

# **Godspeaks**

## **Knowing God By His Voice**

**James Critcher**

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# **Session 1**

**Relational or Revelational?**

# Session 1

## Relational or Revelational?

Ephesians 1:17<sup>1</sup>

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

### Introduction

As we begin our study into hearing God's voice, it is wise to consider the "why" and not just the "how" of this privilege. Throughout Scripture, we find Jesus and Paul challenging the motivation for a gift or blessing whether it be for personal gain or fame or for the advance of His Kingdom and for His glory. Hence, our *motivation for revelation* becomes primary to our study.

### God and His Word

We find the very first act of God recorded in Scripture involved His speaking voice.

Genesis 1:3

*And God **said**, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

God's first known action beyond Himself was with words — words powerful enough to create that which did not previously exist!

God is the God of words and unlike humans, He is inseparable from his Word. This distinction is just one attribute of the Divine.

John 1:1

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

It is from His words that we derive our understanding of His person and His will. His words form the very essence of our faith.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

Romans 10:17

*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*

In a seminal moment in Jesus' life and ministry, in the presence of his closest disciples, we find this account:

Matthew 17:5

*While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"*

Previously, on a different mountaintop centuries earlier, heaven gave to Moses *ten commands*. In this moment with Christ, just one was given, "Listen to Him."

Hearing God's voice is one of the highest privileges afforded us by the gifting and enabling of the Holy Spirit. Hearing as a Divine gift, what we will call *the prophetic*, must never be referred to as "mine", or reduced to "a word" or "a ministry". Rather, we should understand that it is God favoring us, speaking from heaven to us and through us.

As John Piper tweeted:

*What could be a greater privilege than to listen to the voice of God, and be granted by God himself the ears to hear? <sup>2</sup>*

This privilege is available for all believers, not just those with the spiritual gift of prophecy or who stand in the office of the prophet. It is not a gift reserved for the extraordinary but for the ordinary among us.

Numbers 11:26–30

*<sup>26</sup> However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup> A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."*

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<sup>2</sup> John Piper, @JohnPiper, 7 August, 2014

*<sup>28</sup> Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!"*

*<sup>29</sup> But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" <sup>30</sup> Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.*

## **Communication is Relationship**

Relationship is always dependent upon communication — clearly spoken, correctly heard. Relational health or relational dysfunction most often can be traced to challenges of communication. This principle of "*clearly spoken, correctly heard*" is especially true as it pertains to our relationship with God.

Ephesians 1:17

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

This passage is foundational to prophetic ministry. Its purpose is that we and others "*may know Him better.*" Making the prophetic an end in itself removes this relational dimension essential to it. When the prophetic becomes its own end, it becomes disembodied from the Head and reduced to just another source of information; a spiritual version of an internet search engine. Being relationally disconnected and, thereby, wrongly motivated, prophetic ministry can become much less than God intends and in extreme cases, even dangerous.

Proceeding from righteous relationship and proper motivation, Christ is glorified by the prophetic.

Revelation 19:10b

*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*

But when wrongly motivated and used for self-centered gain, it is opposed to the Spirit of God.

Acts 8:18-24

*Simon the sorcerer*

## Eagerly Desire

God does not force Himself or any aspect of Himself upon us. While there are biblical accounts of God unexpectedly speaking to people in an audible voice, He most often comes to those who are poised to hear. For this reason, we need to have a motivation of wanting **Him**, not just the blessing His word might bring to us.

1 Corinthians 14:1–5

*<sup>1</sup> Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. <sup>2</sup> For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. <sup>3</sup> But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. <sup>4</sup> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.*

Gordon Fee observes:

*Our theology and experience of the Spirit must be more interwoven if our experienced life of the Spirit is to be more effective. The health of the contemporary church necessitates that its theology of the Spirit and its experience of the Spirit correspond much more closely than they have in much of the past.<sup>3</sup>*

## His Voice Indicates His Presence

It is God's Presence that identifies us as His own. God's voice indicates that He is present with His people.

Exodus 33:14-16

*<sup>14</sup> The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."  
<sup>15</sup> Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. <sup>16</sup> How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"*

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Fee, Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God, Hendrickson Publishers, 1996

His Presence is known among us today by His indwelling Spirit and the work of His Spirit through gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12) and miracles.

For the individual, His Presence and His voice confirm we are sons.

Romans 8:14–16

*<sup>14</sup>...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

Corporately, it is God's Spirit manifested in the midst of a people that gives irrefutable proof of His Presence.

Acts 2:43,47

*<sup>43</sup>Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles... <sup>47</sup>praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Acts 5:12-14

*<sup>12</sup>The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. <sup>13</sup>No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. <sup>14</sup>Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.*

1 Peter 2:9-10

*<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

Jesus' famous encounter with woman at the well and his masterful example of the use of revelational insight and knowledge serves as an example of how the prophetic can draw those who are far from God to Himself.

John 4:13–26

*<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the*

water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

<sup>16</sup> He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

<sup>17</sup> “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. <sup>18</sup> The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

<sup>19</sup> “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

<sup>21</sup> Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

<sup>25</sup> The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

<sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”

## Not Optional

Our ability to hear well, discern rightly and respond quickly are skills that are not optional. We need the revelatory gifts functioning in our lives daily to discern between good and evil and to help us avoid being careless regarding the path we are to take.

Ephesians 5:15–17

*<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.*

Malcolm Gladwell, author of The Tipping Point, wrote a subsequent book entitled Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking. Some excerpts from his first chapter follow:

*The part of our brain that leaps to conclusions like this is called the adaptive unconscious, and the study of this kind of decision-making is one of the most important fields in psychology. (p. 11)*

*Our brain uses two very different strategies to make sense of the situation. The first is the one we're most familiar with. It's the conscious strategy. We think about what we've learned, and eventually we come up with an answer. The strategy is logical and definitive. There's a second strategy, though. It operates a lot more quickly. It has the drawback, however, that operates- at least at first- entirely below the surface of the consciousness. It sends in messages through weirdly indirect channels, such as the sweat glands in the palms of our hands. It's a system in which our brain reaches conclusions without immediately telling us that it's reaching conclusions. (p. 10)*

Of course, Gladwell is not writing about spiritual matters nor the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Yet, we can see a reflection of the principal as he refers to the “adaptive unconscious” at work. As believers, we know this “adaptive unconscious” to be the Holy Spirit and His voice IF we will both acknowledge and respond quickly to that voice.

Gladwell continues:

*The adaptive unconscious does an excellent job of sizing up the world, warning people of danger, setting goals, and initiating action in a sophisticated manner,” quoting Timothy D. Wilson From Strangers to Ourselves (p.12).*

How true. And we have developed an exhaustive apologetic and practice for this type of decision-making. We have applied right and true biblical concepts such as discipleship, accountability, "safety in a multitude of counselors," etc. All are true and all are very good. Yet...

*We believe that we are always better off gathering as much information as possible and spending as much time as possible in deliberation. We really only trust conscious decision making...Decisions made very quickly can be every bit as good as decisions made cautiously and deliberately. (p. 14)*

Paul succinctly puts it this way:

1 Corinthians 2:15

*The spiritual man makes judgments about all things,  
but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment.*

Our days are filled with increasing challenges (the days are evil). Our desire to hear God, our willingness to develop the skills necessary to do so, and our determination to obey Him immediately become both our defense against the evil around us (i.e. the powers of darkness) AND our most effective offense (i.e. the advance of the Kingdom). This is true biblical spirituality — acknowledging the Spirit of God in our lives by hearing and heeding. Doing so, we demonstrate that He is with us and that we are His.

John 10:27

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*

John 14:16

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another  
Counselor to be with you forever--*

Matthew 28:20b

*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

1 Corinthians 3:16

*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple  
and that God's Spirit lives in you?*

Gordon Fee summarizes:

*Thus my conviction that the Spirit stands near the center of things for Paul, as part of the fundamental core of his understanding of the Gospel. The experience of the Spirit is key to his already/not yet eschatological framework; the Spirit is the essential player in the believers' experiencing and living out the salvation that God has brought about in Christ; the Spirit both forms the church into God's new (eschatological) people and conforms them into Christ's image through His fruit in their lives; and the Spirit gifts them in worship to edify and encourage one another in their ongoing life in the world.*

He concludes with a quote from Clark Pinnock:

*It is fair to say that "Paul's entire theology without the supporting opinion of the Spirit would crumble into ruins."<sup>4</sup>*

**Application:**

- 1) How and why is it a privilege to hear from God?
- 2) If the primary purpose of the prophetic is that we “*may know God better*”, how are we consistently developing that skill and subsequently, deepening our relationship with Him?
- 3) How do you understand Malcolm Gladwell’s description of the “adaptive unconscious” as relating to our need and opportunity to be increasingly sensitive to the Holy Spirit? Why is this important, especially in light of the day in which we live?
- 4) How are you personally inspired by this first session?

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<sup>4</sup> Gordon Fee, *Ibid.*

# **Session 2**

**Poised to Hear**

## Session 2 Poised to Hear

### Introduction

The true essence of prophetic ministry and indeed the foundation of our relationship with God is hearing, not speaking. Our will to hear must be purposefully engaged and our skill to hear must be ever-increasing. There are, however, very real challenges to hearing well. We live in an increasingly noisy world. Technology has brought to us never-ending choices. Streaming. Podcasts. Amusement. Voices. Beyond just the external noise is the internal “noise” continually produced by our soul - our thoughts and emotions influenced by our personalities, preferences and prejudices - along with our unique past and wounding make accurate and focused hearing a challenge. But that challenge can be successfully overcome.

### The Art of Hearing

A “skill” is something that can be learned and, with practice and continued use, can be honed and developed. The “art” of doing something, however, is more than a well-developed skill. “Art” begins with a highly developed skill and adds something extra to it. That “extra” may be generational DNA or a unique measure of Divine gifting. An artist doesn’t just play the notes, he makes music. Spiritual hearing is very much a matter of art. Skills can be developed, yes, but when they are Spirit-enabled they become uniquely Divine.

Hearing begins by establishing a baseline of quiet. And that is an increasing struggle.

*Man’s difficulties are caused by his inability to sit, quietly, in a room by himself.* Blaise Pascal

We serve the God who does not compete for anything. He declares clearly:

Exodus 20:2–4<sup>5</sup>

*<sup>2</sup>“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>3</sup>“You shall have no other gods before me.*

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<sup>5</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

*4“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.*

God will not compete because He does not have to. This includes competing for the bandwidth of our lives — our affection and attention. Such attentiveness is directly related to how we hear.

There are skills that any believer, who so desires, can have in abundance and in fluency.

### **Active vs. Passive Hearing**

There are many ways in which we hear and there are different degrees of hearing. Great musicians are not just those that sing or play at a high level. In addition to their ability to masterfully perform, they have an extraordinary ability to hear that which most do not. Whether by gift or training, they are able to hear not only themselves, but also what is being played or sung by their fellow performers.

Most of us listen to music at different levels of passivity. It washes over us; we know it's there but we are not really hearing it. This is passive listening. As a result, based on our measure of engagement and involvement, we place relatively low value on whatever noise is coming at us.

Active hearing, on the other hand, requires effort. It requires more than an acknowledgment that noise is present. It requires a type of participation. Yet with all of the noise around our lives, we have actually been trained to be passive listeners without even knowing it.

### **External Noise**

We live in an increasingly noisy world. The noise, however, is not just measured in decibels. More often than not, it is the distraction and the ongoing intrusion that technology brings to our lives. We may be connected to the rest of the world but often at the expense of being disconnected from the realm of the Spirit.

## Blessing and Curse of Technology

We all know the benefits of technology. In and of itself, it is not evil. Yet, like food or any other beneficial thing, when used beyond the proper boundaries of self-control and balance, technology can become an idol, an addiction. No longer is it a blessing, something helpful that supports our ability to live more effectively. When it occupies a place of control, it can distract our attention, cloud our focus and keep us from things that are of greater importance.

Fortunately, every device we use has a common feature. It's called an on/off switch. Turn it off! Can you? Like fasting, stepping away from technology can serve to sharpen our ability to actively hear.

## Muting the Voices

Even before the 24/7 deluge of information and internet access, Scripture warns of the many voices competing for our attention today. With the advancement and availability of technology, in particular the internet, we have available to us more voices and opinions - about everything - than at any other moment in history. And this shows no sign of abating.

2Timothy 4:3-4

*<sup>3</sup> For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

And along with false teachers come false prophets.

2Peter 1:19-21

<sup>19</sup> And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2Peter 2:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup> Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. <sup>3</sup> In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*

And these voices can form a collective revelation, what might be called “revelation by consensus” whereby, if enough voices say the same thing then it must be true by default. This is the anonymous, seemingly authoritative “they” people reference when speaking of a trend of opinion or thought. Unfortunately, we see this working like leaven in the church today. But for us, we have the Word. We have God’s Spirit and with the Spirit we have His voice.

