



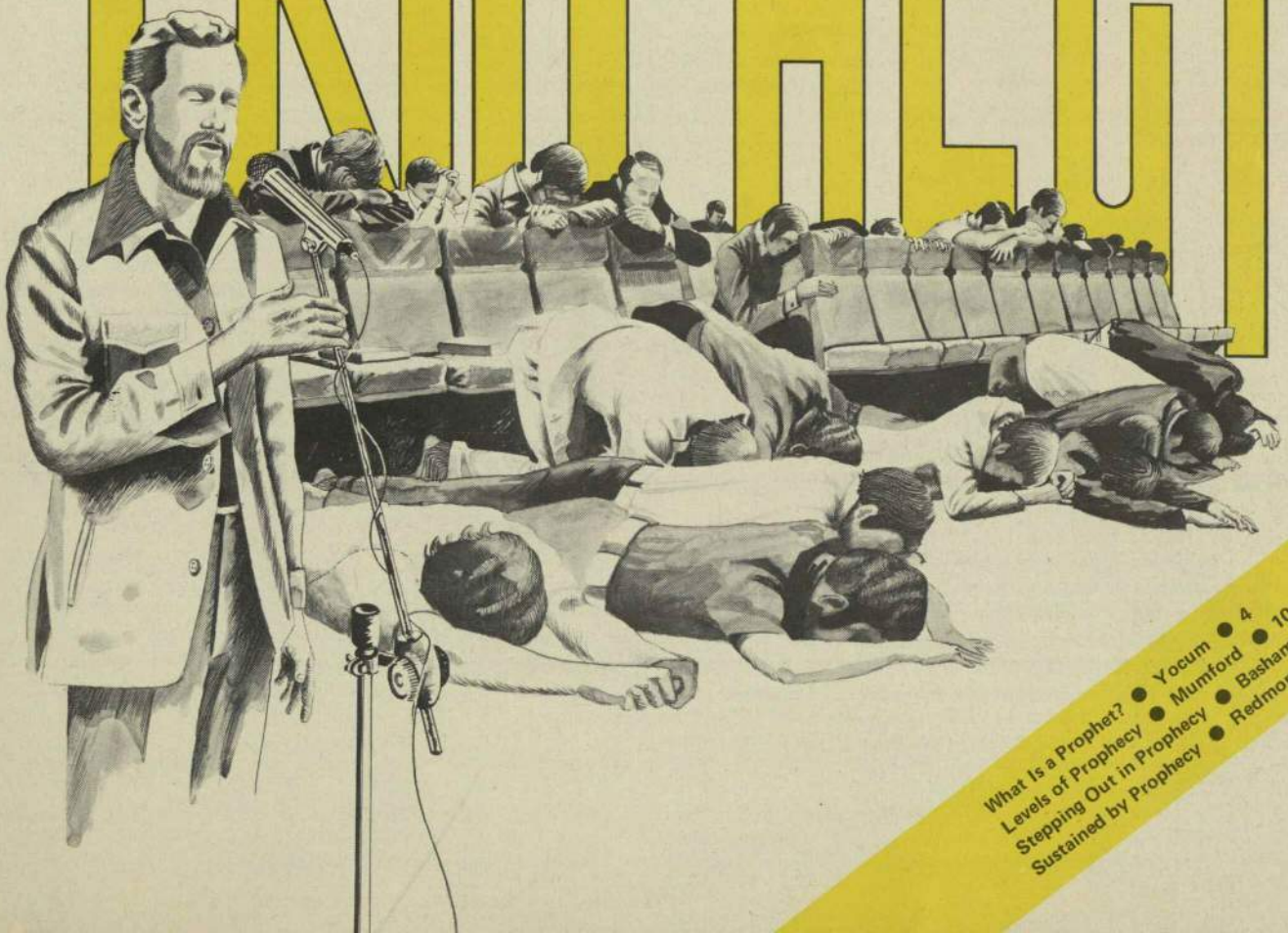
new
wine

JANUARY 1977

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH

PROPHECY



What Is a Prophet? • Yocum • 4
Levels of Prophecy • Mumford • 10
Stepping Out in Prophecy • Basham • 20
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FEEDING ON NEW WINE

We here at the Bernotsky household really praise our Lord for the "meat" He supplies us through *New Wine*. The October issue on *Unforgiveness* is really hitting home with us in many areas; we feel it is an answer to specific prayer.

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Bernotsky
Kirkwood, PA

This magazine is so anointed and timely that I just feed on what is there. I like the different viewpoints. I think it is essential to have this. Every fellowship is different and we need the varied views and experiences of mature leaders.

Dr. Roy Clark
Collingwood, Ontario, Canada

I am only 19, but for the few years that I have been receiving *New Wine* I have grown much spiritually. *New Wine* has been very much an inspiration in this growth. I have only one criticism about *New Wine*. It kind of seems to be getting over my head sometimes. Which makes it hard for me to understand or I lose interest in the article. I am not suggesting you leave these articles out, but make them easier to understand by presenting them in a different way or using different words. I realize your magazine is mostly directed on an adult level basis — for the Christians chewing on the meat — but there are still many babes in the Lord still on the milk. Your magazine could be a great help and blessing to these Christians if you included these articles with the milk.

Sandy Lathem
Bee Branch, AR

Thank you so much for the *New Wine* Magazine. They are so very very helpful only God Himself could explain how much they mean to me. I feel like a camel must feel when he is thirsty and finds cool, refreshing, life-giving water.

Mattie Walker
Decatur, GA

THANKS FOR FORGIVENESS

I want to thank you for your recent issue of *New Wine* in which you so thoroughly covered the topic of forgiveness. The Lord had prepared me to receive and understand these teachings, and they provided the "missing piece" to my puzzlement and confusion. I finally understand that, in feeling justified in my lack of forgiveness, I was actually blocking the free flow of God's grace. The Lord has instructed me to "do as I do, forgive as I forgive, love as I love."

Mary Henson
Cincinnati, OH



How I thank you for the powerful issue (October) on *Forgiveness*, especially the thorough and convicting article by Derek Prince.

Jeanne M. Jackson
Glendale, CA

I have just completed the Bible Study on "Forgiveness" in the Oct. issue of *New Wine* Magazine. It is terrific and basic to our salvation and walk in Jesus Christ.

Mrs. G. Perkins
Lynwood, WA

IN GOD WE TRUST

I really appreciate your magazine & your approach to financing your ministry. I requested information about *New Wine* well over a year ago. You sent me a subscription — never once billing me. Praise the Lord for your love and faithfulness.

Linda Barry
Marion, OH

Just a few lines to thank you for your *New Wine* Magazine. I have really enjoyed it. I am sending a contribution to help a little with expenses. There is no charge on subscriptions, but the expense goes on anyway.

Mrs. A. Young
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

NEW WINE: HIGH OR DRY?

The highest compliment is always paid to your magazine in this part of the U.K. — it is always hard to read a copy of *N.W.* because others are so deeply engrossed in it! So often it serves as a real backup to what the Lord has been saying to us as a local expression of His Body — thousands of miles away from where it is printed and written. That has just got to be God.

Mr. D.J. Waite
Witney, Oxon, England

I have always enjoyed your magazine and believe you have sound basic teaching. However, since you've been printing such long articles, I never have time to read them. It's like studying from a book. I liked it much better when they averaged just a couple of pages and were on a variety of subjects. It gets kind of boring reading so long on the same subject.

Cathey Martin
St. Louis, MO

Please forgive my delay in stopping our subscription. I have a love for *all* of you striving in this ministry. I am sorry this has to be.

With what knowledge and vision my Lord has given me, I can't, in good conscience, condone the ministry you work so hard for.

For what small good this might do, I would plead that you all might try to love one another before exploring the secrets of the kingdom. You appear to be as small children discussing and practicing algebra before endeavoring to learn addition and subtraction. I say this in grief, not mockery.

I pray that you all might be humbled into submitting to the Master's will.

Carl Linton
Arlington, VA

I enjoy your magazine. About the only complaint I have is that it almost always is beat-up by the time I get it. It looks like half a dozen people have read it by the time it reaches my mailbox. But I guess that isn't all bad, is it?

Lois M. Woodhead
Jackson, MI

Editorial

Perhaps no other spiritual gift has created as much controversy as the gift of prophecy. Misconceptions, misunderstanding and great scriptural ignorance surround it.

The need for true wisdom concerning this significant gift was forcibly pressed on us here in South Florida by some startling events early last year. Many of our readers are unaware that a prophetic utterance was given in Guatemala around the end of 1975 predicting that South Florida would be inundated by a tidal wave in April 1976.

Now, enthusiastic prophecies predicting catastrophies are fairly common in charismatic circles and most are properly judged and dismissed. But what gave this particular prophecy credence was that it also predicted accurately the Guatemalan earthquake of February 1976.

How, then was such a prophetic utterance to be handled? Since the earthquake came to Guatemala, would the tidal wave come to Florida? Some sincere Christians believed it would and fled to high ground during the month of April.

An editorial is not the place to discuss all the factors that led us to believe that the tidal wave portion of the prophecy was not valid. It is sufficient to say that the utterance was prayerfully judged by men of spiritual maturity and, lacking confirmation, was set aside as unacceptable. Nevertheless the incident does point up the need for genuine understanding and wisdom in dealing with prophetic utterances. Wise were the words of St. Paul when he said, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (1 Cor. 12:1). It is our hope and prayer that this initial 1977 issue of *New Wine* will provide some encouraging insight and information concerning the operation and application of the gift of prophecy.

new wine MAGAZINE

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New Wine is published monthly, except combined July/August issue, by Christian Growth Ministries, 264 S.W. 31st St., Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33315. Second class postage paid at Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and at additional mailing offices.

Please use our self-addressed envelope in the center of the magazine for new subscriptions, notice of change of address, and all contributions, comments, and suggestions pertaining to Christian Growth Ministries and *New Wine* Magazine.

New Wine is a non-subscription magazine supported by the contributions of its readers. Single copies and back issues: 50 cents each. Bulk prices for regular issues (Minimum order of 6) 6-24, 40 cents each; 25-49, 35 cents each; 50-99, 30 cents each; 100 or more, 25 cents each. Foreign contributions, except Canada, should be made by a check made out for American dollars or by local currency.

Material submitted for publication should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope if return of manuscript is desired. All material becomes the property of *New Wine* when published.

The views expressed in *New Wine* are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the Editors or Directors.

