

## **(EXPLORING PART 2) Living in victory**

Our calling is a tough one, and it gets tougher, not easier. If we study the first eleven chapters of Joshua, we can see this process in action. The battles and challenges got harder and harder. But Joshua was never defeated. However hard the battle, and however hard he was pressed back, he managed to live in victory. On one occasion (Joshua 10:16-24) he captured five kings, but being heavily involved in fighting, he shut them up in a cave. When the battle was over, he had them brought out, and the Bible says: "When they had brought these kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, .Come here and put your feet on the necks of the kings.. So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks. Joshua said to them, .Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight.. Then Joshua struck and killed the kings, and hung them on five trees, and they were left hanging on the trees until evening."

Joshua suffered the pain and the struggle, but in his heart he lived in victory. We must follow his example. We will often feel low, helpless, afraid and defeated. But we are not defeated. We are more than conquerors. (Romans 8:37) We are on the victory side. This does not make us proud or arrogant, but it does make us winners.

Why have I written this to prophets? We need to have a "victory" attitude. because we are so often alone, helpless and apparently defeated. The Church often leaves us isolated and frustrated. Our words seem to count for nothing, and the future looks uncertain. But despite all, we will not be defeated. We will press on towards the goal. (Phil 3:14) This attitude gives us comfort, rejoices the angels in heaven and drives the enemy mad! Alleluia.

### **Learning to wait**

God's creatures are not designed for waiting! We like things to happen. The prophet Isaiah must have felt exactly the same. After his great prophecy in chapter 7, ("A virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.") I expect he was looking around every day for the fulfilling of this word. I wonder how he would have felt if he had known that he was to wait

hundreds of years for this word to come to pass? Prophets have to learn to wait. God will give the word at His appointed time, and will bring that word to fulfilment at the appropriate time. We might see this process covering a few minutes, or a few centuries. Whichever way, we have to learn to wait. If we do not have a waiting heart, then how can God use us?

How can he trust us with ministry when he knows that if we do not see immediate action, we will start getting frustrated? Revelations wait their appointed time (Hab2:3), and we must do the same. Study the book of Habakkuk. This prophet had a fantastic vision, and could well have got frustrated when its fulfilment did not come to pass. But he had a waiting heart. Read his final words, and ask God to make them part of your experience:-

“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.”(Hab3:17-18)

Why do I say this to prophets? Frustration with the apparent ineffectiveness of our work can cause us deep pain. Like Isaiah, we have to speak, and leave the fulfilling of what we speak to God. If it happens today, then that's fine, and if it happens in two hundred years' time, that's fine as well. Remember prophets, it is God's revealed word, and he has the divine right to fulfil it when he is ready.

## **The prophet and the church**

### **The prophet and the church - foundation gifts**

The church has a pattern for its ministry, and the basic pattern is seen in Ephesians 4: 11-13:-

**So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

These 5 ministries are the foundation ministries of any and every church.

### **Apostle**

Releaser of gifts and appointer of ministries.

Must have a wide and deep view of Church.

### **Prophet**

Interpreter of times and indicator of ways.

His integrity must never be compromised.

### **Evangelist**

Keeper of the door and voice of the Gospel.

Must have passion and force.

But often cannot understand wider implications of ministry.

### **Pastor**

Shepherd of the sheep. Keeps open the bridge of love. Will be trodden down.

### **Teacher**

Equipper of ministries and guardian of truth.

A passion for teaching. Often pushed to the edge of Church life.

**Why do we need to know about this pattern? The reasons are clear:**

- 1.** This is the way God planned the ministry of his Church.
- 2.** It prevents any one office claiming to have the entire truth.  
We have to work as a team.
- 3.** It gives balance to the ministry which God wants us to offer to his Church.
- 4.** It prevents any one of the foundation gifts throwing out any other foundation ministry.

**Can these gifts come in combination?**

Some of them fit well together. Pastor and teacher have always been linked.  
A pastor can have a prophetic voice.

An Apostle can have an evangelistic side to his nature.

But there is one combination which is particularly difficult -Pastor/Prophet.

This is a difficult combination:-

1. Who is the Pastor/prophet going to submit his ministry to? It needs to be done by the leadership, of which he is part.
2. Who is going to test his word?
3. Pastors have to be involved in the day to day running of the body, and with all the detail of Church building. Prophets are seldom interested in this.
4. It is hard for the body when one person combines these two offices. The prophet must be free to say hard things. It is the Pastor's job to minister the words to the people in love and tenderness. The sheep are sometimes confused by this combination.

**The prophet must be prepared to understand this pattern, and function within it, and not outside of it. A prophet cannot stand alone – he or she will be crushed by the burden.**

### **The prophet and the Church - Recognition. (Acts 13: 1-4)**

A prophet has his call from God. But in New Testament prophecy, that call has to be recognised by the Church. In Acts 13, we see one of the ways in which that can be done:-

1. **The leaders pray.** If this does not happen, then how can God direct?
2. **God speaks.** It is necessary for God to make his will known.
3. **The leaders pray** some more, to get clarification and confirmation that what they are hearing is from God.
4. **The Church recognises** the call, by the laying on of hands. In this way, the Church is identified with the call, as well as confirming it.
5. **The ministry begins** to flow. Without some recognition and accreditation process, our foundation ministries will not be in line with biblical truth.

