

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

1 Corinthians 12:10

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1 Corinthians 12 once more. We're looking at the gifts the Spirit has given to the church. We began by looking at the gifts of wisdom and knowledge and then the gifts of faith and healings and miracles. Today the sixth gift in the list: the gift of prophecy. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...to another prophecy" (1 Corinthians 12:7,10).

As we look at the gift of prophecy, perhaps if I ask you to identify the prophets that you know, you might draw a blank. I'm convinced that this is one of the gifts of the Spirit that is frequently in operation in the body of Christ but which is most often not recognized as a gift functioning. We perhaps attach other names to it. Because we have ideas of what is involved in being a prophet or exercising the gift of prophecy. I hope that when we come to the end of the message today you'll be able to say, "Yes, I recognize that the gift of prophecy has functioned as a gift toward me," and maybe you'll be able to say, "I have recognized that the gift of prophecy is something which has already begun in me."

The gift of prophecy perhaps, of all the nine gifts that are given in 1 Corinthians 12, is the one that is to have the greatest dispersal in the body of Christ. It's the one that more people should have perhaps than any other gift. We know, from the Old Testament, that this was the prayer of Moses and the promise of the prophets, that the Spirit of prophecy would be extensively manifest in God's people. Moses, for example, when he was communicating with the Lord on the mountain in Numbers 11:24-39, some people bring him word that out in the camp there are two people that are prophesying that are not part of the group of seventy elders, to whom has been

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given supposedly the exclusive privilege of speaking on behalf of God. They come to stop them from speaking. Moses' response, in Numbers 11:29, is this: "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" One can very easily see why Moses felt this way, because he was in a situation where people were looking to him for leadership and direction, and were in need of teaching. He was longing for a greater spirit of understanding God's ways and God's acts among His own people, so there would be less strain perhaps on his own shoulders and demand on his own time. Oh, that the Spirit of the Lord would be widely dispersed among God's own people!

The prophet Joel prophesied, and Peter picks this up on the Day of Pentecost, when he indicates that in the New Testament age, even the teenagers and the hired help were to have the gift of prophecy "On that day," Joel says, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all people and your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Not only that, but your handmaidens and your man-servants shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28–29). So, teenagers and people who work at minimum wage and below—you don't have to have a degree to prophesy. You don't have to have a college education. You don't have to be at some point in the economic social ladder to prophesy. But rather, even the teenagers, people who haven't had a great deal of experience in the things of God yet, but whose hearts may be wide open to God, are in the age of the Spirit to prophesy.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:1, the beginning of the chapter and later at the end, verse 39, to make love our aim, "and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy...Be eager to prophesy" (NIV). It's very fascinating. He never says, "Earnestly desire the gift of faith" or "the gift of healings," although we certainly can do that. But he puts a strong emphasis on desiring to prophesy. If prophecy is to be widely dispersed throughout the body and it's available to anyone within the body, regardless of what external qualifications they may bear, then

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specifically what is the gift of prophecy and how does it function and how may we begin to put it in operation in our life?

I. In looking at the gift of prophecy, I think it might be important for a moment to talk about what it is not.

That will clear up some of the stereotypes that exist about prophecy.

A. To be a prophet is not to speak from a trance. There are some people who believe that when you speak under the anointing of the Spirit, you must be trance-like. This was, by the way, the case with the heathen prophets. Like the oracle at Delphi, who needed to go into a trance to speak, but Paul tells the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 14:32, “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” One of the things about prophecy as a spiritual gift is that it does not require an abnormal tone of voice. You do not have to put on pulpit lingo. You do not have to use King James English. You do not need to go into a trance to prophesy.

B. Another thing that prophesying is not is fortunetelling. I would say that this is especially important when some might want to use the gift of prophecy to be almost like at carnivals where people are going to tell your future or something. Fortunetelling, whether it occurs at church auspices or carnival auspices, is all ruled out by the Scripture. To prophesy is not to simply say, “I know what you’re going to be doing five years from now,” or, “I know who you’re going to marry,” or the like.

C. Prophecy, on the negative side, is not being a great moral or political leader. Sometimes, a person like Gandhi will emerge, or people on the American scene, and people will say that they’re prophetic. But it’s not simply a great moral or political leader.

D. Prophecy is not engaging in end-time speculation. Most of the idea of prophecy in evangelical circles today is writing a book that tells you when the Lord is going to come or when the

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tribulation is going to start or when the countdown on the last generation began. That kind of thing. That's not really prophecy, either. Often it's amazing speculation.