Paul heard the voice of God. On the basis of what he heard, he identified his calling and understood it to be unique, initiated according to God’s will and confirmed by the Spirit.

Galatians 1:15–16

*<sup>15</sup> But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to **reveal** his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, **I did not consult any man...***

Galatians 2:1–2

*<sup>1</sup> Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. <sup>2</sup> **I went in response to a revelation** and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.*

It is important that we be wise as we read the above passages. Revelation is never license. Revelation is never about rebellion. Revelation, operating decently and in order (see 1Corinthians 14:40), is always able to be submitted so as to be judged by those with authority to properly do so. (We will discuss this in more detail in another section.)

At the same time, while it is true there is safety in an abundance of counsel, it is also true that too much counsel and/or counsel from too many sources will only yield confusion (and possibly deception) rather than revelation that produces genuine faith.

## **Internal Noise**

As we strive to reduce the external noise around our lives, it is also paramount that we eliminate the internal noise as well. This is a twofold process.

## **The Quieting of God**

Zephaniah 3:17

*The Lord your God is with you,  
he is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you,  
he will quiet you with his love,  
he will rejoice over you with singing.*

Psalm 23:1–3

*<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.  
<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
<sup>3</sup>he restores my soul.  
He guides me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.*

## **The Quieting of Self**

Psalm 131:2

*But I have stilled and quieted my soul;  
like a weaned child with its mother,  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

Psalm 46:10

*Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth.*

Even in our distress and in the times of frantic intercession often birthed in those moments, there is still the need to “quiet our soul” so that we can find God and hear Him. An example, Elijah on the mountain:

1 Kings 19:11–13

*<sup>11</sup> The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”*

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

*Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”*

## **The Posture of Hearing**

Pride talks. Humility listens.

Psalm 34:2 (KJV)

*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord:  
The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*

Psalms 10:4

*In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*

In Revelation 2, we find this repeated instruction to the churches:

Revelation 2:7

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

To be heard by God is more than just using the right words in prayer. It is a right posture of prayer, one of humility and repentance that release God’s forgiveness and healing.

2 Chronicles 7:14

*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

## **True Hearing Is Always Reflected in Obedience**

Truly great disciples have two complementary characteristics: 1) they *hear*, and 2) they *do*. This combination, working in tandem, produces true listening. This is not a mere nuance. *We can hear much but heed little*. James calls this deception.

James 1:22–25

*<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*

John 14:23–27

*<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*

*<sup>25</sup> “All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

Our obedience is prefaced by our hearing - “*these words you hear*”. And the the Holy Spirit was sent to bring these words to minds - “*He will remind you*”.

When we hear, we are to obey:

Proverbs 4:20  
My son, pay attention to what I say;  
*listen closely to my words.*

When we fail to listen and obey, there are consequences:

Proverbs 5:13–14  
<sup>13</sup> *I would not obey my teachers  
or listen to my instructors.*  
<sup>14</sup> *I have come to the brink of utter ruin  
in the midst of the whole assembly.*

### **Application**

- 1) Are you effectively addicted to your technology? Can you go for an hour, a day, without it?
- 2) Consider a technology “fast”.
- 3) Can you quiet yourself?
- 4) Can you allow God to quiet you?

# **Session 3**

## **Biblical Foundations for Prophecy**

**Session 3  
Biblical Foundations for Prophecy**

**Introduction**

Someone asked a well-known apostle many years ago in the midst of an outpouring and manifestation of the Spirit, “How far are you going to let this go?” Good question. His response was even better, “As far as the Bible will allow.” In this brief overview, we will look at what the Bible has to say about prophecy, its validity and proper outworking in both the church and our individual lives.

## Discovering the Purpose and Practice of the Prophetic

1 Corinthians 14:1–5<sup>6</sup>

*<sup>1</sup>Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. <sup>2</sup>For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. <sup>3</sup>But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. <sup>4</sup>He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup>I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.*

We find an important word used in 1 Corinthians 14:5, “...that the church may be *edified*.”

As the expression of His Kingdom in the earth, God is intent on building and building-up His church. Like Israel, He is jealous for it and gives the very best of Himself to see that happen. The expression of any spiritual gift or manifestation of power is most often two-fold in its purpose: for edification and for evangelism.

Evangelism works to **BUILD**, whereas edification **BUILDS UP**.

Strong’s Concordance identifies the Greek word for “edify” as *olkodome*, The word is described as:

*oikodome*, oy-kod-om-ay'; feminine (abstract) of a compound of Greek 3624 (oikos) and the base of Greek 1430 (doma); architecture, i.e.

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<sup>6</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

(concrete) a structure; figurative confirmation :- building, edify (-ication, -ing).<sup>7</sup>

1 Corinthians 14:12

*Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that **build up** (oikodome) the church.*

1 Corinthians 14:26

*What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the **strengthening of the church**. (again, the Greek word is oikodome)*

The Apostle Paul defines the function and importance of prophetic ministry.

1 Corinthians 14:3

*But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*

These three - *strengthening, encouragement and comfort* - are to be the benchmarks, the standard for measuring any word of prophecy: 1) anything we “hear” for ourselves personally, or 2) any word ministered to us by another person. Any word that fails to strengthen, encourage, and bring comfort should be held as suspect. Both the source and intent of such a word should be judged carefully. Again ...

Revelation 19:10b

*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*

In addition, prophecy, when used wisely, can have an evangelistic component as well.

1 Corinthians 14:24–25

<sup>24</sup> *But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, <sup>25</sup> and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”*

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<sup>7</sup> James Strong, Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, Reference number 3619

Ephesians 5:17

*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

As has been previously stated, to truly be disciples we have to do God's will. We have to hear (and listen) before we can fully know God's will.

Prophecy must first be HEARD (Proverbs 29:18) then combined with FAITH and OBEDIENCE. Hearing and listening must be married to faith and obedience. (The conditional aspects of prophecy will be examined in another session.) This is Jesus' pattern for ministry. Listening with faith then acting in obedience is a characteristic of Christ - a *family trait* - that marks both our sonship and our love for God.

James 1: 22

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.*

Romans 2:13

*For it is not those who **hear** the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who **obey** the law who will be declared righteous.*

John 14:15

*If you love me, you will obey what I command.*

1 John 5:2

*This is how we know that we love the children of God:  
by loving God and carrying out his commands.*

The written Word of God, the BIBLE, is God's perfect, inerrant word revealing His purpose, design and will. One might say it is "perfect prophecy" inasmuch as it has already been both inspired and approved by the Holy Spirit as God's Word and as such, needs no further clarification or judgement (2Timothy 3:16). It only needs to be believed and obeyed. We also believe, however, that God is yet still speaking and leading His Church today through revelational means and gifts. That contemporary communication never supersedes nor conflicts with that which has been previously set forth in Scripture. Rather, our ongoing revelation should confirm, affirm and point us back to Scripture as His "living Word".

2 Peter 1:20–21

*<sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

2 Timothy 3:16–17

*<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

## **Committed and Submitted**

John 5:19

*Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*

Any and all ministry that proceeds from Christ is SUBMITTED ministry. If the ministry emanates from Jesus ("*Christ in us*" - John 7:38, Colossians 1:27) and belongs to Jesus then we do not have OWNERSHIP but rather STEWARDSHIP. Unfortunately for many, gifts and ministry are viewed possessively and not humbly regarded as entrustments to be stewarded.

Once we understand that any gift we MANIFEST belongs to God, then we are able to willingly SUBMIT that expression to the authority He has placed around us. This is especially important as it pertains to our handling of revelatory gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:36a

*Did the word of God originate with you?*

Ephesians 5:21

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Hebrews 13:17

*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

A person truly convinced that his/her ministry, gift or "word" is from God will gladly and willingly **SUBMIT** what they have to insure that God is honored and that there is confirmation and affirmation of what is ministered.

1 Corinthians 14:29

*Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.*

The word "judge" in this passage is the Greek word, *diakrino*, meaning to separate and discriminate between that which is real (i.e. of God) and that which is not. (We will look at the entire topic of judging prophecy in depth in a later session.)

Our willingness to be submitted in our gifting, particularly our revelatory inspiration, is often a manifestation of our discipleship and maturity. It is the degree of humility with which these gifts are submitted that often determines why some see their measure of gifting increase while others never seem to grow in their measure. How we receive ongoing input and correction in the use of these gifts is often a reflection of how we respond to Divine authority as well.

## **A God of Order**

Whether in God's Kingdom or in His Church, principles of order are clearly seen. From creation and down through history, God has sovereignly revealed Himself and demonstrated that He has always had a plan. There is no confusion. Nothing is random.

1 Corinthians 14:33a

*For God is not a God of disorder but of peace...*

1 Corinthians 14:40

*But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*

How often, though, we see well-meaning believers doing the right things but in the wrong way. Most often the failure is not the accuracy of what is being shared, but how it is being communicated (love?) and the timing of what is offered.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 (KJV)

<sup>3</sup>*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; <sup>4</sup>He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, <sup>5</sup>Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*

## **Developing a Biblical Theology for Prophetic Ministry**

Considered as literature, the Bible is a book of words. Our understanding of Scripture is directly proportional to our understanding of the words contained therein. As we examine the words that comprise Scripture in their original language, taking into account the proper textual, historical, and grammatical context we can begin to develop a sound biblical theology of prophecy.

## **Receptive and Communicative Aspects of Prophecy**

### ***Defining the Words***

#### ***Ro'eh - "a seer"***

This word occurs 12 times in the O.T. It comes from the root, ra'ah, which means "to look at" or "to behold." This word describes the prophetic revelation of seeing through visions.

#### ***Chozeh - "a seer"***

This word occurs 16 times in the O.T. While very similar and used interchangeably with the word, Ro'eh, chozeh seems to be a broader term in that it can refer to both visionary or cognitive perception.

Both words are synonymous for the word PROPHET.

1 Samuel 9:9

*(Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, "Come, let us go to the seer," because the prophet of today used to be called a seer)*

Remember, before the canon of Scripture had been completed, one inquired of a prophet to know God's will. Prophets were both gifted and

called to "see" into the mind and the intent of God and communicate such when inquired of by man or when directed to do so by God Himself.

2 Kings 3:11-12

*<sup>11</sup>But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord through him?"*

*An officer of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah. "*

*<sup>12</sup>Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the Lord is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.*

### ***Dabar - "Word"***

Refers to the Word of the Lord. In Hebrew thought, the "Word" of the Lord was regarded as a living entity containing within itself divine power to accomplish itself. The creative power of the "Word" in the creation points to this- "and God said." The word *dabar* carries with it a connotation of dynamic action. Further etymological examination behind this word means "to be behind or drive forward." The *dabar* of God is not static but "drives forward" to accomplish its intent. The word *dabar* in Hebrew was identical with *action* (Genesis 24:66; 1 Kings 11:41)

### ***Massa - "a burden"***

This Hebrew word is used 70 times in the O.T. and most often is translated "burden." It is descriptive of the response of the one receiving the prophetic word (think of Jeremiah). The Hebrew root *nasah* may refer to either the burden or weight of a heavy load, which is carried, or it may indicate the lifting up of the soul (as in prayer or in worship).

### ***Naba - "to bubble up, gush forth"***

This word occurs 435 times in the O.T., 324 times in the noun form and 114 times as a verb. The emphasis is on the prophetic office with the prophet as a spokesman for God. This same word is found in the ancient Accadian language as *nabu*, meaning "to call or proclaim" and appears to be the original source for the word. This word further defines the concept as a communicative aspect of prophecy associated with authoritative proclamation. Divine inspiration is conveyed on the human personality and the prophetic message "bubbles up" or "gushes forth" from the prophet's mouth.

Job 32:18-20

*<sup>18</sup> For I am full of words,  
and the spirit within me compels me;  
<sup>19</sup> inside I am like bottled-up wine,  
like new wineskins ready to burst.  
<sup>20</sup> I must speak and find relief;  
I must open my lips and reply.*

This New Testament passage comes to mind.

John 7:38

*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water  
will flow from within him.*

Yet, we always have control of that stream or flow.

1 Corinthians 14:32

*The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.*

### ***Nataf- "to drop, as drops of rain"***

This word occurs 21 times in the O.T. and four times is used as a term for prophecy. While this word was regularly used to describe the falling of raindrops from the heavens (Judges 5:4; Job 36:26, etc.) it was also used as a term for prophecy (Micah 2:6, 11). The picture being presented is that as opposed to a gushing forth (internal) it is more a direct result of Divine activity as a word falling from heaven (external).

We will return to these words in a later session as we examine the modes of revelation, or how God speaks to us and through us.