**The prophet has his call from God, but his recognition from men. If we do not have the recognition of a local Church - and that means recognition by the leadership - then we may still be a prophet, but we are not a biblical prophet.**

### **The prophet and the Church . The Pastor/ Prophet relationship.**

The relationship between the Pastors and the prophets is the key to the development of good prophecy. It is a relationship filled with problems:-

- \* **Theological conflicts.** I believe this...
- \* **Authority conflicts.** You have no right to...
- \* **Church order conflicts.** .You're not doing it right..
- \* **Personality conflicts.** .I don't like you!
- \* **Internal conflicts.** I'm not sure about myself, so I attack you.
- \* **Fear conflicts.** You will upset...
- \* **Bad history conflicts.** This happened in the past.

Both Pastor and Prophet can suffer from one or more of these conflicts. It helps to know where the conflict has its root, so that we know how to handle it. So how does friction arise?

- \* **Misunderstanding of each other's roles and each other's gifts.**
- \* **A clash of authority.**
- \* **Lack of commitment to Church order on both sides.**
- \* **Frustration on both sides.**
- \* **Thinking too much of ourselves.**
- \* **Bad experiences on both sides.**
- \* **An unforgiving spirit.**
- \* **No ability to rebuild bridges.**

**How can we put things right?**

#### **1. Preparing the heart.**

Keep the servant heart in your mind. Read of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples, (John 13) and think about the parable of the servant. (Luke 17:7-10)

#### **2. The place & time to put things right.**

There has to be a right time to put things right, and a right place. Shouting at each other in the assembly is not it! But nor is an official summons to meet the elders. The beginning of bridge building is best done informally, in a relaxed attitude, and usually without a lot of other people present. The discussion needs to be confidential, or no one will be honest and open. This is not a meeting to place blame, but to rebuild trust and friendship. There may be times ahead for repentance and confession, but that comes much later. First the bridge must be built and tested. What if one side will not meet? Then relax and keep praying. These things cannot be forced into a man-made timetable. There is a right time.

### **3. Willingness to share, not shout.**

Calm tempers and gentle speaking are the right way ahead. Shouting at each other may make us feel better, and there might have to be a bit of it to clear the air. But shouting seldom solves problems. We have to have a willingness to share together, recognising that if there is fault, both sides have to accept some responsibility.

### **4. Honest look at the problems. (John8:32)**

Amazing things happen when two people look honestly at a problem. Usually, it gets smaller! So many of our problems are really misunderstandings, things put in the wrong way, or things said by others. When an honest sharing takes place, it is surprising how much of the problem disappears. An honest sharing will help find the root of the problem, and deal with it.

### **5. A decision to move forward, and plan for future conflict solving.**

One bridge should lead to others, and the best bridge of all is the one which prevents friction and difficulty arising again. I often suggest that Pastors and prophets should sit down together on a regular basis, to share ministries, and pray together. In this way even if a problem does arise, it will not have very long to fester before Pastor and prophet are sitting down together, and things can be sorted out.

### **True and false prophecy**

Pastors and prophets need to know the difference between true and false prophecy. So let's look at the teaching of Ezekiel in chapter 13 of his book to get an understanding of the false.

**1. "Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit." (v.3)**

False prophets prophesy from their own selfish hearts, saying and sharing what they feel to be right. Their ministry is built on their own needs - for power, for position, for support and love, for feeling a vital part of God's work. The message they bring often sounds good and encouraging, but it lacks the one essential ingredient. It does not flow from the heart of God.

**2. "You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall, to repair it for the house of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the Lord."(v.5)**

False prophets do not love the Church. They may pretend to, but they cannot hide their basic nature. Their lack of love and concern will show itself in a number of ways:-

- \* **An unwillingness to be committed to one local fellowship.**
- \* **An unwillingness to be involved with the everyday life of the Church.**
- \* **Speaking sweet and easy words which have no substance to them.**
- \* **Speaking harsh, condemnatory and judgmental words to the Church, which lack any sign of encouragement, blessing or hope.**

**3. "Their visions are false and their divinations a lie." (v.6)**

If a prophet does not love the Church, then he soon loses the focus of his spirituality. For a lack of love for the Church reflects a lack of love for Jesus. It's only a short journey from this dangerous position to straying into occult practices.

**4. "They say 'Peace' when there is no peace."(v.10)**

False prophets always tell us what we want to hear. Their words are always comfortable, encouraging and friendly. The reason for this is simple. False prophets want to be thought of as nice people. This way they get the adulation and respect which they so desperately desire. Jesus makes it clear what he thinks

about this attitude. “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for this is how your fathers treated the false prophets.” (Luke 6:26)

### **5. “Flimsy wall.” (v.10)**

The true prophetic word warns of danger ahead, and helps the people of God avoid it. The true prophetic word strengthens the people of God for all that is to come. The true prophetic word cleanses the people of God, so that the Spirit of God can work more fully in them. The false prophets are the complete opposite to this. They fail to point out weaknesses, imperfections and lack of righteousness, and as a consequence they weaken and spoil the people of God. This is not always apparent at first. But when trouble comes, those who have depended on false prophecy will be revealed. And they will be washed away. What good is it then to say “If only we had known.”

### **6. “Magic Charms.”**

This means that there is to be no use of anything occult - no voices, manifestations, amulets, charms, spells, incantations or other occult paraphernalia.

Here is a list of the things we can expect to find in true prophet. Study them carefully.

- 1. A true prophecy puts Jesus first. (Rev 19:10)**
- 2. A true prophet loves the body of Christ. (Eph. 5:25)**
- 3. A true prophet has, or is trying to live a pure life. (Ps 24: v 3-4)**
- 4. A true prophet loves and uses the Bible for his ministry. (Ps 119: 105)**
- 5. A true prophet respects the leadership. (1 Thess. 5:12)**
- 6. A true prophet has a humble heart. (Phil 2: 5-11)**
- 7. A true prophet wants the testing of the Church. (1 Theses. 5:21)**
- 8. A true prophet is willing to serve. (Mark 10: 45)**
- 9. A true prophet wants to belong to the body. (Heb. 10:25)**

### **Practical things for a prophet to know**

You may be surprised to find that this is a short section. Surely these are the things at the heart of a prophet’s ministry. Yes they are, but I have written a

great deal about them elsewhere, and you can get these books from the website [www.visionworld27.org](http://www.visionworld27.org). But as I have said many times, what really matters is who we are, and our relationship to God. If we have that right, then we will know how to exercise our ministry. Here are just a few basic things for you to consider.

