



**PIONEER**  
TAKING THE GOSPEL TO NEW PLACES AND SPACES

# Pioneer Prophetic Training Manual



One of Pioneer's distinctives is an embracing of prophetic culture. We believe that God speaks today and that our churches should reflect that. This manual outlines a comprehensive training programme to help grow and release the prophetic gift in order for individuals to strengthen, encourage and comfort others (1 Corinthians 14:3). Churches with open ears and open hearts are churches that flourish because the Father's heart is consistently revealed, bringing hope, truth and breakthrough. Alongside the great power of the prophetic ministry, this manual also covers guidelines on how to operate the gift with wisdom, with accountability and in team.

I highly commend it to you because I know it has been written by practitioners who live out what they teach.

This is a great resource!

Ness  
(Pioneer UK Leader)



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## Introduction to the Pioneer prophetic training manual

This manual has been designed to help individuals grow in their understanding and their use of prophecy as part of developing a prophetic culture across the churches and network of Pioneer. Each chapter will give some teaching and scriptures to study, some examples and testimonies to embed the teaching in real life and will provide questions for reflection or discussion depending on whether you are working independently or as a group.

An important part of any training is to practically engage with the gift of prophecy so each chapter finishes with a guide to a different prophetic activation. An activation in the prophetic is really just an opportunity to intentionally explore the use of the gift of prophecy. Quite often we are familiar with God speaking in a particular way and it is helpful sometimes to practice listening using channels other than our preferred one. This helps us understand other people and how their gift operates, but also explores and extends our listening capability.

Pioneer has a history of being a prophetic network. From its early days it had prophetic leadership and encouraged the use of the gift within local congregations as well as across the network. This manual is part of a move to re-establish some prophetic protocols across Pioneer and to help develop the gift of prophecy, the further development of established prophetic ministry and some clarity on how the office of the prophet operates within our New Testament context.

It is anticipated that using this manual provides an opportunity to create a deeper shared understanding of what those aspects of the prophetic mean corporately and functionally.

In 2023 Pioneer launched its first prophetic training across the network for leaders and those with experience of using the gift of prophecy regularly. The success of this first year led into the development of a second year program with a focus on helping to create prophetic communities within the local congregations.



The teaching from the first course has been utilised as the foundation for creating this manual so that local congregations can take the teaching and use it within small groups to spread the reach and the development of the gift.

## Contents

In order to give clarity to the different aspects of the prophetic the first chapter gives us a broad framework and definitions for each of the ways in which the prophetic might be manifested within the local church and out into the wider environment. It explores the spirit of prophecy, the gift of prophecy, and the role of the prophet. The rationale for putting this session first is that making clear definitions between each of those aspects is essential for ongoing development and for understanding where we as individuals fit, and the stage of development we might be at in terms of our gift.

The manual then goes on to have a number of sessions that focus purely on the gift; how we hear from God, how we respond to prophetic words, the process of judging words and how we operate the gift within a local congregational setting for example.

Then the training moves on to a broader context that looks at the differences between Old and New Testament prophecy and how we engage with the differences we find, as well as thinking about the broader function of the office of a prophet and the five fold ministry.

We recognise that there is already a lot of teaching material available on prophecy and the prophetic and some of these resources are presented as a list linked to each chapter at the end of the manual. However, the purpose of this manual is to ensure that those moving in the prophetic within the Pioneer network have a clear framework to promote development within our churches.



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## Chapter 1

### Understanding the difference between the spirit of prophecy, the prophetic gift and the office of a prophet.

The first session of this manual aims to lay a scriptural and practical foundation that helps us to differentiate between the spirit of prophecy, the gift of prophecy, and the office of a prophet. It will look at how and where each of these aspects function and help us to identify where we may be in terms of our own development in the prophetic.

The rationale for starting with this topic is that it should help you as you go through to identify which aspect of these three elements is related to each of the subsequent topics. This will enable you to identify what attention needs to be paid to each part for your own development and growth. But also as appropriate, discover how to help facilitate the healthy use of the prophetic within your local church and into other spheres of life for the furtherance of God's kingdom purposes.

It's important to clarify the difference between the gift and the office of a prophet because confusion can often arise in this area and there is a need for wisdom in receiving what is brought into our individual and corporate lives as God's word. This particularly applies to how we receive, weigh and judge the words brought; this whole area is considered further in chapter 4.



## Four spheres of the prophetic and their purpose found in the New Testament.

### Scripture

When we think about the word of God the starting point is always the scriptures, as we see in 2 Peter 1:20-21. This aspect is really important when we think about judging prophetic words because we know there should be an alignment with what the Holy Spirit has already taught through the scriptures. There will be a whole chapter on weighing and judging words so for now we just need to remember that God won't contradict himself when he speaks through us. Then there needs to be an alignment with what he has already spoken and what scripture teaches.

### Spirit of prophecy

The Bible clearly shows that at times everyone can prophesy and that is when a spirit of prophecy is released; for example, 1 Corinthians 14:31 talks about how everyone can prophesy and this chapter of 1 Corinthians encourages us to earnestly desire the gift. However, we can also see this spirit of prophecy poured out at other points within the Bible; for example, king Saul in 1 Samuel 10:11 came upon a group of prophets and the spirit that was upon them came upon him and he began to prophesy.

In the New Testament in Acts 2 we also have this sense of the spirit being poured out upon all flesh, as prophesied by Joel, in this instance everyone spoke in tongues as a sign of the spirit being poured out.

In John 10:4 Jesus tells us that he is the Good Shepherd and that we can hear his voice, inviting us all to be part of a community that can hear what God wants us to do and what he is saying. (The next chapter in this manual focuses on the different ways God speaks.)

Some people find it easier than others to operate in this sphere and generally those are the ones who then develop a prophetic gift. However, often within a church meeting context, especially in worship, when there is a strong presence of God, anyone can receive a vision or hear from God to encourage and edify others.



Much of what happens in our church meetings might come under the description of the spirit of prophecy.

God is present and he wants to speak and he will use those who are available to bring his word. Many of the words delivered under the anointing of a spirit of prophecy are words in season (Proverbs 15:23). Generally, this means they are words that speak into the current time and what is happening, perhaps within the meeting. Or if they are words for individuals they will call up and call out of people what God sees in them.

When the spirit of prophecy is flowing it is not particularly a time for directional or correctional words to the church body, these types of words should be submitted to church leadership in order for the leadership to weigh and judge them before being given to the whole body. (We will look more at how prophecy operates within the church family under the chapter called protocols.)

### Gift of prophecy

The gift or ministry of the prophetic is a development of the spirit of prophecy when individuals clearly give prophetic words on a regular basis that encourage, support and build up individuals and the congregation. A gift is something given from God as indicated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

We can also see this gift operating in other parts of the New Testament for example in the passages in Acts about Agabus (Acts 11:28) and Phillip's daughters (Acts 21:7-9). The gift of prophecy is broader in its remit than just prophesying to



individuals within our churches. Someone with a recognised gift can bring God's words to groups, churches and cities. However, all words must be weighed and judged by scripture and by mature believers if there are elements of direction within them.

### Office of a prophet

The office of a prophet is something only a few will have a calling to and this calling needs to be recognised by others. Paul in Ephesians 4:11 indicates they are a “gift to the body” and their role is to equip the church for the work of service. They work alongside the other fivefold ministries as part of a team and we will look at this further in a later chapter. In church the role of a prophet includes laying foundations, identifying leaders, bringing words to the body and working alongside other gifts to bring believers to maturity.

All aspects of the prophetic are used by God to work within the world in different dimensions. Everything about the prophetic should point towards Jesus, the Father and the kingdom. If Jesus is himself the manifestation of the prophetic within the New Covenant (Rev 19:10) then he is the one who should be glorified through the gift. As Christine Westhof explains “every prophetic word should draw our gaze, passion, desire, and kingdom mission towards the person of Jesus - it can look different but should contain the DNA of Jesus” ( Reframing the Prophetic ).

The importance of defining each of these categories of the prophetic is because confusion arises when someone takes these terms and uses them interchangeably or when they attach the label ‘prophet’ to themselves without it being recognised by leaders or elders in a church. When the prophetic is mishandled, it can bring misinterpretation and division and cause damage to individuals and the body. Sometimes leaders who have experienced this have been known to close down the gift completely as they seek to protect people from those who may misuse it. In order to develop the proper use of the gift we need to apply wisdom, knowledge and discernment.



## Exploring the spheres of the prophetic in depth

In this next section of the chapter we will look further into the three main categories mentioned and consider the strengths, limitations and application of each one. As you work through this section you might want to consider prayerfully, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, where you are currently operating in the prophetic and where perhaps He may be calling you to develop.

### The Spirit of prophecy - 1 Cor 14:31

At certain moments, anyone can receive a word or vision to speak to others and the church at large. Much spontaneous prophetic ministry in a church service comes from the spirit of prophecy moving on the gathered body. An unction of the Holy Spirit to encourage an individual can happen anywhere but most often we might see it manifest as part of a worship service because at this time we are focusing on Jesus and receptive to the Holy Spirit communicating with us.

During a time of worship many people may be receiving words and pictures and it is the possibility of listeners feeling overwhelmed and maybe confused that led the apostle Paul to give guidance for how to conduct an orderly meeting in 1 Cor 14:29-33

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.

One of the practical rationales for limiting the number of prophetic utterances in our meeting is to make sure we take time to respond to what God has said and to ensure we are following the direction the Holy Spirit is leading in. Therefore, those leading a meeting also carry the responsibility to decide who will share the revelation and when those prophetic contributions can be shared.



It is sometimes a challenge for those who may not be used to giving a prophetic word when they receive something accompanied by physical signs of God's presence e.g. a fast-beating heart, sweaty palms etc. These signs can make it feel that there is a necessity to publicly share what is received. However, this is perhaps the moment to hold back and reflect with the Holy Spirit on who the word is for, and whether it should be shared now.

Firstly, it's important if you don't regularly hear from God and you are not in the habit of going deeper with what you receive to take time TO PAUSE and ask some further questions of the Holy Spirit. Often people fail to ask the most important question: which is, is this word actually for me? Often when we receive something from God in these situations there is a personal application that we may need to receive first.

It may be that the word then becomes a testimony that we share of God at work in our life. Words can of course have both a meaning for us and also an application for others, but it's always good to acknowledge that God often speaks to us for us.

If the answer to the first question indicates the word is for another person or perhaps the whole congregation another question to ask the Holy Spirit is, is this word for now? Sometimes we need to hold onto something God gives us because he wants us to pray into the situation or pray for the person and we may find we give the word later in a different time and place.

There have been many examples in my own life when God spoke to me for someone during a service and there wasn't the opportunity to share the word. However, I may have then gone home and written a card or sent an email a few days later and then received the feedback that it arrived just at the right moment. God is a God of perfect timing. Words for the church can also be shared with the leadership after the service if there is no time for them during the meeting. If God is speaking, he will continue to do so and the opportunity has not been lost. The chapter on protocols in the church explores this further.



## Testimony from David

I was with a team who had gone to minister at another church, as I waited I wasn't hearing anything from God, neither was one of the experienced members who was with me. My son who was about 10 at the time, told me he had an encouragement for a young man with a basket ball, so I told him to go ahead and give it and as he did I started to receive words as did everyone else in the group. By the end of the evening everyone had prophesied even those who had never done so before. This was an example of the spirit of prophecy being poured out.

## The Gift of prophecy

Romans 12:6

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

God is a gracious father and gives many gifts to the church, of which prophecy is one. It's important to recognise when you have a gift of prophecy, in order to steward it, and ensure you are developing and using it in an appropriate way. Some indicators of you having a gift of prophecy would be; you would be someone who regularly gives encouraging words to others, you are recognised as someone who hears God clearly and who has the heart for service (ministry).

Obviously, there is room for growth and development for anyone with a gift but having a gift does not mean it will necessarily develop into the office of a prophet. Stewarding a gift from God faithfully means valuing and using it to bless and serve others. If you are a talented musician you still need to practice, so with the gift of prophecy it needs to be used, valued and cultivated, if possible in the company of other prophetic people.



The prophetic gift is not more important or of higher value than any other gift, but it is a powerful gift for opening up people to the ways and love of God, and this is true both inside and outside of church. So as well as recognising you have a gift, you will need to develop and dialogue with the Holy Spirit and others to discover where your gift operates most effectively. Not all people with a gift of prophecy work in the same way.

Perhaps, at this point, it's also worth thinking about words of wisdom and knowledge, it is helpful to discern between them even though they all involve hearing the voice of God. Many with a prophetic gift might also operate in these aspects and indeed they should complement one another. It is important just to note that some people may be stronger in one gift than another, but often these gifts working together can be very effective in releasing the kingdom into lives and situations, hence why it is often helpful to work as a team.

As suggested earlier it is possible for everyone to operate at the base level of gift, but Paul encourages everyone to pursue the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14:5,39). However, it should be noted that what we are actually pursuing is intimacy and relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit because the gift flows from that place of knowing God's heart and seeing with his eyes. Jesus himself said;

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you." (John 16:13-15)

As we develop the gift that we have been given, it is likely we will find our sphere of influence (our reach) also growing. As we receive words from God we need to be clear who they are for and perhaps be ready to move beyond just hearing and sharing words for individuals to hearing God for churches, city, and even nations. The anointing we carry determines where we operate, so it's important to know what your capacity and reach is. This is something that can be determined as you work with others and take feedback and counsel on what you are receiving.



Sometimes if the word appears to be beyond our current capacity and mandate (reach) it's an opportunity to pray strategically. Many things we hear from God are actually designed for us to move into prayer that changes things, because we pray and declare what God is saying. However, it may also be a situation where God wants to wait for the timing for the delivery of the word, so sometimes words need to be put on the shelf. (Write them down and keep them somewhere to revisit at regular points. Wait for God to give an opportunity to deliver it).

