

Guidelines for the Prophetic Ministry

I. THE GLOBAL OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY IN THE END TIMES

¹⁷ In the last days...I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ I will pour out My Spirit...²⁰ Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. (Acts 2:17-20)

A. **All flesh**: All are called to prophesy and function in the gifts of the Spirit. All men (not just prophets), women (not just men), children (not just adults), and all nations (not just Israel).

⁵ I wish you all spoke with tongues...even more that you prophesied...³¹ You can all prophesy. (1 Cor. 14:5, 31)

⁷ The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. (1 Cor. 12:7)

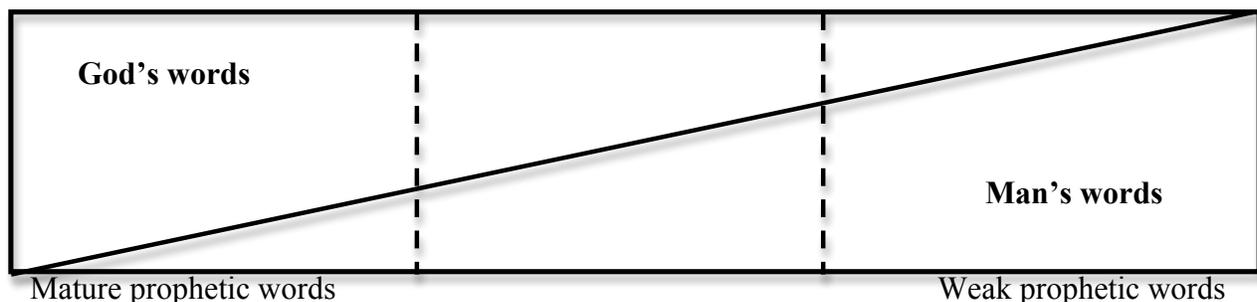
B. **Before**: The day of the Lord refers to Jesus' second coming. The day of Pentecost was only a down payment of a far greater fulfillment of this prophecy in the end times before Jesus' return.

II. WHAT IS PROPHECY?

A. Prophecy is the testimony of Jesus and is the revelation of what is on His heart for His people.

¹⁰ For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev. 19:10)

B. Most prophecy is "human words reporting something that God brings to mind" (Wayne Grudem). The Spirit conveys to our mind thoughts we communicate in contemporary language. They are a mixture of God's words and man's words that combine divine inspiration and with the human process. Some prophetic words may be 10% God's words and 90% man's word while others have a greater revelatory content. Most prophecy has a strong mixture of man's ideas.



C. The first rule of prophetic ministry is that it must always honor the written word of God.

D. The prophetic spirit can be manifested in dramatic ways or in very subtle ways. The dramatic ways include experiencing an open vision, angelic encounter, the audible voice of the Lord or a prophetic dream. Prophecy is released in us most often by faint impressions given by the Spirit.

III. THREE LEVELS OF PROPHETIC MINISTRY

- A. **Office of the prophet:** They have a track record in regularly prophesying with accuracy about the future. They regularly receive open visions, angelic visitations, God’s audible voice, and detailed information such as names, dates, and future events, and are used in the power gifts (healing and miracles). They give correction or direction to the body (by going through the leadership team). All believers are called to prophesy (1 Cor. 14:39), however not all are prophets (1 Cor. 12:29).
- B. **Prophetic ministry:** They receive helpful prophetic words on a regular basis and occasionally receive higher levels of revelation as a prophet (open visions, angelic visitations, God’s audible voice, and detailed information such as names, dates, and future events) with the power gifts.
- C. **Simple prophecy:** This is for edification, exhortation, and comfort of people by giving them the prophetic impressions that they have received. Usually these words are given in a small group setting or in a ministry line instead of on the microphone in a public meeting.

³ **He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. (1 Cor. 14:3)**

1. **Edification:** Building up people by giving confirmation that brings them hope or focus. A common way to do this is by giving them a Scripture that has been important to them or by confirming their ministry calling (evangelist, school teacher, marketplace, etc.).
2. **Exhortation:** calling people to persevere in their ministry calling or promises, etc.
3. **Comfort:** speaks of giving God’s perspective in a time of difficulty or uncertainty

IV. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

- A. **Few or many:** In the OT there were only a few prophets for Israel and thus, the whole world. With the outpouring of the Spirit, the gift of prophecy was widely dispersed. In the OT there is “prophetic concentration” of a few prophets. In the NT there is “prophetic distribution” of many.
- B. **100% accuracy:** The OT ground rules for prophets was 100% accuracy and was required upon the penalty of death (Deut. 18:20). The NT requires the prophets to judge each other’s words (1 Cor. 14:29, 1 Thes. 5:19-21). With a number of prophets in each geographic location, the same accuracy is not demanded in the NT with the safeguard of prophets judging one another’s words.
- ²⁹ **Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (1 Cor. 14:29)**
- C. **Prophesying by faith:** Instead of prophesying only by direct revelation, we prophesy according to the measure of our faith. Thus, we might mix up God’s ideas with our words and thoughts.
- ⁶ **Let us prophesy in proportion to our faith... (Rom. 12:6)**
- D. **National leaders:** OT prophets prophesied regularly to kings. Whereas, most NT prophets spoke to believers rather than to the national leaders of their day.