E. Prophecy is not bringing revelation that exceeds or contradicts Scripture. Of course, we think of references like 1 Corinthians 14:37–38, where Paul puts the prophets at Corinth under obligation, that if they do not accept binding commands that he's giving as an apostle, they're not to be recognized as a prophet. They must come under authority of Scripture. Paul further tells us, in Galatians 1:8, that if there is a word that comes, even if it's from an angel of light, and it is contrary to what is in the Scripture, what God has declared in Christ, then it is not to be taken. There are many examples in modern religions and cults in Christianity where persons have exceeded the Scripture and tried to bring revelation that contradicts or exceeds the Scripture. All these are not prophets.

II. What is a prophet?

A prophet in Scripture is basically two kinds of things.

A. A prophet is one who sees. And especially one who sees for God. To get this idea of a prophet is one who sees, I would go back to 1 Samuel 9:9, where the Scripture says "Formerly in Israel when a man went to inquire of God he said, 'Come let us go and see a seer.'" Samuel is saying that in the old days, they used to call them "seers," but now they call them prophets. As a "seer" or as "one who sees for God," the prophet is in the position of forth-telling and foretelling. There's a wide range of seeing in the prophet, all the way from intuition to prediction. If it is prediction, it is always related to some more spiritual purpose.

Let me give you an example of the gift of prophecy functioning simply as sharp intuition or observation. Paul is talking about how non-Christians on the Isle of Crete exercise prophetic insight. He says, "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil

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beasts, lazy gluttons.’ Their testimony is true” (Titus 1:12–13). What Paul does here is very interesting in defining the function of a prophet. A prophet is to see through all the veneer, all the excuses, and simply be able to penetrate what the true essence of character is. Paul says that prophecy, as it exists in the pagans in Crete, is that one of their own prophets was truly a prophet because he saw their true character. There were a lot of problems in the church at Crete and that’s why Paul said, “You’ve not only got normal problems but you’ve got cultural problems and Cretans by nature are liars, evil beasts and gluttons.” Insight.

By the way, if a prophet can have negative insight, I would think that a prophet could have positive insight into things, as well. A prophet may simply have the ability to sense the importance of a moment and to see the significance in it, that other people around are not able to see.

Anna is such an example, an eighty-four-year-old widow, in the Gospel of Luke, who is in the temple. When Jesus is brought by His parents into the temple, she comes up at that very hour and gives thanks to God and speaks of Him to all who are looking for the redemption of Israel.

What’s another baby in the temple? Babies come into the temple all the time. But this Anna, who is a prophetess, sees in this one baby that comes something so extraordinarily unique that in this baby is the redemption of Israel. A prophet many times, in exercising the gift of prophecy, has the ability to see on a level that another person cannot. And, of course, prophecy at times can be predictive. Prophets, because they are ones who see for God, are often in the exercise of prophecy out in front of people. They’re out in front to see consequences, out in front to see trends, out in front in terms of verbal leadership—plotting forth a direction. So a prophet is one who sees.

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B. But a prophet is also one who speaks, and especially one who speaks for God. We get the idea of what a prophet does when Moses is told to appoint Aaron as his spokesman. The Lord tells Moses that Aaron is going to be his prophet. That the words that Moses would speak, instead of Moses speaking them, Aaron would speak them. It's important that there be persons who speak for the Lord in the body of Christ, because the Lord intensely desires to speak for His people. He does not use the technique of materializing His voice in the room. We don't have a point in the service where all of a sudden we're all quiet and then there's sort of a megaphone that goes on and the Lord's voice comes booming through. Rather, we believe that the Lord speaks as He impresses the hearts of His people. And the Lord intensely desires to speak to His people. This should not surprise us, given the character of the God we serve.

He is described to us, for example, in Scripture as the husband of His people. What does a husband want to do? A husband wants to communicate with his wife, with his family. The Lord is given as the model of a father. And what does a father want to do? A father wants to communicate, to speak. Relationships get injured when we do not speak. We need a God who speaks to us when our relationships are injured or impaired. Someone who gets through our confusion and brings to us a word, that brings us out of that confusion or anger or alienation.