## **1. Hearing from God.**

The prophet expects to hear from God - this is God's covenant to the prophet. He hears God's word in many ways:-

### **\* Through prayer**

God impresses his will into the heart, as the prophet waits on Him in prayer.

### **\* Through worship**

God makes his will known to individual people, as they worship him, privately and in the fellowship of God's people.

### **\* Through the Bible**

As a prophet studies and meditates on the Bible, God will impress things in the prophet's heart.

### **\* Through dreams and visions**

God also speaks in dreams and visions. The problem is that in some cultures dreams and visions are given the top place in revelation, and God's people do not give them the serious testing which they need.

Study Deuteronomy 18:9-13 and Deuteronomy 4:16, which teach what is not permitted - no witchcraft, no trances, no spells or incantations, no amulets or charms. Nothing from the occult must be included in biblical prophecy.

### **\* Through incidents in life**

God often speaks through the experiences of our daily lives. Everyday events become vehicles to explain his purposes, and revelations of his will.

## **2. How does a prophet deliver his word?**

Very few prophets have ever been taught how to speak what they have been given. But there are some simple guidelines, which will help with the ministry:-

- 1.** Speak with the approval of the Pastor.
- 2.** Speak within the discipline of the body. Share with individuals with the knowledge of the Pastor, and share in the worship at the appropriate time. A prophet does not break the flow of worship.
- 3.** Speak in a normal voice.
- 4.** Speak briefly and to the point, sharing the word but not applying it.

5. Speak with respect for the body, the leadership and under the leading of the Spirit.

### **3. How does a prophet test his word?**

This is not a difficult thing to do, but it takes TIME! It is not just the leaders and people who have to test. The first testing is our responsibility. Here is one way:-

**1. Time in prayer.**

**2. Time in Bible study, to find the biblical roots.**

**3. Time to seek understanding.**

**4. Time to seek the right time.**

If in doubt, it is best to wait, to pray, and get some advice from spiritually experienced people.

### **4. How does the body test a word?**

It is the responsibility of the body, guided by the leadership, to test every word. (1 John 4:1) The first tests are of the prophet himself:-

#### **\* Test the man**

**Does he** belong to the body?

**Does he** submit his word/ministry to the leadership of the Body?

**Does he** submit himself to the testing of other prophets?

**Does he** have a desire to unlock the gift of prophecy in others within the Body?

**Does he** attend worship, and share in the local ministry of his local Church?

#### **\* Test the word**

Here are some of the basic questions which help get to the truth of a prophetic word. They have to be asked prayerfully. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal true prophecy to us, and I use these questions to give Him freedom to direct my thinking.

**Is this word** biblically correct? Every prophetic word from God must be rooted in the Bible and must not contradict or add to that revelation.

**Do any of** the words in the prophetic word remind us of particular verses/passages ?

**Does anything** in the prophetic word remind us of anything we have come across recently in a sermon, a home group teaching, or in our own private study time ?

**Does this word** encourage, direct, rebuke, build up?

#### **\* Find the purpose of the word**

This is a central part of the testing process. The purpose of the word should reveal itself as we test it. We are faced with a simple question. "What is God asking us to do, or what is he showing or telling us about our situation?" For example:-

**A surrender/deeper commitment.**

**A change of direction.**

**An encouragement to proceed with more/less caution.**

**Discovery of an error or sin in the body.**

**A relationship problem within the body/between bodies.**

**A lack of repentance.**

**A command to wait/listen more.**

**A warning of some impending event.**

**The uncovering of a truth that has been hidden / lost /forgotten.**

#### **\* Make a response to the word**

The testing process comes to an end when we have understood the word, and made some decision to act on it.

#### **5. Background**

It's a good practice for a prophet to know the biblical background to any word he or she delivers. The roots of everything we say is in the Bible. So it is worth spending time in prayer establishing this biblical framework, before we speak. Then we will have confidence in our word, and God's people will know where to look for their testing..

#### **6. Tiredness**

Beware tiredness! When we are tired, it is so easy to mishear from God, or to get angry and frustrated. Make sure you take time for rest. We are expected to be available 24 hours every day to the Lord, but we are not expected to minister 24 hours a day for 7 days a week every week! It is not possible to maintain quality ministry under such conditions. Take time to rest, time with your wife and family, or with your friends.

#### **Training others**

**"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." (2 Tim**

## 2:2)

Ephesians 4:11-12 makes clear that the heart of our office is to train others in the ministry, to equip the saints. In this the Apostle was following the lead of Jesus, who trained his twelve disciples, so that they in turn could train others. Why is it then that so few Pastors, prophets and leaders give time to training others to follow them in ministry?

- \* Fear - that those trained will take their calling or sheep from them.
- \* Pride - they don't want anyone else to take their position.
- \* Lack of understanding - that this is a central part of their function.
- \* Lack of training and materials to carry out this task.

