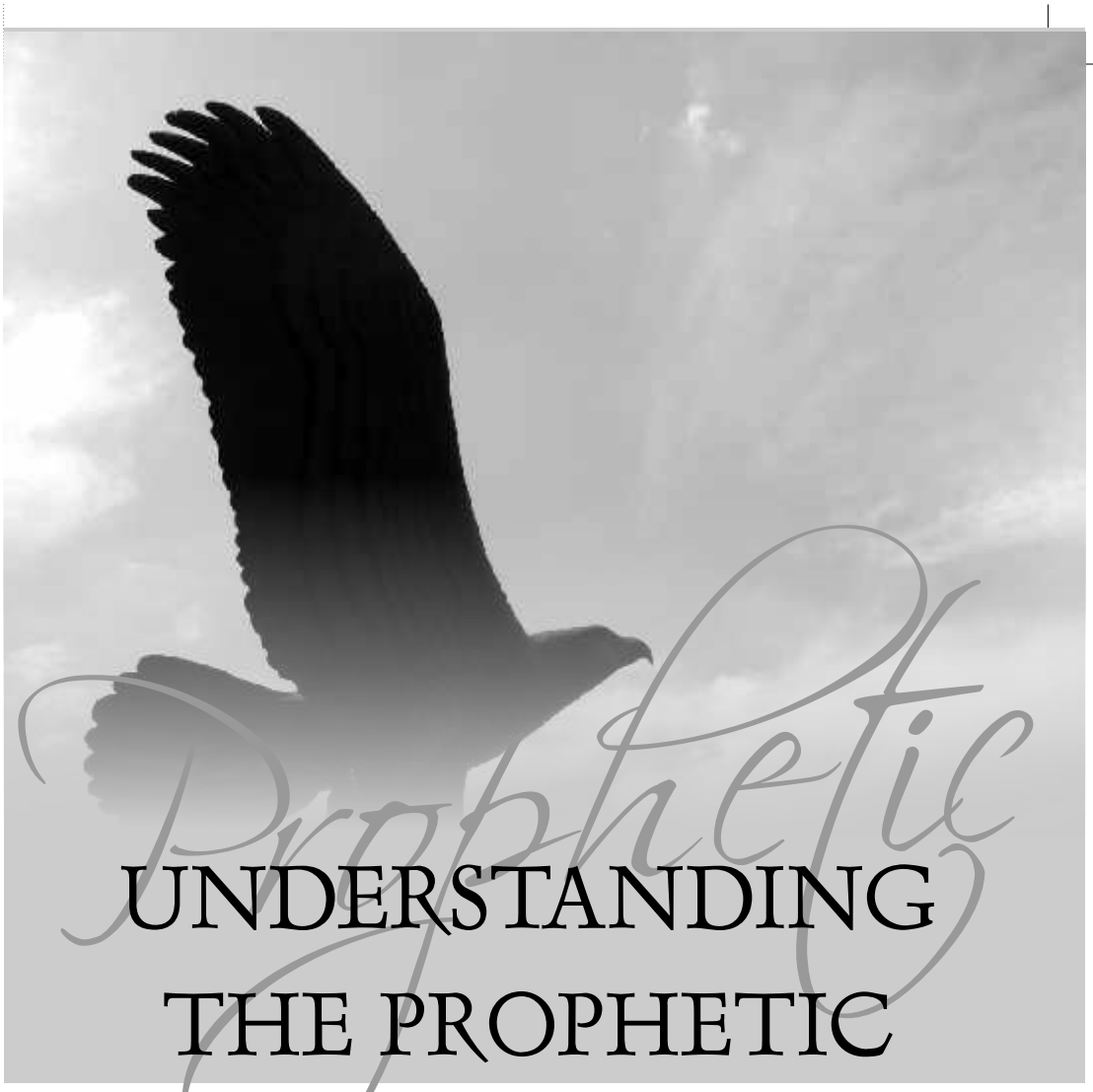
ASHISH RAICHUR

UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETIC



UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETIC

A TRAINING MANUAL FOR PROPHETIC MINISTRY

SECOND EDITION

ASHISH RAICHUR

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Contents

Introduction

Dedication

1. The Prophetic Realm 3
2 Prophetic Ministry in the Old Testament 25
3. Prophetic Ministry in the New Testament 55
4. The Prophetic Word 69
5. Prophetic Intercession 81
6. Prophetic Power 89
7. Prophetic Song 95
8. Activating the Gift of Prophecy 113
9. Hearing from the Holy Spirit 139
10. Testing and Interpreting Personal Prophecies 155
11 Interpreting Dreams 177
12. Ministering Prophetically 193
13. Power of Prophetic Teams 199
14. The Prophetic Church 205
15. Women as Prophetic Ministers 213
16. Practical Issues Concerning Prophetic Ministry 219
17. The Making of a Prophet 229



UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETIC

A TRAINING MANUAL FOR PROPHETIC MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

God is restoring the prophetic ministry in the Church today. From believers learning how to flow in the gift of prophecy to men and women being raised up as ministry gift prophets, there is a revival of prophetic ministry in the Body of Christ all over the world.

The prophetic is not only about hearing and speaking, it is about hearing and doing what God wants done here on earth. God is raising up prophetic believers who not only serve within the local church, but also prophetic believers who are affecting the marketplace through practical ideas and strategies they have received from God. God is raising up prophets like Joseph and Daniel who will represent Him and be His prophetic voice in the high places of the earth today.

This training manual is designed to equip believers, stir up the prophetic in them and enable them to develop a strong prophetic "ministry" in whatever vocation they may be.

May you find this useful as you grow in the area of prophetic ministry!

Blessings!

Ashish Raichur

March 2010

Dedication

This training manual is dedicated to the church family at All Peoples Church, Bangalore. You are a courageous people, bold enough to say 'No' to status quo Christianity and willing to pursue God into all that He has for His people. It takes courage to be willing to go where not many others have gone in our day. It takes courage to pursue more of God. It takes courage to desire more of His Spirit and His power at work in our lives. Thank you for joining me on this journey!

This training manual is also dedicated to pastors and leaders of local churches and ministries in the city of Bangalore and across our nation. May you find this useful in raising up churches and communities of believers who will hear His voice and do His will, here in our city and nation!



THE PROPHETIC REALM

1

1

THE PROPHETIC REALM

Words are a powerful tool in communication. By using appropriate words, we are able to convey our ideas and thoughts, even our deepest feelings and emotions. Encouraging words of a friend or loved one can impart strength and bring reviving in times of hardship and difficulties. All of us can remember such times when the words of a dear one was especially meaningful and brought much blessing. While the words of another compassionate human person can bring great blessing, hearing the words of our tender and loving heavenly Father in critical moments of our lives can be truly life transforming. And the Father desires to speak to us "in the now"—in the midst of our present circumstances and situations. He desires to speak His encouragement, direction and counsel into our lives. There are many ways in which the Father communicates to us, the foremost being the written Word of God, followed by the inward leading of His Spirit. In this book, we consider one of the other modes by which He transfers His word to us—the Prophetic Ministry.

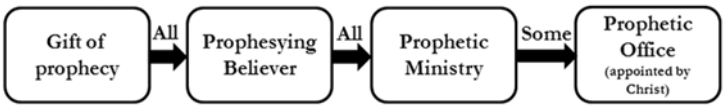
The Lord has initiated many restorative moves of His Holy Spirit in the Church. The Church, which had become a spiritually feeble entity during the Dark Ages (400–1400 AD), began to go through a process of revival and restoration. Beginning in the 1500s, there was a steady increase in the depth of spiritual understanding and revelation imparted to the Church. The Protestant movement in the 1500s brought the revelation of salvation by grace through faith; the Puritan movement in the 1600s brought an understanding of the importance of water baptism and separation of Church from the state; the Holiness movement in 1700s brought an understanding of sanctification—of the Church being separated from the world; the

Divine Healing movement of the 1800s brought a revelation and demonstration of God's healing power for the physical body; and the Pentecostal movement in the early 1900s brought a revelation of Holy Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues. These briefly highlight the restorative work of God's Spirit in the Church following the Dark Ages. However, from the turn of the 20th century, beginning with the Pentecostal movement, the Church has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the restorative ministry of the Holy Spirit. Following the Pentecostal movement, there have been several clearly identifiable moves in the Church that have caused the Body of Christ to rise to higher realms with God. Of these, the Prophetic movement that came into full recognition in the 1980s is among the more recent moves of God's Spirit in the Church.

Prophetic Progression

In recent decades the Church has been progressively understanding and manifesting more of the prophetic. More believers are being activated and trained to manifest and flow in prophetic ministry. This is exciting because as we progress in prophetic ministry, we will have a Body of believers who can clearly hear what God is saying and immediately say and do according to His directives.

While we will study these in detail, here is a quick overview of various stages of prophetic ministry.



All believers can be trained and activated to flow in the simple gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:7–10,31; 1 Corinthians 14:1,31). The gift of prophecy is simply speaking under inspiration from God to bring edification, exhortation and comfort to people (1 Corinthians 14:3).

The functions of believers in the Body of Christ are listed in Romans 12:4–8. This obviously is only a representation and not a complete list of all believers' functions in the Body. Each believer has a specific function depending on the gift and grace given. Prophecy is listed as one of the grace gifts and believers' functions. These are believers who have the grace gift of prophecy and perform their function in the Body with prophecy playing a major role. There can be different degrees to which prophecy is manifested, as these believers are encouraged to prophesy in proportion to their faith (Vs. 6).

All believers who have learnt to flow in the simple gift of prophecy and those with the grace gift of prophecy, can further exercise this gift as part of their function or ministry in the Body. For example, a musician can incorporate the prophetic in his singing or music. So also a teacher, an evangelist, a leader, a social worker, an administrator, an intercessor or any other believer functioning in the Body of Christ, can learn to integrate the prophetic into their ministry or function. These are **prophesying believers** who flow in prophecy as part of their ministry function in the Body.

As believers are further trained in the prophetic and begin to flow consistently in this, they begin to manifest and develop a **prophetic ministry**. This is where almost everything they say and do in ministry function is graced with a word from God or a directive from God. They begin to flow in more of the prophetic manifestations, which we will study later on. **All believers**, if they choose to press in to the prophetic, can develop and manifest strong prophetic ministry as part of whatever role or function they have in the Body of Christ.

The prophetic ministry gift (or as some call it, the "office of a prophet") as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11,12 and once again in 1 Corinthians 12:28 is not available to everyone but is **assigned to**

some, by our Lord Jesus Christ. The prophetic office in addition to manifesting prophetic ministry also carries with it **governmental responsibility and authority** in the Body of Christ. These ministries will emphasize laying strong doctrinal foundations (Ephesians 2:20), hearing from God and announcing new moves and directives of the Spirit (Acts 13:1,2), announcing the mind of God to the larger Body of Christ, to cities and nations (Acts 11:27–30); bring prophetic insight to solve problems in local church government or in the wider Body of Christ (Acts 15:2,6,26,32) and so on.

As believers progress from exercising the simple gift of prophecy to flowing in prophetic ministry, we can expect increased accuracy and an increased measure of the pure message from God and less mixture of human words and ideas. While we recognize that people at all stages, including those with the ministry gift of prophet, are merely human and therefore prone to mistakes, greater accuracy in hearing from God is expected as we progress into consistent prophetic ministry and from those in the prophetic office.

A Testimony

It was the May of 1993. A few months prior to this, I had returned from my first international ministry trip making stops at Albania, India and Malaysia. The trip and the time of ministry in itself were breathtaking. God's supernatural power was evident, in convicting hearts and bringing them to repentance, in healings and miracles. It surely was a mountaintop experience. But having returned to the USA, I was flat on my face, with my bank account to zero, and the ministry in debt. To make matters worse, the scholarship I was on at the university had just come to an end. I had just been through my first two and a half years in the USA as an international student. This was but a prolonged season of pain and tears. Without going into all the details of the struggles, the loneliness and the tears—there I

was, not knowing what I was supposed to do. I had just exhausted the little box of pennies that I had!

About this time, I received a call from friends in Tulsa, Okalahoma, inviting me to participate at their 'Spiritual Skills Course,' an intensive two-week training program to teach professionals to flow in the things of God. They offered to take care of my boarding, lodging and course expense and also for most of the airfare. They wanted me to attend the entire course and also share in one of the sessions. Of course, I did not tell them where I was financially! I had just come to my aunt's place in New Jersey at this time (she also did not know the details of my predicament—I did not tell anybody at that time) and she had, of her own accord helped me with some money. So here I was, flying all the way to Tulsa, to attend this course, not knowing what I would do after that. I had been looking for a job, but due to the nature of my research and training, opportunities were not easy to come by.

There were mostly doctors, and others from the medical profession, attending the Spiritual Skills Course. I was one of the few with an engineering background, although the area of my specialization did encompass the medical field. We were having a great time together and I never mentioned to anyone the things that I was facing. A few days into the course we had some sessions when Kevin Van Den Westhuizen, known for his prophetic ministry, was scheduled to minister to us. As Kevin came to the end of his second session with us, when he had been instructing us about the prophetic, he came up to me to pray for me and then began prophesying over my life. He began to say, "Lord, You have been preparing him for things to come. You are using the engineering abilities and the things You are planting in him for the Kingdom of God. You set things in motion right now, in Your realm You are setting up divine contacts. You are setting up people that he will come into contact with. Things are

happening on his behalf and You are for him. You are opening the way. You are opening the door. You are the One who is going to set this whole thing in motion for his life. Even though he is here, he is here for a season. He is here for a period. There are things that are happening here, but there is coming a day when You will take him back to his people and he will touch the lives of so many. But that will also be for a season, for You have not called this man only to a one people-group, or to a one nation-group, but there is a calling that rests on him, that You have put upon his life and given to him, for You have called him to the nations. And God, there will be much trouble that You are allowing into his life, You are causing that to be effective and to be opened up before him. God, You will cause him to go to and fro, from place to place, even using the gifting of the natural secular area of his life to touch the lives of many nations… ." And so, he went on speaking the same things that were in my heart. Kevin and I had never known each other before. And again in the next session, Kevin came up to me and continued, "There have been some struggles, but God has not called you from pit to pit. He has called you from glory to glory. I see ministry written all over your life. I see a call of God on your life… ." He went on to describe the things that the Lord was going to do in the days to come.

This was a very significant point in my life, especially given the situation I was in. I am so grateful to the Lord for orchestrating everything so perfectly and also for His servants who willingly obeyed Him to bring me God's Word. It has been several years since that time and so many details of that prophetic utterance have come to pass before my very eyes—God setting up divine contacts, opening doors, making the way for my returning to India, and so on. This has been, to date, the most significant prophecy I have received. It was a turning point in my life. In the days that followed, I held on to these words. Almost everyday, I would remind God about what had been spoken. I would repeat these words to the devil, waging war against

the diabolic forces that wanted to hold me down. I would speak these words over the circumstances that I was facing.

Isaiah 44:26
Who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers.

Truly, God confirmed the word of His servant, Kevin. There are many more things that were spoken and I am looking forward expectantly to see them come to pass.

I have seen and experienced the tremendous blessing of the prophetic ministry and I am grateful to God for it. When properly exercised and administered, it can be so uplifting and edifying. Perhaps, you have been ministered to or have had some exposure to the prophetic ministry. Indeed God is raising up many prophets in the Church, as we draw closer to the time of His return. The realm of the prophetic is exciting because it is God communicating to man in the 'now'—in the present. It is exciting because it gives us the opportunity of knowing and seeing into the heart and mind of God. The material in this book is designed to help us understand this restorative move of God's Spirit, that which is commonly known as the Prophetic movement. Our purpose is to gain a better understanding of the prophetic realm and how we, as believers, should respond to present-day prophetic ministry. It is intended to help us, as the people of God, to be in step with what God is doing in our midst today.

The Prophet

Prophet Abraham

The first occurrence of the word 'prophet' in the Old Testament is found in Genesis 20:7 when God spoke to King Abimelech, in a dream, about Abraham saying:

Genesis 20:7
He is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live.

The Hebrew word for prophet here is *'nabi,'* which simply means an "inspired man." It is interesting to note that in its first usage, the prophet was an intercessor. A prophet therefore was identified as someone who had a close communion with God and one who could intercede for others. And out of that communion came inspiration where the prophet would speak the words of God to people. The other interesting inference we can make here is about prophet Abraham himself. We know that Abraham did not go about prophesying or giving the word of the Lord to people around him. And yet God called him a prophet. Abraham was a man who heard from God and walked in the divine purpose of God. He was prophetic in the life he lived, more than in the words he said.

It is also interesting to note that the first reference to a prophet is tied in with prayer—"He is a prophet and he will pray for you and you shall live." Prayer and intercession therefore is an integral part of the prophetic ministry. We can have people who pray and intercessors who are not prophetic. However, we cannot be prophetic without being strong in prayer and intercession.

Genesis 18:17
And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing."

In keeping with Abraham's calling as a prophet, God initiates the revelatory process in Genesis 12 when Abraham is called to go to a land which God would show him. Thereafter, Abraham receives several revelations and encounters with the Lord —in hearing from God—through dreams and angelic visitations. Also it is interesting how God initiates the revelatory process when it comes to what God was planning to do concerning Sodom and Gomorrah as recorded in Genesis 18. Once God reveals His intended judgment,

Abraham steps into his role as prophetic intercessor. The Bible records "Abraham still stood before the LORD" (Genesis 18:22). Abraham stood before God as a prophetic intercessor and made his appeal saying, "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). Like Abraham, prophetic people move into intense prayer and intercession when God reveals what He is about to do.

Moses and Aaron

God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush and commissioned him to lead His people out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Moses had complained about his inability to communicate effectively stating his lack of eloquence as an excuse. So the LORD came up with a solution and said to him:

Exodus 4:14–16
Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.

Then in Exodus 7:1, where we have the next occurrence of the word 'prophet' in Scripture, the context of its usage further clarifies the function of the prophet. The LORD said to Moses:

Exodus 7:1
See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

Once again, the Hebrew word here for 'prophet' is '*nabi'* and occurs 309 times in the Old Testament. From the context of the

second passage, we learn that *'nabi'* is one who speaks for another. He is another's mouthpiece. So a prophet of God is God's spokesperson to the people—God's mouthpiece. He speaks the words that God puts in his mouth.

Nabi-Prophet and Seer-Prophet

1 Chronicles 29:29
Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they are written in the book of Samuel the seer (Heb. *'roeh'*), **in the book of Nathan the prophet** (Heb. *'nabi'*), **and in the book of Gad the seer** (Heb. *'hozeh'*).

We see two kinds of Hebrew words used to describe prophets in the Old Testament: '*nabi*' and *'roeh,'* along with its alternative '*hozeh.'* Both the Hebrew words '*roeh'* and '*hozeh'* referring to "**the seer,**" deal with visions, gazing at or seeing something in the spiritual realm, supernatural revelations, a seeing person. This refers to the word of the Lord coming through the **visualization** process—seeing visually what God is revealing. This is expressed in 2 Chronicles 9:29 in the mention of "the visions of Ido the seer." A seer was called thus, because of his frequent visions—things he saw in the spirit realm. Hanani is also referred to as a seer by using the same Hebrew word '*roeh'* (2 Chronicles 16:7,10). Several other seer-prophets are referred to using the Hebrew word *'hozeh'* —Asaph (2 Chronicles 29:30), Heman (1 Chronicles 25:5), Jeduthun (2 Chronicles 35:15), Iddo (2 Chronicles 9:29; 2 Chronicles 12:15), Jehu, the son of Hanani (2 Chronicles 19:2), and the prophet Amos (Amos 7:12).

Amos 7:14,15
I was no prophet (Heb. *'nabi'*), **nor was I a son of a prophet** (Heb. *'nabi'*), **but I was a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go prophesy** (Heb. *'naba'*) **to my people Israel.'**

The word '*nabi'* translated as 'prophet,' and a similar Hebrew word *'naba'* translated as 'prophesy' deal with the inspirational nature of prophetic reception, the '*nabi*' being **"the inspired"** man. A common meaning of these words is to bubble-up or flow forth. In a similar fashion, another Hebrew word *'nataph'* is translated as 'prophet' and 'prophesy' in Micah 2:11. *'Nataph'* means "to ooze, distil gradually; to fall in drops; to speak by inspiration." These carry the idea that the words of the Lord are released through **inspiration** and they bubble up or come as drops—words, sentences, phrases—bubbling up from within the prophet, in contrast to the visual process of prophetic reception through visions.

While all these words are used to refer to the same prophetic office, it appears that depending on the way God communicated with the prophet, he was referred to either as a **seer-prophet or a nabi-prophet**.

1 Samuel 9:9
(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: "Come, let us go to the seer"; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)

However, when understanding the nature of the prophet's mode of receiving revelation, we must not necessarily restrict or limit a prophet to a single mode of reception. Obviously this does not mean that a nabi-prophet will not have visions and dreams or that a seer-prophet will not have the word of the Lord bubbling up from within. We can never put God in a box and restrain His working. A seer-prophet could also receive the word of the Lord the same way a nabi-prophet did and vice-versa. They were in fact used interchangeably as indicated in 1 Samuel 9:9 and Amos 7:12,14. Hence the "seer-prophet" and "nabi-prophet" categorization broadly identifies two ways in which God would speak to His prophets.

How Does the Prophet Hear from God?

Amos 3:7,8

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

The prophetic ministry is one of the many different ways by which God transfers His word to the human race. God in His own sovereignty has chosen to have spokespersons on the earth. The Lord has purposed to convey the thoughts and intents of His heart to the prophets. He reveals His secret, things not revealed to others, to His servants the prophets.

When God speaks to the prophet, he can do nothing but prophesy. When a lion roars there is a definite response of fear in the human person. Even so, when the Lord speaks, the prophet has a sense of 'compulsion' to release the word that God has spoken. Jeremiah expressed it thus:

Jeremiah 20:7–9

O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; everyone mocks me. For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the LORD was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.

When God speaks, His prophetic word is like a burning fire within us and we must release it to those He intended.

A brief overview is presented below, from the Old Testament, on how the prophets heard from God. In a later chapter, we will discuss at length some of the ways we hear from God today and prophets in the New Testament.

Dreams, Visions, Symbols, Dark Sayings and Face To Face

Hosea 12:10
I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.

Numbers 12:5–8
Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak to him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

To know that God says, "I have spoken by the prophets … " is truly such an amazing thought. God Almighty speaking through mortal man! God uses different "modes of communication" to convey His thoughts to His prophets. Visions and symbols are some of the methods He uses. 'Visions' represents something that is 'seen.' This could be seeing into the spirit realm, seeing a picture that comes to the prophet's mind and so on. The picture could be presented to the physical eyes, or impressed on his imagination, or seen with the spiritual eyes. This could happen when awake, when in a trance, or when asleep through a dream. 'Symbols' represents parables, similitudes, comparisons, riddles, or acts (drama, personifications which the Lord directs His prophets to enact to portray the message).

"The dark sayings" in Numbers 12:8 corresponds to the "symbols" of Hosea 12:10.

Moses, as a prophet walked with God in a realm where God spoke to him face to face, clearly and plainly. However, in general, not everyone called to the prophetic ministry walks in this realm. To most of us, God speaks "in dreams, in visions and in dark sayings"

that is, through riddles, pictures and other forms of communication described earlier. This does not diminish the value of what God is saying. It is just that God communicates through a different mode. Regardless of how God speaks, if it is truly God speaking, then we must pay attention to the prophetic word.

Balaam's Prophetic Experience

We will consider a passage from the life of Balaam. While it is true that Balaam epitomizes a prophet who ran into error (a false prophet) because of his greediness for profit (2 Peter 2:15,16; Jude 1:11), nevertheless he did speak some valuable things under divine inspiration. He also described the prophetic process and his prophetic experience while receiving the true word of the Lord. Let us analyze his prophetic experience to gain insight into the revelatory process through which God speaks to people.

Numbers 24:15,16
So he took up his oracle and said, "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, and the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened; the utterance of him who hears the words of God, and has the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open.

Notice some of the terms that Balaam used to describe how he was receiving his message from God. We employ a student's prerogative in making the following classification.

1. *His eyes were opened—seeing into the spirit realm*

His natural eyes suddenly seemed to have the ability to see into the spiritual world. He was able to see into the realm of the spirit. It was as though the eyes of his spirit-man were looking through his natural physical eyes, seeing what was happening and even going to happen.

A good parallel to this would be the experience of Elisha and his servant:

2 Kings 6:15–17
And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. 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." And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

This in one sense is comparable to the operation of the "discerning of spirits," a gift of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:10. To 'discern' means "to see into, to tell the difference." Through the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit, we are able to see spiritual realities.

When one's eyes are opened there is no limit to the distance one can see in the spirit. Stephen, when he was being stoned for his testimony, had his eyes opened and saw right into heaven. The Bible records "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"" (Acts 7:55,56)

Isaiah too had the experience of seeing into heaven: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1–4).

2. *He heard the words of God—God's audible voice*

He was able to hear the audible voice of God. God spoke audibly to people and may still speak this way, at certain times. The audible voice of God is a 'spiritual voice' that only the person(s) to whom God is speaking hears it, while those not in his intended audience, do not. The audible voice of God is as real and clear as if there were another person standing next to you and speaking and yet others around you may not hear it. A good example of this is Samuel's experience while serving under Eli the priest in the temple as a young boy.

1 Samuel 3:2–9

And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark was, and while Samuel was lying down, that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!" So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down. Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again."… And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. So he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant hears."

Notice how Samuel heard the LORD call his name, while Eli did not.

When people heard the audible voice of God, some of them thought it thundered, others thought it was the voice of an angel (John 12:28,29). Apostle John in receiving the revelation of the Lord Jesus on the Isle of Patmos, heard the voice from heaven several times. He described it like the voice of many waters, like the sound of loud thunder (Revelation 14:2).

The audible voice of God is "'voice with sound' in the realm of the spirit. However, the voice of God can also come into our spirits without 'sound.' This is the inner voice, heard in our inner man. This is the voice of the Spirit speaking to our spirits, through our spiritual faculty of hearing—where there is no need for 'sound.' This is how many of us will hear the voice of God. It is strong and powerful! You know God has spoken even though you have not heard a 'sound.'

3. *He received the knowledge of the Most High*

He received an impartation of God's thoughts into his mind. Here, the knowledge of the Lord is communicated in the form of words that "well up" or "bubble up" out of the prophet's inner man and into his mind where he comprehends it. Under divine inspiration, the mind of the prophet and his thought processes become filled with thoughts, words, impressions and information that come from the Lord. To use modern internet terminology, it is like a heavenly 'download' of information into our spirits that then transfers over into the realm of our understanding.

4. *He saw the vision of the Almighty*

A vision is something that is 'seen.' In visions, God communicates information very often in pictures. This could be a single picture or a "motion picture" where things are dynamic and there is a sequence of events happening or conversations taking place and so on. In some cases, when people have a vision, there may be the absence of a picture with just the communication of the message.

