

# e-cwip interactive apostolic ministry training

## Class 102

### Doing the Stuff: Session Five Pulpit Notes

#### **1. Introduction to the Prophetic Ministry and Revelatory Experiences**

##### *A. God wants to speak to people and have fellowship with them!*

Throughout Scripture and history, God has revealed Himself to humanity as a God who speaks and who desires fellowship with the creatures He made. In the ancient cultures of the Bible, cultures in which sharing a meal was the height of friendship and intimacy, God revealed Himself as the One who was longing to eat at our table. Jesus said,

***“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup [dine] with him, and he with me.” (Rev. 3:20)***

We can easily contrast our God with the gods of other religions, who are often seen as aloof from mankind or who are actually said to be unknowable. Throughout the Bible, it is God who takes the initiative in seeking out men and speaking to them, looking for intimate communion with them. When Adam fell, he did not seek out God; rather, it was God who sought him out and asked, “Adam, where are you?” And in Revelation, we see the beautiful climax of all history – God having eternal friendship with His people and dwelling with them:

***And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle [dwelling place] of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Rev. 21:3-4)***

He is not a mysterious “Other,” or some impersonal “force” or “cosmic energy,” but a living, speaking, loving Person whom you can know as a Friend. Though He calls us to seek Him, He does not call us to a fruitless quest:

***And ye shall seek me, and find [me], when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (Jer. 29:13)***

In this section we will discuss how to hear the Voice of the Lord and prophetic ministry in the Church in general. Many books have been written about these topics, and some of them are very good. Because of our setting, of course, we can only begin to explore questions such as:

- Is it really possible to hear God speak to us outside of the Bible?
- What does the Bible say about the prophetic?
- How can we keep ourselves from error and deception?

- How can we minister His words to others who need to hear from Him?

Even though we can only cover these topics briefly, you will find some good food for thought here and, I hope, be challenged to seek the Lord for these things in your own life. In His Word, God invites us to come and simply be with Him, to speak to Him, and to share our hearts with Him. In turn we can hear Him speak to us. This is the birthright of every Christian, for we serve the One who said, "My sheep hear my voice..." (John 10:27)

### *B. God Speaks Primarily Through His Word*

God's Word is sufficient for all matters of faith or doctrine. As Christians we recognize that God has disclosed all essential doctrines to us in his Word, the Bible. Included in these doctrines are the truths concerning the nature of God, the nature of Jesus Christ, the fact of God's Creation, and the salvation that God has made available to us in Jesus Christ. The primary way which God speaks to us is through his Word, and His Word alone is the measuring stick against which all prophecies, revelations, and subjective experiences are measured. Jesus said:

***Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. (Mark 13:31)***

The Apostle Paul later confirmed that all doctrine and revelation is to be compared to

the Scriptures, saying:

***But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:8)***

In saying this, he recognized that even as an apostle of Christ, he, too, was subject to the Scriptures and could not violate them in his teachings. Thus any revelation or prophecy that transgresses the Scripture must be rejected. For example, no one can validly prophesy or teach that Jesus Christ is only a man because the Bible clearly teaches that He is Eternal God as well as a man.

In the same way, we recognize the Scriptures as the rule or norm governing Christian practices and lifestyles. No one can therefore prophesy, teach or counsel someone to do what God has forbidden. Indeed, we are to consciously seek to perform what Christ has commanded us, seeing as He instructed the first disciples to teach others to do everything he had commanded them. (Matt. 28:20) Any practice or lifestyle which the Word of God forbids is to be rejected and anyone who teaches someone to do so is setting himself up against the authority of God Himself. All Scripture is, in the words of Paul, “breathed by God” and is God’s truth to us. (2 Tim. 3:16)

### *C. Does God ever speak apart from His Word?*

Cessationism teaches that there can be no more Christian prophecy in the Church, only

the prophecy of Scripture. This is not a position that can be validated from Scripture. God Himself said,

***And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy... (Acts 2:17-18)***

Far from showing a diminishing amount of spiritual activity at the end of the age, or saying that the Spirit's activity was only to take place only among certain favored apostles, the Bible shows that there will be a general outpouring of the Spirit of God. We should therefore expect the full range of spiritual activity that was seen in the Book of Acts. In his excellent book, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, former cessationist and theological seminary professor Dr. Jack Deere says,