**Yet it is essential, if our ministries are to be increased, and carried on down the generations. So how can we go about it?**

- \* **Recognise our responsibility in this area.**
- \* **Look out for younger prophets, or for those who have some kind of call on their lives and spend time with them.**
- \* **Have a pattern of teaching which we can share with them.**

I have included a simple training course here. If you have someone who you feel is beginning to show some prophetic calling, study this course with them. At the end of it, it will be clear where they stand. After this, it is necessary to invest time in them, to help them begin to grow. This is time consuming, but it is also your duty and your privilege.

### **Training others: The four week Course.**

This material is designed for a course or group leader to use. Many of the answers, and much additional material can be found in the material which precedes this section.

#### **Outline of course**

- \* **Week 1. What is a prophet?**  
**The fivefold ministry.**

- \* **Week 2: Hearing from God.**  
Characteristics of the prophetic life.
- \* **Week 3. Knowing true from false.**  
Testing the words and the men.
- \* **Week 4. Recognising and releasing prophets**

### **WEEK 1: Session 1. What is a prophet?**

**Teaching suggestion: - Study each of these passages yourself, to understand the prophetic ministry. Then explain what you have learnt to your school.**

**Prophets have a wide range of ministry:-**

1. Watchman. (Ezekiel 33:1-11)
2. Messenger. (Isaiah 6:9)
3. Intercessor. (Amos 7:1-3)
4. A man of the Bible. (Revelation 22:18)
5. A man of the Spirit. (1 Cor.12: Eph. 4: 1-16: Rev19:10)
6. A man who accepts the hard things. (Luke 6:26)
7. A man of the Fellowship. (Eph.4:12)
8. A Man of prayer. (Philippians 4:6)

**Teaching suggestion: - Encourage your school to see prophets as men and women with different emphasis in their ministries. Prophets are not just people who come and give you a personal word! Their ministry is much deeper and wider than that.**

### **WEEK 1: Session 2. The 5 fold ministry of God.**

**Teaching suggestion: - It's vital that we understand that prophets are central to God's plan for ministry.**

**Key passage:-**

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service." (Ephesians 4:11)

Prophets are part of the totality of ministry which God intends for his people. If this ministry is missing, then the work is unbalanced. Here is an outline of the fivefold ministry as taught by St Paul in Ephesians.

**Apostle:** Releaser of gifts and appointer of ministries. Must have a wide and deep view of the Church.

**Prophet:** Interpreter of times and indicator of ways. His integrity must never be compromised.

**Evangelist:** Keeper of the door and voice of the Gospel. Must have passion and force. But often cannot understand wider implications of ministry.

**Pastor:** Shepherd of the sheep. Keeps open the bridge of love. Will be trodden down.

**Teacher:** Equipper of ministries and guardian of truth. A passion for teaching, but refuses to suffer fools gladly. Often pushed to the edge of Church life.

**Teaching suggestion:-** If prophets are to be part of the ministry of the Church, what benefits does this bring us? Ask your group to give you some answers.

## **WEEK 2: Session 1. Hearing from God.**

**Teaching suggestion:** This is a practical session. Through these various teaching points, try to understand how a prophet hears from God.

The prophet expects to hear from God. This is God's covenant to the prophet. He hears God's word in many ways:-

**\*Through prayer. (Isaiah 6:1)**

God impresses his will into the heart, as the prophet waits on Him in prayer. Has this ever happened to you?

**\* Through worship. (1 Sam 7:7-9)**

God makes his will known to individual people, as they worship him, privately and in the fellowship of God's people.

**\* Through the Bible. (2 Kings 22)**

As a prophet studies and meditates on the Bible, God will impress things in the prophet's heart.

**\*Through dreams and visions. (Revelation 1:10)**

God does speak in dreams and visions. The problem is that in some cultures, dreams and visions are given the top place in revelation, and God's people do not

give them the serious testing which they need. Deuteronomy 18:9-13 and Deuteronomy 18:10-12 teach what is not permitted. To sum these verses up - no witchcraft, no trances, no spells, no incantations, no amulets or charms are permitted. Nothing from the occult must be included in biblical prophecy.

**\* Through incidents in life (Jeremiah 11-15)**

**Teaching suggestion: Ask your group to share any ways in which they have heard from God. Suggest that next week we might share anything God has been saying during the week.**

## **WEEK 2: Session 2. Character**

The prophetic ministry cannot be separated from the life, character and behaviour of the prophet. The word he receives is spoken through his life and personality. So it is essential to know what the Bible expects of that character and life.

**Teaching suggestion: There are too many characteristics listed here! You must choose which ones to teach. I always teach the crucified life material. No prophet will go far wrong if he or she leads a crucified life.**

**\* Characteristic 1:** God centred. (1Sam 17:45&47)

**\* Characteristic 2:** Never takes the easy way out. (1Kings 22: 1-38)

**\* Characteristic 3:** Crucified the world. (2 Tim 4:10)

The world loves power and success.

**The crucified life** of the leader loves obedience and service.

The world wants to control.

**The crucified life** of the leader wants to encourage and release.

The world likes to manipulate, to work in the darkness and in underhand ways.

**The crucified life** of the leader works in honesty and openness, rejoicing in the light.

The world loves riches.

**The crucified life** of the leader looks to the provision of God and his work.

The world loves laziness, poor discipline and indulgence.

**The crucified life** of the leader seeks to discipline his life, so he can be effective, and endure. The world likes confusion in its thinking, diluting truth to suit its own needs.

**The crucified life** of the leader loves the truth of God's word, and matches this life to God's law.

The world hates the poor, despising them, or providing them with the minimum.

**The crucified life** of the leader looks to the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the helpless, knowing that in serving these, he is serving the Lord.

The world exploits sexuality, and pulls down family life.

**The crucified leader** has control of his or her sexuality, and seeks in every way to build up marriage and family life.