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Few people today have an accurate or adequate notion of what a Christian prophet is. This is only to be expected: most of us have never met a prophet. In the absence of actual experience our imaginations have taken over. I once wrote an article on prophecy for a magazine, and the illustration which accompanied the article captured perfectly one of the most common conceptions of a prophet: on a rugged and desolate crag of a mountain knelt a bearded and bald old man, his feet unshod and his gaunt body draped with an animal skin. As he gazed intently heavenward, rays of eerie light streamed down from a hidden source to light up his face. If that is a prophet, it's no wonder there are so few!

In order to form a better understanding of Christian prophecy, I want to outline briefly some of the inaccurate or inadequate ideas which float around these days, and compare them with the picture presented to us by Scripture.

One of the most popular understandings of prophecy features the "ecstatic" prophet who whirls around in a sort of a fit or sits in a trance-like state uttering oracles. That is not Christian prophecy. Paul says specifically that "The spirits of the prophets are under the prophets' control, since God is a God, not of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:32-33). In a similar way Eusebius of Caesarea, a fourth century Christian historian, contrasts Christian prophets (who are not "ecstatic") and the prophets of a sect called 'Montanism.' Eusebius quotes an earlier Christian writer named Miltiades who had lived in the second century and opposed the Montanists:

Their (the Montanists') opposition and their recent schismatic heresy in relation to the church originated thus. There is, it appears, a village near the Phrygian border of Mysia called Arbadu. There it is said that a recent convert named Montanus, while Gratus was proconsul in Syria, in his unbridled ambition to reach the top laid himself open to the adversary, was filled with spiritual excitement and suddenly fell into a kind of trance and unnatural ecstasy. He raved, and began to chatter and talk nonsense, proph-

syng in a way that conflicted with the practice handed down generation by generation from the beginning. . . .¹

But the pseudo-prophet speaks in a state of unnatural ecstasy, after which all restraint is thrown to the winds. He begins with voluntary ignorance and ends with involuntary psychosis, as stated already. But they cannot point to a single one of the prophets under either the Old Covenant or the New who was moved by the Spirit in this way — not Agabus or Judas or Silas or Phillip's daughters; not Ammia at Philadelphia or Quadratus; nor any others they may choose to boast about though they are not of their number. . . .²

In other words, the Montanists claimed to have the gift of prophecy, but their ecstatic prophets were not

behaving like Christian prophets. All the authorities of the early church, from the apostle Paul onward, clearly state that prophets among the Christians have full control of themselves, and do not prophesy in trances and ecstasies.³

Another very common notion regarding prophets might be termed "the prophet as a great moral leader." Many Christians derive this view from the great prophets of the Old Testament, who are said to have acted as the "conscience of Israel." Accordingly,





WHAT IS A PROPHET ?

By Bruce Yocum

It takes more than a beard
and a
camel-skin coat
to be a prophet!

they call anyone who exerts striking moral leadership a prophet. Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Ghandi and others have been called "prophets." There is some justification for speaking of prophets in this way; the prophets did provide Israel with strong moral leadership. But moral sensitivity and moral leadership do not adequately describe the action of the Holy Spirit in prophecy.

The prophets in the Old Testament brought with them more than an analysis of Israel's moral state — they brought a message from God. They did not claim to speak from their own insight into the affairs of men; they spoke of a judgment given directly by God.⁴

A notion of prophecy very much like that of the "great moral leader" is the notion of the prophet as a "vision-

ary," a man who can "see into things" in a way which normal men cannot. This, too, is inadequate. The prophets of the Old Testament never claimed any special insight *except what was revealed to them by God*.⁵ Their ability to understand the things happening around them and to speak of the true meaning underlying those events was not a product of their own "vision"; God was giving them his understanding and vision.

Finally, we have an understanding of prophecy that has become very

BRUCE YOCUM, a graduate of the University of Michigan, is one of the leaders of The Word of God, a charismatic Christian community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he is responsible for guiding the use of prophetic gifts in the community.

popular today — the prophet as one who predicts future events. Jeane Dixon, for example, claims the gift of prophecy on the basis of some successful forecasts of the future. Prediction clearly occurs in true prophecy, but it is only a part of the gift. When Paul lists some of the purposes of prophecy, he mentions encouragement, consolation, and the building up of God's people (1 Cor. 14), but not prediction.

We will quickly run into difficulties if we make successful prediction of the future our only criterion for true prophecy. Some people who are not Christian at all can predict future events successfully, yet we cannot accept their "prophecies" as God's word to us. Israel was once sternly warned against those who predicted the future but did not follow the Lord:

If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, "Let us go after other gods," which you have not known, "and let us serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God (Deut. 13:1-5).

In other words, a person can accurately predict future events, yet still be a false prophet.

Well, if all these ways of describing a prophet are inadequate or misleading where can we find an accurate description? I think that the clearest explanation of a true prophet can be found in the book of Exodus as part of a conversation between God and Moses. When God called Moses to take the people of Israel out of Egypt, Moses tried to decline, telling the Lord that he could not speak well enough to talk to the Pharaoh. That excuse didn't help Moses much, however, because

God had a solution for the difficulty: Moses' brother Aaron would do the talking:

When he (Aaron) sees you his heart will be glad. You are to speak with him then, and put the words in his mouth. I will assist both you and him in speaking and will teach the two of you what you are to do. He shall speak to the people for you: he shall be your spokesman, and you shall be as God to him (Exod. 4:15-17).

In that last line, God makes a direct comparison between the role which Aaron has as Moses' spokesman and the role which a prophet has as God's spokesman. The common term for a prophet in Hebrew, "nabi," probably meant "one made to speak." The standard Greek word, "prophetes," meant "an interpreter" or "one who speaks for another." Farther on in the story the Lord says to Moses:

See! I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall act as your prophet. You shall tell him what I command you. In turn, your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave his land (Exod. 7:1).

That is the role of the prophet — to be a spokesman for God. A prophet is not a prophet because of what he says, but because of his relationship to God. He is not important in himself, he is important because he comes as a messenger of the Lord:

And Haggai, the Lord's messenger, proclaimed to the people as the message of the Lord: I am with you, says the Lord (Hag. 1:13).

To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak (Jer. 1:7).

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am," I said; "send me!" And he replied: "Go and say to this people . . ." (Isa. 6:8-9).

Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites . . . But you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord God! . . . Son of man, take into your heart all my words that I

speak to you; hear them well. Now go to the exiles, your countrymen, and say to them: Thus says the Lord God! (Ezek. 2:3-4; 3:10-11).

I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to the company of the prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees. The Lord took me from following the flock, and said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel" (Amos 1:14-15).

In each of these cases God takes a man and makes him a messenger, a spokesman for God himself. The relationship between God and a man is the heart of prophecy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN PROPHECY

The New Testament prophets were less prominent among the people of God than their predecessors in Israel, though as we have seen, the New Testament prophets still played a vital role. The difference in the role of the prophets under the old and the new dispensations is the result of a change not in the relationship between God and the prophet, but in the relationship between God and his people as a whole. The Old Testament prophet was a man unique among God's people because of the Holy Spirit's action in him. He was in direct communication with the Lord, while the people as a whole were not. But under the New Covenant, *all* of God's people receive the Holy Spirit, *all* of God's people are in direct communication with God himself. In Old Testament Israel the prophet was thoroughly unique; in the "new Israel" the prophet is one means among many by which God can speak directly to his people.

But the relationship of God to the prophet, the relationship of king to messenger, remains the same in the New Testament. All of God's people can now hear God's word directly without the mediation of the prophet, yet the prophet remains an official spokesman, authorized to publicly declare the word of God. The image of God as a king ruling his people can

illustrate the role of the prophet under both the old and the new dispensations.

Let us imagine God as a king, seated upon the throne in his castle. Under the Old Covenant, the people were greatly blessed by God because (1) God himself was their king; (2) his palace was with them, in the midst of their city; (3) God would from time to time call men into his presence and through them speak to his people. But most of the people could not themselves enter the palace and hear the words of the king from his own mouth.

But under the New Covenant God throws open the gates of the palace and all of his people can themselves enter (Heb. 10:19). Thus, each of God's subjects can hear God's word from his own lips. Under this new arrangement, there still remains a role for the prophet. When a king chooses a messenger from among his people, he provides him with both a message *and with the authority to proclaim the message publicly*. The many subjects who can now enter the palace can hear a message directly from God, but he does not confer upon them the authority to publicly proclaim the message. The prophet then retains a unique function in declaring publicly the word of the Lord. For instance, let us say that the king has a message to declare to all of his subjects in a particular province. Many individual subjects can come into the presence of the king. But he will not speak to all of them about the message he has for that province. Probably he will speak to most of his subjects about matters which refer to them individually. Perhaps he will tell some of them "I am about to send this message to the province." But it would be inappropriate for those subjects to return to the province, mount the royal grandstand and proclaim that the king says "such and such." The king did not ask or authorize those people to act as his official messenger. He entrusts that specific task to his appointed messengers.

Of course it is a mistake to carry such analogies too far. There are

important differences between God's dealings with his people and this royal messenger illustration, differences which I will point out later. For the moment, this example can serve to illustrate some aspects of the change from the Old Testament prophets to the New Testament prophets. The prophet in the New Testament is less prominent than the prophet in the Old Testament, but the relationship to God as a divine messenger is preserved, and the prophet retains an important role. The language of the messenger bringing God's word remains "Thus says the Holy Spirit . . ." (Acts 21:11).

Four characteristic functions of Christian prophecy can be used to demonstrate the importance of the gift.

INITIATES THE ACTION OF GOD

Prophets frequently initiate the action of God among God's people. Though it is possible for all Christians to hear the voice of the Lord, we very often do not hear God speaking to all of us personally about his will and his plan. Sometimes we fail to hear the Lord because we are not attentive, or because distracting thoughts or personal problems cloud our minds. Very often too God simply elects to speak to us through his prophets. We have no reason to believe that the Lord spoke to anyone but Agabus about the famine which afflicted the Roman empire in the years 49-50. Yet the disciples were stirred to action by this prophetic message and undertook famine relief for Christians in Judea (Acts 11:27ff.). In a very similar way, the Lord spoke through prophecy to a group of Christians in Beirut, Lebanon during the civil war in the fall of 1975, telling them to leave their homes and take refuge temporarily in the United States. Prior to that time, they had all felt they should remain in Beirut despite the fierce fighting which racked the city. Shortly after their departure their section of the city came under heavy attack, and the building they had lived in was bombed.