I think we all know what it is like in human relationships to go through a time when we're not speaking to someone. I recall when we were first married—we had our first big argument. It was like most arguments, something really minor that kicked it off. But neither of us would give in. So because we were steadfast in our viewpoint, we just decided to stop talking. You can stop talking for a day or two, but when it gets to be a week, it gets pretty bad. We were stubborn enough, till finally the time came when we absolutely felt so low, the need for communication was so strong, we broke out of our stubbornness and began communicating and talking to one

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another again. It's wonderful to be able to talk and communicate when you've gone through a hurtful situation. We need to keep the communication lines open.

I think God feels that way many times about us. Maybe there's been a long period of time we haven't spoken to God. Or there are some things in our relationship with God that are not what we would desire them to be, let alone what God would desire them to be. What is God attempting to do all during that time? He's trying to break through to us, speak to us. He will do this in a church context. Or it may simply involve a time when we're sharing with members of the family, and through that member, the Lord will really speak through the gift of prophecy and tell us of the Lord's care and desire and love for us and also His discipline for us.

The prophet speaks for the Lord and is acutely aware of the reality for the Lord's immediate presence. That's why, in the gift of prophecy, the person might say, "Thus says the Lord." Or "I, the Lord thy God, say to thee." Or as John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). A consciousness that this is what the Lord wants to say.

I think it's really crucial, in human speech, that in order to function in the gift of prophecy, which isn't anything really mysterious, but it's simply speaking the mind and heart of the Lord into situations in which we consciously take moments in the midst of our communication to say, "What would the Lord want said here?" Rather than simply, "What do I want to say?" I believe, if you will ask yourself that kind of question as you communicate, whether it's in small interpersonal communications or a large context such as this, "What would the Lord want said?" That is kind of an initiation, a kick off, to the gift of prophecy to really begin to work.

III. Let's look for a moment at what purposes prophecy serves.

For believers, prophecy basically is a gift that serves three functions. It builds up, it encourages and it consoles.

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A. It builds up. In 1 Corinthians 14:3, Paul specifically indicates in that moment that he who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening. Or the word literally is “up-building” or “edification.” The prophet has an “edifice complex.” He wants to build up. Sometimes, we think of a prophet only in a negative sense, that they want to tear down. But not so. The first function of the prophet is to build up. There are numerous occasions in Acts where the gift of prophecy functions and it serves to build up the church. We might expect, for example, when the gift of prophecy functions, these manifestations in building up:

In Acts 11:27–28, it served to stimulate concern on the part of one body in the church for another part of the body. And to stimulate that concern by initiating support.

The gift of prophecy thrusts the church into missionary expansion, in Acts 13:1–2. As the prophets in Antioch were meeting, the Spirit said, “Separate for me Paul and Barnabas to the ministry to which I have called them.” That was no doubt a word of prophecy coming and saying, “Now is the time to undergo expansion.”

I think again if you think for a moment about what I said about prophets being out in front, the Lord is out in front in his desire to communicate to the world, it’s natural that through prophecy the church should be provoked as a whole to begin to reach and extend the borders of its tent.

The gift of prophecy will serve to strengthen or up-build the church in a time of divisiveness—in Acts 15:32, after a wrenching experience in the Early Church where they disagreed on theology, the prophets come with a ministry of encouragement and strength to the brethren who had been most offended and wounded by the arguments.

Prophecies imparted a profound sense of spiritual authority to newly baptized believers. We, in the church today, frequently have the idea that after you’re saved, then you go through a long, long time before you ever are in a position to communicate with anyone about the Lord, other

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than just a simple testimony. There is a sense that obviously time is needed for a person to begin to take in the Word of the Lord before they're put in places of responsibility. But it's striking that at Ephesus, when there were twelve people that were baptized in the Spirit and they were brand new converts, freshly baptized, immediately they begin to prophesy. I don't know that they said anything profound, like Isaiah would have said, but I think their prophecy on that occasion may have gone something like this, "The Lord is here! The Lord has forgiven us of our sins! The Lord has healed our hearts. The Lord has given us His power and wants us to go forth in His might."

All those are simple kinds of statements, but it's what I would expect in budding young prophets. A sense, as never before, that the Lord is with us. Those twelve people had been in that town for years, and not influenced anyone, but they get filled with the Spirit and begin to prophesy, to speak out the Word of the Lord, and an explosion happens. There was a profound sense of spiritual authority to newly baptized believers. Unlearned and outnumbered. But prophecy is manifested among them and the situation quickly changes.

The gift of prophecy sensitized the church to the coming of false teachers and the emergence of defectors. That's another way of up-building (Acts 20:29).