### Testimony from David

I was at a conference where one well known and trusted prophetic lady was speaking and God gave me an open vision of me being in her living room praying and prophesying for her family and her team. I shared this with my wife but didn't feel I needed to do anything else with it as I had no connection with her. About a year later I felt God give me a word for her and her ministry, I wrote it down and put it in my journal because I recognised that at that time I had no capacity or reach to give it to her.

I just held onto it and 6 months later I was at a leaders conference and she was sat behind me. The Lord reminded me of the words that I had been given so at the end of the service I introduced myself and shared the story of the vision and word. She invited me to share the word with her. She was touched by it and invited me to pray for her and her team. This example shows how God expands our reach. We don't need to make it happen we just have to be faithful with what he gives.

### Office of Prophet

It's really important to recognise that not all who prophesy are prophets. The New Testament model suggests the foundational aspect of the office of prophet is to help establish the local church and equip the body. Eph 4:11 - 13 tells us:

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.



This scripture indicates that the prophet is a divinely appointed role (given by God) and needs to be recognised by an established ekklesia which models the other parts of the 5-fold ministry and offers accountability (Deut 18:22). Additionally it is likely that the prophet will also demonstrate evidence of thousands of confirmed words and a wide reach for their anointing. They will have a proven track record. Although prophets may work as part of a leadership team within a church setting, they may also be equipped and released into other spheres to bring the kingdom message and presence.

Any self-proclaimed prophets, or prophets who do not have a church base where they are accountable, do not fit the New Testament pattern. It doesn't necessarily mean they will not be accurately hearing from God, but wisdom is needed in how to receive them and the words they bring. This is where the process of weighing and judging is vitally important.

Prophets will bring direction and correction to the body as they foster holiness and relationships with Jesus. They have authority to help establish kingdom values and experiences in the church and often in the region.

Not all prophets function primarily in a church. Some are called into the marketplace, but here the evidence of their ministry will be people and organisations they are involved with clearly built up and demonstrating the kingdom values the prophet shares. Prophets don't declare their own agenda; they work in the authority of proclaiming God's will.

Prophets and prophetic people often appear to be working in different contexts to others and this is because they have access to God's intentions for the current season and sometimes the next season (Amos 3:7). So, some words they bring prepare humanity for what God is going to do in that season.

However, it's important to recognise that Old Testament and New Testament contexts are different and so we have a whole chapter looking at this later in the course. In brief, however, part of what Old Testament prophets were doing was calling people back to the covenants with God and preparing a way for the messiah to fulfil the historical promise of his coming. Both New and Old Testament



prophets called forth people, had dreams and spoke things and callings into existence.

### Discussion and reflection questions.

1. Did you find anything challenging in this teaching? Why?
2. Is there one sphere of the prophetic that you operate in more than others? Spirit of Prophecy, Gift of Prophecy, Office of the Prophet?
3. How common are personal and corporate prophetic words in your local church community? How often do these words bring a specific challenge of encouragement for the current season (word in season) rather than just general encouragement?
4. Is it common for people operating in the gift of prophecy to be confused with the Office of the Prophet? Why or Why Not?
5. Do you believe that the Office of the Prophet has a relative role in Pioneer today? How have you seen it in function?
6. The whole church has a role in being prophetic and revealing the heart of God into our families and communities – what can be done to encourage this in your locality?

### Activation ideas

This is an opportunity to ask God to give you words that are specifically for the person you are praying with. This is what we identify as words in season. They are what God wants them to know at this moment.

To do this you will need to spend time asking some specific questions of the Holy Spirit. Don't worry if this is not the usual way you receive things or it feels a bit uncomfortable. This is a safe place to have a go.



## Some questions to ask the Holy Spirit

1. Ask Holy Spirit which individual he wants you to speak to and something that you should know about the coming month for them (e.g. ministry opportunity, sermon series, outreach, something specific).
2. Ask Him if there are any significant dates or revelations for that individual for the month.
3. Is there one specific thing the Holy Spirit is wanting to speak to that individual?
4. Is there a specific word for that individual's church/community in the next month?

## Testimony from Joy

As an example of when I did this for about the third time. I got the name of the individual who God wanted me to pray for first. I then got a date in the month. I then asked what was going to happen on that date and I felt there was going to be an unexpected encounter with someone. I felt the Holy Spirit tell her to be bold and not hold back in what she might feel prompted to say.

As an encouragement on that date the individual in question started looking for opportunities to bring a word to someone and on a walk noticed a young woman on a bench reading. She approached her and a conversation was opened up and the individual concerned was able to share God's love with her.



## Chapter 2

### Understanding the ways God speaks.

The aim of this chapter is to go back to basics and explore the various ways in which God can speak to us, so that we have a better understanding of the breadth of experience we bring as prophetic people. This chapter primarily focuses on the inspirational aspects of prophecy, the starting place if you like which is accessible to all.

Later in this manual we will explore more specifically the role of revelation in the prophetic. This chapter will also encourage us to recognise and identify the primary ways of communication we have with God and the different kinds of prophetic flow that we might experience. As prophetic people we need to understand not only how God speaks to us, but how others might hear from him, so we can help the church in their journey to becoming a prophetic people.

We need firstly, to acknowledge, that we all have a predominant way of perceiving, seeing or hearing from God. Some of this is about our personality, some may be about how we have been taught or trained. Sometimes the content of what we hear can be impacted by what we think and know of who God is.

It's important, therefore, to understand not only how God speaks, but the kind of things he might be speaking about. A good knowledge of the bible is essential to help with this. We are not drain pipes. Messages from God pass through our own filters, experiences and understandings and it's important to recognise that. It's why sometimes in a church service several people might bring a similar message, but use different images or metaphors as ways of explaining what they sense God is saying.

There are a variety of Hebrew terms used in the bible for prophet that reflect some of these different ways of hearing from God



The term 'nabi' means literally to bubble up or bubble forth. It indicates an announcer, or one who declares forth. The spirit of prophecy can sometimes work like this, when suddenly God puts something inside us and we have an urgent desire to share. In my own experience the 'nabi' anointing is something I've known when having to prophesy over a lot of people at the end of a meeting or during a ministry time.

Here, I don't have time to pray and wait, instead I ask the Holy Spirit to flow and then I just share as he gives me words or pictures. I often have to start without even knowing what the next bit will be and trust him to supply as I speak.

The term 'roeh' is from of the verb 'to see' and was translated seer and later prophet in the Old Testament. A seer often has access or insight to the heavenly realms and sees what God is doing,

Take for example Elisha and Gehaziah in 2 Kings 6. A seer doesn't necessarily only receive pictures but rather this is more about sight being the primary communication mode. The term 'chozeh' is also translated seer and seems to be more linked to prophetic vision. A seer is going to share from a revelation, as they see things which are known to God and which God reveals to them.

There is another category of the prophetic which is not translated as prophet but which shares prophetic aspects and that is watchmen. One of the attributes of watchmen is that they are looking out and around at what is happening and what God is doing. This is illustrated by the sons of Issachar who not only read the signs of the times but knew what to do (1 Chronicles 12:32).

These scriptural examples help us see that there is more than one way of receiving or expressing the heart of God.



### The prophetic is birthed out of relationship.

All of the prophetic is birthed out of our relationship with God, and we have to recognise we need to make time to listen. We know God wants to communicate (Gen 1:29, Gen 3:8). Throughout the Old Testament we see that God spoke to and through individuals, with the scriptures demonstrating the longing of His heart for a relationship with His people. However, in the Old Testament this communication came through an intermediary.

These were the individuals who spoke to God e.g. people like Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. But the Old Testament also shows that God wanted something more than the law provided for - Jeremiah talks about a new covenant where all will know God (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

God's desire to move in a relationship where everyone can know Him for themselves has been facilitated for us by Jesus's death and resurrection (John 3:16). Jesus himself is the one who demonstrates how we can live in this relationship with the Father. In John 5:19-20 Jesus articulates the closeness of this relationship:

The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

It is the basis of this relationship, a relationship that has made us God's children (1 John 3:2) that is the foundation for us hearing God. Jesus indicated that we all have access to that relationship with the well known passage from John 10:3-5 and v27, where he talks about the sheep hearing his voice and doing what he says.

Sometimes the barrier to hearing God is not found on God's side, but arises in areas of our lives and beliefs that need to be undone. Part of the role of the prophetic is helping others to believe and understand what God speaks to them.

Some people believe that God doesn't want to speak to them, that they are not good enough to hear God. Others commonly ask 'how do I know it's God's voice



and not just me'? The parable of the sower in Matt 13 is a useful illustration of how we need to ready our hearts if God's word is going to produce fruit (Isaiah 55:11). We have to trust what the Holy Spirit releases to us. The more we do this in an open and teachable way the greater our ability to trust what we hear from God becomes.

### Different ways God may speak

This chapter started by saying God speaks in different ways, but often it's not actually a voice we are hearing, it's more of a sense, an internal dialogue or an internal knowing. This is why we need to search the scriptures and see the variety of modes of communication God provides. The following list provides some of the most common experiences.

#### Scripture

Clearly God speaks through the scriptures and we have all probably had experiences where the passage we are reading suddenly becomes illuminated in our heart and mind. This idea of scripture becoming a now word, through the action of the Holy Spirit can be practiced through various prayerful bible reading practices such as Lectio Divina /Ignatian prayer. One example in scripture of a passage becoming a rhema (for now) word is when Jesus reads the passage from Isaiah 61 and then proclaims "today this is fulfilled" (Luke 4:20-21).

#### Visions. What do you see?

Perceiving or seeing is a very common way for God to speak to people and this can be in both still and moving pictures or through objects that catch the eye in everyday life. Scriptural examples include;

- Everyday objects e.g. Jer 1:11-12
- Supernatural visions e.g. Acts 10.

However, often pictures or visions also need interpretation and we will look at this whole area later. Sometimes it may be sufficient to just pass on the picture you



saw, but it's always helpful to check if it has meaning for the person you are sharing it with.

### Dreams. The night parables of God

Some people have more dreams than others and good practice suggests we write down those that feel as if they are from God, to share with others for interpretation and insight. The bible is full of dreamers in both Old and New Testaments, and God doesn't just speak to his people in dreams. This is still true today and dream interpretation can be a great way of bringing God's word to those who don't yet know him.

- Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar both had dreams that required interpretation from God (Gen 41 and Daniel 4).
- Joseph had a dream as did the magi (Matt 1:20, 2:12-13).

There is a clear suggestion in Proverbs 25:2 that God places value on us having to figure things out, as it draws us closer into dependency upon him. This is why some dreams may feel obscure in their meaning to begin with.

### Audible voice

God still speaks to some in an audible voice. However this is not the most common or regular mode He seems to use. It's worth noting from the passage with Samuel (1 Samuel 3) that the voice was ordinary - Samuel thought it was Eli.

### Still small voice

The passage in 1 Kings 19:9, which we often interpret as the still small voice, in Hebrew actually suggests that God speaks in the sound of deafening silence. What we learn from this is that often to hear God's voice internally we need to cultivate quiet on the inside. This voice can also seem to be more of an inner impression or a perception. An inner impression can be faint or strong, physical or emotional and may not be in words but just a feeling or a sense.



## Angels. God's Messengers

Some angels have a specific role as God's messengers and again we can see them in action throughout the scriptures.

- Gabriel (Luke 1:13 and 30).
- Also Gideon, Abraham and Joshua all met figures that could be angels.
- We are reminded in Hebrews 13:2 that we might not always recognise them as angels.

## Other people and circumstances.

God is not limited in how he speaks and so finally this loose ends section reminds us that if we are open God can use prayer, conversation, the prophetic, creation and our circumstances to communicate with us.

Once we have identified how God speaks to us individually and through others, we need to also recognise from the scriptural pattern the things He often speaks about as this will help shape how we deliver the prophetic.

In the early stages of the gift we are mainly expecting God to bring inspirational words that will build people up, encourage and comfort them (1 Cor 14:3). These words largely fit into the categories of spirit of prophecy and are the early stages of developing the gift of prophecy. The framework of 1 Corinthians helps us ensure we bring good and not harm to others. As prophetic people we are in the business of revealing God's heart to others. They should be able to see him through what we bring.

## Things God speaks about.

There are some fundamental things that God speaks about at this stage of the prophetic gift because He wants us to know who He is and who we are. These foundations enable us to become people who host his presence and bring his kingdom.



God speaks about who He is, his nature and his character. Exodus is an example of this. Exodus 3:4-6 has the story of the burning bush and in Exodus 33 God declares who He is.

Next God wants us to know who we are. The example of Jesus shows us that God is really concerned about identity. There are two places where he speaks aloud to Jesus, his baptism and his transfiguration. The words that God speaks are virtually identical on both of these occasions although they represent very different times in Jesus' life and ministry. In both cases God speaks to Jesus about two things; his relationship with Him and His feelings about Him. These things are intertwined. Jesus had his identity affirmed by God

“This is my beloved son”  
Matt 3:14 (Baptism)

“While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”  
Matt 17:5 (Transfiguration)

Straight after his baptism and the first public declaration that he was God's son Jesus went into the desert and after 40 days he was tempted. The temptation was around the identity that God had recently declared. The devil said “ If you are the son of God then...” For everyone, coming to an understanding of our identity as children of God, is essential to being able to fulfil our role as sons and daughters of the King of Kings.

Knowing who we are enables us to act out of that identity. Knowing we are deeply loved also speaks to us about the relationship that we have with God. It is important therefore that we understand that God wants to speak to us about who we are as the foundation of our relationship. He will speak about gifting and callings, but the priority must be to build those on the foundation of knowing who we are and whose we are.



God will also speak into our destiny and gifting and prophecy can help in calling this out. Often the prophetic word identifies the potential in a person and points them towards something that God is releasing to them. It may confirm to them something God has said to them personally and therefore encourage them to pursue those gifts and callings.

