

Are You Suffering From Prophetic Burnout?

If you don't believe that God still speaks today, or, more particularly, if you don't believe in the continuation of prophetic ministry, this article is probably not for you. But if you do believe that God still speaks and that the gift of prophecy continues until today, this article might be just what you need. Allow me to explain.

Spiritual disappointment is a very real thing, often leading to deeper disillusionment and, in some cases, total loss of faith.

"This whole thing can't be real," some conclude, as all the supports of their faith seem to collapse like a row of dominoes.

I address that topic in my new book *Has God Failed You: Finding Faith When You're Not Even Sure God Is Real*, focusing on what happens when our prayers are not answered and we feel as if God has let us down.

But I want to focus on one particular aspect of spiritual disappointment here, namely, disappointment in failed prophetic words, leading to the deeper questioning of other words we believed to be from God. "Maybe none of it is real," we wonder out loud.

This is a perfectly natural response to failed and/or false prophecies, leading us:

- to question the specific prophecy that failed;
- question the person delivering the prophecy;
- then, if the doubts are deeper still, we question the gift of prophecy itself (or, the ministry of contemporary prophets

in general);

- then, if we're unable to separate prophetic ministry from the charismatic movement as a whole, we question that part of our belief system;

- finally, if the charismatic part of our belief system is totally intertwined with our overall belief in Jesus, we question the rightness of our faith as a whole or the reliability of the Bible or even the existence of God.

After all, if one part of our faith that we were convinced was real turns out to be false, maybe everything else we believed is false as well.

It is this kind of logic that causes many people to fall away from the Lord. As Proverbs 13:12 (NIV) states, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life."

For many others, though, it's not a matter of complete falling away from the faith but rather of spiritual burnout in one particular area of our faith. And, given so many prominent failed (or false) prophecies in recent months, there's a lot of prophetic burnout going around. Are you suffering from that yourself?

You wonder if you're really hearing from the Lord in your own life. Or you find yourself being skeptical about any prophetic word you hear. Or you even question past words that you once believed to be true.

How do you deal with this kind of burnout? And what is a healthy, biblically safe method to rebuild your confidence in the prophetic?

I'm quite aware that, to the skeptics and critics, the very premise of this article is totally off base, since, in their view, there is no prophetic ministry today. That's why I

started my article as I did: this article is probably not for you. (For those with sincere questions about whether prophecy and other spiritual gifts are for today, I suggest you watch this debate.)

But for those readers who do believe that the Scriptures clearly teach the continuation of the gifts, here's what I recommend as an antidote to prophetic burnout.

First, recognize where there has been an unhealthy dependence on prophets (as if God's written Word was insufficient and as if the Lord didn't lead you directly and personally). And recognize where there has been an over-exaltation of contemporary prophets, as if they somehow stood above pastors or teachers or other ministers.

In short, do a prophetic detox.

Second, read through the New Testament again, in particular, Acts, 1 Corinthians 12-14 and 1 Thessalonians 5, and ask yourself: Do I accept the testimony of Scripture above my own experience? Do I recognize the importance of prophetic ministry for today?

Pastors and prophets and preachers may mislead us, but the Word of God will never mislead us. And God's Word explicitly enjoins to seek earnestly the gift of prophecy and calls us not to despise prophecies.

Third, recognize that ten or 100 or even 1,000 false words do not negate a single true word. Go back through your own spiritual history. Were there times you felt clearly led by the Lord to make a certain decision or step out in faith, and that word proved precise and true? Or did you receive a prophetic word from someone which was clearly supernatural, revealing information known only to you or speaking of future things that came to pass with stunning accuracy?

Go back and recount those words. Journal them afresh. Rehearse

them before the Lord (or with friends and family). Let your own faith be built up. And, when appropriate, fight the good spiritual fight based on those words which still speak of future promises (see 1 Tim. 1:18).

Fourth, remember the words of Jesus, who said, "I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me." And, "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:14, 27).

Putting prophecy aside, as a child of God and as a sheep in the Lord's flock, you have a personal relationship with Him, and you can hear His voice—almost always, that inner voice, that inner sense, that inner leading.

Cultivate your own relationship with Him through meditating on the Scriptures, through worship and through spending quality time in prayer. Before you know it, fresh confidence will rise in your own heart, and whether someone prophesies accurately or not, your own relationship with God will be rock solid and strong.

Let the prophetic burnout be gone! {eoa}

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