\* **Characteristic 4:** Obedient, whatever it costs. (Mark 10:32)

\* **Characteristic 5:** Discipline whatever it costs. (Acts 27:21)

\* **Characteristic 6:** Spirit filled. (Acts 4:8)

\* **Characteristic 7:** Servant heart. (Mark 8:34-35)

**The servant** denies himself. He has conquered his self-will, (Luke 17:7-10) and follows in his Master's way. (Phil 2:5-8)

**The servant** takes up his cross, without complaining. He bears all the burdens of the cross with joy. (Hebrews 12:2)

**The servant follows**, without complaint. (Luke 9:51- 62)

**Teaching suggestion:** If you have taught the crucified life, challenge your school to apply this teaching to their own lives.

**WEEK 3: Session 1. Knowing true from false**

**Teaching suggestion:** The emphasis of this teaching is TRUE prophecy. To get an understanding of that, we have to look first at the false. Take time to study this yourself, before you teach it.

**The false:** - Ezekiel chapter 13

1. "Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit." (v.3)

False prophets prophesy from their own selfish hearts, saying and sharing what they feel to be right. Their ministry is built on their own needs - for power, for position, for support and love, for feeling a vital part of God's work. The message they bring often sounds good and encouraging, but it lacks the one essential ingredient - it does not flow from the heart of God.

## **2. "You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall, to repair it for the house of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the Lord." (v.5)**

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## **6. "Magic Charms." (v18)**

This means that there is to be no use of anything occult. no voices, manifestations, amulets, charms, spells, incantations or other occult paraphernalia.

### **The signs of true prophecy**

- 1. A true prophecy puts Jesus first. (Rev 19:10)**
- 2. A true prophet loves the body of Christ. (Eph. 5:25)**
- 3. A true prophet has, or is trying to live a pure life. (Ps 24: v 3-4)**
- 4. A true prophet loves and uses the Bible for his ministry. (Ps 119: 105)**
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- 8. A true prophet is willing to serve. (Mark 10: 45)**
- 9. A true prophet wants to belong to the body. (Heb. 10:25)**

**Teaching suggestion: This list of signs of true prophecy is the heart of this session. If possible, get it copied and given out.**

### **WEEK 3: Session 2. Testing the words & men**

**Teaching suggestion: This is a very practical session. It is trying to give some way by which we can test both the man and his words. At the end, I have included a short word, which you might like to test, using the suggestions here.**

- 1. Test the man. Ask these questions.**

### **Does he:-**

- \* **Belong** to the Body?
- \* **Submit** his word/ministry to the leadership of the Body?
- \* **Submit** himself to the testing of other prophets in the Body?
- \* **Have** a desire to unlock the gift of prophecy in others within the Body?
- \* **Does** he attend worship, and share in the local ministry of his local Church?

### **2. Test the word. Ask these questions:-**

- \* **Is this word** Biblically correct? Every prophetic word from God must be rooted in the Bible and must not contradict or add to that revelation.
- \* **Do any of** the words in the prophetic word remind us of particular verses/passages ?
- \* **Do any of** the words in the prophetic word remind us of biblical stories or people ?
- \* **Does anything in** the prophetic word remind us of anything we have come across recently in a sermon, a home group teaching, or in our own private study time ?
- \* **Does this word** encourage, direct, rebuke, build up?
- \* **What is** this word asking us to do?

### **3. Plan a response.**

The question is – “What does this word ask us to do?” Only when we know the answer to this question, can we work out our response. For example:-

- \* **A surrender**/deeper commitment.
- \* **A change** of direction.
- \* **An encouragement** to proceed with more/less caution.
- \* **Discovery** of an error or sin in the body.
- \* **A relationship** problem within the body/between bodies.
- \* **A lack** of repentance.
- \* **A command** to wait/listen more.
- \* **A warning** of some impending event.
- \* **The uncovering** of a truth that has been hidden / lost /forgotten.

### **4. Make a response to the word.**

There has to be some decision about what to do about what God has told us. Otherwise, we are wasting his time.

**Test this word.**

**As a practical exercise, practice what you have learnt on this word:-**

I call you to be servants - servants of me, servants of each other, servants of those who do not know me. The servant heart I value more than any other offering, because it is the heart which is closest to mine, which I am able to use.

If I visit you, will I find this heart in you, or will I find pride, deceit, jealousy, or envy ? Examine yourselves before me, and I will show you your heart.

**WEEK 4: Session 1. Releasing ministries.**

**Teaching suggestion: The purpose of this course is to release people into their ministries. That means discovering prophets, and releasing people into prophecy. The two are not quite the same. So all we can do in this final week, is to outline some teaching. It's up to each Pastor to decide how to proceed from here.**

**1. Gifts and ministries.**

When we are looking for release in prophecy, we are looking for two different, but related blessings.

\* **We are looking for God to raise up prophets.** See Ephesians 4: 11-12. Prophets are one of the foundation ministries of the Church. They are given to embody the prophetic gift. They have their calling to build up the body, and to release gifts and ministries in others.

\* **We are looking for the release of the gift of prophecy.**

See 1 Corinthians 12. Here we learn that the one Spirit gives the gifts. (v4) We see that there is a great variety of gifting, and among those gifts is the gift of prophecy. (v10) This gift is given for the blessing of the whole body. (verses 12-13)

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

\* **1 Corinthians 14:5** “I would like everyone of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy.”

## **2. Key principles.**

As we begin to release the gift of prophecy, there are key biblical principles involved:-

- \* It is the will of God. (Acts 2: 17-18)
- \* It is the work of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:2)
- \* There has to be individual response. (Acts 13:4)
- \* There has to be a leadership response. (Acts 13:3)

## **3. Time to pray and act.**

There is little more I can write. As this course comes to an end, it is time to seek God together, for a release of prophecy and the raising up of prophets.