Visions could also take place at night in a dream. So in a dream, you could have a vision.

Examples of different types of visions:

Receiving only a message in a vision	Genesis 15:1; Genesis 46:2–5;1 Samuel 3:10–15; 2 Samuel 7:4–17 (1 Chronicles 17:4–15)
Seeing a single picture in a vision	Jeremiah 1:11–14; Amos 7:1-8
Seeing a motion picture in a vision	Ezekiel 1:1–28; Daniel 4:9–13; Daniel 7:1-15; Daniel 8:1–13; Daniel 10:1–14; Acts 10:9–17
Being transported in a vision across the earth	Ezekiel 8:3; Ezekiel 11:24; Ezekiel 40:1,2; Ezekiel 41:1; Ezekiel 42:1; Ezekiel 43:1–6
Being transported to heaven in a vision	2 Corinthians 12:1–4; Revelation 1:10–12; Revelation 4:1,2; Revelation 9:17
Seeing a vision when in a trance	Acts 10:9–17; Acts 11:5
Seeing a vision in a dream	Job 4:13; Job 7:14; Job 33:15; Isaiah 29:7; Daniel 2:19; Acts 16:9,10; Acts 18:9,10
Heavenly encounters in a vision	Daniel 8:16,17; Daniel 9:21; Matthew 17:1–9; Luke 1:11–22; Acts 9:10–16; Acts 10:1–8

5. *He fell down with eyes wide open*

The words, "who falls down" most likely refers to his physical posture of being prostrate on the ground. It could also mean falling into a trance. In this posture, Balaam was able to see things as seeing graphical or pictorial descriptions. Here, information is communicated in pictures that may be literal or allegorical. The utterances of Balaam as recorded in Numbers 24:5–9 illustrate this. Many times when God is moving upon His people to speak to them, a combination of these may be experienced. Peter was in a trance and he saw a vision and heard the audible voice of God (Acts 11:5–10).

The God Who Speaks

God's Spirit is so beautiful and wonderful in His working. The Holy Spirit moves in wonderfully creative ways, conveying the thoughts of God in new and fresh ways. God may use a combination of methods and even natural events to communicate His message. God speaking to Jeremiah, at the potter's house, is an example where Jeremiah heard God's words as God used the natural process of a potter working at his wheel to convey His plan for a nation (Jeremiah 18:1–10).

Our God "reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him" (Daniel 2:22). We too can say with Daniel, "There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets" (Daniel 2:28).



PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In this chapter, we conduct a short survey of the Old Testament to examine the role and characteristics of the prophetic ministry in Old Testament times.

Priests and the Urim and Thummim

While there is not much information in the Bible about the 'Urim' and 'Thummim,' we have the following understanding from Scriptural references and Bible scholars.

God gave Moses the following instructions for making the High Priestly garments: "And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually" (Exodus 28:30, see also Leviticus 8:8). Later, as Joshua is appointed successor to Moses, God instructs that Joshua "shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation" (Numbers 27:21).

It is understood that the Urim and Thummim, interpreted as "lights and perfections," also known as "revelation and truth" were gemstones that were carried by the High Priest of Israel on the ephod. When leaders needed to know God's direction, the High Priest would use the Urim and Thummin to determine God's will. The Bible simply does not give us enough information on how

exactly it was used. Some suggest that God would cause the Urim and Thummim to light up in varying patterns to reveal His decision. Others propose that the Urim and Thummim were kept in a pouch and depending on what was retrieved it was a yes or no, true or false. For example, some understand that Urim essentially means guilty and Thummim essentially means innocent. This is how it was used in the case of Saul determining if there was sin in the camp. We read in I Samuel 14:41,42: "Then Saul prayed to God, "O God of Israel, why haven't you answered me today? Show me the truth. If the sin is in me or Jonathan, then, O God, give the sign Urim. But if the sin is in the army of Israel, give the sign Thummim."" The Urim sign turned up and pointed to Saul and Jonathan. That cleared the army. Next Saul said, "Cast the lots between me and Jonathan—and death to the one God points to!" The soldiers protested, "No—this is not right. Stop this!" But Saul pushed on anyway. They cast the lots, Urim and Thummim, and the lot fell to Jonathan (The Message Bible).

It is likely that when David inquired of the Lord using the ephod, he used the Urim and Thummim to get direction (I Samuel 23:1–4; I Samuel 30:7,8). Based on the instruction Joshua had received in Numbers 27, it is likely that he used the Urim and Thummin to trace the sin to Achan, following their defeat at Ai as recorded in Joshua 7:14–18.

It is interesting to note that once Saul had strayed from the Lord, he found himself in a state where the Bible records: "And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets" (I Samuel 28:6).

It is evident that the Urim and Thummim was used from the time of Joshua to the time of David. Biblical scholars suspect that their use diminished some time before the Babylonian conquest, most likely because of the rise of prophets and a prominent role that

they began to play. We see that an attempt was made to consult the Urim and Thummim upon their return from captivity (Ezra 2:63, Nehemiah 7:65), but not much is heard after that.

The Urim and Thummim was a 'Yes' or 'No,' 'Right' or 'Wrong' voice of the Lord for Israel, when needed. Drawing a parallel here, for the New Testament believer the Holy Spirit releases the peace of God (or its absence) as a 'Yes/No' indicator (Colossians 3:15). As a parallel, every believer, who is a New Testament priest, has a 'built-in' Urim and Thummim—the peace of God in his heart to guide him.

Receiving a Word from God Through a Prophet of God

In the Old Testament, we observe that when someone wanted to hear from God, they would go to a prophet. Lay people sought help from a prophet in a variety of circumstances in which they needed counsel from God. As recorded in 1 Samuel 9:9, "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: "Come, let us go to the seer;" for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer." So it was customary in those days to go to a prophet when one needed to hear from God. When Kings wanted to make decisions, they would inquire of a prophet of God. One of the many examples is that of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah: "But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" So one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kings 3:11).

In contrast to this, in the New Testament, every believer has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Every child of God in the New Testament has the privilege of being led by the Spirit of God who bears witness within (Romans 8:14,16). Hence every believer

must be able to hear from God through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy and prophetic ministry then plays a complementary and perhaps a secondary role to the individual believer being led by the Spirit.

The Most Important Test of Every Prophetic Word

While prophets were highly regarded and their words respected in the days of the Old Testament, God gave clear instructions concerning the test to identify a 'genuine' prophet. Deuteronomy 13:1–5 is a well-known passage. It states, "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known — 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst." While the fulfillment of the word spoken by a prophet was important to determine whether the Lord had indeed spoken through him (Deuteronomy 18:20–22), there was a test that was even more important. The integrity of the prophet's message and its harmony with the revealed counsel of God was (and is) of primary importance. By integrity, we mean its purity—does the message move the recipient(s) closer to the Lord? Is it in harmony with the written Word of God, the expressed will and once-for-all established purpose of God? The fulfillment of the prophet's message is only second in importance to its integrity and

conformity to the written Word of God. Therefore, every message that a prophet may present has to be evaluated in this light.

Creative Forms of Prophetic Expression

Prophets often presented their message in the form of creative expressions like song, poetry, parables or drama (symbolic action). These without doubt were done under the direction and inspiration of the Lord. Moses' prophetic song of blessing (Deuteronomy 33:1–29), Nathan's correction of David (2 Samuel 12:1–5), Jeremiah's message using the symbol of the broken pot (Jeremiah 19:1–12), the portrayal of the siege of Jerusalem by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:1–17) are but a few of the many examples seen in the Old Testament Scripture.

Music and the Release of the Prophetic Anointing

There is a close relation between prophetic ministry and the arts, especially music. The prophets usually prophesied, accompanied with musical instruments. Prophet Samuel, on one occasion referred to a company of prophets thus: "... with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying" (1 Samuel 10:5). They must have been quite a band! A well-known account is that of Prophet Elisha. Jehoram, the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah and the king of Edom paid Elisha a visit one day. Actually they were on the verge of battle, getting ready to fight with Mesha, the king of Moab. They wanted to know what the Lord had to say about the outcome of the battle. Now Elisha knew how to stir up the prophetic anointing to hear from God. He called for a musician. Perhaps one of the sons of the prophets came running in and struck a chord on "a stringed instrument." "Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. And he said, "Thus says the LORD ..." (2 Kings 3:15,16). Music helped activate the prophetic anointing. As believers,

we need to understand the importance of music as expressed in congregational praise and worship. Through our wholehearted participation in praise and worship, among other things we are also assisting in ushering in the anointing of the Spirit of God into our midst, so that we might be recipients of His grace, which many times could be expressed through the release of the prophetic word.

Supernatural Demonstrations

The ministry of the prophet, was usually, accompanied by signs and demonstrations of power. Moses, Elijah and Elisha had notable ministries of supernatural demonstrations. In fact it is written of Moses, "But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all the mighty power and great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel" (Deuteronomy 34:10–12). At times, God used material items as symbols in the demonstration of His power. Moses' rod, also called "the rod of God" (Exodus 4:17,20) was used in numerous supernatural manifestations. A tree was used to make bitter waters sweet (Exodus 15:22–25). A bronze serpent was used to protect against death from snakebites (Numbers 21:4–9). Elisha used Elijah's mantle to part river Jordan (2 Kings 2:13,14). Elisha's bone raised a dead man (2 Kings 13:20,21). These are but a few examples. It is true that in all cases the material items that were used were just that—material items. They were symbols that were used at a given time in conjunction with God demonstrating His power. God did not want His people to attach any kind of special affection toward such symbols that were used in the prophetic ministry. More importantly, the administration of supernatural power through the prophetic ministry took place when people responded in obedience to the word of the prophet. The widow woman at Zarephath, experienced God's divine

provision as she obeyed the word of the Lord through Elijah (1 Kings 17:8–16). A good illustration of this principle is also seen in the case of Naaman. Naaman who was the commander of the Syrian army was also a leper. He had come to the Prophet Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. Without coming out to meet Naaman in person, Elisha sent his messenger with the instruction, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean" (2 Kings 5:10). Naaman felt insulted and became furious. He had expected Elisha to come out and pray for him in person. But here he was, being asked to go and wash in the dirty waters of Jordan. But somehow his servants convinced Naaman to follow the prophet's direction. "So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14). All it took was obedience to the word of the prophet! As king Jehoshaphat said, "Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20). God Himself "confirms the word of His servant" (Isaiah 44:26).

The miracles that accompanied the prophetic ministry were unusual. For instance, the miracles that took place when Moses was in Egypt and the miracles through the prophets Elijah and Elisha—of miraculous childbirth, multiplying food and oil, causing fire to fall out of heaven, outrunning a chariot of horses, making an axe head to float, causing supernatural blindness, filling ditches with water without rain, supernatural debt cancellation and increase by multiplying a jar of oil, and so on—are truly extraordinary miracles. Where is the LORD God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God of the prophets of old? Well, the LORD God of the Old Testament prophets has not changed. He is still here. So surely we can expect similar extraordinary miracles to be released in our midst through the prophetic anointing.

Schools of the Prophets

When young Samuel was taken to work with Eli the priest, the land was spiritually barren. 1 Samuel 3:1 records: "Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation." It appears that there were no prophets around and no one really heard from God. It is amazing to see how in the middle of such "spiritually dry" conditions, God trained Samuel to hear His voice and eventually become recognized as a prophet in the land. Initially, Samuel was unfamiliar with the voice of the Lord as 1 Samuel 3:7 states: "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him." With the passage of time, as Samuel continued serving under Eli, the priest, God trained Samuel to receive the word of the Lord. "So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord. Then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel … ." (1 Samuel 3:19–21, 4:1). What is interesting is that Samuel had no 'mentor' to train him, he had no example to follow, no one to impart into his life concerning the prophetic. Eli was very old and probably unable to discharge his duties fully as a priest. Two things need to be highlighted here. First, is that Samuel did not despise Eli, the priest, but served faithfully under him. Second, God nurtured and raised Samuel up as a prophet, in spite of the spiritually dry conditions.

It appears that Samuel then went about doing for others what he may have perceived as a need in his early days. Samuel set up what we refer to as the "Schools of the prophets" where he trained other men in the prophetic. We see one of the early references to this, where Samuel prophesies to Saul that when Saul got back to the city of Gibeah, he would "meet a group of prophets coming down from the high

place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying" (1 Samuel 10:5). Later in 1 Samuel 19:20, we read about "the group of prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as leader over them." From this company of prophets, we get the idea of the "Schools of the prophets." It seems that men who were called to function in the prophetic ministry gathered together around an established prophet to learn from him. During the time of Elijah and Elisha, this company of prophets were referred to as the sons of the prophets. We read of the "sons of the prophets" (or Schools of the prophets) located in different places like Gilgal which probably was the headquarters (2 Kings 2:1; 4:38), Bethel (2 Kings 2:3) and Jericho (2 Kings 2:5). The sons of the prophets at Gilgal lived with the prophet (2 Kings 6:1). These 'trainees' performed the role of a servant and were also referred to as the servant of the prophet (2 Kings 9:1,4). We can infer that those who have been called into the prophetic ministry can be trained and equipped to operate in that ministry by a more seasoned prophet.

As in the case of any other ministry, those in prophetic ministry must go through a process of growth and development. Just because someone is in the prophetic ministry does not mean that he or she will bring forth earth shaking prophecies right away. There is a process of growth and maturity that the prophetic minister goes through. God brings this about in different ways in the lives of his many servant-prophets. Some have the opportunity of working among a company of prophets and thus are trained. For some others, the Lord has His special tailor-made school of the Word and Spirit by which He trains and equips them for prophetic ministry.

The Prophetic Influence

It is interesting to consider some of the outstanding characteristics of the prophetic anointing as recorded in the events of the Old Testament. We observe that when the prophetic anointing came upon

people who were not prophets, or when these people came under the influence of the prophetic anointing, they too began to prophesy. For example, the prophet Moses was under tremendous pressure as he led the people of Israel to the Promised Land. He finally reached a stage where he cried out to God in utter desperation, "Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers? I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this please kill me here and now ..." (Numbers 11:12,14,15). Interesting is it not? The pressures of ministry and caring for God's people can be real! So the Lord came up with a solution. He told Moses to gather seventy leaders at the Tabernacle. He said that He would then come down and take of the Spirit that rested upon Moses, put the same upon the 70 so that they could share in bearing the burden of leading the people. So when Moses had gathered the 70 leaders around the Tabernacle, the Scriptures record that "The Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again" (Numbers 11:25). These 70 leaders were not prophets but under the influence of the prophetic anointing that was on Moses, they too began to prophesy. In fact, there were two men who did not make it to the Tabernacle and were somewhere in the camp. The prophetic influence was on them as well and they prophesied right where they were! "But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp" (Numbers 11:26).

There are many similar instances recorded elsewhere. We see the example of Saul, who though not a prophet prophesied under

the influence of the prophetic anointing. Right after he had been anointed as the first king of Israel, Saul met with a company of prophets and the Scripture records that "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them" (1 Samuel 10:10). A similar occurrence is recorded in 1 Samuel 19:18–24.

What can we learn from the preceding accounts? We understand that under the influence of the prophetic anointing even those not usually considered 'prophetic' can bring forth words of prophecy. When there is a "prophetic environment," so to speak, an environment where the prophetic is welcomed, eagerly desired and encouraged, it becomes easy for every believer to flow in the prophetic. There are many ways by which the prophetic anointing can be released and caused to cover an entire gathering of God's people. When there is a strong prophetic influence present among a gathering of God's people, many of the saints will be moved upon by the Holy Spirit and given thoughts and messages to bring forth in prophecy. In fact this should be encouraged and even earnestly desired since the apostle Paul did encourage the church saying, "Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy ..." (1 Corinthians 14:39).

Transfer of the Prophetic Anointing

Another important fact we discover in the Old Testament is that of the transfer or impartation of prophetic anointing. We see this initially with Moses and the 70 elders. When Moses complained about the weight of the responsibility he had to carry, the Lord said that He would take of the Spirit that rested on Moses and put it on the 70 elders (Numbers 11:16,17). This was an impartation of one aspect or dimension of Moses' anointing, primarily of leadership. Although the 70 elders prophesied when the anointing came upon them initially, they did not continue doing so. Rather the anointing for leadership, characterized by wisdom was upon them to help Moses in discharging his leadership responsibilities. The same thing happened when Moses

laid hands on Joshua, his successor (Numbers 27:18–22). "Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses" (Deuteronomy 34:9). We do not see Joshua moving in the fullness of prophetic anointing as Moses did. One dimension of Moses' prophetic anointing—that of leadership and wisdom—was imparted to Joshua.

The mentoring relationship which the fiery prophet, Elijah, had with his successor Elisha is well known, especially the events surrounding the impartation of a double portion of the Spirit's anointing on Elijah to Elisha. The Lord spoke to Elijah telling him to anoint Elisha "as prophet in your place" (1 Kings 19:16). So Elijah went and looked for Elisha and when he found him, "Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him" (Vs. 19). Elisha understood the significance of what the prophet had done. After taking care of some final duties "he arose and followed Elijah and became his servant" (Vs. 21). Elisha was no doubt aware of his calling to be a prophet to take Elijah's place. And it is quite possible that he had a desire to walk in a double measure of his mentor's anointing. Elisha must have kept this in his heart and made sure that at the right time he presented this request to Elijah. When the time had come for Elijah to be taken away into heaven by a whirlwind, Elisha would not let go of his mentor. He followed him from Gilgal, to Bethel, to Jericho and across Jordan, even though Elijah requested him to stay back. Perhaps, it finally occurred to Elijah that Elisha was 'after' something. So after they had crossed over the River Jordan (supernaturally), "Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me"" (2 Kings 2:9). Elisha wanted twice the measure of the prophetic anointing that rested upon Elijah. Now if giving a double portion was as simple as laying hands and praying a prayer over someone, I am sure all of us would be quick to lay hands on ourselves

and give ourselves a double portion every day and quickly multiply the anointing on our own lives. The truth is that a double portion can never be imparted by man. You cannot give what you do not have. A double portion has to be received directly from God. Elijah gave Elisha one prophetic requirement to receive a double portion. He responded to Elisha's request for a double potion saying, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so" (Vs. 10). This was a prophetic condition and was Elisha's final test of focus. All along, Elisha had remained very focused on following Elijah. No one could deter him from being with his mentor. This was the final test—to keep his focus on his mentor and the anointing he carried, even when there would be "supernatural distractions" such as the chariot and horses of fire, the whirlwind and an open heaven. He had to demonstrate that he really desired the double portion. Elisha passed the ultimate focus test. Once Elijah had been caught up into heaven and Elisha returned with the mantle of Elijah, the sons of the prophets said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha" (Vs. 15). As we examine the ministry of Elisha, we observe that indeed there are twice as many miracles recorded through his ministry than that of his predecessor Elijah. One can pursue and receive a double portion of the anointing on a servant of God, directly from God.

Centuries later John the Baptist came in "the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). When Jesus referred to John the Baptist, He said "Elijah has come already" (Matthew 17:10–13) and there will be a time in the future when Elijah will come again before the day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5,6). It is interesting to note that the spirit and power of Elijah was still available centuries after the man had died and gone, and will be available again at a future time. This teaches us that the mantles and anointing that the Holy Spirit placed on people in times past are still available today. We can carry a similar anointing and gifting as those in the Bible and as those who have gone before

us. The Holy Spirit who does not change over time can reproduce similar gifts and anointing in us that are relevant to our day and time. Another point of interest is that although John the Baptist walked in the spirit and power of Elijah, there is no record of him performing supernatural miracles like Elijah. John the Baptist walked in one specific aspect of Elijah's anointing which was to turn the hearts of people back to the Lord and prepare them for the Lord.

Through these accounts, we understand that one or more dimensions of the prophetic anointing on one individual can be transferred to another. While it is God who calls, appoints and anoints prophets, He may choose to use human agency to train, impart and activate the prophetic in people.

Prophetic Ministry Toward Leaders and Rulers

We see especially in the Old Testament that prophets and kings interacted with each other—some on good terms and others on not so good terms. Samuel as a prophet was instrumental in selecting and anointing the first two kings of Israel. David relied significantly on prophets in his reign, initially on prophet Samuel, and later on other prophets including Nathan, Gad who was also called the "king's seer" or "David's seer" (2 Samuel 24:11, 1 Chronicles 21:9), Heman and Jeduthun, both also referred to as the king's seer (1 Chronicles 25:5, 2 Chronicles 35:15). God used these prophets in different ways in David's life. They brought correction when David had sinned before God, they served in worship before God, and they inquired and provided direction from God. About Heman, the king's seer, and his sons, 1 Chronicles 25:5 says, "they supported and assisted him in his divinely appointed work" (The Message Bible). David had a very healthy relationship with the prophets around him. This is a wonderful example of prophets playing a supporting role to those in 'marketplace' leadership.

Moses, Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist were prophets who confronted wicked kings and rulers during their time. Prophets like Haggai and Zechariah were instrumental in encouraging and empowering political leaders and motivating people during their time. Joseph and Daniel demonstrated God's wisdom and power before foreign kings and rulers.

We can expect God to use the prophetic ministry to affect political leaders, marketplace leaders and others in positions of power and influence in our world today. In fact, God is doing this!

Demonic Opposition to Prophetic Ministry

To every genuine work of God, satan has a counterfeit. The counterfeit to the prophetic is the demonic works of witchcraft, divination, fortune-telling and all other means to connect to the spirit world to receive power, inspired messages and foretell events. As we begin to move in an increased measure of the prophetic, we know that satanic counterfeits will want to come against us in one form or another.

Moses encountered demonic opposition in Egypt. When Aaron threw down Moses' rod, the rod of God which turned into a snake, the Bible records, "But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods " (Exodus 7:11,12). The sorcerers and magicians of Egypt were able to oppose Moses in the first three miracles but thereafter they were no match to the power of God. While we must not be surprised that today's sorcerers and witches can demonstrate counterfeit prophetic signs, we must press into greater depths of the prophetic and manifest the overwhelmingly powerful God that we serve.

Perhaps the one Old Testament prophet who suffered the most from demonic opposition would likely be the prophet Elijah. He lived at a time when the nation was led by king Ahab and his wife Jezebel, who were both extremely wicked and were Baal worshippers. Witchcraft and Baal worship was at its height during this time. "Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord" (1 Kings 18:13), promoted, supported and entertained the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). Jezebel filled the land with her harlotries and witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22). Imagine having to be a prophet at such a time. This was Elijah's task!

Elijah demonstrated such boldness, authority and power, perhaps second only to Moses, in the Old Testament. He fearlessly confronted Ahab and Jezebel's prophets of Baal and Asherah. Elijah saw a powerful victory on Mount Carmel over the prophets of Baal and then prayed through, to bring rain at the end of over three years of drought.

But right after this powerful demonstration of God's glory, Elijah, the prophet of God is overwhelmed with fear, discouragement, despair and ready to die—all because Jezebel vowed to kill him in 24 hours (1 Kings 19). What Elijah was fighting against was not Jezebel, but the demonic powers she represented and had at her disposal. This is referred to as the Jezebel spirit. The Jezebel spirit is all of the demonic expressions seen through the woman Jezebel—witchcraft, lying, deceiving, seducing, controlling, manipulating, provoking and spying spirits—that work together against those in prophetic ministry. The demonic opposition that Elijah faced was so intense that he was ready to quit. God had to restore Elijah and send him back on his assignment.

In the New Testament Book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus is speaking to the church at Thyatira, and refers to the working of the spirit of Jezebel in that local church. The Lord Jesus commends the

church for their love, service, endurance and work. However He says, "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (Revelation 2:20). The spirit of Jezebel was operating in that local church through teaching and seduction, leading people into sexual sin and idolatry. This shows us that the Jezebel spirit is still operative in our day and time. The spirit of Jezebel could manifest itself in the church through one more operations including but not limited to witchcraft, lying, deceiving, seducing, controlling, manipulating, provoking, and spying. God's people, especially those who lead local congregations, and those moving in the prophetic should be quick to identify, stop and dismantle the spirit of Jezebel. Intimidation is a form of manipulation and is an expression of witchcraft.

Public Ministry, Personal Obedience and Ministry Association

In 1 Kings 13, is recorded a very interesting incident about a prophet from Judah who went and prophesied to king Jeroboam. King Jeroboam wanted to have the prophet apprehended, but instead "his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD" (1 Kings 13:4,5). King Jeroboam did a quick about-turn, seemingly repented, had his hand restored and then invited the prophet over for some refreshments and a reward. "But the man of God said to the king, "If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.' So he

went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel" (Vs 8–10).

Later, an older prophet comes along and lies to this junior prophet, and gets the junior prophet to change his plans, to go home with him and have a meal. At the table, "the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back; and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, "Thus says the Lord: 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord, and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water," your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.'" So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse. And there, men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard it, he said, "It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the Lord. Therefore the Lord has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke to him" (Vs 20–26).

There are important lessons we learn from this incident. We learn that success in public ministry, as a prophet, does not exempt one from personal obedience to God. While this unnamed man of God from Judah demonstrated great accuracy and power in public prophetic ministry, disobedience to what God had spoken to him at a personal level, cost him his life. We also learn that ministry association must never supersede personal obedience

to God. God has given this prophet from Judah a specific word of instruction. While the prophet did not allow king Jeroboam to influence him in disobeying God, he allowed his 'ministry association' or affiliation with a more senior prophet, whom he may have respected, to cause him to move away from the word God had spoken into his life. Further, we learn that affirmation should not always become affiliation. The junior prophet was affirmed or recognized by a senior prophet. However, the junior prophet made the mistake of aligning himself (in some way becoming associated or affiliated) with the senior prophet and this cost him his life and ministry. While affirmation from senior leaders and people of God is nice, it does not mean that just because they affirm us we need to align ourselves and become connected to them. Ministry alignment and ministry association should be of the Spirit of God.

Many Prophets, Diverse Experiences

Looking across the Old Testament and scanning the experiences of the prophets and their ministries, we conclude that there is no set form or pattern for prophetic ministry. We see a variety of experiences and expressions to prophetic ministry. The only common factor is that God was speaking to people through the prophets, which is what was important.

We make note here of a few additional expressions to receiving inspiration from the Lord.

The burden of the word of the LORD

Some of the prophets, specifically Isaiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zechariah and Malachi expressed the word of the Lord as "the burden."

The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw (Isaiah 13:1)

This is the burden which came in the year that King Ahaz died (Isaiah 14:28)

The burden against Moab (Isaiah 15:1)

The burden against Damascus (Isaiah 17:1)

The burden against Egypt (Isaiah 19:1)

The burden against the Wilderness of the Sea (Isaiah 21:1)

The burden against Dumah. He calls to me out of Seir, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" (Isaiah 21:11)

The burden against Arabia (Isaiah 21:13)

The burden against the Valley of Vision (Isaiah 22:1)

The burden against Tyre (Isaiah 23:1)

The burden against the beasts of the South (Isaiah 30:6)

This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are among them (Ezekiel 12:10)

The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite (Nahum 1:1)

The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw (Habakkuk 1:1)

The burden of the word of the Lord against the land of Hadrach, and Damascus its resting place (For the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the Lord) (Zechariah 9:1)

The burden of the word of the Lord against Israel (Zechariah 12:1)

The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi (Malachi 1:1)

The Hebrew word used in all the instances for 'burden' is *'massa'* and is typically used in the sense of responsibility or weight of a task that has to be done. This tells us that sometimes the word of the Lord can come to us as a "burden," a deep sense of responsibility of saying, doing or releasing something for an individual or a people. Isaiah and Habakkuk say that they "saw" (Hebrew word *"chazah"* to perceive, have a vision of) the burden. The revelation they perceived became a deep burden, a responsibility which they had to speak forth to the people.