V. ADMINISTRATING PROPHECY

- A. There are 3 components of administrating prophecy: revelation, interpretation, and application. The Lord often uses a team of prophetic people to administrate prophetic revelation.
- B. **Revelation**: refers to receiving the prophetic **information** (the impression, dream, vision, etc.)
⁹ *For we know in part and we prophesy in part. (1 Cor. 13:9)*
- C. **Interpretation**: This refers to **understanding** the revelatory information. Even with accurate revelation, it is easy to get a wrong interpretation of it. There are often symbolic elements to visions and dreams, etc. Often we do not understand the revelation until the circumstances unfold that bring its fulfillment. Some give in to the temptation to manufacture the interpretation before it is clear. Ironically, some who are best at receiving a revelation seem worst at interpreting it.
⁶ *He (God) said, "Hear My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream." ⁷ Not so with My servant Moses... ⁸ I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings..." (Num. 12:6-8)*
- D. **Application**: This refers to the **wisdom** to rightly apply the information that is interpreted. I recommend asking the following questions: Who is supposed to share the prophetic word? Who is supposed to hear it, the leaders, some individuals, the intercessors or the whole church? How much of it is to be shared, 30% or 100%? When should it be shared? Why? What is the desired impact? The main question is, "What will bring about the maximum amount of edification?"

VI. FUNCTIONING IN THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- A. **Principle**: The demonstration of the Spirit's power often follows the ***declaration of God's word*** from the lips of a believer. The Spirit moves as we ***speak words*** that agree with God's will.
- B. Prophetic information is given most often in subtle ways in receiving **faint impressions** such as:
1) **Mental pictures**: reoccurring impressions or pictures in our minds that indicate how the Lord will touch others by imparting His grace or healing to them
2) **Emotional stirrings**: feeling various emotions like joy, sadness, or a burden for a person or a ministry as an indicator that the Lord will touch others related to that emotion or burden
3) **Sympathetic pains**: feeling pain in a specific part of our bodies as an indicator that the Lord desires to heal the disease or pain that others are feeling in that particular part of their body
4) **Physical sensations**: experiencing the Spirit's presence (heat, energy, fire, wind, etc.) in a specific area of our bodies or through our five senses (e.g. smell or taste) as an indicator that the Lord desires to touch others in a way related to the physical sensation that we received.
- C. We must be intentional about receiving the Spirit's prophetic leading when we gather in large or small groups or in social gatherings. We do this simply by asking the Spirit, "***What are You doing or saying?***" He will often answer by giving us faint prophetic impressions.
¹⁹ *The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do... (Jn. 5:19)*

- D. We often do not have prophetic impressions simply because we do not ask for them (Jas. 4:2). Ask the question: “Spirit, what are You saying or doing?” The simple act of asking makes us receptive and attentive to what He is doing and postures us to receive the Spirit’s impressions.
² *Yet you do not have because you do not ask. (Jas 4:2)*
- E. I compare functioning in the prophetic to putting up the sail in a boat on a lake on a calm day. When it seems there is no breeze, the sail catches even the most gentle breeze that barely moves the boat. Yet, it moves! A similar dynamic occurs when we ask Jesus what He is doing. Put your sail up by saying, “Holy Spirit, what do You want to do or say through me today?”
- F. The gifts often begin as the still small voice of God or as a subtle impression of the Spirit to our spirit. It can be so subtle that many do not value it. Thus, they ignore it as they wait for an open vision. As they understand and value God’s still small voice to them, they will be attentive to it.
¹¹ *Behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. (1 Kgs. 19:11-12)*
- G. First, we function in the gifts by giving expression to the impressions that the Spirit gives us. These impressions are like a key that unlocks a door. It requires faith to speak them.
- H. Second, we dial down emotionally or quiet our soul to “listen” or discern the impressions of the Spirit when we are praying for people. This is opposite to stirring our soul up with fervor when ministering to people. Don’t “preach your prayers” over those that you minister to.
- I. Third, we must value the power of God even when it is released in small measures. We must not despise the smaller measures. It is still God’s power that works when even 10% of someone’s headache is healed. It is not the work of the devil or human ability. We honor it as such and do not despise it.
- J. We are grateful for every good thing from God’s hand.
- K. In our pride, we can despise the smallness of God’s power in ministry. Some are only interested in God’s power when it is manifest in a dramatic measure. They want to walk in the prophetic on their terms. It takes humility to walk with God on His terms of being faithful and grateful in the days of smallness.
- L. Fourth, do not be preoccupied with the fear of missing it. We should be more concerned with never functioning in the gifts! The more important question is not “What if I miss it?” but rather “What if I miss a chance to release God’s power to someone in need?”