## **Old Testament and New Testament Prophecy**

Over the past few decades we have seen God restore to the Church the operation of the gifts of the Spirit (i.e. Azusa Street, Latter Rain Movement, Charismatic Renewal, etc.) as well as a renewed emphasis upon the function of various ministry offices given to the Church as seen in Ephesians 4. Over the past 30 years we have seen a greater awareness of prophetic ministry along with the recognition of individuals who are both

gifted and called as prophets. In addition, the past twenty years or so have seen the identification and acknowledgement of apostolic ministry and the recognition of true apostles, men anointed to plant and oversee churches working alongside prophets.

Ephesians 2:20

*... members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

But is there a difference between “Old Testament” and “New Testament” prophecy or prophets? Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah and Isaiah are easily identified Old Testament examples. Now quick...name one or more New Testament prophets. Not quite so easy, is it?

Acts 11:27-28

*<sup>27</sup>During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup>One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Spirit predicted that Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)*

Acts 21:8-9

*<sup>8</sup>Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. <sup>9</sup>He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.*

And don't forget John the Baptist.

Matthew 14:5

*Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.*

So we see from these passages references to both prophets and prophecy. Let's briefly examine the latitude and limitations of New Testament prophecy.

## **Fallibility of New Testament prophecy**

First, we find that New Testament prophecy is fallible. Why? Because God's Word, the canon of Scripture, is complete and will never be added to or subtracted from. For this reason, the same AUTHORITY that we find in the Old Testament prophets to speak to a nation on behalf of God is now no longer necessary. Their prophetic word became Scripture and it is that AUTHORITY we hold to now. For this reason, the gift and ministry of prophecy as taught in the New Testament must always **BE JUDGED**.

1 Corinthians 14:29

*Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.*

1 Corinthians 13:9

*For we know in part and we prophesy in part.*

This is in contrast to the ministry of Old Testament prophecy.

1 Samuel 3:19

*The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground.*

Furthermore, remember from our previous lesson that any prophetic word can be negated through UNBELIEF or DISOBEDIENCE. This also factors into the issue of infallibility. People's response to the prophetic word, to hear, receive and act upon it, has bearing upon the fulfillment of that word. An Old Testament example of this is Nineveh's response to the prophecy of Jonah (Jonah 3:4). Their obedience in repentance was evidence of their faith in Jonah's prophetic word which brought about God's mercy (Jonah 3:6-10).

## **New Testament Prophets for a New Testament Church**

Ephesians 4:11-13

*<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

In verse 12 we again find the word *oikodome*, meaning “to build up.” We see that prophets working with the apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers are released to the Church to **PREPARE YOU AND I** for works of service. The following lists some functions of prophets and prophetic ministry working in the Church.

### a) Building

Ephesians 2:19-20

*<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets** with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

We find prophetic ministry is released to the Church to build and to build up. As stated earlier, this should always be a hallmark of the Spirit's ministry to us.

### b) Edification and Encouragement

Acts 15:32

*Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers.*

### c) Impartation

We learned that the word *dabar* refers to the dynamic action and operation of the prophetic word. Part of that action is the imparting of spiritual gifts.

1 Timothy 4:14

*Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

### d) Identification and Activation

Another aspect of prophetic ministry is to identify gifts, ministry and callings inherent in the believer and to call them forth to be released to the Church and to the world.

What is *inherent* is not always *apparent*. Prophetic ministry in conjunction with the laying on of hands serves to bring forth and activate what is often yet undiscovered and/or undeveloped in the individual believer.

2 Timothy 1:6

*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God,  
which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

### **e) Affirmation**

Prophecy, as the "testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10), will communicate God's affection and His affirmation to us.

1 John 4:16

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.  
Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.*

We have to **know** the love of God for us (and the prophetic is able to impart such *knowledge*) BEFORE we can **rely** on the love God has for us.

### **f) Direction**

Prophetic ministry will often reveal specific direction for life and ministry including placement and sending. This aspect of prophetic ministry is best relegated to those that stand in the office of the prophet.

### **g) Calling and Sending**

We find an interesting concept in the New Testament of "sending" versus "calling." While there may not be a huge distinction between the two as both serve the end of releasing an individual into God's design and destiny, it can be noted that revelational gifting serves this end in at least a twofold manner.

Paul's calling, for example, was the result of direct revelational impartation, AND human revelational intervention.

Galatians 1:11-12, 15-17

*<sup>11</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. <sup>12</sup> I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ...*

*<sup>15</sup> But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, <sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.*

Yet, a man named Ananias was prompted by revelation to go and minister to this same Paul.

Acts 9:10–20

*<sup>10</sup> In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”  
“Yes, Lord,” he answered.*

*<sup>11</sup> The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. <sup>12</sup> In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”*

*<sup>13</sup> “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”*

*<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”*

*<sup>17</sup> Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>18</sup> Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, <sup>19</sup> and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. <sup>20</sup> At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Revelation administered and ministered by men is often actively involved in the "sending" of ministry according to God's direction.

Acts 13:2-3

<sup>2</sup> *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

<sup>3</sup> *So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

Most often this Divinely initiated, human "sending" is affirmation of what the individual is already hearing and sensing from the Lord. There are some distinctions of gifting - which we will examine more closely as we discuss ministries and measures - and "sending" is most often reserved for those acknowledged in apostolic/prophetic ministries.

**Application:**

- 1) From 1Corinthians 14:3, WHY is it important to see the principle purpose of prophecy as being *edification*?
- 2) Why is *submission* so important as it relates to prophetic ministry? How is that reflective of Jesus' relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit's relation to Jesus?
- 3) What insight might be gained from the Hebrew words discussed in this session in understanding how we hear from God?

# **Session 4**

## **Modes and Manifestations of Revelation**

## Session 4

# Modes and Manifestations of Revelation

### Introduction

The very essence of our personal walk with God is one of clear communication. More specifically, it is about our hearing and listening - manifested in obedience - that truly defines us as disciples. As we look into how revelation comes to us (modes) and then how these modes of hearing work (manifestations) we quickly learn that revelation begins with hearing. More than simply acknowledging what we've received, such hearing is an inward working of proclamation.

Job 34:16<sup>8</sup>

*If you have understanding, hear this; listen to what I say.*

Matthew 15:10

*Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand."*

One of the most telling indications of how we approach revelation is how we pray. How often does our prayer life revolve around a list of "needs" requiring God's attention or intervention? We may have times of intense intercession but often it is not a dialogue that evidences a depth of relationship but a monologue, an announcement of needs and requests of which God is already aware.

Matthew 6:7–8

*<sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

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<sup>8</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

## The Lord's Prayer

Luke 11:1

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

Those disciples understood that Jesus' vital connection to the Father, through prayer, was the catalyst for the miracles they witnessed.

John 5:19

*Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*

They wisely asked for instruction on how to pray. Whether marriage, parenting, or our relationship with God, the importance of hearing and listening is foundational to any significant relationship. It requires both the *will* and the *skill* to do so.

Psalm 34:2

*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord:  
the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*

Matthew 6:9–13

<sup>9</sup> *"This, then, is how you should pray:*

*" 'Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,*

<sup>10</sup> *your kingdom come,  
your will be done*

*on earth as it is in heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *Give us today our daily bread.*

<sup>12</sup> *Forgive us our debts,*

*as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

<sup>13</sup> *And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.'*

## The Principle Elements

Notice the order of the elements that make up this prayer:

- Paternity - “our Father”
- Position - “in heaven”
- Praise - “hallowed be your nam”
- Priority - “your kingdom come”
- Petition - “give us this day”
- Penitence - “forgive us”
- Patience - “forgive them”
- Protection - “lead us not” - “deliver us”

They indicate that the priority is God and His Kingdom.

Matthew 6:33

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

It is this priority - *Christ and His Kingdom* - that is to motivate how we seek and manifest revelational gifts. “*Him rather than me*” is the attitude that insures the necessary framework to keep prophecy as the “testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 19:10b).

## Modes and Manifestations of Revelation

When we speak of a mode of revelation, it is not unlike other modes of communication be it spoken, written or visual. As there are different learning modes and different ways that each individual sees, hears and processes information, so it is with revelational manifestations.

Job 33:14-18

*<sup>14</sup>For God does speak- now one way, now another-  
though man may not perceive it.*

*<sup>15</sup>In a dream, in a vision of the night,  
when deep sleep falls on men  
as they slumber in their beds,*

*<sup>16</sup> he may speak in their ears  
and terrify them with warnings,*

*<sup>17</sup> to turn man from wrongdoing*

*and keep him from pride,  
18 to preserve his soul from the pit,  
his life from perishing by the sword.*

A mode of revelation refers to the manner in which we receive such revelation. God can and does speak to us in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Scripture (the written Word)
- Circumstances
- Revelatory means: prophecy, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, personal revelation, discerning of spirits, etc.

Words sometimes used to describe our hearing include “sense,” “feeling,” “a still small voice,” etc. Let’s briefly look at two examples of hearing from Scripture.

#### 1 Samuel 3:1-11

*1The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.*

*2One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 3The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. 4Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." 5And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down. 6Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."*

*"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."*

*7Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord:*

*The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.*

*8The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."*

*Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy.*

*9So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"*

*So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

*10The Lord came and stood there, calling as the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"*

*Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."*

*<sup>11</sup>And the Lord said to Samuel....*

Here we see an example of the audible voice of God. Samuel wasn't sure WHO was speaking but he was hearing someone. Eli was able to help him understand that this was God's voice. Here, God was speaking in a natural, audible voice which the young Samuel initially mistook for Eli. When Samuel finally replied, "Speak, for your servant is listening," God did indeed speak.

1 Kings 19:11-13

*<sup>11</sup>The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."*

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire.*

*And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

*Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

Note from this passage another important dimension of hearing the voice of God - proper POSITIONING. Such positioning is principally a matter of grounded theology and divine relationship rather than physical location.

We are properly positioned in three ways:

**- Positional righteousness (we are justified by faith)**

Hebrews 10:22

*Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

Hebrews 4:16

*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Ephesians 2:18

*For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

John 15:3–4

*You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.*

**- Positional expectancy (God is going to speak or move)**

2 Chronicles 20:12

*O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.”*

**- Positional obedience (we will do what He says to do)**

1 Kings 18:36–37

*<sup>36</sup> At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. <sup>37</sup> Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”*

## **Modes of Revelation**

### **a) Verbal Revelation**

This is when God speaks, whether audibly or inaudibly, and we hear. Let's return to the Hebrew words we considered in the previous section as descriptive of HOW God “speaks” to us.

#### **Dabar-"Word"**

Refers to the Word of the Lord. In Hebrew thought, the "Word" of the Lord was regarded as a living entity containing within itself divine power to accomplish itself. The creative power of the "Word" in the creation points to this- "and God said." The word dabar carries with it a connotation of dynamic action. Further etymological examination behind this word means "to be behind or drive forward." The dabar of God does not just sit there but it "drives forward" to accomplish its intent. The word dabar in Hebrew was identical with action (Genesis 24:66; 1 Kings 11:41)

### **Massa - "a burden"**

This Hebrew word is used 70 times in the O.T. and most often is translated "burden." It is descriptive of the response of the one receiving the prophetic word (think of Jeremiah). The Hebrew root *nasah* may refer to either the burden or weight of a heavy load, which is carried, or it may indicate the lifting up of the soul (as in prayer or in worship).

### **Naba- "to bubble up, gush forth"**

This word occurs 435 times in the O.T., 324 times in the noun form and 114 times as a verb. The emphasis is on the prophetic office with the prophet as a spokesman for God. This same word is found in the ancient Accadian language as *nabu*, meaning "to call or proclaim" and appears to be the original source for the word. This word further defines the concept as a communicative aspect of prophecy associated with authoritative proclamation. Divine inspiration is conveyed on the human personality and the prophetic message "bubbles up" or "gushes forth" from the prophet's mouth.

Job 32:18-20

<sup>18</sup> For I am full of words,  
*and the spirit within me compels me;*  
<sup>19</sup> *inside I am like bottled-up wine,*  
*like new wineskins ready to burst.*  
<sup>20</sup> *I must speak and find relief;*  
*I must open my lips and reply.*

This New Testament passage comes to mind:

John 7:38

*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*

Yet, we always have control of that stream or flow:

1 Corinthians 14:32

*The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.*

### **Nataf- "to drop, as drops of rain"**

This word occurs 21 times in the O.T. and four times is used as a term for prophecy. While this word was regularly used to describe the falling of raindrops from the heavens (Judges 5:4; Job 36:26, etc.) it was also used as a term for prophecy (Micah 2:6, 11). The picture being presented is that as opposed to a gushing forth (internal) it is more a direct result of Divine activity as a word falling from heaven (external).

Other scriptural examples of verbal revelation:

- Moses (Exodus 19:9)
- Jesus at His baptism (Matthew 3:17)
- Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5)
- Jesus' glorification (John 12:28)
- Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4-6)

Hearing the audible voice of God is infrequent and unusual, but certainly not impossible. Most often, however, God simply "drops" words into our consciousness that convey an impression in our spirit of something He is saying to us. We refer to this as inaudible or non-vocal/verbal revelation.