### Testimony from Paula

My husband was on a call with leaders and asked me to jump on at the end to prophecy. I heard God's still small voice the name Rosie and saw a picture in my mind's eye of a lady putting washing in a washing machine. As I saw her, I felt pain and disappointment hitting her. I heard God say he was going to turn that pain and disappointment around and bring healing. There was a leader on the call, who at that moment was messaging a friend, whose daughter Rosie was in hospital to encourage her God knew about her situation.

### Discussion and reflection questions.

1. What stood out to you from this teaching?
2. What is your main way of hearing from God - perceiving, hearing or seeing?
3. Do you work with others who have a different primary flow - are there any challenges to this?
4. What is the most important thing you do to develop hearing from God for yourself?
5. Have you helped others in their journey of hearing from God for themselves? If so, how?

### Activation ideas

These activations are designed to help us focus on hearing God for ourselves. The first is based on the principles of Lectio, where as we meditate on scripture it allows the Holy Spirit to reveal things to us for a word or sentence in a passage. The second is a visual exercise. These may not be your usual way of listening to God but it's good to explore different ways of communication.



### Using a passage of scripture.

The passage does not need to be long. Its about absorbing and meditating on what the Holy Spirit highlights. Before you start, ask the Holy Spirit to highlight a word or a phrase as you read. Read the passage slowly several times. It may be helpful to read it out loud. Then sit with the word or phrase that has been highlighted and ask the Holy Spirit to open it up to you further.

If you want to explore Lectio further there is a course from 24/7 that may be helpful (<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-course/>).

### Open Door Visualisation.

As God often speaks through pictures this activity starts from a picture. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you a door. See how much detail you can see on that door. Then look through the door to what is on the other side. What can you see? Ask God what he wants you to know about the scene in front of you.

n.b. Some people do find this visualisation type of exercise more difficult than others. If you can't see a door in your imagination, then ask God to tell you what the next thing is that He wants you to step into.



## Chapter 3

### Protocols for prophecy in the church

The aims of this chapter are to lay scriptural foundations for the use of the gift in personal and corporate prophecy.

The chapter will also consider the culture of the prophetic within Pioneer that we are fostering through this training e.g. our style, language use, and guidelines for submitting and testing words.

#### History of prophetic in Pioneer for context

Pioneer has a legacy as a prophetic movement with our founding leader Gerald Coates being a true pioneer who sought to bring heaven to earth. The early days of the movement were marked with a creativity that helped bring the prophetic to ordinary people, not just in church but by breaking down walls into the marketplace of everyday life in the community.

We want to honour and steward the legacy passed on to us and press into more of what God intends in this area. So in Pioneer today there is an intentionality to steward the prophetic gift and honour those who have a call to the office of a prophet. There is also a recognition that it's about more than just the words we speak but how we live our lives. The word of God is embodied in and through us and enables us to bring the kingdom of God to new places and spaces.

#### What does the bible say that can help us steward this gift?

Firstly, New Testament principles demonstrate that the foundation of the prophetic is good news, so like Jesus, we should be proclaiming the kingdom of God is near through our words and actions. In Luke 4:16-19 we see how Jesus proclaimed the kingdom and the fulfilment of God's word. So when we prophesy, what we are doing is calling the hope for the future kingdom into the present. Victory has



already been achieved in Jesus and the prophetic comes to declare this completed work and see it manifest in the lives of those around us.

1 Cor 14:1-12 and 24, are the foundational scriptures for thinking about how we deliver prophetic words, especially in corporate gatherings. We use these guidelines to help frame a safe and healthy way of bringing God's word to others both individually and corporately. This helps avoid the hurt and division that can be caused through unwise use of the prophetic gift.

In particular, there are several ways of thinking about what verse 3 means when it tells us that, "the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort" (SEC). In other words the prophecy we bring should build people up, stir them on in God and bring comfort and hope in times of trouble.

Or as our friend Wayne Drain says we are given prophecy to encourage us in our present, comfort us in our past and strengthen us for the future. Another mnemonic that supports these principles is ABCD - always build up, cheer up and draw near. When we give a prophetic word it may contain one or all these elements. These parameters provide a safe way for using the gift. It doesn't mean there can't be occasional correctional or directional words, but even those need to be good news for the recipient and encourage them towards Jesus.

When we give prophetic words we are looking to call out the gold, God's best in people and help equip others to become who God intended them to be. It's not about us telling them about their struggles. e.g. if you see fear in a person, they know it is there and don't need it pointed out publicly. Instead we should be asking God what he wants to do with what we have seen or heard. In this example we know fear is from the enemy so he might need us to bind up fear in prayer or declare a different spirit over them.

This example illustrates how we need the gift of discernment as well as the prophetic as part of what is needed to know how to respond. Graham Cooke talks about this as the difference between 'diagnosis' and 'prognosis'. The first thing we receive or understand gives us insight into the situation, but God wants to use the



prophetic to bring the kingdom into it, so there is a solution in His heart. If you don't get an immediate solution then you pray into the situation and wait for his guidance.

1 Cor 14:26-40 talks about a corporate setting and the need for order in worship (v 40). The purpose of coming together is to build the church. Therefore, there needs to be order to how the prophetic is released into a corporate gathering. This is not about control, those responsible for leadership ensure as best as possible that everything is done well and in line with the Holy Spirit. As we learnt in the first chapter, when the spirit of prophecy moves many people can receive words, but it doesn't necessarily mean all those words need to be given in that meeting or at that time.

This is why protocols for how to submit words are essential, and most local churches have their own process for this. Church leaders carry the responsibility for words that we give them, they have to weigh and judge them and decide what is to be done with them but the purpose of this is to bring peace not confusion. Many churches have someone who you can go to and share the word you have, others may ask for them to be written and submitted to leaders after the meeting. Whatever a local congregation has decided the purpose is the same, to steward the gift wisely and to ensure that we hear God's words and have the opportunity to respond to those that have been weighed and judged.

We are also called to share the prophetic beyond the walls of the church and to speak the kingdom into different spheres of society. We are looking to see God's kingdom established in the marketplace and places of power, whilst recognising we are still living in the "in between era" - it will not be completely realised yet. There are many different ways of doing this, some of which are explored in more detail in later chapters. However, we need to be ready if we feel the unction of the Holy Spirit. Some of the key principles in speaking out prophecy outside the church would include, not using religious language and keeping the focus on Jesus being revealed.



## Personal prophecy protocols

Personal prophecy is often a word in season, as seen in Proverbs 1:23, which talks about a timely word in due season. The word itself can be something fairly simple, the significance relates to when it is given. I was working with a group of teenagers and doing a simple activation with them. At the end of the session one of them came up to the leader and mentioned a word that had been given to her that said “you matter”. She said she had really needed to hear that today, because of things that had been going on. A simple word in the right time can impact significantly.

Within a church context we would encourage personal prophecy, but try to avoid ‘private’ prophecy, particularly if you are someone starting out in the gift. In other words it’s always helpful if you have a word for someone to take another person with you when you go to share it. This openness prevents any control or manipulation, allows for the opportunity for feedback and growth and can sometimes provide for God to speak further through the other person present.

In Pioneer we would also avoid prophesying into areas such as births, marriages and deaths, because these are areas with very high emotional contexts. If you are not a prophet with a proven track record it is better to just pray into any revelation God gives you in this area.

It’s usually a good idea to ask people if they would like us to share with them. Nobody likes to feel ambushed - people who have had bad experiences with the prophetic may be a bit wary, particularly, if we are not known to them. We should be pointing people to Jesus not to ourselves. Sometimes writing a word down and passing it to a person can be a better way of allowing God to speak in His time.

The language used when prophesying that is preferred within Pioneer is that of “I feel God says”, “I believe God has said”, “I sense”, rather than the more definitive declaration of God told me or God says. This does not weaken the declaration but provides an opportunity for weighing and judging a word in context.



Many relationships and church splits have occurred because individuals have held steadfastly to a belief in what God has said to them, that was in disagreement with what someone else felt. The word of God should not come before our relationships as we all need to recognise we only know and prophesy in part (I Cor 13:9). We all prophesy through a personal and cultural lens and none of us give the pure word of God all the time. We will all get it wrong at times but being in relationship with others, remaining humble and having opportunities to practise safely is the best way to develop your gifting.

### Responding to personal prophecy.

We will look at this in more detail in chapter 4, but it is important to recognise that giving a word is only part of the process to seeing it fulfilled. There is also a response that needs to be made by those receiving it and there are helpful guidelines (see prophetic guardrails in chapter 10) we can follow to work with the Holy Spirit in this.

### Protocols for corporate prophecy.

When the Spirit of God is moving prophetic people get prophesying, especially in a corporate setting. This can help us get better at flowing together as a prophetic people. We want to bring God's voice rather than our individual voice, and this will require the mutual weighing of words and knowing the prophetic pathways within your church and out into the community (Acts 13:1,15-40, Eph 3:5 ).

Sometimes meeting together to seek God for a word for the church, locality, business or organisation can help lead to something that has been shaped and crafted and will carry more weight if it comes through a group. Obviously, there are times when someone who is operating in the role of a prophet might also give a word in any of these situations but that comes from the authority they carry as part of the five fold ministry.

2 Cor 10:13 shows us that authority flows from the responsibility we have been given, as Paul indicates "We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will



confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us”. We all have an area of influence or service that God has assigned to us but even within that we should also be operating from the principle of submitting to one another.

Prophets need to be embedded in church and not working in isolation. They need to be willing to be accountable and teachable. They must be willing to admit that they may be wrong sometimes. 1 Cor 13:9 says we only prophesy in part so we will get it wrong at times but we need to have opportunities to grow and take risks.

There should be no directional prophecy in church meetings without submission to authority. It should be checked with leadership first. Directional words are not where we start. It is essential that our gifts are tried and tested first and that our only motivation is love without an agenda. We need to evidence both the fruit of God’s character and love as well as the gifts, which show God’s power on display. One is not more important than the other and we need to take care to grow our character as well as our gift. Chapter 7 develops this idea further.

In the same way as individuals need to respond to personal words, words brought corporately also need a response. Churches need to steward the words God brings them and sometimes prophetic people can help with this.

Working with other prophetic people allows the gift to grow and be shaped and is essential. Coming alongside those who have a proven track record of effective words can help us grow in our own gift. We also need to be clear about the difference between the gift of prophecy and the role of the prophet as stated in chapter 1, not all who have a gift will necessarily be a prophet.

### Protocols for taking prophecy outside the church

There are various forms of evangelistic activity that can provide forums for taking prophecy outside the church. These include practices like Prophetic treasure hunting, which is the practice of listening to God’s voice for clues—like words, pictures, or feelings—to find and bless people in specific public locations. Or spirit cafes, an evangelistic outreach event that creates a cafe-style environment where people can receive free “treatments” such as prophetic words, physical healing, or



dream interpretation. These and others like them seek to take the kingdom out into the streets. However, as individuals we can also be seeking to bring the encouragement and love of God in the places where we live and work on a daily basis. Our motivation needs to be love without an agenda. In these situations we need to employ the gift of discernment in knowing whether or not what we have received from God is for sharing or simply for prayer.

### Testimony from Paula

At our events, we often offer something we call "destiny words." We invite people to hear what we believe God might be saying to them personally. All they need to do is listen and then decide if the message resonates with them or if they wish to disregard it. We've witnessed many emotional responses, often bringing people to tears.

One particularly memorable instance involved a young man from the traveller community. He was actively causing disruption at the event, leading a group of his friends in mischief. We approached him and asked if he'd be open to receiving a destiny word. Egged on by his friends, he agreed. On this occasion, we also had a selection of pictures people could choose from, and he picked a fierce-looking lion.

As we began to speak, guided by what we felt God was revealing about his identity, we shared that God was like a lion who desired to protect him, especially when he felt afraid. By the end of our conversation, tears were silently streaming down his face. When he rose to rejoin his friends, his entire demeanor had shifted. He walked over to them, crouched down, spoke softly, and, to our surprise, they all stood up and peacefully rejoined the event, causing no further trouble.



## Discussion and reflection questions.

1. How can we make sure our words are bringing life?
2. What are some reasons it would be inappropriate to prophesy?
3. What are some things to watch for when delivering a prophetic word?
4. What is the proper procedure for delivering a prophetic word in a public service?
5. What are the protocols for the prophetic in your church or what could they be?
6. How do you make yourself accountable with your words?

## Activation ideas

Developing the use of questions to develop prophetic words. Asking questions can help us sharpen our words for specific situations. We can begin to focus on things like a person's identity in God or their destiny and gifting if we ask God about these things.

Here are some questions you could ask God for the person you are praying for. Don't forget to go back and ask supplemental questions about what you receive to get more depth and to develop what your first impressions are.

- How do you see this person?
- What brings you most joy about them?
- What are the gifts/callings you have given them and what context are they being used in (e.g. church, work, family, community etc.)? What plans do you have for them in this area?
- Is there a specific area of provision you want them to know about?



## Chapter 4

### An effective response to prophetic words

This chapter considers how we should respond to personal prophecy and the role of faith in seeing a word fulfilled. It will also explore an understanding of our corporate responsibility to test words and how to partner with the Holy Spirit in this process in order to hold onto the good. It will examine the ways suggested by scripture to weigh and judge words and the context of these as they relate to current practice.

Prophetic words may consist of a number of parts including reflection on the past, present and future. It's important to identify the different parts in order to put faith into practice and move towards the fulfilment. It's also important that we find people to share this journey with us. Prophecy is best responded to with others. There are some simple practical steps that are recommended as a guideline.

#### Practical applications

- Write out the words of personal prophecy God gives you and keep in a folder or journal, this helps you to track what God has been saying across the seasons of your life.
- Process the word to get the most from it.
- Receive words with faith (ask the Holy Spirit what he's saying in the moment).
- Seek wise counsel in the process of judging a word, applying scriptural tests and remember we judge the word not the person who gave it.

