

FOR LOVE'S SAKE, PROPHECY!

I. THE GIFTS ARE FOR TODAY AND ARE TO BE EAGERLY DESIRED!

A. The Presupposition

"To *each* is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions *to each one individually as he wills.*" -1 Corinthians 12:7, 11

B. We are to be filled with an earnest desire for the manifestation of the Spirit *for the common good.*

"But *earnestly desire* the higher gifts." – 1 Corinthians 12:31

"Pursue love, and *earnestly desire* the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy." – 1 Corinthians 14:1

- Remember the context is love and the common good. Prophecy, more than any other gift, reaches the maximum number of people. The gift of tongues needs an interpretation to do this, and it is more God-ward than to the congregation, even with interpretation.
- Paul is not suggesting all other gifts are less important than prophecy; he is speaking to manifestations of the Spirit that edify the common good, and prophecy does that more than the gifts.

"So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, *strive to excel* in building up the church." – 1 Corinthians 14:12

- Why is such earnestness called for? Love!

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." – Ephesians 4:15-16

- **Earnestly desiring means yielding fully to God in every area of our lives for the good of others.**

- Seeking to serve the body in love with the gifts of the Spirit calls us out of ourselves and gives us a desire to see others strengthened, encouraged, built up.

“Yielding is at the heart of receiving the gifts of God’s Holy Spirit. For it is only when a person lays himself totally at the disposal of God and holds nothing back that the Spirit moves in to take full possession. This yielding may mean the willingness to *give up earthly reputation, security* and ambition so that God may be glorified. Yielding is an act of faith. It is not something beyond faith, but it is faith in its profoundest expression.”¹

- Fear of man, self-love, peripheral...all these things are conquered by love!

C. Earnestly desiring calls us to pray, anticipate and expect!

- **Pray**

“You do not have because you do not ask.” – James 4:2

“And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” – Luke 11:9-13

“Hence, importunate, persistent, unrelenting prayer is the context for the gift of the Holy Spirit. It would be pushing the story too far to suggest that God only grudgingly gives His Spirit; for the climax describes how God goes far beyond earthly fathers in His generosity. The point, however, is that God is pleased to give to those who earnestly desire something...where there is intense desire, the fulfillment of prayer is all the more joy and thanksgiving. Prayer to the heavenly Father is the channel for God’s blessed gift of the Holy Spirit.”²

“Such a precious gift as the Holy Spirit will not be given indiscriminately to seekers and non-seekers alike, but to those who earnestly desire it. God is not a reluctant or grudging giver who must be badgered into

¹ J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, pg. 304.

² Williams, J. Rodman “*Renewal Theology*”, Volume 2, pg. 296.

giving His favors. Hence, the persistence in prayer that is called for is not to overcome His unwillingness, but rather to demonstrate the wholeheartedness of those asking and thus to prepare the way for the extraordinary gift to be received.”³

- Persistent Prayer!
- Believing Prayer!

“...whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” – Hebrews

11:6

- **Earnest Anticipation and Expectancy**

“But earnestly desire the higher gifts.” – 1 Corinthians 12:31

“After all, ‘seek earnestly the better gifts’ for the edification of the body is an imperative, not a polite invitation. At the individual level, my stock answer is admittedly not always helpful: hunger and thirst with openness. For some this puts too much emphasis on the human rather than the divine side; and I too fear that. But my own experience in the church is that there is a clear correlation between our hunger after God, on the one hand, and our experience of God, on the other. This does not remove the experience of the Spirit of God from God’s own sovereignty, nor does it imply that the one hungering and thirsting does not [already have] the Spirit in full measure. I simply know of no other practical solution.”⁴

- Are you anticipating the gifts of the Spirit in operation?
- Do you come anticipating a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit into your heart?

“Converts should not dwell on old experiences, but seek new ones. One new discovery of the glory of Christ’s face, and the fountain of his sweet grace and love will do more towards scattering clouds of darkness and doubting in one minute, than examining old experiences by the best mark that can be given, a whole year.”⁵

- This is so important for the days ahead! They will get darker, harder!

³ Ibid. pg. 304.

⁴ Fee, Gordon D. “Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God”, pgs. 190-191.

⁵ Marsden, George M. Jonathan Edwards: A Life. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, pg. 226.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are ongoing until the return of Christ and are to be eagerly desired.