And it provided assurance that the Lord is aware of our deep valleys of trial. The ministry of prophecy to Paul, as he's on the way to Jerusalem and on the way to a certain imprisonment there, was great assurance that the Lord was with him in that hour of trial.

Prophecy, in these ways and other ways as well, is given to build up people in their faith.

B. Prophecy is also given to encourage. That's another statement that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 14:3—"to encourage." One of the great examples of prophecy as encouragement in Scripture is the Book of Revelation, which was written to the Early Church that was facing

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severe persecution. They no doubt were those in the little churches of Asia Minor who were wondering, “Is the Lord with us?” Why is all this persecution breaking against us now? But the Word of the Lord came through the New Testament prophet apostle, John, saying that the Lord was standing in the middle of His church and that the Lord had all power and authority. That tremendous word of prophecy encouraged the church in a very difficult day.

Frequently, prophecy is exercised in our midst simply as a word of encouragement to us when we are down.

C. And prophecy also functions to console, and here we get the idea of someone who is more than simply discouraged, but who is destitute and deeply despondent. Prophecy therefore comes to remind us that in the heartbreaks of life, Jesus is there. Prophecy is a verbal gift of the Lord to the tears that are in the Christian body or in the world. That when there is a wrenching in apart of the family, or when there is the terribleness of a terminal illness, or when there is the loss of a family member or friend, in those moments, the Word of God should be richly there and the Word of God should come to persons who are in need of being consoled, and it should come to them mightily and freshly.

You will find, by the way, that when you come to a moment when you are really on the downside, that inevitably the Lord will give you a Scripture in that process that will sustain you through it. There are persons right now in the congregation who are going through some very deep things and the Lord has sent someone their way, or in some cases, they’ve discovered on their own a Scripture that is powerfully helping them get through what they’re going through now. That’s the gift of prophecy functioning through someone coming and giving us the Word of the Lord, consoling us in our need.

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Have you ever been encouraged by someone bringing you this word, “But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior’” (Isaiah 43:1-3, NIV). Prophecy as consolation leads us to rest in Jesus. It leads us into the deep peace of God.

So prophecy is basically a gift functioning in the Christian community as speech. The gift of speech, uttered by the Spirit. That is, the Spirit impresses us to speak it. Basically, it is speech which builds up. It is speech which encourages. And it is speech which consoles. And we don’t normally think of it as prophecy, because we’re looking for something more mysterious to be tagged as prophecy. But when speech, under the impression of the Spirit, functions by fulfilling these purposes, the gift of prophecy is working.

As prophecy applied to unbelievers, 1 Corinthians 14:24–25 gives us two functions of prophecy in regard to unbelievers.

Prophecy brings conviction and also prophecy will bring conversion. That is, in a meeting when the prophets are speaking and an unbeliever is coming in and the prophet is getting up, talking about the presence of the Lord, and that prophet is strengthening other people in the body by his application of Scripture, then inevitably there will come a sense to unbelievers—as they are gathered—“Truly the Lord is in this place.” Paul says that then this will make the unbeliever thirsty and it will make the unbeliever want to come to the Lord. It will bring conviction and conversion.

IV. How is the gift of prophecy developed?

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Paul tells the Thessalonians not to despise prophesying. I think it's significant that an apostle would need to tell a church not to despise prophesying. I think the reason why it was necessary was probably that there were people who, when they prophesied in the Christian congregation, weren't all that profound. When a person exercises a gift for the first time, it may not be the most adept or affluent in its manifestation, and therefore, this might lead to it being despised. But Paul has this practical recognition that the gifts are developmental, that they should not be despised when they are initially in use. That one of the things that we short-change ourselves in is when we gather together for Christian worship and we wait until there's someone who is really professional and really has it together to speak.

I think those persons ought to be allowed to share. But I think, as well, that each person in the body ought to feel a sense that, whenever we gather for worship, the Spirit can speak to anyone. We ought not to despise prophesying, whether it's in a large group like this or whether it's in a small home group, or even the family altar—to believe that one of the children may speak the Word of the Lord in that situation to strengthen or encourage or console.

Paul's statement not to despise prophesying suggests that the Early Church had many budding prophets who were developing.

How do you develop the gift of prophecy? Let me give some steps.

