**Moving in the Prophetic**

God promised that in the last days there would be an out pouring of the Holy Spirit that sons and daughters would prophesy – there will be a dramatic increase in prophecy, dreams and visions in the last days. Acts 2:17-18

There will always be counterfeit prophetic ministry but that does not mean we should avoid prophecy anymore than we avoid preaching just because there are false teachers – (Matthew 23:34, 24:11)

Our ministry must be carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit – not only with words, but with a demonstration of power (1 Corinthians 2:4-5 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5)

The prophetic ministry is listed as one of the primary ministries given to the local church (Ephesians 4:12) they are given as tools to prepare for effective functioning in pastoral, teaching, evangelistic or apostolic ministry. They are not toys given for our entertainment but tools to do God’s work.

Paul encouraged believers to specifically desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)

**Prophecy in the Bible**

Abraham was referred to as a prophet (Genesis 20:7)

Aaron also (Exodus 4:16, 7:1) - the Hebrew word is *Nabi*.

**Definition:** A prophet is one who speaks for another, or one who lends his voice to another (Deuteronomy 18:8; Hebrews 1:1-2, John 12:19). The emphasis is not on foretelling the future. (1 Peter 4:11)

Biblical prophets called God's people to return to Him and walk in his ways:

Moses: Deuteronomy 30:2

Samuel: 1 Samuel 7:3

Isaiah: Isaiah 44:22

Jeremiah: Jeremiah 4:1

Ezekiel: Ezekiel 14:6

Hosea: Hosea 6:1

Joel: Joel 2:12

Amos: Amos 5:4

Zechariah: Zechariah 1:3

Malachi: Malachi 3:7

Others: 2 Kings 17:13

**Requirements to Move in the Prophetic**

**1. Pure motives** – we must test our motives (Proverbs 4:23, 2 Corinthians 13:5) and ensure that we are motivated by love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 Timothy 1:5)

**2. Walking close to God** – God reveals insights to prophets (Amos 3:7).

**3. Fearing God** – we must respect God and his Word (Psalm 25:14).

**4. Humility** – to accept that we may make mistakes in how we interpret what God reveals to us. Agabus in the New Testament received a prophecy from God but got some details of interpretation wrong - it was the Gentiles and not the Jews who bound Paul (Acts 21:11, 27-36).

**5. Connection to the body** – the prophet functions within the body of Christ and not in isolation. Paul said that “we (plural) have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

It is God’s desire that all will prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:31) so he has given prophets to the church to equip God’s people to move in the prophetic.

Prophecy must operate in the context of both mercy and judgment (James 2:13).

Prophets are the eyes of the church (Isaiah 29:10). They help the church see in the darkness. They see what is to come. They see even in a pile of dry bones a great army (Ezekiel 37).

**Different Levels of Interpretation:**

**1. Impressions** – these are general revelations that we put into our own words as we exhort people.

**2. Heart Visions** – these come in two forms: gentle visions that we see with our heart or “open” visions which you see like movies. Most of these can be interpreted by understanding biblical symbolism.

**3. Open Visions** – these are vivid and distinct visions where we cannot miss what the Lord is saying. For example, Cornelius’ vision (Acts 10:3). These are normally less frequent and concern matters of great importance.

**4. Dreams** – these can have different levels of clarity and revelation. While we have many dreams each night, we will sometimes feel that a specific dream contains a message from the Lord.

**5. Trances** – this is like having a dream while you are still awake (Acts 10:10, John on the Isle of Patmos, Ezekiel’ experiences when he was caught up and taken to Jerusalem)

**6. Directive Revelation** – like Paul’s vision of the sheet filled with animals (Acts 10). These can be given to illustrate a doctrine or correct a wrong doctrine but not to establish a doctrine as the Scriptures alone are given for that.

**7. The Lord’s Audible Voice** – this does happen, although most people who claim to have heard Jesus speak have probably heard him in the spirit and not audibly. Those who have heard Jesus’ voice testify to being filled with awe and terror (Psalms 29:5).

**8. Angelic Visitations** – there are ministering spirits who have been sent to serve the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14). We must be sure that we do not worship them (Revelation 22:8-9).

**9. Divine Visitation** – there are a number of examples in scripture where the Lord himself visited a person (Acts 23:11). In a visitation Jesus is visibly present.

**Stumbling Blocks to interpreting Dreams and Visions**

**1. Misunderstanding spiritual symbolism** – We must not think that a symbol always has the same meaning. Ie. a serpent in the Bible referred to Satan and the Messiah (Numbers 21:6-9).

**2. Viewing revelation only from our present, personal perspective** – we must be wary of fitting an interpretation to our own situation. We can often filter things through what we value but that may not be God’s perspective.

**3. Seeing through fear rather than faith** – God is not sitting in heaven worrying about how things will work out: he sees the end and he is in total control. We must focus on the King and not the enemy. We must not become faultfinders (Jude 16) and avoid sowing fear and division.

**4. Majoring on minors** – we must make sure that we are not distracted from God’s purposes with side issues.

**5. Prejudices** – we must avoid using prophecy to express prejudice against any race, sex, age group, denomination or movement.

**6. Pet doctrines** – we must not use prophesy to establish doctrines.

**7. Rejection** – prophets are often rejected and must focus on God’s affection and acceptance.

**8. Bitterness** – we must watch out for unhealed wounds (Leviticus 21:20) which can make us over sensitive and lead to bitterness.

