

John Eckhardt: What Is Prophecy?

I am not trying to make every believer a prophet. And yet all of us can prophesy. There are different levels of prophecy. An understanding of the different levels of prophecy will eliminate any confusion.

“On the simplest level, a prophet is one who speaks words from God that build people up: He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” –1 Corinthians 14:3

This is the simplest scriptural definition of prophecy. Prophetic words edify; they bring edification. To edify means to build up. God desires to “build up” His people through prophecy.

The word *edify* is related to the word *edifice*, which is another word for “a building.” The church is God’s building. His building (His edifice) is built up through prophecy.

How do prophetic words build up the church? By bringing exhortation and comfort to the individual people who make up the church.

Exhortation is the Greek word *paraklesis*, which means “solace, entreaty, consolation, admonition or comfort.” This word is related to the word *parakletos*, or *Comforter*, a name for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses prophecy to comfort believers and to exhort them to holiness, love, worship, praise, prayer, evangelism, humility and giving.

Comfort is the Greek noun *paramuthia*, which means “consolation.” This is a different type of comfort, and it is especially important for believers who are suffering or

struggling in their faith.

It is important to note that this simple definition of prophecy contains no reference to prediction. This is where many people have erred, believing that prophecy is another word for predicting the future. While it is quite possible for prophets to offer prediction when they prophesy, it is not required by definition.

Basic prophetic words adhere to the parameters of “edification, exhortation and comfort.”

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