

## **What to do when you receive prophetic words**

By John Arnott

### ***Prophets and The Gift of Prophecy***

In the New Testament, there is both the Gift of Prophecy, that all may aspire to (1 Cor. 12), and the Office of a Prophet, that carries with it many more structures. Personal prophetic words are very scriptural, when coming from recognized leaders in the church who are released in the office of a prophet and who have a track record of accuracy and accountability. There are several examples in the New Testament. Philip received a word for the Ethiopian in Acts 8:30. Peter received a word for Cornelius in Acts 10:20. The Prophet Agabus predicted a famine in Acts 11:28 which was a word for the whole church. In Acts 21:10, Agabus warned Paul of his coming arrest. In Acts 27:22 Paul gives a prophetic warning about the shipwreck, yet the saving of all lives.

Our context here is for the person who has received a prophetic word from a 'prophetic' person for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3).

A word of prophecy can be a source of tremendous blessing and encouragement, and an event that can be pivotal for your faith, to believe God for greater and newer things. There can be, however, opportunities for misunderstandings and difficulties to come in because of several factors.

For this reason, we want to discuss these factors and outline some scriptural guidelines, safeguards, and cautions, so that you will get the greatest benefit from this wonderful ministry. The purpose of prophecy is not to sideline a person into confusion or disillusionment, but to build them up; with edification, exhortation and comfort according to 1 Cor. 14:3.

### ***Prophetic Words in the Church***

1 Cor. 12: 10 teaches that the Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different ones as He determines. The Gifts are different, just as the parts of our bodies are different, that is what makes up the body - the Church. We are taught to eagerly desire the greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:31). We are to excel in the gifts that build up the church (1 Cor. 14:12). Prophecy when given to the whole church, is to build up and encourage the Believers (1 Cor. 14:22). All of this must be done for the strengthening of the church - God's people (1 Cor. 14:26). Usually two or three prophecies in a public meeting are enough, and they should all be carefully weighed by the leadership (1 Cor. 14:29).

Verse 31 teaches that we can all prophesy in turn, so we can learn and be encouraged. There is a learning curve here; and also, the "prophets" are to be self-controlled, not "taken over" and therefore, not responsible for their words. This is why we only release those that we know and are in relationship with.

### ***Personal Prophetic Words***

The Scriptures place a primary concern on testing prophets rather than prophecies though both are commanded. We have individuals who have been released as Ministry Team, as well as other trainees who we are in the process of teaching, training, and equipping. They are easily identified by a red "Ministry Team" badge. You can be assured that those people who minister in personal words to individuals are under the authority and observation of the Pastors and

Ministry Team Captains who have responsibility for the spiritual oversight of the meetings. You may be confident, therefore of their relative maturity and of the trust which we have in them as loving, stable Christians and able ministers.

There is, however, still the need to test all prophecies by the Spirit and the Word since "we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9), i.e., no prophecy or prophet is infallible or equal in authority to the Bible. Consider these guidelines when you receive a word:

### ***Prophetic Guidelines***

**DON'T STIFLE OR DESPISE PROPHECY, BUT TEST IT.**

1 Thes. 5: 19-22. Though the prophecy may come in words or a style of delivery, which you might not choose or through a person to whom you may not relate well, consider their words as a word from God yet spoken by man. (Peter 4:11)

**DOES THE PROPHECY CONFORM TO SCRIPTURE?**

The Spirit of God will always agree with His previous revelation in the Bible.

**DOES THE PROPHECY 'RING TRUE' WITH YOUR SPIRIT?**

(John 10:2-5) Usually a word will come to confirm what God has already begun - to speak to you in various ways. It will confirm and point in you a certain direction and build your faith.

**IF THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF PREDICTION, DOES IT COME TRUE?**

If there are factual statements which can be verified, are they accurate?

**DOES THE PROPHECY BEAR GOOD FRUIT IN YOUR LIFE?**

It is a principle of Scripture that a tree is judged by its fruit (Luke 6:43-45). If the prophecy is from the Holy Spirit, it will serve to glorify Jesus.

**WAIT ON GOD FOR FURTHER CONFIRMATION AND CLARITY**

Sometimes a word requires further guidance for the interpretation and timing. Pray over it and seek guidance in the Bible and from those who are mature (the two primary means of guidance from God).

Know that the revelation about the situation does not automatically supply the power to change it. Pray for further confirmation, especially where the prophecy involves a major impact upon your life. Prophecy is a diving board with which you can dive into a pool of prayer.

If you are unsure, put it on the shelf for now. God is not mad at you. He will lovingly speak to you again and again. Beware of "do or die" prophecies.

**WHEN YOU ARE CLEAR ON THE INTERPRETATION, THEN ACT ON IT IN FAITH**

If you agree that the word is of God, pray that God will fulfill the prophecy in your life. God gives us prophecy for our "up building and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3). Have an attitude of expectancy!

### ***A Word About Immature Prophets***

Sometimes people try to use their gifting to gain recognition in the body of Christ. We as a church are much more interested in character than giftedness. Giftedness must flow out of

wholeness, maturity, and integrity. Sometimes "would be" prophets will do an end run around all the church's safeguards and give you a word in the parking lot or some other private place. Avoid this like the plague!

### ***Directional Prophecy***

Prophecies which give specific dates, times, life partners, relationships, and exhortations to do or not to do something are reserved for the most mature and experienced, and even then, all of the above criteria apply. It is in these areas of dates and exact specifics that even the most "gifted" will miss it. Their word will be accurate, but often they will miss the time frame in which they expected something to happen.

### ***About Correction***

Bringing correction is something that is reserved for the pastors, and definitely not for those beginning in prophecy or intercession. The church is called to work together as a body, so those in leadership have the responsibility of keeping it all healthy. Beware of corrective, judgmental or condemning prophecy, as it would generally not be the Lord. Run it by one of the pastors - if you have any questions or doubts. Remember, you are the one directly responsible to the Lord, to hear from Him and to live your life in the light of what He is personally saying to you.

### ***Scripture for you to Consider 1 Cor. 14:1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.***

**1 Cor. 12:1** (NIV) Now about spiritual gifts, brother, I do not want you to be ignorant.

**1 Cor. 12:10** to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy.

**1 Cor. 12:28** And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

**1 Cor. 12:29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

**1 Cor. 13:2** If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

**1 Cor. 13:3** And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

**1 Cor. 14:1** Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

**1 Cor. 14:3** But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

**1 Cor. 14:4** He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

**1 Cor. 14:5** I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be for edified.

**1 Thes. 5:19** Do not put out the Spirit's fire.

**1 Thes. 5:20** Do not treat prophecies with contempt.

**1 Thes. 5:21** Test everything. Hold on to the good.

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