Joel 1:1

*The word of the Lord that came to Joel son of Pethuel.*

Jonah 1:1

*The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai.*

### **b) Visionary Revelation**

This is when we "see", whether consciously in a vision on the screen of our imagination or unconsciously as we dream.

#### **Visions**

Visions can be "still pictures" or "movies" and always require an additional revelational component of interpretation, whether directly from the Lord by the person receiving the vision or by another party.

Without this required step, the vision is unintelligible and like tongues without interpretation, loses its capacity for edification.

1 Corinthians 14:6–13

*<sup>6</sup> Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? <sup>7</sup> Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? <sup>8</sup> Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? <sup>9</sup> So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. <sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. <sup>11</sup> If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. <sup>12</sup> So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.*

*<sup>13</sup> For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says.*

Like verbal revelation, visions and dreams can originate from three sources:

- The Holy Spirit
- An Evil Spirit
- The Human Spirit (our imagination)

Amos 8:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. <sup>2</sup> "What do you see, Amos?" he asked. "A basket of ripe fruit," I answered. Then the Lord said to me, "The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer."*

Jeremiah 1:11-15

*<sup>11</sup> The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?"  
"I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied.  
<sup>12</sup> The Lord said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled." <sup>13</sup> The word of the Lord came to me again: "What do you see?"  
"I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north," I answered.*

<sup>14</sup> *The Lord said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. <sup>15</sup> I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms," declares the Lord. "Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah."*

There are many biblical examples of men receiving visions including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos and Zechariah.

### **Dreams**

Dreams are simply visions God can use to speak to us while we sleep. For some, dreams are a routine vehicle by which He speaks. For others, dreams are simply the residual cognitive musings of the day or the last conscious impression prior to sleep.

Numbers 12:6

*He said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams."*

Acts 2:17

*"In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.'"*

Dreams, like visions, must be carefully carefully examined to determine their origin, or source and then properly interpreted.

Not every dream is of prophetic inspiration. It could simply be too much pizza, too late in the evening! There are, however, particular distinctions that indicate a dream may be of divine inspiration:

- The intensity or vividness of the dream
- The clarity of recollection of the dream and its details.
- Repetition, whether on the same night or subsequent nights.
- The dream occurs at the same time each night.
- Its interpretation is inherent in or associated with the dream.

Like any other mode of revelation, dreams should be externally judged and the interpretation confirmed.

Genesis 41:15

*Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."*

Other scriptural examples of dreams:

- Abraham (Genesis 15:12-17, 20:7)
- Jacob (Genesis 28:12, 31:10)
- Daniel (Chapter 7)
- Joseph (Genesis 37: 5,9,10,20)
- Solomon (1 Kings 3:5)
- Joseph (Matthew 1:20)

And to those outside the Covenant:

- Abimelech (Genesis 20:3)
- Laban (Genesis 31:24)
- The Midianite (Judges 7:13-14)
- Pharaoh's butler and baker (Genesis 40:5)
- Pharaoh (see above)
- Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:1,4,36)
- The Three Wise Men (Matthew 2:12)
- Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19)

**Finally....**

We should never be impressed by modes of revelation, whether to ourselves or to others. Many prophetic people, in order to give their revelation credibility, go into great detail about the manifestation of their revelation.

Colossians 2:18

*Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.*

God's Word, whether written or revelatory through prophetic manifestation, never needs exaggeration or help. The *dabar* (Word) of God will both prove itself and accomplish its purpose.

Deuteronomy 18:22

*If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.*

Acts 5:38-39

*<sup>38</sup> Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup> But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.*

How God chooses to speak and reveal to us what is needed in the moment is within His purview alone. Most believers receive revelation from God THROUGH THE BIBLE as the Spirit illumines the Word and opens their spirit to receive. Clearly, how God chooses to speak is up to Him. He knows in advance both how we will perceive and receive what He is saying.

**Application:**

- 1) Would you describe your approach to prayer as more “relational” or merely “functional”? What role does revelation play in your prayer life?
- 2) Why is “position” so important when it comes to hearing from God? What do you understand it means to be positioned with “grounded theology”?
- 3) Identify some of the relational elements or components expressed in the prayer Jesus taught in Matthew 6:9-13.

# **Session 5**

## **How Can I Know?**

## Session 5

### How Can I Know?

#### Introduction

Of all the questions associated with hearing from God comes THE primary one, “How do I REALLY know it is God speaking?” It is the right question and one that can be answered. Yet, because we are not dealing with words on the page, such as the Bible, but more subjective factors described in terms of what we “sense” or “feel”, it is necessary that non-biblical revelation, whether from within ourselves or from someone else, be subject to the principles of judgment.

#### The Principle

1 Corinthians 14:29–33<sup>9</sup>

*<sup>29</sup> Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. <sup>30</sup> And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. <sup>31</sup> For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. <sup>32</sup> The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. <sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.*

Paul is speaking of prophecy and its use in a corporate setting. However, this principle of judging or “weighing” what is being said holds true for ANY revelation. Why is that? Because we know there are human limitations to the reception, perception and communication of revelation.

1 Corinthians 13:9–10

*For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.*

The perfection spoken of is the return of Christ. In His light, all questions will be answered and there will be no need for continuing revelation. Until then, as imperfect vessels trying to express perfection, the need for judgment remains.

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<sup>9</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

## **The particulars**

So, how do we “judge” a word of prophecy or revelation to determine its source and confirm its veracity? What enters into the process of “*weighing carefully what is said...*” whether from ourselves or from someone else? There are a number of characteristics that authenticate a word of revelation and commend it as being from God.

### **a) Confidence**

There are voices that are absolutely distinctive and unique, that sound like no other and immediately convey relationship: a mother and child, husband and wife, shepherd and sheep.

John 10:3-4

*<sup>3</sup>The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.*

That unique voice, once heard, enables us to hear and receive what is spoken with confidence. In addition, there are terms of endearment and a secret language that is shared only in the bonds of an intimate relationship. So it is with God. He and anyone who is close to Him will develop language that is unique to that relationship. And, as the relationship develops, a confidence in the communication and revelation that flow from it grows as well.

### **b) Content of the Prophetic Word**

We are admonished to hold fast to what is good in a prophetic word and reject that which is not good.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 (KJV)

*<sup>20</sup> Despise not prophesyings. <sup>21</sup> Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

### **c) Character of the Prophetic Word**

What is the “spirit” or character in which the revelation is given? Does it meet the criteria from 1 Corinthians 14:3 to “strengthen, encourage and comfort”? Does it leave us hopeful? Loved? Are there the seeds of the Spirit’s fruit inherent in the word?

Galatians 5:22–23

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control...*

Or, by contrast, did it produce fear or fruit not in keeping with the fruit of the Spirit? Did the word lead us, or manipulate us? God’s word will always align with His character. The Holy Spirit never condemns. He points to Jesus. Condemnation on the other hand accuses us and leaves us with no hope. Scripture is clear:

Romans 8:1

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...*

Also, we know that God is love. Does the character of the message reflect Christ's love and compassion? A harsh or sarcastic tone is often an indicator that something is wrong with the word.

#### **d) Criterion of the Written Word**

Does the prophetic word line up with the principles and precepts of Scripture. Does it reflect the “*grace and truth*” (John 1:14, 17) that is in Christ and, in doing so, uphold the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 19:10)?

#### **e) Comparison of the Written Word**

Does the prophetic word speak according to the whole of Scripture?

Isaiah 8:19-20

*<sup>19</sup> When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? <sup>20</sup> To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.*

## **f) Commandments of the Written Word**

Does the prophetic word exhort and command in accordance with the commandments of God's written Word?

Deuteronomy 13:1-4

*<sup>1</sup> If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, <sup>2</sup> and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," <sup>3</sup> you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. <sup>4</sup> It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him.*

## **g) Consequence of Fulfillment**

Quite simply, does the word come to pass?

Deuteronomy 18:22

*If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.*

Sadly, there are many "free range prophets" on the loose today with no connection to the local church or any means of accountability to judge their "revelation". Repeatedly - in conferences, blogs, even in books - they make predictions that never materialize, yet they continue to prophesy "presumptuously".

There are also prophetic seasons of fulfillment which we will examine at the end of this session. God often has a timeframe that includes a gap between the proclamation of his will through revelation and its fulfillment. Often, his timing is not in keeping with our expectation and it is in this gap that God works things OUT of us and IN us concurrently.

Hebrews 6:12-15

*<sup>12</sup> We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. <sup>13</sup> When God made his*

*promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” <sup>15</sup> And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.*

## **h) Conduct of the Prophet**

*Who is this person praying over me?* Many people, especially in this day of celebrity and ministry worship, have little discernment about the person ministering to them. Certainly it's not always possible to know. Ministry, however, that is known to the leadership of the local church and/or commended by a broader apostolic church family, can be relied upon as safe both theologically and practically.

Scripture teaches that an unrighteous lifestyle makes the words of a prophet suspect.

Jeremiah 23:15-16

*<sup>15</sup> Therefore, this is what the Lord Almighty says concerning the prophets: “I will make them eat bitter food and drink poisoned water because from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread through the land.” <sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.”*

Likewise, we must test both the words and the spirit behind the words.

1 John 4:1

*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, because **many false prophets** have gone out into the world.*

## **i) Confirmation of the Spirit**

Does something in you say “yes”, or are you left asking “what”?

Romans 8:16

***The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.***

1 John 2:20 (KJV)

*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

1 John 2:27

*As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

While the confirmation of our spirit to what is being said is important, we also know that our hearts can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9) and pride can keep us from hearing correctly. This is why we need external confirmation as well.

### **j) Confirmation of Other Witnesses**

2 Corinthians 13:1b

*In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.*

External confirmation MUST be applied to any word that involves significant directional changes or decisions. This is one reason why prophecy MUST operate under the covering and safety of the local church and local church leadership. God is well able to confirm His words. If He can do it with signs and wonders, He can certainly do it through the confirmation of other witnesses.

### **Psychic Friends and Crossed Wires**

With an interest and even an emphasis on the supernatural in our post modern culture, there is much psychic phenomena "out there". Many could easily confuse legitimate prophecy and prophetic ministry with the 1-900/dial in variety found on television today and the plethora of revelatory wordsmithing filling our inboxes and social media. There is, of course, a tremendous difference: God's word originates in heaven, all others in human imagination and motivation, or even hell! As we have considered, there are clear criteria for determining the differences.

Prophecy as the *testimony of Jesus*, points to Christ. Psychic phenomena primarily focuses upon earth and the elevation of either the communicator

or the one receiving the communication. Yet, we see so many hooked by this type of "ear tickling" revelation.

Sadly, the source of such revelation is demonic. Demons have knowledge about you and I and are not shy about sharing it. They do not have "all knowledge" or omniscience like Jesus, but they do have information gathered externally through the same means that anyone else can learn about your life i.e. an internet search, social media, etc. ONLY God, however, has access to our hearts and our minds.

Psalm 7:9a

*O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts...*

Romans 8:27

*And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

Also, everyone is prone to deception. Don't be deceived, you too can be deceived!

1 Corinthians 11:14

*And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*

We never get too spiritual to be deceived. When we think we are too mature for deception, we are on the brink of getting a wrong number when we dial. Satan works overtime with believers in this realm. Such a pride is evidenced in a number of ways including exclusiveness (too right), separation (much too right), accusation and division. These are never of God, but often feel like God. We'll talk more about these manners and mannerisms in another section.

## **Receiving the Prophetic**

Once we have judged revelation as being from God, how do we receive it? We have learned that New Testament prophecy is not a perfect gift and must be judged. We also learned that we must mix both faith and obedience with the prophetic word for it to become activated in our lives. So what characterizes a proper response to revelation?

## a) Faith

Faith is essential in receiving anything from God, including revelation.

James 1:6-7 (KJV)

*<sup>6</sup> But let him ask in **faith**, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. <sup>7</sup> For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

2 Chronicles 20:20

*Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have **faith** in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have **faith** in his prophets and you will be successful."*

Galations 3:2

*I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?*

## b) Testing

God will test the Word and in so doing, test us. The testing of the prophetic word tests our belief in God, whether He will indeed do what He said He would do. We see numerous examples in Scripture.

### **Joseph - Genesis 37- 45**

Joseph's dreams at age 17 foreshadowed some remarkable events in his life. These words were tested when he was sold into slavery, a contradiction of everything he thought he had heard.

### **Saul of Tarsus (Apostle Paul) - Commissioning through Ananias**

Acts 9:15-16

*<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."*

The test soon came as he had to escape from Damascus for fear of his life.

Acts 9:23-26

*<sup>23</sup> After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him. <sup>24</sup> but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. <sup>25</sup> But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. <sup>26</sup> When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.*

Yet, the word from Ananias was fulfilled through three missionary journeys (Acts 13:4-21;17). He also bore witness before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. God is not afraid to test His own words - and test them through you - for they are true.

