

Introducing the Gift of Prophecy

I heard this story shared by a prophetic person, Emma Starks, who lives in Scotland. She said she was at the checkout and the Spirit said, *“Give a prophetic word to the cashier.”*

And so she went to the cashier and told her, *“Hi my name is Emma, and I am a prophet— I hear from God.”* And the cashier asked, *“What would God say about me?”*

Emma told her, *“You are going to be a really good mom.”* (She was pregnant and had not told anyone — and even had her abortion booked for Thursday.)

She sobbed, *“God if you are ever real, can you tell me what to do about this pregnancy!?”* She told Emma, *“If God says I am going to be a really good mom, I will cancel the abortion.”* And she did.

This is one of many reasons we want to pursue the gift of prophecy.

“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy...Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.” (1 Corinthians 14:1)

The motivation is love.

- It's not to make a name for ourselves.
- We are not trying to be prophetic for the sake of trying to be prophetic.
- We are longing to be *prophetic* for the sake of love.

Of all the gifts, why should we especially desire to prophesy?

- While the other gifts may reveal *God's power*, the gift of prophecy reveals *God's heart*. The other gifts release God's power into a situation. The gift of prophesy reveals God's heart for the person to the person.

What is prophecy?

- *"The prophetic word tears down down the Lord has not authored while it releases the power to plant and to build the purposes of God. Something about a genuine prophetic word kindles things in the hearts of God's servants and releases power to set those things in motion. It tears down false doctrines and obstacles raised up against the purposes of God, and it restores His people to the foundation in Him necessary for the unfolding of His plan and intentions."* — Loren Sandford (Taken from Jeremiah 1:10)

- Prophecy is speaking a message inspired by the Holy Spirit— contrary to popular opinion— it does not have to be predictive in nature, but may be. There is a case to be made that all believers can prophesy from (Acts 2:16-18)(1 Corinthians 14:31)(Revelation 2:29). This doesn't mean that we are all in the office of the prophet or have the gift of prophecy, but the Spirit can enable all of us to prophesy.

- **Contrary to teaching:** *“Prophecy is distinct from teaching in that teaching usually involves a prepared and organized presentation, but prophecy is a spontaneous message directly inspired by the Holy Spirit. Because it is from God, prophecy has the power actually to bring about that which it proclaims — whether conviction or counsel, or consolation or comfort. It releases God’s revelation into the present context.” — Dr. Randy Clark*

- **There are three effects of a prophetic word:**
 - 1. **Edification:** This means *strengthening*. You can be a stronger believer and we can be a stronger church— when we are open to the true prophetic. The prophetic can turn a flimsy shack into a strong edifice. Just like *prayers* that were prayed can add support to our lives, prophecies spoken over our lives can add support as well.

- The prophetic word is ammunition in spiritual warfare: *“This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare...” (1 Timothy 1:18)*
- **2. Encouragement:** The prophetic word will detonate discouragement, intimidation, passivity. It will reaffirm what God has already spoken to us. It will give us the *courage* we need to step out in faith and obedience.
- **3. Comfort:** Life can be brutal. We can be paralyzed by grief, regret, and wounding. We can find ourselves in a battle with anxious thoughts. The stressors of life can be persistently working to break down our peace. If you have ever found yourself in a delicate emotional and spiritual state — the prophetic can bring bring the comfort that you desperately need. We are to live in the rest that Jesus provides for the soul. The prophetic pulls us back to that rest.

Going back to the story I shared about the cashier:

Edification: Through the prophetic word, she was strengthened to make the right decision.

Encouragement: Instead of acting out of her insecurities, she was able to fulfill God's will for her life.

Comfort: She received the comfort she needed because she was experiencing inner turmoil.

We are all wired differently. Yet, the Lord knows us better than we know ourselves. Therefore, He knows exactly how to EDIFY, how to ENCOURAGE, and how to COMFORT!

The Holy Spirit can do a *far better job* than you can – therefore, I welcome the prophetic! I want to grow in the prophetic.

- And when it happens, I would be a fool to take the credit. But, I will tell of HIS mighty works!

Prophetic words can be affirming.

1. When we receive this kind of word we feel known by God. There may be details shared that are very personal. The secrets of our hearts may be touched upon.
2. We are often touched by how much the Lord takes interest in us and cares for us.
3. The good things about a *person* may be highlighted (their gifts, their motivations, their destiny).
4. Ways they have honored God may be stated (Luke 8:17).

Prophetic words can be corrective.