#### Processing a word:

Prophecy is part of the spiritual warfare we find ourselves in. Timothy was encouraged by Paul to fight the good fight (1Tim 1:18). We need to do the same and be active in pursuing what God has said to us. There are a number of things that you can do with a personal word in this way once you have written it out.



You could:

- Circle any identity words that say who you are.
- Underline any direct promises from God to you.
- Make a note of any requirements on your part or anything that is conditional. Conditions may not be explicit but you may need to do something to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. For example, if you have a word about being a teacher, your part may be to study the bible, read widely or attend a training course.
- Note the seasons/timings.
- Make a list of any metaphors or bible verses you want to explore further.
- You might want to turn some of the words into a declaration to use as you pray - this can be really helpful with identity words to remind us of who God says we are.

### Receiving with faith

There is always a need to receive a word with faith. Sometimes the faith step is about learning to wait. In scripture the idea of waiting patiently is linked closely with engaging active expectant faith. Sometimes the waiting is a process of God testing us in order to develop character and move on to maturity. Growth is important. When we are waiting we are putting our trust in God for the fulfilment of his word, it's not about us.

However there are actions we can take to wait expectantly these include:

- Go back and read/listen to words regularly.
- Continue to respond in prayer with an attitude of faith.
- Don't neglect the words or God's promises - but if you do repent.
- Confess to self /tell others what you are in faith for.

### Judging and weighing a word

It's important that we understand how to apply the process of judging and weighing words. There are several scriptures that relate to this that we are using for guidance in the context of what weighing and judging mean, they are:



1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

1 Corinthians 14:29. “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.”

1 John 4:1-3. “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world”

Christine Westhoff, in her book Reframing the Prophetic is very clear that Jesus is the first test we need to apply when we receive a prophetic word. She says - “every prophetic word should draw our gaze, passion, desire, and kingdom mission towards the person of Jesus - it can look different but should contain the DNA of Jesus... the words spoken, the actions demonstrated, the purpose of the words and actions themselves, and the spirit and character of the one speaking the words or doing the actions should all demonstrate, manifest and embody the person of Jesus”.

There are plenty of ways of thinking about how we begin the process of weighing and judging and asking the following kinds of questions are a helpful tool in the process;

- Does it agree with Scripture?
- Is it consistent with the character and nature of God?
- Does it resonate with me?
- How do those around me feel about the word?
- Do I trust the source?
- Does it glorify God?
- Does it reflect what God is speaking to me about?

It should be noted that accurate revelation on its own is not in itself an affirming test of prophetic words. There are many scriptural examples where people were speaking truth, but from a demonic source. Look at the story of Paul and the slave girl in Acts 16 as an example of this. It's also true that sometimes the word can be mixed with our own perceptions and feelings especially if we are invested in a



project or know a person well. The testing process helps us to decipher what is the revelation from God and what is just encouragement we are bringing.

### The art of prophecy

Prophecy is not a science, it is an art . These guidelines for weighing and judging words are designed to help give us some parameters to make sense of the process. Practice at weighing and judging sharpens up the skill and doing this with others is helpful to indicate blind spots we may have. Judging words we give as well as those we receive helps us as we grow in this area.

Three additional elements to think about in giving and receiving a prophetic word that may also be helpful in this process of weighing and judging are: Anointing - Reach - Timing

**Anointing** is what authenticates prophecy. It's about impartation and making a deposit in someone else's life. The anointing brings kingdom results so there will be fruit in the life of those receiving the word and God's people can then affirm when the anointing is present. So, as well as judging the word itself we can look for the fruit of it in a person's life. The kind of aspects we can see should be that a word may;

- Let people see who they are in God's eyes
- Affirm calling
- Recognise spiritual gifts
- Establish identity.

**Reach** - this is determined by the measure of faith and grace you have and we need to be realistic about it. Another way of thinking about it is the sphere of influence that you have in the prophetic, or the favour God gives you to minister in a place or to a person. We discussed this idea of reach in the first chapter on the different aspects of the prophetic. A person moving under the spirit of prophecy has a different reach or sphere of influence to a prophet who ministers nationally and internationally.



For those who travel the reach is different depending on where you go. If you have been invited to minister in a church and they say to you “just do what the Lord tells you” you know you have authority and reach in that situation and can move in the anointing and minister prophetically what God puts on your heart. If however, you are just visiting a church but feel God gives you something to share, you need to follow the protocols of the church as any other member and if you don’t know them, it’s better to be silent and perhaps share what you feel with someone after the service.

In the same way we can also be discerning about who we receive prophetic words from. We don’t have to open ourselves up to anybody if we are not comfortable with who they are or don’t know where they have come from.

God will grow our reach as we prove faithful and accountable to others with what he gives us. Our friend David explains how he started having words for cities and nations but they were beyond his current reach. So he saw it as an opportunity to pray strategically, to present the words to others who had the capacity and reach and this enabled him to see that the words were both affirming to him and confirming to those he shared with as they were receiving similar things from the Lord.

Having a word for a city doesn’t mean we go and stand on a street corner or post it on social media. We need to remain humble and pray, allowing God to open the doors at the right time if he wants our sphere of influence to grow.

**Timing** - speaking words in season. A good word with bad timing can be destructive e.g. Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37 v 5). Just because you have received something doesn’t mean it needs to be delivered now. This is a significant lesson to learn as we often receive revelation from God that is not to be shared now, rather God wants the word to grow in us so that when it is released it comes with love and authority and his anointing. Prophecy flows from connection to the Holy Spirit and alignment to scripture. We need to make sure our private life of worship and study takes us deeper into intimate communion with God. Public ministry flows best from private worship.



What about when you get a word wrong? There is a human element to the prophetic, but that is why there is grace. But it may also be helpful to think about the three aspects, anointing, reach, timing and see which one was missing. If on reflection or after receiving feedback you realise you got it wrong, do admit you got it wrong, pray and ask a blessing on the person.

### Discussion and reflection questions.

1. Is there anything that stood out from this session in regards to judging prophetic words?
2. How do you currently steward the prophetic words you receive?
3. Are there any further actions you could be taking to faithfully steward the gift and the words you have received?
4. Have you considered any conditions that may be implicit in the words you have received?
5. How do you handle it when others judge your words as missing the mark? What can you learn through this process?

### Activation ideas

If you have anyone who has a dream get them to share it and then pray together about the interpretation.

Think back to a word that you have had in the past that has not come to pass or currently remains unfulfilled. Pray and revisit that word together to see if there is further revelation for that word or the timing of it.

How did the word line up with the ART of prophecy? Anointing, reach, timing?



## Chapter 5

### Developing your gift of prophecy.

This chapter looks at the different types of prophetic words and their sources and explores the differences between inspiration and revelation. It considers how we maintain a prophetic flow and practical aspects for developing this. As we discussed in the first chapter there is a difference in the levels at which the prophetic operates. We should therefore think about the difference between inspirational and revelational words.

Inspirational prophecy focuses mainly on encouragement, and is the foundation of the gift as expressed in I Cor 14. It is where everyone usually starts in prophecy. Often an inspirational word is a biblical truth given at the right time with God's anointing. Sometimes the simplest words are the most powerful, so there is a valuable place for inspirational words. Proverbs 18:21 says death and life in power of the tongue so we need to focus on speaking words to create life. This is essential when we start to share revelation.

Revelation insight means you are receiving a profound understanding of something more, or seeing something new. The Holy Spirit is bringing a moment of clarity, or a new way of thinking or living. Revelation can lead individuals to make changes in their lives. All of us have experienced revelation at some point, when our eyes have been opened to the truth of who Jesus is (Matt 16:16).

The main difference between inspiration and revelation is the level of impact it can have on an individual or into a situation. Revelation is God showing you what you could not have otherwise known and has the potential to unlock situations. For example think about Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4) and how a word of knowledge unlocked a whole village to the message of the kingdom.

Therefore, how we deal with the knowledge that we get is really important. For example a word of knowledge can make way for prophecy. Often the revelation that we get is alerting us to a situation, but it's not necessarily what we are going



to speak out, so we need to also discern the purpose of what God shows us through the revelation. It may be for intimacy between you and God or it may be for intercession and spiritual warfare.

Sometimes the revelation that we get shows us something that feels challenging or negative about a person and it's important that we don't speak that out loud. It's important we don't prophesy unhealthy things because we know words can linger in peoples minds, for better or for worse.

It's important to practise discernment with the things God shows us, and to use this along with revelation. In practice this usually requires asking God questions. For example:

- What does God want to do in this situation ?
- Why is he showing you something?
- If you see something negative ask how he wants to turn it into a positive.
- What does he want to redeem in this situation?

Call into being what is not yet created, what God wants to do. Call out the gold in people; this includes spiritual identity and positioning within the purposes of God. There is a need to learn to still our own spirit and listen to God. The more this happens the quicker we will be able to hear even in the chaos around. So as well as receiving revelation, we also need to be seeking discernment and wisdom for the next steps.

### Maintaining a healthy prophetic flow.

We need to recognise that all words come through us and our contexts and our relationship with God, As prophetic people it's important to stay healthy and clean, ensuring we don't carry bitter roots or unforgiveness in our hearts. The prophetic has to minister from a serving, loving heart. If you feel you receive negative words lots of the time for others it may be you are the one who needs to get healed. It's also important, if you feel you are receiving these types of words, that you share with someone you are accountable to and get advice before releasing them.



There are times when prophetic people can be guilty of using the prophetic to manipulate a situation. Sometimes God may show you something, but what is actually needed is not a prophetic word but a conversation with other people. Don't use the prophetic if there should just be a conversation, recognise the need for discernment and wisdom. Remember the prophetic is not the whole picture and we need to work alongside the other ministries (Ephesians 2:19-22) to help the church move forward.

Some prophetic people are perceivers and receive things as feelings or emotions, but as with any form of revelation we need to apply discernment. Sometimes we need to discern if the feeling or emotion is actually ours rather than something we are sensing is happening in the spiritual realm.

### Testimony from Joy

When I was new to the prophetic I didn't realise I could experience insight through my emotions. I would sometimes walk into a meeting and start picking up this range of feelings. I would wonder why I suddenly felt sad or depressed. Gradually I realised that I was sensing what was happening spiritually or in the emotions of those around me. I learnt to pray for those who I sensed carried that feeling. But equally I learnt that if I was going through a personal turmoil, for example bereavement, my senses were more clouded and less reliable because they were coloured by what I was personally carrying.

### Sharing His Heart

It is important to practise listening, hearing and understanding the emotions of God, because often the prophetic is about conveying not just God's words but also his heart. This is why it is so important to be healed if moving in prophetic ministry. We are called to love the bride because Jesus does and this needs to take priority over man-made structures, like our preferred methods of worship, specific denominational traditions, and the comfort of our established programs. But we also need to love ourselves, so we need to do the hard work because the gift is for others and the purpose is to showcase Jesus.



It's important to be emotionally well and to raise up others to go beyond ourselves, so that they can reach further and show more of the kingdom through their lives and gifts. Therefore, it's important to live with a kingdom mindset, living for others not ourselves. We all need to deal with any insecurities and jealousies that may arise because these will cause a word to go off course. This is why we need others around us to keep us accountable and speaking to us if they observe we are carrying hurt and offence. The enemy will seek to bring offence, because offence brings division, which destroys unity and disunity destroys the church. We need to be aware of this for ourselves and others.

We are not always right so we need to stay humble.

Our output must not be bigger than input. So we need to work to maintain a prophetic flow (Is 43:19 and Psalm 147:18).

Some helpful steps to this are:

- To think of it like a river that moves gracefully along.
- To practise as this sometimes helps to keep going.
- To regularly get out of being led by your head and instead be led by the Holy Spirit (tongues can help here).
- To acknowledge that sometimes a word gets more accurate as you go.
- Don't just speak out of your own understanding (1 Cor 2:10-13 - "thoughts of God").

We also need to recognise that we don't just have to prophesy with words but can use other forms of communication e.g. songs, dance, movement, art, poetry, actions etc.

It's important that we don't try to prophesy like someone else, but find out who we are. If you only give short words just give what you have and don't compare yourself to the 'nabi' types who might give much longer words.



Tim Catchum describes 4 types of prophetic people each of who has a specific emphasis :

- Auditor - reminds you who you are called to be
- Awakener - old has gone, new has come.
- Protester - movement message activists who bring change they see
- Performer - Creative power - embody the word (like Jeremiah, who for example smashed a pottery jug to symbolise God's judgement, you may be called to be the message).

These characteristics may help you identify your own or others strengths, so it's worth noting if you are drawn to a particular people group, or a justice issue. What are some of the common themes that come through your prophetic word?

It's important to recognise different churches have different styles and cultures and to respect and honour these differences. Recognise the spiritual authority in a church and find out the protocols for the prophetic in the church and be guided by them.

In summary to stay healthy and maintain the prophetic flow:

- Don't be alone- keep accountable
- Do not get isolated.
- Deal with any offence.
- Be aware of what God is saying and seek to go deeper. Use every opportunity to practise the gift whenever you can.
- Grow both gift and character.



## Discussion and reflection questions

1. What level of the prophetic do you mostly work in? Are you seeing growth in your gift as you steward it?
2. How do the different types of prophetic words apply to corporate prophecies?
3. How do we respond to prophetic styles that are not of our culture e.g. with those who might use “ Thus says the Lord.”
4. Did you find anything particularly challenging in this teaching?

## Activation ideas

This activation uses scripture as a basis for inspirational words and prophetic declarations.

Firstly you are going to ask the Holy Spirit for a scripture that can become a rhema (now) word for someone. When you have the scripture continue the dialogue with the Holy Spirit to get some more detail e.g.

- Why it is important for now?
- Does it relate to a particular situation they are in?
- Does it relate to a specific specific part of their life e.g. family, work, friendships.
- Are there any specific words in the passage that Holy Spirit is emphasising?
- When you have the whole picture, rather than just the scripture, share with the person who it is for.

