

**YOU CAN
ALL
PROPHESY**

DENNIS
CRAMER

You Can All Prophecy

A Balanced Approach
to Giving **and** Receiving
PERSONAL PROPHECY

By Dennis Cramer

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Dedication

To all my friends who encouraged me to revise and republish this book

To the Church of Jesus Christ, and her members who hunger for clarity regarding the gift of prophecy.

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PROPHECY

A supernatural, verbal gift of the Holy Spirit given for the purpose of “strengthening, encouraging and comforting” a believer or group of believers. (See First Corinthians 14:3.)

“...be eager to prophesy...”! (1 Cor. 14:39)

“For you can all prophesy...”! (1 Cor. 14:31)

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Introduction

Why Do We Wait?

Since first writing this book in 1981, I have been amazed at the growth the Church has experienced in the area of prophecy. There has been a mighty restoration of many aspects of prophecy. This restoration has made this particular book even more relevant today than when it was originally written some 12 years ago.

Prophetically speaking, the Church has come alive and scores of believers already have begun to operate in the gift of prophecy. Yet many more believers are eager to operate in the gift of prophecy who have not yet done so. Perhaps you, the reader, are one who needs to “step out” and begin to experience this gift of prophecy. Yes, you can prophesy! Fortunately, for the Church, God has been just as willing to teach us as we have been to learn. For all those “hungry” and “thirsty” believers, there is plenty to learn about prophecy. This book can teach believers about the gift of prophecy and how to make it a reality in their lives.

This updated and slightly expanded version of *You Can All Prophesy* contains several alterations that reflect personal changes in my life as a member of the Body of Christ. First, beginning some years ago, I decided to change from a King James Version of the Bible to a more accurate and contemporary translation. My personal choice was the New International Version, although there are several other good translations. Consequently, almost all of the references in this book are now from the NIV. Second, I decided to update one of the mechanics I utilize when I am operating in the gift of prophecy. I no longer prophesy in “King James English,” but speak in modern,, contemporary English Both of these adjustments have made me more effective in the lives of the believers I am attempting to influence for Christ, The remaining changes in this edition of *You Can All Proph-*

esy are an accumulation of the additional knowledge and experience I have gained over the past 12 years since “*Ye May All Prophecy*” was first written. Hopefully all of these changes will benefit you, the reader, to better understand and to better operate in the gift of prophecy.

Perhaps the *single greatest misconception* in the Church today deals with our failure to take God at His written Word literally. Usually that can be attributed to two basic errors in our reasoning toward God. The first misconception in our reasoning leads us to believe that there is *another spiritual realm* that we must somehow discover, experience or achieve in order to operate in the gift of prophecy. However, this “**alleged spiritual realm**” does not exist. Consequently, we cannot discover, experience or achieve something in a realm that simply does not exist. There is no other spiritual realm! *It does not exist!* We are living in the Kingdom of God right now, today. There is no greater spiritual realm in which to live than the Kingdom of God. God’s “Kingdom” is the realm He has prepared for us (believers) while here on earth. It is in this *present spiritual realm*, or Kingdom, that the Scriptures teach the gift of prophecy has been made available to every believer.

The second misconception is what I call the “old school” theology which states that *God has only a few, choice, select individuals* through which He speaks to the Body of Christ prophetically. That is simply not a scriptural perspective. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and said, “For you can all prophesy...” (1 Cor. 14:3 1). This was a large church with thousands of members. Paul said they could *all* prophesy. It is true that Paul wrote they were to do all things “decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40 KJV). However, this presupposed that they were going to do *all things!* We have always seen this verse as a restriction of sorts, or a warning against prophecy. On the contrary, it was and is an encouragement to do all things! Just remember to do “all things” in an orderly fashion, as outlined throughout the fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians. That includes the opera-

tion of the gift of prophecy specifically in the setting of the public gathering or assembly. Furthermore, if only a few, choice, select individuals have been called of God to operate in the gift of prophecy, then obviously the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6) were unaware of this “supposed” theology. These men were merely believers (like you and me), newly filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 6), and yet they all spoke in tongues and *prophesied*! Obviously, it is our contemporary theology that is in error. It has been the traditions and unbelief of man that has limited the Church’s access to this precious gift and not the will of God! God’s Word has always been crystal clear on this point. That point is, all Spirit-filled believers can *immediately* operate in a prophetic gift as a result, or evidence, of being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19). This fact was true and applicable to the believers then and it is true and applicable to believers *now*. Amen! Whether we are referring to a “brand new” convert or to the “seasoned” believer who has been serving God for years, clearly all can prophesy as inspired by the Spirit of God.

Let us use the words *general* and *special* to better clarify this gift of prophecy. In this book we deal with the so-called “general” gift of prophecy. We will define the word *general* as “universal and available to all believers.” This “general” gift seldom, if *ever*, contains any revelation or specific divine information. It seldom contains any direction. It seldom contains any correction. This “general” gift is simply (yet effectively) used by God to strengthen, encourage and comfort the believer (1 Cor. 14:3). This is the gift God has made available to *all* believers. In addition, God has His prophets and there is that “special” gift of prophecy reserved for the office (ministry) of the prophet (Eph. 4:11). This “special” gift of prophecy contains specific revelation (divine information) into the mind and counsel of God. It can be directive and corrective. This “special” gift of prophecy is only for those called to the office of a prophet and not for the Body of Christ in general. That is why Paul writes, “Are all proph-

ets?” (1 Cor. 12:29). The implied answer is no. But when Paul further addresses the same church, he writes, “Therefore, my *brothers* [men and women alike], *be eager to prophesy*, and do not forbid speaking in tongues” (1 Cor 14:39). Does this represent a conflict? I think not. It shows us that there are clearly two types of prophecy in the Church (excluding false prophecy, of course). The “general” gift of prophecy is for us *all*. On the other hand, the “special” gift is a specific gifting for certain believers (prophets) as God sovereignty chooses. The Scriptures teach that God has placed *some, not all*, in the Church to fill these five “ascension gift ministries.” Ephesians 4:10 and 11 says, “He [Christ].. *ascended....*,” then He gave “*...some to be prophets....*” Thus the term “ascension gift ministries.” Not everyone will be a prophet, but *everyone* can prophesy. Not everyone will have the “special” gift of prophecy, but *everyone* will have access to the “general” gift of prophecy as God inspires them.

Concerning this “general” gift of prophecy for all believers, what do the Scriptures really say? What does the New Testament really give us today as *working examples* to follow in our lives, on this subject? From Scripture, here is the conclusion I have drawn: if we can *all* speak in tongues, then we can certainly *all* prophesy. Why then is there such confusion?

Many dear saints (perhaps you are one of them) have been waiting for that other spiritual realm mentioned earlier. Others of you have been *waiting* for God to use only a few, choice, select individuals in prophecy. As I stated previously in this introduction, both these concepts are false. Therefore, my question to the Church is: *Why do we wait?* Those false concepts run rampant in believers’ thinking today. However, as He always does, God has given clear direction in His Word on this subject. Let us look at a few scriptures together and recognize the purpose of God, which is to motivate us *all* to proph-

esy.

Truly, the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon *all* people (Acts 2:17). We *all* are temples of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). The promise of the Holy Spirit and His manifestations are to *you* and your children and for *all* who are far off— for *all* whom the Lord our God will call (Acts 2:39). If the Book of Acts says that in the last days prophecy will be a sign of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring to the Church (Acts 2:17), then *you* can expect to prophesy since you are a member of that church today. If the church at Ephesus could prophesy as soon as they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, then so can *you* (1 Cor. 14:31). If the church at Rome could prophesy, then so can *you* (Rom. 12:6). If sons and daughters of God can prophesy, then so can *you* (Acts 2:17). If *all* of Philip’s daughters prophesied, then so can *you* (Acts 21:9). Even the troubled church at Thessalonica was apparently a prophetically active church. The operation of the gift of prophecy, although it may have been easy to “despise” at times, was still a part of their spiritual experience (1 Thess. 5:20 KJV; 2 Thess. 2:2). Paul encouraged all of the believers at Thessalonica to continue to respect prophecy and to give it its rightful place in their gatherings. Today, each of us needs to have that same attitude toward prophecy.

It is a historical fact that the early churches, as a whole, operated in the gift of prophecy. That is, the early church had a very active *laity*, in terms of being prophetic. It was not just a few, strange, unapproachable “prophetic types” sitting on mountain tops somewhere, dressed in camel’s hair, eating locust and honey, and hearing voices. Rather, the entire *church body* understood the activity of the Holy Spirit as He inspired believers to speak God’s prophetic word. The early church approached prophecy as the supernatural manifestation it is, and yet with a very practical application. Prophecy was part of their lives. They believed God’s Word concerning prophecy and acted upon it. They were a prophetic *people*. This same prophetic

movement among today's laity is precisely what God is once again restoring. God is not endorsing the "spooky spiritual" types who continue to reinforce misconceptions surrounding prophetic ministry. He is developing a practical, yet powerful *Church* in these last days. He is raising up an *army* and a *nation* to operate in powerful prophetic gifting's. The prophetic purpose and plan of God for the *Body of Christ* is coming to pass in our generation.

Remember, God has no favorites when we consider the gift of prophecy in our lives. He is indeed the original "equal opportunity employer." God wants to employ *you* to operate in this wonderful gift of prophecy for *His glory!*

We know that Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Consequently, we can expect that the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10), is also the same yesterday, today and forever. Yes, we can *all* prophesy! Miraculously, God is still speaking *to* His people *through* His people! Jesus is alive and well in the Church. He has given us *all* the gift of prophecy to prove His desire to communicate with us *all!* How exciting a reality!

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

Dennis Cramer

Chapter One

How *You* Can Begin to Prophecy!

As difficult to comprehend as this concept may first appear, *you can begin to prophecy!* Yes, you! How do you begin? The first step is to have the initial desire to do so. Webster defines the word *desire* as “to long for or crave, to express a wish for.”

As believers, we all need “to long for or to crave” the Holy Spirit to use us in prophecy. We need to express to God our “wish” to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to prophecy. To put it another way, if we do *not want* to prophecy, we probably will not prophecy. The issue here is willingness and cooperation with the Word of God.

For the purpose of clarity, the following is the “groundwork” that each reader of this book needs to have in place. This spiritual “groundwork” is a profile of current circumstances from which you will be *best* able to incorporate the material found within these pages.

1. You are a “born again” believer in Jesus Christ. (John 3:3)
2. You are Baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)
3. You have *some* knowledge of spiritual gifts. (1 Cor. 12:1; 8-11)
4. You either have seen spiritual gifts in operation on *some* level, or have personally operated (participated) in spiritual gifts.

If this “groundwork” is incomplete in your life, act now to remedy this situation by doing the following:

1. Accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.
2. Receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
3. Obtain some knowledge of spiritual gifts through personal study of the Scriptures and by reading trusted authors who have experience in

spiritual gifts.

4. Commit to a local church where the operation of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12) are encouraged and practiced on a balanced and regular basis.

The greater your level of *knowledge* and level of *exposure* to this gift of prophecy, the greater your chances are of understanding the material in this book. If you are a believer and have witnessed prophecy in operation and have desired to experience it for yourself, this book is *most* suited for you. If you have absolutely no exposure of any kind to the gift of prophecy, this book can help, but it may be a bit more than you can “digest” all at once. Two or three readings of this material should solve that problem for any believer. So, assuming that the initial desire to operate in prophecy is present in your life, let us begin to explore this exciting gift.

Initial Desire

The desire to prophesy is *essential*. This desire is not a theological issue, but rather a heart issue. In other words, we, as believers, should *want* to prophesy. People have told me, while discussing this gift of prophecy, that they personally have little or no desire to prophesy. I immediately reply, “Then cheer up, you probably never will.” After all, what do we expect God to do? He will *not* override our will. He will *not* give us any more incentive to prophesy than He has already given us in the Scriptures, which happens to be His revealed *will* for all mankind. It is as if God allows us to go into the “river” of experience as far as we want to. It’s our choice. If we hunger to be like Him, He will lead us and guide us into *all* truth. If we are willing to settle for second best, then we live out a second class sort of life, as far as experiencing the fullness of God’s Spirit in our lives. Yes, we miss something of God when we ignore His Word. This prin-

ciple is true in relation to prophecy as well. Frankly, I maintain that if we have no desire to prophesy, then there is something *missing* from our Christian experience. I would even go so far as to say that there is something *wrong* with our experience.

Concerning prophecy, the Scriptures say that we should *eagerly desire* spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1). We continue to read in the same chapter (v. 12) where Paul says we should be “*eager to have* spiritual gifts.” We should “*eagerly desire* the best gifts” (1 Cor. 12:31) and we should “*be eager to prophesy*” (1 Cor. 14:39). It is abundantly clear that the Word of God commands us to desire this experience. It is for all believers—great or small, minister or layman, man or woman, adult or even responsible child. However, we must have that *initial desire* to speak forth a word of prophecy. God leaves that up to us. Let us all “launch out” in faith, and take on the desires God has provided for us all. One of these desires is to be active in the gift of prophecy.

Again, having an initial desire is a heart issue, not a theological one. Search your heart and determine to obey God. It is exciting to be used of God in this blessed gift. We should not have the attitude of “Do I *have* to prophesy?” We should have the attitude of “Bless God, I *get* to prophesy!” It is a privilege to have the Holy Spirit use us! Thank You, Jesus!

Look for Opportunities

Once our prophetic desires begin to agree with God’s desires, we must then *look for an opportunity* to use our *gift* of prophecy.

Let me illustrate what I mean by examining this word gift as it relates to prophecy. Failing to look for an opportunity to obey God in

prophecy is like leaving a *gift* in its box, fully wrapped, unused and unappreciated. That can be a potential waste of great proportion. *Gifts*, given by God to the Church, were meant to be opened, used and enjoyed. *The beauty of a God-given gift is found in the act of giving it!* Passivity is not a fruit of the Spirit and it can cause us to miss God in the area of operating in prophecy. The gift of prophecy needs to be “activated” within us.

Paul wrote, “Since you are *eager* to have spiritual gifts, try to *excel* in gifts that build up the church” (1 Cor. 14: 12b). Notice that he was making a direct reference to using the gifts of the Spirit to accomplish building up or edifying. Surely prophecy edifies the Body of Christ. We all need to have a humble, yet *aggressive* desire to bless others, instead of looking to be blessed ourselves. Your gift or ministry is not for you personally, but has been given to you in order to *bless others*. Therefore, looking for opportunities to bless God’s people is essential. Everybody loses when you fail to yield to God in prophecy. You lose because you disobeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit and chose not to prophesy. The person or group of people to whom you were supposed to prophesy also loses. But obedience always brings a blessing!

Peter and John stated this principle of looking for an opportunity so beautifully in Acts 3:6. “Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, *but what I have I give you*. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’”

Let me interject here just a word or two of caution about looking for opportunities to prophesy. Although we need to be diligent in the use of our *gift*, we also need to exercise *patience* and *wisdom*. We must never overlook the fact that prophecy does not find its inspiration in the “will of man.” Second Peter 1:21 says, “For prophecy [in

this case the prophecies now canonized as the Old Testament for you and I] *never had its origin in the will of man*, but men spoke from God as they were carried along *by the Holy Spirit*.” Isn’t that a beautiful illustration of how personal prophecy operates in our lives today? Personal prophecy also has its *origins* in the Holy Spirit as *He “carries us along”* by inspiring us to prophesy. Always remember that God is the One who *initiates* true prophecy, not the impulses of man. No matter how sincere those impulses may be, they stand in sharp contrast to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. One is Spirit (inspiration) and the other is flesh (impulse).

It is possible to be *too* aggressive, so we need to understand balance in this area as well. My experience has taught me, however, that more passivity than aggressiveness seems to plague the Church today. Nevertheless, I need to mention at this point that some of us can become too eager to prophesy and consequently miss the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we risk giving a false prophecy. The solution to this problem is for the believer to learn to be led by the Holy Spirit in knowing where, when and to whom he should prophesy. That is accomplished through time and experience with prophecy and with learning the voice of the Holy Spirit. It is *not* the intent of this book to create a prophetic free-for-all.

There is great joy when God has used you to bring a blessing into someone’s life through the gift of prophecy. It is indeed “more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The blessing occurs when you are enabled by the Holy Spirit to give “strengthening, encouragement and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3) to a brother or sister in Christ because you obeyed God and spoke a word of prophecy to them.

You see, prophecy is the direct *testimony* (evidence, statement, witness and spoken reputation) of Jesus Himself, although it is spoken through a believer (Rev. 19:10). Giving a prophecy is speaking

the actual testimony of Jesus to a believer or group of believers, usually in a church or similar setting. The Lord Jesus is using you as a “vessel” to contain and then “pour out” His precious words to the recipient. What a beautiful setting! It is indeed an example of “body ministry” at work. So as believers, we need to minister to one another through the spirit of prophecy. That is how Christ intended it to be. “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Cor. 4:7). As this verse plainly states, the power is surely *from God*. It is also equally clear in this verse that God has *chosen to use “jars of clay” to contain this treasure* of His Holy Spirit with all His power and gifts!

Start Small

Initially operating in prophecy means *starting out small*. Zechariah 4:10 says, “Who despises the day of *small* things? Men will rejoice when....” Initially, God in His wisdom often restricts us, confines us and guards us from too much prophetic activity too quickly. In this we should all rejoice! Isaiah 28 further illustrates this principle of starting out small in verses 9 and 10: “Who is it He is trying to teach? To whom is He explaining His message? To *children* weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast? For it is. . . *a little* here and *a little* there.” Hebrews 5:12 and 13 tells us further that we “...need *milk*, not solid food [yet]! Anyone who lives on *milk*, being still an *infant*, is not acquainted with the teaching....”

This principle of God’s teaching and weaning us is especially relevant when we *begin* to operate in prophecy. Indeed, God teaches us “little by little” in all things. According to these two passages, God teaches us and explains truth to us (weans us from the breast) just as a mother would a young child. God does so gradually and with much love. Be reminded that “the day of small things” is God’s plan.

It is often the novice who becomes impatient and hastily moves out in prophecy. It is possible to wean ourselves prematurely. We all are looked upon by God as *children* who need time to grow. Children also need supervision, training and correction. It is the same with the *beginner* in prophecy. Ultimately, God will feed solid food to us who are mature in prophecy as we consistently use our gift.

