

Never Abuse the Precious Gift of Prophecy

I meet many people who tell me they desperately need a word from God. I've seen Christians line up in front of prophets in a church service, hoping for a quick solution to their problems. I've also seen those same Christians stand in line a second time in front of the same prophets because they didn't like the word they received the first time. These "prophecy chasers" are common in our churches today.

God loves to speak to His people, and I believe He has a fresh word for all of us at the right time. But there is a right way and a wrong way to seek God for His prophetic direction. Never abuse or misuse the precious gift of prophecy. Here are some guidelines that will help you:

Make God's written Word your priority. Many Christians crave a direct word from God, yet they neglect reading the Bible. They may even consider reading Scripture religious or boring—yet they love the thrill of getting a prophetic word in a public meeting. Carnal Christians aren't willing to be disciplined students; they want their prophetic words handed to them on a silver platter.

You will never become a mature Christian if you don't learn to hear from God on your own through His Word. And if you don't read Scripture regularly you won't know the difference between a true prophecy and a false one—because prophecy never contradicts the Bible. Every time you read Scripture you are fine-tuning your ability to hear God speak to you.

Look to God for direction, not man. I seek God daily for direction. I don't chase prophets to tell me what to do or to show me my spiritual purpose. God can certainly use a prophet to speak to me—prophets are gifts to the body of Christ—but my

focus is on God, not on the men or women He uses. If you ever start looking to a human being as your source of divine guidance, you are heading toward unhealthy idolatry.

People who have the gift of prophecy must be careful they don't allow people to put them on pedestals. God's prophets are not mediums who read people's fortunes, and those who have this gift should never allow themselves to be put in such a position. (And beware of anyone who claims the gift of prophecy and then tries to sell you a "word" on their website! That is sorcery.)

Stop looking for the sensational. We've all heard of charismatic prophets who provide phone numbers or addresses in their prophetic words to confirm a message from God. God certainly has the power to reveal such personal information, but in such cases the "prophets" providing these numbers were actually con artists who preyed on the gullible. Beware of prophets who use sensational means to bring a word to you. In all my years of ministry, the most solid prophets were humble men and women who never drew attention to themselves. True prophets walk with a spiritual limp because they have gone through the process of brokenness; they are not cocky, entitled, manipulative or money-focused.

The apostle Paul told us that true prophecy is about three things: encouragement, comfort and exhortation (see 1 Cor. 14:3). True prophecy strengthens us, confirms God's promises and propels us into our divine destiny. Beware of words that create goosebumps or draw people's attention to the messenger.

Make sure your heart is willing to obey. Many people are eager to hear a word from God, especially if it tells them they will have a worldwide ministry or that they are going to become independently wealthy. But God's words are never sent to puff us up, flatter us or stroke our egos. A true word from God cuts deep to our core; it requires surrender and demands holiness.

Make sure you are willing to embrace a true word from God before you ask for it. Henry Blackaby once wrote: “Our difficulty is not that we don’t know God’s will. Our discomfort comes from the fact that we do know His will, but we do not want to do it.”

Don’t be impatient when seeking prophetic guidance. I’ve talked with Christians who were desperate for a word from God, but they informed me they were on a deadline. They needed instant spiritual gratification. Sometimes they even seemed to be threatening God—as in, “If I don’t hear from God by tomorrow, I quit!”

Don’t allow impatience to derail your Christian journey. God moves according to His sovereign calendar, not yours. Don’t throw a tantrum; mature disciples must learn to wait for God’s word. God’s delays actually are His way of refining us. Waiting will require you to adjust your timetable to His perfect will.

Sometimes God deliberately pushes the mute button. If His voice is not clear right now, it may be because He is leading you into a quiet wilderness season. You must learn to trust Him even when He’s quiet. You may feel you are in a fog, but you can still lean on Him. If you are impatient, you will run ahead of God—and you could make a foolish decision. Wait on the Lord in the stillness, hold on tightly in faith and let your roots grow deep. {eoa}

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.