Another way of using scripture is to ask God to show you a bible character for a person. when you have the character ask the Holy Spirt what is significant about them or in what ways he see them as like that person.



## Chapter 6

### Interpreting prophetic words

The aim of this chapter is to look at the role of interpretation throughout the prophetic process. Firstly, we need to understand that many prophetic words require some interpretation and that when we look at biblical prophecy, much of it is symbolic and figurative and therefore there are implications in how we read it. This chapter will then consider how we process pictures, visions and dreams we receive and how they can be interpreted recognising that we all bring personal and cultural lenses to the process.

#### Interpretation and application of prophetic words

##### Context

One of the ways God often speaks is through pictures, visions and dreams, as we discussed in chapter 2 on the way God speaks and all of these require interpretation.

It's important to recognise that interpretation is not the same as translation i.e. translation implies a word for word substitution, interpretation is often about giving a sense of what has been said. However, we also need to recognise that everything comes through our contextual filters and our view of God and how He speaks.

Interpretation can also be seen as an independent gift. We see in 1 Cor 12:18 Paul talks about interpretation as a spiritual gift that is linked with speaking in tongues specifically. However, the context Paul was speaking into in this passage was running an orderly meeting, so we shouldn't let that verse be our only understanding of the gift of interpretation. As we shall consider later interpretation of dreams was also a gift given by God.



Finally, it is worth noting that this chapter is not going to cover Bible hermeneutics, or ways of interpreting scriptures, there is just not space. However, some of what we consider may be relevant in the way we apply scriptures. So, for example, we might want to consider what happens when the Holy Spirit is making the written word into a rhema word and whether there are interpretation consequences.

When looking at many of the prophetic books in the Bible we see they are filled with visions, apocalyptic language (Apocalypse just means reveal in the Greek. It can be translated as to uncover, reveal, lay bare, or disclose). Much of the imagery in these writings had direct relevance to the current context the prophet was speaking into, as well as layered significance for generations to come. The relevance of historical and cultural context is important when studying and seeking to interpret prophetic writings and the Bible Project videos are highly recommended as a tool to help with this (<https://bibleproject.com/explore/>).

For the purposes of interpreting how we use the prophetic, we need to recognise that our worldview impacts not just how we engage with scripture, but also how we may engage with spiritual life and being and these perspectives will come through in how we interpret things.

### Interpretation in the prophetic process

Interpretation happens at different stages of the prophetic process, both as we give and as we receive a word/picture/vision. It may not be that we always have an interpretation but part of the role of prophetic ministry is supporting those who receive a word, in moving with them through the application of it in their lives. We all engage in interpretation to some extent before we even speak out a prophetic word, because as we receive something from God we are already applying and connecting things in our thoughts.

### Testimony from Paula

During a church gathering, I was sitting next to a woman I hadn't met before. As I quietly prayed, asking God if he had a message for her, I saw a mental image of an open book with light shining out of it. Initially, I thought it might represent the



Bible and that God was going to reveal something from his word to her. However, when I asked God for clarification, I distinctly heard the word 'teacher'. I then turned to the woman and asked if she was a teacher. She confirmed she was. I described the vision exactly as I'd seen it, without offering any interpretation. She immediately burst into tears. She explained that she had recently experienced a miscarriage and a breakdown, and felt God had been telling her that this difficult period would be a part of her 'book of life' and that she would be okay. My sharing the vision of the open, illuminated book resonated deeply with what she had been hearing. On this occasion I was glad I did not give my own interpretation.

It is important that we get into the habit of going back to God for more than the initial image, asking the Holy Spirit for more detail and clarity. We also need to remember to ask the Holy Spirit whether what we have seen is the prognosis or diagnosis for the situation (see chapter 3). We may not be called to speak out the picture/vision if it is only the prognosis God gave to us to show where the person is now. We want to seek God for the words that will bring the breakthrough God wants to bring into their life.

When we receive revelation via an image we need to recognise that often we may focus on the detail, the uses and the location of that object, or alternatively we may find the object itself begins a process of association for us, a train of thought or a memory. If we are praying as a group we may find that our picture is just one part of some related ideas.

One key to interpretation is remembering that God is always addressing the heart of both those who prophesy and those He is speaking to. Often He is wanting to build the foundations within us for the purposes He has called us to and his relational nature means that He is often focused on our journey with him rather than the destination which may be our focus. Let's also remember that God does not always take his people by the shortest route and the journey itself may be important in helping shape character and faith to bring us to a place where a word can be fulfilled.



## Biblical examples of visions and interpretations

We can look at some examples of visions from the bible to see what they demonstrate about interpretation. From the prophetic books of the Old Testament and through examples in the New Testament we can see that God speaks in visions. As we explored in chapter 2 these can be both unremarkable visions about everyday objects or supernatural visions.

Unremarkable visions are where God uses everyday things and our own understanding to bring prophecy (visions can be still or moving). E.g Jeremiah 1: 11 The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you see, Jeremiah?” “I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied.<sup>12</sup> The Lord said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”<sup>13</sup> The word of the Lord came to me again: “What do you see?” “I see a pot that is boiling,” I answered. “It is tilting toward us from the north.”

The interpretation of Jeremiah 1 relies on us knowing some local context and how in Hebrew it illustrates a word play happening, through an understanding that the words for almond tree and the words for wake up come from a similar root word Shaquad (watch and wake up) and Shaqed (almond tree). The almond tree is also the first tree to blossom, so a sign spring is on its way. It indicates something is coming down the road and God is at work. The picture is helpful to those waiting for God to act, but there may also be other symbolism at play because the almond tree is also represented in Exodus where the menorah in the tabernacle is shaped like almond trees and they were the only light in the tabernacle. Also, we can think about Aaron’s rod that budded in the Holy of Holy (Numbers 17:8). So even with a simple picture there may be layers of meaning and interpretation.

A different kind of example is Zech 4:1-6 What do you see?

Then the angel who talked with me returned and woke me up, like someone awakened from sleep. 2 He asked me, “What do you see?” I answered, “I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven channels to the lamps. 3 Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” 4 I asked the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” 5 He answered, “Do you not know what these are?” “No, my lord,” I



replied.<sup>6</sup> So he said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty. Here Zechariah didn’t have an interpretation but asked God for one straight away.

Supernatural visions often have more imagery and symbolism and need greater interpretation. E.g in Acts 10, Cornelius saw an angel in a vision and Peter at prayer also saw a vision, Peter was perplexed by what he saw and had no immediate interpretation. But as Peter obeyed the Lord the meaning became clear.

The key is all visions need some Holy Spirit inspired interpretation.

Interpretation is one step in the process of application and engaging with what God says. In our predominantly western worldview we often connect with intellect first and then think about how to engage the body, how we walk it out. However, the Jewish worldview is that they are the same thing, if you engage intellectually with the word or the text you also need to walk it out. So there is always an application to any prophetic word, which is also part of the interpretation process, thinking about how we need to respond and how we need to walk it out with the Holy Spirit. Scripture is clear that God places value on us having to figure things out. Proverbs 25:2 “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.” That is also why it’s good to record words, revisit them and share with others.

A more eastern interpretive model reflects the Jewish thought where the value of learning is one of exploration and of asking questions rather than looking for one definite answer. This is so different from how in the west we may perceive so many things, and where the emphasis is on one right way which can be the starting point for many disputes and disagreements. We know and may have experience of the way the prophetic when used in this categoric way can be the source of those divisions and divides, so a “thus says the Lord delivery” does not open up room for further dialogue, consideration and interpretation. Therefore, we suggest that as we do when we give a word, we should also approach interpretation in the same way and phrase what we say to give space for God to speak more e.g. “This seems to mean this to me.” Sometimes it is also good to ask the person receiving the



picture if the image means anything to them as they may have a deeper interpretation.

However, godly Holy Spirit inspired interpretations are not just us applying our opinions, they take practice in listening for the Holy Spirit in the same way as when we are looking to hear him in the first place and they are not always immediate. Sometimes, we need to pursue the witness of the Holy Spirit and sometimes we have to wait for a full interpretation. This may be personally waiting on an interpretation for something God has given us or helping others to seek God for the meanings of pictures and visions that have been given to them.

Interpretation is an art not a science, obviously at times symbols, pictures, themes and ideas mean something to a receiver of a word that we could not have known about, God is speaking their language, if you like, and this may enable them to add more clarity.

### Testimony from Joy

Our prophetic community was praying for someone we didn't know who had come for an appointment. One member of the team had a clear picture of a stag which she interpreted to mean certain characteristics about who God said this person was in terms of authority and character. After the session had finished and he was asked for feedback, he affirmed that God had spoken to him through the words, but then added that the picture of the stag had also been very personal to him as it was part of his family crest.

It may be important to also consider other aspects of interpretation such as the timing of a word. Often prophecies are given with no timescale involved, so how do we know if this is a word for now, or something for the future? This can be particularly challenging as God can speak to the future in the present tense because when we get to the point where the word is fulfilled it needs to be current then. We shouldn't be pressed into prediction, but we can ask questions of the Holy Spirit and remember the story of Abraham and how he was promised a son, but got impatient. Also, let us remember there is grace for a correct interpretation but a wrong application, look at Agabus and Paul in Acts 21:10-11.



## Summary

Interpretation impacts all parts of the prophetic process.

We need to be aware of not giving our own opinion, but accepting that our experiences and our culture and context will impact what we do with what we receive.

Opening words up for interpretation is helpful and as prophetic people we need not just to give words but help others with the application. Joy recalls sitting down with people to help them find themes within their words and identify elements of identity, of calling and destiny. Once she was doing this for someone who had a poor self image and felt that prophecy was always negative. She found that this person had ignored all the identity words, as she didn't believe they were her. Following some prayer she began to embrace who God said she was and it changed her outlook on many things.

## Interpreting Dreams

God speaks in dreams all through the bible and we have to learn to recognise this language

“In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.(Acts 2:17).

God declares that He will counsel us at night through our dreams.(Ps. 16:7 NASB).

God does very significant things within dreams. For example, He established the Abrahamic Covenant in a dream. (Gen. 15:12,13,18,).

God grants supernatural gifts THROUGH dreams. (I Kings 3:5,9,12,15).



### Why does God speak in this way?

God doesn't always make himself clear in the bible and He's not changed! Jesus teaches in a complicated rabbinic fashion (we can't evaluate Jesus by western teaching methods).

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He quotes from Isaiah 6, though they have eyes and ears they close them because they don't really want to change / be challenged by hearing the truth. People have to till their own soil to receive the words.

11 He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables".

John Paul Jackson called dreams the night parables from God.

So the value of interpretation is:

To draw us closer because knowing God is the single most important element in interpreting dreams, visions and revelation. It's about our hearts rather than our minds. To gain a response from us, as we start working and engaging with what he gives us. To develop dependence and interdependence. God wants us not only depending on him, but working with him and also working together as the body of Christ.

We need to understand God's timing, his nature and his character is not like ours. Dreams can be a great way into conversations with those who don't yet know Jesus and also for any of you who are parents, let's be ready to help our children interpret their dreams.

### Process of interpreting dreams

As with any prophetic word we need to consider the source of the dream (test the spirit). Is it God, the enemy or the self (too much cheese or a hectic day being processed through dreaming)? Rachel Harris says a God dream will have a mark on it. So look for dreams that you won't be able to get away from because they



stay with you or they leave a deep impression. Sometimes it might be the clarity of the dream or a feeling or an anointing remains with you, these can all be indicators of something God is communicating.

A satanic dream or nightmare will leave a sense of hopelessness and despair attached. If your mental health is poor and you feel you have a lot of dreams like this it might just be you are processing. It's important to focus on who God is, that He is light, good, and lovely. Ask God to speak into it and bring light into that and deliver you.

### Some actions to take following a dream

Write the dream down and ask the Holy Spirit for interpretation.

Notice any emotions or feelings you had in the dream.

Note whether you were in the dream or an observer. This might help you work out who the dream is for.

Find the focus of the dream first and then think about other details.

Every detail in a dream has some significance because God doesn't do anything without a purpose. However, it is possible to get so bogged down in the details we miss the picture God painted with a broad brush. Look at the big picture. Is the Lord saying something about your career, your family, your heart? What is the general theme of the dream? Once you have identified the overarching message, interpreting the details will be easier and not so confusing.

Typically, dreams speak in imagery, metaphors and symbols, a language that initially can feel unfamiliar and sometimes very strange. But the truth is, we use symbols all the time. Symbols are a universal language however, it is important to recognise that in different languages symbols can mean different things, the symbols themselves may not be universal. Another consideration is that images have an emotional context for us personally. The same picture can be positive for one person and negative for another. Colours also often have common symbolism, but could be either positive or negative depending on how they were portrayed in the dream.



There are plenty of books and resources that would suggest you can interpret things with some sort of reference to scripture and while this is a starting point e.g. numbers and colours it is better not to be too dogmatic in using these to rely on the Holy Spirit. For example Jewish hermeneutics and Christian hermeneutics look at numbers slightly differently e.g. the number five to the christian is the number of grace but the number five to a jew is the books of the law - the torah

The bible suggests that we see interpretation of dreams as a gift from God and as we can see in the stories of Daniel and Joseph who both relied on God for interpretation.

Daniel 1:7 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

Gen 40:8 “We both had dreams,” they answered, “but there is no one to interpret them .”Then Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.”

Dan 2: 16 At this, Daniel went into the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.17 Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 18 He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.

Interpretations are a gift of God but we can practise and learn from others with more experience.

### Summary

As with all prophetic interpretations we need to remember that we are individuals with our own history with God and sometimes words, phrases, symbols or pictures have a depth of meaning for us they would not have for others.

Context and culture impact how we interpret.