**How would a completed Bible make the New Testament Christians' varied ways of hearing God obsolete? They could hear God in dreams and visions without compromising the authority of the Bible. Why can't we? Actually, aren't we in a better position to evaluate dreams and visions, since we do have the completed Bible? And besides, much of the revelation given in the New Testament is often not the kind of information that could be deduced from the completed Bible. For example, God gave directions for specific ministries (Acts 8:26ff., 9:10-19; 10:1-23; 13:2), warnings (20:22, 23; 21:10-11) and encouragement in specific situations (18:9-10; 27:23-26). Certainly the New Testament gives us principles, and God may use specific passages to speak to us about directions for our lives, but the New**

**Testament does not tell us specifically where to preach the Gospel, where not to, and so on. Instead the Holy Spirit had to tell Paul where and where not to preach the Gospel (16:6-10).**

To boil down these wise comments to a very plain example, the Bible tells you that marriage is good, but it doesn't tell you whom to marry! Jesus did not come to just leave us a book, even one as wonderful as the Bible – He came to give us His very Spirit, to remain with us forever. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth – even the truth of the Word of God that He Himself wrote. For who would presume to say that he does not need the illumination of the Holy Spirit to understand the Word?

## **2. How God speaks apart from His Word**

### **A. Principle Number One: God's Sovereignty**

Remember that God is omnipotent and sovereign. That means He can and does do whatever He wants! Aside from any of the supernatural modes of communication we will discuss below, God has spoken by using means as stars in the heavens (Matt. 2:2) and giving speech to a donkey (Num. 22:28). So this is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the ways God can speak, but to discuss some of the ways we do see him speak to us. Please be aware that in some cases we cannot give very precise definitions of spiritual experiences. We sometimes do best to call things and experiences what the Bible calls them, and not be too dogmatic about the rest.

### B. A word from the Word

We know that God speaks to us through His Word in a general way, but there are times when the Holy Spirit especially “quickens” or brings to our mind portions of the Word for a particular need of the moment. People commonly refer to this as a rhema word as opposed to the logos word, which is how they refer to the written word. Jesus said we should expect the Holy Spirit to exercise this ministry for us and in us:

***But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)***

### C. Dreams

A dream is, of course, a picture or revelation of sight and sound received while sleeping. The abundant testimony of the Word is that God speaks to us in our dreams. Great men of the faith such as Joseph and Daniel received guidance from God by way of dreams. Not all dreams are from God but we must be alert to the possibility that God will speak to us in our dreams.

### D. Visions

A vision can be described in general as visual revelation received from the Holy Spirit while we are awake and conscious of our surroundings. Visions can perhaps be placed

into two main categories: inner (or interior) visions and open visions.

An **inner vision** is a mental, interior visual revelation given by the Holy Spirit. This can be a fleeting image of which your mind is suddenly and unexpectedly aware. A fleeting image of this type is often referred to simply as a “picture.” Use of this language is often preferable to the term “vision,” if only to avoid misunderstandings and negative connotations. An inner vision can also be longer and more elaborate, almost like a dream in its intensity as opposed to just a fleeting image. An example of this may be Jesus “seeing” Nathaniel praying under the fig tree. (John 1:48)

An **open vision** is an external visual revelation in which a person is seeing the physical reality of this world and seeing the supernatural or heavenly realms at the same time. An example would be Elisha and Gehazi being able to see the angelic armies of the Lord stationed on the mountain with them. (2 Kings 6:17) A person experiencing an open vision remains “awake” and conscious of physical reality even while seeing what is usually not visible to the natural eye. The person may actually have some interaction with supernatural beings, whether the Lord or His angels.

### *E. Trances and Transports*

For most Christians nowadays, the word “trance” is a negative term - it speaks to them of mediums and séances rather than the Holy Spirit! Despite these bad associations, the word “trance,” and the experiences it describes, are perfectly biblical and valid. A trance is a type of visionary experience in which the person’s normal consciousness is

suspended to some degree so that they are only partially aware of their surroundings - or perhaps completely unconscious. In the Greek New Testament, the word is “ecstasy,” which did not mean intense pleasure but rather being down from or outside of your normal state. A person in a trance is interacting more with the unseen realm than with the physical. In the New Testament, both Peter and Paul experienced trances (Acts 11:5, 22:7). Paul himself was taken up into the third heaven, as was John when he received the Revelation. In these experiences they could interact as though they were a part of that realm rather than the physical, earth realm.

