



**The Five Ministry Gifts
Lesson 5: The Prophet**

1. Introduction

Along with the ministry of the apostle, the role of a prophet has been dismissed in many churches today.

Some people believe that the office of the prophet passed away. They teach:

- The office of the prophet was only valid under the Old Covenant.
- The office of the prophet was only valid through the transition period of the early church.

The office of the prophet is valid today. Paul had a lot to say about the office of the prophet and prophecy.

Ephesians 4:11

1 Corinthians 12:28, 29

1 Thessalonians 5:20

Ephesians 2:20

These verses in the New Testament, written by the Apostle Paul, clearly demonstrate that God placed in the church prophets “until the church comes into unity and maturity”.

That means the office of the prophet is valid today and the church needs the prophetic ministry today!

2. Three ways prophecy operates in the church today.

- The gift of prophecy as one of the gifts of the Spirit
- The motivational gift of prophecy

- The office of a prophet

They all involve prophecy, but they are all different. It is important to understand this.

3. The gift of prophecy

All can operate in the gift of prophecy if they are born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, and open to the supernatural.

The gifts of the Spirit are listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

Three of the gifts are referred to as the “vocal gifts” because you must use your voice in order to operate in them.

The vocal gifts of the Spirit are the gifts that help us speak like God.

The three vocal gifts are:

- The gift of speaking in tongues
- The gift of interpretation of tongues
- The gift of prophecy

Prophecy is the greatest of the vocal gifts. The other two gifts combined do the same thing as prophecy accomplishes on its own.

1 Corinthians 14:5

Prophecy is the ability to speak words inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Definition of TO PROPHECY in Hebrew: To flow forth

Definition of PROPHECY in Greek: To speak for another; to speak for God or to be His spokesperson

We should expect to prophesy every day. We should expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to operate in our lives everyday

We should have a very strong desire to operate in the gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:1

Prophecy is the only gift we are specifically told to covet and to seek after.

1 Corinthians 14:31**1 Corinthians 14:39****1 Corinthians 14:39 – The Passion Translation**

So, beloved friends, with all this in mind, be passionate to prophesy and don't forbid anyone from speaking in tongues.

Acts 2:17, 18**1 Corinthians 14:3**

These are the primary purposes for the gift of prophecy.

- Edification

Definition of EDIFY: To build up; to strengthen; to make more effective

When you receive a word of prophecy it should make you more effective and better able to serve the Lord.

Prophecy can bring a word “in season” to someone who is weary.

Proverbs 15:23**Isaiah 50:4**

- Exhortation

Definition of EXHORTATION: To exhort, stimulate, encourage, admonish, and to stir up

To admonish can include severe warning or even rebuke. But it does not include condemnation.

Exhortation also means:

- A calling to come nearer to God
- To insight to a more worthy cause
- To encourage to come up a little higher
- Comfort

Definition of COMFORT: To cheer up

2 Corinthians 1:3

This is God's character. A word from Him brings comfort.

4. The motivational gift of prophecy

The term "motivational gifts" is a manufactured term.

More accurately they should be called the gifts of grace.

God has given each one of us gifts, talents, and qualities by His grace so that we can fulfill the ministry He has called us to.

These gifts are free. We were born with these gifts. We do not have all the gifts.

Romans 12:4

Everyone has motivational gifts in their life, but not everyone has the motivational gift of prophecy.

Romans 12:6-8 lists the gifts. Prophecy is one of the gifts listed.

Romans 12:6

Romans 12:6 – New Living Translation

In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you

Prophecy is a gift that God gives a person to help them effectively minister and do what He has called them to do.

A person with a prophetic ministry gift will tend to operate in the prophetic on a continual basis.

Believers operating in the motivational gift of prophecy are the "seers" or "eyes" of the body.

Some other characteristics of a person with the motivational gift of prophecy:

- They often have insight and foresight. They act like watch dogs in the church.
- They are concerned with the church and the direction in which the church is going.
- Their gift ignites faith and hope. It gives energy to fight for a breakthrough.
- Their gift brings God's perspective, releases vision and calling, and undermines the enemy.
- They will often warn of sin or reveal sin.

- They are usually very verbal and may come across as judgmental and impersonal.
- They tend to be serious, dedicated, and loyal to the truth.

5. The office of the prophet

Ephesians 4:11

Why did Jesus give these five offices to the church?

Ephesians 4:12-14

The five ministry gifts are the church leaders. Most believers are not called to operate in one of these five offices.

The office of the prophet is different from the gift of prophecy and the motivational gifts.