II. CLOSING

A. Questions

1. How would you rate your current level of expectancy and anticipation that the Holy Spirit is eager to manifest his presence for the common good of the Body through *you*?
2. What gifts of the Spirit have been evident in your life that need fanned into flame in a fresh way? What would that look like practically? How does this communicate your love to the body of Jesus Christ?
3. Is there an area in your life that is hindering the Spirit's working through you for the good of Christ's church?

B. Responding Now

“A PASTORS ROLE IN DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING PROPHETIC MINISTRY”

1. MY PERSONAL TESTING OF BECOMING A BLACKSMITH

1 Samuel 13:19-22 Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears." 20 So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. 21 The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the hoes. 22 So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan. NASU

2. DOING SPIRITUAL APPRAISALS

1 Corinthians 2:15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. NASU

3. BECOMING A SPIRITUAL DOCTOR

D – Discover who they are

Matthew 16:13-19 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." NASU

O – Observe what they have in their hands

Exodus 4:2-4 The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." 3 Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 But the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out

your hand and grasp it by its tail", so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand. NASU

C – Celebrate the anointing of others

Luke 10:21 At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. NASU

T – Test them to see if their faithful

Matthew 25:21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' NASU

O – Order we don't promote gifting over character

James 3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. NASU

R - Release them into their gifting

Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." NASU

4. WE NEED TO BE "SENT" AND "COMMISSIONED"

- To be Authorized
- To Appoint
- To Charge
- To Empower
- To Dispatch
- To be Entrusted with a Mission

5. HAVE A PHARISEE FREE ZONE AND ALLOW PEOPLE TO GROW IN THEIR GIFTING

(practice, experiment)

6. A LITTLE WORD (LOGOS) = LITTLE PROPHET (RHEMA)

7. TEACH THEM THE 3 LEVELS IN WHICH PROPHECY OPERATES

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. NASU

8. DON'T QUENCH THE SPIRIT OR DESPISE PROPHETIC UTTERANCES

1 Thessalonians 5:19 Do not quench the Spirit. NASU

- Quench – stifle, extinguish, suppress or put out the fire of the Holy Spirit
- Despise – hold something in contempt, to set at naught or not to esteem

9. COMMUNICATE THE RULES OF THE HOUSE

1 Corinthians 14:39-40 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. 40 But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner. NASU

10. TEACH THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RHEMA (REVEALED) AND LOGOS (WRITTEN) WORD OF GOD

Matthew 4:4 but he answered and said, "it is written, 'man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of god.'" nasu

11. JUDGE THE PROPHET BEFORE THE PROPHECY

Matthew 7:15-20 Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. NASU

12. BELIEVE GOD WANTS TO POUR OUT HIS SPIRIT

Acts 2:17-18 And it shall be in the last days God says, "That I will pour forth of my spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of spirit and they shall prophesy. NASU

13. GET IN THE RIVER

Revelation 22:1-2 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. NASU

“SPIRIT-FILLED PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN SUBMISSION” (EPH. 5:21)

The prophetic gift is the most controversial spiritual gift in the Bible. The prophetic gift has been used to bless, create miracles, bring the flow of the spirit, call people to ministry and confirm the will of God for the church and much more.

The prophetic gift can also cause confusion, pain and destruction. Just mentioned to any pastor that you have a prophetic word and you will get a variety of responses, some not so nice.

Many pastors have been so burned by misuses of the prophetic gift that they do not allow the gift of flow anymore.

Unfortunately many people with this gift because of their immaturity or fleshly perversions have twisted this gift and have caused much damage to the church and individuals.

Regardless of the perversions of this gift the Scripture has a clear mandate that we are all called to earnestly desire to prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:1- *Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*

1 Corinthians 14:39 - *Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.*

As leaders in the church we must know how to impart and activate this gift and at the same time facilitate the use of the gift in the divine and orderly way.

1 Peter 4:10 - *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

- *received a special gift* – impartation
- *employ it* - activation

1 Corinthians 14:40 - *But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner*

A word about prophetic people - Many people with the gift of prophecy have dramatic personalities. They tend to act out what they are feeling. They can be extreme and very black and white and opinionated. Understanding their God-given personalities can help you in relating to them (consider John the Baptist and Peter).

The prophetic people who are immature tend to want to speak judgment, correction and

criticism.

Those mature in their gifting will use the prophetic gift to edify, exhort and consol people and the church. (I Corinthians 14:3)

The problem has been that many Christians with the gift of prophecy feel they have a very special revelation of God. If the pastor does not immediately recognize their gift and their revelation they can get offended. When they get offended they will leave one church and go to another. However leaving one church out of order they will arrive at the next church out of order.