Many years ago I received a prophecy from a prophet of God. His prophecy to me clearly illustrated that point of a father-child relationship with God when learning about prophecy. Here is that prophecy: “The Lord has a jealousy over you as a *father to a son* and He is not going to let anything spoil you. He is going to work with you until you have become the *full grown son* that can labor with Him...” As we train our earthly children in the natural areas of life, we gradually give them more and more responsibility. Apparently, according to the prophecy I received, God deals with us the same way an earthly father would.

I have seen many Christians “start out” in prophecy “full steam ahead,” only to wind up spiritually “shipwrecked” six months later. They became disillusioned at their own humanity. They wanted everything right at that moment with no mistakes. They misunderstood the learning process of God. Why? They failed to recognize the importance of taking their time, “proving all things” and “not despising the day of small things” concerning prophecy in their lives.

Plainly and simply, it takes *time* to get acquainted with *how* God wants to use you in the gift of prophecy. Prophecy is nearly as much a *skill* as it is a gift. Skills take *time* to learn., fine tune and perfect. So do not underestimate the importance of “starting out small.” There is divine *protection* there for the beginner in that. This principle is clearly seen in Proverbs 20:2 1: “An inheritance [gift] *quickly* gained

at the beginning will *not* be blessed at the end.” Everyone certainly desires the blessing of God on all that they do, from beginning to end!

For example, I personally began to prophesy to those Christians I felt comfortable with as *friends*. That is one of the best ways to start. This method allows you to be less apprehensive of rejection, failure or misunderstanding, since there is some credibility already established in your friendship. This approach helps eliminate much of the *fear* surrounding the actual delivery of prophecy. The next time you are prompted by the Holy Spirit to prophesy, your confidence will be greater as well as, hopefully, your effectiveness. Do not be concerned if you have certain fears that make it difficult to prophesy at first. That is why I encourage beginners to minister first to those whom they know will cooperate with their learning experience. Eventually, most of the prophetic “butterflies” will disappear.

Another good way to start out small in prophecy is to “step out” in *small informal meetings*, such as cell groups, home meetings, house groups or otherwise less public gatherings. Do not pressure yourself by trying to “break into” prophecy during a large public meeting. Usually your measure of faith is too small for such spiritual responsibilities. It is possible to do so, but it is rare. Personally, I began to prophesy in small informal meetings for this very reason. Where there is less pressure, there is less chance of error, hence, you will want to prophesy again. That is the key to maturing in the gift of prophecy.

We all need to develop *slowly* but *surely* with a *gradual, steady increase* in the *frequency* and *quality* of our prophetic activity. I am not advocating a high number of prophecies for the sake of mere volume. God always prefers quality over quantity when operating in prophecy. I am only trying to help you realize that we need to be “prepared in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2b), in case a need

arises and God chooses you to deliver a prophecy. We can mature fully only by *exercising* our prophetic gift in accordance with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Eventually we can develop a *sensitivity to prophesying* that remains with us. So once you have begun to learn this “voice of the Lord” in prophecy, you are half way home to being a trusted “vessel” for prophecy. Strive to be *safe* when operating in prophecy rather than *sorry*. The race is not always won by the swiftest! Take your time!

Confirmation: A Tool for Beginners

Still another way in which to *begin to prophesy* is to take advantage of what I call the *confirming prophecy*. This opportunity arises when someone other than yourself steps out *first* and gives a word of prophecy that agrees in content with yours, although your prophecy is yet unspoken. Never underestimate the effectiveness of such a confirming prophecy. Many believers fail to see that as significant prophetic activity, but the opposite is true. It is very significant that God deems it necessary to speak to more than just one person for another. God is giving you a confirming word because He wants His prophetic word heeded

This confirmation is a fantastic aid to the beginner. It builds your faith to know that you received the same content, either generally or specifically, as the individual who actually *first* delivered his prophecy. It is a golden opportunity for you to rejoice that you too heard from God. More than likely God has simply *confirmed* His message by giving “double witness,” or *confirmation*, to the given prophecy. What a thrill to know that two or three people in a meeting at the same time have received similar, if not identical, prophecies! This will surely encourage everyone involved and especially those who ministered the prophecies. Paul wrote, concerning the confirmation of God’s plan, “Every matter must be established by the testi-

mony of two or three witnesses” (2 Cor 13:1b).

Also, let us remember it takes less faith to merely *confirm* a prophecy than it does to *initiate* a prophecy. The Scriptures say, “If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in *proportion* to his faith” (Rom. 12:6b). There are *levels* of faith. There are areas in which we can have *more* faith than in others (Mark 9:24). Fruit grows, so faith can also grow since it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Yes, faith can dramatically *increase!* (Luke 17:5). When we first start to prophesy, our faith will need to develop. So use what faith you have to begin and then more will manifest in your life. However, do not go beyond your measure of faith and attempt to initiate prophecy until you are confident you can do so. In due time you will cross over a threshold of faith and begin to regularly *initiate* prophecy. By constant *use* we train ourselves to distinguish, or discern, how to operate in prophecy (Heb. 5:14). Practice does indeed make perfect. As I stated earlier, prophecy is a gift first and foremost, but it is also a *skill* to be exercised as the Lord reveals and speaks.

Learn as You Go

The word *learn* is defined as “gaining knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study.” One of the misconceptions people have about God is that everything supernatural is *received* and that nothing supernatural is ever *learned*. Nothing could be further from the truth! Jesus Himself *learned* obedience (Heb. 5:8) and He was about as supernatural as One can be! *Learning* and *receiving* apply to the supernatural gift of prophecy. Frequently, in prophecy, you *learn* as you go. In one way prophecy is a gift. The idea is that the “gift” is the ability to prophesy, to speak a directly inspired message from the Holy Spirit. In quite another way it is a *learning* process. This process includes several aspects. First, there is the skill in *delivering* (speaking) the prophecy (through an effective

choice of words or phrases). Second, there is the aspect of *timing*, as to *when* to give the prophecy. Third, there is knowing *how* to deliver the prophecy in a healing manner, which means knowing how to deliver the prophecy in the right “spirit.” Fourth., you must learn whether to deliver that prophecy in *public or in private*. Remember, all of these aspects of prophecy need to be *learned* in order to deliver the supernatural message most effectively.

My own life and ministry in the prophetic has been an example of this principle. God sovereignly and supernaturally *gifted me* to prophesy many years ago. Yet I too had to *learn* all these same aspects of prophecy. One of the most effective ways I learned was by *observing others* who were reliable, proven ministers of prophecy. Many times a *good example* (i.e., a proven prophetic minister), is a better teacher than that of reading a number of books, listening to teaching tapes on the subject, or even “experimenting” with prophecy yourself. All of these methods are fine in and of themselves, but they are not the most effective method. The *right example* can show you a successful “track record” and, hopefully, the reason for the individual’s success. To put it into contemporary terms, I believe in going with a spiritual “winner.” In other words, Paul said, “Follow my *example*, as I follow the *example* of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). I am not, however, advocating copying others. I am suggesting that you study the principles involved, not just the method or personal technique alone. Also, as a note, let me encourage you that methods and personal techniques of how to actually operate in prophecy can also be taught, if done so carefully and in the Spirit of God.

Some aspects to observe in these prophetic ministers when they prophesy include the following: Do you observe them moving cautiously or impatiently in their gifting? Are they ministering love or selfishness? Are they bringing a “healing” prophetic word to a be-

liever or are their words sharp and cutting? Do they concentrate on blessing the hearer and magnifying the Lord Jesus Christ? These are just a few of the principles you should look for in an example of a proven ministry in prophecy.

Be careful whom you look *to* and learn *from* as examples. The Scriptures say to “know them which labor among you...” (I Thess. 5:12 KJV). Go with *proven* ministry. If I wanted to learn plumbing, I would ask a licensed, professional plumber to teach me. If I wanted to become a physician, I would attend medical school, where I could be taught by trained educators in the field of medicine. Similarly, if I wanted to learn how to operate in the gifts of the Spirit, I would study someone who actually is used of God in this area. I would look for an individual who has a balance between sound prophetic doctrine and sound prophetic practice alike. Do not attempt on your own to test a prophetic “theory.” Go with *proven methods, principles and people* who get positive results. There is a reason God has placed such effective ministry as this in the Church. It is God’s purpose for us to observe and learn from what we *see* and *hear*. Let us now distinguish between following good principles as compared to outright copying of others in style and technique. There is a fine line between the two. For to be truly unique as God would want you to be in prophecy, you need to learn the difference.

Do Not Copy Others

I fully appreciate the biblical concepts of “discipling” (New Testament) and “mentoring” (Old Testament). Although both have been abused, they are, in their proper place, very biblical concepts. So is following the examples of biblical characters or patterning our lives after spiritually successful people we encounter today. These concepts are all valid in their proper roles. These concepts also can play a major role in the spiritual development of a believer. In addition to

these valid concepts, we as believers must remember a most important one. It is: *Do nor copy others—be yourself*” How important these words are when it comes to operating in the gift of prophecy. To “copy” in this context means to *excessively* duplicate, to become a forgery or replica, and to become a counterfeit! God wants us all to be “originals,” not “copies”!

One of the biggest temptations we face when we begin to prophesy is of *copying others*. As the expression goes, we either consciously or unconsciously attempt to “keep up with the Jones’.” The irony is, most believers basically do not want to do that. At first we usually copy others out of admiration. We may notice a believer who has been used in prophecy for years and try to equal his or her accuracy and depth of prophecy. We may actually imitate the phrases, terms or style of delivery of a believer whom we honor. No matter how sincere, these attempts to imitate another believer operating in prophecy can be dangerous. We can lose our own individuality and uniqueness by copying.

God would never approve of prophecy becoming a mere performance in your life. Delivering a prophecy in a style unnatural to you would be lowering it to just that, a performance. God wants you to be *yourself* God wants you to operate in the gift of prophecy *naturally*. If, for example, that means you are more comfortable using the more traditional style of prophesying in King James English, then use it. Perhaps you feel better using modern English, which I use. As long as you are honestly being yourself, go ahead and use the style with which you are most comfortable.

If you are attempting to be yourself, there are actually very few inappropriate prophetic styles. There are simply no hard and fast rules. Strive to do your *best* and strive to be *yourself* Your responsi-

bility is to get the prophetic message across as *clearly* and as *naturally* as possible to the person for whom it is intended. Use whatever style of delivery “*fits*” you. Prophecy can even be given in song, or spoken in perfect rhyme as poetry. Prophecy also can be written down on paper or recorded on tape for delivery later. All these forms of prophecy are effective and a blessing to receive. Any of these forms may very well be *your natural style*. However, most effective believers normally will use the standard spoken form of prophetic delivery.

If you are quiet and reserved, then give your prophecy in a quiet and reserved way. If you are outspoken, aggressive and not afraid of being heard, then give your prophecy in like man-net Just remember to carefully speak the prophecy in the love of God and you will be effective. I have heard some tremendous prophecies ruined by an unnatural delivery or style. So *above all, be yourself—do not copy others!*

Concentrate on Content

Nothing is more *crucial* in a prophecy than the actual *content of the prophecy*. We should always concentrate on prophetic *content first—prophetic style second*. If style is important (which it is), then content is infinitely more important in a prophecy.

Let us look at some *contrasts* between style and content in prophecy.

1. *Style* means “expressing the significance of something, a manner of presenting the substance of a thing.” *Content* means “the *meaning* or *significance* of something, the *substance* of a thing.”

2. Style in prophecy can be learned naturally by observation. *Content* in prophecy must be *supernaturally received by revelation*.

3. Style in prophecy, by its very nature, can be flexible. *Content* in prophecy, by its very nature, *is fixed and rigid*.

4. God does not fulfill (bring to pass) prophetic style. God *does* fulfill (bring to pass) prophetic *content*.

5. Good prophetic *content* can compensate for poor prophetic *style*.

Good prophetic style cannot compensate for poor prophetic content.

6. The Bible says little about the importance of prophetic style.

The *Bible* says *much* about the importance of prophetic *content*.

7. How you prophesy (style) is limited in its importance. *What* you prophesy (*content*) is *critical*.

8. Style in prophecy speaks of the delivery of the prophecy. *Content* in prophecy speaks of the *divine information* of the prophecy.

I cannot emphasize enough the priority you must place on striving for prophetic clarity and accuracy of *content*. As you begin to operate in the gift of prophecy, establish the highest of standards of honesty, integrity, and character for your prophetic gift. You will never regret this decision. The *content* of your prophecies will reap the benefits of

this quality decision.

Tremendous intrinsic power is in prophetic words (content). Sometimes the very power of life or death can be in the words (content) of the prophecy you speak (Pray. 18:21). For example, look at the importance of your prophecies. Jesus said His words were “spirit” and “life” (John 6:63). We as believers must apply this standard to what we speak in Jesus’ name, especially when we operate in the gift of prophecy.

“The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; *His* word was on *my* tongue.” (2 Sam. 23:2)

“...*my* tongue will utter *no* deceit.” (Job 27:4)

“...the righteous man. . .*his* tongue speaks what is *just*.” (Ps. 37:30)

“...*my* tongue is the pen of a *skillful* writer” (Ps. 45:1)

“...the tongue of the *wise* brings *healing*.” (Prov. 12:18)

“...keep a tight *rein* on his tongue...” (James 1:26)

“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their *strengthening, encouragement and comfort*.” (2 Cor. 14:3)

Timing

When operating in the gift of prophecy, understanding *timing* is critical. In order to better understand prophetic timing, let us review the three basic steps to delivering a prophecy. Here are those three steps:

1. We use a *style* that is as natural to *us* as possible.
2. We make sure that the *content* is exactly what the Holy Spirit is saying, to the best of our ability.
3. We deliver the prophecy when the *timing* is as perfect as

we can determine.

As you begin to operate in the gift of prophecy, it is possible to miss the proper timing to deliver your prophecy. According to First Corinthians 14:31, the Holy Spirit will present opportunities for *all* to prophesy in *turn*: “For you can *all* prophesy *in turn* so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.” This means that there are proper time slots in which prophecy is to operate during a public gathering of believers. There is usually a preordained time slot in which God would have you deliver your prophecy. The Scriptures put it this way: “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a *timely* word!” (Prov. 15:23). I have heard perfectly good prophetic content severely “diluted” because the believer waited *too long* before giving the prophecy. The other extreme, of course, is *prematurely* delivering your prophecy. Both untimely deliveries adversely affect the effectiveness of prophecy.

The question I am often asked is, “*How* will I know *when* to give the prophecy?” My answer has always been, “You will know *when* to give a prophecy by the same way you know *the message of the prophecy*.” You know by the prompting of the Holy Spirit! The responsibility of the Holy Spirit is twofold in this instance. First, He gives you the inspiration of *what* to prophesy. Second, He gives you the inspiration of *when* to prophesy. Be confident that God knows what He’s doing and that you can follow His leading. He will make it clear to you exactly when to speak

I have only one *caution* for the believer, as far as “timing” in prophecy is concerned. The issue is not whether or not we will make “timing” mistakes in prophecy. Mistakes in timing will occur. We all will make them. They are merely the result of learning. Mistakes are normal and must not be blown out of proportion when we discuss timing in prophecy. However, the *caution* is, timing in prophecy *must*

be learned and perfected. I *caution* all believers to strive to better understand the proper timing in prophecy. Prophesying is not an exact science, but learning the proper *timing* is an essential ingredient to successfully operating in this gift. Ultimately, learning “timing” in prophecy is simply a result of operating in the gift over an extended period of time.

Prefix and Suffix

Another important aspect of learning to prophesy is understanding the words *prefix* and *suffix*. Let us define both words. *Prefix* is “an affix (attachment) put *before* a word.” *Suffix* is “an affix (attachment) put *after* a word.” How then do we apply this information to operating in the gift of prophecy?

It is absolutely imperative that *you* make your “inspired message” what it is supposed to be: *Prophecy!* By this I mean that God makes it *your* responsibility to proclaim: “The Lord says,” “The Holy Spirit says,” or some such prophetic *prefix*. It is necessary since *you* are declaring that *Jesus* is actually speaking through *you*. You are *not* giving your anointed opinion. You are *not* merely reciting Scripture from a page. You are *not* reading some religious-sounding poem or quoting from some author’s writings. By your act of *faith*, you are declaring verbally that *you* are God’s spokesperson, speaking on God’s behalf. What a privilege to be prophetically used and inspired by God in such a manner!

By placing this prophetic prefix and suffix on your content, you are declaring that your message is from the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, *prophecy must be prophesied!* There are various ways to convey the prophecy, but no matter what the particular style or delivery, you must *prophesy the prophecy!*

I recommend using a prophetic *prefix* to your message and, if necessary, end your message with a prophetic *suffix* such as “So says the Lord” or other similar endings which denotes that *prophecy* was spoken. What you are attempting to do is to introduce the prophecy, deliver the prophecy, and then close out your prophecy as the Lord concludes the message through you. if *you*, the believer, do not declare what you are speaking to be a *prophecy*, then you will be viewed as relegating that message to a mere opinion. At the most, you may be sharing a “revelation” (1 Car. 14:26), and there is certainly nothing wrong with this contribution. However, even a “revelation,” as it is mentioned in this context (1 Cor. 14:26), is not a true prophecy. Prophecy is separate and distinct from all other gifts. Therefore, it must have its own unique qualities that distinguish it from all other gifts.

One of the distinguishing features of prophecy is in its presentation as a verbal gift. *Prophecy must be presented or spoken as prophecy*. It is the believer’s speaking the prophecy that makes what he is speaking either prophecy or something less than prophecy. Again, it is up to the believer to *prophesy* the *prophecy*. Your opinions may be anointed and even contain some truth. However, they are still just opinions, not prophecy. The spiritual impact of a genuine prophecy is much greater than when you share your feelings or opinions to another believer Remember that you, the believer, must and will determine whether you are to deliver a prophecy and thus use the prophetic prefix or suffix. It does require more faith to actually prophesy than it does to merely share feelings arid opinions, but that is what is necessary for prophecy to be spoken. We prophesy “according to the grace given us.. .[and] in proportion to [our] faith” (Rom. 12:6).

