

If we get this wrong, we are going to be in serious trouble. We will open ourselves up to all kinds of false doctrine, false teaching! Paul in I Thessalonians 5:19-22 said, **“Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”**

We can test all things by bringing them into the light of God’s Word. What doesn’t stand the test of God’s Word is tossed aside and that which is found in God’s Word is held onto. It is good.

Quenching the Spirit is not speaking against or coming against these prophecy’s but rather doing that which is not found in God’s Word. That quenches what the Spirit is trying to do! I think we all understand that, but many times we let others confuse us by what they say because we don’t want to quench the Spirit. So we believe what they are saying, even though it is contrary to the Word of God. Test all things. If it is not found in God’s Word, get rid of it, abstain from that evil!

You see, God does not contradict Himself; He does not say things that are contrary to His Word. Keep that in mind as you bring prophecies in the light of God’s Word. It is as John admonishes us in I John 4:1, **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”** Bring everything into the light of God’s Word to see if this word spoken was a gift of prophecy or not!

## **2. IT SHOULD REVEAL JESUS OR DRAW YOU CLOSER TO HIM**

When people are speaking for God they should not be exalting self or placing God in a position of dishonor. They should be exalting Jesus. As John said in I John 4:2-3, **“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”** Sounds simple, but we must not lose sight of that. As John tells us in Revelation 19:10, **“... For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.”** The focus should be Jesus or manifest the nature of Jesus. The words spoken should reveal Jesus or draw you closer to Him!

John also tells us that **“Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”** Thus, any teaching of prophecy that takes us away from Jesus is not right. Prophecy should unfold the beauty of Jesus to us! In Psalm 40:7 we are told regarding Jesus, **“Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me.’”**

Also, in John 5:39-40 we are told, **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you**

**are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”** Isn’t it amazing that people can read the Scriptures and still miss Jesus? The reason is simple. They are not willing to come to Him!

In I John 5:10 we are told, **“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.”**

Thus, if you believe, you have eternal life. If you reject Jesus, you make Him a liar because the Scriptures testify that He is the way, He is the truth and He is the life. Without Him you will never get to heaven. Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!

## **3. YOU MAY HAVE TO PONDER IT IN YOUR HEART FOR A TIME**

Sometimes things that are spoken are predictive in nature and you may have to ponder them in your heart to see if they come to pass or not. We see this at the birth of Jesus with all the things that Mary saw at His birth pointing to Him being **“A Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”** We are told in verse 19 of Luke chapter 2, **“But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”** What Mary pondered in her heart, did come to pass! There is nothing wrong with praying about what you hear or what you believe God spoke to you regarding some situation. Ponder it in your heart. Think about it. Let God show you if it is of Him or not!

## **4. DOES IT LINE UP WITH THE FACTS**

Here is another point that is important and we must not dismiss. There are times that someone will come up to you and tell you that God spoke to them regarding you, but what they are saying does not line up with the facts at all. Therefore, you can dismiss it.

This gift can speak of future events, foretelling the things of God. This gift can speak of speaking forth the Words of God, forth-telling the things of God. But, as I have said, the gift of prophecy is speaking forth the Word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In a sense you are a channel through which the Lord may speak. The words will edify, exhort and comfort believers. Remember what David said in II Samuel 23:2, **“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.”** When God places His Words upon our lips what a joy it is to speak them! The gift of prophecy is still in operation today as it brings edification, exhortation and comfort to the Church; the gift of Prophecy!

# What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 7

## **6. GIFT OF PROPHECY**

In I Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul speaks of another supernatural gift that the Holy Spirit can give us which is the gift of prophecy. We have talked about the office of a prophet and how that office has passed off the scene. Then what is this gift of prophecy all about and is it different than the office of a prophet? The difference between the office of a prophet and the gift of prophecy is simple. There was no room for error for the office of a prophet. But for the gift of prophecy there can be human error at times. Paul said in I Corinthians 14:29, **“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”** They were to judge if what was spoken was of God or not.

Now because of some potential problems, some have dismissed this gift. They believe that it too has passed off the scene. I disagree and I am thankful it is still around today. You see, Paul in I Corinthians 14:1 says, **“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”** Why would Paul say that he desires for us to pursue or seek after the gift of prophecy, especially if it has passed off the scene? He wouldn’t!

Notice that Paul gives us three reasons why this gift of prophecy is so important in the church even today. In I Corinthians 14:3 he said, **“But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.”** If we truly understand what Paul is saying here, this is one of the most important gifts to be exercised as the body of Christ comes together.



## PROPHECY SPEAKS . . .

### 1. **EDIFICATION** (It is the Greek Word “oikodome” [oy-kod-om-ay’])

This word, “**edification**” speaks “of building” or “building as a process.” In other words, as the gift is being exercised we see believers built up, strengthened in their faith, in their relationship with God. It should cause believers to hold on to God’s promises even during difficult times.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 14:19 as he wrote, “**Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.**” The focus is to build people up, not to tear them down. We are to strengthen them in the faith. God is not in the business of destruction, but restoration and we need to remember that as we speak to people.