Eventually to prophetic person becomes a Lone Ranger who is very susceptible to deception and attacks from the enemy.

What the prophetic person must be taught is that they do have revelation but the revelation that they have must be in submission to the wisdom of the pastor.

God gives pastors a spirit of wisdom that He does not give to the prophets.

When the prophetic people understand that there is a gift of wisdom operating in the pastor that is from God they can submit to it and be blessed.

When the revelation of the prophets submits to the authority and wisdom of the pastor you have a marriage made in heaven and you can expect the miraculous.

In order to facilitate the imparting of the prophetic gift in divine order the key is proactive education.

What must be taught?

- How to use wisdom with revelation.
- What the difference between the office of prophet and the gift of prophecy and the motivational gift of prophecy.
- Give them a deep understanding of the new covenant. (Many immature prophets tend operate in old covenant principles).
- Teach the difference between an exhortation and a prophecy.
- Teach the difference between a testimony and a prophecy.
- Teach the giver when to stop.
- Teach the giver of the prophecy not to try to explain or interpret their prophecy.
- Teach those desiring the gift of prophecy how to recognize the voice of God.
- Teach about the authority of the church and submitting to the authority that God has established and the blessing that it brings
- Teach about the flow of the spirit and using the gifts at the proper time.

- Teach the prophetic giver that they can hold on to their word until the pastor says it is time to give it.
- Teach them to be bold and step out.
- Teach the recipients of prophecy not to run with every word they get but judge the word with scriptural principles.
- Any questionable prophecy should be submitted to the leadership of the church.
- Teach that prophecy should not be given without the knowledge and approval of the church leadership.

1 Corinthians 14:29- 33 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. If a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

What we learn from the above Scriptures

- We should not let too many prophecies go forth. From personal experience when too many prophetic words are given the importance of the words tends to be lost.
- The best people to judge prophecies are prophets.
- Prophetic word should be given one at a time. (I personally like a pause between the words to give the listeners time to digest them).
- The person giving the prophetic word can wait for their turn and give it at the correct time.
- God has nothing to do with confusion or disorder.

In conclusion – The prophetic gift is to be the most desired gift operating within the church. It is no surprise that Satan has continually tried to pervert this gift. Prophecy is simply hearing what God has to say to us. Nothing is more important than God's voice. It is vital to impart and activate the prophetic gift within the church. Everything we do including operating in spiritual gifts should always be done in divine order. Education is the key to divine order.

Proactive education is more effective than reactive correction.

Hosea 4:6 - My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge



Prophetic Team Ministry: A Tale of Two Prophetic Cities

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

Borrowing the epic first line from the Charles Dickens' classic, *A Tale of Two Cities* sets the stage for a helpful contrasted discussion of the prophetic experience of two New Testament churches – Antioch and Corinth.

Antioch highlights the presence and value of team ministry through practice, Corinth experienced discord from a disproportionate focus on individual opportunities and "felt-needs."

These snapshots reveal two very Spirit-filled churches with apparently very different approaches to gift and prophetic ministry that caused Paul to bring correction that can inform our perspective.

I. Why Prophetic Team Ministry? Why don't we just let folks go it alone

- A) Team is God's idea because we are building after the True Model of Team.
- B) Look at what he did with a rag-tag group of fishermen and outcasts, it was said of them, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also," (Acts 17:6).
- C) "Team" is a concept clearly understood and appreciated most for its higher purpose than any one individual.
- D) Team ministry is where we can strip away the assumptions about another's character, and we can grow in an accountable way.
- E) Throughout Scripture there were prophetic companies, groups, and entourages – teams.
- F) Prophetic ministry is highly individual in its experience and obedience, but team/group oriented in its growth and function.
- G) Also, prophetic people can experience adversity that will bring prophetic persons together for provision, support, training, and encouragement.

He uses our coming together, to grow us together, to use us together.

II. 4 takeaways from these Two Cities' Experience

A. True Prophetic Team Ministry...

- 1)...Unifies the church, it doesn't create confusion

- 2)... Serves leadership, it doesn't burden leadership
- 3)... Edifies the Local Church, not indulges personal preferences
- 4)... Is cultivated, matured, and released through stewardship and leadership

The Holy Spirit took Paul to school on the gifts in Antioch, especially Prophecy.

Why does it matter to consider Paul's experiential knowledge?

It stands to reason that he was affected by true prophetic ministry as an elder present in Antioch which lends even more credence, clarity, and weight to his various corrections of the Corinthians.