Another method to make your prophetic efforts more effective is to speak in the first person. When you prophesy, you are at that moment a mouthpiece for God. Why not then deliver your message as

such? When I am delivering my prophetic messages, I always speak in the first person—as if I were the Lord directly speaking. After all, prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, is it not? So Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is testifying through you! Speaking in the first person when prophesying does take faith and some practice. However, this is the very form, style and delivery that prophecy had in the Scriptures. (Study the prophets in the Old Testament to see this more clearly. Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:17-21 also give you an example of this first person technique.) If the believers in the Scriptures could prophesy in this way, then so can the believers *today!*

Accept Mistakes

The word *mistake* is defined as “an error or blunder.” When we begin to operate in the gift of prophecy, we all can expect to make some errors and blunders.

Let me share with you my first experience at *attempting* to prophesy. I was in a very informal and yet intimate spiritual atmosphere with some believers at a local college. We all had prayed together often and had just finished a time of prayer and praise in our weekly fellowship meeting. I felt the Lord wanted me to give a message in prophecy. I was nervous since I had never done it before. Finally I got up enough courage to try it. (We must never be afraid of trying. We owe it to ourselves to see if God can use us, do we not?) Well, the moment of truth had arrived for me. So I waited for the perfect time to deliver my prophetic message. Then I was ready! I opened my mouth and said, “The Lord would say. . .” and that is as far as I got’ Fear took over, my thoughts left me, and any chance of hearing God’s voice died within me. I failed totally! I had done everything exactly as it should have been done, except for one thing. I said absolutely nothing at all! I still smile today when I think about this beginning of my

prophetic ministry.

We all need to have a *positive attitude toward ourselves*. Do not take yourself too seriously. We *all* make mistakes, especially when we are in learning situations. *Accepting* your mistakes will free you to keep growing and to become an effective believer who can bless others prophetically. Jesus was the only perfect spokesman God ever used in an earthly ministry.

Some time ago, the Lord spoke to me and told me He was going to “remove error from my ministry.” That was spoken to me over 12 years ago. How exciting it was to me! It did not mean that I would never make any mistakes again. But it did mean that I could expect to *improve* in my prophetic gifting as I gained more experience. Experience is the best teacher! You can certainly claim this promise for your life as well. God indeed wants to remove error from all of our lives and make us a more effective prophetic people. I am confident God will do the same for you and help you to become truly *skilled* in prophecy! Just do not lose your prophetic momentum because of a few failures. Keep on flowing and growing in prophecy. Keep on keeping on! Take it from someone who has made plenty of mistakes. *God never gives up on us!*

Accepting something means “to willingly or gladly admit, consent, and/or agree.” Be willing and glad to *accept* the growing process of learning how to operate in the gift of prophecy. You will be glad you did!

Do Not Quit

One of the greatest temptations we can experience when we be-

gin to operate in the gift of prophecy is the temptation to *quit*. It happens to all of us. We may argue with ourselves that we have made too many errors. We may condemn ourselves for not being as nearly polished and refined as the experienced believer in prophecy. How do you think the experienced believer got so polished and refined in the first place? Patience! Persistence! Practice!

Many times, in operating in any gift of the Spirit, we can give up before we really get started. Surely I too have wanted to quit many times. I often said that I would never again open my mouth and prophesy. I later asked for forgiveness for that immature attitude. We must be willing to be wrong and to be corrected. We all must learn to humble ourselves. Only practice and experience can move us toward that goal, which is error free.

God has made provision for all of us to go on to “perfection,” or maturity, in our walk with Him. That includes going on to perfection and maturity in prophecy as well. The Scriptures tell us, “Let us not become *weary* in doing good, for at the *proper time* we will reap a harvest if we do not *give up*” (Gal. 6:9). So when you experience a mistake in prophecy, learn from it, but certainly do not quit. If your delivery was less than perfect, and you stumbled around trying to get out what you felt in-side, keep going, *do not quit*. Prophecy is like anything else in the life of a believer. It takes time to learn about prophecy, to deliver your prophecy, and to perfect or mature in the gift of prophecy. *It just takes time!* If you do quit, you will just be hurting yourself. If, however, you do decide to continue to prophesy, as you grow, you will be able to bless others. Have confidence in God. Believe that God can use you again to prophesy with greater effectiveness. Be encouraged with these words from First Peter 4:11: “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of

God....” It is God’s plan that you speak His words. *He* is expecting you to and *you* should expect to so as well. *So do not quit!*

To *quit* something means “to end one’s involvement” in something. Do not end your personal involvement in the process of learning what prophetic gift God has for you as a believer, if that sounds like I am trying to be a cheerleader, you are right! Cheer up, *do not quit*, and thank God for His *grace, unconditional love* and *acceptance* of you as His child.

Prepare for Reproach

The intention of this book is to inspire you to *begin* to operate in the gift of prophecy. There are times, however, when this gift and the believer operating in it may experience some difficulty in the area of acceptance. There are essentially two reasons. The first reason is *truth* and the second reason is *fear*.

Throughout the Scriptures we have accounts of men and women of God who suffered for *truth’s* sake. It seemed that the more *truth* they received from God, the greater the reproach they suffered. Again, Jesus Christ is our best example of this unfortunate reality. Jesus Christ said, “I am the way and the *truth* and the life” (John 14:6) and they *crucified* Him. Likewise, prophecy is one area in which we must learn to suffer reproach, since prophecy does contain and reveal *truth*.

The Church today is much like the children of Israel were in the wilderness. In Exodus 20:19 they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have *God speak to us or we will die*.” Moses they could handle, so they thought, but they knew they certainly could not handle God’s voice. This same attitude of *fear*

exists in the Church today. It seems that the more of God's *truth* an individual may have received from God, the more that believer may be met with *fear*. Moses too was eventually rejected because he represented God's truth. It is the same situation with the gift of prophecy. In some instances believers can be afraid of *truth* and react with much *fear!* if you are the believer whom God has chosen to present this prophetic *truth*, you may be targeted, as well as the *truth* you speak.

Operating in the gift of prophecy can qualify you to *suffer reproach* for the name of Christ (1 Pet. 4:14). You need to be warned that prophecy is not always received with an open mind and heart by other believers. Here is part of a prophecy I received once from a believer that vividly illustrates this point: "My son., *fear not, fret not*, because you do not always preach the message that *pleases the people*. *Fear nor* because you do not always minister things that make people *happy*. I have called you to *reveal*, to *awaken* My people, and to awaken them to righteousness that they *sin not* and that they walk before Me *in purity and holiness*." A similar prophecy spoken over me said this: "I have called you to a *hard* ministry and a *hard* place where you will have to *reprove and rebuke*. You will have to prophesy a word of the Lord that is *not always pleasing to the flesh*."

I trust these two examples make my point. in spite of the difficulties that we may encounter in prophetic ministry, we must persevere. It may not always be easy. It may not always be fun. We may suffer for it. Yet we must forge ahead no matter how strong the opposition to the gift of prophecy in our lives may be. Jesus said, "Remember the words I spoke to you: No servant is greater than his master. If they *persecuted* Me, they will *persecute* you also..." (John 15:20). "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they *persecuted the prophets* who were before you" (Matt. 5:11,12).

“Brothers, as an example of *patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord*” (James 5:10).

This matter of *reproach*, ultimately, does have a “silver lining” to it. There is no better way to build personal confidence in your prophetic gift than to do so in the face of criticism. It is, of course, God’s purpose that you continue to prophesy regardless of who agrees or disagrees with your message. We are assuming here that your message is from God, and that you are in submission to somebody, somewhere. However, in the face of *reproach*, the secret is to deliver the prophecy and then allow *God* to vindicate you. *Your part* is to deliver the prophecy and *God part is* to fulfill the prophecy. As some prophetic minister so aptly stated, “We don’t *write* the letters [the prophecies God gives us for others] we just *deliver* them.” You are simply the messenger (mail carrier) of God!

Learn to Be Unselfish

Learning how to begin to operate in the gift of prophecy means learning how to be *unselfish*. We could also use the word *submissive* to describe this process of learning to be unselfish. *Unselfishness* occurs in our lives *after* we have learned to be truly *submissive* to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Failing to learn this particular aspect of functioning in the prophetic can lead to some problems later in your prophetic service to the Lord. For example, a *dictatorial attitude* can develop if you fail to learn unselfishness (submission) when operating in the gift of prophecy. You can begin to dominate ministry and become overbearing toward others who are just beginning to operate in this gift. You can even develop a type of *pride* similar to that of the fallen angel, lucifer, when he wanted to be equal with God (Is. 14:12-17). Lucifer was never *satisfied*. He was driven by unholy *ambition* and *pride*. We can all face this same temptation in ministry. So we must learn how to take our time and be content with what we have in terms of our prophetic gifting.

It is important to remember that God is never in a hurry and He seldom *pushes* anyone through a learning situation. Especially in this phase of prophecy, as the saying goes, “haste makes waste.” If a temptation such as a dictatorial spirit or a dominating attitude in ministry is evident, then we need to take steps to prevent it. If it is possible that pride can develop in our attitudes toward ministry, can we successfully combat that pride? Do we have this attitude of never being satisfied with what we have? Do we feel *compelled*, that “God always has to use *me*”? Remember, no ministry, no matter how dynamic, accurate or anointed, has a corner on the moving of the Holy Spirit. God is not raising up people who want to *control* His Spirit or *control* His people. God is raising up those who will unselfishly *cooperate* with *others and the Holy Spirit* in this gift of prophecy.

There are at least three basic steps we all must take to learn unselfishness in our prophetic ministry. These basic steps will help to control pride. Too, these steps not only will help to *regulate* you in giving prophecy, but also will teach you a *balance* between operating in the gift yourself and *allowing others to be used*. If you follow these steps, you will control spiritual pride and not be nearly as tempted to dominate others. Most of all, God will be able to *trust* you for additional prophetic ministry in the future. God is looking for mature, experienced individuals who know how to spiritually *restrain* themselves and who will not *over extend* themselves and lose the “anointing” and the impact that true prophecy contains. To put it more simply, God is looking for quality, not quantity. So here are the three basic steps:

1. Learn to take the “*back seat*.”
2. Learn to patiently *hold on* to truth.
3. Rejoice when *others* are used.

Learn to Take the Back Seat

First, we all must *learn* to take the “back seat” when we spoken to you, it may be that God wants you to allow *another believer* to give the prophecy. This principle may not make sense to the immature and inexperienced believer, but it is true nevertheless. Many times in a meeting, there may be a “spirit of prophecy” that would allow any believer to operate in the gift of prophecy. Obviously, everyone could not simultaneously begin to prophesy. That would not be God’s order for a public meeting. That is an example where taking the “back seat” (prophetically) is quite apparent. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church concerning the same principle. He said, “And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should *stop*” (1 Cor. 14:30). The King James Version says it this way: “If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, *let the first hold his peace.*” This was a lesson in the proper use of revelation (prophecy) that the Corinthian church had to learn, and it is a lesson we must learn today. Remember, “The spirits of prophets are subject to the *control* of prophets” (1 Cor. 14:32).

Many times God can place you in a time of rest as far as the gift of prophecy is concerned. It is another way you learn to take the “back seat.” When God is using you, then “give it all you have.” When the time for rest and relaxation from prophetic activity comes, then accept it as also being part of God’s plan for your life. It is easy to fear that God will never use you again, but such is not a valid fear. You actually may believe something is wrong when God is merely giving you a “vacation” from active prophetic ministry. Personally, I cherish those times because afterwards I come out of my rest ready for more. I have not over extended myself prophetically, and I did not give false prophecy. Why? These times of divinely ordained rest developed in me a “take the back seat” attitude or spirit. Remember, you want *quality* in your prophetic ministry, not necessarily *quantity*.

Certainly you never want quantity at the *expense* of quality. Learning to “take the back seat” will help you in maintaining real prophetic quality in your life.

Learn to Hold on to Truth

Second, you must learn how to patiently *hold on to truth* in ministry. This principle can be very difficult to learn, but the Scriptures do validate it. The Bible teaches that there is a time and a season for *everything* God does and says (Eccl. 3:1). There is a “due season” in God (Gal. 6:9 KJV). This is especially true when it comes to giving prophecy. God may speak to you and give you a definite prophecy for someone, yet He may require you to wait until the *time* is right to actually deliver it. This is the “due season” of prophecy. I personally have received prophetic information from the Lord and waited months and even years before He would *allow* me to deliver it. There have even been times when the Lord would not allow me to give what I had at all! He wanted me to learn how to *hold on to truth*.

Perhaps in your life, as a prophetic believer, God may want you to simply pray about the situation He shows you. This particular situation may not be something that must be “shared” or delivered to another believer. *Discretion* in prophetic ministry is always desirable. If you develop a tendency to “spill the beans” every time you hear from God, it can have a negative effect on your prophetic ministry. A faithful steward of prophecy will handle what God shows him with great care and patience. He will not allow God’s precious prophetic word to be hastily delivered. A prophetic steward will learn that unless the prophecy is delivered at the appointed time, it could do more harm than good to those involved.

Rejoice When Others Are Used

Third, we learn unselfishness in ministry as we *rejoice when others are used*. The Scripture says, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of *others*” (Phil. 2:4). “Honor one another *above yourselves*” (Rom. 12:10b). If another believer is being used of God prophetically, rejoice with him (Rom.. 12:15). We must always unselfishly encourage others when they are being used of God. This again is a sign of a humble and proper attitude in ministry. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider *others* better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3). If your desire is to see the Kingdom of God grow and the Body of Christ built up, then you will want others to be used. So the more believers operating in the gift of prophecy, the greater the level of edification, exhortation and comfort to the Body of Christ. After all, is this not our goal? Working by myself, I can get only a limited amount of work accomplished. So, logically, when others work together with me, the amount of work completed increases. It is the same in the Church today. There is certainly plenty of work to do for God. Therefore, our attitude should be “*Lord, I want to be a team player.*”

Again, these three steps will help you to acquire an unselfish attitude in ministry. The day when God raised up a Moses is past. Today God is raising up a people, an army of believers equipped to prophesy and minister to one another. Let us all flow together as one in God’s Spirit. Let us put the *other* members of the Body of Christ first, and pray for their success and effectiveness in ministry!

Reproduce Yourself

The next step in learning how to begin to prophesy has a new dimension for the believer. Now, instead of being a mere student who

is learning, you become a *teacher who instructs others* in what you have learned. Paul put it this way: “...even as I try’ to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many...” (1 Cor. 10:33). Teaching others how to begin to operate in the gift of prophecy is a sign of the *maturing* “veteran.”

This maturity in you indicates two things. First, you have grown tremendously in your personal use of the gift of prophecy. Second, your attitude is to see the Kingdom of God advance. The Scriptures refer to this process as “discipling.” In other words, you actually *reproduce yourself (spiritually)* in another believer or group of believers. Proverbs 11:24 and 25 says, “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”

Keeping our ministry to ourselves is both an outdated and a prideful mentality. God wants us to *share our secrets* with others who desire to operate in the gift of prophecy. That is exactly how Jesus trained the 12 disciples to take His place in earthly ministry. He shared both Himself and His gifts with them for three and a half years. He had a desire to *reproduce* Himself in others. What a marvelous vision this is for us today! We as believers can further the Kingdom of God here on earth by unselfishly *training, equipping and educating* others in the things of God.

Learning how to reproduce yourself in others is not that difficult. Did not the Old Testament have a “school” of the prophets? Did not Elisha teach and train the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 6:1-6)? Begin by being an understanding example and by letting compassion flow from you to those believers hungry to learn. Pray for beginners so they can avoid some of the problems you experienced. Answer as

many of their questions as possible. Encourage others to pursue the gift of prophecy while providing opportunity for them to begin.

In a Nutshell

Beginning to prophesy can be “boiled down” to a very simple formula. It is essentially the same formula we have used for years when we minister the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues. Here is the step-by-step formula:

It takes no more faith to initially prophesy than it does to initially speak in tongues. It is the *same overall formula* for both gifts. You can certainly speak in tongues immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit. You can also operate in the gift of prophecy immediately

TONGUES

1. Have faith in God’s Word that this experience is for all believers. (Acts 2:4; 2:38-39; 8:15-17, implied;

10:44-46; 19:1-6; 1 Cor.

14)

2. Receive the gift by faith, then step out and speak it. (Heb. 11:1)

3. Exercise the gift whenever appropriate. (1 Cor. 14:18)

4. This gift is for *personal* edification. (1 Cor. 14:4; Jude 20)

PROPHECY

1. Have faith in God’s Word that *this* experience is for all believers. (Acts 2:17; 19:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:7; 14:1-

5,12,31,39)

2. Receive the gift by faith, then step out and *speak* it. (Heb. 11:1; Rom. 12:6)

3. Exercise the gift whenever appropriate. (1 Cor. 14:12)

4. This gift is for edification *of others*. (1 Cor. 14:3)

after receiving the Holy Spirit, as He “inspires” you to do so. “Inspiration” (divine influence) by the Holy Spirit is always necessary in order to operate in the gift of prophecy. However, speaking in tongues seems to be a resident gift available to the believer at all times for personal edification. The kind of inspiration needed to prophesy is simply not required when speaking in tongues.

There are no scriptural distinctions as far as *who* may receive these gifts. Both gifts (tongues and prophecy) are available to *all* believers. The only distinction that exists between these two gifts (other than the actual form they take) deals with *who initiates their operation*.

It is apparent from Scripture that we as believers can initiate speaking in tongues for *private, personal edification at any time*. However, the *public* use of speaking in tongues for *interpretation* (1 Cor. 14:27,28) is a gift separate from the private, personal use of speaking in tongues. This gift of speaking in tongues for interpretation in public is the result of a special manifestation by the Holy Spirit as *He* wills (1 Cor. 12:11). In the same way, to operate in the gift of prophecy requires a manifestation by the Holy Spirit. Believers can *initiate* speaking with tongues (for personal edification and devotion), but only the Holy Spirit *initiates* prophecy.