The hand of the Lord

The prophet Ezekiel had very unusual prophetic experiences through which he received the word of the Lord. The phrase "the hand of the Lord" is used often throughout the Book of Ezekiel in connection with him receiving the word of the Lord or having a prophetic experience.

Ezekiel 1:3
The word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.

Ezekiel 3:14
So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Ezekiel 3:22
Then the hand of the LORD was upon me there, and He said to me, "Arise, go out into the plain, and there I shall talk with you."

Ezekiel 8:1
And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there.

Ezekiel 33:22
Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the man came who had escaped. And He had opened my mouth; so when he came to me in the morning, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.

Ezekiel 37:1
The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.

Ezekiel 40:1
In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there.

If someone were to place their hand upon you, either on your head or around your shoulder, it is something that you can feel and would be very aware of. So the hand of the Lord coming upon, describes a tangible awareness, a sensing or recognition in the spirit of the presence God coming upon or moving upon one to convey a message.

The Spirit lifted me

Another unique experience that Ezekiel describes often in his book is that of the Spirit lifting him up and taking him around to cause him to hear or see things. While it is not absolutely clear whether Ezekiel was moved about physically, or whether he travelled in the spirit or whether it was in visions, it appears that it was most likely in visions that he actually travelled in and through different places, heard and saw, what the Lord wanted to reveal to him.

Ezekiel 3:12
Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: "Blessed is the glory of the LORD from His place!"

Ezekiel 3:14
So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Ezekiel 8:3
He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes to jealousy.

Ezekiel 11:1
Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the East Gate of the LORD's house, which faces eastward; and there at the door of the gate were twenty-five men, among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

Ezekiel 43:5
The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

A Sense of Seriousness

The prophetic ministry carried with it a deep sense of seriousness, especially when a people or nation had utterly gone astray from the true and living God. God had given such a strong mandate to both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, because they had to prophesy to a rebellious people. It was not going to be easy to prophesy in such a hostile environment.

Jeremiah 1:17,19
Therefore prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you," says the LORD, "to deliver you."

Ezekiel 3:17–21
Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his

wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.

A prophet carries immense responsibility toward God and toward the people he is sent to. God requires of us to speak His word faithfully and at the time He wants it spoken. He holds us accountable for the word He wants us to deliver. We may not find ourselves in conditions and situations similar to what Jeremiah and Ezekiel had when they had to prophesy. People had wandered away from God and become hostile toward genuine prophets of God. However, we do need to grasp the seriousness with which we must handle the prophetic word, that God releases to us to deliver to his people.

Warnings and Judgments

An important part of prophetic ministry was to bring warning and announcement of divine judgments. We see several prophets bringing warning to individuals, kings, cities and kingdoms. We must keep in mind that—whether it is a warning where God announces a consequence when people do not change their ways, or whether it is judgment where God has made up His mind on what He is about to do, in both situations, if people repent and turn to God, He will always extend mercy. Perhaps an incident that illustrates this so well is that of king Ahab and prophet Elijah. Ahab and Jezebel conspired and killed Naboth the owner of a vineyard that Ahab wanted for himself. Here is what happens next: "Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of

Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours." 'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free. I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and made Israel sin' (1 Kings 21:17–22). This was a pronouncement of judgment. There seemed to be no opportunity for Ahab to repent for what he had done. He was indeed a very evil man. Here is the rest of the record: "But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house" (1 Kings 21:25–29). When Ahab, being as wicked as he is, repented at the pronouncement of Judgment, God decided to defer part of the judgment to a later time. God's warning and judgments are always intended to turn people back to Himself and not intended to drive people away from Him.

When God Refused to Speak

We see in the Old Testament certain situations when the Lord refused to speak His counsel to leaders through prophets.

Rebellion

1 Samuel 28:6
And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

Saul had strayed into rebellion and was moving further away from God. At such a moment, even the prophets were unable to receive a word from the Lord for Saul to help him.

Idolatry

Ezekiel 14:1–3
Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?

The other occasion when God refused to answer to leaders through a prophet was because the leaders were into idolatry and practicing all kinds of sinful things. God chose not to answer them.

We are not implying here that all silence from God is because of rebellion or idolatry. Sometimes God keeps silent simply because He wishes to speak to us on another occasion or through some other means than through a prophetic word.

The Spirit of God Moving Through Old Testament Prophets

1 Peter 1:10–12
Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have

preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

2 Peter 1:20,21
Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us that is was the Spirit of Christ working in the Old Testament prophets who enabled them to prophesy beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the things that would follow. These prophets prophesied hundreds of years ahead of their time with significant details of the Messiah and what He would do.

Prophecy is simply speaking as we are moved (carried along) by the Holy Spirit.

The LORD also used the Old Testament prophets to assemble a major portion of the Scriptures that we have today. Since all Scripture was given by inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16), it is prophetic in essence. This understanding is corroborated by passages such as Romans 16:26 where we find the term "prophetic scriptures" and 2 Peter 1:20,21.

Difference Between Old Testament and New Testament Prophetic Experiences

It is wonderful to consider that the Anointing—referring to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit—is still the same across the Testaments. He has not changed. The same Holy Spirit who moved so wonderfully through Old Testament prophets is moving through present-day prophets and saints in the Church. So we must be open to all of the prophetic experiences and expressions released by the Spirit of Christ as revealed in the Old Testament.

We do recognize that there is some element of difference across the Testaments. In the Old Testament where the Holy Spirit did not indwell every person and where they did not have all the Holy Scriptures, they depended heavily on the prophetic ministry for guidance and direction from God. However, in the New Testament, with every believer having the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are all led by the Spirit of God who speaks to us in our own spirits. We are guided by the written Scriptures and the inner leading of the Spirit. Every believer has the opportunity to become a prophetic person, someone who can hear what the Spirit of God is saying.



PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

We now move into the New Testament, to do a quick overview of the operation and manifestation of the prophetic anointing.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist was among the last of the prophets of the Old Testament period. He came in "the spirit and power of Elijah," 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). The "spirit and power of Elijah" is that of a forerunner, a 'way-preparer.' Elijah prepared the way for Elisha who carried a double portion of the anointing. It was Elisha who anointed Jehu as king during whose time Jezebel and Baal worship was destroyed from Israel (2 Kings: 9, 10). Similarly, John the Baptist was anointed with that dimension of Elijah's prophetic anointing to "go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins" (Luke 1:76). "The Elijah anointing of the forerunner" will once again be in operation in and through the Church, to prepare the bride for the coming of the Bridegroom.

The Lord Jesus spoke very highly of John the Baptist. To the crowds that followed Him, Jesus said: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'behold, i send my messenger

before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'" Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 11:7–15). While all the Old Testament prophets pointed ahead to the coming Messiah, John the Baptist was the only prophet who could proclaim that the Kingdom of God had come and point to the Messiah saying, "This is the One." When John completed his assignment, he gladly took the backstage as he informed his audience, "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:28–30). John's unique assignment and his faithfulness to the assignment was key to his greatness.

Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth

The Lord Jesus, during His earthly ministry, walked as a Prophet among other things. He is our Chief Prophet. With reference to the Lord Jesus, Moses had declared many centuries earlier that, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (Deuteronomy 18:15; see also vs. 18,19; John 1:45; Acts 3:22,23). The Lord Jesus made an indirect reference to Himself as a prophet when He said, "No prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24). People recognized the Lord Jesus as a prophet. After He raised the dead boy in the city of Nain, the people glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen

up among us;" and, "God has visited His people" (Luke 7:16). When He rode in to Jerusalem on a donkey, the Bible records that "all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matthew 21:10,11). When Jesus joined the two men on their way to Emmaus, Cleopas explained that the latest news in Jerusalem was about "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:19).

Through the prophetic anointing, the Lord knew the hearts and lives of people (Matthew 9:4; Luke 11:17). He revealed the true character and potential of His followers (John 1:42,47). He exposed the secret thoughts and sins of people (John 4:16–19). There were supernatural manifestations of power bringing deliverance and healings. He prophesied and revealed events of the last days ahead of time (Matthew chapters 24,25).

The Early Church

Following the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the church was birthed and established at Jerusalem. Starting with the 12 apostles, the rest of the 120, the Spirit of God was at work in the church at Jerusalem raising up many bold witnesses like Stephen, evangelists like Philip and many prophets. Following the persecution as recorded in Acts 8, the Gospel was carried beyond Jerusalem into places like Samaria, Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. A strong church was established at Antioch where Barnabas and Paul served. A prophetic team came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Acts 11:27–30 records: "And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This

they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

Apparently after the visit of the prophetic team from Jerusalem, there must have been a powerful impartation and stirring up of the prophetic in the life of the Antioch church. We see shortly thereafter, the Spirit of God raising up prophets and teachers at the church in Antioch. This happens within a period of 2–3 years since the start of the church, which is quite impressive. Acts 13:1 states, "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers …" Barnabas and Saul were listed among these men. As these prophets and teachers fasted and ministered to the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke to them and instructed them to send out Barnabas and Saul for the work He wanted them to do (Acts 13:1–3). The Holy Spirit desires to do the same in our day. He seeks to raise all kinds of ministries and ministry gifts—apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors, and others—from within a local church.

We need to recognize and encourage such men or women whom the Holy Spirit is raising up. As a local church becomes well equipped with resident ministers, the body is strengthened and enriched. If the Holy Spirit sees fit, He may choose to call people from a local church and extend their realm of responsibility beyond the perimeters of a local body to minister to larger portions of Christ's Body or to labor in gathering the harvest in different regions. We should be welcome to such changes.

As the Gospel began to reach the Gentile world with non-Jewish people becoming believers, there arose a question whether the Gentiles who become believers must also follow Jewish customs. This led to the first general Council of the Church, held at Jerusalem, where the apostles, elders and others like Paul and Barnabas met to determine the mind of the Lord (Acts 15). After much deliberation, James, the leader of the Jerusalem church made the final verdict,

which they put in writing. They then appointed prophets Judas and Silas to carry this letter to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. "So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words" (Acts 15:30–32). So we see other prophets in Jerusalem like Judas and Silas. We also note how prophetic ministry not only brings the doctrine of God but also encouragement and strength to the people of God.

The Early Church seemed to have understood that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was for both "sons and daughters" and "menservants and maidservants." They did not hinder women from prophesying. Acts 21:8,9 informs us that Paul and his companions stayed with Philip the evangelist, the same man who was instrumental in preaching Christ at the city of Samaria. Philip had four daughters who prophesied.

Agabus, the prophet from Jerusalem seems to have had a well-established prophetic ministry. He had prophesied earlier of a famine in Acts 11. We read of him once again in Acts 21. This time Agabus comes with a word from God for the apostle Paul. "And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (Acts 21:10,11). Paul of course, had already been warned by the Spirit about what was going to happen in Jerusalem. This was a repeat warning to Paul through a prophet.

The Gift of Prophecy

The New Testament teaches us about the Gifts of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1–11
Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Prophecy is one of the manifestations or gifts of the Spirit listed above. Prophecy in its most basic form and common expression is simply speaking "edification and exhortation and comfort to men" (1 Corinthians 14:3). "He who prophesies edifies the church" (1 Corinthians 14:4). We will delve a lot deeper into the gift of prophecy in a later chapter. All believers can manifest the gift of prophecy.

The Grace Gift of Prophecy

Further, prophecy is also listed as one of the grace gifts distributed among believers.

Romans 12:4–8
For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy

in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

All believers have some function in the Body of Christ and these functions differ from one another. These functions represent the role they play in the Body, the ways in which they serve and give to the Body, and the ways in which they are connected (that is how they relate) to the rest of the Body of Christ. There are many different functions, some of which are listed in Romans 12. This is not a complete list but should be seen more as a representative list of the many diverse 'activities' (1 Corinthians 12:6), with the same Lord working in and through each believer. Prophecy is listed as one of the grace gifts that empower specific believers' functions in the Body of Christ. There are specific functions in the Body that require the empowering of the grace gift of prophecy to be performed adequately. These gifts have to be exercised according to the faith we have. However, we also see that there can be varied measures of the same grace gift. Ephesians 4:7 teaches us that, "to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." While people may have the same grace gift, depending on the level of faith and the measure of the gift, the expressions will differ. But we can all grow in grace and faith and in the measure of the gifts we walk in by demonstrating faithfulness and pursuing God. Hence, believers can grow in their grace gifts and manifest stronger levels of prophetic expression.

The Ministry Gift of Prophet

Ephesians 4:11–13

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:28

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

The Lord Jesus Himself has given gifts to some men and women in the Church to fulfill specific ministries. There are five ministry gifts in the Church—that of the apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, and evangelist. The Church, that is the Body of Christ, is still here on the earth and still needs to be edified. The saints still need to be equipped. Therefore, all of the ministry gifts that the Lord appointed in His Body still exist. There are those who are called to be prophets and who have the ministry gift of the prophet. According to 1 Corinthians 12:28, "God has appointed these in the church" and we do not see anywhere in the New Testament Scriptures the appointing of apostles, prophets and other ministry gifts in the Body of Christ being discontinued. So apostles and prophets are still in operation today.

The prophetic ministry gift (or as some call it, the "office of a prophet") as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11,12 and in 1 Corinthians 12:28 is not available to everyone but is assigned to some by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is not given by man or some organization. The ministry gift of prophet, in addition to manifesting prophetic ministry also carries with it governmental responsibility and authority in the Body of Christ.

The household of God is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). These founding New Testament apostles and prophets were unique in that they were given the revelation of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. As Paul wrote, " ... the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles

and prophets" (Ephesians 3:4,5). Those who are raised up as prophets today do not walk in the same capacity as the founding prophets, in that they bring no additional doctrinal revelation about the mysteries of God, for the doctrinal foundations have already been laid. All other New Testament prophets operate upon the foundation and within the perimeters of the revelation given through the founding apostles and prophets. However, both the foundational and revelatory dimension of the prophetic anointing is still operative through present day prophets. Present-day prophets may be used by God to help lay or rebuild foundations in local churches by bringing the Word of the Lord to confirm or clarify a God-given vision, to provide direction as the local church progresses in God's purpose, to reveal where they are in that journey and to bring or restore order. However, all of this must be done in subjection to the local leadership, which is described in a later chapter. The ministry gift of prophet will emphasize laying strong doctrinal foundations (Ephesians 2:20), hearing from God and announcing new moves and directives of the Spirit (Acts 13:1,2), announcing the mind of God to the larger Body of Christ, to cities and nations (Acts 11:27–30); bring prophetic insight to solve problems in local church government or in the wider Body of Christ (Acts 15:2,6,26,32).

Distinguishing the Three

Therefore, we can identify at least three distinguishable operations of the prophetic in the Church today—the simple gift of prophecy, the grace gift of prophecy and the ministry gift of the prophet. While all three are the operations and manifestations of the same Holy Spirit who is the prophetic anointing, they are distinguishable in terms of realms of influence, measure of anointing and boundaries of operation. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit as expressed through the gift of prophecy is available to all believers and must be earnestly desired. The grace gift of prophecy is given to some

to fulfill their membership function in the Body. Only some are called and authorized by the Lord Jesus with the ministry gift of prophet.

In general, the gift of prophecy and the grace gift of prophecy in a believer operate within a local community of believers. The one operating in the ministry gift of a prophet will serve a local body and may also have a wider realm of influence (i.e., a wider ministry) to other believers if the Lord so desires.

Typically, the gift of prophecy and the grace gift of prophecy are used to bring forth words of edification, exhortation and comfort. The prophetic office has greater authorization to bring forth words of direction, correction, instruction and motivation and is often accompanied by an impartation of anointing and gifts.

From a practical and observational perspective we notice that all believers, those flowing in the gift of prophecy and those with the grace gift of prophecy, if properly trained and equipped can become what we call as **prophesying believers**. These are people who learn to integrate the prophetic in whatever role and function they have and consistently flow in the prophetic. For example, a businessman can learn to integrate the prophetic (i.e., listening to God and doing what God says) in his business. He is a 'prophesying businessman!' A leader, in whatever capacity of leadership can integrate the prophetic into his responsibility. He is a 'prophetic leader!' We need to encourage the rising up of more and more prophesying believers. As prophesying believers consistently flow in the prophetic, glorifying God and blessing others, they begin to manifest **prophetic ministry**. People now recognize and receive from the prophetic flow and expressions through these believers.

The Gifts of the Spirit and the Prophetic

Among the nine gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7–11, from observation, we notice that four of these gifts—the gift of prophecy, the gift of the word of wisdom, the gift of the word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits—typically operate in the expression of the prophetic. The three gifts—the gift of the word of wisdom, the gift of the word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits are revelatory gifts, in that they reveal something. The gift of the word of wisdom is a piece of divine wisdom that is supernaturally imparted to a believer that reveals the mind, purpose and will of God and is used to solve problems, determine the right course of action and so on. The gift of the word of knowledge is a supernatural impartation of a piece of divine knowledge that reveals facts of things, past or present. The gift of the discerning of spirits is the supernatural ability to see either into the spirits of people or into the spirit realm. Usually when one is ministering prophetically, at any given time, one or more of these four gifts will flow together. They come as one package and flow as many streams into one river of prophetic expression.

Prophetic Presbytery

In a somewhat similar fashion to the company of prophets in the Old Testament, we see records of prophetic presbytery in the New Testament. In 1Timothy 4:14 Paul writes to Timothy saying, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership." Similar to what happened in Acts 13:1–3, we see that a group of elders or presbyters laid hands on him, ministering to him with prophetic words and releasing into him spiritual gifts. This practice ought to continue today in local churches when a group of spiritual leaders can flow together in prophecy to confirm, ordain, release, impart and activate men and women into the call of God on their lives.



THE PROPHETIC WORD

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THE PROPHETIC WORD

There are several ways by which the prophetic is released. These include:

(a) Prophetic word- where the message is released through words.

(b) Prophetic intercession-where prayer is made based on what is being revealed.

(c) Prophetic power-where the demonstration of the power of God accompanies the release of the prophetic.

(d) Prophetic song-where the prophetic is released in praise, worship and music.

(e) Prophetic action-where the message from God is expressed through something that is done or enacted.

This classification is purely for training purposes only. In practice God does not compartmentalize these. Instead in real life, all these dimensions of prophetic expression are interwoven. For instance, there may be a prophetic flow wherein a part may be spoken, a part may come in song, another part in prayer and yet another in dance. And the power of God may accompany this entire prophetic flow, so that lives are touched and transformed when this is being released.

In this chapter, we discuss the prophetic word, which is simply the message from God being released in words, in the language of the audience. Understanding the powerful impact a true prophetic word can have will motivate us to pursue God for genuine prophetic expressions.

The Prophetic Word Brings Edification, Exhortation and Comfort

"He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men" (1 Corinthians 14:3). To 'edify' means to build up. Or as the Amplified Bible puts it, it is to cause "constructive spiritual progress." To 'exhort' is to encourage and it comes from the Greek word *'paraklesis'* which according to the Vine's Dictionary means "a calling to one's side." The word 'comfort' means to console and comes from the Greek word *'paramuthia'* which is primarily "a speaking closely to anyone" and again according to Vine's "denotes a greater degree of tenderness" than *'paraklesis.'* Vine's also points out the difference in the nature of these two, by saying that to exhort is "always prospective, looking to the future, in contrast to the meaning to comfort, which is retrospective, having to do with trial experienced," The prophetic word is a word in season causing constructive spiritual progress, or bringing encouragement or consolation.

The Prophetic Word Reveals One's True Character and Potential

The revelation gifts of the Spirit—the gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and discerning of spirits—are an integral part of prophetic ministry. Through the Spirit of revelation, the prophetic word reveals the true character and potential of a person. As an illustration, recall Nathanael's first encounter with the Lord in Galilee. Philip, Nathanael's brother, told him about Jesus of Nazareth and urged him to meet Jesus. As Nathanael approached the Lord, "Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"" (John 1:47). This word revealed Nathanael's character. Jesus had never met Nathanael before, but yet by the Spirit He knew that Nathanael was a man of integrity, a

man "in whom there is no guile nor deceit nor falsehood nor duplicity" (Amplified Bible). In the same chapter, we read about Andrew bringing his brother Simon to the Lord. Verse 42 says that when Jesus looked at Simon, he said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas (which is translated, A Stone)". Here, the Lord revealed Simon's true character and potential by giving him a new name. He was revealing the character and potential of Simon as one who had the ability to be solid, firm, unshakable as a rock, representing steadfastness and commitment.

In like manner, God can cause someone to see his or her true potential through the prophetic word. Many in the Church are sitting on the sidelines as spectators because they have failed to recognize the gifts and abilities that have been placed within them. The prophetic word can help take the 'blinders' off and help them see their true potential in God. At times, the impartation of some spiritual gifting may accompany the prophetic word to make the recipient aware of the ability being given to him (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6) and therefore his enhanced potential in God.

The Prophetic Word Brings a Revelation of God's Plans and Purposes

God speaks to us by His Word and by His Spirit. Every child of God has the privilege of being led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14). The Holy Spirit reveals to us the mind and will of God (John 16:14,15). The inner witness of the Spirit is both a revelation and confirmation of the plans and purposes of God in any matter facing any of God's children. This inner witness is always in harmony with the Word of God, and is both necessary and sufficient to understand God's will and direction. However as a 'bonus,' the Lord may choose to send someone with a prophetic word to add to the confirmation and direction He has already given. As an illustration, (although in a very sober context), we read in Acts 20 where the apostle Paul had set

his heart on going to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit by His inner witness had made it clear that trouble awaited Paul in Jerusalem. Paul shared what he felt when he told the Ephesian elders, "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me" (Acts 20:22,23). In the following chapter, on two occasions, we read about people warning Paul through the Spirit about his trip to Jerusalem. When Paul stopped by at Tyre, there were certain disciples who "told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). From there, Paul along with his companions stopped at Caesarea. Agabus, an established prophet from Judea came down to Caesarea and when he met with Paul "he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'"" (Acts 21:11). What Paul heard on both occasions was not new to him. The Holy Spirit had already warned him personally. However, the Lord was providing additional confirmation to Paul through the prophetic words that were brought to him.

A wonderful example of a father prophesying over his own son is seen when Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied over his son John, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:67,76–79). He was declaring the plan and purpose of God over his child by the Spirit.

On many occasions, the Lord may choose to provide confirmation and direction of His plans and purposes by means of

the prophetic word that is delivered to us. This can bring much encouragement to our hearts. However, many of us are laying too much emphasis on receiving confirmation by a prophetic word. We literally "sit around" until some prophet gives us a prophetic word. This is absolutely wrong. If God has spoken to you from His Word and by the gentle inner witness of His Spirit, revealing His plans and purposes, then that is all you need to obey God. The Scriptures do not tell us that we are to be led by prophetic words. Rather we are to be led by the Spirit who bears witness with our spirits. Sometimes people make the mistake of sitting around waiting for a prophetic word, which God never intends to send their way in the first place. God wants us to trust Him enough to obey Him when He speaks to us by His Word and the still small voice of His Spirit. As we do, God then usually send prophetic words of encouragement, confirmation and direction to us. Personally, if God moves on my heart by His Spirit to do something, I go do it. I neither need, nor do I seek a prophetic word as a confirmation. If God gives me a dream or a vision or sends a prophet my way to confirm what He has spoken by His Spirit, then that is a 'bonus.' We should obey God whether or not that prophetic word is delivered to us. However, we do know that the 'bonus' can be a great encouragement and blessing and thank God when it happens!

The Prophetic Word Stirs Up and Causes a Release of Faith

The prophetic word causes a release of faith in the hearts of people, which when acted upon brings a demonstration of the supernatural. The widow woman in Zarephath was ready to eat her last meal with her son in a time of famine, and then waste away and die (1 Kings 17). Then Elijah came along, sent by God, and said, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.'"

So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days (1 Kings 17:14,15).

We are also familiar with the story of Elisha and the widow with two sons, who had only one jar of oil left. As she acted on the prophet's instructions, the oil multiplied and filled many jars, which she sold, cleared all her debts and lived off for the rest of her life (2 Kings 4:1–7). There are several similar miracles recorded in the Bible where when people acted on a prophetic word, they experienced the supernatural. God works in similar ways today as well. King Jehoshaphat, as he led his people out to battle based on a prophetic promise, encouraged them saying, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20). The people marched in to battle and saw a supernatural victory.

The Prophetic Word Provides Motivation and Strength to Carry Out the Plans and Purposes of God

God uses the prophetic word to provide motivation and strength to carry out His will. Many times we are aware of what God wants us to do, and we set out to do it. At times, we could become slack in our work or discouraged, or even face hardships and difficulties. In such situations, the Lord may choose to stir us up, encourage and strengthen our hearts by prophetic words that are delivered to us. A good illustration of this is found in the events surrounding the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. The Jews at Jerusalem were forced to cease the work they were doing on the Temple. "Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia" (Ezra 4:24). The rebuilding work was on hold for about sixteen years. God then sent two prophets to provide motivation and strength for the people to get back to work after the many years

of discouragement. Ezra 5:1,2 reads, "Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them." About five years later, the rebuilding effort of the Temple was completed. The prophets were there throughout this time, encouraging the work. "So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel ..." (Ezra 6:14). It was in this context that the oft quoted and very encouraging prophecy of Zechariah 4:6,7 was given, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts, 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!""

The Prophetic Word Releases God's Power

The power of God operates when a true prophetic word is released. Healing, deliverance and miracles accompany prophetic proclamation. God always "confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers" (Isaiah 44:26). God stands ready to perform His word, spoken through the mouth of His prophetic people (Jeremiah 1:12).

The Prophetic Word Brings Correction and Restoration

We are accustomed to having prophecies of blessing and encouragement ministered to us. However, the Lord also uses the prophetic word to warn and correct us from our sin, and to restore

us into fellowship with Him and thus preserve us in the faith. God does not expose our errors to condemn or shame us. He does it because He wants to lovingly correct us so that we may be restored and preserved. We see examples of such prophetic words in Scripture being ministered to individuals and also to whole groups of people. As an illustration, remember that King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. He then arranged things in battle in such a way to have Uriah killed, so that he could have Bathsheba as his wife. "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. Then the Lord sent Nathan to David ..." (2 Samuel 11:27–12:1). David tried to cover up what he had done. But the *Lord* exposed and corrected him through Nathan the prophet. This caused David to repent (Psalm 51). He was restored and preserved when he did. God will use the prophetic word to bring correction and restoration among His people.

