

# HEARING GODS WORD IN PROPHECY

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*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy.*

*1 Cor 14:1*

## INTRO

We continue to follow Pete Gregs' book on 'how to hear God'. This week we are looking at hearing God's word in prophecy.

First, let us pause and pray. Spend a moment of silence thinking about what you think and feel when you hear the word *prophecy*. Perhaps you are fed up with how it has been used to manipulate or you might feel wary about prophecy because it is considered risky, unfamiliar or just not been part of your Christian tradition.

Ask God for help in understanding what is of him and invite him to work in us today.

Is prophecy a spiritual gift that I 'earnestly desire'? I take a moment now to ask the Holy Spirit to give me a passion to hear and speak his word.

## FOR OTHERS

Our focus so far in this series has been learning to hear God for ourselves, but prophecy shifts the focus to hearing his voice for other people. The apostle Paul describes it like this: 'the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort ...the one who prophesies edifies the Church' (1 Cor. 14: 3-4). By being in a homegroup my hope is that you are in a comfortable, familiar, and trusting environment where you can try out the spiritual gift of prophecy. The church needs to hear Gods voice more than ever in as many different ways as possible.

## READ 1 Sam 3:1-10

Notice in verse 1 'in those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.' We often assume that people found faith in the Bible easier, but Samuel was living in a time when God's voice was far rarer and more unfamiliar than it is for us today. Imagine his surprise when he did hear Gods voice talking to him, an 11-year-old boy. Also notice that Gods voice was mistaken for Eli's voice, it wasn't earth-shaking deep or otherworldly, it was normal. The Lord keeps calling until he is noticed, just as Jesus graciously walks with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, it shows us a patient God. It also shows that the gift of prophecy takes time to practice and grow into.

Our first attempts at prophecy can be scary so it helps to have a memorable rule of thumb before you share what you suspect to be a word from God, an **ABC** filter:

**Affirming:** Does the word fulfil the criteria of 1 Cor 14, by being strengthening, encouraging, comforting, edifying and upbuilding?

**Biblical:** Is the word consistent with the broad teaching and witness of Scripture (not just a specific verse taken out of context)

**Christlike:** Is the word consistent with the character, mission and message of Jesus?

When receiving a word from someone we must also take time to weigh it, wait on it and walk in it. Don't just accept them indiscriminately, use the ABC filter. It may be the right word at the wrong time.

**Question:** Have I ever been hurt by someone claiming to be speaking on behalf of God?

## **PROPHETIC WORKSHOP**

This exercise is a great, simple, interactive way of helping people of all ages to listen to God and to share his words with others. It's taken from p143 in *How to hear God*. Start by handing out photographs cut from newspapers and magazines to each member of your group (the pictures don't have to be religious in any way, and it's probably better if they aren't). With each person holding their picture, ask the Holy Spirit to speak. Having prayed, everyone should take time to study the image in their hand, asking the Lord to reveal his heart in some way through it. Some people will find this very easy but others will struggle at first. Take your time. There's no hurry. If anyone wants to choose another picture, that's fine, so have some backups. Once everyone seems ready, remind them of the four positive guidelines listed in 1 Cor 14 - prophecy should aim to strengthen, encourage, comfort and edify. Then invite each person to share what they sensed God was saying, whether it was for themselves or someone else in the circle. This simple exercise can be surprisingly effective in opening ears to listen to the Holy Spirit in the ordinary stuff of life, and in boosting confidence to share words from God with other people.