Don't get locked into one way of interpreting dreams but rely on the Holy Spirit. Ask God for the gift of interpretation.

### Discussion and reflection questions

What was your main takeaway from this teaching?

What are the challenges of interpretation for the prophetic?

What are your personal experiences of dreams and interpretation?

Why do you think God values us having to figure things out? (Proverbs 25:2).

### Activation ideas

Using pictures or objects as a starting point for prophecy can help us think about how we interpret what we see. Either bring a selection of pictures or small objects or get everyone in the group to find something near at hand.

First choose a person and then a picture or object that you are going to use to prophesy to them from.

Start with the question God asked Jeremiah - what do you see? It's what jumps out first and people do see different things - e.g. some notice colours and shapes rather than central objects. Then ask the Holy Spirit what does it mean for the person? What interpretation is God giving you?

Take time for the person being prophesied over to feedback on what was said to them and if appropriate what they saw and heard or what it meant to them.



## Chapter 7

### Character implications for prophetic people.

This chapter looks at ways to ensure that our character development is happening alongside the use of the gift. It considers how prophecy should demonstrate good fruit in the lives of those who give and receive words and what we can do to maintain a godly character and a flow of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It recognises humility and love as key aspects for growth of the prophetic. Being accountable and in community is essential for effective personal growth.

Character and fruit is important to God and should be important to us, Jesus emphasised that under the new covenant, love was the most essential aspect of our relationships with each other. (John 13) Do people receiving our prophetic words feel loved? What fruit are we demonstrating, as this will add credibility to our words? Are there areas of our own lives we need to bring to the Holy Spirit for shaping?

#### Three things we can do to develop fruit in our lives.

##### Be a worshipper

Quite often prophetic contributions come through worship, because it facilitates God encounters. True worship enables the Father's heart to be heard. Worship must be part of our lifestyle, not just an aspect of corporate gatherings.

One example from scripture is in 2 Kings 3:12-19 where Elisha asks to have a harpist to facilitate hearing from God. In v15 it says "while the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha". Worship is the place where the Holy Spirit leads and where God's word is released.



### Intercession/prophetic prayer

Intercessory prayer involves finding out what is on God's heart and responding accordingly. It's sometimes about being patient and allowing the Holy Spirit to draw us in. Words of knowledge can assist in prayer. There is also the value of sharing and praying with others. (1 Cor 13:9 tells us that we see in part. Others can bring breadth to our contribution). Then we can agree together in prayer about God's purposes, as our response to what God has spoken.

- Prayer prepares the ground for seeds.
- It helps foster an intimate relationship with God.
- We pray with authority and faith and this can be released as prophetic decrees and declarations.
- Luke 10:19 tells us God has given his authority, we have the same Holy Spirit within.

When we receive revelation, we can pray it back to God even if there doesn't seem to be an immediate response, (Is 55:11) in waiting we pray in agreement. Prophetic prayer can also be about changing the atmosphere, for example bringing peace/joy to surroundings.

### Knowing the word of God

We need to read, study, meditate and grapple with the Bible as this can bring discipline and challenge. Aligning with scriptural truth is one way in which we judge prophetic words. Also, we need to understand what to do when God illuminates a scripture to us, as it's different from personal reading and study. Ask God which are the important words and how do they open up a revelation for you about the meaning of the word or passage. We become more like Jesus by investing time in these things.



## Character traits in the prophetic

Sometimes those with a recognised prophetic gift can be seen as a bit “weird”. This may be because prophetic people can have a tendency to see life in black and white terms and become impatient. It is often the paradox of living in the in-between era, but striving for the future to be now. As seers, some prophetic people are often sensing what God is bringing for the next season and can get frustrated if others don't seem to have the same passion or see the same things.

It's important to know that as a prophetic person it's not your job to make sure that someone acts on a word. The person receiving the word is the one who does the weighing and judging, not the one giving the word. It's the word that is weighed and judged, not the person.

In heaven you might be known for what you don't say as much as what you say. We need to continually develop our intimacy with God and seek wisdom and discernment. This will shape our character so that we become more like Jesus. We need to know who we are and what we've been called to. We have a responsibility to work on our character and be ready to address issues of self worth and self confidence. To do this we need to use what God has said to us about our identity in him and learn to refuse the lies of the enemy. One way to do this is by taking our thoughts captive (2 Cor 10:5) and noticing distractions. Another is to use prophetic words and scriptural truths over our lives as decrees and declarations, reminding ourselves of who we are in God. Pay attention to the things that distract you and lead you away and recognise the times when the enemy will test you. Resist the temptation to look at self and focus on Jesus. Our job is to submit faithfully, it's always about him, not us.

There are times when our character can be challenged. We may get something wrong, or have a word but don't have a chance to give it. It can appear that the word we gave has not been acted upon. What we choose to believe and how we respond in these times is all about character and is more important to God than the word itself. As our character is moulded we experience more presence, power and authority.



### So what does a prophetic person look like?

Prophetic people are:

1) People of genuine faith who are able to recognise that different levels of faith are required of them. (Abraham and Sarah Genesis 21). God fulfilled his promise but then it got challenged. However, Abraham demonstrated faith by being willing to sacrifice the promise that he had waited for (Hebrews 11:8-12).

2) Pioneers taking new territory. In order to go forward sometimes we need to go back and going back takes character. Elijah was fearing for his life and yet God speaks to him, takes care of him and calls him back into his service (1 Kings 19:1-18). We need to deal with past hurts and offences and the lies of the enemy. We may need to repent and speak blessing.

When Elijah went back God propelled him forward and gave him Elisha. God is often preparing us in the natural to be a pioneer in the spiritual. Elisha understood that in the natural that prophetic is about groundbreaking. It can be tough and lonely because you see things differently. It can be frustrating, but we need to take the tough moments to God and keep going forward, keep pioneering and breaking up the ground.

3) Messengers with a clear word and a pure heart. The job is simple: we speak on behalf of Jesus. No need for elaborate language. We need to live and speak the message of the cross (1 Cor 1:23, 2:2. The crucified, risen and returning Christ).

It's important to stay in close intimate relationship with all the trinity and keep a longing to see the kingdom come to earth. Words originate from a heart of love to accurately reflect the Father's love. We are all called to live a godly life (2 Tim 2:20-26) and our actions should match our words. Therefore, we should see the fruit of the spirit manifest in who we are and what we do (Gal 5:22-23). We need to promote unity and consideration for others and even if we bring difficult words they should convict those receiving them leading to repentance but never bring condemnation (James 3:13-18).



4) A member of a servant community and part of a local church. Prophetic people are not called to be lone rangers or 'elite superstars'. In the picture in Ephesians of the armour of God the one area not protected is your back, and that's because you need to have people behind you watching out for you. We are all called to watch out for others in the family of the church. It can be uncomfortable dealing with character, but God wants us to become a living word.

### Discussion and reflection questions.

What helps you be ready to hear God? (Worship, prayer, walking in nature etc.)

What practical things could you do to create more space in your everyday life to hear God?

What fruit are you producing in others through your prophetic ministry?

What is your key character challenge - who is walking with you in this?

In what ways do you want to sharpen and increase your prophetic gifting?

### Activation ideas

In this prophetic activation we are training ourselves to gain different perspectives in what God is saying by zooming in on details and zooming out to see the big picture (or vice versa).

An example in scripture is found in Ezekiel where as you read you see God kept giving him different perspectives of the temple with different issues at each place. Some of these were close up pictures, others he was further away, but they all related to the same message. Revelations 4 and 5 are another example of this pattern.

So when you pray for somebody in your group you are asking God to give you both the details but also a broader view. Sometimes you might want to move from



one to another until you have all the details you feel the Holy Spirit wants to share. Give both the zoomed out and the zoomed in pictures. Speak to the specifics of what God shows you; why, where, who, how?

Get feedback from those receiving and reflect on how you find the activation - do you find it easier to get the big picture or the detail - practice this type of process when praying for others to see what more God might show you.



## Chapter 8

### Understanding prophetic context: What we can learn from Old Testament prophets about the gift of prophecy and the role of the prophet.

This chapter aims to examine the way the Old Testament prophets operated and consider how the individual circumstances, contexts and personal calls of Old Testament prophets influenced their messages. It will then discuss how we can apply some of these aspects to the gift of prophecy and the role of the prophet. To set the context we will start by looking at the role of prophecy in the Old Testament.

#### How is prophecy understood in the Old Testament?

A basic biblical definition of prophecy, would relate to the communication of a divine message, with the prophet as the human agent that both receives and transmits this message. In our current secular context the word prophecy often has the sense of “a prediction of something to come” with a focus on the future. However, it’s important to note that in the bible there is not a requirement that prophecy be restricted to revelation about the future.

As we read through the books of the prophets we will also see that prophets are noted for their roles in promoting social justice, within their own contemporary societies, sometimes with little concern for future events.

There is a wide range and diversity of those who are called prophets in the Old Testament. If we only look at the books of the writing it down prophets (this includes the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel and the 12 minor prophets) we miss out on many of the other prophets and how the Old Testament itself explains them. There are 100 named prophets and more than 1000 anonymous ones.



For the writers of the Old Testament, Hebrew prophecy is linked to Hebrew history. So it's always helpful to have an understanding of the context when studying or reading the Old Testament. It is useful at times to read the prophets alongside who they were prophesying to and where in Israel and Judah's history this took place (e.g. the books of Kings and Chronicles are a starting place).

### So who were the prophets and what did they do?

Most of what Old Testament prophets were doing was speaking into their current climate and context. They were seers and they would make links with Israel's history and what they knew of God and they would then speak about what God desires to say now. They often recall what has gone before in the nation's history and have been called the 'guardians of the covenant'. Their purpose was to point out where society was failing in meeting God's laws and what was needed for restoration. They did this through calls to repentance from idolatry, combined with the challenge to live justly and righteously by taking care of the orphan widow and alien.

Obviously, some of the prophetic books such as Ezekiel and Daniel have a far more apocalyptic sense to them, but even then the role of futuristic visions had less to do with some kind of mystical prediction and more to do with addressing the then present concerns of the community. The classic prophets sought to maintain the fidelity of the nation's adherence to their covenant with the one true God (Source - BEMA podcast).

“The writing prophets are who we know most well as prophetic figures, they appear through the often poetic and metaphorical language of the text to be passionate people who felt things fiercely” (Abraham Heschel). They saw the worst of society and lamented loud and long, but behind this was love and compassion for mankind.

Richard Rohr talks about how a true prophet lives on the inside/outside. He says:

“None of the prophets held highly established or institutional roles within Israel. They were by definition inside/outside people. We can only criticise



something if we walk the narrow line of being an inside/outside person that the prophets dared to walk. I find so few people can do that. I think only the Spirit can create it. There are a few prophets who can love their church, their country, or their company so much that they see it clearly and deeply and are free to criticise it. But there's a difference when critique comes from anger and rebellion and spite, and when it comes from love. All of our actions and prophetic words must come out of an experience of gratitude for what is given. Only out of the joy and the fullness of what is given can we dare to speak against what is not given.”

### The first prophets

Moses is often seen as the first, and often argued to be the most important prophet in the Pentateuch. This theory is based around the fact he's the one who brought the Law to Israel and on the promise made in Deuteronomy 34:10-11.

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land.

There are others in the Pentateuch, but often they are not referred to as prophets, although they act like them - Noah and Joseph. Some are described as one - Miriam is addressed as a prophetess (Ex15:20 ). They were essentially God's mouthpiece at a time when God needed an intermediary to speak on his behalf. They can also be thought of as ambassadors and mediators. In speaking out the prophet reveals God and the invisible God becomes audible. Exodus 7:1 tells us “And the Lord said to Moses see I will make you as God to Pharaoh and Aaron shall be your prophet.” What Aaron did for Moses, the Old Testament prophets did for God. We can also see Moses acting as a mediator in Deuteronomy 5:5, “I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD.”

The function of the prophet in this sense was to convey to men knowledge regarding the thoughts and ways of God. Some of this was about the future, but they could equally be speaking into the present. It was forth telling and even



foretelling was primarily given as an aid to repentance (Jonah). They were often critics of contemporary life, recalling the nation's story, while picturing the future.

Other scholars argue for Abraham as the first prophet as he was a man who lived his life in pursuit of God's will. He as the model which Israel as a people were supposed to imitate. In Gen 20: he is called a prophet by God.

Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die."

Abraham lived in the light of an unfolding of God's purposes for his life. His life demonstrated a call to social and spiritual reform. God revealed the intentions of his heart to him, with Sodom and Gomorrah as an example (Gen 18:21).

It is apparent the role of the prophet was understood throughout the Bible. The most common word used is that of nabi (meaning to spring up). It is worth noting that even those who we might identify as false prophets are still called nabi. A wide range of people acted in this way, using the prophetic function and acting as God's spokesmen, when the spirit fell many people could prophesy. We see this in the example of Saul - "is Saul among the prophets" (1 Sam 10:11) - when he joined a company of prophets.

Samuel is another biblical figure who is often seen as a founder and father of Hebrew prophecy, and it's interesting that the growth of the prophets took place at about the same time the monarchy was established. In the books of Kings and Chronicles we are given the stories of the good and bad kings and very often alongside them we see tales of true prophets and those who were working for the king. The stories of Elijah and prophets of Baal, Micaiah and king Ahab and the 40 prophets are examples of this mix of good and bad prophetic utterance.



1 Sam 10:2-5 is the first mention of sons of prophets or schools of prophets, but other examples are found - Elisha and the axe head in 2 Kings 6. This suggests that the role of the prophet was not only in isolation.

Prophets would often speak within the context of their tradition, using the rich oral and written poetry and stories which were part of their common heritage. “The prophet is also a poet, preacher, patriot, statesman, social critic, moralist “ (Abraham Heschel).