The Prophetic Word Causes Conviction, Repentance and Turning to God

While the preceding aspect of the prophetic word is directed toward God's people, God can also use the prophetic word to touch the lives of the unsaved bringing conviction to their hearts, causing them to repent and turn to God. The Scriptures in reference to the simple gift of prophecy manifested through the believer states, "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you" (1 Corinthians 14:24,25).

An apt case study to illustrate this is recorded in John 4, where Jesus meets the woman at the well in Samaria. As the Lord engages in a conversation with this woman, He says to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have

no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet" (John 4:16–19). Jesus did not know nor did He reveal everything about the one. However, this revelatory word brought conviction in the heart of this woman. She went back to her village and announced, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). Eventually she and many others in her village believed in Jesus.

The Prophetic Word Transforms Nations

Jeremiah's commission reveals the power of the prophetic word. "Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms. To root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:9,10). God's prophetic word released through Jeremiah's mouth would affect nations and kingdoms. In the spiritual realm, things over nations and kingdoms would be torn down, and that which God desires to be raised up would be planted and built, through the prophetic word. Very similar to the way God used Jeremiah, God may send some of His prophets to a local area, region or nation to uproot and destroy demonic strongholds by proclaiming God's prophetic word over that geographical area. They also build and plant the work of His kingdom in that region by proclaiming the word of the Lord.

When Ezekiel had his vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1–14), and prophesied to the dry bones and saw them come together, life being imparted to them and saw them rise up as a great army, he was prophesying over the nation of Israel. He was declaring their future transformation from being a scattered people to

becoming a people restored to their own land. Centuries passed by, but the power of that prophetic word remained intact and Israel was established as a nation.

The Prophetic Word Is Used in Warfare

Once you have been given a prophetic word you may need to use that word in spiritual warfare against demonic assignment against your life. Paul wrote to Timothy, "This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18). Using the prophetic words spoken over your life, you are empowered to fight a good spiritual fight and wage a good spiritual warfare. You begin to speak those prophecies over your life. You begin to pray and worship God that what He has spoken over your life will be fulfilled.



PROPHETIC INTERCESSION

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PROPHETIC INTERCESSION

An important aspect of the prophetic ministry surrounds intercession and petitioning God on behalf of others. In fact, the first time the word 'prophet' was used in the Old Testament, it was in connection with intercessory prayer. While Abraham and Sarah journeyed in their response to the call of God, they came to a place called Gerar. Abimelech, king of Gerar eyed Sarah and took her into his palace. However, God came to the king in a dream at night and warned him not to touch Sarah. God spoke to him and said, "Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live ..." (Genesis 20:7). Abimelech obeyed and restored Sarah to Abraham. Then when Abraham prayed for Abimelech, the Scriptures record that "God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife" (Vs. 17,18). In prophetic intercession, one prays the heart and mind of God for people. While all believers are called to pray for others, there are at least some outstanding features that characterize prayers made under the prophetic anointing. We discuss these in this chapter.

Prophetic Intercession Births Prayers that Delay or Avert God's Judgment

A prophet often stands before God on behalf of people, whether sinner or saint, to plead for God's mercy and favor upon them. The prophetic anointing carries with it a 'burden' or a 'moving' or a 'stirring' to pray for people or specific situations. When such a moving or stirring comes, one usually yields to it by going into prayer. As

one prays, one often receives a revelation of the details of the situation for which intercession is being made. In situations where there is impending judgment, such timely prayers can delay or avert God's sentence and instead cause grace and mercy to be released. In some situations, judgment cannot be avoided, but the form of judgment may be altered through prayer. There are numerous examples in Scripture, but mentioned here are only a few as illustrations.

Amos, who was just a shepherd and planter, was appointed by God to be a prophet to His people (Amos 7:14,15). During the eighth century BC, the northern kingdoms of Israel experienced great economic and political prosperity, perhaps the best since the days of King Solomon. However, while the nation prospered, the hearts of its people had wandered far from God. The people had strayed away from God's Word and given themselves to pleasure and self-indulgence. Among other things, idolatry and social injustice was rampant. It was at such a time that Amos was raised by God to be His spokesperson to the people. Amos was able to change God's method of judgment through his prayer. "Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, He formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop; indeed it was the late crop after the king's mowings. And so it was, when they had finished eating the grass of the land, that I said: "O Lord God, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!" So the Lord relented concerning this. "It shall not be," said the Lord. Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, the Lord God called for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory. Then I said: "O Lord God, cease, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!" So the Lord relented concerning this. "This also shall not be," said the Lord God" (Amos 7:1–6). We have here a record of Amos praying to alter two proposed forms of God's judgment. First the plague of locusts and second the devouring fire, both of which would have utterly ruined the nation. There are some things we must note. First, notice that

the prayers were in response to revelation received under the prophetic anointing. Amos said, "the Lord God showed me" and when he understood the meaning of what he saw, he made intercession for the people of Israel. Prophetic prayers are birthed out of such revelation received under the prophetic anointing. Second, note that the revelations disclosed the purpose and intent of God's heart. Prophetic prayers are based on an understanding of the Father's heart, His purposes and intentions. Third, note that in Verse 6, the title "the Lord GOD" meaning "the Sovereign Yahweh" is used. It is interesting to consider the fact that the Sovereign Lord would relent or change His mind in response to the prayer of a mortal man. What a wonderful privilege prayer is!

There were many occasions when Moses had to pray and intercede on behalf of the people of Israel so that God's judgment on them would be stayed (Exodus 32:9–14; Numbers 14:11–20; Deuteronomy 9:19,20; do examine these Scriptures in your Bible). "They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt. Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them" (Psalm 106:21,23).

Prophetic Intercession Births Prayers that Foil Satan's Attacks

As one intercedes under the prophetic anointing, very often one gains insight into the activity in the spirit realm. One is able to discern the strategies and schemes of the devil. With this understanding, one can pray and make intercession that will thwart the enemy's efforts. Prophetic intercessory prayer is a weapon of warfare that enables us to counteract and overthrow demonic powers over individuals, families, communities, cities and nations. Luke 22:31,32 illustrates this well, "And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has

asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." The Lord Jesus was able to discern the plans of the devil and his desire to shake Peter's faith. Recognizing this, the Lord prayed for Peter in advance, that he should be restored, continue in the faith and become a blessing to his brethren.

Prophetic intercessors serve as spiritual watchmen who stand guard in the spirit realm over God's people. With reference to prophet Moses, Hosea 12:13 states, "By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved." Israel was preserved through the leadership and intercession of Moses (Numbers 14:11–20) on many occasions. The Hebrew word used for 'preserve' is '*shamar'* = to hedge about (as with thorns), to guard, to protect, to watch, to beware, to keep from harm, damage, danger, or evil, and to save. For example, it is the same word used when Adam was told to keep *(shamar)* the garden (Genesis 2;15). Cain asks God if he his brother's keeper *(shamar)* in Genesis 4:9.

There is a protective dimension to the prophetic ministry. The preserving and guarding aspect of the prophetic ministry is needed in every local church. This is why the leadership in the church needs to be prophetic, so that they can successfully *'shamar'* God's people. In addition, we need many prophetic intercessors in the local church who will serve as spiritual watchmen to '*shamar'* God's people. The leadership through their prophetic teaching, preaching, leadership, and discernment can successfully guard the people of God. Prophetic intercessors through their prayers reinforce what the prophetic leadership of the local church is doing in preserving God's people. This helps defend the church against the schemes of the devil either in the form of sin, deception, legalism, worldliness, witchcraft and so on. Thus prophetic people are spiritual watchmen and keepers of God's people.

Prophetic Intercession Births Prayers that Release One's Destiny in God

Very often as one prays for another under the prophetic anointing, the Spirit of God reveals the plans and purposes of God for the one being prayed for. One simply follows the revelation and prays out the plans and purposes of God for the other. The effects of such prayers can be far-reaching, both in terms of setting things in motion in the realm of the spirit and in ministering to the one being prayed for.



PROPHETIC POWER

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6

PROPHETIC POWER

God's power, whether demonstrated through a believer or some ministry office—that of an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher—always brings great blessing to people and glory to God. However, it may be accurate to state that there are certain outstanding features to the power of God as demonstrated through the specific ministry gifts. For example, the power of God revealed through a pastor may be focused toward meeting the needs of the sheep as described in Ezekiel 34:1–4. God's power demonstrated through an evangelist is directed toward winning the lost and in the workings of healings and miracles as illustrated in Acts 8:5–7. God's power operating through an apostle is multi-functional, being directed toward advancing the frontiers of God's Kingdom; in establishing communities of believers; in bringing unity among the brethren and is accompanied by supernatural signs and wonders (Acts 19:11; Romans 15:16–21).

In this chapter, we discuss some characteristics of God's power revealed through the prophetic. This does not mean that God's power will not manifest in these ways through other ministries or kinds of anointing. Nor are we implying that those flowing in prophetic ministry will not be used in other dimensions of the supernatural. The following are highlights of prophetic power as seen in Scripture.

Prophetic Power Brings Deliverance to Captives

Prophetic ministry is often characterized by power that brings deliverance to those bound and oppressed. God used Moses, a prophet to bring His people out of bondage. While this was literal

slavery and bondage to oppressive rulers, we understand this to be a 'type' of deliverance from Satan's oppression. Prophetic power destroys demonic bondages and causes people to be set free.

Prophetic Power Confronts the 'Workings of Demons' as in False Doctrines, Spiritism and Witchcraft

A major thrust of Elijah's ministry was toward confronting the prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). Baal was the principal god of the Canaanite religion, a nature religion that used ritual prostitution as a kind of magic to achieve fertility of the ground. Asherah was a Canaanite goddess, Baal's consort. While these were obviously expressions of demonic activity, Elijah who was anointed as a prophet confronted them with the power of God. There is a sense of boldness and aggression that comes under the prophetic anointing that moves one to confront, expose and subdue demonic activity.

Prophetic Power Causes Unusual Miracles

We made a note of this as we discussed supernatural demonstrations when we surveyed the Old Testament prophets. We remarked that many unusual miracles that involved supernatural change of events, overriding natural laws and so on were often witnessed when prophetic power was demonstrated.

Prophetic Power Impacts National / Political Leaders

Very often God raises individuals whom He anoints with the prophetic anointing and sends them to influence and impact national leaders and decision makers. The Old Testament records many prophets whose ministry impacted kings and those in authority. Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Samuel, Nathan, Daniel are some of those who were used in

such manner. This does not mean that everyone who operates under the prophetic anointing will be used this way. Even under the prophetic anointing there are differing degrees (or measures) of the anointing, differing thrusts (or focus) of ministry, differing levels of responsibility, and so on. Therefore, God uses individuals as He sees fit and for His glory.



PROPHETIC SONG

7

7

PROPHETIC SONG

The prophetic is often released through song, worship and praise accompanied by creative expressions such as dance, drama, and other artistic abilities.

The Prophetic and Music

It is evident that the prophets usually prophesied, accompanied with musical instruments. As we saw during Samuel's time groups of prophets would prophesy accompanied with all kinds of instruments. For instance we have this record of Samuel informing Saul that when he got back to his city, "you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying" (1 Samuel 10:5).

Music is a key to help us step into the prophetic. Most of the time we tend to be "in the natural," hearing, saying and doing things in the natural. The right kind of music will help us to move into the Spirit and hear from God. The classic illustration of this is the incident when king Jehoshaphat and two other kings were going out to fight against the king of Moab. The three kings decided to inquire of prophet Elisha what the word of the Lord was. They approached Elisha to speak to them and this is what happened: "And Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you, nor see you. But now bring me a musician." Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. And he said, "Thus says the LORD: … " (2 Kings 3:14–

16). The musician must have been part of Elisha's school of prophets. So he would have known what to play and how to help Elisha step into the prophetic. The phrase "when the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him" unveils how music can help usher in the prophetic anointing to release the word of the Lord.

Musicians, worship leaders and others who participate in the worship ministry of local churches should learn to flow in the prophetic. They are not to be just song leaders or talented performers, rather people who can hear the heart of God and express God's thoughts and feelings through their song and music. During king David's time, we see the kind of singers and musicians who were appointed to serve in the Tabernacle of David. "Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the skilled men performing their service was: Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied according to the order of the king. Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp to give thanks and to praise the Lord. Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamti-Ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth. All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to exalt his horn. For God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. All these were under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the authority of the king. So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight.

And they cast lots for their duty, the small as well as the great, the teacher with the student" (1 Chronicles 25:1–8). There were 288 singers and musicians who were not only skillful but also trained in the songs of the Lord. Prophecy was integrated into their worship and music. They also encouraged and strengthened the king in his work.

Understanding the Power of Prophetic Worship

All that can be done through the prophetic word can also be released in song, since prophetic song is simply singing the word of the Lord. All that we have understood about the prophetic word can also be said of prophetic song. Prophetic songs can release edification, exhortation and comfort to people. Prophetic songs can reveal the plans and purposes of God. Prophetic songs can encourage a release of faith in God. Prophetic songs can be accompanied with a release of God's power for miracles, healings and deliverance. Prophetic songs can cause people to turn toward God in repentance. Prophetic songs can also affect nations and entire groups of people.

Four Kinds of Prophetic Expressions in Praise and Worship

The prophetic can be expressed in song and music in at least four different ways:

1. Prophetic songs to the Lord
2. Prophetic songs of exhortation to people (songs that the Lord sings to us)
3. Prophetic songs of declaration (proclamation) to demons, situations, people or over nations
4. Prophetic action accompanying one or more of the above

Prophetic songs to the Lord

The Holy Spirit can move on musicians and singers, and others to sing a spontaneous song to the Lord. This could be a love song, a song of praise, a song of worship and adoration, a song of prayer and intercession, a song of thanksgiving and so on.

There are several instances in Scripture where we are encouraged to sing a "new song" to the Lord.

Psalm 33:2,3
Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.

Psalm 40:3
He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD .

Psalm 96:1
Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth!

Psalm 98:1
Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

Psalm 144:9
I will sing a new song to You, O God; on a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You.

Psalm 149:1
Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints.

Isaiah 42:9,10
Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you coastlands and you inhabitants of them!

The word "new" in the Hebrew is the adjective *'chadash'* which means 'new' both in the sense of recent or fresh (as the opposite of old) and in the sense of something not previously existing (Vine's dictionary). This new song is often birthed when God does a 'new' thing in our lives, a new miracle, a new deliverance, a new declaration and so on. These new songs are songs that rise up out of our spirits, inspired by the Holy Spirit as praise unto our God. These are prophetic songs to the Lord.

There are songs the Lord gives to us to sing back to Him. In Revelation, we read about the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses, we know, is the song that Moses wrote. Therefore the song of the Lamb would be a song given through Jesus. These are the songs (or song) which the Lord wants His people to sing back to Him. "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested" (Revelation 15:3,4).

Prophetic songs to the Lord are also songs that the Lord Jesus sings to the Father. In Hebrew 2:12, the Lord Jesus *says: "I will declare your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly i will sing praise to you."* This is intriguing, as it is the Lord Jesus speaking these words. He says that among the believers who have been assembled together, He sings praise to the Father. When we flow in the Spirit of prophecy, we are able to flow with what the Lord Jesus is saying (Revelation 19:10). We then sing these songs, the songs of our Lord, released through the assembly, to the Father.

Prophetic songs of exhortation to people

Prophetic songs could be also songs that we sing to the people of God. These are songs that express what God is saying to His people. The apostle Paul admonished us, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Ephesians 5:18–20). He wrote once again in Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). We sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord, which are songs we sing to the Lord. We are also to speak, teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. It is generally understood that by singing psalms we mean singing the Word out of the Old Testament songbook of Psalms. Hymns are the songs that express biblical doctrine and themes. Spiritual songs are songs that arise spontaneously from the heart of man or under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These songs that come forth inspired by the Holy Spirit, which speak to, teach and encourage other believers are prophetic in nature.

There are also songs which the Lord Himself sings to us and over us His people. When we receive these songs and sing them, we are releasing prophetic songs to His people. God instructed Moses to write down a song and teach it to the people, so that the song could be a witness of what God wanted to say to His people. God told Moses, "Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel. Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 31:19, 22). We refer to this as the song of

Moses.

The prophet Zephaniah describes God as singing songs over His people. He says, "The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17). When we receive the songs that the Lord is singing over His people and sing them over people, we are releasing God's heart to His people. These are another expression of prophetic songs.

Prophetic songs of declaration over demons, situations or nations

Another expression of prophetic song is in singing songs of declaration or proclamation over people, geographical areas or against the powers of darkness. Psalm 149:5–9 says, "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD!" The high praises of God in the mouth of God's people enables them to move with a two-edged sword in their hand to affect nations, peoples, kings and nobles. Obviously, the executing of vengeance and judgment, binding and so on is not something in the natural. It refers to what happens in the spirit realm, as God's people are joyful, sing aloud and have the high praises of God in their mouth. High praises are praises that declare God is great, praises that exalt the Lord and proclaim who He is. Many times the Spirit of God would lead the singers to move into this and when we do so, we affect the spiritual atmosphere over nations, people and demonic powers. As the Psalms teach us, praise even out of the mouth of infants has the power to silence the enemy and the avenger (Psalm 8:2; Matthew 21:16).

A really interesting example of how prophetic music can alter and break the influence of demonic powers is seen in the life of Saul. The Spirit of God had left Saul, which also implies that Saul was now no longer under the umbrella of God's protection. Saul was being troubled by demonic spirits and one of them suggested, "Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me." Then one of the servants answered and said, "Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the Lord is with him." And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him (1 Samuel 16:16–18,23). We must understand that the distressing spirit was not sent from God. Rather God had withdrawn His protection over Saul's life because of his rebellion and hence demonic spirits now had access to disturb and trouble him. David had a reputation of not only being a skillful player but also as someone who had God present with him. So his music was not just about how well he played, but it was a release of the presence of God that he carried, which overpowered and drove away demonic powers that troubled Saul. David was a prophetic psalmist of the Lord. David is called "the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1).

These are definitely things that can happen today through anointed singers and musicians who release God's presence through prophetic song and music.

Prophetic action accompanying one or more of the above

Often, God may direct some action had to be taken along with the song and music that He inspires. For instance, King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20, not only believed the prophetic word and had a team of prophetic singers praising God, but he also had to have the army go out against the enemy. This was prophetic action accompanying prophetic praise, as the army of soldiers and worshippers marched toward the enemy. They saw God step in and give them supernatural victory that day.

We believe that musicians, singers and worship leaders in our day and time should not settle to a 'sing-song,' song leader role but must press into the prophetic. They must be trained and encouraged to go beyond their well-prepared song lists and singing the standard set of five songs before the sermon. They need to step into the prophetic so that the people they lead in worship can sing prophetic songs to the Lord, sing prophetic songs to one another, make prophetic proclamations over cities and nations, and so on.

The Tabernacle of David

Around 1000 BC, when David had been established as king in Israel, he commanded that the Ark of the Covenant be brought into the city of Jerusalem. He had the Ark of the Covenant placed in the Tabernacle and he appointed 288 prophetic singers and 4000 musicians to minister before the Lord. 1 Chronicles 16:4 records that David "appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel." These prophetic singers and musicians took turns to minister to the Lord in continuous day and night worship. This was the Davidic Order of worship established in the Tabernacle of David. Later, after the tabernacle was replaced by the temple which Solomon built, the Davidic order of worship continued for a period of time. After that

it was reinstated by a few of the kings who truly sought the Lord. In addition to Solomon, kings like Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah and leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah followed the Davidic order of continuous worship to God.

Thousands of years later, in the Early Church of the New Testament, when the apostles and elders had come together in the Council at Jerusalem to determine whether the Gentiles who follow Jesus should also follow Jewish customs, the apostle James quotes from the prophecy of Amos (Amos 9:11,12). The Book of Acts records:

Acts 15:13–18

And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'after this i will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of david, which has fallen down; i will rebuild its ruins, and i will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord who does all these things.' " Known to God from eternity are all His works.

James quotes from Amos' prophecy about the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David, and highlights the fact that the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David will see an ingathering of Gentiles to the Lord. There is a direct relationship between the reviving of the continuous day and night Davidic order of worship led by prophetic singers and musicians and the winning of souls to the Lord.

Today, as communities of believers establish the Davidic order of worship in their midst—worship led by prophetic singers and musicians and grow into communities that commit themselves to continuous day and night worship and prayer, we can expect a great harvest of souls across the nations.

The Worship Leader

During the time of David we see the rising of prophetic musicians and singers. Amongst this, we also see the concept of worship leaders who were appointed by the king to be in charge of the worship teams. We pick out two men who were worship leaders, to glean some insights.

Chenaniah

1 Chronicles 15:16,22,27

Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy. Chenaniah, leader of the Levites, was instructor in charge of the music, because he was skillful; David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who bore the ark, the singers, and Chenaniah the music master with the singers. David also wore a linen ephod.

Chenaniah was the leader in charge of the music and songs that were to be sung. He was skillful and excellent in his musical abilities. He was responsible to appoint people in the team as musicians and singers.

Asaph the Psalmist Prophet

Asaph was part of the team of Levites who were appointed to worship God as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:17). Later, after the Tabernacle of David was established, Asaph was one of the key prophetic worship leaders. "Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the skilled men performing their service was: of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied according to the order of the king" (1 Chronicles 25:1,2). Asaph

along with Heman and Jeudthun was a leader of the prophetic worship team, people who would sing prophetic songs accompanied with harps, stringed instruments and cymbals.

So the role of prophetic worship leaders dates as far back as David's time when there was organized worship led by these prophetic leaders, day and night in the Tabernacle of David.

Prophetic Song Writers

We also note the concept of prophetic 'song writers' or psalmists. Both David and Asaph were psalmists. The Book of Psalms contains about 12 psalms of Asaph (Psalms 50, 73–83). David himself was a prolific psalmist who wrote several psalms. It seems that David would write the psalms and present it to the Chief Musician, which would be either Asaph, Heman or Jeduthun, and they would incorporate it in their worship and prayer. "On that day David first delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord:" (1 Chronicles 16:7). Many of the psalms of David begin with the note, "To the Chief Musician."

We see different kinds of psalms written by Asaph and David:

Psalm 3:1 A Psalm of David.

The Hebrew word for psalm is '*mizmor'* meaning an instrumental music; a poem set to notes.

Psalm 7:1 A Meditation Of David,

The Hebrew word for meditation is '*shiggaion*' is a wandering, or a rambling poem, where several parts are randomly put together.

Psalm 16:1 A Michtam of David.

The word *"michtam"* simply means an engraving, implying a 'golden' psalm or poem. It implies a psalm that is to be treated as very precious and valued.

Psalm 17:1 A Prayer of David.

The Hebrew word for prayer is '*tephillah'* meaning an intercession, supplication and by implication a hymn.

Psalm 74:1 A Contemplation of Asaph.

The Hebrew word for contemplation is '*maschil,*' meaning an instructive, that is, a didactic poem, something meant to instruct, educate and inform.

Psalm 83:1 A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.

The word 'song' in Hebrew is '*sheer'* meaning a song; singing, musical.

There are psalms that are poems set notes. There are psalms that are simply the expression of the meditations and feelings of the heart. There are psalms that are very precious and personal and hence very valued. There are psalms that are prayers and intercessions to God. There are psalms that are meant to instruct, teach, educate and inform. And then there are psalms that are songs meant for singing. This gives us of a framework of some sort for prophetic songwriting.

Practical Instructions for Prophetic Worship

In a later chapter, we will discuss in detail how to pick up and tune into the prophetic, so that singers and musicians will know how to release prophetic songs through music and singing. Here are some practical guidelines to help singers and musicians flow in the prophetic.

Preparation

In addition to being skillful in playing or singing and training for improvement in this area, worship leaders and musicians must prepare themselves on an ongoing basis by developing depth in prayer and depth in the Word of God. Prayer builds sensitivity to the Spirit of

God. A rich deposit of the Word is essential so that God can draw out of that deposit and also so that the Word acts as a boundary within which prophetic expression can take place. If a worship leader is not strong in the Word, he may not be able to determine if a song that is springing up is accurate.

Expectation

Worship leaders and musicians should lead with an expectation for the prophetic to flow. If the worship team has the attitude that all we have got to do is run through our set of five songs and then go off stage, then there is no expectation for the move of God's Spirit and hence is likely that there will not be one. However, after all the preparation, if the worship team is in a state of expectation, desiring for prophetic songs and the leading of the Spirit, it is likely that the Spirit of God will manifest in this manner.

Sensitivity

During worship, both the worship leader and all members of the worship team need to be sensitive to recognize any of the leadings, directives or revelation coming from the Spirit of God. If the leader or the team is distracted, by being concerned about performance, things happening in the audience and so on, it is easy to lose sensitivity to the Spirit of God.

When the worship leader moves into a prophetic song during worship, the rest of the team must recognize and follow the worship leader. If a song is being formed, the team must join in and sing with the leader. Sometimes, other parts of the song may emerge from other singers in the team. Sometimes, the anointing may rest on a particular musician and he/she is bringing forth the prophetic through their music. Every member must be sensitive to what the Lord is doing, how the song is evolving and on whom the hand of the Lord is

resting at that moment, so that they recognize and support the individual who is bringing forth the prophetic expression at that moment.

In most settings, there is a media team responsible for projecting songs on the screen. As the words of a prophetic song are being formed and crystallize, it would be great if the media team can type them out and project them on the screen so that the congregation can follow and sing along.

Singers and musicians, learn how to incorporate the prophetic word of God into your life. You can live in the prophetic, walk in the prophetic, sing and play instruments in the prophetic. Release the word of God through your voice and your instrument.



ACTIVATING THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

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8

ACTIVATING THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

Having established a fairly broad Scriptural foundation for the prophetic and the expressions of the prophetic, we now transition into some of the practical aspects of receiving revelation and ministering prophetically. We begin by presenting some basic understanding of the gifts of the Spirit and focus on how to flow in the simple gift of prophecy.

Some Basics on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:1–11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Every believer can manifest all of the nine gifts of the Spirit

God does not want His people to be ignorant of spiritual gifts. There are varieties of gifts released by the Holy Spirit. The manifestation or expression of the Spirit, which is what the gifts are, is available for every believer. Conventionally it has been taught that a believer has

one, two or three gifts of the Spirit and they can operate in those gifts alone. But a closer study of 1 Corinthians 12-14, help us understand that the gifts of the Spirit belong to the Holy Spirit. He can manifest all nine of the gifts through all believers. Therefore, every believer can manifest all nine of the gifts of the Spirit, at different points in time, as the Spirit manifests Himself.