In Romans 15:2 Paul makes that same point when he said, “**Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.**” In I Thessalonians 5:11 Paul admonishes us to continue on in these things, as he said, “**Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.**”

So, as this gift of the Holy Spirit is in operation you will see people grow and blossom in their faith. That should be desire of all of us, not just the pastor or the elders building people up, but all of us participating in this great work of God and using the gift as the Holy Spirit gives it to us.

### 2. **EXHORTATION** (It is the Greek word “paraklesis” [par-ak’-lay-sis])

The next word that Paul uses is “**exhortation**” and the idea here is to come alongside and help, to spur someone into action. When you think about it, the Scriptures are a PARAKLESIS to us. They help us in our walk and spur us into action. In II Timothy 3:16-17 Paul tells Timothy that, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**”

The Scriptures tell us what is right, doctrine. They also tell us what is not right or reprove us. The Scriptures tell us how to get back on track when we have gone astray. They correct us so that we may walk worthy of the high calling by which we have been called. They also tell us how to stay on track or give us instructions on how to live. All of these are important as God is strengthening us and spurring us into action. The Scriptures are living and Powerful. Therefore, if they don’t spur us into action it is because we have become dead to them! In regards to correction, think about this for a minute. None of us like to be corrected. However, if God ignored what we were doing, allowing us to travel down a path of death and destruction with no real concern, it would show us that He doesn’t care for us.

But He does care for us. He does love us and He will correct His children, sometimes using the gift of prophecy to cut through the hardness of our hearts and get us back

on track. It is as pastor Chuck has said, “Don’t just mouth it - do it! Don’t just hear it - practice it!” May that be the desire of our hearts, to live what we believe.

William Barclay wrote this in regards to exhortation or encouragement.

“One of the highest of human duties is the duty of encouragement. . . . It is easy to laugh at men’s ideals; it is easy to pour cold water on their enthusiasm; it is easy to discourage others. The world is full of discouragers. We have a Christian duty to encourage one another. Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a man on his feet. Blessed is the man who speaks such a word.”

- William Barclay, The Letter to the Hebrews

Yes, that should be our duty as Christians, to encourage people, but as the gift of prophecy is in operation the words that are spoken will point us in the right direction. They will spur us into action. They will lead us to Jesus.

### 3. **COMFORT** (It is the Greek word “paramuthia” [par-am-oo-thee’ah])

Paul then speaks of “**comfort.**” We may not admit it, but all of us love to be comforted. I don’t care how big or strong or macho you think you are, we all like to feel the comfort that another can bring into our lives. Now let’s take this a step up and ask the question, “How important is it to have the comfort of God in our lives?” It is extremely important. In that comfort we see the peace of God in our lives. We can rest in Him!

That comfort is experienced when we recognize that God is still in control. He is still on the throne. As bad as things might seem, He will work it out for His glory. It is as Romans 8:28 says, “**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**”

It is when we understand our God and know that He is for us, that we can rest in Him. He, in a sense, is the captain of our lives as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

“Robert Louis Stevenson tells of a storm that caught a vessel off a rocky coast and threatened to drive it and its passengers to destruction. In the midst of the terror, one daring man, contrary to orders, went to the deck, made a dangerous passage to the pilot house and saw the steerman, at his post holding the wheel unwaveringly, and inch by inch, turning the ship out, once more, to sea. The pilot saw the watcher and smiled. Then, the daring passenger went below and gave out a note of cheer: ‘I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well.’”

- Robert Louis Stevenson

When the gift of prophecy is in operation, we find that the words that are being spoken will comfort us and give us a proper perspective of who God is, that He is still in control and He is still upon the throne. That comfort that God has given to us, we can turn around and give it others!

So we see Paul’s point regarding the gift of prophecy here. When the gift is in operation, it will edify the people, it will exhort them to move forward in the Lord and it will comfort them during difficult times!

I think this is important for us to understand. When we take our eyes off the Lord the storms of life seem overwhelming and we feel that we are going under. Get your eyes back on the Lord! Here is a beautiful aspect. What God has given to us, His great comfort, we can turn and give to others.

Paul, in II Corinthians 1:3-5 says, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.**”

As you can see, this gift is very important in the church today. That is one of the reasons the enemy causes people to dismiss this gift and say that there is no Scriptural support for it being in operation today. I disagree. I do feel the Scriptures support the operation of not only the gift of prophecy, but the other spiritual gifts that the Scriptures speak of.

On the other end of the spectrum, are those that abuse this gift. They are not bringing edification, exhortation or comfort to the people, but confusion. They are feeding the flesh!

We also need to be careful because there are many people out there that are claiming they are speaking for God. How do we know if what they say is of God, or if it is from the imagination of their own hearts, or from a lying spirit, or maybe born out of a pizza they had before they went to sleep that night? I think that is an important question and one we need to explore more closely. How do we know if this gift is being used by someone today?

## **HOW DO WE KNOW IF THIS IS OF GOD?**

### 1. **THE WORD OF GOD**

The first thing you need to do is bring what has been said into the light of God’s Word. If it contradicts what God has said in His Word, then you can toss it aside. It is not of God! God does not contradict Himself. Some, in trying to get around this, say that “God is bigger than His Word”, or that “God is giving to us new doctrine”, or “You are quenching the Spirit by your judgmental and restrictive attitude” or even “You can’t put God in a box!”