

Prophet's Calling

Pastor Rich Vera wants the American church to start expecting power in its prophetic movement. He believes the church has misunderstood this vital spiritual gift and office, and he is trying to walk it out through his own ministry. Through a series of supernatural encounters, Vera believes God has placed a mandate on his life to bring prophetic revival through signs and wonders.

"My ministry began with a supernatural encounter with the Lord," Vera says. "I never asked for it. God just came to me. I had this encounter that was very drastic with the Lord. So everything I do is based on that."

Vera—who serves as the senior pastor of the Center Arena in Orlando, Florida—founded Voice of Healing Outreach, an "international prophetic evangelistic healing ministry" that conducts revival services and rallies around the world. Vera says one example from a trip to Argentina demonstrates the call on his life.

"I was in a city in Argentina where the people were not really open to what I was saying," Vera says. "There was a lot of resistance from religious people. The Lord says [to me], 'Close down the service.'"

So Vera did just that. But before leaving, he told the people assembled, "If I'm a man of God, tomorrow at 7:00 when I come here, there's going to be [both] rain outside and rain inside."

Rain inside may sound impossible, but rain outside was almost as difficult. A local pastor nervously informed Vera after his proclamation that there had been a drought in Argentina for the past two years. He tried to provide Vera a way out, asking, "Did you mean to say it will 'rain in the Spirit'?"

“No,” Vera replied. “There is going to be water rain that’s going to come, and then you will know that I am a man sent from God.”

The next night, Vera was angrily waiting for his ride to church. He had promised to arrive at 7 p.m., but it was already 9 p.m. His driver was running late. Finally, Vera texted the driver: “Where are you?”

The driver responded quickly: “The city’s flooded.” Rain had fallen in the area, and traffic delayed the driver. Soon Vera received word from the pastor not to bother coming—the rain had apparently fallen so heavily that it broke the roof and began to leak inside the building. The church was flooded.

“When I showed up, there were 2,000 people outside on the street,” Vera says. “Then the power of God hit, miracles took place and hundreds got born again.”

Vera pauses before explaining the moral: “That’s the authority of a prophet.”

Vera believes miraculous power to carry out one’s mandate will always accompany the office of the prophet—and that there is a big difference between someone who is a true prophet and someone who merely exercises a prophetic gift.

Vera spoke to *Charisma Digital* about the three supernatural encounters with God that shaped his ministry, the common misunderstanding many believers have about prophecy, and the call and mandate God has placed upon his life.

Three Visitations

Vera says his own testimony and ministry were shaped by three supernatural visitations he experienced between 1990 and 2005. The first encounter came on July 9, 1990, when he was only 17 years old. Vera—a nominal Catholic—was vacationing in Orlando, Florida, when he was invited to Benny Hinn’s then-church, the

Orlando Christian Center. During that meeting, he says the presence of God came over him for two to three hours, and he wept the entire service. He fell asleep in bed that night reading the book of John.

While he was asleep, Vera says, "I had an experience where the Lord came to me in a vision and told me, 'Nothing is going to separate you from the love of God. When you are 21, I'm going to use you. You're going to travel the world. And you're going to lay hands on the sick, and they're going to be healed. Just follow Me.'"

The next morning, he began praying in tongues without understanding what he was doing. From that moment on, Vera says, "The presence of the Lord was on my life. All I wanted to do from that moment on was to know Jesus and fellowship with God."

The second visitation took place in March 1997, while Vera was ministering in a northern city of Argentina. The pastor whose house he was staying at urged him to go take a siesta before that evening's meeting. Vera says while trying to get comfortable and fall asleep in bed, he went into a deep sleep and received another vision from God.

"I saw Jesus walking the streets of Jerusalem," Vera says. "He was walking and healing the sick, and there were lines of sick people on the left and on the right. He was touching the blind, touching the crippled, feeding the leper. I'm behind Him [cheering him on]. And then He stops halfway, turns back and points at me, and says, 'Now you do it.' When He points at me, I freak out. I say, 'God, I cannot do this. ... I am not Benny Hinn. I cannot.' So He comes closer to me, and His body [merges] into my body. ... He jumped into my body, and instantly His body was conformed to the shape of my body. I hope that makes sense. When He came in me, I felt this incredible energy on me, and I continued doing exactly what I saw Him do. I healed about three or four people in this vision by the power

of God. Then the voice of the Lord spoke to me audibly, and the Lord said, 'Your healing ministry will begin today. Pray for the sick.'"