Believers are told to "earnestly desire the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31) and walk the path of love at the same time. Notice it says "gifts" and not the singular "gift." This implies that we must desire for more than just one gift. What would be "the best gifts?" The best gift (or gifts) is the gift that is most appropriate for the situation at hand. If you are ministering to a sick person, the best gifts would be the gifts of healing, the working of miracles and the gift of faith to bring a healing to that person. If a person is totally well physically, but is very discouraged, then the gift of prophecy would be the best gift to encourage or comfort that individual. If the person you are ministering to is facing a very complex situation or needs to make a major decision, the gift of the word of wisdom and the gift of the word of knowledge would be the best gifts in that situation. So a believer must desire the best gifts depending on what is needed to be addressed. This obviously implies that every believer can and must desire to manifest all nine of the gifts of the Spirit.

For instance, both speaking in tongues and prophecy bring edification or spiritual building up. Speaking in tongues builds up the person who speaks in tongues, whereas prophecy builds up the people being prophesied to. So if I am alone, the best gift to exercise is to speak or pray in tongues. If I am ministering to others, the best gift to exercise is prophecy. All can speak in tongues and all can prophesy. But depending on where and what you are doing, one is more appropriate than the other. "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all

spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification" (1 Corinthians 14:4,5).

After teaching us about the more excellent way of walking in the love of God in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul transitions back to continue teaching us on the exercise of spiritual gifts in the context of a local church gathering. He begins in 1 Corinthians 14:1 saying, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." How many believers are to pursue love? The answer is definitely all believers. If the command to pursue love is for all believers, then the rest of that verse is also for all believers. All believers are to desire spiritual gifts, but especially to prophesy. This obviously implies that all believers can manifest all spiritual gifts including prophecy.

"For to one is given…" as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:8, and "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11), must be understood as with respect to a particular instant in time, and not in terms of ability to manifest the gifts. 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13 and 14 all flow together in thought. So what Paul is leading up to is the exercise of spiritual gifts in a particular gathering of believers. Hence we read statements such as, "Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place …" (1 Corinthians 14:23) and "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification" (1 Corinthians 14:26). So 1 Corinthians 12:8,11 must be understood in the context of when the church comes together at a particular time. In that context, in a particular meeting when they are gathered together, different gifts are distributed by the Spirit to different people. In a subsequent meeting, the distribution may be different, that is, one who had words

of knowledge in one meeting, may manifest gifts of healings in another. This again implies that an individual believer can manifest all nine of the gifts of the Spirit, with different gifts being manifested through her/him at different points in time.

Spiritual gifts need to be stirred up

Paul in his writing to Timothy exhorts concerning his spiritual gift. While we do not know which spiritual gift he was referring to, whether a gift of the Spirit, a grace gift or the five-fold ministry gift, here is what Paul wrote to Timothy: "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership" (1 Timothy 4:14) and "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).

The word neglect in the Greek is 'ameleo' which means to be careless of, to make light of, to be negligent and to not have regard. Paul is instructing Timothy not to become careless, negligent or make light of the spiritual gift that is in him. Timothy is instructed to stir up, literally meaning to rekindle the fire or to fan aflame the fire of the spiritual gift that God has placed in him. Regardless of which specific spiritual gift Paul was referring to, the message is clear that spiritual gifts must not be neglected or treated lightly. Spiritual gifts need to be stirred up, otherwise, they diminish in their expression through neglect or fear (2 Timothy 1:6,7). The more you exercise and flow in certain gifts, the easier it becomes to have more of those manifestations of the Spirit.

Spiritual gifts can be activated and imparted

We also learn in New Testament Scripture that spiritual gifts can be imparted and activated. Timothy received through impartation the specific spiritual gift Paul was talking about in 1 Timothy 4:14. Paul,

writing to the Romans said, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established" (Romans 1:11). Spiritual gifts lying in a believer can also be activated or brought into operation so that they are released through believers. Because spiritual things can be taught, believers can be taught and trained in the release of the gifts of the Spirit. Gifts and ministries come from God. However, we can train, mature and perfect them to greater accuracy and effectiveness.

We release spiritual gifts through faith

While spiritual gifts are really gifts of grace that are released through believers as the Spirit desires, we do have a part to play in their operation. In addition to desiring spiritual gifts, we must also move in faith, as the Spirit of God directs us. Fear, doubt and unbelief become hindrances to the free flow of the gifts of the Spirit. In Romans 12:6, Paul teaches us, "having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith." The grace gift of prophecy for example, must be exercised by faith and will be released in proportion to the faith that we are able to walk in, in relation to the exercise of that gift. If someone doubts whether God can use them to prophesy and so on, it obviously blocks the flow of the gift.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul makes it very clear that the gift of the Spirit and miracles are not experienced because of our fleshly efforts, but rather through faith. He asks the following self-answering questions, "This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:2,5).

Some Basics on the Gift of Prophecy

We now present some basics on the gift of prophecy. We will cover the prophetic process in depth, in a later chapter. The goal of this section is to present sufficient truth to help you to start exercising the simple gift of prophecy.

Prophecy—What it is

Prophecy is simply God speaking to man through man. The simple gift of prophecy is given for edification, exhortation and comfort. As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14:3, "he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." Typically those in the ministry gift of prophecy would flow in other dimensions of prophecy such as bringing direction, correction, and warning from God.

All can prophesy

As we have clarified earlier all believers can manifest all nine of the gifts of the Spirit including prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14: 1,5, 24, 31, 39

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you *(all, implied)* prophesied; ... But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14, leaves a clear indication that all believers must desire earnestly to prophesy and that this will not only result in the edification of the church but also in the conviction and salvation of the unsaved.

We prophesy in part

1 Corinthians 13:9
For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

Sometimes we put undue pressure on ourselves or have wrong expectations from God that if we are going to prophecy, it means that we will read a person like a book, tell all their past, present and future and totally shock them with our prophecy. However, God does not release prophecy according to our liking but according to His wisdom. We know in part and hence we can only prophecy that part that has been revealed to us from God. There are times when the Spirit of God may give us a word with many details to deliver to someone. Other times, it may be just a simple word, a small sentence that may not sound impressive at all. Our objective must be to listen and what He reveals is what we prophesy.

All prophecy must be judged

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

1 Thessalonians 5:19–21
Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.

An important fact that both the person giving the prophecy and the person receiving the prophecy must remember is that all prophecy must be judged. The Giver of the gift is perfect and the gift is perfect—but the vessel through which the gift is being released is not perfect. Therefore, often times, the message comes through tainted with some of the individual's own thoughts and ideas. Hence, all prophecy must be judged. We must hold on to what is good and discard parts that are not of the Spirit of God.

How and when you deliver the message is in your control

1 Corinthians 14:32,33
And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

When the Holy Spirit moves on your spirit to deliver a prophetic word, He will not overrule your own volition. You are still in control of how, when and where you deliver the message the Spirit of God has given to you. He definitely does not want you to do something in the process of delivering a prophetic message that will result in confusion among God's people. For our God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.

Sometimes we take pride in how accurately we have heard from God and mess up in how and when we deliver the message. And in spite of the message being a true word from God, we end up causing confusion and damage to believers because we did not deliver it correctly. Keep in mind that the presentation of the revelation is as important as the revelation itself. Proverbs 25:11 teaches us that. "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver". Words spoken well and at the right time are priceless.

Prophecy can flow along with other gifts (gift-packs)

Normally prophecy will flow intertwined with several other gifts of the Spirit. In a prophetic word, there will be elements that are word of knowledge, there will be some elements that are words of wisdom, there may be some elements that are purely edification and so on. We should not get too hard and fast on compartmentalizing the gifts of the Spirit, but simply learn to flow with the Spirit of God.

Do not be too hasty to use "Thus says the Lord"

We strongly recommend to be very sparing in your use of the "Thus says the Lord" or "The Lord says" as a prefix to your prophecies. Instead, it would be much better to just say "I sense in my spirit … or "I sense the Lord laying this on my heart for you …" and so on. We suggest this approach for several reasons: (a) If God is truly speaking to you and through you then His word will find its target. We can be sure that the person God is addressing will feel the impact of what is being said. (b) We need to give room for people to test the message and discard it. The moment we emphatically say, "Thus says the Lord" we are requiring the listener to accept what we are saying without questioning, because who would dare question what God is saying. (c) When we present it as something we sense, we are also putting ourselves in a place of being corrected, in case we are not sensing correctly. Hence, we recommend that only in situations where we are absolutely clear that God wants us to use the phrase "Thus says the Lord" in order to get peoples' attention, should we do so.

Preparation for Releasing Prophecy

We now discuss a few specific areas of preparation to be used in the gift of prophecy. These are given in no particular order of importance, as all of them are equally important.

Proper motivation

1 Corinthians 14:12
Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

We must check and ensure that our motives in manifesting spiritual gifts are pure and acceptable before God. The right motive is to edify—bless, encourage, build up—people. We know that

someone somewhere can do with a word from God to be encouraged. We must always guard our motives. If we desire spiritual manifestations in order to promote ourselves, to gain recognition, status, importance and so on, our motives are not pure. A true pure word can be given with an impure motive, but the Holy Spirit will not bear witness to it. And if the Holy Spirit does not bear witness, then it will not bless people, it will not give life. The Holy Spirit knows your motives. We must always remember that increase comes from God. Instead of using gifts to promote ourselves, if we use gifts to serve people, then as people are blessed, these gifts will make room for us and allow us to be a blessing to many more people.

Separate your spirit from personal experiences

When we are ready to be used by God, remembering past experiences can be a good or a bad thing. If we remember past experiences that bring encouragement so that we can yield ourselves to God in faith, that is a very positive thing and we must do so. However, sometimes, we tend to assume that the way God did it in the past is still the way God wants to do it now. God however, may wish to operate differently today. But because we have locked ourselves into a past experience that we had with God, we are unable to yield ourselves to the fresh new expression of what God wants to do in the present. In this case, dwelling on a past experience is not a good thing.

Further, based on our past experiences in life, we tend to carry certain notions, emotions, negative feelings and so on. For instance, a woman who has had a bad marriage and is still carrying negative emotions toward men may tend to release negative feelings toward men in her prophecies to other married women. She is more likely to give prophecies directing women to leave their homes and husbands. The true flow of the Spirit will come marred with her negative hurts and emotions toward men.

Similarly, we must learn to keep aside our own history with God, because our personal history with God may not be what God wants someone else to walk in. For example, if a man had to give up his successful professional career to go into full-time Christian service, if he is not careful, he may be inclined to keep giving prophecies to people about leaving their professional careers to go into ministry. This obviously is coming out of his own spirit and is being mixed with what the Holy Spirit is genuinely releasing through him.

Separate your spirit from personal prejudices

We must also maintain a right spirit free from anger, bitterness, prejudices and so on. We must develop the ability not to be moved by what we see, hear or know in the natural to deliver a prophetic word. For example, if we see a person who seems to be very important, we may want to give that person a long prophecy. Whereas, if someone comes along who does not seem to be very important, we do not tend to press as much in the spirit to get the mind of the Lord for that person. This is wrong, because we are showing partiality toward a certain class of people.

Some people carry a very critical and judgmental spirit. They always tend to see the cup half-empty and not half-full. They see the negatives. And they think this is the gift of discerning of spirits or special ability of discernment operating thorough them without realizing that really they are being judgmental. There could be several reasons why people end up with a critical or judgmental attitude. Perhaps it is there because of past experiences where they were brought up in a very strict environment, where nothing less than perfection was tolerated. Perhaps they have had to work through very difficult situations and demanded nothing less than perfection from themselves, and hence demand the same from others. Perhaps their natural inclination is to be a perfectionist and hence they have zero tolerance toward flaws and weaknesses in others. Or it could

just be a religious spirit that demands perfection from others while tolerating and excusing weaknesses in one's own self. Whatever the reason, you will notice that such people are quick to bring "warnings and judgments" in their prophecies. Most of their prophecies will be about how displeased God is with His people, and if we do not change, everything will be shaken and so on. I do believe that God warns His people of judgment for their sins. However, God extends His goodness first and for a long time, because it is the goodness of God that brings people to repentance (Romans 2:4). God does not deal with us according to our sins nor punish us according to our wrongdoing (Psalm 103:10). God is very merciful, gracious and slow to anger (Psalm 103:8). So for God to release warning and judgments for sin is an extreme and final step after He has extended a lot of grace and patience. And even then, warning against sinful behavior comes with the opportunity to repent and receive forgiveness and not as an end in itself. So I would encourage us to be very careful before giving or receiving prophecies that warn of judgment and disaster for sin without the opportunity to repent and receive forgiveness. If you are someone who always wants to correct and warn people and so on, maybe you need to check up on yourself and see if your spirit is right and there are no personal issues or prejudices that you are carrying.

Commit to speaking faithfully or remaining silent

Jeremiah 23:16,28

Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD. "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD.

We need to have a strong commitment with ourselves that we will only say what God says, nothing more, nothing less and nothing

else. We must remain true to God, to ourselves and to the people we are serving. We cannot allow our desire to prophesy overrule what the Spirit wills. Discern if the Holy Spirit is speaking. If He is not, just keep quiet. We must develop the fruit of self-control, in this area especially. We must be willing to control our own emotions and opinions and hold back if the Spirit is not saying anything, or hold on to a word until it is time to release it.

Part of our training is the silence test. There are times when God does not say anything. Our ability to know that God is not saying something and to remain silent is as important as our ability to hear what He is saying and to deliver that faithfully. If we speak something out of our own hearts, we end up making people worthless, get others into trouble and can actually hurt peoples' lives.

Build and maintain godly character

While God encourages us to desire spiritual gifts, He equally desires for us to be changed from glory to glory into the image of His Son Jesus. He desires that we grow up in all things to be like Jesus. Character is important to fully represent Jesus to people. Our character is also the container through which the gifts of the Spirit are released. When people know you are a person of godly character, they will also trust you. The more trust you have among the people, the greater liberty and faith you can exercise to deliver the prophetic word. Sometimes people who may be manifesting the gifts of the Spirit wonder why they are not being recognized, welcomed or given a bigger platform from where they can serve. It is likely that their character is not as far developed as they are in the manifestations of the Spirit. It is like the Corinthian believers who were not behind in any gift (1 Corinthians 1:7) and yet Paul had to rebuke them and call them carnal, behaving like ordinary men (1 Corinthians 3:3).

Do not base your identity in spiritual gifts

Our identity in God is derived from the fact that He is our Father and we are His sons and daughters. We did not earn this relationship. His grace brought us into this wonderful place where we are children of the Most High. This is our identity. Our gifts and ministries are just tools to fulfill responsibilities entrusted to us by our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our value is based on what God has done for us in adopting us into His family. This has once for all defined our eternal value. Our value in God is not defined by the gifts we manifest or the ministries we perform. Spiritual gifts help us fulfill our function. We must understand the difference between our value and our function.

If who you are, how you feel about yourself is wrapped around the gifts that manifest through your life, you are basing your identity on spiritual gifts and this is the wrong place to be in. Also, if you must have other people hear about the gifts operating through your life, then you are basing your identity on your gift. This is a sign of insecurity and misplaced identity.

Know what the Word says

It is important to have a strong foundation in the written Word of God so that we are able to discern what we are hearing, process it correctly and then once we have validated it, we can deliver it with confidence to its intended audience. If we are weak in the Word of God, it is possible that we may allow our own opinions to go through in our prophetic utterances, along with what is truly coming from the Spirit.

We also need to be full of the Word to help us determine if what we are hearing is truly of the Spirit of God or from some other source, perhaps our own imagination, or in some instances a lying spirit or a spirit of error. The Bible teaches us that the Spirit and the

Word agree (1 John 5:7). So if the message that I am receiving is truly of the Spirit, it will agree with the Word in me, and I immediately have been able to validate that what I am receiving is truly of God. If, I am not full of the Word, then I may not be able to readily validate what I am picking up in my spirit. Another important reason to be full of the Word as part of developing in prophetic ministry is to interpret what you are seeing. When God speaks in pictures, symbols, parables, allegories and so on, these symbols have to be interpreted with the Word of God first. So if you are full of the Word, you are able to do this quickly and confidently.

Maintain accurate doctrine. Accurate doctrine keeps you out of error and also keeps those you serve out of trouble. Right after Paul encouraged Timothy to stir up the spiritual gift that was in him, he wrote two verses later, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4:16). In other words he told Timothy, watch over your own life and over what you teach. Continue doing this constant self-policing, so that you will protect yourself and those who listen to you.

Prayer in the Spirit and fasting

The more we pray, the more we can hear from God and the more details we can receive. Prayer helps strengthen the lines of communication with the Spirit and makes us more sensitive to Him. Prayer also helps quiet the noise of our own emotions, feelings, reason, opinions and the flesh. Praying in tongues or praying in the Spirit is a basic foundation gift for all other gifts. When we pray in the Spirit our spirits are praying and begin to engage with the Holy Spirit. We must also combine fasting with our prayer. The new wineskin does not come without fasting and prayer (Matthew 9:17).

Worship

We have seen in earlier chapters that worship is integral to prophetic ministry. Worship helps us to step into the prophetic. When we are busy with everyday mundane activity, taking time to just worship can help us step into the Spirit and tap into the prophetic anointing. Acts 13:2 has a record of the prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch that "as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said …."

Desire for the manifestations of the Spirit

In his teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, Paul encouraged us several times to "earnestly desire" the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:1,38). It literally means to have warmth of feeling for, to be zealous about and to be jealous over something. Whenever there is an opportunity to serve someone, in your spirit lift up a prayer to the Spirit saying that you desire such and such gifts appropriate for that moment. If you are ministering to a gathering of people, again, in addition to all the preparation of your message or worship, also desire the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit.

Sometimes people get all religious and supposedly super-spiritual and teach that you must seek the Giver not the gifts, and we must not be so zealous about spiritual gifts. I think such opinions are actually contradicting what God Himself said. God told us to be zealous of spiritual gifts. God told us to eagerly desire spiritual gifts. Of course we know that we have to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. That is a settled matter. That is how we live each moment, full of love and passion for God. Of course we root our ministry in intimacy, prayer and worship of our God. Out of our love for Him, we desire to obey Him. To obey Him, we follow the instructions given to us in His Word, where He told us not to be ignorant about spiritual gifts and to earnestly desire spiritual gifts.

Have Faith. Eliminate doubt

As we have said earlier, it requires faith from our part to move in the gifts of the Spirit. Increase in faith because you prophesy according to your faith. One of the things I find helpful to help build faith to prophesy is to read and meditate on Scriptures that teach us about the prophetic. Simply reading the experiences of one of the prophets in the Bible on how God speaks and so on inspires faith in me and helps me move out and flow in the prophetic.

Yield to what the Spirit is saying or doing

The Bible instructs us "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies" (1 Thessalonians 5:19,20). The word 'quench' literally means 'to extinguish.' When the Holy Spirit is lighting a fire in your spirit prompting you to say or do something, do not put it out. Do not suppress it. Instead we must step out on what the Spirit is prompting us to do and act on it. We must yield our members as instruments of righteousness so that they can serve the purposes of God. The more we obey His promptings, the more likely He is to prompt us in the future.

Know how to administer the gift properly

1 Peter 4:10,11

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Whatever gifts God is releasing through us, we must use it to serve others, as good stewards. Part of being a good steward of the gift is to administer it in a manner that blesses others and glorifies God. Many of the things we share in this training manual will help you

learn how to administer the gift of prophecy and other gifts of the Spirit properly.

Walk in wisdom

Part of exercising the gift of prophecy is learning how to walk in wisdom. It is not enough to only receive an accurate revelation, how we handle that revelation is probably more important. Without wisdom, revelation can be misused. Zeal without wisdom is dangerous too. A lot of wisdom is required if we are going to truly benefit from prophetic ministry. In fact, because of people operating in the gift of prophecy without wisdom, much confusion, hurt and damage has resulted. When we receive a revelation from the Holy Spirit, we need wisdom to know how to interpret that revelation, how to correctly apply that revelation, what is the intended timing of action required, what words to use to communicate that revelation, and when to communicate and to whom.

Hindrances to Moving in Prophecy

Lack of proper teaching

It is unfortunate that many believers have not been taught on the gifts of the Spirit and therefore are missing out on so much that God has provided for them. Even in many Pentecostal, Spirit-filled churches, the teaching and experience stops with speaking in tongues. Believers are left at that point and not encouraged to move into all of the manifestations of the Spirit and so much more of the supernatural that God desires to manifest in and through His people. Lack of proper teaching and instruction on the supernatural has left much of the Body of Christ spiritually weak and unable to affect change in the world around. However, this is changing as God's Spirit is moving powerfully all over the world and across denominational lines, reviving and awakening God's people to their inheritance in Christ.

Sense of unworthiness

Almost all of us have experienced feelings of unworthiness in being used by God or even to ask God to work through us. We do not feel that we are sufficiently holy or spiritually qualified for God to release His gifts through us. Many times we are aware of our own flaws, weaknesses and inadequacies. God does not want us to behave as fearful slaves but as his sons and daughters. "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father"" (Romans 8:15). However, one of the enemy's strategies is to heap guilt and shame and leave us crippled with a deep sense of unworthiness and inadequacy. And if it is not the devil, our own religious mind is faithful to tell us that we are not worthy. Do not let your own religious mind or the devil tell you that you are not worthy or qualified enough to manifest the gifts of the Spirit. In such moments, when I have to battle thoughts of unworthiness and feelings of inadequacies, I like to remind myself of what the apostle Paul said: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

Fear of making mistakes

Perhaps all of us hold back from releasing a prophetic word because of the fear of being wrong and making a mistake. But we must come to a place where we accept that it is no longer about us and our reputation. Rather, we are more interested in seeing people ministered to and the Lord being glorified, even if it means we have to lay aside our reputation. Will we make mistakes? Yes. I am sure all of us will make mistakes. But we can never learn how to hear from God and speak what He is saying if we do not try and learn from our mistakes and perfect our ability to hear and speak what God is saying. God is with us to help us through the learning process. Like Peter we must step out of the boat—our comfort zone. We have His Word to

"desire spiritual gifts." We must step out on that Word. Like Peter, even if after stepping out of the boat we slip up, He is always there to reach out to us and take us back to safety. So we have nothing to lose, as long as we are willing to learn from our mistakes and make changes.

Fear of man

Similar to being afraid of making mistakes, often our fear of people's reactions can hold us back. We do not want to embarrass others. We feel that they are not accustomed to hearing prophecy. We feel that they will not understand us. We feel that they may consider us weird and abnormal and so on. The Bible teaches us that, "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25). I like how the Message Bible puts this: "The fear of human opinion disables." Fear of people and their opinions cripples us.

When Paul told Timothy to stir up the gift of God, he immediately assured him that fear has no place in us as people of God. It is likely that fear was causing Timothy to hold back on exercising his spiritual gift. "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" (2 Timothy 1:6,7).

Need for affirmation

Another big need all of us have is to be affirmed by those we are ministering to—at least for them to let us know when we bring a right word, so that we are encouraged. However, just from experience, we know that not everyone will come back to you to let you know that the word you released truly touched their hearts. Many will receive a true prophetic word, know that that could only have been God

working through you, but quietly walk away without giving you any feedback. Sometimes when we are speaking to people, we would like to see them giving us some form of feedback—cry, smile, or nod their head—to let us know that this is God. Here again, some people may stare blankly right back at you, when everything that you are saying is straight on target! We must quickly come to a place where we prophesy and move in the prophetic, whether we receive affirmation or not.

Distractions

It is rather difficult to tune into the Spirit to hear what He is saying, if our minds are preoccupied with responsibilities and cares, troubles, stressed out, disturbed, under pressure, or just distracted. We need to calm our minds down, quiet ourselves, rid our minds of distractions and become sensitive to the Spirit of God. It is like the analogy of a dove sitting on a man's shoulder. If the man is going to be jumping about or moving rapidly, it is likely that the dove will fly away. However, for the dove to rest on the man's shoulder, the man needs to be calm.

Releasing the Gift of Prophecy

There are three simple instructions on how to start flowing in prophecy: Pray, Perceive, Prophesy.

Pray

Express your desire for the release of the gift of prophecy. Let God know that you desire this. Ask Him for a prophetic word for one or more people.

Perceive

Pause and see if God is giving you anything in your spirit. This is like tuning a radio to see if you are picking up anything on a certain

frequency. You try different frequencies (meaning modes of communication) to see if you are receiving a revelation from God. There are different ways by which the Spirit might communicate with you.

- The still small inner witness (impression)
- A flash of information in your spirit
- A knowing on the inside
- Pictures
- A word, then a sentence and then a paragraph.
- Physical sensations

We will study these in the next chapter.

Prophesy

Once you have received something in your spirit, then step out and speak it forth. Release that word to its intended audience.

The Prophetic in Personal Use

The gifts of the Spirit can be manifested anywhere at any time. They can be released through you when you are at home, in your school, college, workplace, out shopping, during your time of recreation and relaxation and in ministry situations when ministering to people.

To be prophetic is to simply hear what God is saying and then say or do in accordance to that. The release of the prophetic does not always have to be for "ministry use" only. The prophetic can be released in and through you to solve a business problem at your workplace, to inspire a creative idea for your business, to provide direction to someone facing a challenge and so on. If we can desire for and learn to express the prophetic in everyday life, I am sure God will be glorified so much more through all of our lives.

Prophesying in Small-Group Settings

We encourage you to start practicing the exercise of spiritual gifts, especially to prophesy, in small prayer group settings. This is a safe environment where believers can learn to exercise spiritual gifts under the supervision of a mature small-group leader, edify one another and receive guidance for any mistakes they make in a non-threatening way. A lot of the instructions that Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 14 can be applied to small group settings. Here are some basic guidelines when exercising the gift of prophecy in small group settings:

Use the gifts for edification, not for destruction or condemnation!

1 Corinthians 14:26
How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

When we gather together, it is good that everyone exercises spiritual gifts to share and minister to one another. The only directive is that everything must be done to build people up, not to tear them down.

Let everyone participate

1 Corinthians 14:31
For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

In a large gathering it is obviously not possible for everyone to participate. However, in small group settings, all can prophesy and exercise the gifts of the Spirit to learn and encourage one another.

Follow instructions

1 Corinthians 14:40
Let all things be done decently and in order.

In a small-group meeting, people still must follow the leadership set in place. Follow the instructions and guidelines set by your small-group leader so that there is no confusion and all things are done decently and in order. Refrain from drawing attention to yourself and becoming the star attraction of the meeting. Refrain from taking over the meeting and wanting all the time for yourself, for you to do your own thing.

Allow yourself to be judged and corrected

None of use start out perfect in the exercise of spiritual gifts. We will make mistakes. So it is important for the leader of the small-group to be mature enough to judge and lovingly correct the mistakes that are made. Those exercising spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, must remain teachable and willing to receive correction.



HEARING FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

9

9

HEARING FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

In this chapter, we will cover some practical insights on how we actually hear from the Holy Spirit. We have found the following approach simple and easy to help people learn how to receive what God is speaking to them.