Summary Outline: How *You* Can Begin to Prophecy

1. Ask God for the *initial desire*.
2. *Look for opportunities* to prophecy.
3. Always *start small* in prophecy.
4. *Confirmation*: a tool for beginners.
5. *Learn as you go*.
6. *Do not copy others*.
7. *Concentrate on content*.
8. Strive to learn *timing*.
9. Use a prophetic *prefix and/or suffix*.
10. *Accept mistakes*.
11. *Do not quit*.
12. *Prepare for reproach*.
13. *Learn to be unselfish*.
14. *Reproduce yourself*

In A Nutshell

1. Tongues and prophecy: a *working formula* for *all* believers.

Chapter Two

What to Look for in Prophecy

The ancient Greek's understanding of prophecy [*propheteia*] meant "to speak [*phemi*] or flow forth [*pro*]." This tells us something of the nature and character of prophecy. It is a verbal message. It is a "flowing forth" of God's will and purpose for the occasion. It is like a "stream" flowing from the throne of God, spoken to the believer and expressing God's own heart to His people. This "flowing forth" characteristic of prophecy is what makes it unique among the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, if you have witnessed prophecy in operation, you know exactly what I mean. Prophecy does indeed "flow" like "water" when the gift is in proper operation.

For example, an individual "gives out" or "flows forth" with the very words of God in a prophecy, meant for "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (1 Cor 14:3). If you also happen to personally know the individual who is giving the prophecy, then you may know very well that what the person is saying is surely from God and not man. Your spirit tells you that there is no conceivable way that such a carnal, imperfect, finite individual could manufacture such spiritual wealth as that in a genuine prophecy from the Holy Spirit. Speaking symbolically, the difference between the "vessel" and the "precious ointment" in the "vessel" is apparent. Your spirit tells you that this prophetic message has found its origin in God, and that this "treasure" has been merely deposited in "earthen vessels" for the purpose of the prophetic delivery.

We, as prophetic believers, simply "receive" and then "transmit" what God has said to us. Knowing that helps us to understand the very *nature* of prophecy. Spiritually speaking, prophecy is a "receiving and transmitting" of what God is saying, through a believer. The believer does not "produce" the "signal," the believer

merely “receives” and then “transmits” the prophecy to another believer. The “signal” originates from the Holy Spirit.

Here is another simple, yet clear picture of what prophecy is. Picture in your mind a length of typical copper pipe used to carry domestic water in your home. Inside that pipe flows clear, pure, safe water for drinking. The pipe is merely the container and deliverer of the water. It is *not* the water. The water, on the other hand, is *not* the pipe. Both are separate and distinct from each other. Nevertheless, they both work hand in hand, complementing each other, to bring your home a necessary life-supporting element, which is water. That is exactly what prophecy and the individual delivering the prophecy are like. Together, these two can bring the very mind (testimony) of Christ into others’ lives, “strengthening, encouraging and comforting” the members of His Body.

Just as prophecy is a “flowing” process, it is also a *well-ordered collection* of rigid facts in God’s mind. The best way to “fully” remember a prophecy is to actually *dissect* it into specific parts. Since everything that God does contains an order and method (sometimes not always understood by man), we need to attempt to remember prophecy based on this procedure.

That is, take this collection of rigid facts and dissect them into categories or points. Why? My experience has taught me that too many of us fail to remember what God has said to us through prophecy. We get all excited that we have received a prophecy from someone and completely or at least partially forget what was spoken to us. What a tragedy! To think that God actually speaks to us, and that many times we can only recall the excitement of the experience and little of what He said to us in the prophecy. We often respond to the “thrill of the moment” and become overwhelmed at the idea that we are actually getting a prophecy from the Lord. This reaction is understandable, but not very effective. We then go our way remembering *75 percent* of the *experience* and perhaps *25 percent* of the actual *content* of the prophecy. How can we overcome this problem?

We as believers can overcome this problem by *dissecting* the prophecy into categories. By following this process, we should be able to remember 75 percent to 95 percent of a prophecy. So let us examine how we may achieve this goal.

Prophecy can be “dissected” into at least the following categories:

1. *The main theme* of the prophecy.
2. *The key words* of the prophecy.
3. *The conditions* of the prophecy.
4. *The time slots* of the prophecy.
5. *The new material or confirmation* in the prophecy.
6. *The “spirit”* of the prophecy.
7. *The “vessel”* who delivered the prophecy.

The Main Theme

The *most* important aspect of any prophecy is the *general or main theme* it conveys. For example, a typical prophecy may carry a *theme* of encouragement to worship God with new vigor and enthusiasm. Another prophetic theme may instruct, direct or warn (exhort) an individual or group. Thus, we would identify each prophecy by its content or, as we have stated here, its “general theme.” Yet, in all these diverse forms of prophecy (in terms of their subject matter), each has its *own unique* general theme.

A possible exception to the importance of a prophecy’s general theme may be found in what is called an “inspirational prophecy.” An “inspirational prophecy” says more to an individual by how it

makes him feel (inspired) than by what it actually says (content). The actual content of the prophecy may not be as important as the inspiration it produces. Prophecy of this nature (inspirational) is perfectly acceptable, although it does have a limited application. Usually, prophecy has a *message* to remember or contains instructions, or a general direction, for the believer. Since that is the case, we as believers need to go beyond just being emotionally affected by the prophecy, to allowing it to actually change our lives. But it can be done only by developing a way to accurately *remember* what God has said.

This process of remembering what God has spoken in a prophecy begins by *surveying* the prophecy in your mind. You then mentally *assemble* a general theme or message of what was spoken. Next, you may ask several questions of the prophecy. For example, did the prophecy generally encourage you to continue in your present direction? That is, was God saying, in effect, “Everything is fine and I am just confirming you and the direction of your life.” Or, was the Lord saying prophetically, “It is time to move out in a new direction and do what I have called you to do.”

Perhaps the prophecy contained a loving yet firm warning for you not to take a certain “path.” Some prophecy *may* even seem to “chastise” you if you have been disobedient or have neglected your responsibilities in the Lord. No matter what the content of the prophecy, everyone can make a general *review* of each prophecy they receive. If you do not develop this *discipline* of reviewing prophecy, you could miss much of the blessing God has for you through it.

Personally, when I am ministering to a believer in prophecy, I always try to review the prophecy with the recipient as to its general theme. I try to touch on the *major point(s)* of the message and relate the feeling or spirit of the prophecy, to help the recipient remember. I have found that this quick review of the prophecy doubles their chances of recalling all or most of the prophetic message. Whenever possible, I encourage people to immediately *write down* the general

theme and high points *of* the prophecy. However, we all need to thank the Lord for tape recorders too. Often, the fact that a service was taped has helped many believers to later record the prophecy on paper and better apply it to their lives.

Some people ask, “Does not the Holy Spirit help us to recall the prophecies?” Yes, He very often does help us to recall what the Lord has spoken to us, both in the Scriptures themselves and in personal prophecy. However, writing down what the Lord has spoken to you is a scriptural principle too. “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘*Write* down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel’” (Ex. 34:27). Also, God spoke to Jeremiah and said, “... ‘*Write* in a book all the words I have spoken to you’” (Jer 30:2). It should also be noted that the Book of Revelation is actually a *recorded* (written) prophecy that the apostle John received while on the Isle of Patmos. We need to thank God that Moses, Jeremiah, John and others obeyed God in recording all that God had given them.

As a believer, I have seen prophecy that I have recorded consistently unfold in my life. What a thrill to see that the “Word of the Lord” is actually alive! Always remember that a single prophecy may cover many years of your life and bring understanding to you years later. Praise the Lord for the spiritual strength each of us can gain by reviewing how God has faithfully guided us in prophecy. We all will appreciate prophecy more as we take the time to record it on tape or paper and refer to it as a guideline for the moving of God in our lives.

The Key Words

Another effective method in remembering prophecy is to recall *key words and phrases*. We mentioned earlier that in receiving prophecy, we often remember 75 percent of the experience and only 25 percent of the content of the prophecy. One of the best ways to avoid

this imbalance is to concentrate on the *key words and phrases* of the prophecy.

Let me illustrate this point by using the example of a typical baseball game. The pitcher, if he is talented, will have several different pitches from which to choose. He will also have the ability to create various movements, motions, fakes and pitching deliveries. The responsibility of the batter at the plate is to ignore all that and to concentrate on one single thing: the ball.

After all, the only thing that will mean anything to the batter is hitting the ball by “keeping his eye on the ball.” When we are remembering prophecy, we need to “keep our eyes on the ball,” which represents the key words and phrases of the message. Do not be *distracted* by the “delivery.” Like that batter, concentrate on the “ball.” Remember to always listen for any *key words or phrases* in a prophecy.

Another potential distraction to remembering a prophecy is what I’ve termed “*prophetic filler*.” Prophetic filler can sometimes be confused with the actual content of a prophecy. I am not implying that prophetic filler is in any way inappropriate in a prophecy. My point is, it is still only *filler* and not the “real stuff” of which prophecy is made. In other words, prophetic filler is merely the *vehicle, mode or style of delivering* a prophecy that the believer giving the prophecy uses. The important part of the prophecy is not how many times you hear, “The Lord would say” or “Yea, My son or daughter,” etc., etc. Obviously, these kinds of phrases (prophetic filler) are not the actual content but are, nevertheless, a part of the prophecy that you are hearing. These phrases, or “filler,” can help in the delivery of the prophecy and are therefore *proper* in their place. Prophetic filler many times helps the believer to deliver the prophecy. Prophetic

filler keeps the prophecy fluid and smooth by supplying certain phrases that help to identify the message as a prophecy. However, the most important part is the *content* of the prophecy between these “filler” phrases. Your responsibility, as the recipient of a prophecy, is to put the “filler” aside in your mind and key in on the *content*. As illustrated previously, we need to keep our eye on the ball!

Whenever I receive a prophecy from another believer, I look for the words that stick out in my mind. I do not even think about the filler or mode of delivery. I concentrate on the key words that give me a good *understanding* of the prophecy. There may be only two or three key words, but it is certainly more feasible to recall six or seven points than an entire prophecy word for word. What I try to do is skip from point to point, putting the prophecy in the *simplest form*.

When I personally review a prophecy I have just given someone, I usually try to recall the *actual* words I used. For example, I might say, “Did not the Lord say something about your *financial needs* being *met*?” Or, “Did not the prophecy mention that God is calling you to fasting?” Sometimes it is literally a word or two that will help you to remember the whole emphasis of the prophecy.

Key words and phrases also can be divided into two groups: *active* and *passive*. The *passive* words in a prophecy are those words that state what is or what has been or even what potentially can be. These types of words merely explain situations God is aware of in your life, but that require no action. The *active* key words are those words that relate to any *action* you may have to take. For example, a prophecy might state, “My (son or daughter), begin to fast and pray regularly for the government.” Here is an example of where action is required by the hearer. It is a prophecy that instructs the believer to actually do something (in this example it is to fast and pray). The

tenor of the prophecy is *active* and the *key words and phrases* denote action to be taken, rather than merely stating a passive explanation of events in the recipient's life.

The Conditions

Conditions and instructions are ultimately the most *important* part of any prophecy because, in many prophecies, God makes a kind of spiritual *contract* with us. That is, God says in effect, "I will if you will," thus forming the contractual agreement. If we fail to obey the conditions of the prophecy, then we cannot expect God to be responsible for His part either. A deal is a deal, so to speak. Isaiah 1:19 and 20a says, "If you are *willing* and *obedient*, you will eat the best from the land; but if you *resist* and *rebel*, you will be devoured by the sword." One of the most tragic occurrences in prophecy today is God's not being able to fulfill His promises in our lives because we failed to fulfill our responsibilities. Could it be that some of our problems, in terms of prophecies not being fulfilled in our lives, are our own fault? Are we ignoring the *conditions* God attaches to various prophecies? Is that why we sometimes fail to realize a closer, more intimate relationship with our heavenly Father? As believers, we must learn to "play by the rules" of prophecy if prophecy is to benefit our lives. We must learn to *respond* to the *conditions* or *instructions* of the Lord in prophecy.

Equally as tragic, in prophecy, is our shifting the blame to others for prophecies that seemingly fail to be fulfilled. We tend to blame the believer who delivered the prophecy instead of searching our own hearts to see if we have been disobedient to any conditions in the prophecy. Usually, our first reaction is to point an accusing finger away from what we might *not* have done (conditions), straight toward the obedient believer who delivered the prophecy. That is a hard lesson that anyone who delivers prophecy needs to learn. He can sometimes be blamed for "false" prophecy when, in reality, the *hearer* failed to meet the guidelines of the prophecy, as laid down by

the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, conditions and instructions are not *options*. They are the “*rules of the game*” in God’s sight. If we do not respond, He will not respond. If we cannot do our part, He cannot do His part. How I pray that we can begin to obey God’s specific conditions in prophecy! What a glorious new realm of blessing the Church will then experience. Let us all strive to be “*willing and obedient*” so we can “*eat the best of the land.*”

The Time Slots

Our God is a God of exact order and precise, perfect *timing*. Nothing just “happens” in God, for all things are divinely planned. This powerful truth especially applies to our relationship with God. Nothing in our lives merely happens. Instead, everything is precisely *timed* according to *His* will. “There is a *time* for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1). “He has made everything beautiful in its *time*...” (Eccl. 3:11). “A man’s steps are directed by the Lord” (Prov. 20:24a). This idea of precise and planned timing from God also applies to the *prophecies* we as believers may have received.

When remembering prophecy, you need to recognize God’s “*time slots*.” Obviously, as in all measurements of time, the *time* element in prophecy is divided into three parts: *past, present and future*. By placing prophecy into one or more of these time categories, you will be able to recall a much greater percentage of the total message. By mentally placing each segment of the prophecy into the appropriate time slot, you have simplified the memory process. Now, when attempting to recall the prophecy, you have only three categories to deal with: past, present and future.

This particular system helps you to “cut through” the prophetic “filler” and get right to the “meat” or “core” of the prophecy. Many times when I am personally going over a prophecy, I follow this exact procedure. I simply associate different subject matter in the prophecy

with the particular time slot it coincided with. For example, I start with anything the Lord said about my *past*. Then I review any subject matter in the prophecy that deals with my life here and now, in the *present*. Last, and most important, I try to recall all material in the prophecy that applies to my *future*. We need to put prophecy in *order* as far as *time sequence* is concerned. God does not waste a single word in prophecy, so we need to be diligent in recalling it. I can truly say that many prophecies have become more real to me by my following this “time slot” procedure.

The New Material or Confirmation

Still another way to better recall a prophecy is to assign one of two labels to its subject matter. Does the prophecy contain *confirmation* (the first label) or does the prophecy relate *new material* (the second label) to the recipient?

First let us discuss the *element of confirmation in a prophecy*. When you receive a prophecy from another believer, you need to ask yourself, “Have I heard this before from the Lord?” The Lord will often *repeat* prophetic information to you for several reasons. First, the Lord wants you to recognize the *importance* of that information. Second, you may be “tested” in the specific area God is addressing, and you simply need to be reassured by the prophecy. Sometimes what God says to you prophetically and what is actually happening in your everyday life can seem to be in opposition to each other. So, God in His wisdom and love *reminds* you (confirms) that He has not changed His mind and that you need to continue to believe God for whatever He has promised you in the prophecy.

Third, most *major* prophetic statements will be *confirmed*. This principle is clearly seen in the call of Samuel the prophet, when God spoke to the young boy *three* times (1 Sam. 3). Many times that is why God seems to repeat Himself in prophecy. If you continue to receive prophecy with similar content, then “sit up and take notice,” for

there surely is a reason. It seems the *more* significant a statement by God in your life, the *more* times you will hear it repeated by God in a prophecy. Lastly, if you tend to ignore the instructions of the Lord, then repetitious (confirming) prophecy serves as a *warning* that God seldom lets His children go their own way. God wants you to obey Him, not “miss” Him. Therefore, He is willing to *repeat* Himself for you. That is why confirming or repetitious prophecy is something you should heed. So here again are the four reasons for prophetic *confirmation*:

1. The *importance* of the general content.
2. The *testing* of the prophecy in our lives.
3. The *establishing* of a major statement by God.
4. A *warning* from a loving and patient heavenly Father.

The second “label” we can assign to prophecy says, “Does the content represent any *new material* to the individual for whom it is intended?” Obviously, we all face this situation from time to time since God continually unveils His will for us by means of prophecy. How then can we prove new material in prophecy to be genuine and correct? The answer is to *wait on it*. That is of extreme importance, since not all new material is necessarily true. “Test [prove] everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21), and “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). These two verses are scriptural safeguards given by God that we all can apply to proving (testing) a prophecy.

Basically, when it comes to *new material* in a prophecy, we need to take a *cautious* approach. Now, being cautious and being unbelieving are two distinctly different attitudes of the heart. God does not want us to totally disregard something merely because it is

new to us. Just as we need to be careful, we also need to be *open* to new material. The best way to do that is to let the Lord confirm what has been spoken. If we adopt this approach, then there will be little pressure to prematurely discard the prophecy or act on the prophecy. Again, the rule of thumb is to *do nothing right away*, especially with new prophetic material.

Whatever the content of the prophecy, do not *overreact*. If the prophecy is of that great a significance, then God will surely *reaffirm* it to you by repeating the “message” again. You need not judge the prophecy (prematurely) “false” unless, of course, it is *unscriptural, illegal or immoral*. Otherwise, *wait* on the prophecy.

Unfortunately, I have seen some believers disregard legitimate prophecy because they could not see it at the moment. A short time later, God fulfills the prophecy. *New material* is *exciting* if the believer can respond to it calmly and in faith! Some have asked me, “What do you personally do when someone gives you a prophecy with new material in it?” I “practice what I preach” and calmly follow these steps:

1. Do nothing, *wait*, prove and test everything in the prophecy.
2. Remain cautious but *calm*. Remain in *faith* concerning the prophecy.
3. Expect *confirmations* on the prophecy.
4. Accept my *limitations* in fully understanding the prophecy (especially timing).
5. “Do not treat prophecies with *contempt*” (1 Thess. 5:20).
The Spirit of the Prophecy

My experience with prophecy has made me realize that *how* one says something can be just as important as *what* one says. When I listen to prophecy, I concentrate on what I call the “*spirit?*” of the *prophecy*. In other words, I try to analyze the impression, feeling or sense the prophecy gives me. I use this analytical process both in my mind and in my spirit. Sometimes what does not make sense in your mind seems to make perfect sense in your spirit. At other times, what seems to make perfect sense in your mind leaves you unsettled and undecided in your spirit. That is why both your mind and your spirit need to be involved in understanding the “spirit” of a prophecy.

Let me share with you one brief caution of which you should be aware when determining whether or not the “spirit” of a prophecy is appropriate. But first, to better understand the “spirit” of a prophecy, we need to recognize something that is true of *all* believers: We need to recognize our *limitations*. We need to be *honest* with ourselves. We need to give the prophecy the “benefit of the doubt.”