Then Vera suddenly woke up, terrified for that night's meeting. Throughout the service, Vera says he tried to flow in the anointing, but nothing was working. He heard God prompt him in his left ear, 'Pray for the sick,' but he refused—he was convinced it would not work, and then he would look stupid. Finally, he gave in to the Lord's command but remained skeptical as he browsed the crowd for someone in need of healing.

"I was looking for the easy case—maybe some kid with a bellyache," Vera says. "There was a little boy in the front row. I got close to him, and I thought, *This kid must have a fever or something*. I didn't realize that one of his legs had a brace all the way from his hip down, and that leg was several inches shorter. The Lord blinded me from seeing that. I kneeled down and said, 'How many of you believe the Lord can help this kid?' As I'm saying that, that leg grows out of his body. The crowd begins to scream. I fell backwards, ran behind the piano player and freaked out. Instantly, miracles broke loose all over the place. And that's how my healing ministry began."

The third visitation happened on during the evening of Nov. 14, 2005, while Vera was grilling fish with some friends in Maui, Hawaii. Vera says he fainted on the ground for six hours, during which time, he says, the Lord caught him up to the heavens to reveal His glory and the truth of the Scriptures. Near the end of that encounter, Vera says God pointed out a small crowd of people lined up nearby and asked him, "What do you see?" Vera described aspects of their clothing or their appearance, but again, God repeated the question. Finally, Vera stayed quiet and just watched.

"I saw an angel go up to this group of people and begin to

peel their skin off, like the way you peel a banana,” Vera says. “But instead of seeing their organs, all I could see inside them was everything that happened in their lives since they were born—all the issues that were going on. My eyes were opened, and the Lord said, ‘From now on, you will speak to people. You will reveal the secrets of their hearts, and you will see what’s going on in their lives. And as you speak it, I will heal the sick. I will deliver them. You will raise the dead, and from now on, the prophetic is going to be activated in your life.’ That’s the experience that launched me into an international prophetic miracle ministry.”

Gifts Versus Office

Vera says that even though God unlocked a prophetic ministry for him through these visitations, he didn’t immediately understand what it meant to be prophetic.

“I didn’t understand the prophetic, or that there are prophets now,” Vera says. “As a Catholic, I thought Moses was the only prophet. As I began to read the Bible, I realized that the office of the prophet and the prophetic are New Testament, and I began to ... exercise those gifts. And 20-something years later, I’m known around the world because of our strong prophetic ministry.”

He says one thing he had to learn early on was the difference between the office of the prophet and the gift of prophecy. Vera believes the gift of prophecy, as taught in 1 Corinthians 12, is available to every believer in Jesus, but that the gift of prophecy also has very strict parameters.

“The gift of prophecy has limitations,” Vera says. “In the Bible, Paul says the gift of prophecy is for exhortation, edification and comfort. ... [If a] lady gets up and says, ‘The Lord says ...’ and then she begins to edify, exhort and encourage the people, that’s the gift of prophecy. But [people with] the gift of prophecy don’t have authority by God to

declare people's futures or to establish things. That will require the office of the prophet to do that."

He says the office of the prophet is quite different and is defined by Ephesians 4:11. It's one of the branches of fivefold ministry, but not everyone is called to it or will be appointed by God to this office. According to Vera, prophets have a particular message or call and a particular audience—and this is consistent throughout both the Old and New Testament.

"God raises prophets with messages," Vera says. "Prophets are different than pastors. Pastors could preach 50 different messages in a year because they're pastors, but a prophet has a message. John the Baptist—what was his message? To prepare the way of the Lord. Elijah—what was his message? To destroy Ahab and Baal and to destroy Jezebel. Isaiah—what was his message? He prophesied the coming of the Messiah. So what is your message? ... And God didn't call you for everybody. So to whom did God call you?"

He says too many believers conflate prophetic giftings with the office of the prophet, and as a result, there are many people operating outside of their anointing.

"The office of the prophet is an office not everybody has," Vera says. "God chooses prophets. Every prophet carries a mandate, a message and the power to demonstrate that message. So nowadays, people think, *Because I stood up and I prophesied to Johnny and he got blessed, I'm a prophet*, and that's the mistake. So then they begin to tell people [their future]: 'OK, you're going to marry this person, or you're going to...' When they go out of their jurisdiction—if you want to call it that—it causes confusion."

