

How the Charismatic Movement's Great Strength Has Led to Its Great Weakness

It is one of the great strengths of the charismatic movement that we have so many prophetic words. After all, it was Moses who exclaimed more than three thousand years ago, "Oh, that all the people of the Lord were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Num. 11:29).

At the same time, it is one of the great weaknesses of the charismatic movement that we have so little accountability for all these prophetic words.

All too often prophets deliver words with little or no accountability, even if they are inaccurate or never come to pass. Do we just think prophecies are inspired guesswork? That they're totally hit or miss?

Without question, the New Testament calls for prophetic words to be tested, which indicates that in this era, when everyone can potentially prophesy, we cannot take everything at face value. Prophecies must be judged.

True prophecy is life-giving. During one very difficult season, when there was tremendous pressure to compromise my convictions—and in the name of the Lord at that—four different leaders came to me with prophetic words. None of them had any idea what was going on, and all of them spoke with incredible accuracy into the situation, each from a slightly different angle. It's hard to describe what a lifesaver those words were at such a difficult time.

We need to do a better job of separating the wheat from the chaff, lest a multitude of inaccurate words obscure the true ones. I've read articles summarizing words for the coming year

put together by a gathering of prophets, and many (sometimes most) of them didn't come to pass. Was there any accountability, any soul searching, any seeking of God with a humble heart?

The challenge here is to do what Paul said to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21: First, we must be careful not to put out the Spirit's fire. We don't want to become skeptical, cynical, or unbelieving. Second, we must not develop a negative attitude toward prophetic words. Third, we must test everything by the Word and by the Spirit and pay attention to whether a word was given at the right time and if it proved to be accurate. Fourth, we must hold on to the good. Are we willing to go through the process?

Remember what Paul exhorted the Corinthians: "Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may desire to prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1, 39). This is an important gift, and it needs to be cultivated in our midst— not snuffed out so that we hardly prophesy anymore and not left to grow like a weed, without any checks or balances. Instead, because of its importance prophecy is a gift for us to cherish. We honor the gift, we examine the gift, and we hold fast to the real gift. This is the Spirit speaking to us!

There's a biblical principle that basically goes like this: if we don't judge ourselves, others will judge us—and their judgment will be far costlier than our own. So what will it be? Will we rightly esteem the precious gift of prophecy, removing the dross from the silver and the worthless from the worthy? If we take the gift more seriously, God will speak to us more powerfully. It's time for some prophetic accountability. Let it start with you and with me. And let it be for the glory of the Lord. Why should He get discredited because of our spiritual laziness? Why should a powerful movement be maligned because of our sloppiness? It's time to show Him honor. {eoa}

This passage is an excerpt from Playing With Holy Fire (Charisma House, 2018) written by Michael L. Brown, Ph.D., who is the founder and president of AskDrBrown Ministries. Dr. Brown served as a leader in the Brownsville Revival from 1996–2000, and out of this significant spiritual movement he and his leadership team birthed the FIRE School of Ministry, which Dr. Brown serves as president and faculty member. He is host of the nationally syndicated, daily talk radio show, the Line of Fire With Dr. Michael Brown—"your voice of moral, cultural, and spiritual revolution"—as well as the host of shows on GOD TV, NRB TV and INI TV. His syndicated columns appear on many leading websites, and his work has been featured in The Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, the Charlotte Observer, the Charlotte Magazine, Citizen magazine and other publications.