Thus, all believers must understand that sometimes our own *prejudices* can get in the way of impartially testing or judging the “spirit” of a prophecy. Yet, if we can accept this fact, we should be able to get a fairly accurate “witness” (determination) of the “spirit” of a prophecy. Due to the highly *subjective* (based on personal opinion) nature of this particular step, in remembering a prophecy, we as believers must admit at least the *possibility* of prejudiced judging of a prophecy and the “spirit” we feel it conveys. Just because a believer does not fully *understand* the entire prophecy (content), that does not mean the “spirit” is wrong or the prophecy false. For example, if the Lord speaks firmly and in a corrective manner toward you in a prophecy, it does not necessarily mean the “spirit” is wrong. In other words, if you can be honest enough to separate prophetic content (which we will assume is accurate) from the “spirit” it conveyed, you should get a better overall view of the prophecy, and thus a better understanding. The content might seem somewhat firm to you; nevertheless, the “spirit” of the prophecy was peaceful, loving and most of all, true!

Strong prophetic content does not necessarily indicate a harsh “spirit” in prophecy. Learn to separate the two.

Prophecy is supposed to be for “strengthening, encouragement and comfort” (1 Cor 14:3). A good way to remember prophecy is to review the “spirit” of the prophecy and see if it accomplished those three things. For example, did the prophecy sound firm and fatherly, or was it pushy and degrading? Did the “spirit” of the prophecy sound bossy, dictatorial and overbearing, or was it merely requiring obedience to God?

We must understand the difference. The difference is, the first “spirit” humiliates, degrades and demands. The second “woos” us to want to obey God, as we would a Father we love and want to please. Also, in the “spirit” of the prophecy, is there an undertone of discouragement or an expectation of hope? God *always* has hope for us and He often expresses this hope for us in prophecy. I have looked at a believer and thought doubtfully, “How could the Lord have *anything good* to say to this person?” Then as the prophecy was delivered, in spite of my lack of faith, the Lord, through me, prophesied hope and encouragement to that believer. It was necessary for me to change my mind about the believer over whom I prophesied. God never judges according to human standards. But if we judge that way, according to the natural eye or the flesh, we risk quenching or limiting the Holy Spirit’s operating through us.

Another way to determine the “spirit” of a prophecy is to look at the question of *fear*. Ask yourself if the prophecy is conveying godly fear (Prov. 1:7) or the fear which has “torment” (1 John 4:18 KJV), that is, the type of fear associated with punishment. The first fear is a healthy, positive attitude of restraint which leads you to obedience. The other fear is empty, hard on the emotions, and contains no sense of safety or security. This latter type of fear condemns you and gives you “no way out.” When remembering prophecy, you need to identify the “spirit” of the “message” as to the type of fear in it. Was it

godly fear or tormenting, punishing fear? The *fear of the Lord* is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge and the other *fear* (empty, hollow, condemning, vague) is the result of a wrong “spirit” in a prophecy.

God also tends to *plead* with us in prophecy. Believers should be able to recognize the pleading or yearning of God’s heart in a prophecy, if the “*spirit*” is right. God does not threaten or use “scare tactics” to make us serve Him. Instead, as a loving Father would, He pleads, yearns and cries out for a right relationship with His earthly children. How we need ears to hear this pleading of God in prophecy. I still cannot comprehend that the Almighty God humbles Himself to plead with sinful man. How we can ignore the cry of God’s heart is beyond me! Lord Jesus, help us to be sensitive to Your voice. Help us to honor our heavenly Father and to obey the yearning and pleading of God that we hear in the “spirit” of a prophecy.

Finally, concerning the “spirit” of a prophecy, does the prophecy eventually bring *healing* or does it *wound* unnecessarily? *All* prophecy should ultimately heal.

How often I have seen God cut away the *dead* areas of our lives through the *healing* word that is prophecy. At first, it may seem like a “wound” for God to be so blatantly real with us through prophecy of this nature, but it does bring *healing*. We need to allow God to “surgically” remove certain parts of our lives where sin and the flesh still reign. Sometimes God will use the gift of prophecy to accomplish this surgery. So do not lose sight of the fact that this still brings *healing*. Holy Spirit surgery is sometimes necessary to save our spiritual lives. The Scriptures tell us, “Wounds from a friend can be trusted...” (Prov. 27:6). The initial *wounding from God* (God’s loving discipline) in prophecy (in contrast to the unnecessary wounds inflicted on us by believers who are not ministering in love when prophesying) is only a stepping stone toward complete *healing*. “Because the Lord disciplines those He *loves*, and He punishes everyone

He *accepts* as a son” (Heb. 12:6). If we can embrace and not merely endure this aspect of prophecy, then we know that God considers us true sons and daughters, mature and ready for “correction in righteousness.”

I have always attempted to *heal* and to *encourage* when I minister in the gift of prophecy. My goal has always been to bring *life* to the believer receiving the prophecy. My motivation has always been to provide hope, even for the most desperate individual. I have always tried to see the “cup” as half *full* instead of half *empty* when speaking prophetically into the lives of believers.

Occasionally, in order to realize healing, encouragement and life, prophecy must begin with the *judgment* (adjustments) of God, followed by His *mercies* (acceptance). “Let a righteous man *strike* me—it is a *kindness*; let him *rebuke* me—it is *oil* on my head” (Ps. 141:5a). Also, David continued in Psalm 119:71: “It was good for me to be *afflicted* so that I might *learn* Your decrees.” In verse 67 he says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I *obey* Your word.” As long as the “spirit” of the prophecy is one of *healing*, then we should be able to say, “...in faithfulness You have afflicted me” (Ps. 119:75). That means God’s judgments are always given to keep us in right relationship with Him. Prophecy can be one way in which God achieves this in our lives, if it has the right “spirit.”

The “Vessel” Who Delivered the Prophecy

Our final point concerning what to look for in prophecy deals with the “*vessel*.” In other words, the *character* of the person who gave you the prophecy is of the utmost importance. The very first question I like to ask someone, when I hear they received a prophecy from another believer, is “*Who* delivered it?” To me, the “vessel” or spokesperson who delivered the prophecy can be a determining factor in the *credibility or genuineness* of the prophecy. For one reason, the person or the vessel can pollute, dilute, pervert and otherwise

negatively affect perfectly “good” prophecy. How? By not guarding his heart against unholy and impure “input” (what you feed on) or because of selfish, self-seeking motives, to name two. A prophecy once spoken over me illustrated this general idea of the importance of a “pure,” although not perfect, “vessel.” “Son, I am going to begin to flow from you in a *pure* flow of the word of knowledge and wisdom. There will not be any *dirt* or *foreign matter* in your “pipes” that will have an *effect* on the *prophecy*.”

Plainly stated, I personally trust some “vessels” more than others. Why? Because I see less rust, corrosion and debris (“dirt or foreign matter”) in their “pipes.” I know how they *live*. I know how they *talk*. I know with whom they are in *relationship*. I know of their *reputation* and *integrity* in ministry. I know them to be “vessels” who “know how to possess [their] *vessel* in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess. 4:4 KJV). In conjunction with all these qualities, they have a history of a clear and accurate gift of prophecy operating in and through them that glorifies Jesus Christ.

I have difficulty with a “vessel” whose life is a continual battle between stable and then unstable living. I also recognize that a prophecy can be affected by an untrustworthy character or a questionable reputation. Wrong motivation in a believer who has a personal “agenda” can literally destroy his chances of delivering any prophecy clearly and with accuracy. Remember, *it matters who gives the prophecy!* Do not take any “vessel” or any prophecy at face value, if I have a choice, I look for “vessels” who have some “track record” of fulfilled prophecy. I like to look to sources who have a regular *consistency* and *credibility* about their lives and their prophecies. I do not “despise” or treat with suspicion the prophecy from inexperienced “vessels.” I am only more cautious when receiving a prophecy from inexperienced believers, until I see it confirmed and/or fulfilled in my life. We all need to strive for *reliability in our vessel* when personally operating in the gift of prophecy.

As God lovingly takes time to speak to us in prophecy, we should endeavor to look for at least these items. These items are not “hard and fast rules,” but they are a *guide* to understanding prophecy on ***a general level***. So study your prophecy. Take time to meditate on your prophecy. Dissect your prophecy “point by point” Keep your eye on the “ball” in prophecy.

In the end, through experience, you will have your spiritual senses sharpened to distinguish between true and false prophecy. Most of all, ask the author of prophecy, the Lord Jesus Christ, to give you understanding and guidance in response to your prophecy.

Summary Outline: What to Look for in Prophecy

1. The main theme of the prophecy,
2. The key words of the prophecy,
3. The conditions of the prophecy,
4. The time slots of the prophecy,
5. The new material or confirmation in the prophecy,
6. The “spirit” of the prophecy, and
7. The “vessel” who delivered the prophecy.

Chapter Three

Hindrances When Giving a Prophecy

In the introduction to this book, we established that speaking in tongues and prophecy are available to *all* believers as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Why then do so many believers fail to see these gifts operating in their lives? Perhaps these believers are the exception to the rule that the gifts are for all. *Wrong!* The only reason we do not see these gifts operating more in the Church is, *we do not believe God!* Hebrews 3:19 says, “So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their *unbelief*” Later in the same book (chapter 6, verse 12) we find these words: “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and *patience* inherit what has been promised.”

There are many examples of the importance of *faith* in our lives. All prayers to God are made by *faith*. All progress in the Christian life is made by *faith*. We also prophesy according to the proportion of our *faith* (Rom. 12:6). *Faith* is the key that “unlocks” everything in the spiritual realm. “And without faith it is impossible to please God...” (Heb. 11:6). Strangely enough, however, unbelief (lack or absence of faith in God) is not the “number one” hindrance to operating in the gift of prophecy. There are a number of reasons we do not operate more freely in this gift. Common reasons include fear, pride, lack of scriptural teaching, lack of exposure to good examples, etc. These are all hindrances, but none of these are the greatest or “number one” hindrance to operating in the gift of prophecy. *The “number one” hindrance to operating in the gift of prophecy is underestimating ourselves in God. To underestimate means “to place too low of a value on something or someone.” Specifically, it means placing too low of a value on our ability to operate in the gift of prophecy.*

As Christians, we often think alike. Did it ever occur to you that

at some point we *all* have felt as if God cannot use us? We *all* have questioned God and ourselves and said, “This cannot be God speaking to me.” I personally would like to know where this mentality originates, which states that our leadings and promptings to prophesy cannot be from God. It is time to stop “passing the buck” in the Body of Christ. If God cannot use *you*, then who can He use? If you continue to say, “Who, me?” then you will not “enter in because of your unbelief.” Underestimating ourselves is a strong undercurrent in the Church today, and it is *not* from God.

In the Scriptures, believers are described in many ways. Let me share some of the characteristics of the average believer, as God sees us. According to the Scriptures, we are *called* (Eph. 4:1) and we are *chosen* (Eph. 1:4). We are the *temples* of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16). Imagine, we are the actual dwelling place of God’s presence, *filled* with the Holy Spirit! We are *sanctified* or set apart for God’s use (1 Cor. 6:11). The Scriptures further tell us that “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34). He looks at us all as having *equal* potential. We are equally “in Him [Jesus].. .the *righteousness* [having right standing before God] of God” (2 Cor 5:21). Finally, we can “do *everything* through Him who gives [us] strength” (Phil. 4:13). Jesus Himself said that “greater works.. .shall [*you*] do...” (John 14:12 KJV). There is no doubt that these verses apply to *all* believers.

We are looked upon by God as being equals in terms of our *potential*. Realizing our full potential is *our* responsibility. Son-ship awaits all believers, if they want it! We can experience as much or as little of God as we choose to. Although God is Almighty, He leaves this decision to us.

I believe that you can and have been hearing the Shepherd’s voice. All His sheep do. I believe that you can prophesy. All believers can. You probably have not operated in the gift of prophecy because *you underestimate yourself* It is more likely that you *have* been hearing God’s voice than not hearing it. The leadings and promptings

you may have to prophesy are *more likely* God’s promptings than not. That is right—more *likely to be God!* It is a scriptural fact. I just gave you a number of reasons you probably are hearing God. I say “probably” because nothing is automatic in God, and you need to prove everything. However, according to God’s Word, you should be able to prophesy regularly, with a clear and accurate message.

Another common misconception is the attitude that says, “I do not think God wants to use *me.*” Imagine if everyone in the Church had that same mind set. There would be nobody “in faith” for God to use. Again, we have been caught “passing the buck.” God earnestly desires to use *you.* Specifically, God desires to use *every* believer in many ways, including in the gift of *prophecy.* We need to begin to take God at His Word literally when He says, “For you *can all prophesy...*” (1 Cor 14:31).

God has not ordained the ungodly to operate in the gift of prophecy. He has prepared believers, like you and me, to do so. He has made *us* His *Body.* He has made *us* His *Bride.* It is the vehicle known as the *Church* that will always best express the “whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13), which includes expressing ourselves in *prophecy.*

Contrary to some beliefs, God did not stop speaking through believers in prophecy when the last apostle (of the original 12) died. That argument simply does not appear in the Scriptures anywhere! The Scriptures do state, however, that “God’s *gifts* and His *call* are *irrevocable*” (Rom. 11:29) and according to Ephesians 4:11 and 12, God is *currently* maturing and equipping the Church by using the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. Both God’s gifts and God’s callings are active today in the Church that He is building.

Can all believers then, regardless of their specific station in life

or lack of a “call” to a specific ministry, still operate in prophecy? Apparently a man named Ananias in the Book of Acts thought so. We have no record that he was a deacon or an elder. We have no record that God had particularly “called” him to any special ministry or office. We have no evidence that Ananias was gifted in some unusual way. Yet Ananias, a mere *disciple* (Acts 9:10), acted as *Gods messenger* (v. 17)! So if a *disciple* could prophesy *then*, you as a disciple can prophesy *now*. The gifts of God are irrevocable, which means God *has not* and *will nor* revoke the ability for believers to operate in prophecy or any other spiritual gift.

It is very difficult for me to understand why Christians, of all people, “throw away” or disregard so much of God’s Word. Some believers spend more time and effort “taking away” from God’s Word than others do *agreeing* with it. We spend even more time debating among ourselves, as believers, what we think God can and cannot do. Every time we turn around, some new “truth” reveals that God “is not doing that today.” As believers, what we should do instead is preach more sermons on what the devil cannot do, not prepare sermons on what God cannot do! Many of our traditions limit God and “nullify the word of God” (Mark 7:13). If the entire Corinthian church could prophesy, *so can we*. If the Ephesian church operated in the gift of prophecy, then *so can we*. We *underestimate* ourselves because we fail to believe the following truths:

1. There exists no other spiritual *realm*.
2. We are sufficiently *holy* now.
3. We are sufficiently *equipped* now.

We have given support previously as to why all these reasons are

true. However, let us restate them for the benefit of all. Please consider the following:

1. We are currently in the Kingdom of *God—this is the realm.*
2. We are holy by the *gift of righteousness*, which we accept by *faith*.
3. We are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit; therefore, we “qualify.” Our *faith* is our *equipment*.

God has been using imperfect “vessels” ever since Adam fell. Except for Jesus Christ, we all have our faults. The key to success in God is to accept the complete redemption of the cross and claim our birthright as sons of God. So accept yourself as imperfect, but do not let your effectiveness in God be *limited* by believing that sonship means *perfection*. Moses, for example, complained of his faults before the Lord. He said he was “slow of speech and tongue” (Ex. 4:10). But God simply would not accept this excuse from Moses. God became very angry with him because Moses needed to believe God and not *underestimate* himself.

Another example can be found with the biblical character of Gideon. God *said* to him, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” (Judg. 6:12). Immediately Gideon made two excuses. First he said, “*If* the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?” Second, he said, “*Where* are all His wonders that our fathers told us about...?” (Judg. 6:13). Gideon was *underestimating* himself as a “mighty warrior.” The Lord *was* with him later in battle, and he *was* indeed “mighty as a warrior.”

Next we have Jeremiah the prophet. His first reaction to God was

similar to Moses'. He said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child" (Jer. 1:6). The Lord disagreed with Jeremiah in the very next verse: "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you" (v. 7). The point is, all these godly men had "weak starts" but "strong finishes." At least they *obeyed* God. In spite of their own inadequate feelings about themselves and regardless of their circumstances, they forged ahead in God. They all acted on what God said to them.

The great king and psalmist David further illustrates this point for us. David had sin in his life; nevertheless, *God used him*. Yes, he paid the price for his sin, and was obviously far from perfect, yet *God used him*.

Peter made mistakes, but God still *used him*. Peter actually denied the Lord three times, yet God still chose to *use him*.

God used an ex-prostitute (Rahab), lowly fishermen and an ex-tax collector (Matthew). He even used an old donkey to pronounce judgment on a disobedient prophet (Mum. 22). Certainly He can use *you*.

When I became a believer through faith in Jesus Christ, I was a sinner. I became marvelously saved *from my sin in spite of my sin!* I was baptized in water and received the Holy Spirit, still with some sin in my life. Then God "called" me into the ministry while I still had sin in my life. Either God made a gross misjudgment, or it has always been His plan to use *imperfect* people. Yes, we need to continually overcome our faults. All of us should strive to be like Jesus. In the meantime, do not let imperfection (sin) "hold you back" or "keep you down." Jesus Christ took care of our sins on the cross and *we are righteous by faith in Him*. That is why the glory, praise and honor

must go to Him. He is our righteousness! He is the reason we can be effective in all things, including the gift of prophecy.

Some believe that we do not have the right *qualifications* or *equipment* to operate in any gift of the Spirit. But the Scriptures say we “are complete in Him...” (Col. 2:10 KJV). Thus, if God could use some meal to heal pottage (2 Kings 4:38-41), salt to heal the water (2 Kings 2:21), Balaam’s ass to speak judgment (Num. 22:28), Aaron’s rod of wood to bring deliverance (Ex. 7:19), a jawbone to slay the enemy (Judg. 15:15) and the ravens to feed Elijah (1 Kings 17:4-6), then He can use *you*. If those dumb animals and inanimate objects can be used of God, then so can *you!* After all, were you not made in His image?