He says those people are false prophets, but that doesn't mean they are working for Satan. It just means that even if they are well-intentioned, they are immature and passing themselves

off fraudulently as something they are not. The best protection against such deception and immaturity is to grow strong in the Word, Vera says.

“Maturity is developed by learning the Word of God,” Vera says. “Man, if you learn the Bible, you will mature. False prophets are exposed by a true prophet showing you, ‘This is what it is.’ If you have a basketball player, like Michael Jordan, and then you [are] somebody who doesn’t know how to bounce the ball, and you look at him? You’re going to realize, *I don’t know anything.*”

Vera says he is hopeful that God will expose these false prophets and continue to raise up authentic prophetic voices in 2020 and the years to come. He says the best test to discern the genuine from the frauds is to ask for a demonstration of power. Real prophets, Vera says, come equipped with divine power—like Elijah at Mt. Carmel—to prove their mandate comes from God.

“In 2020, God is going to begin to mark a difference between those who are self-proclaimed and those who are God-appointed,” Vera says. “We don’t have to be afraid to say, ‘What is your message? What is your mandate? Where is your power?’ People have come to my church to tell me, ‘I don’t believe you. I believe you’re a fake.’ I say, ‘Prove it.’ I don’t have a problem with that. I don’t have bodyguards. I say [to those people], ‘Come up to the front, and I’ll prove it to you.’ Within 30 seconds, the prophetic is changing their lives to the point that they’re on the floor crying, turning their hearts to God. Because the prophetic has power to validate that which God has called you do. That is going to separate the boys from the men.”

Show Me the Power

Vera would describe himself as a person occupying the office of the prophet—and he says he would not make such a bold claim

without proof. He says he has “thousands of testimonies” of power manifesting in service of his prophetic calling. So what is his calling?

“I’ve been saying since I was 17 [and I had] that experience with the Lord,” Vera says. “The Lord said, ‘I’m calling you to bring prophetic fire and to bring revival of miracles, signs and wonders with a prophetic, now word.’ I’m a prophetic revivalist. God has called me to open territories, to demonstrate the raw power of God to my generation. That God can still heal now. That God can speak now and change your life. ... That is what God has called me to do. To demonstrate the prophetic in the now with miracles, signs and wonders that will impact my generation and the nations.”

He admits it’s a big calling, and the experiences he has had—including the rainstorm in Argentina—have been “wild.” But he sincerely believes and hopes what God is doing in his life is not all that unusual. Others are having or will have these same experiences.

“God is raising up people who are going to come with demonstrations of unusual power to deliver His people,” Vera says. “Power is not about the status of the prophet or the preacher, or about how big a ministry is. Power is about helping the people God loves.”

Yet Vera laments that many American Christians do not have strong examples of prophets equipped to not merely share prophetic words but to “carry fire from heaven to change situations.” He wryly notes that it’s always when people go to other countries that they report incredible miracles, but on demand in the U.S., they are often unable to perform.

“You know, the majority of prophetic people think they’re called,” Vera says. “They like the idea of the calling. But where’s the evidence of the calling? ... That’s what we lack nowadays. If you look on TV, all these people who claim to be

prophets or miracle workers, it always happens, 'When I was in Africa, three blind people were healed. When I was in Peru, cripples walked.' But show me now. Do it now. Because people need to [see]."

He believes the primary reason we do not see incredible miracles here in the U.S. is due to unbelief. At one point, he notes—sounding unimpressed—that many healings we see in America deal with minor complaints like back pain.

"We've got to understand the power of God also works according to your faith," Vera says. "The Bible says, 'Them that believe shall lay hands on the sick.' So any believer can lay hands on somebody, and the pain will be gone. But Corinthians also talks about miracle workers and healers. That's a whole different level. ... That's the problem I see. We are following those who talk nice and those who wish to have power. But I will say, look for somebody who really has it, who has it every time. Because God works everywhere the same. And God doesn't just heal in Africa. If he heals in Africa, He heals here in Orlando. And if you cannot do in Orlando what you do in Africa, then you're not called. You're just operating by faith."

Vera hopes a new era of genuine prophets will help to bring revival and restore faith—both in the American church and around the world.

"That's what I see God bringing back to America, especially with us here at The Center," Vera says. "We are demonstrators. We have been raised to demonstrate His power so the many can once again have pure faith in the God of the Bible. And that's what we do."

READ MORE: about Rich Vera, visit his website at .

*Taylor Berglund is the associate editor of Charisma magazine
and host of several shows on the Charisma Podcast Network*