1. These words are rarely *public* unless there were already many *private* warnings extended.
2. The purpose is not to punish or to shame, but to see the person restored.
3. The heart behind a corrective word must be love.
 - “If the person delivering the corrective word has any animosity, bitterness, or anger in their heart toward the person receiving... if..they have been wounded by the receiver, they are not the one to give that word.” — Cindy Jacobs
4. The best result will be *conviction* and *repentance*.

Keys to Growing in the Prophetic:

1. Pursue personal sanctification.

1. We need *inner healing* so we don't prophesy out of our *wounds*.
2. We need to deal with our *idolatry* (even religious idolatry) so we don't confuse the voice of the Spirit with the voice of our idols.
3. We may need *deliverance*, so the *demonic* won't taint our prophetic words.

4. We need to *fill our hearts with the Scriptures*, because our prophetic words will not *contradict* Scripture, but will *thrust* Scripture into hearts and situations— advancing the Kingdom of God. We wield the sword of the Spirit when we release prophetic words!

2. Don't Need To Impress Anyone

1. You don't need to make it sound more amazing than it is. We don't need extra elaborations or exaggerations.
2. We can share what we are getting, and let the receiver press into the Lord for more.
3. Be faithful with what we have and we will be entrusted with more.
4. On the contrary, you don't need to make it sound less amazing. You don't need to downplay a word and water it down either.
5. As we grow in the Lord, the Lord may give us a Word but as us not to release it until the proper time. If you don't sense a green light from the Holy Spirit, don't feel obligated to share the Word. You can sit on it and pray for the individual.

3. Serve under leadership.

1. Leadership is for our good (Hebrews 13:17): *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”*
2. These leaders have the huge responsibility to watch over the sheep — and the sheep are responsible to follow the leader as long as he or she is seeking to follow the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:1).
3. If there isn't anointed and appointed leadership, that space can be filled by self-appointed leadership (3 John 1:9): *“I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, refuses to have anything to do with us.”*
4. Those who are under self-appointed leaders, tend to not excel as much— spiritually and in their callings.
5. God gives us leaders who can equip us for the work of the ministry— including the *prophetic* (Ephesians 4:11-12).
6. We are not to come under *controlling* and *manipulative* leadership.

- *“I am greatly concerned about some churches that call themselves ‘prophetic churches’ but exercise so much control over their members’ lives that they are highly dysfunctional, controlling, and border on being a cult (or maybe already one). You absolutely have the space to*

exercise discretion, hold things up to the light of the Scriptures, and ask questions. Just be sure whatever you do is covered in love and respect for your leaders.” — Cindy Jacobs

4. Although we should not be under abusive leadership, we may be asked by the Lord to serve under leaders we wouldn't have picked.

- God has a way of choosing the “*foolish things of this world*” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

- “*Submission to a delegated authority is not always easy because the authority figure placed over you may not be a person you would have selected. In learning to submit to delegated authority, personal pride issues may need to be addressed, especially when it comes to leadership and promotion within the church. God promotes on the basis of different from the world, not necessarily according to physical ages or years in the Kingdom. Many times, learning to submit to authority figures you would not have chosen is a test for you.” — Cindy Jacobs.*

7. There are dangers in being a Lone Ranger.

- Being separated from fellowship of the church was how Paul explained people being handed over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh (see 1 Corinthians 5:5).
- *“Even if you feel that ‘no one understands my gifting,’ you need to pray and search until you find the local church you need... Satan loves to pick off the sheep who strike out on their own, away from the protection of a shepherd, and it is hard to grow without the accountability that comes from being in a church.” — Cindy Jacobs*
- It is quite common for prophetically gifted people to experience rejection from leadership. However, being offended, bitter, isolating, and contentious is not the road to promotion in our prophetic ministry.
- David recognized the authority and anointing the Lord had given King Saul, and while he would not take the abuse — he was very cautious to protect his heart against dishonor.

8. Prophetic words should be subject to evaluation.

- *“Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.” (1 Corinthians 14:29)*
- The biblical model for sharing prophetic words is that prophetic words ought to be *scrutinized*.