**9. Rebellion** – this is often seen when prophets will not submit to men but only to God.

**10. Unsanctified mercy** – this involves having mercy for the things that God is judging - we can often let human compassion cloud our discernment – Jesus spoke directly and even harshly to Peter (Matthew 16:23).

**11. The “Party Spirit”** – this is when we feel that what we share must fit into the party line. All true authority for ministry comes from the Lord and not an organisation. It is important to be in submission to a local church and there is a place for letters of recommendation to be carried (2 Corinthians 3:1) but we are representing the Lord and may speak against the organisation at times.

**12. Failing to submit to the body** – this is the opposite side of the party spirit where we refuse to submit to the body of Christ. We must learn to work together in the body and trust each other’s special gifts.

**13. Using natural eyes instead of the “eyes of the heart”** – prophecy comes from the Spirit so we must not be overly influenced by what we know in the natural. What we see on the outside of a person is not always what is taking place on the inside. Even Samuel the prophet allowed the outward appearance to fool him (1 Samuel 16:7).

**Is Prophesy just about confirmation?**

Some people say that God will never say something to us through a prophecy that he has not already said to us – ie. they feel that prophecy should only be used as a confirmation. But in the Bible many prophecies were given because people were going in the wrong way and they needed correction, not confirmation. While God does give prophesies as confirmation of what he has already told us, this should not be made into a principle. Prophecy does not always confirm what is in our heart: example, Christ’s prophecy that Peter would deny him three times. It was not in Peter’s heart, he argued and declared that he would die first - yet it came to pass.

**We must avoid prophetic addiction!**

Paul received a specific prophetic commission to go on his first missionary journey, but for the second he just felt that he needed to go and check on the churches he had established. When we are young we need to be led by the hand, but when we grow up we can be sent by God. We must be open to prophetic direction but not dependant on it.

**The connection between prophecy and spiritual warfare**

Paul told Timothy that the prophecies he was given were to be used in defeating the enemy (1 Timothy 1:18).

**Preparing to Prophesy**

**1. Prayer** – we must listen before we start to speak.

**2. Meditation** – reflecting on God’s Word.

**3. Waiting on God** – spend time in a place of quietness and stillness.

**4. Praying in tongues** – those with the gift of tongues will find that praying in spirit is helpful.

**5. Desire to prophesy** – make it your desire to move in the area of prophesy.

**6. Expectation** – come expectantly before God believe that he will use you to speak prophetically.

**7. Do a self check** – how is my relationship with God and my prayer life? How is my lifestyle?

**Sharing a Prophesy**

1. Consider the person you are ministering to – we must not blurt out everything God shares with us.

2. Avoid negativity and judgmentalism – watch out for being more prone to sharing judgment that encouragement.

3. Make yourself available to share advice and counsel with the person.

4. Avoid looking for natural clues as to what God is saying to the person.

5. Recording prophecy is a good idea.

**Three Parts to a Prophecy**

1. The word of knowledge that opens up a situation.

2. The word of prophecy that can speak to it.

3. The word of wisdom that says what one can do about it.

**Characteristics of Prophecy**

**1. Prophecy is incomplete** – we prophecy in part (1 Corinthians 13:9).

**2. Prophecy does not mean God condones sin** – a prophecy does not mean God overlooks sin in our life.

**3. Prophecy is ongoing and developmental** – prophecies build from one word to another. Example Abraham: he received the first word at age 75 (Genesis 12:1-5), the second word (Genesis 12:7); the third word brought emphasis and instruction (Genesis 13:14-17), then at 99 years he received a new word: ‘be blameless’ (Genesis 17:2-8). The final word was a test to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:16-18).

**4. Prophecy is provisional and dependant on obedience** – if our response is poor, if we are full of unbelief or have a lifestyle that grieves the Holy Spirit we can not expect the prophecy to be fulfilled.

**Tests for Prophecy**

**1. Does it edify, exhort and comfort?** The true purpose of prophecy is to build up, admonish and stir up, encourage and release from pain and discomfort and to enable people to know and understand the heartbeat of their God for themselves. (1 Corinthians 14:3)

**2. What is the source of the prophecy?** We must test the spirit because behind every prophecy there are three possible sources: the Spirit of God, the spirit of man or an evil spirit (1 John 4:1-3). We need to weigh the spirit behind the words, and then look at the accuracy. In Acts 16:16-18 the servant girl was 100% correct – even her words were religious and reverential – but she was not a true prophet.

**3. Does the prophecy conform to Scripture?** We must build our lives on Scripture and not prophecy. Prophecy must not be used to establish a new doctrine or practices. (Isaiah 8:20).

**4. Does the prophecy glorify the Lord Jesus?** The prime ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring glory to Jesus (John 16:14, 1 Corinthians 12:3).

**5. Does it leave us with a sense of peace** – the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts producing peace should confirm the prophecy (Colossians 3:15).

**6. Is it manipulative or controlling?** Prophecy, unfortunately, can be used for the purpose of making people do what we want; to get them on our side in a situation; for dishonest gain or ulterior motive.

**7. How do we handle negative prophecy?** Is there an inner witness in your spirit to something that is said or done? This can be confirmed by Scripture and by agreement with people in maturity. Where there is no inner witness to prophecy, we must exercise our hearts more cautiously. We should try and discover if the source of the word is an evil spirit or whether the word is originating out of this person’s human spirit. A prophecy must be good news even if the message is ‘repent’ (Revelation 2:2).