

Cultivating a Loving and Honorable Prophetic Gifting

Scripture for Study: 1 Corinthians 12-14; John 14:12-29; 1 John 4:1-11; Romans 12:3-8 1. *The Gift of Prophecy*

*“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” “He who prophesies speaks **edification, exhortation and comfort** to all...” 1 Corinthians 14:1 & 3*

a) Earnestly Desire Prophecy

- Prophecy is one of many gifts given to believers, and it is one of the 'greater gifts' that Scripture tells us to earnestly desire. (1 Corinthians 12:31)
- The prophetic gift is one of the most basic and powerful expressions of the Holy Spirit's power in our lives. God has supplied us with the abundance of His Spirit so that we might commune with Him and also convey the depths of His heart and will to others.
- Through prophecy we are able to edify, exhort and comfort people in such a way we could not do otherwise. God understands what people need and He desires to partner with us in ministering to them and speaking into their lives.
- Through prophecy we get a wonderful two-fold blessing. First of all, we get to commune with the Holy Spirit. Second, we partner with God in ministering to the hearts and minds of His beloved creation. God desires to reveal Himself and the mysteries of His Kingdom. Seeking prophecy is one way to set our hearts on a journey into the depths of God.

b) The Spirit of Prophecy

- The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy. (Rev 19:10)
- All prophecy, spiritual revelation, sign, wonder, angel or gospel that does not glorify Jesus is false. All prophecy that comes from God will glorify Christ and press people onward toward a deeper relationship with the God-man Jesus.
- We often mistake false prophecy with incorrect prophecy. False prophecy is any prophetic word or message that does not glorify Christ. Even if a prophecy appears to be true, if it does not reveal Christ, we must not receive it. Jesus Christ must be the cornerstone of all we are and believe. (1 John 4:1-6)
- On the other hand, we as believers see in part and know in part. (1 Cor 13:9) Nowhere in the Bible does it say that we will prophesy with perfect clarity or accuracy. This is why we must create a safe environment within the Church for people to grow and develop in the prophetic.
- Therefore, test all prophecy. The most important test is: 'does this prophecy reveal Jesus and press us onward and upward in Him?' Prophecy will always reveal the love, purity, faithfulness and righteousness of Christ. True prophecy should always cultivate in us a desire to worship God! c)
Inspirational Prophecy
- *Inspirational prophecy* is not a biblical term, but a simple means of explaining the most basic expression of prophecy. Inspirational prophecy is the prophetic gift that Paul highlights in 1 Corinthians 12-14. This gift is given to all believers for the edification, exhortation and comfort of all believers.

- When we pray for people, the Holy Spirit will often give us simple phrases, impressions, pictures or even simple 'mind visions'. These can sometimes seem very odd when we receive them, but I have found even the strangest, most peculiar word or picture to be encouraging to the person I am praying for. Often, God will use little things to remind us of His faithfulness, love and commitment.
- Inspirational prophecy can often seem silly or insignificant, but sometimes, often actually, I find that if we are faithful to speak these things to one another, it results in great encouragement. Quite literally, the most powerful prophetic word I have ever given someone is, "Jesus loves you."
- The best advice I could give to anyone seeking to grow in this gift is: ***Be courageous, share only what the Lord gives you, and never tell a lie.*** The Spirit of truth does a far better job of conveying the heart of God than anything we would say in addition.
- Similar to inspirational prophecy are the gifts of discerning spirits, word of knowledge, and word of wisdom. These gifts often operate on a basic level and are typically for the purpose of giving us warning, comforting us in difficult circumstances, or giving us immediate counsel or revelation into someone's life.
- We must remember that in all of these things we know in part and see in part. If we rely too much on spiritual revelation and not enough on Scripture or godly wisdom we can easily fall astray.

d) Revelatory and Directional Prophecy

- *Revelatory Prophecy* works on a much different level than

inspirational. All believers can move in inspirational prophecy by simply listening to the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 14:5)

- Examples of revelatory prophecy are angelic visitations, dreams and visions, open visions (being taken up in the Spirit) and hearing the audible voice of God. I typically caution people from sharing revelatory prophecy with others until they have sought godly counsel and received confirmation.
- Habakkuk 2 says that 'revelation waits for an appointed time'. When we receive this type of revelation, God almost always supplies us enough time to test, pray through and receive counsel from others.
- Revelatory prophecy is given when God desires to set the course of someone's life in a significant way, reveal a great mystery about Himself, or to help us understand the times and seasons.
- Revelatory prophecy should always be handled very carefully, with much prayer, study of the Scripture and sometimes fasting if appropriate.
- As in the example of Gideon, it is even good to ask God to confirm a revelation with signs. (Judges 6:16-27) The Lord longs to confirm His Word, so that we might know His faithfulness and see His plans and purposes unfold.
- *Directional Prophecy* is a type of revelatory prophecy where specific direction is given that sets someone's life on a specific course. A Biblical example is where the Prophet Samuel prophesied that David would be Samson's successor as King of Israel.