Our Spiritual Senses

Spirit, soul, body

We understand that each of us is a spirit, having a soul and dwelling in a body. Paul makes this clear when he writes, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The spirit is the eternal part of us. It will never die or be annihilated. It is also that part of us that relates to the spirit realm. When we are born again, our human spirit receives the life and nature of God. The Holy Spirit of God comes to dwell in our spirits. Many times the word 'heart' is used in the Bible to refer to the spirit. Other times the word 'belly' or "innermost being" is used to refer to the spirit of man. The word "inner man" is also used to refer to our spirits. The soul is the psychological part of us. It is the mind, will and emotions. With the soul we feel, think, reason and so on. The soul can be carnal (or fleshly), or the soul could be one that is transformed or renewed. The soul is like a processor. It processes input from the spirit and also input that comes in through our body. The body, is the physical part of us through which we connect with the physical natural world. The body has five senses or channels through which it collects input from the physical world and feeds it into our soul to process. The body is sometimes referred to as our outer man. The natural evil desires of the body and soul together comprise what the Bible refers to as "the flesh."

Spirit-to-spirit

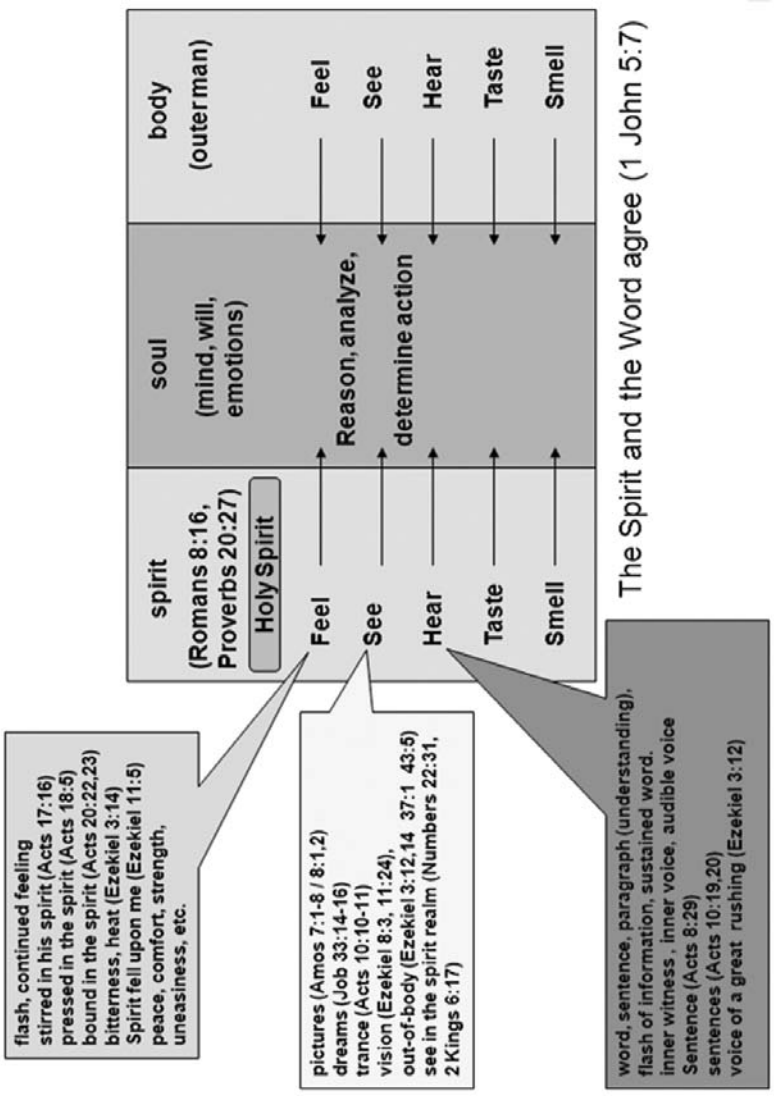
The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirits and this is where He communicates to us. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will speak to us, guide us, reveal things to us ahead of time and reveal the very mind of God to us. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13–15). The children of God have the wonderful privilege of being led by the Spirit of God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

The main area in which the Spirit of God relates to us is in our spirits. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16). The Old Testament uses the term 'lamp' or 'candle' to refer to the spirit-man. Proverbs 20:27 says, "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart." God uses our spirits to determine our true condition. It is also in our spirit-man that God enlightens us and give us His counsel and direction. David said, "For You will light my lamp; the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness" (Psalm 18:28). Deep calls unto deep (Psalm 42:7) or the Spirit of God communicates to my spirit. Communication from God normally takes place Spirit-to-spirit.

Five spirit-senses

As mentioned earlier, the spirit is referred to as the "inner man." It is quite clear from Scripture that the spirit has senses, similar to the physical senses of the human body. We can clearly establish a parallel of the five physical senses to five spirit-senses which the spirit of man is capable of. It is possible that the spirit is also capable of a lot more when it comes to relating to the unseen spiritual realm than what the physical body is capable of in relating to the material world.

We now establish the five spirit-senses and show from Scripture how the Spirit of God communicates to us through these five channels.



The spirit-sense of feeling

Our spirits can feel. We can have feelings of joy, quietness and peace in our spirits. We can feel restlessness, uneasiness, a stirring or motivation to action, a feeling of tightness or discomfort, bitterness or anger, weighty feeling and so on. These feelings can come and go as a flash or can continue for a period of time in our spirits. With each feeling, there is actually a message that the Holy Spirit is communicating to us. A feeling of peace indicates all is well. A stirring in your spirit is a call to action, to do something about the situation. A feeling of tightness or uneasiness is a warning not to go or do something and that some danger is near. A feeling of anger is usually again a call to action. A weighty feeling is usually an indication of His presence over you, the anointing coming over you and so on. Here are some examples in Scripture:

Peace

Colossians 3:15

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Stirred, provoked in his spirit

Acts 17:16,17

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

Compelled by the spirit

Acts 18:5

When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

Bound in the spirit

Acts 20:22,23

And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

Bitterness, heat

Ezekiel 3:14

"So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me."

Spirit fell upon me

Ezekiel 11:5

"Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said to me, "Speak! 'Thus says the LORD: "Thus you have said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind."

We must develop the ability to recognize these feelings in our spirits and then understand what the Holy Spirit is testifying or telling us through that feeling. Paul, for instance, felt "bound in the spirit," meaning he felt very restrained, had a tight feeling inside him. But he understood the message that the Holy Spirit was telling him that there was going to be trouble up ahead in Jerusalem.

The spirit-sense of seeing

We know that the spirit-man has 'eyes' or the ability to 'see' and 'ears' or the ability to 'hear.' For instance, when Jesus was asked by His disciples why He spoke in parables, He responded: "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear" (Matthew 13:13-16). The

Lord Jesus obviously was referring to the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the heart and not to the natural organs of sight or hearing. We see pictures and hear words.

Very often we will get pictures and images that come up in our spirits and over into our minds. These are really messages from the Holy Spirit. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, they are a great form of communication. The pictures we see are essentially a basic form of spiritual visions. Sometime we see pictures as in a movie, which is a sequence of pictures where things are happening. We can also see pictures when in a trance, or when we are asleep through dreams or visions of the night. There are times when it seems like our spirit-eyes are seeing something in the spirit realm—what is happening inside the spirit of another person or what is happening in the spirit world. And then there is something that could happen, but is rather rare, which is to have an out-of-body experience where our spirits travels on a sight-seeing tour.

The most common experience for most of us is pictures and images that we see. We need to accurately interpret the meaning of the pictures and derive the message that God is conveying to us through them. We will address this in the next chapter. Here are some Scriptures and Scriptural examples:

Pictures

Jeremiah 1:11–14

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see a branch of an almond tree." Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word." And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north." Then the LORD said to me: "Out of the north calamity shall break forth on all the inhabitants of the land.

Amos 8:1,2

Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. And He said, "Amos, what do you see?" So I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me: "The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore.

Dreams

Job 33:14–17

For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, When deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. In order to turn man from his deed, and conceal pride from man.

Visions

Daniel 8:1–3

In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.

Daniel 10:4–9

Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

Trance

Acts 10:9–17

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again. Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.

Seeing in the spirit realm

Numbers 22:31

Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

2 Kings 6:15–17

And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. 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." And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Isaiah 6:1–8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe is me, for I am

undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me.

Out-of-body

Ezekiel 37:1,2

The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.

Ezekiel 43:5,6

The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me.

2 Corinthians 12:1–4

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

The spirit-sense of hearing

We know that the spirit-man has ears. In the Bible, many times, we read things like, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (E.g., Revelation 2:7). The reference is to spiritual ears.

When we 'hear' in the spirit, we normally do not hear sound but rather receive the word, words, sentences or paragraph that is

supernaturally imparted to the spirit-man. Sometimes it can come as a flash of information, suddenly coming into our spirits. Sometimes what we 'hear' just comes as a supernatural understanding where we just know. There has been an impartation of a whole lot of information and it is in our spirits.

The word comes into our spirits through an inner witness, an inner voice and sometimes (although very rarely) an actual audible voice, as in the case of Samuel hearing the voice of God. Only the intended audience is able to hear the audible voice of God, and those standing alongside normally do not hear it.

When God speaks He does not speak a "whole lot." Sometimes it is just a single word. Sometimes it is a single sentence. Other times it may be a few sentences. When God wants to communicate a lot of information, then they usually show up as pictures, visions and dreams.

Many times in the Bible, we read the phrase "the word of the Lord came." In some instances the Bible also indicates that it was an audible voice, a vision or dream and so on. But in many cases it does not. I believe, that in most cases when we read the phrase, "the word of the Lord came" it was a non-audible impartation of the message to the prophet who received the message in his spirit and then spoke it forth.

Hearing is communication of information. In the natural realm, this communication or transfer of words normally takes place through the medium of sound. In the spiritual realm, normally the medium of sound is not used, although there are instances when you can hear the sound of His voice or the sound of heavenly worship and so on. Typically, you hear His voice, receive the word or the message He is communicating without any sound. There are times when this knowledge is imparted to your spirit and you just 'know' in your spirit. We call this 'perceiving,' the ability to just know or recognize

in the spirit without the use of other information. It is written of Jesus on more than one occasion that He knew the thoughts of men. "But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?" (Mark 2:8)

Sentence
Acts 8:29
Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

Sentences
Acts 10:19,20
While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.

The spirit-sense of taste and touch

We know that the spirit-man is capable of taste and touch as well. The Bible tells us, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good …" (Psalm 34:8). Ezekiel describes his spiritual experience of eating a scroll and tasting it. "So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you." So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness" (Ezekiel 3:2,3). This was indeed a spiritual experience where he could taste something in the spirit.

To touch something is to become aware of its presence. Similarly, you can become aware in the spirit of the presence of the Lord, of the flow of His anointing, of Him coming upon you and so on. When the woman with an issue of blood touched Jesus, He asked, "Who touched me?" Although there were many who were physically touching Jesus, there was a 'touch' in the spirit. Jesus felt the flow of power out of Him and into the person who touched him in faith.

Training Our Spiritual Senses

We have described above the faculties of the spirit-man which is very similar to the five senses we have. We must keep in mind that these five spirit-senses do not work in isolation of each other. They are not compartmentalized. Very often when God communicates, there will be things you feel, hear and see. All these channels will receive pieces of communication and you need to combine them and then present them or act on them.

The other important aspect to know is that our spirit-senses need to be trained to pick up what God is communicating through those channels. The more we learn to listen and receive from God, the more sensitive we will become and the easier it will be to pick up what God is saying. It is like hearing someone's voice over the telephone. Once you have heard their voice several times, you can recognize the voice and who the individual is. The same is with learning to listen to God.

Hebrews 5:13,14
For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

One of the important ways to train our senses is through being in the Word. The word 'senses' in Verse 14, means "organ of perception." Both the spiritual and emotional organs of perception need to trained through the constant use of the Word of God. This gives our senses the ability to discern, what is of God and what is not.

Once we pick things up in our spirits, we then usually process this in our soul (mind, will, emotions) to validate that this is indeed from the Lord and then what to do with it, when, how and so on. So we must also train our minds to process what we receive through the

spirit. We must have a mind renewed with the Word of God and the whole counsel of God to accurately process what we are picking up in the spirit. This training manual is a tool to help us train our spirits and minds to hear from God and process what we are hearing.

One of the big challenges in this training process is to learn how to differentiate what is of the Spirit and what is of our own imagination. Reflect and learn from every experience you have of manifesting the gifts of the Spirit. Develop your own library of what went right and what went wrong. This is a continuous learning process that you need to maintain, so that with time, you will be able to differentiate the voice of the Spirit and the voice of your own soul.

Things that Hinder Us from Hearing God

I usually like to journal dreams and prophecies I receive. Here is something from my journal. On Thursday July 02, 2009, I had a dream that taught me something on cleaning out our spiritual ears.

As I was about to awake this morning, I had a short motion picture dream. I saw an ear and a hand pulling out dirt—big weeds, small stones—out of the ear. There were quite a few. First the big weed-like things, they were in the ear. I did not even know about it until the finger went in and began to pull it and it came out so big. Surprising that something so big could be compressed in an ear. Then a slightly larger stone and finally the finger searched in the ear and a small stone came out. Then I washed the ear clean with water and the ear was fully clean.

I understood this dream having to do with spiritual hearing. I wondered why I saw only one ear in the dream and not two ears. Interestingly, in the New Testament, Jesus in some cases uses 'ear' in singular and not plural (Matthew 10:27, Revelation 2:7,11,17,29 3:6,13,22, 13:9). "He who has an ear, let him hear ..." referring to the capacity to hear spiritually.

Lessons:
To improve our spiritual hearing, we need to clean out our hearing by removing weeds, stones and dirt that clog up our ears and hinder our hearing.

- weeds—In Mark 4:19 thorns, weeds represent cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches and lust for other things.
- stones—In Mark 4:17 stones represent afflictions and persecutions for the Word's sake.
- dirt—things that float into our ears from what we hear in the world. Dirt is removed by washing with the water of His Word.

False Assumptions

Sometime we have the wrong notion that when God speaks each time we will shake and quake, fall to the ground and so on. We get a little disappointed when we find out that God uses our spirit-sense to speak in pictures, feelings and simple words that come up in our spirits. We tend to think that God speaking to us would be a whole lot more spectacular and sensational. However, Elijah's experience on Mount Horeb is a lesson to learn. After about forty days of hiding, finally Elijah hears God asking Him what he was doing. Then God instructs him, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice (1 Kings 19:11,12). Wind, earthquake and fire—God was not in any of these. Elijah had to wait for the "still small voice." God speaks to us usually in simple ordinary ways. Do not miss the supernatural while looking for the spectacular!



TESTING AND INTERPRETING PERSONAL PROPHECIES

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TESTING AND INTERPRETING PERSONAL PROPHECIES

Having learnt how to hear from the Spirit of God, the next important step is to understand the prophetic process and how to test and interpret personal prophecies. Some of the teaching here may be from the perspective of what to do when a prophecy is given to you. However, we need to teach these things to those we are ministering prophetically, to so that they know what to do with the prophecies they receive.

Prophetic Process

The prophetic process of receiving a word and then seeing that word fulfilled involves several elements which we enumerate as follows:

- Revelation
- Presentation
- Interpretation
- Application
- Timing
- Confirmation

We now discuss each of these in detail.

Revelation: The Origin of the Prophecy

The first step in prophecy is receiving the revelation. We have dealt with the "how to" to receive revelation in the previous chapters. In addition to receiving the revelation, we also need to determine the origin of the prophecy. What we really want are genuine messages

that come from the Holy Spirit of God. However, not all messages delivered as 'prophecy' are from the Holy Spirit. So when either giving or receiving prophecy, we need to evaluate what the origin of the prophecy is. Is it really of the Spirit of God, or is it some other source? If we are not sure if the revelation we are receiving is of the Spirit of God, it is best to discard it, or keep it aside and validate it with a more mature person before doing anything with it.

Sometimes what is delivered as prophecy can come out of the thought, idea or imagination of the individual's own heart.

Jeremiah 14:14
And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.

Ezekiel 13:2,3
Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the LORD!' Thus says the Lord GOD: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!

Sometimes prophecy can come from a false spirit, a lying spirit of falsehood that releases false prophecies.

Micah 2:11
If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, 'I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,' Even he would be the prattler of this people.

Presentation: The Human Element and the Prophetic

Presentation has to do with the human element involved in the operation, manifestation and communication of the prophetic. The Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of prophecy or the prophetic anointing is pure and without error. His workings are perfect, His words are accurate, His revelations are true, His power is infinite and He is God. However, the prophetic anointing is manifested through mortal

humans. This means that although the Source of the prophetic is pure, the final expression of it may become tainted because of the human agency through which it must flow. 1 Corinthians 14:32 says, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." The Holy Spirit moves upon our spirits and yet our spirits are still in our control. We are responsible for the delivery and expression of the prophetic. For instance, you could choose to yell and scream out your prophecy and deliver it in a totally unbecoming manner, or you could choose to do so in a manner that is appropriate. On most occasions, it is you who will choose what words to use to communicate the message. We need to be aware that in the process of delivery, there are possibilities of errors creeping into the message. Further as the Scripture says, "we know in part and we prophesy in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9). When we minister to an individual, we will not know the entire past, present and future of that person. We only know "in part," whatever the Spirit reveals. However in order to 'spice' up the message, if we are tempted to add many more 'parts' to the 'true' part that was revealed, we deliver a mixed word or an imperfect word. Similarly we must teach believers not to expect a prophecy to reveal all the details of their future. They must understand that the one who prophesies only knows 'in part' to the extent that the Lord reveals to him. Again, it is wrong for believers to 'swallow' every word of prophecy that is delivered to them without first testing and evaluating it.

Interpretation: Understanding the Meaning and Testing the Prophecy

Wrong interpretation to a genuine prophetic word can cause chaos and result in a lot of problems!

Interpreting Prophetic Imagery

For some unknown reason, God has chosen to use symbols, parables and riddles to speak to us.

Hosea 12:10
I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.

Numbers 12:6–8
Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

The "dark sayings" in Numbers correlates with the 'symbols' of Hosea. Dark sayings refer to puzzles, proverbs, or riddles. Hosea's symbols mean comparisons, to resemble, liken, parables and so on.

We must learn to accurately interpret the symbols, parables, comparisons and dark sayings that we receive.

Example, when prophesying, if you see a car and the person standing next to the car, it could mean any one of these things:

- God want to give this person a car
- He could be in the car business and God wants to prosper it
- He could be a car mechanic
- He just lost his car
- God wants him to go into the car business
- Etc…etc…

While the picture (image) you are seeing can be truly from God—you could end up conveying totally different meanings depending on how you interpret this! So in addition to the image you see, you need to tune in, to get the meaning of the image or the message that God is speaking along with the image. You need to

'see' the image and also 'hear' the message and then put the two together and deliver the prophecy. We will deal in the next chapter on how to interpret symbols we see.

Interpreting Personal Prophecies

As believers, we need to know how to respond properly to personal prophetic words that may be delivered to us. After we have tested the prophetic word, rejected whatever is not of God and decided to hold on to what is truly of God, we now need to translate it to our life in practice. The purpose of the prophetic word is not just to make us feel good about ourselves or make us feel special—although these may take place when one hears a word from God. A prophetic word could be a word of edification, exhortation, comfort or it could be a word that brings direction, correction, instruction and motivation and may be accompanied by an impartation of anointing and gifts. The Bible teaches, "Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets and you shall prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20). Our first response to a true word from God should be to believe that word—no matter how impossible it seems. When angel Gabriel brought the announcement about Christ's birth to Mary, her immediate response was "How can this be … ?" When the angel explained that it would take place by the power of the Holy Spirit and that with God nothing is impossible, Mary responded saying, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). We should in a similar way respond with willingness and faith to the word of the Lord.

If the prophetic word requires us to take action either in the spirit or in daily life, then we need to do so. However, we need to interpret it in a proper manner. For example, if the prophetic word says that God will use you mightily for His Kingdom—it does not mean that you have to quit your present vocation and go into full-

time ministry. That could be interpreting that prophetic word incorrectly in daily life. Since there were no specifics about your job, career, and so on, it means that God would want you to continue doing what you are doing and believe that He will use you for His Kingdom as you follow His plan and purpose for your life. Another example would be if someone prophesied to you that you would be extremely successful in your business —it does not mean that you can be rash, hasty and foolish in your business decisions and that regardless of how you conducted your business you will still prosper. Rather, you ought to believe God's prophetic word to you and then continue in wisdom and diligent work, and believe that as you walk in wisdom and sound business practices, God will prosper you. If you become reckless in your business thinking that God will bless you no matter what, you will most likely find yourself on the brink of bankruptcy very soon!

Too many of God's people have received a genuine word from God, but they do not experience the fulfillment of that prophetic word because they fail to interpret and apply that word correctly in their lives. If you have received a prophetic word from God and are not sure how to apply it—then consider talking to your pastor or receive counsel from a mature servant of God who understands prophetic ministry.

There are two very important areas that we need to keep in mind when interpreting prophecy. We need to understand the timing of the word of prophecy given to us and we need to understand the underlying process necessary to fulfill the prophetic word.

How Is Personal Prophecy Tested?

1 Thessalonians 5:21
Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.

How do we test personal prophecy? How do we determine if the content of what was spoken to us is truly of God or not? As stated earlier, it is possible that in a series of sentences delivered as prophecy, some part of it may be a genuine word from God and others parts of that same prophecy could be a product of the human imagination or addition. So each part of the prophecy has to be evaluated. Do not despise or reject the entire prophecy just because some parts of it may not have been accurate. Hold on to what is good. Here are some guidelines to test personal prophecy:

Is the prophecy in harmony with the written Word of God?

The first and essential test for every word of prophecy is to examine if it is in harmony with the written Word of God. God's Word is the final authority in the believer's life and no prophetic word, no matter who delivered it can displace God's Word. If any part of the prophecy violates the written Word, then you can be sure that that part of the prophecy is not of God. For example, if a prophet came and told you that he had a dream where God told him to tell you to divorce your wife and marry another, you can be sure that this violates God's written Word.

Do not elevate prophetic words above the written Scriptures. God's written Word must be the standard that we live by.

Does the prophecy move me toward God and His will for my life?

As stated earlier in the second chapter, when evaluating prophecy there is something more important than the fulfillment of a prophetic word. More important than the fulfillment is whether or not the prophetic word is directing you in the ways of the Lord and toward Him, rather than away from Him. If the prophetic word is about glorifying self without glorifying Jesus, then that prophetic word is

questionable. Today, we have too many people prophesying to others with words like: "God will give you an international ministry" or "God will make you a great success" or "You will become very rich" and so on so forth. Now if these are genuine words from God, then praise God for it. However, if it is the prophet's own ideas, just to please the itching ears of people, then beware! This could feed the listener's pride and cause one to become self-important and actually drift away from God.

Does the Spirit bear witness to the prophecy?

It is possible that a prophetic word can speak of things concerning your life that the Lord may not have revealed to you directly, as yet. The Lord may be revealing to you through the prophetic word, ahead of time certain pieces of His plans and purposes for your life. However, you will still have to evaluate it and see if the Holy Spirit is bearing witness within your spirit to that prophetic word. Is there a peace in your heart about what was spoken? The peace and confident assurance of God in your spirit is an indication that this is a genuine Word of God, even though you were not informed about it beforehand. An absence of peace and assurance, an emptiness or even a feeling of distress in your spirit means that this may not necessarily have come from God. If you are not sure that what was spoken is of God, then prayerfully submit it to God and wait till you receive further direction and confirmation from the Lord.

However, keep in mind that a prophetic word that takes you by surprise might cause some unrest in your mind initially. For example, suppose you are an unmarried person and belong to a certain country and are of a certain race, and a prophet of God gave you a genuine word from God that you would marry someone from another country and from another race. Now you may not have even been thinking about marriage, or you may have assumed all along that you would marry someone from your own country and race. So your initial

reaction to this word from God might cause your mind to question it and say it cannot be. However, in such circumstances, it is best to commit that word to God in prayer and store it in the "back of your mind." Watch and see if your spirit receives an assurance about that word. Consider how the Lord directs your steps and how His plans unfold for your life. For example, you may receive an unexpected opportunity to go abroad to a different country and stay there for sometime. This could very well be part of God's plan that will put you in a place where you will see that prophetic word concerning your marriage fulfilled.

Is the prophecy in harmony with the overall plan and purpose of God for your life?

As you keep walking with the Lord, God will give you a general sense of His plan and purpose for your life. This is very important, because if you were to receive a prophecy that directed you to take action—make a geographical move, change careers, and so on—you can evaluate that word in the light of what God has already revealed as His plan and purpose for your life. For instance, if God has called you to serve Him in full-time ministry and someone came with a word directing you to go into business for yourself, then you should definitely question that word. That word is not in harmony with the overall plan and purpose of God for your life.

The Lord had placed on my heart, at an early age, that I was to serve Him in my own nation. Even when I went to the USA to study, I knew that I would one day return to my country to establish a church, live in India and serve Him here. This vision has been burning bright and strong in my spirit ever since it was birthed in me as a teenager. Now if someone were to come to me with a word and tell me, "Brother, the Lord tells me that you are to go to Egypt, settle in that country and raise up churches in that nation," it would only take me a short while to discern whether that was a word truly from God.

Perhaps, I might take that word to God in prayer and ask the Lord about it. But it is likely that I will not even bother doing that, since I have a definite call from God to serve Him in my nation.

Are there two or three witnesses?

The Scripture teaches us, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). Applying this to prophetic words, we need at least two or three witnesses before we can accept a prophetic word as being genuine. The inner witness of the Spirit agreeing with a prophetic word delivered to you makes two witnesses. However, if all you have is a prophetic word and are unable to recognize the Spirit bearing witness to that word in your spirit, then wait for further confirmations. God can confirm the prophetic word through several other means.

Application: Understanding the Process for Fulfillment

We also need to understand that there is an implicit process attached to what God wants to bring about in our lives. For example, if God speaks through prophecy and tells you that He will make you very successful, very rich or give you a very powerful ministry—implicit with that word is the fact that you will therefore have to go through a very rigorous process of training, equipping and preparation. You will have to go through the process of working hard, intense labors, discipline, training, acquiring the knowledge, wisdom, skill and experience that you will need to be able to stand in that position of great responsibility and success—before God can bring it into your life. If God says that He is going to give you great peace, great faith or great victory, implicit in those words is the fact that you will first have to go through great trial and tribulation. Either you are already in it or you will very soon go through some. Unless you see trial and tribulation, you cannot experience peace. Faith is perfected through

allowing patience run its full course during trials (James 1:2,3). And of course you cannot have a great victory without fighting a battle in the first place! Therefore, when we receive a word of prophecy, we need to understand the process involved to seeing that word come to pass.

Not only is there tremendous responsibility on the person delivering prophecy to be as accurate as possible, but there is also responsibility on the recipient of the prophetic word to see its fulfillment. All prophetic words at the personal level (having to do with an individual) are conditional, irrespective of whether the conditions are stated. If you receive a personal prophetic word, then God expects you to do certain things (even if they are not explicitly stated) to see its fulfillment. Even if God said, "I will do such and such …," it still means that you have an important part to play in seeing that prophecy come to pass. All personal prophecies are conditional, even if God says, "I will do … ."