- M. Fifth, be ***supernaturally natural*** without drawing undue attention to the fact that we are prophesying. We encourage people to prophesy in a way that is dialed down emotionally and without an overemphasis on saying, “thus says the Lord” or the “Lord told me” and to use a humble style that is less melodramatic. It's better to be less dramatic in our prophesying and more helpful to the people. We can say, “I want to pray for you; I believe God wants to touch you.” If we are wrong we will not hurt anyone if we use softer language.
- N. Why do believers neglect to prophesy? It takes love and spiritual vigor to prophesy often. Why? It requires ***attentiveness*** to the Spirit to receive small impressions from Him. It also requires ***energy*** and that we take ***risks*** to act on the impressions. It is easier to draw back from all this. There is an intensity involved in being continually available to the Spirit. To be attentive implies refusing the indulgence of anxiety and self-pity that cause so much emotional traffic.

VII. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR PROPHETIC MINISTRY

- A. People must have an attitude of “open expectancy” related to the fulfillment of a prophecy. The exact way that God brings about a word in our lives is often very different than how we envision. We encourage people to put revelations “on the shelf” until you have a clear interpretation.
- B. We ask all to write their prophecies down to give to the leadership team
- C. Have the integrity and humility to clean up any messes that are caused by wrong prophecies.
- D. Create a safe atmosphere so people can grow in their confidence (small group settings). One way is to communicate on paper (so that new comers into your community are informed) the guidelines that your leadership has in giving and receiving prophecy.
- E. Give mercy to those with a teachable spirit. Allow for the risk and accept the inevitability of being humbled as a congregation as you grow in the prophetic. The oxen that bring strength to the farm also bring a mess to the stable. Some prefer to have clean stables even if it means losing the strength that the prophetic ministry brings.
- ⁴ Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox. (Proverbs 14:4)*
- F. Paul taught that prophets could control their spirit instead of claiming that they “could not help” what they did. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).
- ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak...³⁰ If anything is revealed to another...let the first keep silent...³² The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.³³ God is not the author of confusion but of peace...⁴⁰ Let all things be done decently and in order. (1 Cor. 14:29-33, 40)*

VIII. MISUSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Simple prophecy is to enrich people's spiritual life, not to give them direction in the domestic areas of their lives including finance or romance (who to marry), having babies, changing jobs, moving, buying or selling (house, car, etc.), traveling (which ministry trips to go on), joining a specific ministry or going to a specific college. We can give godly counsel in domestic areas without presenting it as a prophecy.
- B. I have seen many make harmful decisions because they obeyed a directive prophecy. God wants people to use wisdom in their personal walk with Him and to be responsible for the decisions they make and not give that responsibility to those prophesying to them. Many are inexperienced with prophecy and thus, they are quick to obey its directives.
- C. In the Scripture, dreams are used by God to give direction on occasion. However, dreams are not to be a substitute of gaining and applying wisdom in the domestic areas of our life. Usually dreams are given to us to be a confirmation of a decision that we have already have sensed. We should not regularly rely on them as the initial and primary source of direction.
- ¹⁷ Your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. (Acts 2:17)*
- D. There is over-reliance on dreams for direction in domestic issues in our life. In my experience, the vast majority of "prophetic dreams" are not helpful when evaluated 10 years later. God never intended to direct people *mostly* by dreams. Some people rely on dreams for decisions because it absolves them from the responsibility when the decision turns out as a wrong one.
- ³ For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool's voice is known by his many words.
⁷ For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is vanity. But fear God. (Ecc. 5:3, 7)*
- E. We must not prophesy in a way that flatters people (to gain an advantage from them), corrects or embarrasses them. A common example of this is in labeling someone as having a Jezebel spirit.
- F. We prophesy in the light with witnesses (recording it when possible). Beware of people who want to go somewhere private to prophesy to you and ask you to keep it private. The primary reason for doing this is to gain one's confidence to get their money or influence, or to establish a soul tie with them that often ends up with sexual overtones.
- G. Do not speak of promotion or change in a ministry organization without going through the proper protocols or those warning you about how specific people will mistreat you
- H. Do not omit the conditions or qualifiers when giving promises. Prophecies are often conditional. They are invitations not guarantees. They require confirmation, prayer, obedience and hard work.
- I. Most negative prophecy gives insight into Satan's intentions. We assure them that repentance, faith, and obedience can stop Satan's desire for destruction in someone's life.

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