### **c) Humility and Meekness**

We must approach any revelation with humility to do whatever God is asking of us. Many times we come to God or to a prophetic gathering looking to have an agenda endorsed and go away disappointed. A spirit of humility says, "not my will, but yours."

Psalm 34:2

*My soul shall make her boast in the Lord:  
**the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad***

James 1:21

*... receive with **meekness** the engrafted word ...*

Meekness is a word barely translatable in our modern culture. It means *strength under control*. The word picture presented in the Greek is that of a wild horse who has been tamed and is now under the control of the bit and bridle. Meekness acknowledges the sovereign control of God and, in so doing, lays aside any attempt to push forth a ministry or calling mentioned in the prophetic word.

### **d) Patience**

Many times words are spoken that will come to pass in future seasons. Many times God will ask us to simply wait on Him, again, in **faith**. He and

His words are worth waiting for! Jesus, as our model for ministry, spent thirty years preparing for three.

Romans 8:25

*But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

James 1: 3 (KJV)

*Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

### **e) Joy**

We receive His words with joy. We rejoice over those words spoken to others as well.

1 Corinthians 12:26

*If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*

1 Peter 1:8b (KJV)

*...ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

### **f) Submission**

The prophetic word is not license. As we receive revelation, we should retain a submissive spirit to the local church leadership as they help to guide us into the fulfillment of the word in due season.

## **Improper Responses to the Prophetic**

### **a) Doubt**

No faith. No reception. No activation.

James 1:6-7

<sup>6</sup>*...he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.* <sup>7</sup>*That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord.*

## b) Pride

How can we be proud about something that God is doing or is giving to us?

Psalm 66:7b

*...let not the rebellious exalt themselves.*

## c) Anger or Bitterness

Often this stems from the expectation of what we wanted to hear, but didn't. God know exactly what we need to hear and when we need to hear it!

## d) Independence

Some will say, "I've got my word and I'm off!" **Wrong.**

## e) Jealousy

Proverbs 6:34

*For jealousy is the rage of a man:  
therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.*

"I wanted that word!" Why? **God knows** what you need because He made you, your need, ordained your ministry and provided the grace for all of it.

Jeremiah 29:11

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

## Prophetic Timing and Seasons

This aspect of prophetic ministry is perhaps the most misunderstood. Because of this, the prophetic word is often misapplied. As humans we only think of time in linear terms, beginning at one point and ending at another - *chronos* time. Yet, as we move into the realm of the spirit, time is not so simply understood. Eternity is a concept of time that we really cannot comprehend. God often speaks in a way that declares something is already accomplished, yet it hasn't even happened in historical terms. We sometimes refer to this as "*prophetic perfect tense*" or *kairos* time. The

prophetic last words of Jesus on the cross, "*It is finished,*" spoke to much more than His last breath and the end of His earthly ministry. The completion He spoke of is still being worked out in our lives and on the earth. Yet God looks at us as a finished work in Christ. Justification and sanctification are both concurrent truths and function simultaneously. Our justification is complete; our sanctification is being accomplished. We are perfect and are being perfected at the same time.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.*

Daniel 2:21 (KJV)

*And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.*

Luke 1:20 (KJV)

*And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not **my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.***

Acts 1:7 (KJV)

*And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or **the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.***

Just as a farmer cannot produce a crop out of season, likewise, we cannot produce anything outside the season in which God has decreed that it will happen. Our cooperation and our patience allow us to wait for God's season with hope and faith.

## **Application**

- 1) Why is it important that prophetic revelation be judged?
- 2) We understand that a prophetic word must be in keeping with the bible. What are some other key standards by which a prophetic word is judged?

- 3) How do you understand the difference between *chronos* and *kairos* time? How do these help us better relate to the promises of God and in particular, to revelational promises?
- 4) What stands out to you as the most difficult thing to deal with in receiving a prophetic word?

# **Session 6**

## **Measures and Ministries**

## Session 6 Measures and Ministries

### Introduction

As we have learned, God desires to speak to us as a primary expression of relationship with Him. There are, however, different degrees of ability, or “measure” by which we hear from Him. As with any natural gift, such as athletic or musical ability, people have different measures. Similarly, there are different measures of spiritual gifts found in Scripture. Once we understand the measure of our God-ordained gifting, that gift can be expressed both personally and corporately in freedom, fluency and frequency.

### A Gift

We know that God gives gifts to men and women and that they are good.

Ephesians 4:7-8<sup>10</sup>

*<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

*<sup>8</sup> This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."*

Matthew 7:11

*If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*

1 Corinthians 14:1

*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.*

Scripture teaches that there are different gifts and God determines the distribution of those gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:11

*All these [spiritual gifts] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.*

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<sup>10</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

Romans 12:6a

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*

Inasmuch as God gives gifts, he gives different amounts or measures or that gift “as Christ apportioned it” (Ephesians 4: 7).

Romans 12: 6

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.  
If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

In this we see that God determines both the gift and the measure to each as He determines. This principle is set out in a familiar parable.

Matthew 25:14-29

*<sup>14</sup> "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.*

*<sup>16</sup> The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*

*<sup>19</sup> "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'<sup>21</sup> "His master replied, Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*

*<sup>22</sup> "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'<sup>23</sup> "His master replied, Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*

*<sup>24</sup> "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'<sup>26</sup> "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? <sup>27</sup> Well*

*then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. <sup>28</sup> "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."*

While there is a divine, ordained distribution and measure of gifting, we can increase that measure by exercising the gift God has chosen to give us. As we carefully invest, our faith and anointing can increase as we confidently move in God's gifts.

## **Measures of Prophetic Ministry**

In prophetic ministry, we refer to three types or measures of prophetic anointing: the spirit of prophecy, the gift of prophecy, and the office a prophet. It is important that we understand the function, capabilities and limitations of each of these.

### **a) The Spirit of Prophecy**

There are times of specific anointing, often occurring corporately, where practically anyone present can fluently receive revelation and even prophesy aloud because a *spirit of prophecy* is in operation. How can this be?

Revelation 19:10

*...Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

1) Worship, particularly corporate worship, can be catalytic to the release of the *spirit of prophecy* as the *testimony of Jesus* is released in that moment.

2) Being in proximity to prophetic gifting, especially the developed gift resident in the office of the prophet, can be catalytic with even the uninitiated prophesying.

1 Samuel 19:18-24

*<sup>18</sup> When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. <sup>19</sup> Word came to Saul: "David is in*

*Naioth at Ramah";<sup>20</sup> so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came upon Saul's men and they also prophesied.<sup>21</sup> Saul was told about it, and he sent more men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied.<sup>22</sup> Finally, he himself left for Ramah and went to the great cistern at Secu. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" "Over in Naioth at Ramah," they said.<sup>23</sup> So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even upon him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth.<sup>24</sup> He stripped off his robes and also prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay that way all that day and night. This is why people say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"*

The operation of the spirit of prophecy is sporadic and is not necessarily evidence of the gift of prophecy.

## **b) The Gift of Prophecy**

In contrast to the infrequent manifestation characteristic of *the spirit of prophecy*, the *gift of prophecy* operates through the individual on a consistent basis and similarly with the other gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Prophetic revelation accompanying this gift is a normal occurrence and is generally recognized and affirmed by the leadership in the local church.

For this reason, Paul strongly encourages believers to seek the gift of prophecy:

1 Corinthians 14:1–5

*<sup>1</sup> Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. <sup>2</sup> For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. <sup>3</sup> But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. <sup>4</sup> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.*

1 Corinthians 12:31

*But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.*

1 Corinthians 14:39

*Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.*

1 Corinthians 14:31

*For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.*

While spiritual gifts are freely given and distributed as God ordains, there is an accountability as to how such gifts are manifested and invested. One who receives a gift shows their gratitude by: 1) regularly using the gift, 2) carefully exercising and stewarding it. Speaking the very words of God is both a gift and an awesome privilege afforded us by the Holy Spirit who was Himself released into our lives by the sacrifice of Jesus.

### **c) The Office of the Prophet**

While prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit, prophets themselves are a gift of Christ to the Church.

Ephesians 4:11-16

*<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Prophets operate in a very consistent and accurate measure of the prophetic gift. While there are similarities with those who move in the *gift of prophecy*, there are also important distinctions. There are expressions of

authority and direction that should be reserved only for those operating in the office of the prophet. These include but are not limited to:

- Personal Direction
- Speak of or unfold specific future ministry
- Rebuke
- Direction to local leadership of the Church
- Prophetic counsel in marriages or with children
- Any private ministry

## **Distinctions of Prophets**

### **a) They minister IN the church**

Prophets are to be found **IN THE CHURCH** building it up, not OUTSIDE the church criticizing and tearing it down. As with all ministry, prophets are to work in submission to and harmoniously along side of those with whom he is called to labor.

1 Corinthians 12:28

*And **in the church** God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*

Acts 13:1

***In the church** at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.*

### **b) They are consistently specific and accurate in their revelation.**

Prophets operate with prediction and speak clearly of future events.

Acts 21:11

*Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.*

### c) They have authority.

Acts 15:22

*Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.*

Acts 15:27

*Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing.*

Acts 15:32

*And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.*

### d) They impart

As we learned earlier, the **dabar** of God has with it power and the prophet has in that word the power to impart and create under the direction and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 1:18 (KJV)

*This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.*

1 Timothy 4:14 (KJV)

*Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*

### Wrong uses of the office of the prophet

The office of a prophet is for the building up of Christ's church. As such, he is not free to do anything he desires.

- A prophet is **not a consultant** speaking to a person or situation according to the agenda or desire of the one being served. Doing so is prophetic manipulation.

- Prophets of God are **not for hire**. Prophets do not operate for financial gain.

Titus 1:7

*Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.*

Acts 8:18-21

*<sup>18</sup> When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money <sup>19</sup> and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." <sup>20</sup> Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup> You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.*

- Prophets should never **draw attention** to themselves but to Christ.

Acts 8:9-11

*<sup>9</sup> Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, <sup>10</sup> and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." <sup>11</sup> They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic.*

Prophets found in the Church will love the Church as Christ loves His bride. A true prophet will speak truth, even correction, in a manner that strengthens, encourages and comforts. His words and the manner in which those words are spoken will accurately reflect the Source of revelation. They will always be redemptive and leave the hearer with hope not hopelessness, conviction not condemnation, and produce victory over defeat.

Finally, there is plenty of room for whatever measure or gifting God has bestowed. Whether there is an occasional manifestation of prophecy or the consistent use of a proven gift, the admonition is to **USE WHAT YOU HAVE!**

Don't take on titles. The need for a title is often just a manifestation of insecurity. God defines. Such definition often takes years. True prophets are rare; they are called by God and confirmed by men. God is never in a hurry. He spent thirty years preparing for three.

## **Ministries of the Prophetic**

While we have looked at the *modes of revelation* or how revelation comes to us, the manner in which that revelation is discharged - *the ministries of the prophetic* - is quite varied. While there are many, we will briefly look at just four: the prophetic in proclamation, the prophetic in intercession, the prophetic in spiritual warfare, and the prophetic in worship.

### **a) Proclamation**

This is the manifestation, the ministry most often associated with prophecy and is defined simply as *speaking forth the revelation one receives*. *God speaks, we listen, we repeat*. It seems simple enough BUT because human personality and language are involved, the subsequent communication will be influenced.

We see this even in Scripture. In the resurrection accounts, for instance, we see the same event retold with the different emphases and different voices of the authors. Yet, all are valid, inspired accounts..

2 Peter 1:21

*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,  
but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The responsibility to accurately express not only God's words but His heart and emotions as well is crucial in representing God. The communication skills required to do this well can be developed and one gifted in prophecy should continually hone the skills of communication and the requisite love to carry those words accurately. We will explore this more extensively in another section entitled *Prophetic Manners and Mannerisms*.

### **b) Intercession**

Intercessory ministry has gained prominence and significance in the Church over the past few decades. As the days “increase in evil”, there is

an ancillary increase in both the amount and fervency of powerful, effectual prayer. The release of accurate prophetic revelation in intercession is vital if we are to pray on target, on time and in concert with heaven in these critical days.

The greatest example of intercession we have is Jesus. We see prolonged seasons of prayer to the Father.

Luke 6:12

*And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

We also see numerous accounts of His prayer life recorded in the gospels. He is now making continual intercession on our behalf before the throne.

Romans 8:34

*Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

- **It is the Holy Spirit who directs intercession.** This sets it apart from petitionary prayers born out of human desire and need.

Romans 8:26-27

*<sup>26</sup> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

- **Simeon and Anna are models** of Spirit-led intercession.

