

The Gift of Prophecy

The Gift of Prophecy is referred to as a 'Prophetic Word' or sometimes 'A Word'. It is when God gives a person something to say to an individual, a number of individuals or to the whole of the Church meeting. We are not able to make ourselves prophecy by prayer, good living or any other means; it is something that comes from God in His way and in His time. It does not depend on personal intuition and thoughts but is entirely supernatural and it is when we are given something to say by God on His behalf. It is God speaking to us.

Please note: A prophetic word is always in the general language that is being used in the meeting, so it is understood by everyone. There is sometimes some confusion about this, which will be explained when we look at the Gift of tongues.

Old Testament times

In Old Testament times there were prophets who were used by God to prophecy to the people and nations about their future. This is known as '**foretelling**' and was used by God to speak to both believers and unbelievers; it told them beforehand what was going to happen to them. Since Pentecost prophetic words have been given to people who are Christians, but not necessarily prophets. We can read in the Scriptures of occasions when there was a foretelling of something that was going to take place in the future, but usually, since Pentecost, prophetic words have been a '**forthtelling**'.

Definition from Google! Foretelling = Predicting future events.

Forthtelling = Delivering a message from God. Speaking God's truth which includes declaring His will and strengthening God's people and is a message for the current times.

Earnestly desire

Paul writes at length to the Corinthians about the Gifts of the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 14) In the first verse he wrote, '**Make love your aim. Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.**' Paul obviously saw this as the most important of the Gifts and encourages us to make this our number one desire. It is the only Gift that we are specifically told in Scripture to '**earnestly desire.**' If we do not wish to receive the Gift of Prophecy from God, then we are not being obedient to what God asks us to do via the Scriptures.

Who can receive the Gift of Prophecy?

The answer to this question is – All of us – Men, women and children. It reads in Acts 21:9 '**Philip.... had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.**' As women at that time in that culture were married very young, his daughters were most probably teenagers. Paul also mentions about women covering their heads when they prayed or prophesied, which shows that the women as well as the men were allowed to prophesy. In their writings both Peter and Paul say that those who are spirit-filled Christians are equipped to manifest God's Gifts. Sadly there are many, many Christians who have never 'Given a Word' either to an individual or to a congregation. These 'Growing Strong' articles are intended to encourage people to step out in faith and help to build up the Church by giving a prophetic word when they receive it from God. I would say that many may have been in that position but have maybe either not recognized what they had been given or were not confident enough to do anything about it.

Personal qualifications

There are no set qualifications needed for God to give a person a prophetic word. Having said this though, there are certain conditions under which a person may or may not be used by God for this purpose. Obviously an ongoing relationship with God is a necessity. If we are not spending time reading God's word and being in His presence then we are not in a right state to hear anything that He says to us. The closer we are to Him the easier it will be for us to be on His wavelength and ready to be used. God is hardly likely to give a prophetic word to someone who is not living a life that is pleasing to Him. For instance, if someone is under a serious addiction, is immoral or dishonest, then they are not going to be given a Word. A person's heart needs to be right. Boastfulness and pride can also block what God wants to do in a person's life. All of these things mentioned show that there is not the fruit of the Spirit so a so-called 'prophetic word' from someone in any of these circumstances is likely to be false and not genuinely from God. The character of the person and if fruit is apparent in his/her life, helps us to discern between a genuine and a false prophecy.

Control

The Holy Spirit does not put us under bondage about giving a prophetic word. He is not manipulative and does not make absolute demands of us. The Gift is always under our control along with the choice of whether to proclaim it or to keep silent. We can never say, "God made me do it" because the Holy Spirit never forces us or over-rules our wills.

Prophecy and preaching

A person can give an inspired sermon, but preaching is not the same as prophecy and does not have the same purpose. The main aim of preaching is to help to bring folk to a point of salvation. Prophecy is not about salvation; it is God's way of speaking to people who are already Christians in order to get their attention.

The purpose of prophecy

The main purpose of prophecy is to speak God's word to the people. God does this in three ways:-

- 1. Edification.** This means to 'build up' or 'strengthen'. If Christians in the Church are built up and strengthened, then they will be more effective in their particular ministries. This in turn will make for a stronger Church.
- 2. Exhortation.** God does not discourage or put down people. A prophecy will always encourage, stir up and stimulate us to keep strong in God. It can bring us out of lukewarmness and help us to put our trust in God again.
- 3. Comfort.** God is a God of comfort. A prophetic word of comfort can cheer up or give consolation. People need comfort in times of suffering or bereavement. It can help those who suffer with depression and anxiety. It can give healing of bad memories or sadness.

Are you ready?

Do you want to see God's Church built up and grow stronger? Are you ready and willing for God to use **you** to achieve this? Will you come alongside others who are 'having a go' and help them to move forward as they step out?