

The Gifted: Prophecy in Practice

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This morning, we're continuing our message series entitled 'The Gifted'. Last week, we began learning about specific spiritual gifts and starting with prophecy.

We learned that prophecy is making known the future potential and purposes currently hidden by God. This week, we're going to get practical about prophecy.

First, we'll take a look at how to receive a spiritual gift from God. We know already that these are charisma – gifts given by God as He wills through His grace. They cannot be earned and are not deserved, but are very much so empowering!

As I shared last week, I am a firm believer that all spiritual gifts are available to all believers. However, that being said, there are some conditions that we find in scripture for receiving any spiritual gift.

1. What God desires to do in that situation (He alone gives spiritual gifts as He wills, not as we will)
2. What the other person is willing to receive (even Jesus could not perform miracles in His own hometown, God will not force Himself on anyone)
3. Why we want the spiritual gift (our motive and intent)
4. What we're going to use it for (glorify self or God?)
5. How we are going to use it (to build up in 1 Cor. 13 love or to tear down?)

1. ASK FOR IT

Now, practically speaking, we receive the gift of prophecy by asking God to give you a prophetic word for a person or group of people who needs strengthened, encouraged, or comforted (1 cor. 14:3). Honestly, most people fit this category at any given time, so prophecy should be a common and powerful spiritual gift for us to use.

It is recorded six times in the gospel accounts where Jesus told us that if we ask for anything in His name or to glorify Him, and did not doubt that we would receive it, that He would give it to us. How true this is when it comes to eagerly desiring the spiritual gifts!

We receive all things from God by asking for them in faith. Faith is defined in Hebrews 11 as being sure of what we hope for, but do not have, and certain of what we do not see. After all, we don't hope and ask for something that we already have received, right? We do not currently have God's revelation of their potential for that person or group of people, so we ask God to reveal it to us.

Sometimes with prophecy, we make a false assumption that if God desires for us to give a prophetic word to someone that He'll just give it to us. That's not at all what scripture teaches, however. God offers us many things, but it is a cooperation where we do our part to ask and receive and God is always faithful to do His part in giving what He wills us to have. In James 4, we find that we covet what others have and do not have it ourselves because of two primary reasons. Either because we haven't asked God for it, or we've asked God for it, but with wrong motives.

After we've noticed someone who needs strengthened, encouraged, or comforted and asked God for a prophetic word for them, we then carefully listen for it.

2. LISTEN FOR IT

In John 10, Jesus said that He is the good shepherd and we are His sheep. He also said that we, His sheep, hear His voice and will not follow the voice of a stranger. That means that not only does Jesus still speak to us today, but that we can clearly hear His voice.

God is a creative God and He speaks to us in a great variety of creative ways. Throughout scripture, we find God speaking to people face to face as with Moses, through visions such as with Daniel, through an audible voice as with Samuel, through a donkey such as with Balaam, using symbolism such as with Ezekiel, in a dream such as with Solomon, through nature such as with Jesus and His parables, and the list can go on and on.

The important thing is that we trust that we can hear from God. If you ask for a prophetic word and something suddenly comes to mind, or you get an impression about something, chances are good that this is God speaking to you. Try not to excuse this as just being your imagination or something that you are making up too quickly. You probably be surprised at first in how often you receive confirmation that you are hearing from God. Just do a quick double check of what we learned last week about testing prophecy. Yes, I believe that we should test prophecy that we are hearing not just from another person, but also what we feel we are hearing from God for another.

Imagine prophecy being like water flowing from one place to another. Although the source may be 100% pure, it can become contaminated and muddied as it flows from God to us, as it flows out from us, as it flows into another person, and also once it comes to rest within that person. This is why it needs to be tested and filtered.

3. SHARE IT

Ask their permission to share it with them.

If you are here at New Hope during a service, we have a prophetic team here in the front to run your word past. If you are at another church, follow their protocols or run it past someone in leadership there. If you are sharing it outside of a church setting, I recommend stating something to the person such as, "I realize this sounds strange, but I believe that God has something that He'd like to share with you. May I do so?". In my experiences, most people will be willing to listen to hear what you have to say.

If they decline, however, don't get discouraged. Just politely let them know that this is OK and thank them and tell them to have a blessed day.

If they permit you to share with them, share it as simply as you have received it, just make sure to do it in a way that is going to strengthen, encourage, or comfort that person and in a way that follows the 1 Corinthians 13 way of love. Also avoid the need to sound spiritual by saying phrases such as "The Lord says...". Avoid Christianese altogether and instead of declaring with absolutes, use phrases such as "I believe that God showed me that...".

Although prophecy is most usually verbally spoken, we do find some creative ways in which people throughout scripture have also shared prophetic words. Take this for example that God had Ezekiel do:

Ezekiel 4:1-8

1 "Now, son of man, take a block of clay, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. 2 Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. 3 Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the people of Israel.

This part doesn't sound too bad, getting to play with blocks.

4 "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. 5 I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel.

6 “After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. 7 Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her. 8 I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege.

Lying on one side for over a year, not so much fun... Now this type of prophetic act is not common by any means, but it is a strong example of how communicating prophetic revelation doesn't necessarily have to be with words.

Here's a New Testament example as well:

Acts 21:10-14

10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 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 Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’”

12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord's will be done.”

This is another creative way of communicating a prophetic word in a way a bit more distinctive than just by speaking the word. You can imagine how much more of an impact this word had on Paul because of how it was given. If some guy came up and took my belt from me and tied themselves up, I would not soon forget it. If someone just told me that I would be bound and given over to Gentiles, I might forget this a bit more easily.

In today's culture, there are many creative ways that we can clearly communicate a prophetic word in ways that I believe can be far more effective and powerful than just spoken words.

Receiving and using the gift of prophecy is far easier than you might think. When you find someone who needs strengthened, encouraged, or comforted, all you have to do is:

1. Ask for it
2. Listen for it
3. Share it

Now, we've learned last week about what prophecy is and some guidelines of how to properly give and receive a prophetic word. This week, we've learned about how to practically receive and use the spiritual

gift of prophecy. Now, we put it into practice! throughout the next week, intentionally be more observant of others around you wherever you go. When someone catches your attention, do these three things. Remember, if God doesn't reveal anything to you, don't get discouraged. If He reveals something to you and you ask permission to share it with them, don't get discouraged. If you receive permission to share it with someone and you completely miss it, don't get discouraged. When you first start using a spiritual gift, you will miss it and will even fail miserably. Allow God to train and mature you and keep stepping out with your full faith and trust in God!

Right now, we're in a safe and somewhat comfortable environment. Right now, we're surrounded by our family in Christ who can provide feedback and are the perfect people to practice with. Right now, if you could really use strengthened, encouraged, or comforted, please raise your hand. Don't be shy! Now, if your hand is down and you are a born again, spirit-filled believer, go over to someone with their hand up and:

1. Ask God for a prophetic word for this person (a revelation of their God planned and purposed future potential)
2. Listen for God to give you this revelation
3. Share the revelation that you received in a loving and encouraging way that will build them up

If necessary, you can form a group around a single person and take turns doing so. Have fun and praise God for what He does right here amongst us!