Luke 2:25-27

*<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> It **had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit** that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> **Moved by the Spirit,** he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required...*

Luke 2:36-38

<sup>36</sup> *There was also a **prophetess**, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was eightyfour. **She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.** <sup>38</sup> Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and **spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.***

We see a number of principles from these passages that characterize the ministry of intercession:

- It is Spirit led (v. 27)
- There is revelation (v. 26, 38)
- There is grace for prolonged periods of consecrated prayer (v. 37)
- There is grace to be alone (v. 36-37)

There are those who recognize the gift of intercession as a spiritual gift given by the Holy Spirit. While this is not one of the recorded gifts of the Spirit listed in Scripture (1Corinthians 12), nor one of the equipping offices of Ephesians 4, we do recognize both the operation and significance of those called to intercession.

What is the relationship of prophetic and intercessory ministry?

- **Conception/Revelation...Holy Spirit Initiation**

One of the words we learned for prophecy, *massa* meaning *burden*, is one of the most common prophetic manifestations to the intercessor. "I sensed a burden to pray." That burden is not merely emotional, it is most often a revelatory prompt from God.

- **Delivery/Discharge...Human Response**

How the burden of revelation is discharged helps to delineate the difference between the pure prophetic and the intercessory. The prophetic can discharge the burden by simply speaking while the intercessor must "pray through" in order to discharge the burden. Put another way, the prophet can **say** it (the burden) off while the intercessor must **pray** it off.

Intercession is a unique ministry whereby God brings us into divine counsel, releases a prophetic burden to us in order for us to come into agreement with His will, so as to release the burden back to heaven through intercession. This creates a loop of sorts. The challenge for the intercessor occurs when the burden is not fully released through prayer. This can result in worry and a false sense of responsibility. The intercessor can mistakenly take up a burden God never intended for them to bear. The weight of the burden is always to be upon the Lord Himself.

Knowing whether you are prophetic or intercessory in your response to the burden is extremely important in knowing how to function in the Church. There are many intercessors in the Church today accurately receiving revelation and attempting to function as prophets. This has caused great confusion and consternation in both the intercessor and his/her local church. When we come to understand HOW God has called us to discharge the burden, we can then know whether we are called to prayer or to proclamation. Revelation and intercession must be vitally connected. Revelation without intercession can become just information. Conversely, intercession without revelation - without the Spirit's origin and initiative - can devolve into an exercise of words and emotion.

### **c) Spiritual Warfare**

Spiritual warfare is yet another ministry that has gotten much attention in recent history. We know God has an unchanging nature and character of love, truth and mercy, but Satan has an unchanging character and mission as well:

John 10:10

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.  
I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

While there is abundant information in the Christian marketplace on the topic of spiritual warfare, we ourselves must be careful to develop a theology of warfare which is not based on testimony (whether ours or someone else's), movies, or Christian fiction but soundly on the Word of God. True spiritual warfare, we will learn, is about God, not about us.

1 John 3:8

*He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

Colossians 2:15

*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

It is interesting to note that immediately following Jesus' baptism (in public), He was led into spiritual warfare (in private).

Matthew 4:1

*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.*

Like intercession and prophetic proclamation, we see a very important principle here. Jesus was led by the HOLY SPIRIT to go to war with the devil. Here is an important prophetic perspective and the key to effective spiritual warfare: always be sure that our warfare is initiated and directed by God and that the time or the place of battle is never determined by the devil.

This is not to imply that we do not defend ourselves against the devil's attack. Rather, we need clear, revelatory unction and strategy given by the Spirit to be effective and victorious in this "war that has been won with battles still to be fought".

Peter Wagner writes:

*The Holy Spirit was the source of all of Jesus' power during His earthy ministry. Jesus exercised no power of or by Himself. We today can expect to do the same or greater things than Jesus did because we have been given access to the same power source.*

#### **d) Worship**

The last ministry of the prophetic that we will briefly consider is its connection to worship. We see the relationship in the following passage.

2 Kings 3:15-16

<sup>15</sup> *But now bring me a harpist. While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha* <sup>16</sup> *and he said, "This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches."*

God has always had a prescribed WAY in which He desired to be worshiped. His instructions for sacrifices, the Tabernacle, the Temple, etc. are incredibly detailed and specific. Clearly, there is a prophetic element to discerning HOW God desires to be worshipped and this requires LISTENING. *What does God want to do and say in this moment?*

We have all experienced the presence of God as He is being worshiped. Prophecy (both the spirit and the gift) often flow in the atmosphere of His presence. The converse is true as well. Worship often releases prophecy and prophecy often releases worship. These two are vitally connected because Jesus is found as the center and the focus of both.

**Application:**

- 1) Why is it important to understand the concept of “measure” as it applies to spiritual gifting? How does one properly assess or accurately determine measure?
- 2) What are the principle characteristics of the *office of a prophet* as opposed to the *gift of prophecy*? Why is the distinction important?
- 3) Revelation and intercession often proceed from a “burden” given by the Holy Spirit. What do you understand the difference to be between a prophetic response and an intercessory response? Why is it important to understand this distinction?

# **Session 7**

## **A Prophetic People**

## **Session 7**

### **A Prophetic People**

#### **Introduction**

While God is looking for prophetic persons, he is also looking for a prophetic people. This is a people who like the sons of Issachar, “understood the times and knew what Israel was to do...” That understanding only happens when a people, His Church, learn how to individually find their gift and then fit that gift into the greater whole, learning to function and flow together in unity.

Contemporary prophetic ministry is not intended to be the lone Elijah wandering in the wilderness, from cave to cave, or, in more modern vernacular, from church to church delivering his message with little or no connection to the people and without submission to the God-placed authority in those churches.

Let’s examine what it truly means to be a prophetic people.

#### **The Value of Prophetic Ministry in the Local Church**

Concluding his remarks on the use of spiritual gifts in the corporate setting, Paul writes to the church at Corinth this admonition:

1 Corinthians 14:40  
*But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.<sup>11</sup>*

The Church, as an extension of Christ in the earth, should reflect every aspect of his person and nature. Order is one of those.

1 Corinthians 14:33  
*For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.  
As in all the congregations of the saints,*

Accordingly, God’s placement of men and ministries is not random. Beginning with His Creation, God has always had a plan . . . for His Church

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<sup>11</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

universal and for you and me as individual stones in the building of the Church.

1 Peter 2:4-5

*<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

A question we have to ask ourselves is whether we are building blocks or stumbling blocks to that building. In Peter, we find both.

A stumbling block:

Matthew 16:23

*Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

A building block:

Matthew 16:17-18

*<sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

To the extent that we are committed to building His Kingdom and not promoting ourselves or our ministries, God can and will use us. He has given gifts to men and women for building and building up of His Church, for both evangelism and edification. The specific value of prophetic ministry in the local church moves in both these directions; useful for both building and building up. This should be the criteria by which any ministry is measured.

Ephesians 2:19-22

*<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises*

*to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

How do we find our place and how do we *fit and flow* once we do?

## **Prophetic Manners and Mannerisms**

In an earlier section, it was stated that prophetic proclamation is subject to the personality of the one prophesying and is a skill to be developed through practice and discipleship. Revelation brings with it knowledge but wisdom is the proper application of that knowledge.

Ephesians 1:17

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

Joseph was able to use revelational gifts to reveal and interpret Pharaoh's dream but it was the gift of wisdom, the application of revelation, that promoted him.

Genesis 41:37–40

*<sup>37</sup> The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. <sup>38</sup> So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"*

*<sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. <sup>40</sup> You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."*

We are told to ask for wisdom.

James 1:5

*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

In the following section we will consider some mannerisms and identify some prophetic pitfalls to avoid as you learn the emotional and

communication intelligence that allows God's voice to be heard and received, both by a believer and unbeliever.

### a) "Monkey See, Monkey Do"

Scripture teaches that it is proper to imitate Christ and other leaders. Consider these verses regarding Jesus and Paul respectively:

Matthew 5:48

*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

1 Corinthians 4:16

*Therefore I urge you to imitate me.*

We need to emulate the proper attributes of character and anointing, but not the personality aspects of another individual. Ministry is not about style. It is about reflecting God through YOUR personality and words.

### b) "Show Me Your Badge"

There are prophetic schools, even online, where you can get a certificate identifying you as a certified, card-carrying prophet. There may be a certain validity in such training, but prophets are not raised in schools nor do they need credentials. They are anointed by God and their ministry is affirmed by men as their words prove to be accurate and their character reflects whom they are representing over an extended period of time.

Elisha did not come out of the school of the prophets that were with Eiljah, but was chosen by God to receive the double anointing of the first son.

1 Kings 19:19-21

*<sup>19</sup> So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. <sup>20</sup> Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye," he said, "and then I will come with you."*

*"Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" <sup>21</sup> So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant.*

## 2Kings 2 and 3

### c) The Truth Truck

This is the individual who must “dump” his load of truth or revelation at every opportunity. It’s important to remember that no one prophetic minister is the only receptacle of truth on the planet today.

Amos 3:7

*Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing  
without revealing his plan  
to his servants the **prophets**.*

### d) Mystic Myopia or “My Angel's Bigger Than Your Than Your Angel”

This is the individual who must validate his prophetic ministry through the manifestation of revelation. The thought is that the bigger the manifestation, obviously the more important the revelation! There is much "unlawful sharing" that occurs with this type of individual who works overtime at seeing how weird or esoteric they can be in their newfound ministry.

Colossians 2:18–19

*<sup>18</sup> Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. <sup>19</sup> He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

### e) You called my wife a "what"?

This is the prophet, usually operating from OUTSIDE the church, who insists on pointing out the faults of the Church and bringing condemnation as they do so. Love should always be the motivation for revelation.

Ephesians 5:25-27

*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with*

*water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

## **f) The Elijah Syndrome**

1 Kings 19:14-18

*<sup>14</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."*

*<sup>15</sup> The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. <sup>16</sup> Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. <sup>17</sup> Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. <sup>18</sup> Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him. "*

"Poor me. No one understands." This is the prophet who has been wounded by authority or has an independent or un-submissive spirit and finds it easier to disassociate with the rest of God's people. Once again, he feels unique in his anointing and his revelation.

## **g) The Weatherman**

This person is so consumed with the future he is often no good for the present. This person is often disconnected and unproductive in their current life.

Ecclesiastes 11:4

*Whoever watches the wind will not plant;  
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.*

2 Thessalonians 3:11-13

*<sup>11</sup> We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. <sup>13</sup> And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.*

## **h) The Lint Brush**

This is the prophet or individual who is always looking for dirt and always manages to find it. This person feels they are "right" and are providing the standard to which everyone else should attain (self righteousness).

Matthew 7:3-5

*<sup>3</sup> "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

## **i) Chicken Little or "the Sky is Falling"**

This is the individual whose entire ministry is devoted to coming destruction. When it doesn't come, like Jonah and Nineveh, they often become frustrated and angry. Yes, prophets and prophecy warn. But even in the warning, the redemptive purposes of God are made known and hope is given.

Jonah 3:10-4:4

*<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.*

*<sup>4:1</sup> But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. <sup>3</sup> Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." <sup>4</sup> But the Lord replied, "Have you any right to be angry?"*

## **Proper Prophetic Protocol**

As we have already seen, God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:40). God establishes order in His Church through leadership: that which He has

established and authorized in the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4) and the local elders and senior pastor of a local congregation. It is through this leadership that God regularly speaks direction and gives protection for the flock. This is not to say that these men are the sole repository of revelation for the church. The input of gifted prophetic members and the ministry of the intercessors are of tremendous importance to the church.

The following are some guidelines that will help facilitate clarity and provide order to allow these gifts and ministries to be effectively released.

### **a) Prophecy in corporate services**

Likely, everyone reading this has received a "word" during a corporate worship service. Often there is a conflict within us as to HOW we deliver this word, WHEN it should be done, or even IF it should be done. The first criteria we must ascertain is whether or not the word is personal or corporate. Many times revelation will come to us so intensely we immediately assume it has implications and application for the entire body. A question to be asked: Does the word in concert with everything else that is happening in the moment, with what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing? If we do indeed sense that the word is for corporate hearing, there are probably multiple people in the congregation receiving the essence of this revelation simultaneously. Does everyone speak up at once? Not according to Scripture.

1 Corinthians 14:29-33

*<sup>29</sup> Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. <sup>30</sup> And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. <sup>31</sup> For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. <sup>32</sup> The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. <sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.*

The context of this passage is helpful. Groups of believers were likely coming together (probably in homes) numbering far less than most of our contemporary corporate gatherings. This passage presents us with some guidelines: a) one person is to speak at a time; b) the word spoken is judged; c) there is order throughout.

As we find ourselves in congregations numbering in the hundreds or even thousands, it is simply not practical for everyone receiving revelation to speak in the moment. In order to facilitate flow and order in the meeting AND provide for proper judgment of the word, each local church and leadership team might consider the following protocol. This is of course, NOT doctrine but practice and will/should vary from church to church based on worship liturgy, size, etc.