A. One is: Be a disciple of Jesus. If you're going to see for the Lord and speak for the Lord, it's important to know the Lord. Prophecy as a gift flows most effectively through a strong and consistent Christian life. It is walk before talk. For the prophet, prayer is vital. The teacher, perhaps, should spend a great deal of time in study. The prophet draws more of his message from his interaction with the Scripture and with prayer. The prophet sees what part of the Word of

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God is especially applicable to that situation. Be a disciple of Jesus. Be in love with Jesus.

Follow Jesus. Seek His character to be engrafted into your life. Be His person.

B. Then, secondly, be alert to occasions when the gift of prophecy should function. Be alert.

When are those occasions? When something needs to be built up. When someone needs to be encouraged or strengthened. When someone is really down and needs to be consoled and loved.

Be alert to those occasions. I try, for example, to be alert to special sort of moments of pause or space in a worship service, when the Spirit at that point should be given the freedom to break forth. I especially feel that communion almost inevitably provides that kind of opportunity, because we're worshipping, we're quiet, we're waiting before the Lord. Often, it is a time—you'll find—when the Lord wants to break through and speak.

Many times we're in such a rush to go on with things that we may not give the Lord sufficient time. If He wanted to speak, He couldn't because we're too jammed-in with what's on the agenda. But we should be alert to occasions when the gift of prophecy should function.

Especially alert when we meet as a whole body too. What might the Lord want to say through me today, to this whole people? What would be the appropriate occasion He would seek?

Be alert to occasions. It may be that you would never exercise the gift of prophecy in a larger context such as this. But again, prophecy isn't something that just happens in the confines of a sanctuary. The gift of prophecy can happen within a family situation. It can happen in a home or small group setting. And it does.

C. Another key step to prophesying is to simply study God's Word. Prophets are alert to what God is saying. So, a knowledge of God's Word is extremely helpful. Continue to study God's Word to help you be receptive when the Lord, in His time, brings the Word that He wants to you. One of the reasons I wanted to avoid the pastorate is that I was petrified at presiding at funerals.

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Death scared me and death still does something to us all. We never like to face death. I didn't really know how I could ever conduct a funeral service. I just thought I would absolutely fall apart; I would not be able to hold my emotions together or anything else. I'd been in the church about a year and had not had a funeral. Then I was asked to visit a man in the hospital who was in the final stages of cancer. I'd never met the man before. I'd been told that he had been a very hard-bitten man in his life, that he had cursed God and man. And that his family relationships were very difficult and strained. The day I walked into his room at the hospital, he was a man who could barely speak, because of what the cancer had done to him. I remember the time with him as one in which he wept the whole time. I didn't see a hardened man at all. I saw a man who had been broken, who had become repentant toward God, who had asked for forgiveness and had received forgiveness. I had the joy of praying with him. But I remember that all he did during that time was weep. A few days later, he died. I was asked to do the funeral. I had never done a funeral. I said, "Lord, finally! This is the test. I don't know how to do a funeral. I'm frightened to death. What will I even say?" As I was driving my car, thinking about this and praying about it, the Lord put in my mind a Scripture—a Scripture that I couldn't even remember where it was. I just knew that I had read it. It wasn't a Scripture I normally reflected on or thought about. It was this Scripture. "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his trouble." That, over and over again, came to my mind—"this poor man cried out. The Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his trouble" (Psalm 34:6).

We had a memorial service that was a ministry to people. All I did was take that one little verse of Scripture and, with the gift of prophecy in operation, I believe, console those who were there.

"This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his trouble."

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How was I able to exercise the gift of prophecy? It was because at some point I was reading through the psalms and came across that phrase. I obviously received it on a subliminal level. That often happens to us when we read the Word of God. We don't take it in on the conscious level. It was there on the subliminal level. I never consciously memorized that Scripture in my life. But when I needed it, and the gift of prophecy was needed, it was there. God had brought the Scripture to my mind. He couldn't have brought the Scripture to my mind if, at some point, I hadn't been reading through the Psalms and it was there. So be alive in the Word of God. The Spirit, in the moment you need, will quicken some part of God's Word to you.

D. I think another key thing in prophesying is desiring to prophesy, desiring to speak God's Word. This, I've tried to say, is true of all the gifts.