Here are some important insights to keep in mind in the process of fulfillment:

- God expects you to believe the prophetic word. You must have faith in God and in what He has spoken to you. "Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20).

- God expects you to obey His word. If there are things that need to be done in response to the prophetic word, then you must do them. You must act on the prophetic word.

- You may need to use the prophetic word in spiritual warfare against the forces of darkness. Paul wrote to Timothy saying, "This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the

good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18). Speak words of faith, words that are in harmony with the prophetic word given to you, over your life.

- You need to realize that God always has a "due time," a perfect time to fulfill His plans and purposes. You will need to recognize and continue doing what you have to be doing until God's perfect timing for fulfillment comes.

- You will have to pray for a fulfillment of the prophetic word. A good illustration of the last two points can be seen in Daniel 9:1–3. When Daniel understood from reading the books that the time for the fulfillment of the word of the Lord through Jeremiah had come, he set his face toward the Lord to pray and make intercession for his people. Similarly, we see prophet Elijah having to pray seven times for a cloud to come, even though God had already promised him that it will rain (1 Kings 18:1,42-45).

- You will have to go through the necessary process to reach a place where God can release the fulfillment of the prophetic word. Remember that the greater the prophecy and the greater the plans God has for your life, the greater will be the preparation which God will take you through.

- The areas that were not addressed are as important as the areas that were addressed in the prophetic word. So keep all areas in your life submitted to the will of God.

Understanding Timing in Personal Prophecy

Every prophetic word that God speaks to you has its appointed time for action and fulfillment. God always carries things out in their fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). God may speak to you today about something

that will take place, perhaps10 years from now or sometime later in your lifetime. God's promise to Abraham about having a son with Sarah actually took place about 25 years after the promise was given. Abraham misinterpreted God's promise, became impatient and produced Ishmael (Genesis 16) before he could finally have Isaac, the son of promise.

God's concept of time differs greatly from ours. Thousand years are like a day in His sight (Psalm 90:4). When God says that He will do something very soon, quickly or in the immediate future it could mean any time, maybe in the next two or three years. It may not mean today or tomorrow or even next week. Prophetic timeline varies according to whom God is addressing. When the word is for individuals, then God usually speaks with respect to a lifetime. When God speaks to a family or household, He speaks in terms of generations. When He speaks to nations, the prophetic timeline spans centuries or several hundreds of years. When He speaks to His people at large—the Church or Israel, He speaks in terms of ages or thousands of years. Think about this: Jesus, speaking to the Church said in Revelation 22:12, "Behold I am coming quickly …. " It has been about two thousand years since He spoke that Word to Apostle John and He is still yet to come.

Understanding the timing for the fulfillment of our personal prophecy is very important because we need to determine what to do between now and then. Just because you received a prophetic word about going to the nations does not mean that you need to pack your bags, keep them ready and sit around doing nothing, just waiting to go to the nations! You might have to wait 10 or 20 years, if that is God's timing to take you to the nations—and that is a good number of years of one's life to let slip by without doing anything! Who knows, if God sees you sitting around doing nothing for that long, He may even choose not to take you to the nations! Anyway,

the point is that you must keep doing what you know you ought to be doing until the time comes for your prophecy to be fulfilled. Continue with faith, patience, diligence and walk in practical wisdom fulfilling the responsibilities God has given you presently.

Prophetic fore-shortening

In the same sentence, there could be parts of the prophetic word that have different time elements. For example in Isaiah 9:6,7, it is recorded that, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." The first part of this Scripture passage talks about the birth of Jesus and the second part talks about His government. There is a gap of about 2000 years between the first part (His birth) and the second (His Rule), but both are presented in one sentence.

Disappointments

Sometimes people tend to add 'timing' (E.g., by the end of the year, in 2 months and so on) to the prophetic word, which the Lord never said in the first place. When the prophecy does not happen in the anticipated time, people can become disappointed, discouraged and disillusioned. So always take timings, dates and durations given in prophetic words cautiously.

Confirmation: Two or More Witnesses

2 Corinthians 13:1
This will be the third time I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

This is a simple yet important principle. Wait for confirmation from two or three witness to establish a personal prophetic word. Do not act on a single instance of a prophetic word, especially, if it is something you have not sensed in your spirit already.

Personal prophecies

For personal prophecies ask yourself the following:

- The inner witness: Does the Spirit bear witness? Is there a sense of peace and calmness about the prophetic word?

- The consistent versus the sudden: What has God been consistently speaking to you over the months/years. If this prophecy is a sudden alteration of what you know God has been consistently speaking, then be cautious while receiving it.

- The mouth of other witnesses: Have there been others who have delivered a similar word to you?

Sometimes God may speak through repeated dreams. The dreams may have different imagery and symbols but carry the same meaning. If a dream is repeated twice, it is God confirming to you that He is ready to do the thing and it is something that is going to happen in the near future. Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream illustrates this well. Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine

will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass" (Genesis 41:25–32).

Congregational prophecies—Does anyone have a witness?

The Scripture states, "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that you all may learn and be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:29–33). The New Testament encourages us to prophesy when we assemble together as the people of God. When prophecy is given in a congregational gathering, the Bible teaches that it has to be judged. That is, others who are prophets or who are spiritually mature should judge what is being said. If anything is revealed to someone who is listening and judging the prophecy, the one delivering the prophecy should keep silent and allow the other person to speak. There is no excuse for the one delivering the prophecy to go 'out of control,' because when prophesying under the unction of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the prophet is still subject to the prophet. Congregational prophesies have to be tested and either approved or corrected immediately, if possible.

Only a Part was Revealed—What Went Unsaid Is Still Important

We stated earlier what the Bible teaches, that we prophesy in part. This means that God allows the prophet to speak only of a few things concerning our lives. He does not reveal everything about us to His

servant. So if we are living in sin in a certain area of life, and God in His mercy does not reveal it to His servant, and instead the prophet prophesies words of peace, blessing and success—this does not mean that God is excusing the sin. Rather God is extending grace and mercy to us for the present, not exposing our sins and weaknesses. The areas that went unaddressed are still as important to God as those that were spoken of in the prophecy. If you continue in sin—God will have to bring discipline and correction in that area even though the prophet may have spoken words of peace, blessing and success.

On the other hand, you could have an area of major concern in your life. And the prophetic word may never address or mention that particular area. Keep in mind that the prophet only prophesies in part. So you need not despair and think that the area that went unmentioned is not important to God. Every area of your life is important to God—He knows the number of hairs on your head! However, He does not reveal every area of your life to the one prophesying to you.

God's silence about a particular area of life does not imply that He approves of what is going on in that area. At the same time, God's silence about a particular area of our lives does not mean He is ignorant or uninterested in that area of our lives.

True Prophets Also Make Mistakes

We must remember that even true and genuine prophets of God can deliver incorrect or inaccurate words from time to time for various reasons. They are just human. This does not make them a false prophet. Just because someone makes a mistake and delivers a wrong prophecy (a false prophecy) at any time, does not mean that they have lost their salvation and are under the control of deceiving spirits.

True pastors make mistakes, and when they do we do not call them false shepherds nor do we stone them. True Bible teachers also make mistakes in their teaching, and we do not call them false teachers. True evangelists also make mistakes in their lives, and we do not call them false workers. True apostles also make mistakes. After Peter had gone and preached to the house of Cornelius, the apostles in Jerusalem thought Peter had made a mistake, gone into apostolic error and so the apostles and elders confronted him, and contended with him (Acts 11:1,2). Peter, the powerful apostle also made mistakes, and several others including Barnabas fell into the same thing. The apostle Paul had to confront and correct him (Galatians 2:11–14). We do not call any of them as false apostles because of their errors. Even so, we must be gracious to true prophets of God who make mistakes.

While we judge prophecy using the guidelines discussed earlier, we do not judge a prophet or the person delivering prophecy solely on the content of their prophecy. Instead, we judge ministers by their fruit and by their confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus told us in Matthew 7:15–20, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them." When judging a prophet or any minister for that matter, examine the fruit of their life and ministry. Is their personal life manifesting Christ-like character and the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23)? Does their ministry produce the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of those whom they minister to or is it just all 'froth,' drama, thrills and chills?

I John 4:1–3 reads, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of 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 of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus the Messiah—the Savior of the world, the Anointed One sent from God—has come in the flesh, is of God. So this is the second test to determine if prophets are true or false.

The Bible describes several characteristics of false prophets. "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber" (2 Peter 2:1–3). False prophets bring in destructive heresies, influence many to follow their destructive ways, are covetous and exploit people through deceptive words. They have forsaken the right way and have gone astray like Balaam. They are wells without water and empty clouds blown about by the wind (2 Peter 2:12–19).

God has placed and is raising up many prophets, both men and women, and is releasing them to minister to the Body of Christ. When these people make mistakes, it does not make them false prophets. It is only those who fit the descriptions of the previous passage mentioned above, who should be recognized as false prophets. Be very careful not to speak evil about some prophet of

God just because the prophet made a mistake. He said, "Do not touch My anointed ones and do My prophets no harm"(1 Chronicles 16:22). He does not take it lightly when someone speaks against His prophets (Numbers 12:1–9).



INTERPRETING DREAMS

11

11

INTERPRETING DREAMS

Dreams are fun! It is exciting to have a dream that you know is from God and is truly God speaking to you. Of course not all dreams we have are from God. Some dreams could be vain imaginations which result from overwork, preoccupation or overeating. "For a dream comes through much activity" (Ecclesiastes 5:3). It appears that the devil can also trouble people with bad dreams, which we often call nightmares. Demonic spirits, if given entrance into our lives, can intercept our night sleep with evil dreams. And yet, it is absolutely true that God speaks through dreams:

Job 33:14–18
For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. In order to turn man from his deed, and conceal pride from man, He keeps back his soul from the Pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

God speaks to us in dreams to instruct us, correct us, reveal things to us, preserve and protect us and so on. God also speaks to the 'unsaved' in dreams to draw them to Himself and point them to the truth.

There are many different kinds of dreams serving different purposes. You can have a dream within a dream. You can have a vision in a dream. You can see, hear and feel in a dream.

Scriptural Examples

Here is a listing of some of the people who had dreams and visions in the Bible.

Records of people who had dreams in the Bible:

Abimelech (Genesis 20:3–8)
Jacob (Genesis 28:12–15/ 31:10–12)
Laban (Genesis 31:24)
Joseph (Genesis 37:5–10)
Pharaoh's Butler and Baker (Genesis 40:5–19)
Pharaoh's Dream (Genesis 41:1–7,15–32)
A Soldier (Judges 7:13–15)
Solomon (1 Kings 3:5–15; 9:1,2)
Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:1–7,14–16,25–45; 4:4–23)
Daniel (Daniel 7:1)
The Magi (Matthew 2:12,13)
Pilate's Wife (Matthew 27:19)

Records of people who had trances and visions in the Bible

Abram (Genesis 15:12)
Balaam (Numbers 24:2–16)
Job (Job 4:12–16)
Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1–14; 40:1,2)
Daniel (Daniel 8:1,2)
Ananias (Acts 9:10–12)
Peter (Acts 10:10–16; 11:4–8)
Paul (Acts 16:9,10; 18:9; 22:17,18; 23:11; 2 Corinthians 12:1–5)

Prophetic Symbolism

In dreams and visions, as we discussed in the previous chapter, God uses symbols, parables, riddles, comparisons and so on. Of course, sometime things are literal and at other times God uses words, sentences, pictures or actions in a symbolic way. They mean something other than their literal sense. Therefore, we need to be careful in interpreting them. A wrong interpretation of an accurate prophetic word, could lead to wrong application, resulting in disaster!

A symbol is some object (real or imagined) or action which depicts a meaning or conveys a message. A symbol may not always have a **self-contained meaning**. In some cases, the symbol has an **assigned meaning**. Example: An iron pillar representing Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:18) has a self-contained meaning of strength, and longevity/durability. Good figs representing Jewish captives (Jeremiah 24:3–5) is not a self-contained meaning but an assigned meaning. Symbols with self-contained meanings can be easily understood. For other symbols that do not have a self-contained meaning, we need to receive from God the meaning He is assigning to that symbol while communicating a message to us.

Some important guidelines in interpreting prophetic symbolism:

1. Always interpret using Biblical symbolism—what do those symbols mean in Scripture. Please do not use handbooks from New Age, other occult organizations, psychologists, gurus, mystics and so on.

2. There will be times of course, when the symbols seen are not found in Scripture. In this case, we need to receive the specific meaning the Spirit of God is conveying along with the symbols in the image (picture)/vision/dream that you are seeing.

3. In a picture/dream/vision, some objects could be literal and some objects in the same picture could be symbolic. Identify what is

literal and what is **symbolic**. Differentiate these. Do not assume that because some of the prophetic image contains symbols, that everything else is also symbolic.

4. Identify your **audience—**who is God speaking to: to you, to another person, to a gathering of people and so on.

5. Identify the **meaning or resemblance** between the symbol and the audience that God is speaking about.

6. If you are unable to receive immediately the meaning or resemblance between the symbol and the intended audience, try to discern the following:

   (a) Is the symbol found in Scripture and what does it mean or represent in Scripture?

   (b) What major characteristic(s) do the symbol and audience have in common? Find at least one major point of resemblance/commonality. Avoid unnecessarily drawing many parallels between the symbol and audience.

   (c) Be careful not to assign the wrong characteristics of the symbol to the audience. Example, a lion is both stealthy (prowls) and strong. The 'stealthy' characteristic is assigned to the devil in 1 Peter 5:8,9 and the 'strength' characteristic is assigned to the Lord Jesus (Revelation 5:5). A dove is both gentle and simple (easily tricked). The gentle nature is assigned to believers in Matthew 10:16 and their simple nature (easily misled, a silly dove without understanding) is used against Ephraim (Hosea 7:11).

7. Tap into the gift of the word of wisdom to interpret prophetic symbolism. The ability to correctly interpret dreams and visions and clarify its application is a gift of wisdom that also comes from the Holy Spirit.

Some Symbols in the Bible:

- Divine symbols
- Symbolic materials
- Symbolic gestures
- Symbolic actions
- Symbolic numbers
- Symbolic names/characters/events
- Symbolic colors

The following is a very short list just to show how to relate things back to their meaning in Scripture. The more of the Word you know, the easier it becomes to quickly connect back to the Bible and accurately interpret prophetic symbolism.

Divine symbols

Symbol	Meaning
Sword	Breach of fellowship between man and God (Genesis 3:24) Judgment coming in
Burning bush	God's presence (Exodus 3:2)
Pillar of fire and cloud	God's guiding presence (Exodus 13:21,22)
Water, River	Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39)
Mantle, Cloak	Anointing (Luke 24:49)
Dove	Holy Spirit (John 1:32)
Lion, Lamb	The Lord Jesus (John 1:29, Revelation 5:5)
Oil	Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:1–6)

Symbolic materials

Symbol	Meaning
Boiling pot	Judgment (Jeremiah 1:13)
Good figs	People (Jewish captives in Babylon) (Jeremiah 24:3–5)
Bad figs	People (Remnant Jews who stayed in Judah) (Jeremiah 24:3,8)
Dry bones given new flesh	Restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 37)
Four beasts	Four kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome (Daniel 7)
Tree	Person (Psalm 1:3)
Basket of summer fruit	Judgment is coming (Amos 8:1–12)
Gold lampstand	Israel as God's witness (Zechariah 4:2)
Two olive trees	Zerubbabel and Joshua (Zechariah 4:3,11–14)
Woman in a basket	Sinful Israel (Zechariah 5:5–11)
Golden lampstands	Churches (Revelation 1:12–20)
Stars	Ministers of the churches (Revelation 1:12–20) Winner of souls (Daniel 12:3)
Blood	Life (Leviticus 17:11)
Bread and wine	Body and blood of Jesus (Luke 22:19,20)
Dove	Gentleness (Matthew 10:16)

Symbolic Materials

Symbol	Meaning
Dove	Simplicity (easily deceived) (Hosea 7:11)
Dragon	Satan (Revelation 12:3–17, 13:2)
Serpent	Satan (Revelation 12:9)
Horn	Strength (Psalm 112:9)
Incense	Prayer (Revelation 8:3,4)
Keys	Authority (Matthew 16:18)
Lamb	Man's wanderings from God (Isaiah 53:6)
Lion	Satan (1 Peter 5:8)
Rainbow	God's promise, faithfulness (Genesis 9:13–16; Revelation 4:3)
Door	Entry point, opportunity (Acts 14:27)
Bread	Provision (Matthew 6:11)
Birds	Demonic powers, satan (Matthew 13:4,19)
Wood, hay, stubble	Things that are temporal (1 Corinthians 3:12)

Symbolic gestures

Symbol	Meaning
Laying hand on another person	Imparting a blessing (Genesis 48:13,14,17)
Beating one's chest	Expressing sorrow/repentance (Luke 18:13)
Sitting in dust and ashes or sackcloth and ashes	Expressing repentance (Job 42:6, Luke 10:13)
Tearing one's clothes	Expressing grief (Job 1:20)
Tearing one's clothes	Expressing anger (Mark 14:63)
Handshake	Fellowship, Friendship

There may be times when God will ask you (or someone else) to enact the prophetic word rather than just speaking it. This is Symbolic gesture or Symbolic action that God is leading you to do. The Symbolic gesture or Symbolic action conveys the prophetic message to the audience.

Symbolic actions

Symbol	Meaning
An angel placing live coal on Isaiah's lips	Cleansing (Isaiah 6:5,6)
Jeremiah buried a linen belt in a rock crevice and later, when it had rotted, dug it up	False gods worshiped by Judah were useless like the rotten belt (Jeremiah 13:10)

Symbolic actions

Symbol	Meaning
A potter making a clay pot	God's dealings with his people (Jeremiah 18:1–6)
Breaking a clay jar	Judah would be destroyed (Jeremiah 19:10,11)
Jeremiah wore a yoke	King Zedekiah would surrender and come under the authority of Babylon (Jeremiah 27:1,2,12)
Jeremiah buried stones in clay in the brick pavement at the palace in Egypt	Babylon would conquer Egypt (Jeremiah 43:8–13)
Ezekiel ate a scroll with word of mourning and woe	Ezekiel was to bring this kind of message to Israel (Ezekiel 2:8–3:3)
Ezekiel drew an outline of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and built siege works and a ramp against it	Jerusalem would be attacked by Babylon (Ezekiel 4:1–3)
Ezekiel laid 390 days on his left side and 40 days on his right side, weighed out his food, and cooked it using cow manure for fuel	The people of Israel would eat ceremonially defiled food in nations that would capture them (Ezekiel 4:4–13)
Ezekiel shaved his head and beard and burned one third of the hair, cut one third of it and threw it to the wind, and tucked some in his garment	One third of the people of Jerusalem would die by plague or famine, one third by the sword and one third be scattered. (Ezekiel 5:1–4,12)

Symbolic actions

Symbol	Meaning
Hosea married an adulterous woman who left him and then he brought her back and loved her again	God will restore Israel even though she has sinned against God (Hosea 1:2,3; 3:2,5)
Agabus tied himself with Paul's girdle	The Jews in Jerusalem would bind up Paul (Acts 21:10–12)
John ate a scroll	John was to receive the message the Lord was about to give him (Revelation 10:9–11)

Symbolic numbers

Symbol	Meaning
Seven	Perfection (Genesis 2:2,3 Revelation 1:12; 4:5: 5:1; 8:1; 15:1; 16:1)
Forty	Testing (Moses' 40 years in Midian, Israel 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus' 40 days of temptation)

In most cases take the number in its literal sense, unless God specifically intends to use it in a symbolic way.

Symbolic names/characters/events

Many times God can use names, Bible characters or Biblical events in a Symbolic way to convey a message to a particular audience.

Symbolic colors

God may use colors in a symbolic way. Once again, take the literal sense, unless the 'symbolic' is specifically assigned by God.

Purple represents royalty (Judges 8:26, Esther 1:6; 8:15) or wealth (Proverbs 31:22)

White represents purity and righteousness (Isaiah 1:18, Revelation 1:14; 3:4,5)

Some of the above information has been adapted from the following resource:

> Basic Bible Interpretation—A Practical Guide to Discovering Bible Truth
>
> Roy B. Zuck, 1991. Indian Edition published in 2002. OM Books.

Here is an example of a dream taken from my journal and how I went through the interpretation process of the dream:

Saturday September 05, 2009

Had a strange dream last night. There were three parts to this dream. In the first part, I saw myself handling some thin small snakes. They were easy to handle. One of them slithered off and crawled away very fast. I caught the other one and smashed its head and threw it out of the window, onto the road where I thought some people further crushed it under their feet. In the next part of the dream, I saw a very fierce venomous cobra in my way. It was very angry and ready to attack. I was wondering for a moment why God was allowing this to come against me. Then I saw myself rolling a potted plant over the snake, and as the snake was trying to react to this surprise move, I jumped over and crossed over the snake and continued on my journey. In the third part of the dream, I saw myself in what seemed

like the first floor of a wooden house and I wanted to go down the wooden stairs but there was a huge snake like a python or an anaconda—something of a size that could either swallow me or strangle me. I was wondering how to get past this. I then saw about 3–4 live chicken all arranged, with their legs tied, so that they could not move. So I took one of these birds and threw them to the snake. It caught the bird and began to feed on it. And as it was doing so, I jumped over it and went on my way.

I woke up this morning trying to understand what all this meant. The meaning did not come to me right away, so I kept it aside in my memory, hoping that the meaning of this would come to me at a later point.

We had our Pastors and Ministry Leaders' gathering today at home, and when my turn came, I was sharing what I had learnt from Judges 20, earlier this week. Israel asking counsel from God and then going to battle against one of their own tribes, the Benjamites. Two times they faced defeat and at the third attempt, they had a 'strategy' and saw the victory God had spoken to them. As I was sharing this, a light came on inside of me, connecting my dream to the message from Judges 20. What God was indicating to me through the dream is that to overcome (get past) what the devil is doing, we need to outsmart the devil. There are some devils that are easy to deal with. However there are other demonic forces that obstruct our path and all we need to do is outsmart the devil. Be wiser than the enemy. Use divine strategy to get past the demonic powers that come in our way.

But now I began to ask two questions: Do we see this principle in Scripture? Does the Bible indicate anywhere about overcoming the devil by wisdom or divine strategy or anything of outsmarting the devil? And second, how do we do this in practical life? As I kept these two questions in mind, intending to research them later, I realized

that the Cross was a place where Christ triumphed over demonic powers (Colossians 2:14,15). The Cross was a place where God demonstrated both His Wisdom and Power (1 Corinthians 1:23,24). The wisdom of God was part of what overthrew the powers of darkness on the Cross. This wisdom is given to the Church and is to be expressed through the Church (1 Corinthians 2:6–8, Ephesians 3:8–11).



MINISTERING PROPHETICALLY

12

12

MINISTERING PROPHETICALLY

In this chapter, we share some additional learning to help us minister prophetically, in a way that would be edifying to people and glorifying to the Lord. We also look briefly at ways in which the prophetic is being used to serve people in and outside the church.

Different Levels of Prophetic Ministry

As we learn to walk in the prophetic, we must remember that it is like climbing up a ladder. We start at the lowest rung and climb up step by step. This is something we grow in and as we keep at it, we develop in our ability to hear from God, interpret what He is saying, correctly deliver it to others or apply it in our personal lives.

While we must always desire to move up to new levels in our prophetic experience, let us understand that God is not in a hurry. Some of us may be called to be prophets with the ministry gift of a prophet, but we must start out where everyone else starts, by learning to exercise the simple gift of prophecy and progress from there. Some of us make the mistake of going around labeling ourselves as a 'prophet' just because we flow in the gift of prophecy or even manifest consistent prophetic ministry. Just because someone has a prophetic ministry, it does not place them in the same category as a prophet in the Body of Christ. All believers can and should be encouraged to develop "prophetic ministries"—in that they consistently move and manifest the prophetic in their lives. This does not mean that all believers have the ministry gift (or office) of a prophet.

The key is to learn to serve God and His people faithfully at whatever stage you are in your development process and move with God as He takes you forward into new levels.

Ministering Prophetically to a Congregation

We discussed in an earlier chapter about ministering the gift of prophecy in small groups. We now share a few useful guidelines when ministering prophetically in a large congregation, such as a church service or conference.

- Delivering a prophetic message

  When ministering to a congregation and you are led to deliver a prophetic word, there are some quick questions you ask yourself before delivering it.

  (a) Who is this message for? Is it for the entire congregation, the leadership, an individual or a smaller group of individuals within the church? Are there some qualifiers for the people to whom this applies?

  (b) When should they be told—right at that moment or at the end of the service?

  (c) Is it alright to speak it publicly or must the word be delivered in private?

  (d) Should it first be presented to the leader of the church or have they given me the liberty and trust to deliver it publicly?

- Calling people out in a service

  There are times when you move prophetically and God leads you to call people out. This could be either by the names of people, pointing people out in the congregation or calling out conditions, situations or things that relate to them or

identifying them in some way. While all of this is wonderful and glorifies God, we must also be sensitive to the people themselves. We must be careful not to embarrass people, not to humiliate people or even falsely accuse people in front of others.

- Delivering personal prophecy

  If you are ministering in a church service and you are moved to deliver personal prophecy, always do it in a manner that keeps with the trust and confidence the leader of that local church or conference has placed in you. Always encourage people to test the prophecies you give them. Encourage people to get input from their leader (e.g. pastor) in correctly interpreting and applying personal prophecies. If God is revealing a certain sin or problem among people or if you had to counsel someone about personal matters in their lives, as far as possible, communicate this back to the local pastor and have the people meet with their pastor for further guidance. It is also likely that when traveling as a visiting minister, you will be invited to people's homes for prayer and personal prophecy. Continue to follow the same etiquette when doing this. Always encourage people to connect back to their local church and local pastor for further guidance.

Ministering to Political Leaders

There will be opportunities, as the Lord makes possible to minister to leaders in government. While we must walk with confidence and expect God to use us to powerfully impact the lives of those in government, here are some things that will help us:

- Do not flatter: It is quite natural that people want to hear good things about themselves, about their future, about their political career and about their government. When ministering

prophetically, be kind and gracious in your delivery, but do not flatter with the content of your prophecy.

- Do not compromise: On the other hand, while we do not wish to flatter, we must also not compromise on what God is saying. Say what God reveals.

- Speak with wisdom: If God is requiring us to address a problem, a difficult situation, some wrongdoing or injustice, we must communicate that with wisdom. The way prophet Nathan brought correction to King David in 2 Samuel 12:1–9 is a classic example of using wisdom in communicating to those in authority.

- Do not seek political favors: Unless God brings you into a place of divine favor and cause political leaders to reciprocate favor on you for your ministry, as a principle, do not ask for political favors. Guard yourself and do not abuse the opportunity and responsibility God has given you. Serve the political leaders that God has connected to your life, faithfully.