The prophet Ezekiel was apparently transported by God in the spirit (not physically) from Babylon to Jerusalem to observe what was taking place there (Ezek. 8). This experience takes up four chapters of the Book of Ezekiel, during which time Ezekiel is apparently not aware of his physical surroundings but is interacting with the Lord and angelic creatures.

#### *F. Natural Signs*

God can certainly speak through natural signs such as the Star of Bethlehem, and in the future He will again show great signs in the heavens as the end of this age approaches. (Acts 2:19-20)

### G. Impressions

There are several ways the Lord communicates His actual thoughts to us, ranging from the more vague and general to the more dramatic and specific. One level of “speech” that we can hear in our spirits is what are commonly simply called “impressions,” for want of a better term. This can be simply a general sense in one’s spirit about things, a sense that comes from the Lord’s Spirit to yours. A believer can have a general “leading” about things that does not come from any rational thought process he can identify. Many people have testimonies of someone being protected from harm because they had a kind of “knowing” in their heart that they should not go down a particular road or that they should vary their routine, and thereby avoided accidents.

There is also a realm of impressions which we might call prophetic perception which is perhaps seen more frequently in prophets and in persons with prophetic ministries. For example, when Paul was taking his famous sea voyage in Acts 27, he “perceived” that the trip would be extremely dangerous. In Acts 14:9, Paul also “perceived” that a certain man had faith to be healed.

### H. The Witness of the Spirit

Another type of communication from the Holy Spirit is the witness of the spirit, or the witness of the Spirit. The word “witness” in this context, in more modern English, really means “testimony.” The living Holy Spirit within us will testify and speak to our human spirits that some things are true, or not true. For example, the Spirit bears witness with

our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). So, in addition to the evidence the Word of God gives us concerning our salvation, we have a subconscious knowing and feeling in our hearts that we are truly saved and are truly God's children. We are able to discern in our hearts that the Spirit is saying the same thing about our spiritual condition that our own spirit is saying. Many people knew when they became children of God and they felt this witness within their being right away. (Recall biblical teaching about spirit, soul, and body.)

Our hearts can also sense the Presence of the Lord, as well as the presence of angelic or demonic spirits. Many times you may sense that another person is a Christian, or an occult practitioner. Your own human spirit is alive and sensitive to the presence of the Holy Spirit in other people, as well as the presence of demons. This can be a safeguard to the Body of Christ. You might have had the experience of hearing a teacher who sounded very good, but yet you felt within yourself at a very deep level that something was just simply not right. On the positive side, you may recall that the unborn John the Baptist could sense the Presence of God when Mary the mother of Jesus spoke (Luke 1:41-44).

We should all be sensitive enough to the Lord so that we can sense His peace and His other attributes. In fact, Paul advises us to let the peace of God rule (literally, act as umpire) in our hearts (Col. 3:15). While this may seem too subjective for many Christians, Paul is telling us that the presence or absence of God's peace in our spirits should govern our decision-making processes! Paul assumed that we could sense it or sense its absence so we could make godly decisions that were truly led of the Spirit. How far is this from the experience of typical North American Christians?

### I. Inner Voice

Here we come to another level of communication in which we are actually receiving something which is not just a sensation or a feeling of guidance in our hearts, but actual verbal content from God within our minds. God will give actual words, phrases and sentences to you for your own edification or the edification of others. The Scriptural examples of this are too numerous to list here. Many times it is said that the word or message of the Lord “came” to such and such a person. How we process these inner revelations will be discussed below.

### J. God's Angelic Messengers

Obviously God at many times has communicated his words and intentions to human beings through the ministry of His angels.

### K. Audible Voice

The most dramatic form of verbal communication we can probably imagine is hearing the audible voice of God. Such instances certainly seem to be few and far between, whether in Scripture or in Church history. Curiously, those who hear the audible Voice of God do not necessarily recognize it as such. We can think of the child Samuel, or those in the Gospels who thought the Father’s Voice was only thunder.

### L. Through the Ministry of the Gifts of the Spirit

We can certainly hear the voice of the Lord, in an indirect way, through the prophetic ministry of others. This may come through a prophecy, word of knowledge, tongues and interpretation, or other means.