- Some examples of directional prophecy include prophesying that someone will: have a specific ministry or vocation; move to a specific city or geographical area; marry a specific person; make a large financial purchase or decision; have a child (or children)... the list goes on...
- Directional prophecy should be received with great caution, prayer and testing.
- Whenever we receive a directional prophecy, we should always seek counsel from the Lord. We should also seek the counsel of people we trust, respect and know have godly wisdom.

2. Common Growing Pains and Pitfalls

a) Lacking Boldness and Assurance

- It is easy to lack confidence when we first begin to walk in the things of the Spirit. I do not consider this a sin or lack of faith, but rather a common part of the growing progress for most.
- Nevertheless, the Lord desires that we walk in the Spirit with boldness, proclaiming the Word of God. We minister to one another within our meetings for two reasons: First, we have the opportunity to bless and encourage one another. Second, it gives us an opportunity to grow in the gifts of the Spirit so that we might use them in our classrooms, workplace or wherever else the Lord has placed us to 'do ministry'. (1 Cor 14:26&31)
- Something most of us will also struggle with is assurance that we are hearing from God. The best way to overcome this is simply to step out and risk saying something that might seem ridiculous to us. I have found some very 'off the wall'

statements minister to people in wonderful ways. We must simply remember that our ministry is to share the love of Christ.

- In light of this, when I pray for people, I usually don't ask the Lord for a prophetic word, but I ask, "Jesus, how do You want to show them your love?" It says in 1 Corinthians 12:11 that "One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." The Holy Spirit knows best how to minister to us in such a way that all are encouraged and that Christ is glorified among us.

b) Fear of Man

- Another pitfall is the fear of man. This can be crippling to us because when we give into the fear of man we cannot minister the love of Christ.
- There are usually two results when we succumb to the fear of man. One result is that we focus too much on the way people respond when we give them a prophetic word. We need not be discouraged by someone's response. If you minister to someone in love and truth, it is not your job to make sure they receive what you say. You are only responsible regarding your love and obedience to Jesus.
- The second trap people fall into is to use their gift to gain the approval of man. This is pride and we must be quick to repent if we fall into this snare of the enemy.
- 1 Corinthians 13:2 tells us that even if our gifts are great but we do not have love, we are nothing. Without humility and love all of our gifts and talents mean nothing in light of eternity.

c) Hiding Behind the Gifting

- Another common pitfall is to 'hide behind the gifting'. This happens to people when they've grown in confidence in one gift, such as prophecy, but still lack significant amount of confidence in other areas.
- For example, if someone comes to us wanting prayer for healing, and we neglect their desires to give them a prophetic word, this is hiding behind the gifting.
- It is for this reason that we need to always cultivate a willingness to step out of our comfort zones to bless and encourage others.

3. Let Love Be Our One Motive

a) Developing Patience

- The gifts aren't as important as the character that they are intended to cultivate in us. If the gifts are not effective in developing in us the love, peace, unity and patience of Christ, we must seriously re-evaluate the manner in which we pursue them.
- In the prophetic, simply because of the often foretelling nature of the gift, we must cultivate patience. Especially in the instance of revelatory prophecy, there is often a watching and waiting time period. May we be guided into the peace and patience of Christ!
- It is often that we are tested shortly after receiving a prophetic word. This is one way that the Lord produces faith in us. Like Abraham, will we believe God's promises and allow it to produce expectancy and hope in our lives? (Hebrews 11:1-2)

b) What if God Reveals Someone's Sin?

- Sometimes the Lord will reveal areas of sin in someone's life when He gives us revelation.
- From experience, I find that the Lord usually only gives this type of revelation to people who have the character to steward it.
- There have been instances where I have seen people calling out sin in people on a regular basis, claiming that it is revelation, but I often find that this is often pride, immaturity and divisiveness and not at all revelation.
- If God does reveal an individual's sin to you, it is usually good to spend time fasting and praying for them before sharing with them. If we are not willing to pay the price for people on a physical and spiritual level, we are not mature enough to give them a spiritual rebuke.
- Another good approach to take looks like this: Let's say you're praying for someone and God gives you the word 'homosexual'. Rather than sharing that word directly or asking them if they're homosexual, I would consider praying for them a prayer such as, “God, I pray that You would pour out Your grace and minister Your purity and righteousness in their life.”
- Having spiritual revelation of someone's sin is much different from catching him or her in the act. Usually if you have a revelation of this nature, God is inviting you to contend for them in prayer.

c) The Most Excellent Way

- In all things, we must earnestly pursue love. Love is what the

Lord is truly ministering to us.

- God longs that all ministry points us toward Him. It is His love, His faithfulness, His glory and grace that we're pursuing.
- God is inviting us into a glorious fellowship with Him and one another. The gifts are but a means of cultivating a unity in the Spirit that is much greater than the gifts themselves. *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or imagine... to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations... amen” Ephesians 3:20-21*