Whatever you do, do not underestimate yourself in God. “. . .But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men” (Matt. 5:13). The “*number one*” *hindrance* to operating in prophecy is *underestimating* yourself in God. So let us be “overcomers” in God and overcome this hindrance. We *are* the oracles of God (I Pet. 4:11 KJV)! We *are* His spokespeople! We *are* His mouthpieces! Remember, you *are* in the Kingdom, you *are* holy, and you *are* equipped!

Summary Outline: “Number One” Hindrance When Giving a Prophecy

We underestimate ourselves because we fail to believe these truths:

1. There exists no other spiritual *realm*.
2. We are sufficiently *holy* now.
3. We are sufficiently *equipped* now.

Chapter Four

Hindrances When Receiving Prophecy

One of the most important aspects of Christianity *is* knowing how to listen. Whether it is the “voice of the Lord” or the voice of one of our spiritual leaders, we need to be careful listeners. Listening is a spiritual discipline that takes time to develop. The Book of Revelation says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 3:22). Each believer needs to ask these questions: “Am I going to *allow* God to speak to *me*? Do I have spiritual *ears* to hear?”

These questions show us that, hypothetically, there may be certain *hindrances* to *receiving* from the Lord through personal prophecy. Here are some of the hindrances I have noticed as I minister in the gift of prophecy to other believers. These are the general areas in which I have experienced the most resistance. These areas represent “strongholds of our flesh.” These all oppose the *proper receptivity of prophecy* in our lives.

1. Holding a *self-preserving attitude* toward the prophecy by the recipient.
2. Looking through a *distorted view of God’s perfect prophetic timing* by the recipient.
3. *Drawing premature (human) conclusions* about the prophecy by the recipient.
4. *Allowing an insignificant offense to overrule a major pro-*

phetic truth by the recipient.

5. *Misunderstanding God's prophetic plan for your life.*

6. *Failing to recognize your limitations in receiving prophetic truth.*

Holding a Self-Preserving Attitude

The most prevalent of these *hindrances* to properly *receiving* prophecy is the *self-preserving attitude* of the recipient. That means that we all tend to *resist change*. We as believers generally fail to embrace anything that may appear to be uncomfortable in a prophecy. We keep the prophecy at a distance and do not allow it to affect our lives. Above all, we consciously or unconsciously strive to maintain our spiritual *status quo* at the expense of the prophecy.

A self-preserving attitude can indicate our *unwillingness* to change. We want to *preserve* our present state. Why? Sometimes *change* means *pain*. However, pain is natural to the *growth* process. Even when we consider prophecy, this principle of “no pain, no gain” certainly applies. Growth will always require “sweat equity” on the part of the believer. This could incorporate *new* areas of responsibility, hard work, commitment, sacrifice and even “dying” to our own goals as outlined to us in a personal prophecy. It is often our flesh that resists change. Therefore, when we hear prophecy that implies change, we sometimes refuse to receive or discern it properly in our hearts I was ministering once in central Pennsylvania at a small country church. Many of the believers there were open to the operation of the gift of prophecy. However, several times, through prophecy, the Lord dealt with the self-preserving attitude of the recipients. The whole thrust of these prophecies was to motivate the believers to *grow* in ministry. God wanted them to *produce spiritually* instead of

merely consume spiritually. The Lord was saying, through the gift of prophecy, that it was “time to advance.” He said further that it was time to stop *preserving the status quo* in their lives and to get mobilized for God. On that night, I encountered a self-preserving attitude in believers.

In my opinion, nothing hinders the “moving” of God more than a self-preserving attitude. Why? Self-preservation is just a nice way of being *selfish*. Selfish or self-centered believers do not like change. They do not like any commitments or require-merits put on their lives. However, there are usually conditions to every personal prophecy and the recipients must meet these conditions, or miss God’s best for their lives.

Matthew 16:21-25 illustrates a self-preserving attitude in the life of the apostle Peter. For Peter to agree that Jesus must be crucified would have ruined all of Peter’s (selfish) plans: “‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’” (v. 22). As far as Peter was concerned, his personal *status quo* was being threatened and change was approaching much too rapidly. Jesus rebuked this attitude (which, by the way, was of the devil) and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men” (v. 23). At times even the devil can use a *self-preserving attitude* in believers’ lives if we are riot on our guard!

The final verse on this subject, found in Matthew 16, is absolutely true and I have seen it in believers: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it” (v. 25). Do you see the principle at work here? In order to *find* ourselves, we need to *deny* ourselves. Denial means to follow God’s plan and not our own. We deny ourselves by allowing God to lovingly dismantle our self-preserving attitude. This process may seem painful

at first, but it will be very *rewarding* upon its completion. Jesus prayed this prayer “Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). So ask God to help you see this hindrance in your life, if it exists. It is indeed one of the major hindrances to properly receiving prophecy.

Looking Through a Distorted View of God’s Timing

Our next hindrance to receiving prophecy is a *distorted view of Gods prophetic timing*. Luke 24:13-35 illustrates how it hindered these two disciples after Jesus’ death They too had a distorted view of God’s *timing*. There they were, totally discouraged and without hope; their Messiah was dead. A traveler, a stranger to them both, had joined the disciples as they walked along, and inquired about this Jesus of Nazareth. The disciples could hardly believe this stranger’s ignorance of the events of the last few days. They explained fully what had taken place, right to that present hour. However, they had a *distorted* viewpoint. They said, “But we had hoped that He [Jesus] was the One who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since au this took place” (Luke 24:21). The disciples in this example “missed” God’s timing. Although the actual amount of elapsed time was minimal, in terms of God’s eternal purposes, they missed God’s timing by a “mile.” They had a *distorted view of God’s timing*.

This traveler (Jesus), with whom the disciples spoke, was the very fulfillment of that statement they had just made. The

Redeemer of Israel was walking next to them! He had risen from the dead! It was the third day and indeed He was alive, right on time, just as Jesus had promised! Yet, due to their distorted view of what

God was doing (God's timing), they almost missed God. Then, in verse 31, their eyes were opened and they knew it was Jesus. God had not lied. The Old Testament Scriptures were true. All that was spoken by Jesus Himself was fulfilled precisely *on time*. God's timing was *flawless!*

Here is an example from my own life concerning God's timing. As a young man in my early twenties, God had spoken to me about a wife. He told me, "I am going to give you Diane to be your wife." She was beautiful. She was spiritual. Most importantly, God had *told* me that she was a gift to *me!* I liked what I heard!

What I did *not* like in this case was the element of God's *timing*. It never occurred to me that God might not have told Diane what He had told me. Boy! Was that a mistake! We need to wait on God's timing for *everything*. "Missing" God by five minutes can be like "missing" Him by five years. Of course, I immediately called my new wife-to-be. However, she was not exactly thrilled, to put it mildly. You see, God had not told her a thing that He had already told me! She did not have the slightest hint that she was to marry me. She actually said, "But I don't even like you." Now it was not very funny then, but I can hardly contain myself when I think of it now. So we do learn from our mistakes. What I thought I was learning at the time was to avoid women for the rest of my life. The principle God was actually trying to teach me was, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1).

Again, I was the one who made the mistake, not Diane or God. He just told me what He was going to do. He did not tell me *when* He was going to do it! My error was in not viewing the timing of God correctly. Fortunately, God spoke to Diane three months later and we

were married three months after that. That was 18 years ago. Praise the Lord! I learned a lesson that day I hope I will never forget. There is “a time to be *silent* and a time to speak” (Eccl. 3:7b). Allow God to fulfill His will in your life in His time. Timing is everything in prophecy.

Drawing Premature Conclusions

This next hindrance to receiving prophecy also deals with timing, but in a different area. Sometimes we *draw premature (human) conclusions* about the prophecy. Doing so can prove to be spiritually dangerous since premature conclusions can lead to *discouragement* and *despair*. Ultimately, drawing premature conclusions about prophecy could lead to a “hardened” heart or attitude toward the Lord Himself. That is otherwise known as a “root of bitterness.” Why? We mistakenly blame God for prophecies that fail to “come to pass” (be fulfilled) as we *think* (with human reasoning) they should.

In stark contrast to our way of thinking about anything relating to God, the Scriptures declare this: “‘For My thoughts are *not* your thoughts, *neither* are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways *higher* than your ways and My thoughts than *your* thoughts’” (Is. 55:8,9). Romans 11:33 says, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How *unsearchable* His judgments, and His paths *beyond* tracing out!”

Finite man will never fully understand an infinite and omniscient God. Similarly, we will not always be able to fully understand all prophecy at all times since the Scriptures tell us that “we know in part..” (1 Cor. 13:9). When we do not recognize this limita-

tion in ourselves, we tend to draw premature conclusions about our prophecies. Remember that “His paths [are] beyond tracing out.” When we see this verse as a *divine restriction* and recognize it as being for our own good, we will, hopefully, cease from drawing *too* many conclusions *too* soon in our prophecies.

Let me give you an example from my own life. My wife, Diane, was pregnant with our first child. We had the usual joy and anticipation associated with the first new arrival. Since we were both committed believers and embraced the gift of prophecy, we were thrilled to receive prophecy about our unborn child. What Christian parent would not be? We were told, through prophecy, that our baby would be “blessed”! Another prophecy said that our child would be “used” of God. Still more prophecy said that the delivery of the child would be “different” than all the others in our church. The most exciting of all the prophecies was, “He shall be a miracle baby!” Both Diane and I were extremely happy. Praise God, the delivery would be quick and easy, we assumed, and we would have a miracle baby too! What we failed to understand was what God said and what we thought He meant were two very different concepts. Does that sound familiar to anyone?

My wife Diane went into normal labor. Although several hours passed and there was still no baby, the doctors assured me that everything was fine. After many more hours of prolonged labor (about 14 hours in all), complications developed and things began to look somewhat ominous. I tried to ignore the circumstances because God had spoken to us through several powerful prophecies. The prophecies were from reliable sources and we were sure we were going to have a miracle baby!

Finally, the doctor explained to me the difficulties Diane was experiencing in giving birth. I could not believe my ears and I nearly passed out from the strain of it all. The baby's heart was experiencing fetal distress. After 14 hours of labor, there was no hope of any normal delivery. I thought to myself, "Wait a minute, God, what are You doing?" "Why all this when You said we were going to have a miracle baby?" I asked myself, "Did God forget what a miracle was?" Miracles were supposed to be exciting and uplifting. Then the doctor delivered the final blow to me as I stood just outside my wife's room. "Mt Cramer, we are going to have to take the baby by C-section," he said. I replied, "Yes, doctor, that's fine. What is a C-section anyway?" At that time I had never heard of the term *C-section* and had no idea what he meant.

The doctor then explained to me that the baby would have to be removed from Diane surgically. To say the least, I was very shaken. What really leveled me, though, was the fact that God *seemed* to have failed me. In my heart I knew that could not be. Nevertheless, I almost "blacked out" from the shock of the entire ordeal.

The doctor quickly sat me down so I would not fall down. I was in a daze. I never felt so unable to give an explanation for something in my life. Although feeling mentally "numb," I had to tell my wife of the doctor's decision. Somehow I convinced her that it was a common and safe surgical procedure. I tried to assure her that God had everything under control. But inside I questioned, "Did He?"

So into surgery she went, alone, not fully knowing what was happening to her or to the baby. Outside in the waiting room, I called upon the Lord. "Lord Jesus, I do not know what is going on, but Lord, I do not blame You. Please help us. Do not let the baby die or Diane

suffer. Jesus, I give this whole situation to You. I do not understand it, but I believe You are in control. Thank You, Lord.” That was about all the praying I had left in me. Many other prayers were said for Diane and the baby as well by numerous churches and individuals.

The emergency Caesarian delivery (C—section) was successful *in itself*, but the baby was critically ill. Due to all the complications at birth, the first eight hours of my new son’s life were crucial. The doctors told me of the possibility of lung and brain damage to the infant. However, several churches continued to pray. Then the doctors began a series of injections to “clean up” the poison that was in the baby’s system due to a failed placenta. More than 25 injections were administered to him in his first few days of life. Heart monitors, chest tubes in his lungs, medications of every kind, and around the clock medical attention were all part of our baby’s new, fragile life. I knew God had not lied because He cannot do so, but what kind of miracle was this?

God then began to unfold our promised miracle right before our eyes. There was a supernatural side to all of this suffering and pain after all. The two-day-old infant, by himself, pulled out a life-sustaining tube from his chest, which had been inserted earlier due to the collapse of his lung. What should have been a life-threatening disaster was, in fact, God supernaturally *beginning to fulfill our prophecies to us*. God used the infant’s actions in puffing out his tube to show us that our personal prophecy was being fulfilled. From that time on, our baby’s recovery became the talk of the maternity floor.

The doctors and nurses marveled at what the “Cramer baby” had done. Our own doctor medically confirmed the baby’s speedy recovery and was quoted as describing the events of those few days as “remarkable.” Even the ever-conservative nursing staff told us that we had a “miracle baby.” Our son was being identified on the entire

fifth floor of that hospital as a literal “miracle baby” by everyone involved. Remember, these were not born again believers giving this testimony. These were “hard-to-convince” medical professionals who seldom jump to any unsubstantiated medical conclusion. Yet, as grateful as we were, there were still the questions about brain damage or problems with the infant’s heart.

As I stated, the *miracle* was just beginning! The baby’s recovery would be complete within a few days of his birth! *None* of the expected complications ever materialized. *We had a miracle baby after all!* We just could not see with our “natural” eye how God had intended to fulfill our personal prophecies. Our problem was a common one, when attempting to properly receive prophecy. My wife and I had *drawn premature conclusions* about what God had said to us.

God will, at times, purposely conceal the meaning of a prophecy until the proper time. “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter” (Prov. 25 :2a). We can apply this quality of God to the area of prophecy. God will personally conceal the meaning of certain prophetic information. As an example, let us look at the Book of Revelation.

When John received these prophecies, many of their meanings were obscure, if not completely unknown to him. Since that time, God has revealed great portions of this book, but much still remains concealed. In many ways, the Book of Revelation remains a “closed” book to us. That is why so much of the teaching from the Book of Revelation is essentially speculation and not true revelation from God. Likewise, if God is “concealing a matter” in personal prophecy, then any effort by an individual to “figure it out” will be equally as speculative, if not outright futile for the believer.

Allowing Offense to Overrule Truth

Allowing an “insignificant” offense to overrule a “major prophetic truth” is our next hindrance to receiving prophecy. Let us examine this dilemma in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. John 6:60 and 61 gives us the account of the disciples’ adverse reaction to *truth* as spoken by Jesus. In this instance, the “truth” happened to be on the subject of communion. After Jesus gave His teaching on communion, there was a very negative reaction from the crowd. “On hearing it [the teaching], many of His disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’ “ Jesus, after knowing their heart’s reaction to this *truth*, said, “Does this *offend* you?” Notice where the offense occurred. The offense occurred in their *hearts!* Jesus knew His “word” brought offense and yet His words were “spirit and life.” His words were *truth*, but there was an “offense” within that truth. Occasionally, this same conflict exists as we react to *truth* contained in a prophecy directed to us personally.

There may be points of “offense” in a prophecy that we receive from another believer. We must be careful, however, not to “throw the baby out with the bath water” We need to ask ourselves honestly why we are offended. Is it because we do not understand the prophecy? That could be the case at times. Could we be offended because the prophecy is true and we do not want to admit it? This could also be the case. Does the prophecy “go against our grain” of tradition or theology? These are all legitimate questions to ask concerning our response to our personal prophecies.

Let us look again at the life of Jesus for a moment. Jesus had more trouble with the Pharisees (the religious leaders) than He did with the common unbelievers of His day. Why? The religious leaders and their followers also *failed to surrender to truth*, in both the person and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Today, some of us have the

same problem with Jesus as those disciples of Christ and Pharisees did. Perhaps we too would have found “offense” with the truth that was spoken by Jesus. There is, however, an answer to this problem of offense. The answer is openness, honesty, transparency and humility. We must *admit* to ourselves that we do not always know *everything* God is doing or will do in our lives. We must recognize that “we know in part” (1 Cor 13:9).

If you *do* receive a prophecy that contains some doubtful material, simply do not *overreact*. Do not be offended. Ask yourself honestly, “Could this prophecy be true?” Wait on the prophecy and let God fulfil it. You really have nothing to worry about God does not fulfill false prophecy. He only fulfills His plan and His purpose for your life. He does not fulfill what some sincere but misguided believer might say is His will for your life. If the prophecy contains direction for you, let God *confirm* the prophecy *before* you take any major step. Do not attempt to understand immediately everything you hear in a personal prophecy. Do not “despise” your personal prophecy.

Let us assume for a moment that a prophecy delivered to you was clearly false. If you have had a negative experience with receiving a prophecy of this nature, do not *allow* the offense to disqualify all subsequent prophecy in your life. Do not let the “false” turn you away from that which is “true” in prophecy. Do not be one of those disciples who “turned back and no longer followed Him” (John 6:66) because of an offense to the truth

Misunderstanding God’s Plan

It is not difficult for a believer to *misunderstand God’s overall*

plan for his life. That is especially true when dealing with God’s *prophetic* plan. Many times prophecy can deal with an area of our lives that is “hidden” from our natural understanding or perception. We cannot possibly know *all* that God has planned for us. How then can we honestly expect to understand *all* prophecy? No one knows fully *all* that God is doing. Instead, we as believers tend to *misunderstand* God’s prophetic plan for our lives. This fact *is* illustrated very well in John 20:1 and 2.

‘Viewing the facts that were available to her at the tomb, Mary Magdalene drew a conclusion concerning Jesus. However, she *misinterpreted* her present set of circumstances and relied on what her senses and natural understanding told her. There it was, the empty tomb, and the stone was, in fact, rolled away! Erroneously, Mary concluded, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb...” She continued to misinterpret the circumstance and said further, “...and we don’t know where they have put Him!” (v. 2)

Mary, as much as she loved Jesus, was totally in error. However, let us remember that *we* see this situation from beginning to end. Mary made a judgment based on what seemed to be the “facts” available to her. However, the facts were actually indicating something entirely different. It was not true that someone had robbed the grave and taken the body of Jesus to another location. In actuality, God’s *overall prophetic plan* was being fulfilled in full view of everyone. Mary was a sincere disciple, like you or me, but she made a classic mistake. Like you and I, Mary *misunderstood* God’s overall plan. Later on in the ninth verse of the same chapter we read, “They [the disciples] still did not *understand* from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.” If the disciples had been fully aware of the *entire* plan of God (that only God can reveal), then they perhaps would not have made the mistake.