Characteristics of a prophet:

- They do not only prophesy, but their words and messages are prophetic.
- They have a prophetic anointing when they speak.
- Their words help break through obstacles that hinder the church from moving forward.
- Prophets inspire, stir up, challenge, convict, build, bring breakthrough, open up, ordain, establish, pull down, expose, and declare.
- Prophets are strong in bringing correction.
- Prophets call people back to their mandates and commissions.
- Prophets have insight and understanding concerning the plans and purposes of God.
- Prophets help identify leaders and their gifts.
- Prophets help release people into ministry.
- Prophets help release gifts into believers through the laying on of hands.
- They bring revelation and insight concerning the plans of God for regions, churches, and individuals.
- Prophets are used to bring deliverance and breakthrough.
- Prophets are guardians and watchman who help preserve and protect God's work.

- Prophets are called to pray and intercede.

6. Similarities with Old and New Testament prophets

Both are called by similar titles: prophet, man of God, servant of the Lord, messenger of the Lord.

They act as spokesmen and the mouthpiece of God.

They communicate the same way: by word of mouth, dreams, visions, actions, symbolic drama, strange burdens, and by the written Word.

Both covenants have prophets with vision. Examples are Daniel and Zechariah in the Old Testament and the Apostle John in the New Testament.

Old and New Testament prophets are concerned with the morality of God's people and are actively involved in preparing God's people to be the Bride of Christ.

There is a strong spirit of justice in the prophets of both the Old and New Testament. Prophets speak out against moral, social, governmental corruption, political corruption, and injustice.

7. Differences between Old and New Testament prophets

Old Testament prophets were called "seers", a term not applied in the church.

Old Covenant prophets gave guidance to people who came looking for a word. However, under the New Covenant the Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit guides us.

John 16:13

In the Old Testament the prophets heard from the Lord and spoke to men. New Testament prophets are not used to guide, steer, or govern people. Prophecies bring confirmation to people.

Under the New Covenant prophets do not tell people what to do, they confirm what God is saying. People do not "need" a prophecy. They need a relationship with Jesus. People also receive guidance, direction, and oversight through the scriptures under the New Covenant. In the Old Covenant God spoke to people through prophets but in the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit resides in people and teaches them to hear the voice of the Lord for themselves. As someone who moves in the prophetic, we must not take "God's place", but should direct people towards hearing God for themselves.

Under the Old Covenant, prophets were some of the main historians and were used to write some of the scriptures. In the New Covenant, this was given to the Apostles.

In the Old Testament, prophets were very forthright in rebuking, warning, and chastising people.

In the New Testament, prophets minister by exhortation, the word, example, and confirmation. The New Covenant is redemptive, full of grace and mercy.

Under the Old Covenant, prophets were feared. They were eccentric, intimidating, and authoritarian by nature. They often had a sense of doom that hung around them. They were independent and usually very unpopular. People operating in the prophetic under the New Covenant must exhibit the fruit of the spirit with grace and humility. They are accountable to the Body of Christ.

In the Old Testament the prophets mainly represented the heart of God. In the New Testament the prophets work with apostles to lay foundations and establish the Church as the house of the Lord.

8. The New Testament prophet

We must be careful not to misrepresent the office of a prophet and operate under the Old Testament ways.

The New Testament prophet is not primarily called to prophesy,

There are four things they are called to do:

- To train people to hear the Lord for themselves
- To teach believers how to find and live in the will of God for themselves
- To instruct and train people in the gift of prophecy and to help churches establish the right framework and protocol for the gift
- To bring the Word of the Lord either inspired by preaching or by supernatural prophetic utterances.

The New Testament prophet is called to work alongside the apostle. Their interaction will provide checks and balances for both ministries.

The New Testament prophet is a catalyst within the church to make things happen. A prophet will envision and call the church and individuals into an understanding of God's plans and purposes.

Sometimes people get preoccupied with the "new" and they forget what God has already spoken. The prophet will remind them.

Sometimes it's about timing. God may have spoken things but now is the time to step out and the church needs to hear that.

Prophets are active "in preparing people for the Lord". They are working to prepare the Body of Christ for the second coming.

Luke 1:17

There are many words that must be fulfilled before Christ's return, and we need prophetic revelation to interpret those signs.

Prophets are preparing the Bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:27

Prophets are activists.

Ephesians 4:12

They are a part of the "equipping of the saints for the work of ministry". Every church must have access to the office of the prophet.

Prophets bring impartation to the believers.

1 Timothy 4:14

As every member of the church is activated to be effective in work, the church grows up.

Ephesians 4:16

Prophets promote ministry and have a passion to train and release others.

Prophets have a role in declaring the Word of the Lord.

They communicate the heart of God.

They can communicate in several ways:

- Teaching
- Preaching
- The spoken prophetic word
- Dreams and visions
- Interpretations
- Symbolic acts

It will always exhort, edify, console, admonish, provide warning, or bring reproof.

The New Covenant prophet has a role in foretelling or communicating the future as perceived in the mind and heart of God.