E. A final step in prophesying is to obey the impulse of the Spirit and exercise faith when the word of prophecy comes to you. Believe that the Lord is speaking to you. I know this is a difficult thing. If you've never spoken on behalf of the Lord consciously before, one of the things you'll find is that there's a deep strong impression in your spirit to say something. Many times, we'll fight it and say, "This is really me and I don't want to stand up and make a fool out of myself." But if the impression keeps coming stronger and stronger, you need to share that. Take the faith and obey that impulse. Nine chances out of ten, maybe ninety-nine out of a hundred, that is indeed the Spirit speaking through you and wanting what is in you to be shared with people, whether it's a small group or a large group. Obey that impulse that comes to you while you're in prayer, waiting upon the Lord. If you deny that impulse, then you'll never really get a chance to exercise the gift of prophecy, because part of exercising prophecy—like all the gifts—is in accordance with your faith. It's stepping out in faith.

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Again, I share an instance from my own experience—the first time I remember prophesying.

This was a dramatic experience. I was in a service. There was an evangelistic meeting going on in a church. I was in seminary. The Spirit of the Lord came strongly upon me to give a very stern warning to repent or face eternal loss. I'm soft by nature. I don't spend a lot of time threatening people. There are some people to whom God has given a sharp-edged ministry. Mine is more conciliatory, I suppose. This message just kept welling up within me and I kept choking it off saying, "I don't want to say that!" The impulse was stronger and stronger.

I fought that impulse for about an hour. Finally, I gave in. When I gave in, what happened was, I shouted the prophecy. It broke every rule I said earlier, that a prophet can speak in a normal tone of voice. I wouldn't even try to imitate the tone of voice I spoke in—but "scream" would probably be a better word than "shout." I said things to the effect that, if that person didn't repent, they were facing hell. I literally did not know who it was. I just felt this overwhelming urge. I thought to myself, when I finished, "You have made a first-class fool out of yourself. You are a seminary student. You should have more decorum. You are a dummy! You are emotionally unstable!"

One of the things about gifts is that sometimes you don't see immediate results. That meeting ended and nobody jumped out of their seat and ran down to the altar. Everybody sort of heard it and went on.

A week later, a young man in the congregation who had just recently gotten out of the service, had been very away from the Lord while he was in the service. He'd gotten out of the service and with the money he had saved up, and just gotten a Corvette Stingray. This was in the early sixties. The word of prophecy so spoke to him that evening that he hid it from everyone. He got out of the church, went to the parking lot, got in his Stingray, and drove that thing ten miles an

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hour down the right hand side of the street, as close to the curb as possible, because he knew that message was for him. He was afraid, since he hadn't given his life to the Lord, that someone would come and hit him and it would all be over. For the next few days, he wrestled with God. Then he came back to the church and gave his life to the Lord. He later came to Southern California College and went into the ministry. All that was a first-time prophecy. I wish the gift of prophecy always functioned that noticeably.

But my point is: Obey the impulse. The Spirit desires to speak with His people. When you feel very strongly that you should speak to someone in a way that will bring the Word of God to that situation, to that person, don't choke off the impulse, but obey it. As you release it and grow in it increasingly, prophecy or speaking the Word of the Lord to a person or situation will begin to develop and take place in your life.

I think we all need the attitude of a little boy in the Old Testament, whom the Lord wanted to be His spokesman. The Lord called him, "Samuel! Samuel!" and Samuel's response, when he learned it was ok to respond to the Lord was, "Here am I" (1 Samuel 3:6). I believe, when the Lord speaks to us as well and gives us the impulses, that our response can be just as childlike and just as trusting: "Here, Lord, am I. Speak through me."

Closing Prayer

I realize, Lord, as we come to You today, that speech is a very powerful thing that You've given to us. I pray, Lord, that we will experience the grace of Your Spirit in our conversation, to not only speak the things that all mankind speak, but to speak in such away that our speech reflects Your character and personality. That it is done with a consciousness that, if You were living out our life, this is what You would be saying. If You were in this troubled spot, what words would You bring to it? It is that practice of Your presence in our lives which makes it possible for the

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barriers of communication that we have to be broken down. It makes it possible for us to know You, Your will and Your mind, and resolve this. It's so very wonderful. We're built up in You. Although, Lord, this message today has been teaching in its function, I pray, nevertheless, that there will be words shared that will apply to persons that have come here, not necessarily wanting to learn how to exercise the gift of prophecy, but who have come today with hurts and needs and problems in their own life. You're saying to them, even now, that You're aware of that. That You have words of healing and help for them. That they are not alone in the dark struggle of the night of their soul. That You are with them, even though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4). You are with them. They need fear no evil. We thank You for the assurance of Your presence. We close today in thanksgiving for Your love and for Your gifts. In Jesus' name. Amen.