AWAKENS GOD'S PEOPLE TO HEAR HIS WORD

Prophets can awaken God's people to hear his word. When John prophesied to the church at Sardis that they should "awake and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death," he was trying to shake them from a slumber that was taking their very life. It was not that the Christians at Sardis *could* not have heard that word themselves; they just *did* not hear it. I recall a time two years ago in our community when we seemed to be losing our vitality. We did not very often speak about what the Lord was saying to us or where he was leading us. Then the Lord spoke to us through prophecy: "Repent and restore me to the center of your attention where I ought to be." We seemed to wake up and take notice of our growing apathy. The ability which we all had to hear and respond to God's word was stirred up, and soon we were all once again hearing the Lord and experiencing his action. The prophetic word opened our ears and ignited a desire in our hearts to seek and to find God's will for us.



PROCLAIMS GOD'S WORD PUBLICLY

The prophetic word is a public

word. It focuses our attention *as a group* on the message which the Lord wants us to hear. If we are to respond to the Lord communally, his word has to be presented to us publicly. Prophecy is not the only way in which the word of the Lord can be made public, but very often prophecy is the means which God will choose to draw our common attention to the word which he wants us to hear.

UNLEASHES THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Through the gift of prophecy the power of the Holy Spirit, at work in the word of God, is unleashed among us. When someone speaks prophetically, the Holy Spirit is at work both in the person who speaks and in all of those who hear. This is a very important truth, and a key to understanding the power of the prophetic word: when God speaks things happen. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all of their host by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6).

God's word is a word of power and authority. When the Lord, in the vision of Ezekiel, made the valley of dry bones a living army, he did it through the word which Ezekiel spoke. A very real spiritual power abides in the prophetic word, a power that can change people. It can change the course of nature and of history: "Behold, I make my words in your mouth a fire, and this people is the wood that it shall devour!" (Jer. 5:14).

The speaking of the prophetic word itself brings into action the power of God.⁶ Four years ago during a meeting of our community one of the leaders stood up and said "I believe that the Lord has shown me that there is a man present here who is living in sin." He went on to describe the circumstances of the man's life, and told him that he could, right at that moment, turn to God and receive forgiveness and the power to change. At the end of the meeting a young man rose and told us all that he was the individual the Lord had spoken to. He changed his life and became a Christian at that moment.

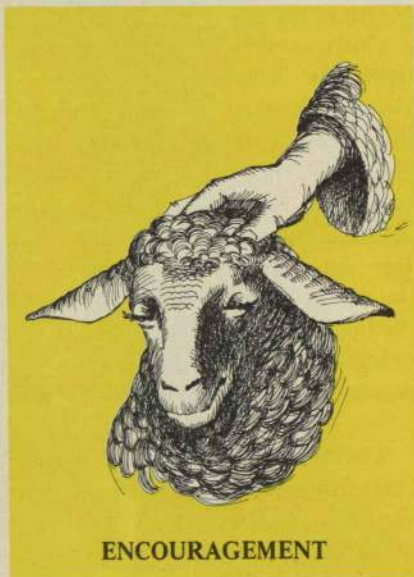
He had heard of Christianity many times before, but when the word of the Lord came directly to him, he experienced an immediate change of heart and a desire to live as a Christian. The prophetic word changed him.

THE PURPOSES OF PROPHECY

God sends his word for a purpose, to accomplish something in the world:

For just as from the heavens
the rain and the snow come down
and do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to him who sows
and bread to him who eats,
so shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it
(Isa. 55:10-11).

There are four distinct purposes for which God gives the prophetic gift to the church.



ENCOURAGEMENT

Most often God's word through prophecy is a message of encouragement or exhortation. Paul lists encouragement as one of the benefits of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:3), and Acts 15:32 records the prophets Judas and Silas "encouraging and strengthening" the believers at Antioch.

Encouragement, in the New Testament sense, is intended to revive a person's spirits, to strengthen him or

give him hope. All of God's people at times run into difficulty or opposition, and at those times need to hear that God is with them, that he will help them, that he loves them. An excellent example of prophecy sent by God to encourage can be found in the book of Haggai. The Jews returning from exile to Jerusalem had begun to rebuild the city and its temple, but pressure from surrounding enemies had soon caused them to cease. Eighteen years later the Lord's words of encouragement through his messenger Haggai fired them to return to the work:

Haggai, the messenger of Yahweh, passed on the message of Yahweh to the people, as follows, "I am with you — it is Yahweh who speaks." And Yahweh roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, high commissioner of Judah, the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and set to work on the temple of Yahweh Sabaoth their God (Hag. 1:13-15).

Many of the prophetic messages which we hear are as simple and unspectacular as the message which God addressed to the Israelites through Haggai: "I am with you, says the Lord." And yet a simple word like that, received with faith, can be profoundly encouraging. It is only a simple expression of concern and support, but the speaker is God.

CONVICTION, ADMONITION, CORRECTION

The Holy Spirit will reveal to us our sin, so that we can turn away from sin and be freed from its tyranny. In this aspect of his work, the Holy Spirit can be likened to the defense attorney in a trial. There are, in most legal proceedings, two people who will point out to the defendant his wrongdoing. The prosecuting attorney will expose the defendant's wrongdoing in order to secure his punishment. The defense attorney, on the other hand, will also point out to the defendant where he has done wrong, not in order to condemn him, but in order to save him. Satan, "the accuser," corresponds

in this analogy to the attorney for the prosecution; his goal is our condemnation. But the Holy Spirit, like the attorney for the defense, reveals our sin so that we might escape condemnation.

In Isaiah, the Lord says, "a voice shall sound in your ears: 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn to the right or the left" (30:21). In other words, God will let us know when we do wrong, and will warn us when we are about to do wrong, so that we can escape from the deception and the power of sin. Through the gift of prophecy that voice sounds in our ears: "... put away from yourselves your anger, your jealousy, your irritability . . ." "Turn your hearts back to me . . ."

Prophetic admonition or correction can be directed to either groups or individuals. Several months ago a young married couple, who had not been Christians, began to come to our community meetings. They were seeking God, but were not convinced that he could be found in Christianity. They were also being troubled by jealousy and animosity in their own relationship. During one of the first meetings they attended, the husband was feeling great doubt that Christianity held out any hope for him at all. He silently offered an almost despairing prayer, asking for some sign that God could be found among Christians. At the very moment he concluded that prayer, another young man stood to speak: "I believe that God has shown me a young married couple present at this meeting tonight" (there were about six hundred people at the meeting). "These people are seeking God, but are encountering doubt and confusion. Furthermore, they are having difficulty in their own relationship because of anger and jealousy." He went on to tell them, in the name of the Lord, that if they forgave one another and trusted in God, God would reveal himself to them and strengthen their marriage. Of course, the young husband was thunderstruck. This person had perfectly described their situation, and offered a solution at the very moment he had asked for

it. The young man who spoke to them in prophecy had neither met them nor ever heard of them. That young couple heeded God's word, repented of their anger with one another, and are now living happily as Christians.

INSPIRATION

Very often prophecy will function in the church as a source of inspiration. When the gift functions in this way, the Holy Spirit is primarily *doing* something to people through prophecy rather than *saying* something to them. Of course, since prophecy is a gift operating through speech, something will always be said. But inspirational prophecy is not so much concerned with communicating information as with evoking a response.

Frequently people have commented to me that they are troubled because they do not always remember what has been said in prophecy at a community meeting. That is a problem only when the Lord is intent upon giving us direction or telling us something specific. Most of the time, however, the intention of the Holy Spirit is simply to lead the community in a worshipful response to God. At those times, the important thing is to respond to God, not to remember the exact words of the prophecy. Prophecy seemed to occupy a prominent place in the worship of the early church (cf., *Didache* 10). The gift enabled the prophet to lead the people in praise and thanksgiving. I have seen the value of prophecy for worship in our own community and in many others. It brings the Holy Spirit *into* the group in a powerful way. Literally, it *inspires* people.

In 1 Chronicles 25:3 we read of prophets participating in the solemn worship of Yahweh. There is reason to believe that at least some sections of the psalms are prophetic oracles which originated in ritual worship (e.g., Ps. 46:11; 81:6-17). The following prophecy, spoken at a gathering of our community, is an example of a powerful inspirational prophecy, calling people to worship and impelling them to glorify God:

Yes my people,
my beloved children,
come into my presence,
be with me today.
Worship me
for I am here among you.
Open your hearts to me:
let me fill you with my love.
Let me clothe you
in my righteousness
as you bow before me.
I am the Lord your God,
the mighty God of all.

Be assured of my love for you.
Be assured that I am with you.
Open now your hearts to me;
give your lives to me.

Move with me; as I bid you, come.
Know the love of your God.
And know the life of his people.
Indeed, I am with you.

GUIDANCE



All through the Scriptures, we read of God speaking to his people to guide them into his ways. Sometimes his guidance was very general: he revealed his plan for salvation and gave men a way of knowing him and following him in all ages. But at times that guidance was very specific, even to the point of telling Israel what political alliances to make or warning a man that he would die within a year if he did not repent (Jer. 28:16). In the time after Jesus, God spoke through prophecy and warned of a famine (Acts 11:27ff.). Many people also believe that the Lord used prophecy to warn the Christians in Jerusalem about the impending destruction of the city by the Romans, so that before the city was actually destroyed all the Christians moved to the nearby town of Pella. The guidance received by Christians in Beirut which I described

earlier is a modern day counterpart to the story of the Christians at Jerusalem.

The guidance which we receive from God can apply to important directional questions as well as to specific individual needs. Peter received prophetic guidance concerning the salvation of the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-16), and Paul states that it was in part through the prophets that he received his gospel for the Gentiles (Eph. 3:5).

The church today needs guidance from God as much as it ever did. The difficulties and questions which confront those who are trying to spread the Gospel are formidable, in fact insurmountable, unless God provides the means to overcome them. The direct guidance of God is available to us when we need it. The gift of prophecy is one of the most important means by which God can guide and direct us, and we should not be without it.

On two occasions at least I have been involved in planning meetings in which prophetic guidance played a decisive role. On the first occasion the group I was working with had no clear sense of direction for its work. We stopped for a few moments and prayed. During those few moments, one person present spoke in prophecy. The words were straightforward direction for our meeting: "Put your own relationships in order first." The "relationships" in question were not simply personal relationships, but work relationships as well. The prophecy was directed at our practical needs. We resumed our discussion and followed out the directive to "put our relationships in order." The results were spectacular. From that discussion flowed a clear, practical direction which has since molded the whole life of our community.

The second occasion on which prophetic guidance was decisive occurred only eight months before I wrote this book. We had a set of goals, but try as we would, we could not discover a way to implement them. We simply had too many tasks to accom-

(continued on page 14)

LEVELS OF PROPHECY

by Bob Mumford

For several years there has been a growing interest in New Testament prophecy which has naturally been accompanied by a need for practical teaching on how it functions. My experience has shown that God truly desires to use His people in prophecy if they will just get a firm grasp of what prophecy is and how it operates. To obtain such an understanding of this gift of the spirit, let us begin by looking at 1 Corinthians 12:4-10.