### **3. We are the people who can hear God's Voice**

All Christians can hear His Voice! As we already noted, Jesus said that all of His sheep could hear his Voice:

***My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)***

There is no requirement that you be in some particular ministry to hear the Lord's voice. God spoke to a variety of people in His Word, from kings to unknowns - even to nonbelievers. Sometimes this even included very significant revelations. The Apostle Paul was ministered to by Ananias, a man to whom the Lord spoke revelation about Paul's future and who was used by God to open Paul's eyes, and see him filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:10-17) Ananias is a man about whom we know nothing at all except for this incident, and he held no great title or office that we know of. He was just a servant of the Lord. Perhaps that is the key?

God did say in Acts 2 that He would pour out His Spirit on His servants and handmaids and that they would prophesy. I once saw a book entitled "God Tells the Man Who

Cares.” I believe this is a biblically true statement, as Psalm 25 tells us that the “secret of the Lord is with those who fear him.” If we truly fear and reverence the Lord, and seek to hear his Voice from a sincere desire to know Him better and to bless others, we can be sure He will speak to us and we will hear. His Word says that He is no “respector of persons.” (Acts 10:34) This means He has no favorites – His door is open to all!

#### **4. Seeking the Giver... and His gift of prophecy!**

##### **A. Recognize that the things of the Spirit are for all and not a few.**

God is no respecter of persons – He can and will use anyone who is yielded to Him. But the Bible encourages us specifically to **seek to be used by God** in supernatural ministry. Christians often do not even attempt to pray for anything they believe is supernatural because they don’t know or don’t believe they are qualified to do so. But as we've seen, Jesus made a most remarkable statement in John 14:12:

***Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.***

We've seen how Paul lists (1 Cor. 12) nine manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power, including prophecy, which can potentially be given to any saint for the “common good” – not just to a few super-saints, saying:

***But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man...***

*B. Ye may all prophesy!*

In fact, the Scripture specifically holds out to us the possibility that all believers can prophesy, in 1 Cor. 14:5 and 14:31. But... not only may you, ***you are to desire to!*** Although Christians are commonly told to “seek the Giver and not the gifts” (that is, the gifts of the Spirit) that little phrase only tells part of the story. The fact is that Jesus, the Giver, has actually commanded us to seek after spiritual gifts, and especially to prophesy!

What does the Word command about our attitude towards gifts of the Spirit? We are told to be zealous by a threefold use of the verb “*zeloo*,” which means to be zealous. See these passages:

***1 Cor. 12:31: "covet earnestly the best gifts"***

***1 Cor. 14:39: "covet to prophesy"***

***1 Cor. 14:1: "pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but rather [especially] that ye may prophesy"***

Therefore, the choice between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit is a false choice which God does not ask us to make. To the contrary, He wants us to seek after both, and to have both! Have you ever specifically obeyed this command to covet these things and have you ever sought God for them?

## **5. The Definition of NT Prophecy**

New Testament prophecy can be described as simply reporting something that God has spontaneously brought to your mind. It has its origin in the mind of God, not the mind of man, and it is not the same as preaching or teaching, which have a greater element of human preparation. The word “*propheteia*” in the Greek simply means speaking on behalf of another.

Prophecy is not equivalent to Scripture, as the Scripture even says that we know in part, and we prophesy in part. (1 Cor. 13:9)

Despite the common use of the word in our everyday language, prophecy is not necessarily *foretelling* things, but it is *forthtelling*: speaking forth the thoughts of God regardless of whether there is any future predictive element to it:

***“He who prophesieth speaketh unto men for edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” (1 Cor. 14:3)***

This is the normal use of prophecy in the New Testament era, which includes us.

## **6. Vehicles and Levels of Prophetic Speech in the New Testament**

### **A. The Spirit (or Anointing) of Prophecy**

Prophecy is ministered through several different vehicles seen in Scripture. While all

Christians can have the role of prophesying, not all will have a more regular ministry in the prophetic. We can see this at work in other areas as well. All believers should evangelize, but not all are called and gifted as evangelists. At the most common level we might note the spirit of prophecy or the manifestation of a gift of prophecy (see 1 Cor. 12:7-11).

You might have experienced this in a congregational setting when there is a heavy sense of the Lord's presence in a meeting and suddenly someone prophesies, someone not particularly noted for it. You are then experiencing the truth that anyone can hear the Lord and speak forth what He is saying.

### *B. The prophetic ministry*

On a higher level is prophetic speech that comes through persons who could truly be said to have a prophetic ministry (see for example Rom. 12:6). This is not really a different type of prophecy, but merely a question of degree. A person with a prophetic ministry will be used more regularly in the gift, and probably with more accuracy and anointing, and therefore greater impact.