God is both the *fulfiller* of and the *fulfillment* of all prophecy. Specifically, *all* prophecy finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ and His will for your individual life. Until *God* chooses to fulfill a personal prophecy, all other conclusions are merely speculation, projection and well-meaning presumption. Presumption causes error, and error causes discouragement. Many times we “despise” prophecy not because of the prophecy itself, but because the recipient was not fully aware of God’s plan for his life and misunderstood God’s prophetic plan.

God sees the end of a thing as well as the beginning. He is the Alpha and Omega. The Lord always operates in the present, the now. Even though a prophecy is given in obedience to the Holy Spirit, it may be years before it is fulfilled. Yet, the sound, tone or tenor of the prophecy may mislead us into thinking it could happen immediately. That is why we tend to *misinterpret* prophecy. God’s timing and our timing are vastly different. Why? The answer is in the nature of God. He always was and always will be. The element of “time” as man views it and as God views it can be years, decades, even centuries apart. I have known prophecy to take years in coming to fulfillment that initially sounded as if it would be a matter of days. So we must accept the fact that God’s time schedule is far from agreeing with ours. We would all do better with personal prophecy if we threw out our “Timex” and began to *wait* on our prophecies. God will fulfill them in His time and according to His plan for our lives. God will not be hurried. To hurry Him is to find fault with Him.

Failing to Recognize Our Limitations

Our last hindrance in receiving prophecy is *failing to recognize our limitations*. Just as our physical bodies can have handicaps that

hinder us, so can our spiritual beings have certain handicaps that hinder our ability to receive truth in prophecy. There are no exceptions to this rule. We are *all* guilty of it, no matter how spiritual we may be. Even the most experienced individuals, who deliver prophecy to other believers, can themselves *stumble* over *receiving* prophecy in their own lives. We can be great prophetic “transmitters” and poor prophetic “receivers” at the same time. All of us have “blind spots.” The following lists the most prevalent spiritual conditions that hinder us from *receiving* prophecy. These conditions are listed in the order of their severity, with “Hardness of Heart” being the most severe. These spiritual conditions are best understood as *limitations in receiving prophetic truth*.

1. *Hardness of Heart,*
2. *Uncircumcised Heart,*
3. *Stiffneckedness,*
4. *Uncircumcised Ear—Dull of Hearing,*
5. *Blinded Eyes,* and
6. *Carnal Mind.*

Also listed are the appropriate *symptoms* that accompany each of these *conditions*. By listing the condition first and then any accompanying symptoms, we will better understand our spiritual limitations. No believer has total immunity from these conditions. However, all of these conditions *are* curable. But if we ignore their presence and do not apply some type of repentance, these conditions can lead to spiritual death. At the very least, we will forfeit the effective-

ness that personal prophecy can have in our lives if we do not respond correctly to these conditions. Remember, these are responses to *receiving* prophecy. So view each response as a *choice* you make toward your personal prophecy.

This list of spiritual *conditions* finds its origin in Scripture. The list of spiritual *symptoms*, however, is highly subjective. Consequently, it represents the author's interpretation based on both Scripture and personal observation. Again, these conditions are listed in the order of their severity.

Prophetic Condition—Prophetic Symptoms

Hardness of Heart (Matt. 19:8)—Displays a total rejection of prophecy and rejects the one who delivers it. Pharaoh developed these symptoms while dealing with the prophet Moses. Is terminal to your spiritual life if not dealt with. Jesus made reference to this spiritual symptom in regard to divorce. Can even affect entire churches and lead to a prophetic pandemic. When rejection of prophecy occurs corporately within a church, it results in a widespread, deadly spiritual disease (i.e., prophetic pandemic). Is numb, apathetic, closed-minded and otherwise unreceptive toward prophecy.

Uncircumcised Heart (Acts 7:51)—Not as serious as “hardness of heart,” but still a “critical” spiritual disease. Is Unyielded and tends to resist prophecy. Rebellious in nature and alienates self from prophecy. “Fleshly” (uncircumcised) response diminishes the effectiveness of prophecy. Defensive toward allowing God to change self. Usually chronic, but seldom terminal. Became an epidemic in Israel several times (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4).

Stiffneckedness (Acts 7:51)—Lacks flexibility in responding to prophecy. Unable to “see” beyond one's own limited perspective. Stubborn, proud. Refuses to consider the possibility that prophecy may be a reality. Thinks that own wisdom exceeds

anything prophecy can offer. Unyielded to prophecy. Narrow-minded and “know-it-all.”

Uncircumcised Ear—Dull of Hearing (Matt. 13:15)—Relies excessively on human understanding. Usually bound to a single tradition or set of predetermined religious beliefs. Too dependent on own personal “witness” to prophecy and uses it as an excuse to disobey. Critical spirit. Poor listener. Prophecy viewed as irrelevant. Prophecy becomes inaudible to their spirit. Prophetically deaf.

Blinded Eyes (Rev. 3:18)—Willfully refuses to see (“scales”). Would rather die than have eyes opened. Self righteous. Tends to recruit others with similar blindness to support their “stand.” This handicap affects one’s receptivity of prophecy. Almost always fatal to an objective view of prophecy in general.

Carnal Mind (Rom. 8:7)—Sincere but opposes prophecy. Believes prophecy unnecessary in own life. Spiritually retarded in thinking. Self-reliant, proud. Tends to minimize power of gospel through legalistic spirit. This individual dies spiritually at an early age, never growing past childhood in spiritual maturity. Allows “lower nature” to “quench” the Holy Spirit. “Lukewarm” toward prophecy. Spiritual dwarfism (distortion) results. Worldly. Spiritually unbalanced. Analytical. Given to rationalizations against prophecy. Unfocused.

Many of these prophetic symptoms can “overlap,” depending on the individual. Although incomplete in its description of a spiritual “condition” and “symptoms” each response should serve as “food for thought” when examining *our personal response to prophecy*. These descriptions do sufficiently cover the general problem. If we can *humble ourselves* and admit we may need “medical” attention, in our responses to prophecy, God will *totally heal us*. If we can honestly say that we do not have any of these symptoms, then we can

be grateful to God for a healthy attitude toward personal prophecy.

Summary Outline:

Hindrances When Receiving Prophecy

1. *Self-preserving of the recipient.*
2. *Distorted viewing of God's timing.*
3. *Drawing premature conclusions.*
4. *Allowing offense to overrule truth.*
5. *Misunderstanding God's plan for our lives.*
6. *Failing to recognize our limitations in receiving truth:*
 - a. *Hardness of/wart,*
 - b. *Uncircumcised heart,*
 - c. *Stiffneckedness,*
 - d. *Uncircumcised ear—Dull of hearing,*
 - e. *Blinded eyes, and*
 - f. *Carnal mind.*

Chapter Five

The Secret to Power in Prophecy

Genuine humility is a rare thing. Once we recognize it in our lives, we could lose it if we are not careful. Nevertheless, we need to examine some guidelines of humility in order to keep it as a balancing force in our lives as believers. The *secret* to real power in the Holy Spirit is humility, or “low mindedness” as the King James Version translates it.

The Scriptures tell us to “clothe [ourselves] with humility...” (1 Pet. 5:5). That means *we* are responsible for “putting it on” ourselves. Let us examine a few facts that show us what humility *is* by showing us what humility *is not*.

Humility is not something with which you were born. It is not a personality trait innate in all human beings. True humility is something you *develop* progressively throughout your Christian life. It is not something you achieve once and for all, but is something that keeps *growing* in you. Humility is *not* how others view you *externally*; rather, humility is how *you look at yourself internally*. More accurately, humility is a spiritual condition of the heart. To have power in your life and to cooperate in the gift of prophecy, you need to “put on” (be clothed with) genuine humility.

The basis for genuine humility is simple. *Everything we are* and *everything we have* comes from God. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights...” (James 1:17). How then can we take “credit” for anything that God has done in our lives? We as believers are merely the “earthen vessels” while He is the most precious oil that fills us. The true value of an “earthen vessel” was always in its contents and not in the vessel itself. The vessel was useful only as a container of that pre-

cious oil.

One night, while in prayer, the importance of *practicing* humility was revealed to me personally by the Lord. I “saw” that there were at least three things in God you never want to “touch.” In this context, the term “touch” means “to embrace excessively” either physically, mentally or spiritually. First, you never “touch” (covet) another man’s house, wife, possessions, etc. or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Ex. 20:17). Second, I was told to never touch “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11 KJV). Third, and most importantly, God told me that night in prayer that I should never touch the “glory” (*splendor, majesty, praise, worship, adoration, exaltation,*) *due the Lord!*

A believer will always regret “touching” (coveting) anything from these three areas, but he will regret “touching” the “glory” due the Lord *most of all*. God told me that night something special about this subject of humility. He told me that you can *never* “pay” God “back” for the glory you steal! There is no way to properly reimburse God for this type of theft! Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the Lord; that is My name! I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols.” In Acts 12:23 Herod was struck with an illness then filled with maggots, and died, because he did not give God the *glory*. All believers should use this Scripture as their motto: “I have brought *You* glory on earth by completing the work *You* gave *Me* to do” (John 17:4). Remember, the “glory” is due God, without reservation, by virtue of one fact: He is *Almighty God!*

We are not practicing genuine (scriptural) humility just because we appear shy, bashful, timid or introverted in *personality*. We can *appear* humble because of a certain personality type and still be proud in our heart (spirit). Humility is volitional. That is, we consciously choose or decide to practice humility through an act of our will. Humility has almost *nothing* to do with personality.

As believers, we do not ask God to humble us, we *humble ourselves*, in all circumstances, by the grace of God in us. The original Greek word for humility (*tapeinos*) means “to be humble in spirit, lowly in mind.” We can be very outgoing, classic extroverts, and still be *humble* in the true sense of the word. For the believer, humility is a *response* that originates in our spirits and guides our thinking. The choice is up to us! Humility is a *learned reflex* and a *skill* that we obtain through experience.

Let us examine the *choice* the Pharisees made in regard to humility. The Pharisees chose a poor substitute for genuine humility. They chose to walk in a “religious spirit” steeped in religious pride and hypocrisy. The Pharisees looked and acted “humbly” *outwardly*, but denied Jesus Christ His true Lordship in their lives inwardly. The Scriptures describe this group of religious hypocrites as actually believing in their own self righteousness and false humility. They were classic examples of what it means today to be deceived and proud. We need to learn from their mistakes! We must *choose* daily between humility and hypocrisy.

The practice of “humbling ourselves” as believers is best illustrated by a simple pressure gauge commonly seen on certain pieces of machinery. On these gauges there is always a “safe” zone and a danger or “red” zone clearly marked by color. The *white* background on the gauge (safe zone) means the pressure is safe and no action needs to be taken to correct it. The *red* (danger) zone indicates excessive pressure and immediate action needs to be taken to prevent a possible explosion. As long as a believer stays in the “safe” zone, in terms of his humility, God will leave him alone. If he moves into the “red” zone, in terms of his lack of humility, then God will *warn* (not kill!) him.. I believe God has shown me a few ways to stay in this “safe” zone. If humility is the *secret to power in prophecy*, then we need to follow these guidelines:

1. Do not take yourself too seriously. We call this *humility*.

2. Do not let people worship you. We call this *integrity*.
3. Allow God to bring you into the place of “brokenness” that He has prepared for you. We call this *reality*.

Looking at our first point, of the three listed, we see that it is the most personal. It is your responsibility, and your responsibility alone, *to not take yourself too seriously*. Only *you* and *God* can know your heart in this case. As a matter of fact, God knows your heart better than you do, but He still commits the act or process of humbling yourself to you. Each of us must willingly humble ourselves, especially in our own eyes. It is the easiest thing in the world to fool others, but you know in your heart if you are walking humbly with God. We all are acutely aware of our *real* motives, *innermost* thoughts and *hidden* desires and ambitions.

If we want to be “used of God” and operate in the gift of prophecy, we need to have a realistic view of ourselves. We need to understand that we are creatures of pride and must be on our guard constantly. I believe it takes a *humble* attitude to be “used of God” in prophecy. *The best way to humble yourself is to not take yourself too seriously*.

Conversely, my *relationship* with God is something I take very seriously. However, I do not take *myself* too seriously. Let me explain the difference between these two concepts. On one hand, I need God for my every breath. On the other hand, God could use anybody He wanted. I am aware that God does not need me; He has simply chosen and called me. *I am the one who needs Him*. I must never think that God is fortunate to have me around. If He wanted to, God could use the stones that lay on the ground to cry out to Him in my place. But I have determined that no stone is going to take my place in praising God and walking in humility. (See Luke 19:40.)

Our second point is: *do not let people worship you*. This prob-

lem has always been a deadly tendency in the Church. Our “flesh” gravitates toward exalting man and toward worshiping idols. History tells us that “it is in our blood.” Unfortunately, one of the most popular idols we have today in the Church is *ourselves!* We have a tendency in the Church to idolize men and women based on their individual gifts.

We are warned by Scripture to “keep [ourselves] from idols” (1 John 5:21). However, my concern here is about the “other side of the story.” We need to take a stand against people worshiping *us* when God uses us in prophecy or in any of the other gifts. It is up to the individual who is operating in the gift of prophecy to keep people from going too far where honor and gratitude is concerned. That is one reason why some believers eventually fall into spiritual pride. They never learn how to gracefully *refuse* worship.

The problem really begins when we think we do not have anything people could worship in the first place. Yet the children of Israel (a type of the Church) chose to worship the image of a dumb animal. They worshiped an idol in the form of a golden calf. We like to worship what appeals to the senses. It is our flesh that gives idolatry its strength. In the “flesh,” that golden calf looked attractive to the children of Israel. It represented a counterfeit opportunity to worship. It was perversely appealing to their lower natures. So whether it is a golden calf or the pastor of your church, both are “fair game” for idol worshipers. There is only one thing to do with worship that is directed toward you, and that is *refuse it!*

Let me share a secret about humility that God gave me some years ago. It is the *answer* to this problem of receiving worship. God told me that my capacity to humble myself would *increase proportionately* with my capacity to move in the gift of prophecy! What a beautiful promise! God will show us ways to humble ourselves, to refuse worship and to remain effective in prophecy.

It is this “other side” of idolatry that God is dealing with today. He is teaching those who are usually the object of false and idolatrous worship to refuse it. God told me to never take the glory from Him. He told me I could never pay Him back for any glory I received that was due Him. Herod was killed because he let the people say, “This is the voice of a god...” (Acts 12:22).

Adopt a *realistic* view of yourself in God. Alert yourself at all times to this reality: *You are expendable! You are replaceable!* God does not *need* you.

Learning how to handle human response (gratitude) is part of humility too. We all need to learn how to humbly accept the gratitude of others. We need to learn the difference between how much to accept for ourselves and how much should go to God. Only the Holy Spirit can make that decision for each believer. Allowing someone to merely express thanks is appropriate as long as both parties realize who the source of blessing is and, of course, we know that source is our heavenly Father. We are all “unprofitable servants” fulfilling our service to God. This skill of directing people’s gratitude and thanksgiving *heavenward* will develop fully over time. Skills take time.

No doubt you will be occasionally *misunderstood* when you prophesy. You may suffer many times for obeying God in your prophetic service to Him. “However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name” (1 Pet. 4:16). If you are reproached for the name of Christ, embrace the suffering, endure it for Christ, and *humble yourself* for the glory of God. Become better, not bitter! The disciples rejoiced “because they had been counted *worthy* of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41). Through all this suffering, you must still humble yourself. Humility is the key to growth in the Holy Spirit. Learn how to handle these human responses to prophecy humbly, whether the responses are positive or negative.

Our final thought on humility is a critical one, as far as operating “successfully” in the gift of prophecy is concerned. We must ask ourselves two fundamental questions about our service to God. First, will we “allow” God to bring us to a place of “*brokenness*”? Second, how do we achieve “brokenness” in God and still survive?

The answer to achieving “brokenness” is simple and clear. We achieve “brokenness” by *giving God permission* to establish it in our lives! We must *desire* for God to develop us prophetically *His* way, in *His* time, and with our cooperation. This “fine tuning” of our prophetic gifting will usually involve “brokenness.” Genuine humility (brokenness) is not found on the spiritual “mountain tops” as we mistakenly imagine. Quite to the contrary, humility is found in the “valley.” As the Psalmist wrote, even the “valley of the shadow of *death*” (Ps. 23:4).

In order to be mature prophetically, we must be willing to be humbled, broken and even *crucified*. Yes, we must die! Why? God *knows* us intimately, inside and out. He *knows* what motivates us. He *knows* why we do what we do in the name of our “service” to God. He *knows* that occasionally *our* ambitions and our motives are not always in line with His plan. God is the One who never changes. Therefore, we are the ones that must change or be left wandering in the wilderness of unbrokenness, pride and rebellion. We are the ones who need to “die to the flesh” Without hesitation, our prayer should be these words: “*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done.*”

God has used various means to accomplish a small level of humility in me personally. For example, He has allowed misunderstanding toward my prophetic ministry from both believers and unbelievers in order to humble me. He has used business failures and economic pressures to humble me. For example, I took humiliating jobs that barely allowed me to pay the bills. I was living “hand-to-mouth” for years, never able to find any financial stability. These were some of the “valleys” God had lovingly prepared for me. These situations

humbled me and broke me. My extended family thought I was an “underachiever.” Even my spiritual family could not understand my life’s pattern at times. God did all this arid *more* to humble me. It did not last forever, but believe me, it was effective! Now, symbolically speaking, God can begin to “flow” through me without a lot of “debris” in my pipe.

I challenge you, as a believer, to allow the Lord, in His perfect love, mercy, unselfishness, compassion and wisdom, to break (humble) you. The oil of “anointing” (God’s *effective* presence in your life and ministry) will flow from you only *after* consecration (brokenness and submission). You may experience a “trickle” of His “anointing” without being broken, but you can experience the full “flow” of His “anointing” in your life when you are broken before the Lord. The “fire of God” will not fall on *empty* altars of sacrifice (see First Kings 18). It is you who are required to “offer *your* bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God...” (Rom. 12:1). Only God knows what may be required of you to experience brokenness. Yet no matter what “breaking” you go through, “we know that in *all* things God works for the *good* of those who love Him...” (Rom.. 8:28).