Agabus took Paul's belt,
bound his own hands and feet,
and prophesied:

The Holy Spirit says,
"Thus shall the Jews
in Jerusalem
bind the owner
of this belt."

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

Prophecy, the third of the speaking gifts, is more than just inspired preaching or the mere foretelling of events; it is a supernatural speaking forth of the Word of God in the language of the speaker and his hearers.

We know that prophecy is one way God speaks His word and reveals His will to the Church, but what does this entail and whom does He use? Well, if we were to look at the literal meaning of the Greek word translated "prophecy," we would discover that it means "to speak in behalf of another." So the person who prophesies does so with the conviction that he is speaking on behalf of God.

This is confirmed by the Apostle Peter's words in Scripture when he exhorts us to speak "as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:10,11). An oracle is a mouthpiece — just like a lawyer is the mouthpiece of his client. The one who speaks as the oracle of God — the person who prophesies — serves as the mouthpiece of the Lord.

In a very real sense, that's how the Body of Christ always functions: God has no hands to lay on people but ours, and no lips to speak through but ours. Now, don't let that scare you. Just remember that God spoke to Balaam through his donkey; if he could do that, you'll work just fine! The point we're making here is that God is seeking those who are willing to be His mouthpiece . . . and very simply, we are the people and *our* voices are the instruments He wants to use. One other thing: we needn't feel inadequate for this task, for we can be sure that, when we speak as the mouthpiece of God, His power and authority back up what we say.

Since God wants us to be His spokesmen, prophecy should be the most commonly exercised gift in the Body. 1 Corinthians 14:31 says, ". . . ye may all prophesy, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." Everyone is able to prophesy under God, and He wants each of us to learn how to properly minister the gift at the right time.

THREE LEVELS OF PROPHECY

With this in mind, let's examine the first of the three categories of prophecy in which we can move. *The first level is when a spirit of prophecy falls on a meeting and anyone can prophesy.*

One of the purposes of this kind of

prophecy is to "convince" the one who "believes not" by revealing "the secrets of his heart" (1 Cor. 14:24,25). I was once in a meeting where a woman was prophesying, calling people out of the audience for ministry. I thought, "I don't know if I believe this or not." Just as I was thinking that, she turned around, pointed her finger at me, and said, "The Lord speaks to His servant. Hide not unbelief within thy heart!" That word was so powerful that it peeled me like a grape! The Lord knew just how to convince me of the reality of prophetic utterance.

The time when prophecy functions easiest is when your fellowship is worshipping and a spirit of prophecy enters the meeting. As the Spirit of the Lord moves in after the singing, just get quiet in your spirit and wait on the Lord. When the spirit of prophecy moves in, say, "Lord Jesus, I sure would like to get in on that. Won't you let me participate, too?"

Whenever that happens, you have an opportunity to begin to prophesy in this realm as a sort of "spiritual general practitioner." Don't complicate things and get all hung up, because God starts you off by giving you short little words of exhortation, words of comfort that He has made real to you.

I remember a meeting of about 200 or 300 young people where there was a strong spirit of prophecy. A man jumped to his feet and began to give a word: "The Lord says, take your cross and use it as a battering ram against the forces of hell." I thought, "Well now, that's a sound word of exhortation," and it came forth under a spirit of prophecy.

The second level of prophecy is the gift of prophecy. The person who operates at this level is more of a "specialist" than the one who prophesies under a spirit of prophecy. The gift of prophecy is more accurate, more mature, and more consistent than the spirit of prophecy. Look at 1 Corinthians 14:1 and 39:

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak in tongues.

The impact of these two verses is that all Christians should seek diligently after the gift of prophecy. It ought to be the most commonly used of the gifts of the Spirit in public meetings. In most places, though, prophecy is just about the least-used gift. Part of the reason for this is that many people fail to speak out when God gives them a word for the Body.

If you are in a fellowship where this seems to be the case, you might ask yourself, "How do I know when God wants me to prophesy?" First of all, don't try to prophesy out of an empty heart. To prevent going to a meeting in that condition, spend time alone with the Lord before you go. Get in your prayer closet and pray in tongues until you know your communion with the Lord is unhindered. Then when you get to the meeting, you can prophesy and encourage all the weak saints. Don't prophesy out of your weakness, but rather out of God's strength.

Other than that, it's not a hard thing to know when God wants you to prophesy. The problem is, most people are afraid to open their mouths. "Oh, me, prophesy? I couldn't do that! I don't ever want to get in the flesh."

The problem with most flesh is it never says anything. Most people in the flesh have never squeaked, spoken, grunted, or prophesied. I've seen a boy sitting with the whole pew shaking. I'd say, "Son, why don't you give what God has given you?" "Oh, I don't want to get in the flesh!" Don't have that attitude or you'll miss out on God. You do the speaking — that's your responsibility — and let the others judge!

Moving out in prophecy isn't difficult; even new converts can do it. According to Acts 19:6, Paul ministered the baptism in the Holy Spirit to some new believers, and they immediately began to speak in tongues and prophesy.

A Baptist friend of mine who was really strong in the Word and had been

a preacher for ten years prayed for a boy in his church to be filled with the Spirit one Saturday night. The next morning as the preacher walked down to the platform, the boy handed him a note and said, "Pastor, I'm so happy about the baptism . . . here's what God showed me last night." The minister walked onto the platform, sat down, and opened the note. On it was written the same outline that he had decided to use for his sermon that morning! That's the way it is. If you'll just move in faith, God will use you.

If we make prophecy complicated, we can miss out on the chance to participate in the blessings and benefits of God's gifts. When you feel your heart pounding in your ears — boom, boom, boom — don't say, "Lord, not here . . . don't do this to me, please! Wait till we get home in the bedroom, alone!" You would be amazed at the number of people — frustrated and disappointed by lost opportunity — who have told me after meetings, "Brother Mumford, when you were waiting for that prophecy tonight . . . I had it, but I was afraid to give it. I

know I disobeyed God." Failure to step out when God tells you to is plain disobedience.

Lest you think I'm over-emphasizing prophecy, let me illustrate what I'm saying. The gifts of the Spirit are like a vine. The vinedresser doesn't start to prune his vines until they have started to grow. If we had nine prophecies in a meeting, we could keep the three best ones, and eliminate those that weren't helpful. But as it is, now, we usually have to keep the three that we get, regardless of their quality. Just remember, you can't prune a plant that hasn't begun to grow if you expect it to survive.

This brings us to the third type of prophecy: *the office or ministry of the prophet*. This is the person who is God's gift to the Body of Christ for the purpose of divine direction. In the New Testament, the office of prophet is held only by men, not by women. Let's look at Acts 21:8-11:

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we enter-

ed into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Notice that there is a difference between the daughters of Philip and the prophet Agabus. God called in a prophet to speak over Paul; He didn't let the daughters do it, even though they could prophesy. The situation called for the ministry of a prophet. Agabus was enabled by God to look right through to the time when Paul would get to Jerusalem where the things he prophesied would be fulfilled.

The gift of prophecy is more limited in scope than the ministry of the prophet. The prophecies that come forth under the spirit of prophecy and the gift of prophecy usually have a lesser anointing than the ones which come from the ministry of a prophet. That's why some people despise the gift of prophecy; they have never heard prophecy come forth from a pure prophetic ministry. If you ever hear a real prophet anointed of God to speak forth His word, you will find yourself down between the chairs.

Once when I was speaking in Argentina, I began my message, but for lack of power and anointing, I realized God wanted me to stop. I said to the man in charge, "Brother, God doesn't want me to continue with this teaching. There's something He wants to say to this convention, but He doesn't want to use me." After I had quit, the brother began to reprimand me: "You've missed God. You're supposed to plow on through, rebuke the devil . . ." Right in the middle of this came a prophetic word in Spanish. I couldn't understand Spanish, but when I saw all the other men hitting the deck, I fell on my face before the

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Lord, too. When I could get the brother to interpret for me, I learned that the prophecy concerned the powerful visitation of God that would come to the country of Argentina. That's the kind of pure, powerful, prophetic ministry that we need in the Body today.

OTHER TYPES OF PROPHECY

Beyond its use as a source of exhortation, comfort and edification, prophecy can do one of two other things. It can either be directive or impartive. The prerequisite for both these types of prophecy is that other prophets must be present to judge what is said.

Directive prophecy is when the Lord says something like "Behold thou My servant. I shall use you as a minister in Africa." I have both heard and spoken prophecy like that, but it always has to be judged by others who themselves have legitimate prophetic ministries.

A young student of mine, whom I thought surely would become an evangelist, asked some of us to pray for him. He was trying to make a decision about his ministry and I just knew God was going to tell him he was to be an evangelist. We began praying for him and a fellow there who had a consistent prophetic ministry said, "Yea, thus saith the Lord, a pastor thou art, and a pastor thou shalt become. The Lord has given thee a pastor's heart." The boy started to weep and I asked him, "What's the matter? Don't you like what he said?" He answered, "The Lord's been dealing with me for three years about becoming a pastor." God used prophecy to confirm the direction He wanted this young man to take, and in the process, confounded some of us who thought we had figured out God's plan.

In the Body of Christ there's a better way than trial and error. If the Church had maintained a strong prophetic ministry, many Christians would have been saved unnecessary pain, unnecessary years in the wilderness, and unnecessary embarrassment. Many times foolish mistakes are made

by the people of God when there is no prophetic ministry to guide them.

Now let's consider prophecy of impartation. Look at 1 Timothy 1:18. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that you war a good warfare." In other words, the Lord spoke to Timothy what he was supposed to do, and with that prophetic word came the ability and the perseverance needed to continue in this appointed task.

JUDGING PROPHECY

That brings us to the subject of judging prophecy. If we look at 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, we find this: "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The reason the Thessalonian church was despising prophecy was that all kinds of error and deviations were being prophesied. "Thus saith the Lord, the Lord has already come." "The Lord saith, the resurrection is passed . . . you missed it." If you think you've heard bad prophecy, look at what they put up with! It's no wonder they wanted to do away with prophecy. But Paul said, "Despise not prophesying."

For example, one problem that arose in Corinth is indicative of an abuse that sometimes occurs when the spirit of prophecy descends on a meeting. People begin to prophesy all at the same time, competitively, all over the fellowship. That's not the way it's supposed to happen, but sometimes it does when a group of people don't know how to operate in the gifts at a mature level. But even with the mistakes, just because one plane crashes doesn't mean we all quit flying. We don't get rid of all prophecy; we just forget the bad ones. "Hold fast that which is good," and let the rest go.