A prophet's ministry will shape the direction of a church.

It will cause a desire for godliness.

It will empower and release people.

New Testament prophets must work closely with the other five-fold ministries,

- In Acts 11:27 several prophets traveled together.
- In Acts 15:32 Judas and Silas encouraged and strengthened the church.
- In Acts 13:1-3 teachers and prophets came together to release Paul and Barnabas into their wider calling.
- In Ephesians 2:20 apostles and prophets are linked together.

9. In the New Testament, prophecy plays an important role in spiritual warfare.

1 Timothy 1:18

1 Timothy 1:18 – New International Version

Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well.

1 Timothy 1:18- New Living Translation

Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord's battles.

We can use prophecies to fight the enemy.

10. How does prophecy come?

- Visions or pictures

Sometimes our visions are of everyday things.

Jeremiah 1:11, 12

Sometimes they are supernatural or unusual.

Acts 10:9-16

Definition of TRANCE: Displacement of the mind, bewilderment, astonishment

We need prophetic interpretation.

- Dreams

Genesis 37:5-10

Numbers 12:6

Daniel 1:17

Matthew 1:20

Write down your dreams.

Pray over them and share them with a trusted leader.

Remember they may not be relevant for weeks or months.

- Impression

You will get an inner conviction about something.

Be still and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

- Seeing words

We can see words over people.

The first word activates our spirit.

Ask the Lord questions to get a clearer understanding.

- Scripture

Every prophetic word must align with the scripture.

The Lord may give you a scripture to prophetically speak or pray over a person.

It will pop into your mind or heart. This is why a foundation in God's Word is so important.

That Scripture will help a person to stand strong a fight.

11. Judging prophecy

1 Corinthians 14:29

“Judge” is also translated evaluate, discern, decide whether what the person said was right or wrong.

We see in this verse that prophecy should be judged.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

Prophetic words should be judged according to the Word of God.

12. How do we judge prophecy?

- Test the prophetic word.

Does it edify, exhort, and comfort?

I Corinthians 14:3

Prophecy must build up, admonish, stir up, encourage, release pain and discomfort, and enable people to know and understand the heartbeat of God for themselves.

People should be coming into blessing in God and not into a curse.

The final purpose of prophecy is always positive, not negative.

- Test the spirit.

I John 4:1

There are three possible sources behind every prophecy.

- The Spirit of God
- The spirit of man
- An evil spirit

We need to discern the spirit behind what is said, not just test the words.

A word can contain some inaccuracies, but we can still receive from the spirit of the word in which it was given.

- Does the prophecy conform to scripture?

2 Timothy 3:16

We should build our lives on scripture, not prophecy.

Prophecy must not establish new doctrines or practices.

Prophecy must never be used to govern our understanding of scripture. Scripture should govern our prophecy.

Submit the prophetic word to the scripture and see how it fares.

Do not let circumstances be the guide, but rather the Word of God.

- Does the prophecy glorify the Lord Jesus?

John 16:13, 14

The primary ministry of the Holy Spirit is to bring glory to Jesus.

Any word or ministry that exalts man's ministry at the expense of the glory of Jesus must be considered unworthy.

- Look at the fruit.

Romans 14:17

The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy.

Notice that righteousness comes first.

Any form of joy and peace that bypasses righteousness is a deception.

We talk so much about the Holy Spirit that we forget an important thing about Him – He is holy!

Matthew 7:15, 16

A false prophet is not going to come to you and announce that he is a false prophet.

How do you know? – By their fruit.

Here is a list of some of the fruit from false ministries:

- Pride, arrogance, and boastfulness
- Exaggeration
- Dishonesty
- Financial irresponsibility

- Immorality
- Broken marriage vows
- Broken homes

13. What prophecy is NOT

- Condemnation, confusion and discouragement

Romans 8:1

The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter!

Condemnation, confusion, and discouragement are weapons the devil uses against believers.

Prophecy undoes the strategies of the enemy.

- Manipulative or controlling

Prophecy should never be used to make people do what we want, get them on our side in a situation, or even make people feel indebted to our ministry rather than indebted to Jesus.

A good leader must be accountable and responsible so that they do not become deceitful, demanding, controlling, domineering and repressive.

We must examine the motivating force behind each person speaking prophetically.

We must never confuse God's will with our own needs and desires.

Prophecy should never give warnings or threats to others. For example, that the blessing of God may be removed if you don't listen to the voice of the prophet.

Beware of people who are always saying "the Lord told me" and "God has shown me".

What is the spirit behind it?

It can be a sign of control.

Revelation has a power all on its own. It does not need to be prefixed like this.

Our spirit will recognize the truth.

- Prediction of the future

The simple gift of prophecy has nothing to do with the future.