- An established leader, pastor or elder should be designated in each service to receive prophetic words.
- An individual receiving a word should go to that individual and submit the word, preferably in writing if time allows, in a quiet and unobtrusive manner.
- The designated leader receiving these words will discern their placement and positioning in the service, if at all, and share with the pastor or worship leader accordingly.

For this to effectively work in a local church, those prophetic individuals must TRUST those in leadership to make the decisions regarding placement, timing and implementation of the word.

### **b) Prophecy in small group meetings**

Much of the protocol established above can be relaxed in a small group setting where there are fewer people in attendance. However, there should always be an attitude of submission to whoever is leading the meeting. Because of the absence of other prophets or perhaps local church elders that can judge words immediately, prophetic revelation - particularly that which may involve direction or correction - should be submitted to pastoral authority to be judged as to accuracy and timeliness.

### **c) Prophecy for pastor, leadership, local church, etc.**

Words of prophecy for leaders and/or the direction or protection of the local church are to be welcomed and encouraged. These words should be written down and submitted to the pastor or another leader, preferably an elder, in the church. Remember, the prophet is only the mailman. He is

not the policeman. Once you have submitted the word, the responsibility for activation resides with the leadership.

#### **d) No private words!**

NEVER give or receive a prophetic word to an individual privately if at all possible. Find someone in leadership and submit the word to the individual with that oversight present. There is a tremendous element of protection available if we will abide by this. If you do receive a private word, hold that word very lightly until it can be properly submitted for judgment.

#### **e) Write it Down!**

Habakkuk 2:2

*Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it."*

Most phones today have a recording capacity allowing any prophecy spoken over you to be recorded. It is often helpful to transcribe the recording to paper to help clarify what has been said. Often, going back to the words spoken not only reminds us of the promise, but provides the ammunition to war.

1 Timothy 1:18–19

*<sup>18</sup> Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, <sup>19</sup> holding on to faith and a good conscience.*

#### **Finding Your Place**

Among the most basic needs of every human is the desire to fit in. From the playground to the church, we want to fit in. To do that, we must first find our place with Him. Any and all ministry must start and continue to flow from that place where we are with Him and thus, regularly receiving from Him. Relationship and Lordship.

Secondly, we must find our place in fellowship with one another.

Acts 2:1

*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

Acts 2: 46

*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.*

Hebrews 10:24-25

*<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

We learned in an earlier session that prophets (and by extension, prophetic ministry) are to be found in the church. We must find our place in the house. God has something special and unique for each one of us...some gift to manifest, some grace given to divest and some group in which to invest.

- Some gift....

Romans 12:6

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

- Some grace....

1Corinthians 1:4

*I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 3:7

*Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effective working of his power.*

- Some group....

Galatians 2:7-8

*<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.*

*<sup>8</sup> For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.*

Ephesians 3:8

*Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

## **Fitting Where We Are Placed and Graced**

What is our gift(s)? How do we find out? There are a number of ways we can discover how we are graced or gifted.

### **a) Revealing Tests**

Written gift tests such as the Wagner-Houts Modified Gift Test can be a good starting point in assessing how we are gifted and motivated.

### **b) Revelation**

Through proven prophetic ministry in the church gifts and callings can be identified and/or imparted.

1 Timothy 4:14

*Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.*

2 Timothy 1:6 (KJV)

*Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.*

Through personal revelation, the Holy Spirit will often reveal gifts and callings directly to you.

Jeremiah 1:4-5

*<sup>4</sup> The word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*

Galatians 1:1

*Paul, an apostle--sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...*

Galatians 1:15-16

*<sup>15</sup> But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles .*

### **c) Observation**

As we receive revelation of how we are gifted and called, it is through the observation of the outworking of those gifts that confirmation is provided.

1 Timothy 4:15

*Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.*

### **d) Friends and Faith**

It is also helpful to get around other "birds of a feather." Certain gifts draw forth like gifts from others. Prophecy and prophetic phenomena attract prophetic people. Being around mature and developed expressions of gifting help to bring us to new levels of anointing and provide a benchmark for us to attain.

Romans 12:3

*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Romans 12:6

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

Sometimes it is as helpful knowing what we are not, as well as what we are. You may be a competent musician but will never be a concert artist.

That is OK. It doesn't mean you aren't a musician nor does it mean you cannot enjoy making music.

It is the same with spiritual ministry. We are called to be ministers but not all will be full-time ministers vocationally. It isn't about comparison, but about an honest assessment of what we have been given and what are we called to do.

2 Corinthians 10:12

*We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.*

Mark 4:23-25

*<sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." <sup>24</sup> "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you--and even more. <sup>25</sup> Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."*

Luke 6:38

*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

We must learn to trust God and, in turn, trust the gift He has given us. As we are learning to step out into any new realm of ministry, faith will always be required. Prophecy is no exception. Faith is the key to both receiving and releasing any spiritual gift.

## **Flowing In The Prophetic**

To effectively flow in the prophetic we must expect and position ourselves to be used by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 21:22

*If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.*

James 1:6-8

*<sup>6</sup> But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That man*

*should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

Luke 21:15

*For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.*

Psalm 49:3

*My mouth will speak words of wisdom;  
the utterance from my heart will give understanding.*

To have this kind of confidence we have to deal with any known areas of compromise in our life. We need to be a “clean tube” to allow the flow of the Spirit to be unimpeded.

Ephesians 4:30-32

*<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:19

*Do not put out the Spirit's fire ...*

Our obedience and our cleanliness gives us confidence to move out in our gift and in faith.

Hebrews 10:35

*So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.*

1 John 3:21

*Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.*

We must have a motivation for advancing the Kingdom of God. God releases power ministry, among which is included prophecy, for the manifestation of Himself for the advancement of His Kingdom.

Romans 15:18-19

*<sup>18</sup> I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done-- <sup>19</sup> by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.*

We must understand there is a progression and a maturation in the use of the gifts. A submissive and teachable heart along with accountable relationships will move the process along.

2 Peter 1:5-8

*<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; <sup>6</sup> and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup> and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. <sup>8</sup> For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure., they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Application:**

- 1) What characterize a “prophetic people”? Why does this dimension need to be cultivated in the Church today?
- 2) Why is it important to look at some of the pitfalls and mannerisms that can derail prophetic ministry? What are some of the underlying motivations these mannerisms expose?
- 3) What are some of the important spiritual principles that are evidenced when proper prophetic protocols are practiced? Why do you think God stresses “order” in the congregation?
- 4) How are you working to identify where you “fit” in terms of ministry and calling? What does it look like when your are “flowing” with the Spirit?

# **Session 8**

## **Nurturing the Prophetic Soul**

## **Session 8**

# **Nurturing the Prophetic Soul**

### **Introduction**

Plants always grow best in the right environment. Certainly while they can learn to adapt and survive in less favorable environments, they prosper and propagate in the right conditions. The prophetic “soul” thrives in the right environment. While the gift and the anointing can transcend the ideal, there are aspects of the unique wiring of the prophetic that can and must be nurtured.

### **Design**

God has made us in 3 parts – body, soul & spirit. In the Church, we correctly emphasize the renewing of the “spirit”. However, we often don’t address the holistic connection of soul and spirit. Our soul - mind, emotions, will - constitute who we are. The human personality consists of the interaction of these 3 elements – they are everything that constitutes personhood. Developing the prophetic gift necessitates: 1) acknowledging the prophetic “soul”; 2) understanding its strengths and weaknesses; and 3) working with, rather than against, the unique design that God has given us.

### **Environment**

Cultivating or developing the soul as a vessel for the prophetic requires the right environment. We often don’t see truly prophetic people raised up into maturity because we are often trying to do so in a less than hospitable environment.

- We need to **CREATE** the right environment instead of waiting for it.
- You cannot **WAIT** for the right environment to be functional and fruitful in the prophetic.
- Prophetic individuals must avoid taking offense at not having opportunities for the prophetic to be expressed or exercised as freely as might be desired.

- The local church where one is placed might not be a “prophetic hothouse”. Yet, God’s placement is sovereign. Prophetic people, like butterflies, tend to flit from house to house looking for the perfect place to land. It doesn’t exist. Acknowledge God’s placement and discover how you can help fulfill God’s vision for that particular church.

## Counter-Cultural

There is something about the church that should be decidedly counter-cultural. The early church was different - noticeably. Every culture is looking for something radically different, not a modified or improved version of what it currently is. And the prophetic should lead the way.

Nurturing the prophetic soul requires a “counter-cultural” approach to living. Contemporary culture is characterized by certain elements that are not conducive to nurturing the prophetic, whether in the individual or corporately. The goal, however, is not to simply be in opposition to the culture (unless righteously indicated), but to be distinct from it. This is the contrast Jesus was speaking of:

John 17:15–19<sup>12</sup>

*<sup>15</sup> My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

- Current culture is fast, loud, busy & goal-oriented.
- Counter-culture is the opposite: slower, quiet, contemplative.
- “Being” oriented rather than “doing” oriented.
- What it takes to raise up or develop the prophetic requires adopting these disciplines and attributes.

Psalm 46:10

*Be still and know that I am God.*

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<sup>12</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

Psalm 131:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *My heart is not proud, O Lord,  
my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
or things too wonderful for me.*

<sup>2</sup> *But I have stilled and quieted my soul;  
like a weaned child with its mother,  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

- We must purposely extract ourselves from those things that create noise and keep us “busy” rather than relational and fruitful.
- Often the business of life destroys the margins around our lives. We expect God to meet us and speak to us according to our time frame. He is God and will not hurried. He is not bound by our time.
- This is not an excuse for being eccentric. Christ understood the need to get away to be with the Father. Yet, there was nothing about His manner that ever communicated eccentricities of personality or behavior.

## **The Paradox**

The prophetic soul needs the very thing that can get it into trouble - isolation. The prophet needs isolation. Yet, he needs to be with people to stay relational and grounded. Living as a prophetic person means living in this tension and the paradoxes that accompany the lifestyle of the prophetic.

- Looking, listening and when necessary, speaking. You have to leave the cave to do this.
- Separate, but, at the same time, an integral part of...”in the church”
- The need to be objective but compassionate. Truth AND mercy.

- A right regard for the value of being fruitful and productive, but the need to maintain a sensitivity for doing what is often less visible and less measurable. Self-worth cannot be found in what is produced.

## **Finding what works**

To nurture the prophetic, it is necessary to find those things that truly “nurture” and not simply “comfort” the soul. Anything we derive comfort from has the capacity to become its own deity. At the core of our hearts must be the need to find comfort in God alone. There is a difference between finding “nurture” and “comfort.” And this is certainly NOT to create a hothouse for the prophetic that it can only happen under ideal conditions. BUT, it is intended to work with God’s unique wiring in order to acknowledge and fully cooperate with that design.

## **Power of the Closed Door**

Another important discovery for the prophetic soul is the power of solitude. The prophetic soul is characterized by what might be described as a monastic motivation. This is not an excuse for not being with and loving people nor an excuse for anti-social behavior or language that does not well represent Christ. But there are times, and to some extent even a lifestyle, when this solitude requires learning the priority of the “closed door.”

*2 Kings 4:32-33:*

*<sup>32</sup> When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. <sup>33</sup> So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord.*

Elisha had to go into the room, close the door and pray to the Lord. Alone. A corpse, an impossible request (resurrection), a prophet and God Himself. For both a believer and a prophet, there are times when the only thing to be done is to shut the door and get alone with God and that which needs resurrection power. It is only in this way that the truly prophetic is developed.

The elements of the prophetic are never nurtured publicly. The largest part of the prophetic essence is unseen, hidden and must remain so. There really is no such thing as a “public prophet” or a celebrity prophet. There is

however a need to develop a self-security rooted in being with God that doesn't require recognition or applause. The prophetic soul is one that finds its nurture and nourishment with God alone. Jesus tried to explain this to his disciples.

John 4:31–32

*<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”*

*<sup>32</sup> But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”*

## **The Power of Slower**

Along with “aloneness”, the prophetic soul must also become acquainted with “slowness”. The prophetic soul is nurtured by learning and cultivating “the better-ness of slow-ness”, that “slow is better”. This is in marked contrast to the “1-minute” culture where everything is immediate.

The disciples spent countless hours simply walking with God. Literally, walking. And talking and LISTENING. There is an “efficient inefficiency” that must be learned, the value of “wasting time with God” (which, of course, is oxymoronic as one never wastes time with Him). There are times when God simply wants to be with us; when instruction, production or even revelation is not the agenda.

James 1:19

*Be quick to listen, slow to speak ...*

This speaks of our need to deliberately listen, to discipline ourselves to slow down and listen.

## **They**

We live in a moment when anyone and everyone with an internet connection has an immediate voice and can become an immediate expert.