That's why on occasion it's necessary to bring correction and direction to a prophecy given in a public meeting. Once I heard a fellow say, "The Lord says, the end of the world will come next September." I couldn't let that go past, so I said,

"Now, Church, hold it a minute . . ." and we straightened the thing out on the spot. It may have been an honest mistake, or he may have just needed some teaching. Most situations like that arise when someone with good intentions but poor instruction tries to "help God out." But even with the problems, we still need prophecy.

There are nine guidelines for judging prophecy that I want to explain to you briefly. These are based both on Scripture and on several years of personal experience of moving in the gifts.

1. *Fulfillment:*

An obvious way of judging prophecy is whether or not it is fulfilled. We are all familiar with people who have circulated stories about someone's prophecy that the world would end at a certain time or that a certain region was about to suffer judgment. Obviously, in these and other cases, prophecy that is not fulfilled is not from God (Deut. 18:22).

2. *Accompanying conditions:*

Most true prophecy in the realm of direction or prediction is accompanied by conditions which must be met prior to the prophecy being fulfilled. "If you will obey the Lord, He will bless you and your house." In the case of Nineveh, Jonah prophesied destruction if the people didn't repent. When they did repent, God spared them the destruction Jonah had prophesied.

3. *Is it scriptural?*

Any prophecy which is not in agreement with Scripture is false. No guidance is valid unless it conforms to the written Word of God.

4. *Public acknowledgment:*

Beware of prophecy that is given in a corner. When somebody says, "Don't tell anybody this, but the Lord saith, 'Go to India!'" you had better watch out. God doesn't operate in a corner because He Himself set up the principle of judging prophecy.

5. *Confirmation:*

True prophecy will ring a bell with

you regarding something God has already spoken to you about. God doesn't try to surprise us or sneak up on us. He always starts dealing with us early so that we are ready when the time comes to do what He wants us to do. He even compensates for our disobedience — that's called "course correction."

6. *The witness of your spirit:*

If you ever hear a prophecy and something inside you says, "Man, I don't like that," you should exercise caution. If the peace of God is upset in your heart because of a prophecy, watch out for it.

7. *The purity of the vessel:*

Know those who prophesy in your midst. If the man's home is out of order, if his life is messed up, if his bills are not paid, or if he's in deception, watch out for what he says. He could be used of the enemy to sow deception in the Body of Christ. In large meetings I discourage prophecy except from those whom I know

personally. The Scripture says, "know those who labor among you," and there's no place more important to apply that than with prophecy.

8. *The spirit of the message:*

The Scriptures say in Revelation 19 that the "spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." When Jesus spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem, He didn't say, "God is going to judge you bunch of rebels!!" He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered you . . ." Even though the prophecy is one of judgment, the spirit in which it's given should be one of love.

9. *The burden of the Lord:*

This is similar to the eighth guideline. Listen for the burden of the Lord when a prophecy is given. Check to see if you can hear God drawing His people to Him. Now there can be a legitimate utterance that comes forth with no burden, no spirit. But that may be because the person's spiritual well is empty. Then, he arrives at the

meeting — unprepared, unedified — and the spirit of prophecy comes on the meeting. He can speak forth an utterance, but it's shallow and impotent, because of the condition of the vessel. The utterance is valid, but the channel is messed up.

These nine guidelines for judging prophecy will provide us with enough information to decide whether to "hold fast" to prophetic messages we hear, or to just forget them. However, they should not deter us from stepping out in prophecy ourselves. Rather, we should all try to realize that, because prophecy will be judged, we can feel free to prophesy because of that added security. If we ever make a mistake, God will protect others from being led astray, and we will receive the loving instruction we need to move more effectively in the gifts. Paul said that he wanted all to prophesy, and only when that is the case can we expect to see the Body of Christ "come . . . unto a measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). ♡

WHAT IS A PROPHET?

(continued from page 9)

plish with too few people. So we turned to God and asked for help. We asked the Lord to show us what each person present should be doing. We received specific guidance for each person, and when the whole thing was put together, all the problems had been solved. God had shown us by revelation what we could not figure out on our own.

Relying on prophecy for guidance can create problems if we expect that every decision we face will be made for us in a prophecy. We could adopt the attitude that we do not have to think about things ourselves, because if we wait long enough the answer will be given prophetically. But the desire to avoid this abuse is no reason to avoid prophecy altogether. The help which we see prophets giving in the Old Testament is still available in the New; when we face an important decision we can ask the prophets if they have a word from the Lord. Old Testament prophets did not "guaran-

tee" that they would receive a word from the Lord if they were asked about something, but they did have expectant faith that if God's people sincerely wished to know his ways, he would not withhold his word from them. Often the Lord will use prophecy to guide us into his ways when we are not expecting it. Sometimes when we do expect prophetic guidance the Lord will not speak prophetically. But if we have faith that God will give us guidance, he will, and much of that guidance will come through prophecy.

All in all, the access to the mind of the Lord which the gift of prophecy provides is a powerful, valuable resource. Valuable enough that we should all, as Paul encourages us "set our hearts on spiritual gifts — above all the gift of prophecy" (1 Cor. 14:1). ♡

NOTES:

¹Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. G.A. Williamson (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin, 1965) Book V, 16, pp. 218–219.

²Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, Book V, 17.

³Cf., Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. II (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) chapters 8, 9.

⁴Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 207. Bruce Vawter, "Introduction to Prophetic Literature," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmeyer, and Roland Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 227, 234.

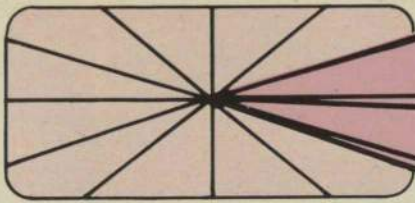
⁵Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. 207.

⁶Vawter, "Introduction to Prophetic Literature," p. 237.

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WANT TO READ MORE ABOUT PROPHECY?

See the back page of this magazine for Bruce Yocum's book, *Prophecy*, which deals with receiving and expressing this gift of the Spirit.



BIBLE STUDY

PROPHECY

by Jim Croft

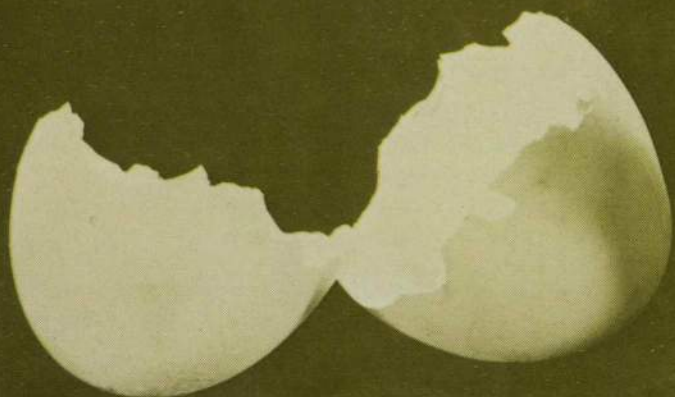
Most Christians are familiar with Paul's injunction that we should all desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. Many are now seeking to exercise this vocal gift in order to build up the Body of Christ. May the entire Church come to realize not only that prophecy is a tool for mutual encouragement, but also a mighty weapon by which we can war a good warfare against Satan (1 Tim. 1:18).

(Bible Study answers are found on page 31.)

1. What prophet did Jesus say was the greatest man who ever lived but was still less than the least in the Kingdom? (*Matt. 11:11*) _____
2. Though Jeremiah had made up his mind that he would never prophesy again, what prompted him to speak by burning in his bones? (*Jer. 20:9*) _____
3. Many times the ministry of a prophet requires that the prophet make very graphic demonstrations to show how far the people have drifted from God. What did Isaiah do? (*Is. 20:3-4*) _____
— For how long? _____
4. What king prophesied in a similar condition? (*1 Sam. 19:24*) _____
5. What New Testament prophet acted out his prophecy to Paul? (*Acts 21:10-11*) _____
6. This was no surprise for Paul because in _____ city that he visited, the _____ gave witness that _____ and _____ were in store for him. (*Acts 20:22-23*)
7. This was good because Paul knew that the _____ of the _____ are _____ to the _____. (*1 Cor. 14:32*)
8. According to 1 Peter 1:10-11, it was _____ Spirit that signified through the Old Testament's prophets that Christ should _____ and that _____ would follow.
9. Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and 1 Corinthians 14:3-6 very carefully and answer these questions:
 - a. Name three uses for prophecy. _____
 - b. Who is edified through prophecy? _____
 - c. What gift can serve the same use as prophecy? _____
 - d. Would it be out of order to receive doctrine or revelation through this gift? _____
10. We are not to _____ prophesying but _____ all things and _____ to that which is _____. (*1 Thess. 5:20-21*)
11. Elijah did not see or hear the Lord in the wind, an earthquake, or the fire. Where did he hear him? (*1 Ki. 19:11-13*) _____
12. And in what did he hide his face? _____
13. A person who exercises the gift of prophecy should guard his character with all diligence, being just the opposite of the prophets of Jerusalem who were _____ and _____ persons. (*Zeph. 3:4*)
14. What will God do without first telling his prophets? (*Amos 3:7*) _____
15. When and how often does he send them forth? (*Jer. 7:25*) _____
16. Read Hosea 12:10 and Numbers 12:6 and list three of the many ways that God gives a word of prophecy. _____
17. In the days of Samuel's childhood, the Word of the Lord was _____ because there were no _____ . (*1 Sam. 3:1*)
18. But God was faithful in that he raised up Samuel and _____ of his _____ to the _____. (*1 Sam. 3:19*)
19. The Lord often has to coach us along to get us to prophesy. As he taught Jeremiah to discern His Word, what were the first and second things that he showed him in visions? (*Jer. 1:9-13*) _____
20. Only as we exercise our spiritual senses can we learn to discern between that which is _____ and that which is _____. (*Heb. 5:14*)
21. We should _____ prophecy that we may all _____ and be _____. (*1 Cor. 14:31*)

Breaking of Your Shell

by Dennis Moses



How I overcame my reluctance to prophesy

When I first heard about prophecy I thought it was wierd and perhaps even phoney. Later, I did a complete turn-about, believing prophecy to be a rare and super-spiritual achievement far out of my reach! But I know now that prophecy is real and that it is an effective way in which God speaks to His children. And to top it all off, I have even found that I can prophesy!