## **Some suggestions.**

- \* You might have a time of prayer, and invite people to prophesy, under the authority of the leader.
- \* You might offer to pray with laying on of hands for any who want the gift of prophecy.
- \* You might invite any who feel the call of prophet to speak with you after the course. Only you can decide what steps to take with these people. I can suggest:-
  1. You contact us, for additional material.
  2. You visit our website, where you can see what books are available, and download them. They are all free.

## **Repentance**

**Repentance is one of the main themes of prophetic ministry. We need to know about it.**

Every prophet must have a good theology of repentance. Here is a biblical foundation to study, based on Psalm 51.

- 1. “Against you, you only have I sinned.” (Ps 51:4)**

It is against God we have sinned. No amount of discussion or debate can change this basic truth. Accepting it is the starting point for true repentance. However, it is the hardest point for a Christian to find.

## **2. “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Ps 51:7 )**

Once we know our sin, we need the cleansing of God, which comes through the blood of Jesus. “The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)  
But in order to be washed, God will make us aware of what we have done. How else can we know the true cleansing, if we are not made aware of the shame of the nation, the darkness of the nation, the weakness of the church, or the failure of leadership? This is a most painful experience, but it cannot be avoided if we want the fruits of repentance. This is also the step that many want to avoid, or make easy. But to know the true nature of our sin is a painful and even frightening experience. Without this, we can never know true repentance.

## **3. “You desire truth in the inner parts.” (Ps. 51:6 )**

As we are praying and thinking about these things, the enemy will do all he can to spoil our repentance. He knows he must, because this is such a powerful and life giving moment for us. (See 1 Samuel 7:7) While we are repenting, we need to hear words of truth from the Bible, to counter the lies of the enemy.

Words like:-

**“The sacrifices of God** are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart O God you will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17)

**“Cleanse me with hyssop** and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Psalm 51:7)

**“If we confess our sins,** he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”(1 John 1: 9)

## **4. “Create in me a pure heart.” (Ps. 51:10)**

Repentance has to result in a new way of living. We cannot repent and continue in the same way as before. What does God expect?

\* **A commitment** to a new way of life. Even though we do not know the implications, we must be willing to let the Holy Spirit make the changes. Working out this new way of living is easier if we think, pray and talk with others.

\* **A willingness** to pay the price of repentance, and the changes it will bring personally, in church life, and beyond.

### **God is faithful! The challenge of Jeremiah**

Every prophet has to be sure of his lifestyle. Without a godly and Biblical foundation for his life, a prophet will quickly fall away from the truth, and begin to speak lies. But there is nothing quite like the challenge of another prophet to help us look again at our lifestyle, our behaviour and our method of working, and in this material, I want to let the prophet Jeremiah challenge and encourage us to self-examination, and correction where needed.

#### **Jeremiah the man.**

Jeremiah was called at a young age to his work, and he had a long ministry. To him fell the responsibility of interpreting difficult times for Judah. The pressure was on the Nation from great world powers, especially Babylon, and true religion was at a very low ebb. His task was to explain to the people that the coming of Babylon was the judgment of God on the godless Nation, and that nothing could turn back the Babylonians. He encouraged the people to join the Babylonian side, prophesying that the people who did this would be safe. He encouraged those who were taken in the first exile to remain in Babylon, because this was the will of God. He criticised false religion and false prophecy, and as a consequence lived in great danger of his life. Finally the very people he had tried to warn accused him of bringing about their downfall, and forced him to run away from the Babylonians to Egypt. One of the hardest lessons a prophet has to learn is that he has no rights. He cannot choose where to go, when to go or what to say. These things are given to him by the Lord. We are servants, messengers of God, available to do his will when he decides, in the way he decides and in the place he decides.

This is basic Christian discipline, and looks easy in writing. But it is not always so easy to do. Why?

**We often** want to go to those who we know will receive us.

**We often** go to those who we know will give us a good offering.

**We often** avoid those that we know will give us a hard time. We often avoid those we consider could not understand our message.

**We often** go for the easy and comfortable path. It takes great discipline and determination to accept Jeremiah's challenge, and to let the Lord direct our

steps. Yet if we do not, our ministry will always be weak and ineffective. We can only function properly in the place of God's choosing, at the time of God's choosing.

**1st challenge: - We do not go to those who invite us, but to those to whom we are sent.**

**“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said ‘We will not walk in it.’”(6:16)**

The mission of the true prophet is never easy. Again and again the prophet is up against the stubborn and disobedient hearts which are often in the people of God. So when he speaks what appears to be a simple word, as did the prophet Jeremiah in this verse, the wilfulness and disobedience rise up against him. This is not easy to live with, but unless the prophet can face and endure this, he will never reach the full potential of his ministry.

When I began as a prophet, I did not expect to face so much hostility and rejection. I was, after all, merely passing on what God had said to me. But like Jeremiah, I soon discovered how wilful and how spiteful God's people can be towards the messenger. I have had to come to terms with this, and accept it. It has hurt me many times, and will many times more. One occasion, when I was put out of a Church, God said to me “remember prophet, it is me they are rejecting not you. It is me they are hurting, not you. It is my message they will not receive, not yours.” I have found this helpful to remember as my ministry has progressed. But when God is hurt, the prophet is also hurt. When God is rejected, it is almost impossible for a prophet not to feel rejected. When we see the tender heart of God, and the arrogant heart of his people, it is not easy for us.