When can you say that you have a prophetic ministry? You should not casually say or suggest that you have any gifts of the Spirit or ministries. Let the grace of God be seen in you and let another praise you and not your own mouth, as the Scripture teaches.

However, there does come a point where it would actually be false humility to deny that you have a particular grace from God. In several places in the New Testament, contrary

to traditional religious teaching, we are actually called to recognize that we have spiritual gifts so that we can develop them appropriately! In 1 Tim. 4:14, Paul tells Timothy not to “neglect the gift” God had given him. In 2 Tim. 1:14 he also told him to “watch over the deposit.” And in 2 Tim. 1:3-7, he tells him to “stir up” the “gift of God” which was in him. This shows that Timothy was responsible to recognize and develop the spiritual gifts God gave him!

### C. The office of a prophet

On the highest level of prophetic functioning are prophets, a ministry mentioned among other places in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Because the new ministry of apostles was brought out and emphasized in the New Testament, some people are not aware that the older office of prophet continued in the New Covenant; however, there were and continue to be people who were called prophets in the Christian church. Among those specifically called prophets in the New Testament were Judas Barsabbas, Silas, and Agabus. (Acts 15:32, 21:10)

A prophet is an office in Christ’s Church; the prophet is not a gift of the Spirit but a person given by Christ to equip the saints for the work of ministry and to build up the Body of Christ. A prophet will function at even greater levels of anointing and accuracy than someone with a ministry of prophecy. As in the Old Testament, prophets will receive revelations on a number of things, give prophetic counsel, and proclaim the blessings and judgments of the Lord. They are more likely than other Christians to be used in the word of knowledge and in discerning of spirits, and are more likely to have

visionary experiences in general. Because of their unique ministries of removing obstacles and building according to God's Plan, the apostles and prophets make up the foundation of the Church. (Eph. 2:20)

#### D. Who is a prophet?

Although people may differ on who is a prophet, a fair reading of Ephesians 4 would tell us that you cannot be made a prophet by the will of man; only Christ can do that. The Church can only recognize what God has already done. There should be public recognition by a plural eldership that a person has been set into this ministry before a person is called a “prophet” as opposed to simply saying “he has a ministry of prophecy” or “he is a prophetic person.” This was likely the practice in New Testament times. Such persons should of course demonstrate a long track record of fidelity to God, His Word, and His Church, and excel in a prophetic ministry that manifests itself to a degree beyond that seen in the great majority of other believers.

### **7. Beginning to Flow in Prophetic Perception**

#### A. Sensing the Lord speaking to us

Our spiritual “senses” are related to our natural senses and we can perceive the mind of the Lord or His intentions either through our spiritual sight or spiritual hearing. This is borne out by the Old Testament, where we see three words used to refer to what we

might call “prophets,” two of which mean someone who sees and one which means someone who declares.

The verb “to prophesy” in Hebrew is *naba*, which may carry the idea of something *bubbling up*. This indicates to us that prophecy can come as words or impressions which bubble up within our inner man as they are received from the Spirit of the Lord. As with the other gifts of the Spirit, this does not come from human reasoning by a direct conveying of the message to the person from outside his own soul realm.

In practical terms, a person who is first beginning to move out in prophecy may recognize the feeling or sensation that he is receiving a phrase or a flow of words, or other information that is coming to mind spontaneously but which he knows did not originate within his own thought processes. Very often, when people begin to prophesy there is a sense of nervousness and a “burden” which makes a person feel a sense of urgency to deliver the message.

While these sensations can be viewed as nudges from the Lord, we don’t rely on them and as we gain more experience we may no longer even notice them.

In most people, beginning to prophesy begins at a baseline level of engaging in prophetic intercession (in which a person seems to pray about exactly what another person needed or was experiencing) or receiving a burden to pray for a person, place or situation. Again, as we gain experience we realize that these are all forms of prophetic “information” which enable us to partner with the Spirit of God to bring about good in the life of another.

With the passage of time and through prayer, a person may note herself being used in more and even higher-order manifestations of the prophetic. For example:

Specific burdens to pray → Prophetic intercession → Simple prophecy  
(edification, exhortation, comfort) → words of knowledge → predictive  
prophecy → prophetic counsel / words of wisdom → proclamation and release  
of God's purposes, etc.