My experience with prophecy has been a steady growth toward this discovery. Shortly after I was saved, my wife, Sheila, and I were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Through wonderful Christian fellowship, we became exposed to the gifts of the Spirit. As a new Christian I looked upon those who prophesied with awe; I thought anyone who prophesied just had to be an extra-special vessel! Since that time I have learned that *all* Christians are special, and as Paul says, "you can all prophesy, one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted" (1 Cor. 14:13).

In the case of my wife and myself, she was the first to speak forth a prophecy, though she did so with fear and trembling. Even so, the important thing was that she was

being obedient to God in an area of truth that she genuinely wanted to understand and experience.

I remember several small home meetings when she would talk after the meeting to those who had prophesied, trying to learn how to be sensitive to God's Spirit as He moves upon a person to prophesy. She learned that just as our prayer language of tongues is a gift of God in which we grow by faith and by practice, so it is with prophecy. This encouraged her to continue stepping out in this realm.

As time went on, I too started prophesying in small home prayer meetings. I realized that I was not "special" — I was just learning in the Lord to move out in faith. It is not egotistical or proud to desire to prophesy. Paul said, "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1).

I especially remember a lesson God taught us in our early experience with prophecy. We were having a weekly Bible study and prayer meeting in our home, with mostly teenagers and new Christians attending. One night after finishing our Bible study, we were all sitting on the floor praying and waiting upon the Lord. As we

prayed, the Holy Spirit began to move, not upon just one or two to prophesy, but upon the whole group of about a dozen!

As one would speak a prophetic word in faith, someone else would say, "That's just exactly what I was thinking," and others would add, "Me, too." The Spirit was revealing God's message to the entire group, with all of those present confirming that the same message spoken by one in faith had also been stirring within them. The Spirit Himself was "leading us into truth," exhorting our little group to prophesy, and we certainly were being edified. That evening God was teaching us that any of the thoughts we were having were not ours but *His*, and He was supplying the encouragement we needed to overcome our limited faith and experience to step out in prophecy.

As we learned to trust God and be obedient to the prompting of the Spirit, it became easier to distinguish the voice of God from our own personal desires. This isn't to say that every time we prophesied it was 100% right, but our goal came to be that "we must decrease that He may increase." We recognized that no prophecy is 100% pure, because very few of us are continually in the Spirit and obedient to God. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9). Through this we realized that, as imperfect as we are, God works through our minds, our personalities, and our vocabulary, to speak His messages. Just as He used men of old to bring forth His written Word, the Bible, God has chosen to use human vessels today to declare His words.

During this learning period, all the prophecies which I had spoken forth were in small home meetings, but then we started attending a large non-denominational charismatic church. At the beginning of one of the Sunday morning services, the Spirit started to give me the beginning of a message for the congregation. I sat there through the entire service with my heart pounding and my legs shaking, but I just couldn't bring myself to give that word from the Lord! For the next several hours I really felt terrible about my disobedience to God. I confessed my sin and promised Him that if He ever chose to use me in a large meeting again, I would try by His grace to be obedient and not fail Him.

I soon found out that when we promise something to God, He takes us at our word! The very next Sunday at the start of the morning service, the Holy Spirit started speaking a word to me. I said, "Lord I didn't expect this so soon, but I promised and I won't fail you this time." As the pastor finished his sermon and started giving an altar call, I knew it was time.

Since the church was so large, the procedure for giving a prophetic word was to go forward and submit it to the

pastor to keep order in the service. I knew that the moment I stepped into the aisle, I couldn't turn back. I was nervous, but as I started forward, the peace of God swept over me, and before I knew it, I was standing beside the pastor. He knew me and said, "Just speak into the microphone." After I spoke forth the message, (which confirmed the sermon), the pastor said, "Thank you, Brother Moses," and I returned to my seat, grateful to have been used by the Lord.

But I came to realize that I was not simply a tool or vessel which God wanted to use; I was His child whom He wanted to teach and train, and I found myself learning a number of things.

One thing is that when the Lord gives you a prophetic burden, it doesn't mean that you just dump it quickly as you would a wheelbarrow full of dirt. The time of presentation is almost as important as the message itself. In most prophecy God is speaking to specific individuals or a specific group for whom He has prepared a situation to "hear" His word. Sometimes you do just unload the wheelbarrow, but other times you must carry it for a while. God's messages are precious, and proper timing is necessary for prophecy to be most effective.

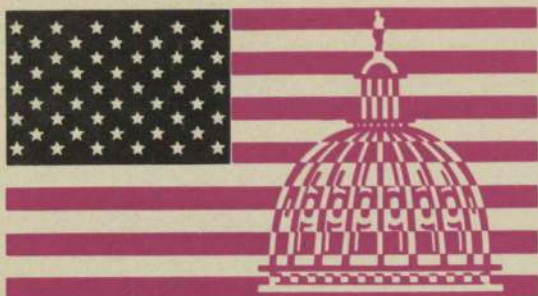
I also learned that once I had spoken a prophetic message, I needed to leave it alone. The results of a prophecy are up to God; it is His message not ours. Our responsibility is to be sensitive and obedient to give it.

Scripture teaches us that prophecy is to be judged and tested by those in authority and by those experienced in prophecy within the Christian community. But, I believe even further that the person giving a prophecy needs to judge and test the word which he believes he is to speak even *before* he gives it. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). If I feel uneasy about a prophecy which I am holding in my spirit, then I give it to God and ask for confirmation of the message, and for wisdom about the time for sharing it.

Often this assurance can come as we pray further about the word. But perhaps one of the most orderly ways to receive confirmation of a word you are unsure about is to submit it to someone in authority or to one who is mature in the gift of prophecy.

Perhaps the most important thing I have learned is that we, as the Church, have a great need in this day to hear from our heavenly Father. He is not a quiet God: He has spoken to us through the prophets, revealed Himself to us in His written Word, the Bible, and even became flesh in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, speaking to men as a man. But today God has chosen that we should not only be His witnesses, but also His voice to each other and to the world. "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21). Learning these things about prophecy, and experiencing the personal blessing of this gift has been an exciting part of my adventure in walking with God. 🙏

DENNIS MOSES, currently a student at Melodyland School of Theology, and his wife, Sheila, have two children and are active in the Dayspring Community of Brea, California.



INTERCESSORS REPORT

By John Beckett

THE NATIONAL PRAYER CONGRESS

No one fully knew what to expect at the first *National Prayer Congress* in Dallas last October. "To the best of our knowledge, nothing like this has ever occurred before," said Dr. Bill Bright, coordinator of the four-day gathering.

A typical reaction as one entered the huge Dallas Convention Center was surprise that so few had come. The facilities dwarfed the 1500 to 2000 attendees. Ironically a lurid rock group, "Black Sabbath," drew over 10,000 young people into an adjacent hall on the first night — at the same time Jimmy Owens was leading the inspired "If My People . . ." cantata for our comparatively small band of prayer warriors. Was God being upstaged? Of course not. It seemed as though God was showing us two things: First, that numbers, per se, impress Him less than they do us, especially in prayer. As Dr. W. A. Criswell pointed out, the prayer that moved mountains in scripture was that of committed, trusting servants praying singly, or by twos and threes. Secondly, He seemed to be illustrating the relatively low priority that Christians give to prayer — not realizing that it is the most powerful weapon against evil that God has given His people.

Several themes emerged as the thirty-two conference speakers developed the many-faceted overall topic of prayer. The need for unity in the Body was among the most prominent, and in the words of Jimmy Owens, "foremost in the heart of God." He pointed out that Satan

works within the Body, knowing that if he tried to divide us from the outside, he would drive us closer together. He implored us to be peacemakers, saying we "must be aware to never be a tool for the kingdom of darkness" through gossip and spreading rumors. In a way, the conference itself was a symbol of unity, with speakers and participants covering a broad denominational spectrum and embracing both charismatics and non-charismatics. Prayer, by its nature, unites. Undoubtedly this is a key reason for the high priority God places on prayer.

Motivation to be diligent in prayer came from several speakers. Cliff Barrows said we need to stop talking about prayer, and organizing prayer, and begin praying. Dr. Harold Ockenga outlined the pattern for receiving God's promises in scripture: meet His conditions of obedience; ask in faith that God will hear and answer; and live in His righteousness. Then "we have an undisputed claim upon God's promises." Dr. Edward Hill shared marvelous answers to prayer in his own life and concluded, "It's amazing how much God has for us, and how unwilling we are to receive it." Dr. Charles Stanley said God showed him at the beginning of his ministry that what he accomplished of worth would be accomplished on his knees.

Practical direction in our prayer lives was emphasized. Dr. Jack McAllister said our daily time with God should be the most important thing we do, and challenged every person present to commit at least one-half hour a day to prayer and Bible reading. The majority made this commitment, with many committing to a full hour each day. How else, he

asked, can we expect to know God. Dr. Louis Evans urged us to *listen* in our prayer times. "We need a 'pause' time in prayer." And Lloyd Ogilvie outlined a successful pattern for home prayer gatherings, involving 45 minutes for Bible study, 45 minutes to share personal needs, and 45 minutes for prayer.

Interestingly, a number of speakers referred to the great value of prayer notebooks. Dr. Ockenga said he could look over forty years of such records to see when he had requested a matter in prayer and when God had answered. He quickly added that some of those answers were "no." One great advantage of the prayer notebook is that it forces us to be specific. Dr. Howard Hendricks noted that Socrates said, "generalities are a refuge for a weak mind," to which Hendricks added, "Generalities in prayer are a cover-up for a weak spiritual condition."

There were numerous references to intercessory prayer, which Rev. Willie Richardson simply referred to as "praying for others." He noted that such prayer "requires a deep love of God, and a divine love for other people," saying that we must be prepared to pray for our enemies too! Miss Corrie ten Boom said, "To speak to God in behalf of men is the highest call of God." And Dr. Stanley spoke about mountain-moving prayer, emphasizing that our faith must focus on God — not the mountain. "We must pray and not lose heart . . . and we must pray fearlessly, coming to God expecting," he added. In undertaking such prayer, Dr. Stanley urged us to be quiet long enough for God to show us His burden . . . to enable us to "feel what He feels," and then to

mix prayer with fasting, that we might bear the burden of God.

Dr. Sam Coker added still another dimension to effective prayer. He described our tendency to pray amiss; for example, that God will save our nation, but "don't involve me." "Pray," he said, "with the intent of getting involved in our prayer." Certainly Nehemiah is a striking example of a man who combined prayer and action to produce mighty results (Neh. 1 and 2).

