hear from them.

Questions to Ponder

1. Name the greatest obstacle that we must overcome to see our gifts grow.

2. How can we tell when we are growing in our gifts?

3. Name three ways in which we can practice our spiritual gifts.
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Questions for Group Discussion

1. Share one experience that you had when you stepped over fear into faith. What did you learn from the experience?
2. What is your greatest fear when you consider walking in the fullness of your gifts?
3. What are you going to do about your fear?
4. Take this opportunity to practice what you just learned. Pick someone in the group to prophesy over, and then have the person judge the accuracy of the words he or she received.

Life Application

Create a plan to overcome your greatest fears to stepping out in your gifts. Then become accountable to someone to carry out your plan.





Epilogue

EACH AND EVERY DAY THE WORLD WAKES UP TO THE BAD NEWS OF A PLANET IN DECAY. Depression and death press into our minds and steal our courage. Even our homes that were once safe places for children to grow up in love have become, for many, battlefields where little ones must run for cover. Sticks and stones are breaking their bones and names are taking away their future.

Yet in all of this confusion, there is still a God who only rested one day. His creative proclamations that instilled life and goodness in the Book of Genesis perpetuate through His vessels even to this day. It is He who reigns supreme over all of His creation. He is not depressed, confused, afraid, or perplexed over the darkness of this planet. He speaks into those who are formless and void, and life is the result of His words!

I know a man who 38 years ago had a nervous breakdown. The breakdown lasted for more than three and a half years. His hands trembled so violently that he could not even bring a glass of water to his lips without using both hands. He would sweat so profusely at night from fear and anxiety that his wife would have to get up in the middle of the night and change the soaking wet sheets. As time went on he began to lose his mind and many times a day he would envision himself murdering people—or worse. Demons visited and tormented him throughout the night.

Then one afternoon some friends persuaded him to attend a Christian retreat in the mountains. That day a prophet was speaking at the meeting. He called the young man out of the crowd and prophesied to him. He said, “The Lord has called you to be a pillar in the house of God. You shall be a teacher and a pastor to His people. Strength is in you!”

The war in that man's life was won that day. I know that man very well for I am that man!

Never underestimate the redemptive power of God's prophetic ministry. There are many people starving to know who they really are. You have the ability to alter the history of people who are lost and broken.

Don't disappoint them.



Personal Experience Journal

THE FORMS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES WERE CREATED TO HELP YOU KEEP TRACK OF your dreams, visions, and prophecies. Recording your experiences will assist you in developing accountability that builds up your faith. These records may be used as learning and/or teaching tools similar to the films that athletes use of their previous games to improve their abilities. You may want to copy the pages and create a prophetic journal.

Let the journey begin!

Dreams and Visions

Date: _____

Dream or Vision Description:

Interpretation:

Application:

Date of fulfillment: _____

Dreams and Visions

Date: _____

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About Kris Vallotton

KRIS VALLOTTON IS THE SENIOR ASSOCIATE LEADER OF BETHEL CHURCH IN REDDING, California and has served on Bill Johnson's apostolic team for more than thirty-four years. He has written nine books, including the bestselling *Supernatural Ways of Royalty* and *Spirit Wars*. Kris's revelatory insight and humorous delivery make him a much sought after international conference speaker.

Kris and Kathy Vallotton have been happily married since 1975. They have four children and eight grandchildren.



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