- *“Do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test them all; hold on to what is good...” (1 Thessalonians 5:10-11)*

4. Practice on yourself.

“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.” (Psalm 139:17-18)

1. We want to be continually open to receiving God’s affirmations and corrections for our own lives. Jesus taught us to deal with the log in our own eye before pointing out the spec in someone else’s eye (Matthew 7:3-5).
2. Projection is a very real thing— so we may be speaking over someone else— what the Lord is actually speaking to us.
 1. We can be *affirming* someone with something the Lord is affirming us with.
 2. We can be *correcting* someone with something the Lord is correcting us on.
3. By prophesying over ourselves often, we can better discern what is for us and what is for the person we are ministering to.
4. When we are praying in tongues, we can end up flowing in prophecy:
 - *“Very often praying in tongues is a springboard to go into prophecy in prayer....as I pray about the situation for awhile in*

tongues, many times I move over into prophecy — inspired utterance. Then as I pray by the inspired utterance, I can actually be praying out the plan of God...” — Kenneth E. Hagin

5. Separate soul from spirit.

1. The more we pray in tongues, the easier it is to separate the soul from the Spirit, because praying in tongues is praying in your Spirit.
 - *“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful” (1 Corinthians 14:14).*
2. The benefit of practicing to prophesy with a blindfold, keeps you from prophesying from your own flesh and soul. Rather, we want to prophesy from our *spirit*.
 1. If someone is wearing tattered clothes you can assume that they are needing a financial breakthrough. Or is someone is wearing a Rolex and fine clothing, you can assume they are a financial pillar in the church. But if you share what you are perceiving in the natural, you aren't being prophetic, just perspective. Sometimes, our natural perceptions are accurate. Other times, it may be quite contrary to what the Lord thinks and feels.

2. We can also be just reading body language, rather than reading the Spirit of God.
3. Is it OK to “practice” prophesying?
 1. I’ve been in preaching classes and we practice — we don’t treat it like it’s just practice. It was in an *environment* with other preachers in training — so even if it wasn’t on point — there weren’t souls in the balance. The focus was to develop the preacher— so that— we can better serve our world.
 2. When we practice prophesying— we don’t just treat it like practice — the Spirit is still among us. We all have a mutual understanding that we are seeking to grow in the prophetic.
 3. We develop our spiritual gifts by *servicing* them, not by *sitting on* them. Sitting on the spiritual gifts may lead them to grow dormant (2 Timothy 1:6).

The primary pitfalls of prophetic people

“Rarely are prophetic people happy people — at least until they have served long and made peace with the gifts, with the pain of the burden it brings and with God....All prophetic people are burden bearers. We deeply feel everything going on in the people around us...” — Loren Sanford

*“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.”
(Romans 12:6)*

*“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”
(Proverbs 16:18)*

1. Becoming hyper critical.

Prophetic people have a special ability to discern what is happening and therefore they are more aware of the good, bad, and ugly than the average person. They may also see lot of the potential dangers of a person or a ministry. The reason the prophetic person sees more than the average person is because they are called to intercede.

However, when prophetic people are still immature, rather than *interceding*, they are found *criticizing* and coming against a brother or sister, the leadership of a church, and/or the unity of a church.

While their *intercession* will build up a church/a person, their *criticisms* can tear up a church/a person.

2. Becoming bitter.

Prophetic people can start feeling like their *warnings* aren't being taken seriously — and they take that very personally. They may go find another set of friends or join a different church, only to see the patterns repeat. They feel *rejection* and believe they are the *victim*.

Let's remember that it's not our job to *change* the people to whose they are prophesying. It is our job to *love* the people to whom they are prophesying. (The people you are ministering to will be more open to your prophetic word, when they can feel *God's love*, rather than *your wrath*.)

As a prophetic person, your job is to share what the Lord gives you to share and when the Lord tells you to share it. If you did your part, keep your joy. We are called to be a *good and faithful* servant, not to the *overrider* of people's wills.

Don't let the *ego* get in there and get you tripping over the lack of respect or responsiveness to you and your word. What someone does with the mail is not the responsibility of the mailman.

Think of it like evangelism:

- Perhaps they need to hear the word a few times from a few different people.
- Perhaps, they will hear it now, but get it much later.

Some of our Old Testament prophets saw very little change in the people they were ministering to. But they were obedient to the Lord.

Whether they heed the word or not, our job is to continue to love them and pray for them.

3. Becoming isolated.

The prophetic person first becomes *critical* and then *embittered*. Then they isolate themselves.

“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” (Proverbs 18:1)

They probably have given up on the local church. They don't want to be under leadership. They don't want to be in fellowship with people who don't understand them. They may create their own exclusive group with people who share their gifting. How did they form that exclusive club? They were critical, became embittered, and isolated

themselves. That is not from a spirit of humility, but a spirit of pride. Also we need people with other gifting to balance us out and to team-up with for the advance of the Kingdom of God.

A mature prophetic person is still more than capable of serving under imperfect leadership and will still have the same affections and devotion to the body of Christ that Jesus Christ has.