Intermixed with the talks were times of prayer, usually with small groups of 3 to 5 people. Here we experimented, applying the principles we had just learned. It was here also, that we realized each of us can grow, that no one was an "expert"; each of us realized the vast and largely untapped potential in prayer. But perhaps most importantly, we came away with real conviction that *we'd better get with it*. We can begin where we are and, by God's grace and nurture, become truly effective in this great work of His Kingdom. 🍷

Intercessors for America Newsletter carries news of concern to Christians and informs them of crucial issues before Congress and of urgent prayer needs in the government and nation. It is a great aid in helping Christians pray for the government.

If you would like to receive this newsletter, send your name and address to: Intercessors for America, P.O. Box D, Elyria, Ohio 44035. Although the newsletter is free, it is supported solely by contributions (which are IRS deductible.)

Prayer Focus Announce- ment

At the Chicago Summit
Conference in September

1975, a national gathering of Christian leaders established the first Friday of every month as a day of prayer and fasting for all Christians in America.

New Wine, in conjunction with Intercessors for America, publishes a suggested prayer focus each month, so that the collective effect of our readers' prayers may be concentrated upon a specific area of need.

Our prayer focus for January is the new federal administration and the Ninety-fifth Congress of the United States: that President Carter, his Cabinet, advisers, and the new Congress will faithfully discharge their responsibilities before God, seeking His ways and His righteousness.

THE SOVEREIGN SON

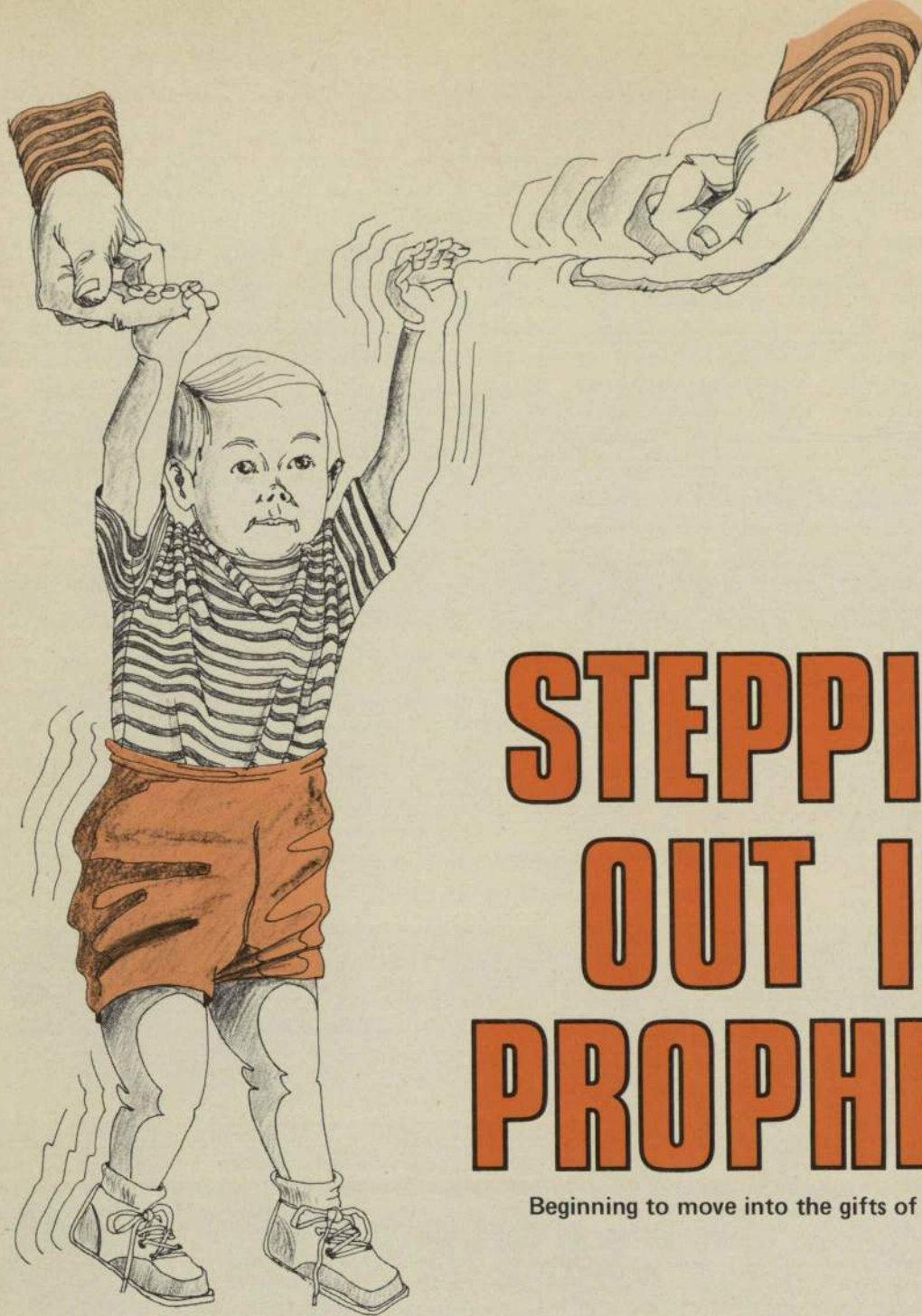
On Zion's Holy Hill,
The God-man sits to reign;
A righteous scepter in His hand,
O'er-shades His vast domain.
Divine decree hath placed Him there,
While mocking monarchs rage,
Inviolate His throne shall stand,
Supreme from age to age.

No weakling King is He,
This Man on heaven's seat;
His bloody sword, His body scarred,
Declare His foes' defeat.
The keys of conquered kings He holds,
His trophies of the fight,
While round Him, "worthy," cry His hosts,
And celebrate His might.

And now from yonder throne,
On men good gifts He pours;
And with the strong He gladly shares,
The spoils from heaven's stores.
Not meat and drink, but peace and joy,
And righteousness complete;
His Kingdom gifts to all His seed,
Who gather at His feet.

All hail, Jehovah's King,
We bless Thee, David's Son;
Thy everlasting reign,
Shall aging worlds out-run.
Thy years shall never end,
And placed at God's right hand,
Thine enemies shall each be brought,
To own Thy just command.

W.J. Ern Baxter



STEPPING OUT IN PROPHECY

by
Don
Basham

Beginning to move into the gifts of the Spirit

On many occasions while speaking in charismatic seminars across the country I have conducted a simple poll. Before a typical congregation of approximately 500 people, I ask for a show of hands from all those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and have received the evidence of speaking in tongues. Perhaps 400 or more will raise their hands.

Then I ask, "How many of you Spirit-baptized Christians who just raised your hands and who speak in

tongues have ever experienced the gift of interpretation of tongues or the gift of prophecy?" Out of the 400 who raised their hands the first time, usually only 60 or 75 will raise them the second time.

In other words, on the average only one out of six or seven Spirit-baptized Christians have manifested any spiritual gift other than speaking in tongues. And yet Paul, in his instructions to the Corinthian Christians about the use of spiritual gifts, makes it plain that all of us are to move on

beyond the initial manifestation of speaking in tongues to experience other gifts as well.

Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that *he* (not someone else) may interpret (1 Cor. 14:13).

For ye may *all* prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted (1 Cor. 14:31).

It may come as a surprise to some Spirit-baptized Christians that the

Holy Spirit doesn't want us to be satisfied with only the initial evidence of speaking in tongues that we experience with baptism in the Holy Spirit. To stop with tongues is to stop barely inside the door of the virtually unlimited supernatural realm of the Spirit.

However, through the years there has been such an over-emphasis on the controversial topic of tongues, God's desire for us to move to a more mature and balanced experience, including additional gifts of the Spirit, has been chronically ignored or overlooked.

Remember this: when we experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of tongues, we receive *the* gift of the Holy Spirit, not a gift of tongues or interpretation or prophecy or healing. Our *gift* is the Holy Spirit Himself, come to dwell in us in a powerful new way. Resident in the Holy Spirit are all nine gifts or manifestations. Therefore, once we receive *the gift* of the Holy Spirit, all nine spiritual manifestations are potentially available to us since the Holy Spirit divides or distributes the gifts "to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:12).

This means that from the time we initially receive the Holy Spirit we have potential access, not only to speaking in tongues, but to *all* the gifts. No wonder God grows impatient with us for neglecting the greater portion of our inheritance!

Now let us consider some basic facts about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and discuss how we begin to exercise them. While we will list all nine, we will limit our discussion to the three vocal or inspirational gifts.

HELPFUL INFORMATION ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

For many years biblical scholars have recognized that, by their definitions as well as by their functions, the nine manifestations or "gifts" of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 clearly fall into three categories of three gifts each. There are three gifts of *inspiration*, three gifts of *revelation*, and three gifts of *power*.

Gifts of Inspiration:

Tongues
Interpretation of tongues
Prophecy

Gifts of Revelation:

Word of knowledge
Word of wisdom
Discerning of spirits

Gifts of Power:

Faith
Healings
Miracles

Without being dogmatic, let us observe that in most cases, progression into the spiritual gifts seems to flow in a certain sequence, with the vocal or inspirational gifts appearing to be the most readily accessible. Perhaps this is because our initial introduction to the gifts of the Spirit usually consists of speaking in tongues when we receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is not an unexpected sequence to move from tongues to interpretation of tongues and then on to prophecy. Although the theme of this month's magazine is "Prophecy," we feel it is helpful here to include a discussion of the gift of interpretation since for many it serves as the connecting link between tongues and prophecy.

Let us pause here to define the gift of interpretation of tongues and the gift of prophecy. The gift of interpretation of tongues is the supernatural ability to declare by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the known language of assembled worshippers, the meaning of what was previously spoken through the gift of tongues. The gift of prophecy is the supernatural ability to speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the words of God to His people. It is similar to the gift of interpretation except that the gift of prophecy requires no prior message in tongues.

HOW DO WE BEGIN?

An essential principle to keep in mind as we discuss how to move into the spiritual gifts is this: *All progress in the Christian life is by faith!* Many people have said to me, "I feel I would like to interpret tongues but how can I

be sure what I say will be from God?" Besides the fact that this requires a step of faith on our part, there is a simple scripture that should help us: "Therefore he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret" (1 Cor. 14:13, RSV).

Since the Scriptures never tell us to pray for anything outside the will of God, we can see from this verse that it *is* God's will for every Christian who speaks in tongues to also experience the gift of interpretation. And if God wants us to attempt interpretation, then He will help us to succeed in that attempt. In all our efforts to move into spiritual gifts, God is with us, encouraging us. Nevertheless, He also requires that we take a step of faith.