He had experiential knowledge about New Testament prophetic team ministry operating to validate the deep revelation he had received by the Holy Spirit to exhort the Corinthians to a better way, an edifying way, evidenced in decency and order.

Let's explore the 4 Takeaways...

- 1) True Prophetic Team Ministry...Unifies the church, it doesn't create confusion
 - a. Antioch
 1. Agabus predicts a famine (Acts 11:27-28)
 2. In this passage, he was visiting Antioch with a prophetic team sent from Jerusalem. He stood up in the midst of the church and declared what the Holy Spirit was saying to the church.
 3. The prophetic word was validated in submission to authority (team came from Jerusalem under authority) and was received with such faith that it produced unity and generosity among all the believers to assist those who would be in need.
 - b. Corinth
 1. Corinth by contrast appeared to be more enamored with tongues and individual edification within their meetings. 1 Cor. 14:27
 2. There seemed to be a significant focus on gifts as a means of personal experience over decency and order that edified everyone as evidenced by Paul's adjustment in 1 Cor. 14:40.

3. It seemed to matter more who had the best word, most wisdom, most chances to speak. That isn't edifying to anyone except the individuals usurping all the attention.
- 2) True Prophetic Team ministry... Serves leadership, it doesn't burden leadership
 - a. Antioch
 1. "Prophets and teachers...Set apart for me..." (Acts 13:1-2)
 2. Antioch humbly received prophetic ministers from Jerusalem (Acts 11:27, 15:32) on multiple occasions.
 3. The Holy Spirit used these visiting ministers to develop prophets who were present in Antioch as part of the church when He launched Paul, one of the most prolific ministers in history (Acts 13:1-3)
 - b. Corinth
 1. Corinth by contrast had gift and prophetic ministry that caused disorder and confusion for the leadership because they were talking over one another seeking attention.
 2. Prophetic Ministry wasn't serving the leadership, it served the prophets who had to be reminded of the need for self-control – "the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets." 1 Cor. 14:32
 - 3) True Prophetic Team Ministry... Edifies the Local Church, not indulges personal preference
 - a. Antioch
 1. Judas and Silas encouraged the brothers (Acts 15:32)
 2. Often when a team is used in ministry, few remember who said what to whom, but God gets the glory for the work done.
 3. The Holy Spirit shows us through Antioch that despite doctrinal disagreement over various issues, prophecy could be a fountain of

unification, confirmation, and edification of God's rich presence working mightily.

c. Corinth

1. Corinth by contrast focused on self-edification in tongues and hearing themselves talk, and not on what mattered most in the prophetic...building up the Church and the manifest presence of God

2. Paul elevated Prophecy for its capacity to edify the church. However, even what we call prophetic can become man-centered and felt-needs focused in its content.

3. The nature of the prophetic words become more exhortation than prophecy. What do I mean?

4. Corinth was droning on with many words, Antioch was hearing, The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me..."

4) True Prophetic Team Ministry...Is cultivated, matured, and released through Stewardship and Leadership

a. Corinth

1. Corinthian Leadership allowed prophetic ministry to run wild with individuals all seeking to outdo one another in the meetings.

2. The outcome of that approach was an individualistic cacophony of selfish ambition and self-righteousness. There didn't appear to be team anywhere in the discussion.

3. It's a cautionary tale of what appears to be weak and passive leadership in the gifts.

b. Antioch

1. Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22)

2. God is looking to send Barnabas through the prophetic again to His Church. Barnabas wasn't a prophet, but his name means what our

ministry is supposed to be – We are a Barnabas ministry – a ministry of Encouragement.

3. He was a pastor, a teacher, an evangelist, and an apostle. He appeared to operate in every office except the one he enthusiastically brought into Antioch on these multiple occasions...prophetic. He sought out proven prophetic team ministry
4. Barnabas unlocks the door to thriving prophetic team ministry...

III. Barnabas Unlocks The Door to Prophetic Team Ministry

Acts 11:19-27

- A. Look for the Grace of God in the Church and others – Acts 11:23
- B. Express joy when others are being used for the Glory of God – Acts 11:23
- C. Exhort faithfulness...with steadfast purpose (in the gospel) – Acts 11:23
- D. Seek out partnerships with effective, gifted ministers – Acts 11:25 & 27

We want the story told about us to be that we were encouraging others to fulfill their calling in the Lord, either as leaders who strengthen others to be used, or members who participate in this ministry that encourages others. Either way, we must be saturated afresh by the Holy Spirit who is the ultimate Barnabas within us.

I pray he gives us thriving prophetic team ministry, that edifies his church, and may he make us Barnabas to others.