We have seen the principle of brokenness perfectly demonstrated in the life of Jesus. As in the example of Jesus, crucifixion (brokenness) was the only prerequisite to resurrection. If we want to live the resurrected life of God, we must be willing to experience the death of crucifixion of our selfish desires, ambitions and ways.

No one was more unwilling as a believer to experience brokenness than I was. I was fearful of the whole concept because I did not understand it. I was literally thrown into circumstances that produced some brokenness in my life. I hated every minute of it at the time. I kicked and screamed through the entire process. However, it was the resulting “*fruit*” of these circumstances that began to show me how valuable brokenness can be.

The dark and evil world of the occult also serves as an illustration for the need of genuine brokenness in the life of a believer. We will define the occult as “spiritually illegal and illicit supernatural influences, agencies or phenomena inspired by the devil.” It is in this area known as the occult where Unbrokenness reigns supreme in those who participate in its practices. It is unbrokenness or “*unsundered*” power that is at the *root* of the *sin* of all occult practices and activities. It is this “Unsundered” power that attempts to circumvent God instead of “going through” (submitting to) God.

In Luke 4:4-13, the devil even tempted Jesus Christ to operate in *unsundered power*. In different ways, but with the same intent, the devil suggested three times that *unsundered power* be exercised by Jesus outside the will of His Father. The devil was trying to cause Jesus Christ to operate in occult-like behavior! Jesus saw through this scheme and quoted God’s Word, and He refused to yield to any opportunity to exercise *unsundered power*. Once again, Jesus is our greatest example of submitting our spiritual gifts to the Father in *perfect* and *total surrendered spiritual power*. That is why we as believers must experience some measure of God’s divine “school” of brokenness. God does not want His children to operate in an area of gifting that in any way represents “unsundered” power. A submitted and yielded life (including any gifts) to the will of God brings much glory to God and a greater level of blessing to the Body of Christ. So be on your guard against spiritual power that is “unsundered” to the name and Lordship of Jesus Christ, especially in the gift of prophecy.

Summary Outline:

Three Secrets to Power in Prophecy

1. Humility: *Do not* take yourself too seriously.
2. Integrity: *Do not* allow people to worship you.

3. Reality: *Do not* resist the brokenness that God works in your life.

Chapter Six

Cautions Related to Prophecy

A *caution* is “a forethought to avoid *danger or harm*.” Therefore, (prophetic) cautions as they relate to this material are best defined as “fore thoughts to avoid danger or harm while operating in prophecy.”

The purpose of this book has been to help every believer operate in the gift of prophecy freely and without undue restrictions. I have presented various step-by-step formulas that have been proven, through experience, to actually “produce” prophecy in any Spirit-filled believer who desires it. I have tried to take prophecy from the hands of just a few and put it into the hands of many in the Body of Christ.

Believers from various charismatic circles have been able to overcome their common misconceptions, doubts and fears about operating in the gift of prophecy because of this book. I have received many testimonies from believers who never realized how simple it was to operate in this gift. One elderly believer told me that he had been waiting 40 years to operate in the gift of prophecy! After following these instructions, he prophesied with great ease and accuracy.

The Scriptures say, “...wisdom is proved right by her actions” (Matt. 11:19). It generally means that if a truth is producing *scriptural* results, its wisdom (its application in our lives) is justified. Thank God that we can help others operate in this gift, just as we were helped. This wisdom that God has given us has proven to be right by the actions it produced in these believers. I can hear God saying, “Rejoice, My word is true, you can *all* prophesy!”

There are, nevertheless, certain *cautions* we must mention and

be careful to maintain in our response to prophecy. We must maintain the *order* as well as the *freedom* of the Holy Spirit. God has made it our responsibility to do all things “in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cot 14:40). Let us examine the following phrases, *since they each pertain to a particular caution* necessary for the proper use of the gift of prophecy. These cautions add *quality* to the operation of the gift of prophecy in our lives, as well as any other gift God might choose for each of us.

1. *Pick and choose.*
2. *Better safe than sorry.*
3. *Free-for-all.*
4. *Sloppy Joe.*

Pick and Choose

First, let us remember what the Scriptures teach us in First Corinthians 12 about the “gifts of the Spirit” in general. *It is God, through His Holy Spirit*, who decides, distributes and determines *who* receives *which* gift (s) of the Holy Spirit. *It is God* who gives a believer the “gift of the word of knowledge” or the “gift of miracles” by His own choosing. We do nothing to deserve or to qualify for this privilege. Simply stated, *God gives us gifts because He wants to!* Similarly, *it is God* who decides who will be a prophet and who will be an apostle according to Ephesians 4:11. In other words, operating in the “gifts” and “callings” of the Lord is not a matter of *pick and choose at all*.

It is true that God intends for *all* believers to speak in tongues and prophesy (see Chapter One). We have supported that fact throughout this book. Whether it is the “general” gift of tongues or the “general” gift of prophecy, the Scriptures teach us that these particular gifts are for us *all*. Here, at this point, we are considering a

completely different list of spiritual gifts. Concerning these nine gifts (special endowments) of the Spirit in First Corinthians 12, it is entirely up to the Lord Jesus Christ as to how He uses each of us in these *specific* giftings. We need to understand that this list of “special” giftings is separate and distinct from the “general” gifts of tongues and prophecy already mentioned. We know that to be true because First Corinthians 12 says, “To *one* there is given...” (v. 8). It does not say to *all* there is given. These “specific” giftings in Chapter 12 are given to believers as God wills. We cannot *pick* our gifts as if they were groceries on a shelf. God did not give us that privilege. The Scriptures say that the “gifts and the callings” *are of God* (Rom. 11:29). That means we *do not* decide who gets what gift; He does. Now, I believe that God will use one believer to impart a gift to another believer through the laying on of hands and the “gift of the word of knowledge.” Even then it is still *God* who determines who gets that gift. If God gives us a particular gift, then we need to be faithful to that gift. We cannot complain to God concerning how He uses us. Complaining will not change God’s mind at all about which gift (s) *He* has chosen for us. He is the one who *picks and chooses* for us. We must only submit to that plan and choice.

Allow me to repeat something for the purpose of clarity. I am referring here to the nine “gifts of the Spirit,” not “general” prophecy or tongues. The nine “special” gifts are given only to those whom God wills (1 Cor. 12:7-11). Verse 11 tells us that “every man” (KJV) can and should believe God for at least one of these “special” gifts. Yet it is still *God* who “gives them to each one, just as *He* determines.” In other words, *God* is the One who initiates their release into our lives. So, when we go beyond the gift of “general” tongues and “general” prophecy meant for *all* believers (Acts 19), we must allow God to *pick and choose* from the list of “special” giftings in First Corinthians 12 as He wills for us. If we fail to accept His perfect choice of gifts from this list, then we forfeit something of the will of God for us. First Corinthians 12:18 says that “God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, *just as He wanted them to be.*”

Better Safe Than Sorry

Second is another caution which is best described by the phrase, “*Better safe than sorry.*” This caution deals with how others *respond* to your prophecies. If you discover that people are not responding favorably to your prophecies, then “*hold off for a time.*” Do not be afraid to *wait* on your prophecies before you deliver them.. The Lord would rather have you be *safe than sorry.* If believers (or your spiritual leaders) are not regularly confirming your prophecies, then take it as a possible warning. You may be “slipping” into some error in your prophecies. It is not the end of the world for you, but it is a warning nevertheless. Generally speaking, there should always be a certain amount of positive response to your prophecies. Most of the time you should not be “surprising” people in a negative way with your prophecies. Rather, remember that a prophecy’s main purpose is to “strengthen, encourage and comfort,” to bring healing and hope to the believer.

God does not want you to hastily “blurt out” just anything and label it a prophecy. That is sometimes the case with over-anxious beginners. God would have you strive for *quality* rather than for *quantity* in your prophecies. You accomplish that by “testing” the source of your prophecy according to First John 4:1-3. Can you reasonably “prove” that the prophecy is from God? If you can say yes to this question, then you are practicing *safe* rather than *sorry* methods in prophecy. “An inheritance *quickly* gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end” (Prov. 20:2 1).

Do not be impatient to mature in the area of prophecy. God has a personalized training course which we all must go through. Trying to “skip a class” or two will only increase the likelihood of errors. Do not try to rush through these vital lessons that God has ordained for you. Being prophetically conservative does not mean you are “quenching the Spirit.” It means you are learning the proper restraints that may keep you out of trouble later. Remember, *safety first!*

Free-For-All

Our next *caution* concerning prophecy deals with the *free.. for-all problem*. Although this tendency is not prevalent in most churches, it still represents a problem in the area of prophecy from which we can all learn. This problem, more than all the others, can diminish the effectiveness and quality of prophecy almost overnight. The *free-for-all* approach to prophecy is usually the result of a lack of order and leadership in such spiritual things as prophecy. It can, however, be detected in anyone who may have an *impatient* spirit, whether spiritually young or old. This problem is especially dangerous in public meetings, but it also can render real harm on a “one-to-one” basis. At times the gift of prophecy can be *extended beyond* the point of blessing and become mechanical and dry or exaggerated and unrestrained. Remember, there needs to be an order even to the most spontaneous operation of the gift of prophecy. It is not a *free-for-all* where just anyone can speak or act. That is how we *over extend* prophecy. That is how the gift of prophecy becomes “watered down” arid so “commonplace” that no one listens. It is better to be in a meeting where one or two *quality* prophecies are given than five or six poor ones. We must balance the proper mixture of *spontaneity* and *order* in prophecy, especially in a public church setting. If the correct balance between *order* and *spontaneity* is realized, any prophecies that are spoken will have a clear and effective quality to them, distinguishing them from the watered-down variety.

If either order or spontaneity become imbalanced in a public church setting, then usually the effectiveness of the prophecies will diminish proportionately.

The answer to regulating this problem of imbalance in prophecy is rather simple. First, you must allow only those who have a proven ministry in the gift of prophecy to maintain a *major* profile within a church. If you allow a *poor* example to go unchecked, then others may follow. It may not happen instantly, but the seed will be planted.

These individuals with the proven ministries do not necessarily have to be in church government as leaders, but they should have a good “track record” in the area of their expertise, which is prophecy.

Second, *teaching* the Scriptures concerning prophecy will bring a better understanding to any church or individual believer. Proper teaching will always increase the chances of a good *example* being developed within a church. It is always “the unfolding of Your words [that] gives light” (Ps. 119: 130a) to any subject and prophecy is no different. So read and study material on prophecy by an author who actually operates in prophecy himself. For example, if I want to learn how to be a plumber, I expect my teacher to know the trade *because* he had been, at one time or another, a plumber. Theory is fine and has its place in learning, but I would rather be taught by an author who *practices* what he preaches and operates in the gift of prophecy himself. That is how Jesus taught—by word and deed.

Third, the ultimate solution to order and spontaneity is the *presence* of the Holy Spirit. When we invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to a meeting, then order and spontaneity will follow. We need only to *yield* to His perfect balance.

Fourth, develop *good prophetic examples* and eliminate *poor prophetic examples*. *Teach* the basics of prophecy from God’s Word. Most of all, *allow* the Holy Spirit to take full *control* of the meeting. The result will be the *free-for-all* approach to prophecy quietly self-destructing. It simply will not want to live in an atmosphere where it cannot thrive and reproduce itself. Then the meetings will be more “anointed,” more spontaneous, and will have fewer “highs and lows.” Both order and spontaneity will be perfectly blended as these measures are taken.

Sloppy Joe

I left the *Sloppy Joe* caution for last because all believers

can be guilty of it from time to time. It seems very few believers today want to be considered a “specialist.” Webster defines a *specialist* as “one who has *devoted* himself to a *particular* branch of study or research.” To elaborate, we are referring to a “specialist” as one who seeks to *develop* and *culture* the gift of prophecy. Often, we want to be a “sloppy Joe” and still function beyond our measure of faith and effectiveness. Paul said, “We, however, will not boast beyond proper *limits*, but will *confine* our boasting to the field God has *assigned* to us...” (2 Cor. 10:13).

God is calling prophetic “*specialists*” today. He does not need 10,000 “general practitioners” clumsily operating in prophecy. The Church has seen enough of these “garden variety” prophecies delivered by those well meaning, but generally ineffective believers. He desires an “army” of first-rate prophetic “specialists” who deliver “first-rate” prophecies. This “army” can be *any* member of the Body of Christ who follows the cautions presented here in this chapter. I am not referring to an exclusive club, but rather to a *focus* toward which *all* believers should strive. *All* believers must refine, hone and generally be responsible for the gift of prophecy (or any gift from God, for that matter) given us by Him. All believers must insist on proper maintenance and development of the quality of whatever gift God has made available to them. We must never take God’s precious gifts for granted.

We have had the wrong emphasis in ministry by thinking that to be effective, we had to be able to do it *all!* Nothing could be further from the truth! God is trying to raise up individuals who can “specialize” (devote, develop, culture) in ministry and bring more glory to God. I would rather be a “specialist” in any area of gifting and ministry, than a perpetually stumbling apprentice, trying to do it all for Jesus! This mentality clearly is based on pride.

My goal here is to make everyone aware of the possibility that God wishes *all* believers to “specialize” in the gift of prophecy

as a matter of *focus*. That may even mean excluding the study of other gifts that might not necessarily be theirs in the first place. Thereby they “major” (if you will), in the gift of prophecy. This “army of prophetic specialists” will then be, by definition, a corps of gifted believers from within the multitude to whom this book is written. However, I do not want to appear condescending to anyone who reads this book, whatever his gift or ministry may be. *Potentially* then, we all could be “specialists” in prophecy or in any gift of God. This potential excites me, and I hope it excites you as well.

We all must re-define our roles and begin to view them as *God* sees them. We must not allow ourselves to be *pressured* to merely perform. The existence of a need does not necessarily require that we be the one to meet that need. Perhaps God has another “specialist” for that need. We tend to react to need rather than *respond* because we see a great number of needs. Reactions tend to be *impulsive, unproductive* and usually *temporary*. Responses, on the other hand, are thought-out *solutions* with easy-to-follow *applications*. Strive to *respond* and not to *react*. We need to *restrict* ourselves and *concentrate* on the ministry God has given us. We call this restriction and concentration of our giftings, *obedience to God*. An obedient believer is a “specialist”!

Today God is rejecting an “applesauce” theology in the Church. No longer will He permit us to “blend” everything together and hope for the best. Rather, we need to discover our *specialty* in God and work at perfecting it for God’s glory. Becoming a prophetic specialist and striving for excellence, quality and *eternal* results, is precisely what God is expecting from *you*.

Summary Outline: Cautions Related to Prophecy

1. *Pick and choose.*
2. *Better safe than sorry.*
3. *Free-for-all.*
4. *Sloppy Joe*

Chapter Seven

Personal Thoughts on Prophecy

Over the past 15 (plus) years, the Lord has allowed me to prophesy over literally thousands of believers. Operating in the gift of prophecy has been, to me, the highest of honors, and I continue to be awed that God has chosen me to bless other believers. This book is the accumulation of knowledge based on those many years of ministry. I have learned much through *trial and error* in the area of prophecy. For the benefit of the reader, I am including some of what I have learned through my personal experiences. Hopefully others will be able to benefit from my successes and failures in the area of prophecy.

The following insights are written in “brief” because it is not my intention to *complicate* this subject, but to *simplify* it. Therefore, the *thoughts* given in this final chapter are meant to stimulate your thought, not necessarily to be complete truths in themselves. However, I trust you will find in each item something that can be applied to your prophetic ministry. (The first section is on the *delivering* (giving) of prophecy. The second section is on the *receiving* of prophecy).

Delivering Prophecy

1. When delivering a prophecy, your *personal opinion* may disagree with God’s. God’s opinion is never wrong and He never changes. Do not let your viewpoint hinder you when you deliver prophecy. Give the prophecy exactly as God gives it to you. Remember, God never asks for your opinion, just for your *obedience*.

2. God will give you a “*set of rules*” by which you operate when prophesying. For example, your “rules” may require you to lay hands on the person before prophesying. Perhaps you need to speak in tongues to yourself to “clear your spirit” before ministering to someone in prophecy. Whatever works best for you is called your personal “set of rules” of prophecy. Follow these rules and you will be *effective*. Deviate from them, and it could cost you. These rules are designed by God to make you effective.

3. *God alone initiates* the operation of the gift of prophecy. He turns it on and off according to His will. We do not control this gift. We do our part by making ourselves available. Prophecy is merely the “echo” of something God has already spoken. Prophecy is then a verbal “reflection” of God to us. We “*echo*” and “*reflect*” His words in prophecy.

4. Do not let others *over extend* your gift. When you know you are finished, you need to stop. Do not continue ministering simply because someone wants you to. Pressure from others to perform is never of God. Neither is pressuring *yourself*

5. God will never force you to prophesy. He is looking for willing, cooperative vessels or vehicles through whom He can operate. Do not accept a leading that seems to force or push you to prophesy.

6. God seldom “yells,” but He often “whispers.” Recognize that the “promptings” and “leadings” of the Holy Spirit to prophesy are usually *subtle* in nature. Be attentive to the “gentle whispers” of the Holy Spirit, that “still, small voice.” Be a good listener; do not expect God to “yell.” God is seldom in the great wind, the powerful earthquake or the raging fire. (1 Kings

19:11,12).

Receiving Prophecy

1. When receiving prophecy, God molds *you* to fit the prophecy. God does *not* mold the prophecy to fit you. You are the one who will need to change or act to conform to the prophecy. The prophecy is the “*constant*” and you are the “*variable*.”

2. Any prophecy, at “face value,” can be dangerous. “Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21). No matter *who* speaks or *what* the content is, do not accept unconditionally any prophecy until it has been proven by: (1) a clear inward witness; (2) another specific, confirming prophecy; and (3) cooperating circumstances.

3. In prophecy, God usually “zeros in” on one or two aspects of your life. Do not overreact. Place the prophecy in context with your life as a *whole*. Prophecy is a *limited* gift and should never be viewed as the *complete* mind of God in your life. First Corinthians 13:9 says, “For we know in part and we *prophecy in part*.”

Whether we are discussing the giving or receiving of prophecy, our approach to the subject must be this: Balance, balance, balance!

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