2 Timothy 4:3–4

*<sup>3</sup> For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

1 John 4:1–2

*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup> This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,*

Objectivity is cultivated apart from the voices and influences that press in around us, even including other prophetic voices. We need to be careful with what we are reading, watching and feeding on. The true prophetic voice is pure, not an echo and repackaged reflection of everything else.

### **God on the Right Side**

The field of neuroscience is confirming much of what we know about how spirituality affects the brain. The left-side of the brain processes the logical while the right-side tends to process more intuitive/creative data. Brain scans have shown that it is the right hemisphere of the brain that responds vividly during prayer and meditation.

We need to cultivate those activities that encourage right-brain function. It is there that we can help develop and increase our capacity to hear from God. Developing the right side of the brain can be done through artistic endeavors such as drawing, listening to and playing music, etc. We see two scriptural examples of the role of music and spiritual matters.

1 Samuel 16:21–23

*<sup>21</sup> David came to Saul and entered his service. Saul liked him very much, and David became one of his armor-bearers. <sup>22</sup> Then Saul sent word to Jesse, saying, “Allow David to remain in my service, for I am pleased with him.”*

*<sup>23</sup> Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.*

2 Kings 3:15

*<sup>15</sup> But now bring me a harpist.”*

*While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha*

**Finally ...**

While the prophetic is primarily spiritual in nature, we must develop the prophetic soul in such a way that God has ready access to and expression through a healthy soul. Developing such a posture takes skill and the will to develop, to grow and change.

### **Application**

- 1) Being aware of and sensitive to the environment around us is important to developing the prophetic. Why is that? How does that environment and cultivating the prophetic soul sometimes come into conflict?
- 2) Why does nurturing the prophetic soul require a “counter-cultural” approach and corresponding action?
- 3) Why do you think “the power of the closed door” is often a challenging concept to embrace and practice?
- 4) What steps do you believe you need to take to begin cultivating your soul prophetically beyond your current experience?

# **Appendix**

## **Raising Children Revelationally**

# Appendix A

## Raising Children Revelationally

### Introduction

There are many wonderful books available today that address the relational aspect of parenting. Such Christian books focus on the biblical principles that shape such relationships and the need to cultivate and navigate the changes that invariably occur during the parenting journey. These are great tools. Yet God has given believers many other tools, spiritual tools and gifts, to bring their children into the fullness of their destiny.

### Revelational Parenting

What is often missing on our bookshelves and in our parental “tool kit” is how we raise our children, not just relationally, but *revelationally*. As parents, we are given unique insight into our children not just by natural observation and genetics, but by the Spirit as well. Such a revelational perspective recognizes:

- God is seeing what you may not be seeing in a given moment in the life of a child.
- There are times when we need to see beyond the moment we’re in. Seeing what God sees always readjusts and realigns our perspective.
- We need to hear a word about our child that we can stand on, believing God’s Word will not return void. Such a word is greater than they are and more effective than our best parenting skills. Remember, God loves your children MORE than you do. The promises of Jeremiah 29 apply to them as well.
- We need more than principles or the latest parenting fad to effectively war on behalf of our children. We war with the words God has spoken about them. More on this later.

Every parent goes through moments wondering “what happened to my child” or “what am I doing wrong as a parent”? We are human. We have

weaknesses and seasons of struggle. But raising our children revelationally gives spiritual perspective that lifts us above those moments when the relationship is under pressure. From that spiritual vantage point we are able to see the promise in our children, not just the problem manifesting itself in the moment.

## Examples from Scripture

Luke 2:19, 33<sup>13</sup>

*<sup>19</sup> Mary cherished these things and pondered them in her heart ... <sup>33</sup> And his father and mother marveled at what was said about him.*

Mary and Joseph's carefully considered the words spoken prophetically over Jesus and held on to them. They would need these words to be effective as parents and to comfort them years later.

Genesis 37:5–11

*<sup>5</sup> Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."*

*<sup>8</sup> His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.*

*<sup>9</sup> Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."*

*<sup>10</sup> When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" <sup>11</sup> His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

Imagine many years later, when Joseph had become their savior, delivering them from famine, how these dreams would be recalled by his family.

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<sup>13</sup> All Scripture passages are from NIV 1984 edition unless otherwise noted

And then there are those moments when we MISS what is hidden in our children, their calling as a future king perhaps. The external ministry of the prophetic is often needed to call forth that which we sometimes don't see.

1 Samuel 16:6–13

<sup>6</sup> *When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord." <sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

<sup>8</sup> *Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." <sup>9</sup> Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the Lord chosen this one." <sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The Lord has not chosen these." <sup>11</sup>*

*So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep."*

*Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."*

<sup>12</sup> *So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.*

*Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one."*

<sup>13</sup> *So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.*

Similarly, Eli the High Priest, could have missed seeing what was in the child Samuel except for the persistence of God. The very prophet who would later anoint David as king was almost humanly overlooked himself as God called Him.

1 Samuel 3:1-9,3:19-4:1

<sup>1</sup> *The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.*

<sup>2</sup> *One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. <sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup> Then the Lord called Samuel.*

*Samuel answered, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." bBut Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he*

*went and lay down. <sup>6</sup> Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."*

*"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."*

*<sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.*

*<sup>8</sup> The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."*

*<sup>19</sup> ...The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. <sup>20</sup> And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. <sup>4:1</sup> And Samuel's word came to all Israel.*

As believing parents we have unique advantages. One of them is a prophetic vantage point from which to see and call forth that which God has placed in our children. No one else will ever replace this relationship and the stewardship we have been given. We are not only to love our children, but to work with God to bring them into the full measure of who He designed them to be.

### **Creating a revelational environment in your home**

It is possible to create a culture in the home where an awareness of the Spirit is the norm rather than the exception. This can be done by being open in our communication WITH OUR CHILDREN about the things of God. We often underestimate the faith and the capacity latent within our children for sensitivity to the supernatural, a sensitivity not yet jaded by years.

This awareness and openness begins by what they see in us. Do our children see us respond in ways that are primarily spiritual or carnal (natural)? Do they see us actively living in faith, relying on the power and faithfulness of God? What they see us do forms the foundation and the pattern of response in them, both now and later.

- Our children need to see us handle our mistakes properly. That response includes quickly acknowledging guilt and asking for forgiveness from both those who have been offended and from God.

- A place where reality and real Christianity can co-exist. Life isn't perfect. People aren't either. Learning to find God and find grace in a family setting where perfection is not the standard creates an atmosphere necessary for growth.
- As parents, how you deal with your humanity and how that humanity intersects with God will form the basis for how they regard themselves and relate to those around them and to God Himself. This is grace personified.

Another way we encourage a revelational environment in our homes and an acceptance of it in our children is by actively encouraging their imaginations. Sadly, an ever-expanding media laden culture and its constant bombardment of noise and images tends to diminish and even warp the imaginations of our kids. The effect of too much external stimulation is compounded by the fact that what is being placed in their minds is often not in keeping with the things of the Spirit. Developing a Godly imagination is one of the keys to developing the prophetic. To this end:

- Be aware of and vigorously monitor what is being put into your child's imagination. This includes what they see YOU putting into yours.
- Encourage their dreams and their musings. Yes, they are children but their dreams (like Joseph) and imaginative reflection are developing the part of their brain where they can more readily hear from God.
- Tie their imaginations to Scripture. Encourage them to connect their imaginations to God's voice breaking through and speaking to them in dreams and visions. This lays the foundation for the gift and skill of vision and dream interpretation later.

How we approach the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible reading also help to set the environment. While these are disciplines, and disciplines are not always fun or convenient, they should be regarded as life-giving and not laws to be carried out. We must carefully set an example in these areas.

## Crafting a Revelational Worldview

Developing a “revelational worldview” is part of creating a spiritual environment. As we process the events in the world today, consider them with a view to what the Word of God has to say.

- Cultivate as an important life skill a child’s ability to distinguish between spirits, to discern what is “of God” and what is not. While a spiritual gift of discernment can grow from this - along with God’s written word - this is the opportunity for learning how to discern the difference between good and evil. This can start very early in a child’s life.

Hebrews 5:14

*But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

- Discussing issues and looking at them scripturally develops a skill for applying the Bible. It can also cultivate an ability to hear the Holy Spirit and make right application of what He has said.

## Defining

One of the primary roles of prophecy is that of defining. The process of defining begins best in an environment that recognizes the importance of revelation and blesses and affirms such insight. Here a child can be reminded of what God has said and what He continues to speak over their lives. In this way they are trained and armed to hang on to that which is good.

Jeremiah 1:5

*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet.*

1 Timothy 1:18–19

*<sup>18</sup> Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, <sup>19</sup> holding on to faith and a good conscience.*

Knowing that which God has placed inherent in a child is not always readily apparent. As parents, we often feel a need to expose our kids to every type of opportunity available to them - from sports to music and everything in between. Yet this diffusion often becomes a wearying process for both parent and child and the very attributes we are trying to instill - focus, creativity (right-brained activity) - are missed or denied.

What if we were to simply ASK GOD what is inside of our children that needs to be defined, developed and celebrated? Imagine the focus that could be brought about at an early stage if the system of trial and error could be eliminated. Doing so would also help our kids dream the dreams that God wants them to have, not just the dreams of grandeur that our narcissistic culture tries to instill. Aligning our children's expectations with God's purpose and design creates in them a clarity of focus and destiny along with a deep sense of security and placement.

### **Different and Fine With Being So**

Raising children in a revelational environment where they learn how to: 1) hear from God; 2) to rightly interpret the times from a spiritual perspective; 3) to resist the latest winds of fad and doctrine is decidedly counter-cultural.

Real thinkers and leaders are always developed outside of the mainstream of thought and culture. For this reason, our children may not always "fit in". Good. We are to be a different, chosen people.

1 Peter 2:9

*<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

One does not have to wait for a lifetime of bad decisions and the bitter fruit that ensues to discover that God's Spirit is always available to impart to us, even from an early age. This is not about raising unloving outcasts. Rather, we are helping our children learn, from an early age, how to live revelationally in their decision making and to live relationally with God. Doing so will set them apart and lay the groundwork for them to bear much Kingdom fruit showing themselves to be true disciples.

## Fighting with the Right Weapons

We are raising different children, children who can be “arrows” if properly aligned and well aimed.

Psalm 127:3–5

*<sup>3</sup> Sons are a heritage from the Lord,  
children a reward from him.*

*<sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hands of a warrior  
are sons born in one’s youth.*

*<sup>5</sup> Blessed is the man  
whose quiver is full of them.  
They will not be put to shame  
when they contend with their enemies in the gate.*

For this reason alone, there will be moments when every parent will need to wage war on behalf of their child. This war might be for their health, their protection or their decision making and destiny. If the devil is truly fearful of one thing, it is Kingdom progeny. Multiplication of the righteous is the ultimate manifestation of the devil’s defeat.

Effective spiritual warfare is always revelational and Spirit-led.

Ephesians 6:13–18

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

Waging war effectively for our families is not just about using the right weapons but using those weapons in the right way and at the right time. An integral part of any effective military campaign is rightly identifying and locating the enemy. For the believer, that involves identifying what is really

at work and the real source of the problem. One reality that is often in play are curses, generational and spoken:

- Curses are generational DNA that, unless broken by the power of the cross, can move from generation to generation (Numbers 14:18) and manifest as sin and bondage. We need to know what those curses are so we can pray to see them broken.
- We must be careful in our reaction and language that we don't generate new curses in our frustration or anger. Blessing and cursing rests with our language.

James 3:9–10

*<sup>9</sup> With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.*

By properly discerning the ROOT (of sin, sickness, etc.) rather than simply addressing the fruit or manifestation, we can bring about lasting change both in and for our children.

## **Moral or Spiritual**

Well meaning Christian parents, because they feel ill-equipped to raise spiritual children, have settled for moral, well-behaved children. The enemy tries to intimidate us as parents that we cannot raise spiritual children so we settle for good morality rather than powerful spirituality. Yes, we are to raise children that have character, but more is needed. We need to go beyond just the fundamental issues of character and morality to instill a deep love for Christ, His Kingdom and REGULAR access to His Spirit to be fully equipped for that to which they are called.

## **Finally**

Parenting revelationally is a skill that is developed intentionally. It doesn't just happen nor is it simply the by-product of being raised in a Christian home. To create such intentionality, three key things must be undertaken:

- An environment must be cultivated where revelation and the work of the Spirit are recognized and given not just a place, but priority.

- Our children need to be defined by revelation – viewed through the lens of the Spirit with a continuing sensitivity to what the Spirit of God has said and is saying.
- We must war for our kids by means of the insight of the Spirit and with the weapons of the Spirit.

**Application:**

- 1) In your own words, define “revelational parenting”.
- 2) What are some keys to developing a family life that is revelational in its experience and expression?
- 3) What are the principle aims of such parenting?
- 4) What are the main hinderances that need to be overcome to establish this method of parenting?

\* These notes were adapted from a message spoken at a parenting conference some years ago.