If a prophetic word includes something about the future, the gift of prophecy is working along with the gift of the word of wisdom.

Many times, the gifts operate together. We separate them for the purpose of study.

Example of coffee – A black liquid is coffee. If it has cream, it is still coffee.

Prophecy sometimes is a vehicle for other gifts like a word of wisdom. It is still called prophecy.

The office of the prophet will often go beyond the simple gift of prophecy and be able to see the future.

An example of this is in Acts 21.

Acts 21:10, 11

- The gift of prophecy is not to be used for guidance.

A prophetic word should not tell you who you should marry, what job you should take, etc.

- Prophecy is not judgmental and negative.

1 Corinthians 14:3

None of these things condemn. They are not destructive or negative.

Even when God rebukes you, it is for the purpose of redemption.

- Prophecy does not put you in bondage. It sets you free.

2 Corinthians 3:17

- Prophecy brings life into a meeting, not death.

Sometimes people speak out of a religious spirit. It brings no life into a meeting.

- Prophecy does not bring pressure to do something.

If you feel you must do something because it was prophesied, you should wait. Do not step out because of pressure.

Remember that prophecy is not to be used for guidance.

14. More information and practical guidelines for prophecy

- Prophecy can be personal but should not be private.

Personal prophecy is when individuals receive a word directly into their lives and circumstances from heaven.

Private prophecy is when one is taken aside and privately given a word.

This is not the Biblical pattern. It lacks integrity and accountability from leadership.

Solution: If you have a personal word for someone and you were unable to give it in a public setting like a service, prayer meeting, or Bible study, go to that person with another church leader and share the word with the person. This protects both the person giving the word and the person receiving the word.

We must earn the right to minister into people's lives.

People must be respected and that should not be violated.

- You can control the gift of prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:32

1 Corinthians 14:32 – Amplified Bible

For the spirits of the prophets (the speakers in tongues) are under the speaker's control [and subject to being silenced as may be necessary],

This means that you have “control” over your gift.

It is not true when somebody says, “I just had to say it. I couldn't hold it in any longer.”

Remember that the gifts operate within the structure and government of the local church.

Solution: If you had a word for someone or for the church and you were unable to give it during a particular meeting or service, write it down and share it with the leader and the person when the meeting is finished.

- Spontaneous or prepared prophecy

There are two ways to deliver a prophetic word – a spontaneous word and a prepared word.

Both are equally valid.

Prophets in the Old Testament tended to lean towards the prepared word.

Over one third of the prophecies in the Old Testament were written down ahead of time.

Many prophets had secretaries or associates who were scribes.

Jeremiah had Baruch write out his prophetic words.

There are benefits of a prepared word:

- Opportunity to pray over it.
- Opportunity to get input and guidance from leaders.
- Creates immediate faith impact in the hearts of the congregation.
- People feel safe knowing it has already been subjected to the judgment of church leadership.
- The Holy Spirit can still speak and add to the framework of the word.

A spontaneous word may not get the immediate response we were waiting for because the leaders and people have to “weigh” and “judge” it.

It can lead to weak prophecy, especially for people just beginning to step out in the gift.

15. Practical ways to prepare and operate more effectively in the prophetic

- Prayer

Be sure to listen to God while you are praying.

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

Pray throughout the day.

- Meditation

Meditate on the Word of God.

- Wait on God

Make sure you are waiting with a sense of purpose.

Expect to hear from God.

- Speak in Tongues

Speaking in tongues edifies your spirit.

This helps us to be led by the Spirit.

- Expectation

Do not live a day without expecting to prophesy.

Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are available to us.

Prophecies we receive are not self-fulfilling, but rather they need our cooperation.

We need to be involved through faith and obedience. How we respond dictates what will happen to the word.

We need to set goals for the fulfillment of the word.

The Lord will give us the essential steps so that we can keep pace with Him.

Timing is the most difficult thing to get right in prophecy. Many people will always want to know when something will occur. Only God knows the timescales into which He speaks.

As we give ourselves to prayer and judging the word, He will begin to speak to us about the specifics in terms of times and seasons.

God is never in a hurry but is always on time.

Examples of God's timing:

- It took 24 years for Joseph's prophetic dream to be fulfilled.
- Abraham waited 40 years to receive his son Issac.
- David waited over 20 years for the prophecy about becoming king came to pass.

16. Conclusion

1 Corinthians 14:31

God's will is for every believer to operate in the gift of prophecy.

It also shows that we can all learn as we operate in the gift of prophecy.

Many people never step out in it because they want to be perfect. But that is not how you learn. Do as much as you have faith for and then you can get better at it the more you practice.

Although we can all operate in the gift of prophecy, not all are prophets. The gift of the prophet is an office of leadership that one stands in. This is only for some in the Body of Christ.