

Now Is a Good Time to Test Our Prophecies

About this time of the year, it is common to read articles from prophetic leaders announcing the latest words from the Lord, telling us what to expect in the months ahead. My question for these leaders is simple: What is your track record so far? How many of your past prophecies have come to pass?

Recently, I discovered a cassette tape in a storage unit marked "Old Prophecies," containing some prophetic words that were spoken over me many years ago and that happened to be captured on tape.

We were able to transfer the prophecies from cassette to CD, and when I listened to those words—some of which I remembered well and some of which I had almost forgotten—I was struck by the accuracy of most of them. It was only by the Spirit of God that some of those things could have been spoken more than 30 years ago.

That is the power of the prophetic gift in operation, and as a charismatic believer, I can say unashamedly that we need more prophetic ministry, not less prophetic ministry, today.

At the same time, prophecies must be tested and prophetic leaders must be held accountable, as the Word makes clear time and again: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:19-21).

If you claim to speak for God, then you should welcome accountability and testing. Otherwise, to paraphrase Smith Wigglesworth, you are surely as wrong as the words you bring.

Have you really been caught up to the third heaven? Then why

does your life seem so carnal? Why do earthly things have your eye? If you have encountered God so deeply in the secret place, why doesn't your public life reflect that?

It is not unfair to ask such questions.

Shouldn't great, extravagant claims be examined? Since when is gullibility a fruit of the Spirit? And shouldn't prophetic words have at least some level of clarity?

In the context of tongues and prophecy, Paul wrote, "If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air" (1 Cor. 14:7-9).

I have heard and read some prophetic words that are so obscure that there's no way to test them at all.

How do these edify or correct or encourage?

To be sure, the Spirit does not always lay things out in a way that makes complete sense at first, and it is only over a period of time that many words can be fully understood. Plus, some prophecies take decades to unfold, and so what might seem false for the short term is proven true for the long term.

That pattern is clear from the Scriptures themselves, and it is sometimes this lack of total, initial clarity that stops us from trying to make the prophecies come to pass through our own efforts.

On the other hand, prophecies are meant to communicate God's heart and mind, and He likes to make Himself clear when He speaks to us. What's the use of unintelligible communication?

The good news is that God is speaking today through many of His servants, and some of them have powerful track records of

hearing from heaven.

And so, if you are a prophetic leader (some of you are my personal friends), I encourage you to remind us of what the Lord has previously said through you. (Of course, predictive prophecy is only one aspect of prophetic ministry, but it's the aspect I'm focused on here.)

You are boasting in Him, not in yourselves, and you are helping us take seriously what He is saying through you today.

Share some striking personal or national words the Lord gave you in the past, and tell us how they were fulfilled.

Give us one detailed story that will stir our hearts and glorify the Lord and remind us of the power of this gift of the Spirit, and then share what is on your heart for this season so that we can take it prayerfully to our God.

You have been placed in the body for a specific purpose, functioning as sons of Issachar who understand the times and know what God's people should do (see 1 Chron. 12:32).

But as charismatics, we have often been guilty of failing to test prophecies or hold prophetic leaders to account, and this has brought mockery to the name of Jesus, reproach to the Spirit, and needless confusion and pain.

Let's all step higher during this critical time of American and world history, and if the Spirit is really speaking, let's pay careful attention. But if human words are masquerading as divine words, let's bring accountability and correction.

We need to hear from the Spirit, not from the flesh, from above, not from below. The stakes are very high.

Michael Brown is the author of 25 books, including *Can You Be Gay and Christian?*, and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show *The Line of Fire*. He is also president of *FIRE School of Ministry* and director of the *Coalition of Conscience*.