**2nd challenge: - To accept the rejection as part of our calling, and not to take it personally.**

**“I have made you a tester of metals, and my people are the ore, that you may observe and test their ways.” (6:27)**

One day I was walking around the town where I live, when a member of a Church came up to me, and we walked together for a while. “You challenge me.” he said. I hadn't said a word, so I asked what he meant. “It's who you are, what you do, the way you live - these things make me uncomfortable.” I was prophesying in a meeting once, and afterwards my friend, who was travelling with me as my

helper said "You make me afraid sometimes." I asked him what he meant and he replied. "Can't you see? After all that you have said tonight, I'm nervous. I don't know what you know."

A prophet is a tester of metal, and God's people are the ore. We live as God has told us to live, we see what God allows us to see and we speak as God allows us to speak. Often these things conflict with the way that the people of God are living and thinking. Our task is to be the tester of the metal - to show by our lives and our ministries what God expects, and what the people are doing. Do not expect to be thanked for this! God's people do not want to be tested. They want to be comfortable, to do things their way, and they so easily convince themselves that they are right. A prophet is a man from the desert places. He can only live God's way, in purity and holiness, with no room for compromise. These two ways clash, and bring trouble to the prophet. We must ignore the pain of this. God wants pure metal - he wants gold. We must be ready to show the quality of the ore of the people of God. If we stray from this position, because it is too uncomfortable, we are on the path which leads to false prophecy.

**3rd challenge: - Is your life pure? Are you, by your lifestyle, being a tester of metals?**

**"Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them." (15:19)**

The people of God are constantly trying to compromise prophets. They want a prophet to be less clear cut, to be willing to compromise a little, to be easier on the people of God. Once they succeed in doing this, the prophet is useless to them - but that is what they want. They want to compromise us, so that they can get away with being impure, unholy, poorly disciplined.

There is nothing worse than wanting to have an easy life, while the prophet is constantly demanding higher and higher standards. But the Bible is clear. It is not the prophet who has to change, but God's people. There is no room for the prophet to change. His calling will not allow him to compromise, to speak easy and comfortable things and make the way easy. He cannot change, and he must not. The people of God have to come to him, and examine their lives in the light of the truth he is trying to share. Of course this does not mean that a prophet has to walk around in arrogance, expecting the people of God to bow down to him. A prophet is also called on to have a servant heart, and from this

heart he speaks his message, and to this message the people come. He longs that the people will love and welcome him; he longs that they will hear the word of the Lord through him, and he longs to be part of them. His humanity is crying out for acceptance. but he will not get it. So he is condemned to a life of loneliness, rejection, hatred, ridicule and even death.

**4th challenge: - Are you prepared for the life of loneliness which your calling will bring on you? Or are you too ready to compromise?**

**“I the Lord search the heart.”(17:10)**

This challenge has to go with the one above, and in the first place should be directed towards the prophet himself. It might read “I the Lord search your heart.” Some prophets seem to think that the word they receive from God is independent of their own lives and attitudes. Nothing could be further from the truth. The destination of any word from God is first into the heart and mind of the prophet. That heart has to be examined first, before the word reaches out to anybody else.

This is why I believe a prophet should long for the servant heart, which will allow God access without the barrier of arrogance or pride. The prophet who will not let his heart be examined is in serious trouble. He soon strays into arrogance, pride and foolishness. Those who listen to him might not know this. We are very good at disguising our own motives, and as a consequence so arrogance and false prophecy begins to take root in the body of Christ.

Jeremiah challenges us to allow God to examine us and to take away anything which is not from Him. We, God’s prophets, have to be the first to confess and repent. This is the only position from which we can challenge others with the word of God. If confession and repentance are not part of our lives, I do not believe that it is possible to be a true prophet from God. This is a hard thing to write, but I believe we must maintain the highest standards of prophecy in the body. An unconfessing and unrelenting prophet is a poor example to the body, and should not be tolerated.

**5th challenge:- Is confession and repentance a part of your daily life and experience?**

**“Heal me O Lord and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be saved, for you are the one I praise.” (17:14)**

This is a tremendous challenge to the personal life of a prophet. We spend so much of our time listening, praying and sharing, that we forget our own needs. Not only does God examine our hearts that we might confess and repent, he also wants to release in us his healing power. We need to know our sicknesses, and we need to seek His healing for those sicknesses. Why? So that we can know the power of His salvation, and have the release of the spirit of praise. Again and again I come across prophets who have faithful ministries, but they lack the sense of the presence of God. Their words are good, but I do not feel the moving of the spirit of God for healing and praise in their lives. Yet of all the ministries, ours is in desperate need of the healing, saving and praising power of God. This transforms our words from being God’s words, to being God’s living words.

Prophets must be constantly seeking their own healing, their own experience of salvation, and their own desire to worship. We must look more to God, and less to the words we bring, or the people who hear them. We must be soaked in the salvation and praise of God. We must be filled with the healing power of God. We must be longing for more and more of God’s healing in our own lives. If we accept this challenge, then our words are sparkling, power filled, joy to the hearers and ministry to the heart of God. However hard we have to be, people will recognise in our ministries the life giving power of God. Without it, we quickly become a banging gong, or a sounding cymbal. (1 Cor.13:1)

**6th challenge: - Are there areas of your life which are not healed? What are you going to do about it?**

**“This man should be sentenced to death, because he has prophesied against this city.”(26:11)**

A prophet must not take any account of men. I’m not saying that we have a licence to be rude or arrogant, or that we should not be willing to take advice. But when we come to our ministry, we are answerable to God. This is our only safe place, our only security and our only hope. Men threatened the life of Jeremiah and they will threaten us. I have lost count of the number of times I have been ridiculed, insulted, ignored, rejected, and put out of places. I have lost

count of the number of times powerful and influential men have ignored or insulted me. Men who could have forwarded my work have brushed me off as if I were rubbish. On many occasions I have been left standing outside the city wall with no help, no comfort and no food. So what? This is part of the cost of my calling.