### Character of prophets

Prophets were not only a mouthpiece for God but they also sensed some part of God’s burden for the people and they made it their own. So it’s helpful to look at how they lived as well as what they said. They are people who felt fiercely and who identified with their people. In some cases they were people who have been struck by the glory and presence of God (Jeremiah 23:18.) They not only hear God’s voice but they feel his heart, which is not always easy. Jeremiah is often known as the weeping prophet.

Some prophets were also ‘signs’ through the actions they undertook at God’s command, Hosea was told to marry a prostitute. Jeremiah buys a field. OT Theologian Von Rad argues:

“a prophecy was an embodied message lived out by a prophet in personal connection with the people. He/she was the prophecy, and the inspired message integrated personal and social struggles that he/she experienced, and that led the prophet to be courageous and speak out, all the while knowing that he/she could be put to the sword.”

### Abraham Heschel suggests:

“that we need to see them as people in the context of a society that cherished three things: wisdom, wealth and might: the prophets frequently derided such infatuation as ludicrous and idolatrous. Their view of God was revolutionary in a



time when gods were personal to tribes and they stated God would even use Israel's enemies as his instrument in history.”

Woven into all the declarations of destruction and the condemnation that noted that Israel had fallen short there is evidence of God's love and compassion for all mankind in what the prophets said. Nearly every prophet brings consolation, promise and the hope of reconciliation. They understand God's heart and purpose and carry the burden of one land and one people, cherished and chosen for the transformation of the world.

### How do we apply Old Testament context to our understanding of the prophetic role.

Let's first remember that not many people today are called to the office of a prophet, most of us are functioning in prophetic gifting whether that is local, extra local or national.

However, there will be prophets in the church who are seeing beyond this and who have a calling into all spheres of society to bring the change and speak truth to power through delivering God's word.

Prophets have a call that will be recognised by others. This will often be bigger than the local church, as with the Old Testament prophets who went everywhere.

Prophets in the Old Testament were also recognised by people who did not follow Yahweh (2 Kings 6 notes: “None of us, my lord the king,” said one of his officers, “but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.”). So prophets today should have a wider audience than local congregations or believers. To demonstrate this range Kris Valloton identifies some of the roles and range the Old Testament prophets had:

#### Kris Valloton talks about a range of prophetic models and roles:

- Leaders (in their own country) : Moses, Samuel , Deborah, David.



- Working with leaders to help govern (other countries) : Daniel and Joseph were covert (like the leaven mentioned in Matthew 13:33) and impacted nations and lives from a place of imprisonment and exile. Loved those they served even though they were sometimes evil empires.
- Adversaries outside the palace : Elijah and Elisha - adversarial relationship with unrighteous kings. Spoke out against injustice.
- Speaking to personal life of king : Nathan and Gad.
- Speaking to people : Hosea and Amos . grassroots - mindset of Israeli people (Northern kingdom).
- Speaking to other nations: Nahum, Jonah (showing God to nations over all the world).
- Multiple roles e.g. Isaiah (national conscience) - but also words to king Ahaz (about his actions re Assyria. Hezekiah about Sennacherib's invasion and then personal insights about his sickness and later his folly in showing off his riches to the Babylonians ). He also wrote down of summaries of teaching that would have been repeated many times. He also speaks about the internal and external affairs of Israel and Judah - chapters 40-66 look forward to the restoration of a chosen people.

It is also notable that signs and wonders often accompanied the prophetic (see Moses, Elijah and Elisha). Prophets today should also walk in the power of God in bringing the kingdom. In order to protect the people the writer(s) of Deuteronomy gave guidelines to try and help work out what was a true prophecy and the punishment for not being right was pretty harsh!

Deut 18:20-22:

But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.



... If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.”

However, this test of fulfilment was also combined with an ethical test; that they follow God and don't try and persuade others to follow another God (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). The ultimate test of a prophet is whether or not he/she leads you to worship God. And so it is in verse 2 that we are told that even though a prophet performs amazing feats, he is a false prophet if he urges men to follow other gods, new gods which they have not known before.

For prophetic people today there is a bit more grace, but words should still be weighed or judged to determine whether they are from God. Just because a prophet has a good track record does not mean everything they say is God's word.

### So what can we apply from our understanding of Old Testament prophets?

Prophecy speaks to possibilities, not inevitabilities (1 Tim 4:14,15). All prophecy is conditional even though conditions may not be explicit.

It is a team ministry. A spirit filled member of the body should function under church leadership (Rom 12:4-6, Eph 4:11,12, 1Cor 12:21-22). Prophecy is only part of the picture.

NT prophecy is revelatory, but revelation doesn't always have to be about the future:

- Jesus with the woman at the well told her about her past and current life. He was immediately recognised as a prophet (John 4:19).
- Agabas exercised the gift of prophecy in a predictive way: he foretold a coming famine and also Paul's coming sufferings (Acts 11:27-28, Acts 21:10-11).



- Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 clearly associate the New Testament prophets with receiving revelation directly from God, but that revelation was not necessarily regarding the future but rather doctrine.
- I Corinthians 12-14 The revelatory character of the gift is clearly present in these passages and in I Corinthians 13:2 the gift of prophecy is explained as "understanding all mysteries and all knowledge."

To be a prophet it still requires that the prophetic person shares God's burden, or his heart over something. You don't have to have a specific burden to speak prophecy when the spirit of prophecy is present, but if you are carrying the prophetic gift or in the role of a prophet one of the key features is that they have the burden of the Lord upon them.

God gives them a taste of what His love is like and how he sees others. This implies closeness to God, and time spent in his presence. It's also character shaping and should produce fruit in the life of the one who prophesies as well as the one who receives a word (Rom 14:7, Gal 5:22-23, Matt 7:15-16).

### Discussion and reflection questions

What is your key takeaway from this teaching?

How much do you think the study of the OT prophets helps to inform prophecy / the role of prophets today?

What do you think are the differences between OT and NT prophecy?

What are the burdens that you feel God has given you and how do they impact your prophecies / life choices etc. (e.g people groups/holiness/the earth/cities /nations etc.)

### Activation

Together we are going to ask God what he is saying over the UK church. Please note the word we are developing is for prayer purposes and to show us what it is



like to work together to identify common features in what God might be saying and exploring ways to discuss and develop.

Look for what is similar in your words, even if the actual language used is different, then do some weighing and judging to decide what as a group you feel is for the current season and what may be the result of personal or cultural lenses we all have. Notice any difference from personal words we give.



## Chapter 9

### Five fold ministry and working with leaders

The aim of this chapter is to explore an understanding of the five fold ministry concept and to see its importance, in order that we can be churches that are bringing heaven to earth. As part of that consideration it's helpful to understand how the prophetic can work in both the local church and a wider network and how prophetic people can work with and relate to leadership teams.

#### The five fold ministry

One of the key passages that we use to think of the five fold ministry is the familiar passage in Ephesians 4:11-13. This version is from N T Wright's translation of the New Testament:

So these were the gifts he gave. Some were to be apostles, others prophets, others evangelists and others pastors and teachers. Their job is to give God's people the equipment they need for their work of service and so to build up the king's body. The purpose of this is that we should all reach unity in our belief and loyalty, and in knowing God's son. Then we shall reach the stature of the mature Man measured by the standards of the king's fullness.

The five fold ministries are gifts that Christ gives to some but not every gift to everybody, and they are established by Jesus. So one goal we need is to focus on is getting each of us to be functioning as God has designed us. We have already discussed how the prophetic can support this by calling out what God has put within people. However, it is the responsibility of our leaders to empower people in the right environments and places and to establish a spiritual and Godly government. Note however that this is without exercising control but rather through humility and servant leadership.

These gifts of people, who are called to the governance of the church, are here to help us all mature and show Jesus to the world. One question that often gets



asked by those who feel as if they are not recognised is what do they do? The answer is simple: we just serve, we walk humbly, we keep close to Jesus and avoid carrying offence.

Later in this chapter we will think about relationships with leaders, which might also be a factor. Sometimes we might need to check in with the Holy Spirit about whether we are in the right place. But let's also remind ourselves that God is more interested in our character and our relationships than our gifts, so he may be shaping us in a different way.

Next we will take a brief look at the significance of each role and why we need all of them:

**Apostles** (literally meaning sent one). Different people describe the role of the apostle slightly differently but basically their functions include aligning earth with heaven. In other words they are often carrying a blueprint for what heaven on earth should look like and how things must change, therefore they bring direction to the church. Signs and wonders should also flow from their ministry as we see Paul in 2 Cor 12:12 talks about the signs of being an apostle:

**I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.**

Apostles are often also seen as builders and fathers who are able to nurture and disciple.

**Prophets** carry an anointing for recognising signs and seeing things in the spirit realm, often they have the ability to see beyond the present and sense the leading of the Spirit. They are able to bring God's perspective and help people to hear God for themselves. Often prophets carry a strong sense of justice about what is right and wrong.

**Evangelists** have a passion for the lost and see the need to serve the great commission. They may be the ones to take the message near and far but equally they should be training others in how to bring the good news to the world.



**Pastors** care for the flock and help them get healed and restored by pointing them to Jesus. They offer advice and counsel to those in need.

**Teachers** carry authority in helping shape the view of the bible and theology. They minister the word of God and remind the church of the priorities and foundations that enable them to be wise in the ways of God.

For many of us we might also have a mix of the gifts at work in our lives. These can be seen in different combinations e.g apostolic /teacher or prophetic /intercessor.

When we look at Paul's teaching on the five fold ministry to the church in Corinth we need to remember it was directed at a church that was disordered and lacked governance to be working effectively. There were divisions and factions in the groups as well as other moral issues that needed to be addressed. As part of his teaching to try to establish a model for the church Paul uses the image of the body in 1 Corinthians 12 and then at the end of the image he introduces the idea of a leadership based on apostles and prophets.

1 Cor 12:27-28:

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.

The message here is clear, everyone is important to the body and there is great diversity. But the aim is to have leaders appointed in a godly order that will allow the flow of resources from heaven to earth. In this passage Paul is saying that God appoints apostles first, then prophets and that the way each of these function together is significant to what focus the church will have.

For example, if a pastor is the main leader and they are put first, the church is likely to develop a 'feed me' mentality because the pastor's gifting is about taking care of the flock. Because they are orientated more to meeting the needs of the



congregation the church has the potential to become more of a service orientated hotel, whereas God's design for the church is that it is an agent of change for the world.

The two models below show the difference in focus depending on who is setting the priority in a church.

## Model 1

An equipping pastoral government	Priorities
Pastoral	Christian church
Teacher	Doctrine
Admin	Stewardship
Evangelistic	Salvation message

## Model 2

Fivefold government	Priorities
Apostles	Heaven on earth
Prophets	Spirit world
Teachers	Understanding the kingdom
Workers of miracles	Supernatural activity

So how do we establish a kingdom culture, as noted above? Firstly it's important to recognise Jesus is building the church and is in control (Matt 16:18 and 1 Cor 3:6). It is helpful when our governmental structures line up with heaven's design - the apostolic gifting needs permission to act and be placed as head of church. The purpose of the church has to be more than customer satisfaction.

The church was never meant just to operate as human bodies in a natural world, the church is meant to be 'naturally supernatural' and to do that it needs to establish the right format. The church should not be about rules and obligations. That is how the Pharisees operated in the time of Jesus and he came to show a better way.



Churches can function with all types of leadership but ideally need to be led by apostles and prophets who bring the supernatural. Everything is always birthed out of love and the more love there is the less rules you need. Apostles and prophets can help establish the environment where the other ministries can function, but they do so with a supernatural mindset.

The five fold gifts are not a corporate ladder to move up through and one should not be valued more than another. They are all needed and it's important to recognise them. The outcome of five fold ministry working together well and in the proper order is freedom, embodied and manifest in Jesus. There is no battle for position in the Godhead, they prefer each other.

Jesus designed for the church was that Paul and the disciples were apostles. Its a model for the church but it can create a mess if not implemented wisely. The apostolic needs to continue and to permeate through all age groups. An apostolic led church with a five fold ministry team should look like Jesus and be full of light. It will be a God centred environment not a Christian centred environment. Not a top down leadership hierarchy but a community reflecting the character of Jesus.

### Working with leaders

As individuals we should ask Jesus who we are and then let our life and our actions speak to us and for us. Sometimes it is helpful to let the Holy Spirit reveal those things that are dormant in us and need developing and training. Reviewing prophetic words we have received may also help us recognise where we have not fully stepped into God's calling and gifting for our lives.

Whether you are a prophet or just someone with an anointed and recognised prophetic gift it's important to belong to a community of people or a team of prophets where we can operate from a foundation of love. We all need those who are like minded around us, so that develop committed authentic and vulnerable relationships. This brings safety, accountability and encouragement in being connected.



It's also important to have a relationship with church leadership - this doesn't necessarily mean we are best buddies (particularly if we are part of a very large church). But we need to demonstrate love, care and concern for them as people first - not just as the roles they represent. We can ask how we can serve and bless them or the church. A good starting point is faithfully praying for our leaders.

However, it's good to recognise that oversight teams in churches also need to create space to hear the prophetic voices, perhaps creating time to meet with the team and hear what God is saying through them. Even if there are external prophetic voices that speak into a church congregation it's vital to also be listening to the internal prophetic people.

Emma Stark quotes Eph 2:19-20 and reminds us that apostles and prophets are foundational to the church that is working to establish a space where revelation is natural. It's not just about one prophet, it's also about building and helping to create a prophetic culture so people expect to hear from God. This is part of the prophetic function, teaching and training others to hear from God.

If you are prophetic and not in leadership it takes time to have a gift recognised, so let your gift be tried and tested. Accurate words will create trust, but remember it doesn't mean you will never be wrong, as we always hear in part. Leadership teams need to weigh and judge all the words given by an individual. Getting a word wrong doesn't make you a false prophet, it just means you are human. Understand what protocols churches have for giving words in meetings or public forums and follow them.