*B. Let's get "growing," already!*

Not only can we grow in our spiritual gifts, we are commanded to! Peter says,

***As every man hath received the gift (the Greek word charisma), [even so] minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pet. 4:10)***

There are no hard and fast rules here, no cookie-cutter formulas to make you an "awesome prophet to the nations." You will grow in the prophetic as you will grow in any other spiritual discipline: walking humbly with the Lord, praying about it, studying it, remaining submitted to authority in the Lord and finding good mentors. Meditate on each one of these points - and don't forget to ask the Holy Spirit to be your ultimate mentor!

Here is a suggested bibliography for advancing in the prophetic:

- The Beginner's Guide to the Gift of Prophecy, Jack Deere (introductory level)
- The Voice of God, Cindy Jacobs (intermediate)
- Growing in the Prophetic, Mike Bickle (intermediate)
- Surprised by the Voice of the God, Jack Deere (advanced)

## **8. If God speaks apart from His Word, how will I know it is Him?**

### A. The danger of gullible Christians

The dangers of gullibility and spiritual deception can be avoided if Christians will realize that God has commanded us to test and examine spiritual experiences.

***Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)***

Since the Lord Himself told us that there would be false prophets and false messiahs who would deceive many people (Matt. 24:24), we must examine prophetic ministry and subjective revelations. Nevertheless, we are not to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

***Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove [test] all things; hold fast that which is good. (1 Thess. 5:19-21)***

***Let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge. (1 Cor. 14:29 NKJV)***

***B. Measuring against the Word***

Remember Paul's words in Galatians 1 that even if he or an angel from Heaven were to preach a different Gospel, he should be counted accursed. Thus, our primary reference and final authority in measuring the content of a prophetic utterance is its adherence to the Scripture.

***C. Measuring against the Person of Christ***

There are many prophecies or revelations which do not sound wrong doctrinally, but do not seem to minister life to those who hear them. Many times a prophecy is weak, ineffective or lacks anointing. It also may not be received because it is overly harsh. The character of Christ was that He would not break a bruised reed; thus if Christ is speaking through our lips, the gentleness of the Lord should be apparent in most cases.

***D. Measuring against the move of the Spirit***

Sometimes a prophecy is completely out of step with what is taking place in the meeting at that moment. When there is a strong message and move of repentance in a service, the most confusing thing can be for someone to release a sweet and loving word of

prophecy into the congregation. Such words are often the result of the person's own emotions or personality. On the other side of this coin, there are many services in which the Lord is causing his people to celebrate Him with joy. Sometimes in such settings people will prophesy strong warnings of judgments and calls to repentance. Again, these "words" are often the product of the person's own soul. This does not mean they are demonic in origin, but they may originate more out a person's own mind.

We may judge a prophecy or any experience by its fruit. Jesus said we would know false ministers by their fruit. The ultimate test of a prophecy or an experience, apart from measuring it against the Word, is what sort of fruit it produces. The strangeness of an experience does not mean it is invalid or not from God. (Nor does it mean it is from God!)

## **9. What do I do when I believe I am hearing something from the Lord?**

### **A. Peace!**

First of all, be at peace. You are not trying to make anything happen or trying to force a revelation to come forth. That is not the prophetic – that is more like being a psychic or being a witch practicing divination to obtain secret knowledge. As soon as it becomes about you, it is no longer about Him!

Will you feel anything physically? You may, or you may not. You may simply hear some words or sentence fragments in your mind, with an inner prompting that you need to speak them out. There may be emotion, or no emotion. I am not aware of anyone of my

acquaintance who has actually died giving a prophecy, so trust the Lord to help you, and step out in faith believing that He will do so. Although you may feel silly afterwards, it is entirely good and appropriate to go to someone who is over you in the Lord or who is more advanced than you in these things and ask for feedback and mentoring.

### *B. Revelation, Interpretation, Application*

Any thought or vision which comes to us from the Lord will typically have three components. One is the revelation itself. ("What has God said?") But, having a revelation in and of itself is meaningless. What does the revelation mean? What is its interpretation? You may be tempted to think that God wants to speak very plainly to us and that interpretation is not an issue. Well, sometimes God says obvious things like, "Get up and go to Egypt because Herod is seeking the Child to take his life!" However, sometimes you may be like Pharaoh and dream of 7 fat cows and 7 starving cows. What on earth could that mean? It took God's wisdom to tell him. But even knowing the interpretation of a matter is not the end. It's not always obvious what we should do with the interpretation. Again, it took God's wisdom to advise the Pharaoh what to do in the face of seven years of famine. Pray not only for revelation but for its interpretation and application. And don't assume you will have it. Maybe someone else does! Don't presume to give prophetic counsel unless you have the application of a matter.