Men are able to ignore me, but if I truly speak for God, they will have to answer for what they have done. If I did not speak for God, then they have done what is right - they have protected the flock from false prophecy. The problem is this. Many prophets cannot make this distinction. They don't like being rejected. They want to be liked. None of us like being made to look foolish or of no account. So, in order to be liked, we soften our message, or hold back when we know we should speak. This is especially difficult for those men who live by their ministry. Many of us have families to feed and clothe, and costs to pay. We know that if we say certain things, the Church will not give us the money or food we need to live. This has been a reality for me, and I share it to encourage others who are in the prophetic calling. But we serve a different Master, who expects us to say what He wants us to say, when He wants it said and in the way He wants it said, regardless of personal consequences. We have to have courage.

**7th challenge: - Despised and rejected. Is this is our life? Can you stand this? If not, you must either leave the Ministry, or seek God for more strength.**

**“In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died.” (28:17)**

It's so easy for the people of God to treat prophecy lightly. Words are given, but they are seldom recorded, not given enough prayer or testing, and are quickly forgotten. The prophet finds this very hard to bear. The prophetic word is his life, and when the word is treated in a poor way, his heart is hurt. I remember going to one Church, and sharing a prophetic word. But the leaders were not interested, and the people hardly bothered to listen. In my prayers that night, I saw the Lord, and I held out the word he had given me to share. “Here Lord” I said “I have to return this to you. I couldn't find anyone to receive it.” The Lord took back the word, and I saw tears running down his face. I didn't know what to say.

But if a prophet speaks a true word from God, it has power to fulfil what it speaks. Hananiah thought he could take on the living word of God in the mouth of

Jeremiah, and for two months he seemed to have been successful. But then the word fulfilled itself in a terrifying way. The Church of God may treat prophecy and prophets lightly, but we carry in our words a terrifying power. This is a powerful challenge to us and to the Church. We must be very careful what we say and how we say it. The Church must be careful not to ignore us, or to ridicule us. To do so could have very serious consequences.

**8th challenge:- Great power in prophecy - do you treat it with great care?**

**“I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “ plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans give you hope and a future.” (29:11)**

Much of the ministry of a prophet can be critical of the people of God. This is natural - prophets are looking for purity in the bride of Christ, and will never rest while they can see impurity. The Church needs this constant challenge to move towards perfection. This growing maturity and purity are the preparations for the return of the bridegroom. But prophets must accept the challenge not to be too gloomy! Our task is to build up the body of Christ. God has plans to bless, to encourage, to prosper, to lead his people, whom he loves forward into his purposes. We must accept the challenge to be positive, to look for good things and to seek opportunities to bless. Sometimes I hear prophetic words which are all negative and totally judgmental. This is not a right biblical balance. Jeremiah knew it, and so must we. Almost all prophecy begins with a positive comment, and ends with a blessing. We must seek to copy this pattern. Our task is to rebuke, encourage and build up the body. Let's make sure we are doing just this - and all of this.

**9th challenge: - “The joy of the Lord is my strength.” Is this true for you?**

**“This is how Jerusalem was taken.”(39:1)**

In the Old Testament, a prophet was considered to be a true prophet if his words came true. In the New Testament, different tests apply. “Coming true” is an ingredient in a prophet's ministry. It is good and upbuilding for himself and the body of Christ if on some occasions, it is testified by others that his word has come true. But the key test is when the leaders of God's people consider his word to be from God, in line with the Scriptures, and part of God's plan for his people.

I was to speak at a Church famous for its music. During the worship, the musicians were really good, the choir excellent, and I really enjoyed what they had to offer. But as the worship proceeded, God spoke to me. "This worship is not acceptable to me. It is too full of the ways of men, not of the glory of God. Tell them this." I was very nervous, because I knew that this would bring trouble to me, but when stood up, I said "The worship in this Church is not acceptable to God. It is full of the things of men." The leaders were unhappy, and after the service they called me to their office and asked me what I thought I was doing. Up to then I had been nervous, but then I became angry. "I was speaking what God said to me" I replied. "You should not be attacking me, but seeking God and testing what I have said to you." But they were very annoyed, and I got the impression that they would never invite me again. One year later, I received a letter from the Pastor. It said quite simply "Everything you said has been proved to be true!"

**\* 10th challenge: - Do not look to words coming true. That is God's business. Rather, look to be confident that what you say is from God.**

**"When Jeremiah finished telling the people all the words of the Lord their God, Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah -'You are lying!' (43:1-2)**

Jeremiah had a very good record in prophecy. He had consistently told the people that Babylon would attack and destroy Jerusalem, and that is exactly what had happened. He had never wavered in his prophecy, and sadly it had come true. But this was not enough for the people. When Jeremiah warned them about the danger of going down to Egypt, despite his excellent record, they replied to him "You are lying." Jeremiah could easily have spoken angry words, but he did not. He could have refused to go with them to Egypt, but he did not. He could have become bitter and negative, but he did not. He allowed them to criticise him, he stayed with them as they went to Egypt, and he continued to try and make them see the foolishness of disobeying the Lord their God.

**\* Final challenge**

**This last challenge is one of the most painful and one of the most powerful. A true prophet does not abandon the people of God, however foolish they may be. He stays with them, even though he has been rejected and beaten down. If**

he leaves, then they are much weaker. He doesn't want this to happen. So he pays the price, and fulfils his tough and challenging calling. His reward is never here on earth, but in heaven, where His Master sees his works, and rewards him.

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