It's important to use and develop any gift God has given you. Spontaneous prophecy within a church meeting may have different types of protocols depending on the size of the church and the way the meeting is structured. But often there is opportunity for ministry to individuals around the meeting. It is important to be wise as you go up to someone. Pay attention to things like praying in pairs, showing awareness of safeguarding principles when it comes to gender and age, working together, keeping words public and not delivered in a corner or separate room.



Then it's great to look for opportunities to take words out into the community. This can be done in many different ways. e.g. blessings for family and destiny words into the community at Christmas shopping evenings, at volunteers Christmas party - prophetic words put in cards with a gift. Summer events in a local park might also provide opportunities.

### Testimony from a Christmas shopping event: Paula

A stall-holder came over to our team who were giving destiny words (asking God what he wants to say to them) and it was obvious she was feeling slightly apprehensive. The more we talked about God's heart for her, the more enthusiastic she became.

In the end I took a risk. I didn't want to say I see an orphan spirit so I asked her a question. "When you were younger did you have issues with your parents?" She said "yes, when I was 14 my mum died in front of me. I tried to save her and I couldn't and I've lived with the guilt of that all my life and my dad didn't cope and I became carer for him and my siblings and that's why I was a bit nervous to come over here."

We were then able to tell her "God wants to say you are not guilty" and to pray over her and advise some counselling. The encounter opened up the opportunity for her to think she could get help.

### Summary of actions you can take:

- Start with prayer.
- Continue to build relationships - open conversation.
- Follow the protocols within your church for submitting words.
- Be open to the Holy Spirit.
- Work as a team and not alone. Prefer each other, it's not about being best or most seen. Words may have a particular slant because of how God has called you, don't compare yourself to others.
- Authority has to be given.
- Share responsibility to equip the church for the works of service.



## Prophetic presbytery

A prophetic presbytery is used in appointing new leaders. Presbytery may be more of an American term, but the principles apply within Pioneer to laying on of hands and bringing revelation and confirmation to those called into leadership and five fold ministry. There are clear examples in the bible.

- Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.(1 Tim 4:14)
- Heb 6:1-2, talks about laying on of hands.
- Acts 13:1-3, (v3) So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

In the Old Testament two groups of people had the responsibility to lay hands on and ordain others for ministry. The Aaronic priests or the prophets. Within Pioneer there is a process of appointing and anointing into leadership with the laying on of hands and speaking words to draw out and encourage leadership in their gifts and callings. The practical outworking of this maybe that the prophetic team have names given to them of those being prayed for. A team of 3 or 4 seasoned prophetic people pray and write down the words and the church will gather to be a witness for what God is saying.

## Discussion and reflection questions

What are your experiences of the 5 fold ministry - both locally and nationally?

Do you know your primary or secondary gifting?

What protocols do you find most helpful when submitting words to leaders?

How are you connected to others?

What can you do to strengthen team connections?



How can you improve relationships with leadership teams and those activated in the prophetic?

### Activation

Developing directional words - where possible you can give names ahead of time and individuals bring a prepared word to share which they can then weigh and judge.

Alternatively you can think about developing the seer anointing by asking everyone to ask God for a word or a picture.



## Chapter 10

### Developing prophetic community and a prophetic culture.

This chapter aims to draw together some of the principles we have explored throughout the course so far and determine some values a prophetic community should adhere to. It will also provide practical examples of how a prophetic community can serve the local church in helping to establish a prophetic culture based in a leadership mandate. Finally it will also consider how a prophetic community can take the gift into other areas outside of church.

**“The word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood”  
John 1 The Message.**

A prophetic community can be a number of different things, but ultimately its purpose has to be that it's a group of people who are being transformed by the Holy Spirit and then transforming the communities in which they live. The prophetic in this context is about revealing the nature, character and heart of God in both words and actions.

Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians to “desire spiritual gifts but especially that you may prophesy”, suggests the value of calling together people who have a recognised gift that they are hungry to grow and develop. This suggests a starting place for establishing a prophetic community.

This community might be within a local church or from several churches in a region, but it should come under the authority of church leadership rather than be an independent body. As we previously learned about the five fold ministry; there needs to be mutuality and accountability in how these work.

A prophetic community can be part of a strategic aim to establish a prophetic culture in the local church as it should function both to support the use of the gift, but also in encouraging others to explore the gift and go deeper in their experience



and develop a wider sphere of influence. Part of a vision for a prophetic community might therefore include the following aims:

- The training and equipping of individuals in their gift development.
- Supporting the whole church in understanding how to hear from God.
- The release of the word of God through prophetic ministry in to a range of places and spaces as God gives a mandate for.

Mistakes in the prophetic come from immature or unbalanced understanding of what the prophetic is. There's a need to deal with integrity issues e.g. independent and self proclaimed prophets (remember the three levels of the prophetic from an earlier session).

Three key scriptures in how we handle prophetic are:

- 1 Tim 4:14 "Don't neglect the gift given to you"
- 1 Thess 5:19 "Don't treat the prophetic with contempt"
- 2 Tim 1:6 "kindle afresh"

Within our churches the prophetic needs to be explored in an orderly way by creating a safe environment for people to learn to hear from God. We need to be teaching people how to hear for themselves, as we don't want to create a culture where people think the only way to hear God is from somebody else.

However, it's also useful to provide opportunities to work in small groups where we can work through material together, practice and prophesy over each other and give opportunities for judging words and giving feedback. This helps to identify those who are moving in a gift rather than just under the spirit of prophecy.

I

t is also helpful for those with an identified gift to meet together under the direction of the leadership to develop teams that can support and function within a church environment.



Some of the principles and values that would need to be established in this group are what we can call guardrails to the prophetic. It is useful to explore and revisit these regularly to ensure as a community the group stays on track.

### Guardrails to the prophetic

If we value the prophetic, then we have to value people.

- 1 Cor.13 we can express prophecy, but if we do not have love we are nothing.
- Genesis 1:26 Every single person that you encounter was created in the image of God. When we prophesy over people we are speaking to or ministering over the image of God.
- James 3:9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness
- It's unbelief to look at someone and not believe they are made in God's likeness.
- God is always speaking to us, we just have to learn how to hear his voice.
  - Look at Samuel in the Old Testament
  - God speaks through different types of communication
- Smile, wave, music, phrase, wink, scents, visual, verbal, non-verbal
- Have you ever been in the grocery store and felt like you needed to pray for someone?
- The ways that one person hears the voice and prophecies may not be the same way as you.
- Nature: Psalms 19:1 "the heavens declare the Glory of God, the skies proclaim his goodness.
- Open Vision – Something playing out in front of you like a picture or photograph, Peter on the rooftop praying and he has the open vision.
- Scripture comes back to you in a moment when praying or talking to someone.



## The prophetic will always be based in Love

- 1 Cor 14:1 Follow the way of Love and eagerly desire the Gifts of the spirit, especially prophecy.
- INTIMACY with God is the foundation to prophetic ministry.
- It's in love with him we discern and discover his voice. This was demonstrated in Jesus's relationship with the Father and Moses who was a friend of God.
- We get to know the heart of the father. We communicate not only his intentions but his motivation and expression of his love.
- Love impacts what I say and how I say it.

## Prophetic will be Identity Sourced

- We prophesy from a place of love and acceptance and not for it.
- I know that I am a son and daughter, I'm representing my father.
- Able to see, speak and cheer without ever feeling less than
- Understand the weight your words carry as an ambassador.

## Prophetic - we have to value RISK

- Prov. 14:14 Where there are no oxen the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox come abundant harvest.
- Honour Faith and Obedience.
- Create safe spaces and places to practice and be in prophetic environments
- Own our mistakes.

## Value team and feedback

- Have to be able to receive feedback as we grow. We can have critical analysis without a critical spirit. Be teachable.
- Accountability is a vital key to developing prophetic ministry with increasing accuracy, integrity, and wisdom and is a safety net to protect us from pitfalls.



- We don't prophesy in dark corners.

### Value the scriptures

- When we know what he's said we can hear what he's saying.
- Get to know the author – understand if it matches the Father that Jesus presented to us.
- Studying the scriptures helps us to grow personally and in our gifts and ministries.
- Being in close proximity to the Father, allows us to hear his voice.

### A Father Presenting Gift

- John 14:9-11 Jesus was always showing us the Father.
- Prophecy declares the Father's mind, not just what he's saying but who he is.
- His nature is Love. Unconditional love.
- Love isn't just an emotion we feel, it comes when we see people like the Father does.
- Did the person feel love by the Father when it's over?

### It's for everyone everywhere

- Not to be kept within four walls
- Jesus modelled the prophetic everywhere he went and with everyone. His encounters were in public places, around tables, market places.
- Prophecy is KINGDOM Releasing because it's the power of God to create and bring LIFE.
- Gifts aren't meant for us, they are to be given away.

### Be normal – Don't BE WEIRD

- Lose the Christianese language.
- Mark 12:37.....The crowd enjoyed listening to him.
- Use phrases like: I feel like I heard, I sensed that. I'm Learning and practicing to hear from God, Can I pray with you (NOT FOR YOU).



- Is this actually something Jesus would say or how would he say it?
- Only say what he says, resist the urge to say more or interpret.

### Practical ways a prophetic community might function

#### David's example

Teams operate to serve the local body and the community beyond. Giving people opportunities within the local church context gives a forum for seeing how they are growing in both gift and character and therefore how safe it is to take them into other settings and give wider opportunities. The further you minister from the church the more trusted you are. It's also important for the leaders to see how individuals are responding and submitting, as we already explored the importance of character in using the gift as critical for growth.

Start by inviting people into a small group book study that runs for 8 -10 weeks. Looking at a prophetic book. Work through within this safe space with plenty of opportunities to practice, weigh and judge words and share feedback. Those who are going get invited to a prophetic team meeting which happens once a month. This gives opportunities for developing those protocols and values already discussed. From here individuals can take part in ministry within the church.

1) Prophetic nights at church where there is an opportunity to minister to teams who serve the church as teams judging words and getting feedback.

2) Affirmation Sundays - where new members are prayed for by two or three people, this is sometimes their first experience of the prophetic. Feedback is given in how it was delivered and a member of the team sits with those who have received the word and goes through it with them

3) Worship night - provide a prophetic team to give context for what God is doing. The purpose of those training others is to try and provide as many different opportunities as possible.



Develop a prophetic culture in the local church and then develop reach into locality - schools - education system, city to nation. Everyone needs to have life spoken into them. We don't want to see Old Testament style gloom and doom judgment - that is not how we see God speaking through Jesus. Ezekiel 37 - "speak life". What you see and what you speak may be two different things. It's a decision you make to put courage into a situation. We want to speak life into the nation.

Prophecy then becomes normal and part of everyday life. Encourage one another.

### Paula's example

We are intentional in creating space for those in the church to prophecy. We would say be the best encourager you can be. On a Sunday morning, we will often say to find someone you can encourage or prophecy over. Often you hear people who would not say they can prophecy move from giving their own encouragement to sharing what God says over the person just as they step out to encourage.

We also write prophetic words over the children that come into our reception class at our school. These words are then kept and given to the family when the child leaves in year six.

### Joy's example

We have been in a prophetic community for about 7 years. Since lockdown we meet monthly on zoom and also provide prophetic appointments via zoom. In doing so we have prayed for many individuals across the nation and into other countries. As a group we have prepared words for as requested by leadership e.g. for baptisms and leadership training events. We have prayed for local businesses and charities and sent words to them. We have annually prepared words for the youth in a local anglican church and provided training on helping them hear from God. Currently we are creating a local regional Pioneer hub to support the development of a prophetic culture across the four congregations represented. We are looking at how to support events each other are holding by bringing specific prophetic words. we are also developing mutual understanding of how each local congregation operates and ways we can share and encourage each other.



## Discussion and reflection questions

- What ways if any do you work on growing the Prophetic in your local church?
- Have you ever led Prophetic Small Groups? What do you think is required to do this?
- What are some things, once a local Prophetic Team is established, that you can do to :
  - Minister to the local church?
  - Minister prophetically to your city?
  - Ways you can bless people beyond the local church?
- What might be required to bring new people into the team when it comes to prophetic ministry?

## Activation

Prophecy over a church - work together to develop a crafted word for a church.



## Book & resource recommendations.

Chapter 1 Understanding the difference between the spirit of prophecy, the gift of prophecy and the role of the prophet

Richard Roberts: Redeeming prophecy: A practical Guide to Authentic prophetic Ministry ( a useful book from a British perspective).

Shawn Boltz: Translating God

Chapter 2 Hearing from God

Shawn Boltz: Modern Prophets: a toolkit for everyone on hearing God's voice

Wayne Drain: He Still Speaks

Lectio/ ignation prayer.

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-course/>

Chapter 3 Protocols for prophecy

Graham Cooke: The exercise of prophecy.

Chapter 4 Effective response to prophecy

Chapter 5 Developing your gift of prophecy

Emma Stark: Prophetic Warrior

Chapter 6 Interpretation of prophecy

John Paul Jackson on dreams - Youtube

Chapter 7 Character and gift

Kris Vallotton: Spiritual Intelligence - the art of thinking like God

Chapter 8 Old Testament context



Abraham Heschel: The prophets. (This is a classic theological book that came out of a PHD thesis so is academic in format ).

Christine Westhoff: Reframing the prophetic : A biblical Observation of an Ancient Gift. (a recent release comprising the material of a course Christine developed.)

Bible project:

[https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-prophets/Chapter 9 Five fold gift and leadership](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-prophets/Chapter%209%20Five%20fold%20gift%20and%20leadership)

Chapter 9 Five Fold and working with leaders

Kris Vallotton: School of the prophets: Advanced training for prophetic ministry

Chapter 10 Developing a prophetic culture

Phil Wilthew: Developing prophetic culture: Building healthy churches that hear Jesus clearly

Joy Chalke: Everybody can play: Encouraging spiritual gifts in children