POWER OF PROPHETIC TEAMS

13

13

POWER OF PROPHETIC TEAMS

As we have already seen, both the Old Testament and New Testament show prophets operating in teams or groups of prophets. Rather than one prophet operating in isolation, we see them moving in prophetic teams where there was more than one individual with strong prophetic ministry and they all could minister together prophetically.

In the New Testament we see a company or team of prophets in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27). Later we see a team of prophets in the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1). We read of a team of elders ministering prophetically to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14). Within a local church it was assumed that there would be multiple prophets. Paul writes with this assumption in 1 Corinthians 14: "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged" (1 Corinthians 14:29–31). It is important for local churches to encourage the rising up of prophets and prophetic ministry within the congregation. Further, prophetic team ministry must be encouraged, rather than letting prophetic ministry be carried out in isolation.

Encouraging prophetic team ministry has several powerful benefits. When people minister in prophetic teams, many wonderful things can happen:

Double-confirmation: There can be double-confirmation in one ministry time. When one person has not heard what the other has prophesied, but brings out the same message, although in different words, that can be a powerful confirmation right there that God is

emphasizing something.

Pieces of a puzzle: Sometimes through a time of prophetic team ministry, bits and pieces can come, and they all fall in place, like pieces of a puzzle to create a complete picture of what God is saying.

Easy to stir up the gift: when people flow together in prophetic teams, it is easy to stir up and flow in prophecy. There is the prophetic influence that is established over the team, so that each finds it easy to release prophecy. Also, each one adds to the flow and experience of the prophetic.

Check-and-balances: With people moving in prophetic teams, there is an inherent check-and-balances maintained with the team. If someone is way off in their prophecy, others in the team can "call foul" and bring correction to what was being said. Also, there is a sense of mutual accountability in personal life, prayer and character development as well.

Corporate covering: Prophetic teams operating under the leadership of their local churches are able to move and operate under a safe spiritual umbrella that covers them both through their local leadership as well as the mutual covering they bring upon each other in the spirit. There is less likelihood of people going off into error, yielding to deceiving spirits, doctrines of demons and so on.

Different kinds of prophetic teams can be encouraged within the context of a local church:

- Prophetic prayer teams: These are teams whose focus is to hear from God for the church, for people in the church, for the city and nation and pray those things through here on earth.

- Prophetic evangelism teams: These are teams that will go out into the streets, malls, parks, to win souls by the exercise of prophetic gifts, dream interpretation and so on.

- Prophetic worship teams: These are teams of singers and musicians who tune in to the Spirit of God in their praise and worship, singing prophetic songs.

- Prophetic creative teams: These are teams of artists, dancers, drama teams and so on, who give birth to Spirit-inspired creative expression to communicate the mind of God.

- Prophetic marketplace teams: These are teams of people in business, entertainment, politics, education and various other spheres in the marketplace who encourage each other to hear from God for what they are doing in the marketplace.

- Prophetic city-transformation teams: These are teams of people whose focus is to hear from God strategies that will result in city-transformation and either implement them or share them with other leaders who will validate and then implement these strategies.

If local churches can encourage the development of such prophetic teams and release them to serve within the local church and in the world, we will see dynamic results both in terms of the harvest of souls and in the edification of believers.



THE PROPHETIC CHURCH

14

14

THE PROPHETIC CHURCH

To be prophetic simply means to be able to hear and speak what God is saying in the present. It is to know the heart, mind and desire of God and to follow through to see it done on earth as He has expressed it.

What we see in the New Testament, and what I believe is in the heart of the Lord, and perhaps a desire in the hearts of many pastors of local churches is to raise up their local church to be a prophetic church. God desires to see the local church become a community of believers who can hear Him speak and respond to what He reveals accurately so that His will is done and His Kingdom is established in their part of the world.

A people who are prophetic in nature would be a people who are passionate about being intimate with God. They place intimacy with God high on their daily agenda, because one cannot be prophetic without intimacy. True prophetic ministry is not just trying to get information from God. Rather it is about knowing His heart and His thoughts, and hence is birthed out of a deep passion for intimacy with God. Prophetic people will also be a people who are absolutely committed to personal holiness. It is the pure in heart who experience (see) God. Prophetic people will also have a burning desire and passion to flow in and demonstrate the supernatural. While they walk in the natural, they are desirous of bringing heaven into earth. Prophetic people are also deeply committed to intercession and prayer. This is their place not only of communion with God but service to people. Prophetic people are also a people of action. They not only pray but also serve.

They confront the powers of darkness with holy boldness. They raise up their voice against unrighteousness and injustice in real practical ways.

Becoming a Prophetic Church

Purpose

Why should any local church desire to become a prophetic church? Local churches should desire to develop the prophetic so that they can hear what the Spirit is saying to the church in the now and act accordingly. Local churches need to know the now word from God and not just what was spoken 10, 20 or 50 years ago. The Lord Jesus said that His sheep will hear His voice. The question we need to ask is whether His sheep know how to hear His voice? Are they hearing His voice today? Another important reason why local churches should desire to see the prophetic become part of their life as a church is that all ministry to one another and toward the world will truly be directed by the Holy Spirit.

Process

How can local churches transition to becoming a prophetic church? There is no set formula to make this happen and the transition path has to be tailored to where the congregation is spiritually. We must be prepared knowing that the process will not be easy. There may be strong resistance to this, especially from those who do not understand the purpose and power of the prophetic or from those with a few bad experiences. Leaders and people in the congregation will need to be trained in the prophetic. We will have to stretch ourselves to go where we have not gone before. We will have to pray more and seek God, so that we can tune our hearts and ears to hear clearly. We have to be willing to let go of our reputation, because many of the things that God will speak and tell us to do will go against

the grain of normal human understanding. We will make mistakes—but we must be teachable and willing to be corrected so that we can learn from our mistakes and move ahead.

Pitfalls

There are some dangers we must avoid as we make this transition to becoming a prophetic church. We must keep in mind that our goal is always intimacy with God and fulfilling His purposes. The goal is not just to hear and speak nice things. We must never give the prophetic word greater authority than the written Scripture. Always remind people not to blindly follow a prophetic word without testing it. Our identity must never be derived from us being a prophetic church. Rather our identity is always based on who we are in Christ and what God has done for us in Christ. We must always walk with a spirit of humility and relate to other churches, believers and ministers who may not have the same passion or understanding for the prophetic as we do.

Results

The fruit of becoming a local church where the prophetic is a part of the life of the church is wonderful. There will be freshness in all areas of our life and ministry, because we are in step with God. There will be success—because success comes from doing what God wants us to do in the now. There will be much growth and advancement directed purely by the Spirit of God. We will have a powerful impact on our world, when we hear and speak what God is saying. We will truly be a voice to the nation and to the nations!

Pastoring the Prophetic

Pastoring a prophetic church and raising up a prophetic people though exciting, has with it a whole new set of challenges. Things are not the same as in a local church that settles for the status quo. Things can

get messy in a prophetic church. As a pastor, you may get prophetic messages from all directions and many of them may be nothing more than "good and sincere" attempts, and you will have to politely tell folks to continue trying to tune in accurately. You may have people who are clamoring for attention and recognition because of their prophetic gifting. As Proverbs states, "Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox" (Proverbs 14:4). If we want to have our place nice and clean, get rid of the oxen. But if you get rid of the oxen, no work will be done. So we must be willing to work through the challenges that come with pastoring a prophetic people knowing that once we get to a place of maturity, powerful things will result.

The Pastor Prophet

As a prophetic pastor who is pastoring a prophetic church, we have the joy of bringing prophetic teaching and prophetic counsel to people. This means that what we teach and counsel people is birthed out of what we hear the Spirit speaking to the church in the now. This will have a powerful impact on the congregation as they are strengthened in their inner man, They realize that their pastor knows how to speak a word in season, to challenge, to refresh, to motivate, to correct and to govern with spiritual authority coming from a 'now' word from God. As a prophetic pastor, do not forget to emphasize the basic—focus on fanning fire, passion and hunger for God. Continuously emphasize the call to spiritual maturity. Establish a solid foundation in the Word of God. Keep a continuous focus on winning the lost. Measure effectiveness by God's plumb line—Christ-likeness, love for the Lord, loving others, enduring with joy and so on.

Remember that prophetic ministry is just one of the tools, as with other ministry gifts, that Christ uses to build and equip the Church. We must learn to receive and welcome this ministry without making it the only focus of what we do. Keep in mind that prophetic ministry

includes a wide variety of God's working from basic inspirational prophecy, revelation, fore-telling, intercession, worship, confronting demonic powers and unusual manifestations of God's power in extraordinary signs and wonders. Do not lock yourself into just one expression of the prophetic. Do not make people the focus. Remember that God is a jealous God. Spiritual gifts are given to bless the people, not to exalt the vessel through which the gift flows. So do not promote an individual or gifting in the local church. Maintain a level playing field for all to come and participate. Encourage the gift, but also hold character equally important. Method and ministry style must follow Biblical guidelines and basic etiquette, and common sense. Sometimes, people with a genuine prophetic gift can become spooky spiritual or spiritually superstitious. God anoints the person not the method or ministry style. Keep the style simple, down-to-earth and something that everyone can receive from. Cut out hype and exaggeration. Do not allow people to use prophecy for manipulation or control. Bring correction in a loving and timely manner without destroying the person or quenching the gift. You cannot please everyone and you cannot explain everything. There will always be people who do not understand the why, the how and the when. There will always be people who will be offended. Establish a balanced leadership-ministry team.

Encourage the formation of prophetic prayer teams where people meet to hear from God and pray for the specific that God reveals to them. Encourage prophetic evangelism where prophetic teams reach unsaved people through the exercise of the prophetic. Encourage believers to become a prophetic voice in the marketplace. Encourage believers to take prophetic ministry into their schools, colleges, places of work and so on, and make a difference with the prophetic to solve real-life problems. Encourage believers to listen to God for prophetic strategies to impact cities and nations. You can make a difference as a pastor-prophet!



WOMEN AS PROPHETIC MINISTERS

15

15

WOMEN AS PROPHETIC MINISTERS

The Bible has quite a few examples of women prophets (prophetesses).

Miriam

Exodus 15:20,21
Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

Deborah

Judges 4:4,5
Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

Huldah

2 Kings 22:14,15 (see also 2 Chronicles 34:22,23)
So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her. Then she said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me.'

Isaiah's wife is called a prophetess. However, there is no record of any ministry she performed (Isaiah 8:1–3).

Anna

Luke 2:36–38

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Philip's Daughters

Acts 21:8,9

On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

If women as prophets (or prophetesses) were accepted in the Bible, then women being prophets should be equally welcome today. These prophetesses were not relegated just to women's meetings or women's conferences. In fact, priests and kings received through their prophetic ministry. Deborah, a prophetess, governed and led people. God has said that in the last days He will pour out His Spirit on all, including women, and they will prophesy (Acts 2:17,18). We also know that the gifts of the Spirit are given to all without distinction of gender. All are instructed to walk in love and desire spiritual gifts, especially to prophesy which includes women. The grace gifts of leadership and prophecy are given without distinction of gender.

In Ephesians 4, in relation to the ministry gifts, when the Scripture says, "He gave gifts to men" (Ephesians 4:8), the Greek for 'men' is *'anthropos'* which is used generally, of "a human being, male or female" without reference to sex or nationality, as in, Matthew 4:4, Matthew 12:35, John 2:25. The same word *'anthropos'* is used in Ephesians 3:16 referring to the inner man and also in 1 Peter 3:4,

referring to the hidden man of the heart. Therefore based on what we see in Scripture as a whole, and in Ephesians 4 specifically, we conclude that women can also function in the five-fold ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11. Women in the Church must be encouraged to rise up in their prophetic gifting and calling.



PRACTICAL ISSUES CONCERNING PROPHETIC MINISTRY

16

16

PRACTICAL ISSUES CONCERNING PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Abuses in the Church Today

As with almost every other gift and ministry, there are several abuses of the prophetic ministry that we hear of and witness from time to time. 'Self-styled' prophets whom we would hesitate to recommend even as servants of God, cheaply using the phrase, "thus says the Lord," attaching it to almost anything they want to put forth as a 'prophecy;' people using 'prophesies' to manipulate and influence others; prophecies that were clearly mental guess-work rather than inspired utterances; Christians trying to order their lives according to prophecies proclaimed on them while relegating God's Word to second place and not attempting to listen to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit; the use of the 'prophetic' for cheap popularity and commercialization, and so on, are some of the several abuses of the prophetic ministry in the Church today. We must experience and rejoice in genuine manifestations of the prophetic. At the same time, we cannot allow abuse of the prophetic to continue in the Body. Leaders and believers need to develop discernment in identifying what is truly of the Spirit of God and what is simply hype and sensationalism manufactured by self-seeking and sometimes ignorant men and women.

Avoiding Prophetic Pitfalls

We must be careful to avoid the common prophetic pitfalls we see in Scripture.

Prophesying for money

Although Balaam seemed to be keeping himself from rewards of divination at the start, later on he fell for it. That is why we have the solemn warning: "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit …" (Jude 1:11). Gehazi was Elisha's servant and probably the one to continue Elisha's prophetic ministry. And yet he made a major mistake when Naaman the Syrian visited them. "But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him." So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?" And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me, saying, 'Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.'" So Naaman said, "Please, take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them on ahead of him. When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed. Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, "Where did you go, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow" (2 Kings 5:20–27).

Micah reported a time in Israel when "Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money.

Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us" (Micah 3:11).

While the desire for money can become a snare to anyone, prophetic ministers must be on double guard, since people tend to offer up money in order to receive a word from God. Prophetic ministers must guard their heart from seeking after money in return for their prophetic ministry.

Playing to Peoples Expectations

Isaiah 30:10
Who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits."

Prophetic ministers can come under a lot of pressure by the expectation people place on them. Whether expressed directly or indirectly, people want to hear nice things, easy things. However, prophesying to please people and speaking nice things can be a dangerous trap to fall into. Avoid it. Speak His word faithfully.

Abusing the Prophet's Reward

The Lord Jesus did teach us that, "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41). There are therefore, God-given rewards for receiving and blessing His servants, the prophets (see 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4). However, some in the prophetic ministry, may intentionally or unintentionally abuse their honorable calling by moving people to obey 'the Word of the Lord' that may not necessarily be of the Lord. For example, statements like, "If you give Rupees 1000/- then the Lord will … " may be used more as a fund-raising gimmick, than a true word from the Lord.

Using "Thus Says the Lord"

For most of us, the only way we recognize a prophetic word is when we hear a "Thus says the Lord." But sad to say that there have been many "Thus says the Lord" put forth which were not from the Lord. On the other hand, there have been whole messages preached, a series of teachings given or sermons delivered which in their entirety were prophetic, even though they did not have a "Thus says the Lord" attached to it. There have been words spoken without the qualifier "Thus says the Lord" and yet these words have come straight from the heart of God. And often because our recognition of the prophetic word is tied to that one phrase, we have taken lightly many of the genuine prophetic words that have been spoken into our ears. A true prophetic word is a word in season, a word from the heart of God, a word that draws us closer to Him, a word that comes forth under the anointing and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and a word that will find its target. We find nothing wrong in using the phrase "Thus says the Lord" when delivering a genuine prophetic word. However, due to the seriousness of the implications, use it with the reverence it deserves.

Death and Doom Prophecies

Does God send prophets to give warnings and announce judgments? Yes, He does! However this is only in situations when an individual or people are going totally astray from God. It is not in the case of people who have flaws and who are still seeking God's help to work through personal issues. However, there seem to be some 'prophetic ministers' in the Church who specialize in giving warning and announcing judgments. As mentioned earlier, much of this flows out of that prophet's own inner issues, a critical and judgmental spirit. Unfortunately, such people make their rounds in churches and believers homes handing out death and doom prophecies in the

name of the Lord, causing a lot of fear and turmoil. For instance, a young man was given a prophecy that he would die by the December of a certain year. This young man was one who loved the Lord, seeking after God, faithful in church and not in any grievous sin. And yet, a so-called 'prophetic minister' spoke this word over him. This young person was terrified. When he shared this 'prophecy,' I told him to reject the word, cast it aside, reject fear and just keep going on with the Lord. The young man did so and continued fine, well past December of that year. Such foolishness in ministry brings much reproach to the genuine manifestation of the prophetic.

Weird and Pathetic Prophecies

And then there are the weird and pathetic kind of prophecies where prophetic ministers take advantage of gullible believers with their prophetic antics. For instance, a prophetic minister visits the home of a believer, where the family has been going through some difficult financial times due to problems in the husband's business. The prophetic minister prays and begins to say that he feels that the house in which they are staying is haunted by evil spirits. He then points to one of the bedrooms as the place where these spirits are lurking. He goes on to say that there are spiritual potholes that are sucking out finances in that room. All this prophesying is accompanied by strange behavior where the prophetic minister stretches out his hand and pretends that he feels some vibrations coming from the spiritual realm, pointing to that particular bedroom. He then convinces the believers that they do not have the power to dispel these spirits and that he was sent by God, to specifically bring deliverance and so on. Now we do know that in certain cases, spirits do inhabit inanimate objects and dwell in places. However, the family mentioned here are strong believers who pray and worship God in that home. They have enjoyed success and prosperity in that very home. Would it not be so much better if the prophetic minister heard from God and released

a word of wisdom to help solve the problem in the man's business or show a course of action that can lead to blessing, or release the workings of miracles to bring in supernatural supply than perform a weird and pathetic expression of the prophetic? Imagine if Joseph behaved like this in front of Pharaoh. What would have happened if Joseph pointed to one of Pharaoh's bedrooms as being infested with spirits and that being the cause of famine, instead of giving a practical solution on how to handle seven years of plenty to prepare for the seven years of famine? Let us be men and women of honor who manifest the prophetic ministry in a way that truly glorifies God.

Seeking a Word from God Through a Prophet

Is it right for us as believers to go to a prophet and desire to hear a word from God? This definitely was an Old Testament practice (1 Samuel 9:9). The New Testament does not explicitly do away with this practice. Hence, it is perfectly alright for believers to seek a word from God through a prophet. However, we must understand that in the New Testament, God has placed His Holy Spirit within every believer. Every believer must be led by the Spirit and not by prophetic words. So the correct order of things when making a decision would be to determine what God's Word has to say about it. Then discern God's specific will for your life concerning that matter through the inner leading of the Holy Spirit. Also determine what action God wants you to take or the method He wants you to use to carry out His plan. Having understood these, then go to a prophet expecting God to speak to you. If the Lord speaks to you through His servant, to confirm what the Spirit has already spoken or to enlarge your understanding by giving you new insight, then praise God for that! Test the prophetic word and hold fast to what is good. If the Lord does not speak anything specific through His servant, it does not affect what the Holy Spirit has already spoken to you. Keep following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Riding on the Wave of the Prophetic

Revelation 19:10 b
... for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The same Holy Spirit who moved in such mighty manifestations of power, as demonstrated through the prophetic anointing in the Old Testament and in the Early Church, still anoints human vessels in our day. There is a restorative work of God's Spirit in the Church today, reviving the power and glory of the prophetic anointing. We are sure to see greater things in the coming days. And we need to be prepared for this. We want to encourage you to understand, desire and flow with the move of the prophetic.

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy. Or as the Amplified Bible renders it, "... for the substance (essence) of the truth revealed by Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy ..." The 'driving force,' the motivation and the inspiration behind all true prophecy is the 'testimony of Jesus.' All true prophecy is birthed by the truth that the Lord Jesus Himself reveals or testifies or communicates by His Spirit. The Lord speaks to His Church. The Spirit of God conveys His Word to our ears. We, His people, hear the voice of His Spirit and sense His moving in our hearts. We speak forth the truth that He has revealed. This is prophecy!

Let us become a prophetic people—a people who know how to hear the voice of the Lord and speak the word of the Lord accurately and for His glory!



THE MAKING OF A PROPHET

17

17

THE MAKING OF A PROPHET

Doing a study on the life of the prophets in the Bible is very interesting. We learn what goes into the making of a prophet. While there is no one singular process or development path, there are some interesting observations we can make.

The Call, Preparation and Training

God calls people to prophetic ministry in many different ways. Abraham was called out of his father's house. Moses was called out of his place in Pharaoh's palace and trained in the backyard of the desert. Samuel was dedicated by his mother to the Lord and groomed directly by God to be a prophet, while he served faithfully under Eli, the priest. We have no record of how Elijah was trained, although it is quite possible that he may have been trained in one of Samuel's school of the prophets. Elisha was called by Elijah in quite a dramatic way and trained by Elijah. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had personal encounters that confirmed their calling. Amos was called from being a business man, a shepherd and fruit grower, to being a prophet. God steps into our lives at a time He sees fit and begins to set people and things around us to groom us.

Time in Isolation

We see many of the prophets on a "hold mode," spending time in isolation until they are ready to be released. About John the Baptist, the Bible states, "So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel" (Luke 1:80). While we may not be in literal desert conditions, God allows us to go through seasons of obscurity when no one really recognizes

us. We continue faithfully serving and doing what God has called us to do in such seasons until God is ready to release us to have wider impact and influence.

Establishing Godly Character—The Right Wineskin

It goes without saying that one of God's primary objectives is that we become the right kind of vessel that He can use. Paul described this for us: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Timothy 2:20,21). God takes His time to shape and prepare the vessel so that He can release the good works He has ordained for us. One of the key areas of work in the preparation process is the development of godly character which is essentially the wineskin that contains the wine of His Spirit.

Being Stretched Beyond Natural Limits

Part of this making process involves breaking and stretching. He has to bring us to a place of total dependence on Him and an understanding of both His greatness and our finiteness. His dreams and goals for us are far bigger than our biggest dreams. But for Him to birth that in us, we must allow Him to stretch the womb of our spirit-man, like a pregnant woman, to become many times bigger than what it normally is. God is not calling us to pursue what we can accomplish in the natural. That would be easy for us and we could possibly take all the credit. However, He is calling us to things far greater and bigger than ourselves, which only He can accomplish through us. However, to see this happen we must be willing to be stretched beyond ourselves. Our faith to believe God will be stretched and we come out knowing that our God indeed is an awesome God. We learn to rely on His goodness and grace. We

come out knowing that He is totally good. He is full of grace. He is absolutely faithful.

Finding Your Place and Fulfilling Your Call

Important in the making process is to be in the right place at the right time and in the company of the right people. We need to find our place in order to fulfill our call. The place that God wants you to be at may not always be the place you think is the best for you. But God fulfills certain things in us in such hard and difficult places which we may not allow Him to do in other places. Being in the right company of people who will support, encourage, guide and correct you is important. If you are unable to find such people, continue to trust God and keep growing like Samuel, who without a proper mentor or godly company, still rose up to be a prophet of God.

Challenges Confronting Prophetic Ministry

Offense and rejection are probably some of the most frequent of challenges that confront prophetic people. It is recorded of Jesus, "So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house" (Matthew 13:57). This is not to say that you on purpose should do things that cause people to be offended or reject you. Rather we need to walk with all the wisdom and humility we can. But we can be certain that those who do not understand us, and what prophetic ministry is, will be offended. Consequently we may be rejected. Many prophets faced that. Amos who left his occupation and turned into a prophet received these welcoming words: "Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the royal residence" (Amos 7:12,13). It is in such moments that you need to know who has called you and whom you are serving. Be bold. God needs true prophets in this hour!



All Peoples Church & World Outreach, Bangalore, India, has extended its ministry by launching its Bible College & Ministry Training Center (APC-BC&MTC) in August 2005. APC-BC&MTC equips, trains and releases faithful men and women to impact villages, towns and cities in India and other nations, for Jesus Christ.

APC-BC&MTC offers 2 programs:

- The two-year and three-year **Bible College** programs are for full-time students and provides spiritual and practical ministry training along with academic excellence. The programs are designed to equip and empower students to successfully fulfil the call of God upon their lives. Upon completing the two-year program students will receive a **Diploma in Theology & Christian Ministry (Dip.Th.&CM).** The three-year program will lead to a **Bachelor's Degree in Theology & Christian Ministry (B.Th.&CM)**.

- The **Practical Ministry Training** is for graduates from the Bible College who desire to undergo practical training. Those completing one or more years receive a **Certificate in Practical Ministry** indicating the duration of involvement.

Classes are conducted in English. The faculty comprises of both trained and anointed teachers of the Word. All faculty and students have access to APC's Study Centre and Library (SC&L). The SC&L contains books, teaching tapes, videos, VCDs/DVDs and music CDs.

Publications from All Peoples Church

A Church in Revival
Ancient Landmarks
A Real Place Called Heaven
A Time for Every Purpose
Being Spiritually Minded and Earthly Wise
Biblical Attitude Towards Work
Breaking Personal and Generational Bondages
Change
Divine Order in the Citywide Church
Don't Compromise Your Calling
Don't Lose Hope
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The Conquest of the Mind
The Kingdom of God
The Night Seasons of Life
The Power of Commitment
The Presence of God
The Refiner's Fire
The Spirit of Wisdom, Revelation and Power
Understanding the Prophetic
We Are Different
Who We Are in Christ
Women in the Workplace

Gospel Booklets

He is Here
Love That Is Deeper Than Love Itself
What Can Wash Away My Sins?

About All Peoples Church

At All Peoples Church (APC), **our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore** and a **voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.**

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, un-compromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4,5; Hebrews 2:3,4). **Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christ-like maturity.**

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect (mature, Christ-like) in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:5; Colossians 1:28).

We trust you were blessed reading this publication. **This is a gift from us to you! It's FREE!**

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All Peoples Church Locations in India

All Peoples Church has the following church locations in India at present.

All Peoples Church – Bangalore (Karnataka)

All Peoples Church – Berhampur (Orissa)

All Peoples Church – Kalyan, Mumbai (Maharashtra)

All Peoples Church – Nagpur (Maharashtra)

All Peoples Church – Raichur (Karnataka)

All Peoples Church – Thokkottu, Mangalore (Karnataka)

All Peoples Church – Vishakapatanam (Andhra Pradesh)

All Peoples Church - Pune (Talegaon, Maharashtra)

New churches are being planted all over India periodically. To get the current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at www.apcwo.org or send an email to contact@apcwo.org

Do You Know the GOD Who Loves You?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus performed many miracles on the earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But, the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, **"For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our**

Lord" (Romans 6:23). Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world, when He died on the cross. Then three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and went back to heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43).

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, You shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells

me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins.

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You. Amen.

God is restoring the prophetic ministry in the Church today. From believers learning how to flow in the gift of prophecy, to men and women being raised up as ministry gift prophets, there is a reviving of prophetic ministry in the Body of Christ all over the world.

The prophetic is not only about hearing and speaking, it is about hearing and doing what God wants done here on earth. God is raising up prophetic believers who not only serve within the local church, but also prophetic believers who are affecting the marketplace through practical ideas and strategies they have received from God. God is raising up prophets like Joseph and Daniel who will represent Him and be His prophetic voice in the high places of the earth today.

This training manual is designed to equip believers, stir up the prophetic in them and enable them to develop a strong prophetic ministry in whatever vocation they may be.

Ashish Raichur