### C. Dialogue with the Holy Spirit

If you believe the Spirit is showing you or telling you something, begin to speak and dialogue with Him. Observe the example of the prophets. A common question the prophets would put to God was, “Huh?” But seriously, ask the Lord, “What does this mean?” “What are you saying, Lord?” When you do this, the Lord may reveal more to you or give you more precise instructions about how to minister.

### D. Prophetic protocols points to consider: assessing prophetic practices

- Humility: how do we act when God uses us?
- Your tone of voice: how should we speak?
- Your vocabulary: what are people hearing when you speak?
- Your demeanor: what are people seeing when you speak?
- "Thus saith the Lord!" When should you use this phrase?
- What is happening at the moment?

### E. Pray, Pray, Pray!

You should never flippantly assume that because you have received a revelation about a person or a situation that you are therefore to share it. It's the secret of the Lord that He

reveals to those who fear Him (Psalm 25), and sometimes He may just tell you something because you're His friend! More often than not, if God gives you insight into a person's life it is so that you may pray for that person! This is especially true if God reveals to you the sin of another.

Some situations call for great wisdom. If you feel God is giving you a word that could affect the life or direction of an entire church, that word needs to go to those who have authority for the church's direction – you do not have liberty to put it on a website!

Remember that God loves people more than you do; treat others as you would like to be treated. How would any one of us like the Prophet Elisha to come into church on Sunday and “read our mail” in front of all the saints, exposing all our sins? If God should lead you to discuss such a matter with one of His children, an arm around the shoulder in private is much better, wouldn't you say?

#### *F. Submission to authority and wise counsel*

Our hearts should always be willing to follow the directives or guidelines that may exist in our local congregations for the exercise of prophecy or other public revelations. Your pastor will appreciate and not dread your gift if you will submit it to Godly authority and wise counsel. Remember, church authorities exist to protect the whole body as well as to help you grow in your gifts. In God's Kingdom, if you cannot follow, you will never lead.

### G. Timing is everything; God will make a way

It surprises some of us to know when we begin to launch out in some of these things that the Universe does not cease its rotations if we do not get to prophesy when we thought we were supposed to! The Holy Spirit is well able to make a space for you to share your message even if it seems your earnest desire to share was frustrated by circumstances. So, we also need to dialogue with Him about whether the word we are hearing should be shared now or later.

### K. Mistakes

All of us have had some bad experiences or mistakes in handling the things of the Lord. Don't be discouraged but press on. The Word calls us to grow in grace. We will indeed go from strength to strength and glory to glory if we do not throw in the towel!

## **10. How can I know and hear the Lord better?**

### A. You have not...

...because you ask not! (James 4:2) Have you honestly asked the Lord to use you?

Being willing is not enough.

*B. I don't want to be weird!*

Then don't be! There is no need to adopt strange speech mannerisms, theatrical gestures, or a John the Baptist costume in order to have people accept your ministrings. A tree is known by its fruit. If you focus on Jesus and avoid self-consciousness, you have won half the battle.

*C. The secret of the Lord*

... is with them that fear Him. Are you walking in the fear of the Lord? Is there anything in your life that will hinder God from using you as a vessel for Him?

*D. Setting your heart's affections*

Let your priorities be the priorities of the Kingdom. What gets you excited? Do you really love the Lord with all your heart? Or is there too much old junk in the closet of your heart? The Bible tells us to set our affections on things above.

*E. Living a Davidic lifestyle.*

Let's study Psalm 27:4 and think about what made David a man after God's own heart. How did this compare to Solomon's famous prayer request? David also said that he praised God seven times a day (Ps. 119:164). What would our lives be if we adopted this

lifestyle?

*F. The circles of intimacy.*

You are as close to God as you want to be. There is no formula for learning how to hear God's Voice, except to say that you must seek to walk with him like Enoch. God has no favorites, but He does have intimates. Would you be content to be one of the 500? One of the 120? One of the 70? One of the 12? One of the 3? Or would you press in until you were resting your head on His bosom like John – a circle of one?