Most of us, when we were first baptized in the Holy Spirit, had to overcome our timidity about speaking in tongues. We had to open our mouths and speak out in faith, trusting that the sounds and syllables we uttered were given by the Holy Spirit. In other words, most of us learned to speak in tongues by speaking in tongues. And what is true about speaking in tongues, is also true about the interpretation of tongues. The Holy Spirit, never forces Himself on us. He doesn't push our mouths open, waggle our tongues, and force breath out of our lungs to make us speak. He merely *prompts* us to speak in faith the utterance He provides. So, the only way you will ever begin to interpret tongues is to open your mouth in faith and speak, in English, the thoughts you feel the Holy Spirit would have you say in response to the message in tongues.

Many Christians fail to realize how gentle are the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He does not *compel* us to speak; rather, He very *gently* prompts us. And the promptings can be so unobtrusive that if we aren't sensitive or if we aren't ready to respond in faith, we will mistake them as momentary thoughts or impressions of our own minds.

Since His promptings *are* gentle, we may wonder, "Was it the Holy Spirit who dropped those thoughts in my mind when that person began speaking

in tongues, or was it my own imagination?" Often our natural timidity takes over and we say to ourselves, "Since I'm not *sure* it was the Holy Spirit, I'll just play it safe and keep quiet. If I speak and it isn't from the Spirit, I'll be terribly embarrassed. Since I can't be sure, I won't say anything."

That's playing it safe all right! That way there's absolutely no risk! It takes very little faith to do nothing!

You're not sure the prompting is from God so you wait. And you wait. For how long? How long until you *are* sure those promptings are from God? A week? A month? A year? Five years?

I believe *there is only one way you will ever be sure*, and that is to try it! Speak in faith the words or thoughts that have been given you — no matter how gentle the prompting — trusting they are from the Holy Spirit. It is the application of the same spiritual principle we mentioned before: *All progress in the Christian life is by faith.*

Most of us need to reevaluate what is taking place when the gifts of the Holy Spirit come into operation. It is the Holy Spirit moving sovereignly to manifest God's purpose and power among His people. We must learn to cooperate in yielding ourselves to His Spirit, daring to trust that He is fully capable, not only of providing, but also of protecting His supernatural manifestations in us.

WHAT IF WE FAIL?

At the same time, we must remember that God understands when we prove to be less than perfect in our attempts to yield to Him. Suppose you attempt an interpretation of tongues and you stammer and run out of words before you've adequately expressed the thought you felt God gave you? Or suppose you attempt a prophecy and it falls flat? Have you committed a crime? No! All you did was fall short in a sincere attempt to be obedient to the Spirit, and you are under no condemnation from God because of the attempt.

The Lord's encouragement for us to

move into spiritual gifts is similar to parents attempting to teach their child how to walk. You know what Mother and Daddy do when they think Junior should begin to walk. Mother stands in the middle of the room with Junior, allowing him to grasp only her index fingers. Daddy steps a few paces away and beckons to his little son.

"Come on, Junior. Come to Daddy."

Then Mother gently disengages her fingers from Junior's hands. There he stands, all by himself, weaving back and forth, looking uncertainly at Mother, then at Daddy, both feet glued to the floor.

"Come on, Junior," Daddy encourages. "Walk to Daddy. You can do it!"

At this point Junior has a decision to make. *He can take a step of faith or he can play it safe.* The first time he probably plays it safe. Without moving his feet he just sinks slowly to the floor, then scampers on his hands and knees over to Daddy with a big smile on his face. (Are you seeing the difference between "faith" and "playing it safe?")

But Mother and Daddy are not satisfied to let Junior "play it safe." They set up the whole experiment again. There Junior stands once more, wobbling back and forth while Daddy encourages him to take his first step.

This time he does it! He takes one step. Then he takes another step! Then, trying for that third step, he stumbles. Kerplunk! Down he goes, right on his face, and he begins to cry. He's failed. He's tried to walk and he's failed!

So what do Mother and Daddy do? Are they angry? Do they punish him for his failure? Do they berate him for making that attempt? Has it all been a terrible mistake? Not at all. It was the genuine love and concern of his parents that exposed Junior to the possibility of falling in the first place. They pick him up and brag on him for trying. They console him and tell him everything is all right, there's no harm done and he'll do better next time. Then they try the whole experiment again.

Junior receives no rebuke and no

condemnation. How *can* he when he is surrounded by his parent's love and encouragement? And they will continue to encourage him to stop playing it safe, to stop crawling. They will encourage him, in spite of his failures and faltering attempts, until he succeeds in walking. Why? Because they know their son's destiny calls for him to walk. It is a part of his inheritance as their beloved child.

God's attempts to promote faith in our exercise of spiritual gifts is akin to the way we encourage our children to walk. And our early efforts at manifesting spiritual gifts are often like Junior's first efforts to walk, faltering and imperfect. Nevertheless, we are right in trying.

By the same token, we are under no more criticism and condemnation for those faltering efforts, even when we fail, than our own children are for their failure to walk perfectly on the first try. More than that, experience shows that even initial, imperfect attempts at manifesting spiritual gifts can be a blessing to other people who are present. I know of no greater encouragement to one attempting a determined, if somewhat shaky interpretation of tongues or prophecy, than for him to discover that, in spite of its imperfections and lack of eloquence, it truly spoke to the needs of those who heard it. The one interpreting or prophesying is pleased, the people who receive it are pleased, and God is pleased — all because an attempt has been made in faith to be obedient to the loving, gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit.

GOD WILL USE US

When I was first baptized in the Holy Spirit almost 25 years ago, I was still laboring under many of the false impressions which plague people today. Back then we did not have the benefit of sound teaching about how to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And when I finally did exercise faith and received the baptism, no one warned me that Satan would repeatedly tell me my experience wasn't from God.

Consequently, for many weeks after I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, I questioned whether or not my experience of speaking in tongues was real. I did not understand that speaking in tongues would always be a volitional act on my part, with me doing the speaking and Him furnishing the words and syllables. I continually felt a little twinge of guilt as I spoke in tongues that perhaps "it was *all* just *me*." I was a long time getting over the feeling.

This had an influence, I'm sure, on my failure to experience interpretation of tongues or prophecy for over a year after I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Like many others I would pray in tongues in my private devotions and earnestly hope for the day when I would miraculously be visited with an interpretation of tongues or prophecy. I had not the slightest realization then that God was waiting for me to move in faith into those gifts the same way I had first stepped out in faith to speak in tongues.

It was during a conference at Elim Bible Institute in Lima, New York, over a year after I was baptized in the Holy Spirit that I gained my first insight into how the gift of interpretation of tongues and prophecy were to be received. During that conference I opened my mouth *in faith* and gave my first interpretation of a message in tongues. At the time, several of us were praying for a woman who was seeking God's direction for her life. My interpretation contained two statements which were so pertinent to her

situation that she began to weep with relief.

Since I had felt foolish and self-conscious when I began to speak, and was quite fearful that what I was saying might be simply the working of my own imagination, I was vastly relieved to receive such a quick confirmation that the interpretation really was of the Holy Spirit and not just "me."

That initial experience proved a spiritual breakthrough for me. In the years since, my confidence in the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit, has increased until I find myself on numerous occasions being led to manifest both the gift of interpretation of tongues and the gift of prophecy. I do not believe I am called to the ministry of a prophet, yet I thank God for the scriptures which speak of the Holy Spirit's desire for me and for all members of the Body of Christ to manifest spiritual gifts.

Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy . . . (1 Cor. 14:5, RSV). ▼

Book Available

For more instruction on Prophecy we would suggest you read Don Basham's book, *A Handbook on Tongues, Interpretation and Prophecy*. This book is an excellent study for those wanting to move deeper into the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Use back page order form to order.

Essay Announcement

The February issue of *New Wine* will mark the end of our Essay of the Month feature. Although the deadline for submitting an essay has already passed, we invite each of you to watch for the final selection we will offer under this heading.

We want to express our thanks to all who have sent in material for this portion of *New Wine*; we have truly been blessed by your efforts.

Many have written to express their concern that the discontinuation of the Essay of the Month would also mean the end of testimony articles in *New Wine*. However, we want to assure you that we intend to continue printing material based on people's experience as the opportunity arises and we feel the Lord leading us to do so.

Again we thank you for your participation in this endeavor, and hope that you'll watch for our concluding selection.

Charismatic Conference

Charismatic Christians will gather in Kansas City, Missouri, on July 20-24 for one of the largest events in the history of the charismatic renewal: the 1977 Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches. Over 60,000 are expected at this monumental gathering of God's people. Nightly sessions of all participants will be held in Arrowhead Stadium, while seminars and workshops on many topics, sponsored by various groups, will meet during the daytime.

The conference as a whole is under the direction of an ecumenical Planning Committee, with Dr. Kevin Ranaghan as chairman. The Planning Committee is responsible for each of the Conference General Assemblies, while the various church-related charismatic committees will guide the denominational sessions and many of the workshops.

Along with many other teachers from across the Body of Christ, all six of the teachers associated with Christian Growth Ministries and *New Wine* Magazine (Don Basham, Ern Baxter, Bob Mumford, John Poole, Derek Prince, and Charles Simpson) will be involved in ministry at the conference.

If you would like registration materials for this event, you may write to:

New Wine Magazine
Attn: 1977 Conference on
Charismatic Renewal in
the Christian Churches
P.O. Box 22888
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33335

Please be in prayer for the Planning Committee, for the people who will be ministering at the conference, and for all who will be attending. We also want to encourage you to make every effort to be present at this great gathering of God's people.



A businessman's story of the power of prophecy

by Tom Redmond

SUSTAINED BY PROPHECY

It was late in the healing service. The minister, a messianic Jew named Mike Evans, had already prayed for many people. More than a thousand folks had turned out that night in November 1974 at the Christian Retreat Campground in Bradenton, Florida to hear Mike preach and to see if God would touch them. At the time, I was working as business administrator for the ministry there, and as usual, I was present at the evening service. I had seen many

healings that night and had actually left my seat to help catch people as they were being "slain in the Spirit."

While I was helping at the platform, the minister declared that he was going to pray for the healing of gum and tooth problems, and since I had had a tender spot in my mouth for several days, I just stepped into the line at the long platform to receive prayer.

I still have a vivid mental impression of the crowded auditorium, the hushed whisper of many people praying in the background, the soft music, and the dimly lit platform area. As

Mike stepped towards me smiling, I told him of my sore mouth. He bent over, placed his hand upon my head, and then suddenly stood upright. Seeing his head tilted back slightly, his one arm raised, and his eyes closed, I realized he was about to prophesy over me.

Now quite frankly, this was not my first encounter with personal prophecy. My previous experiences had never seemed quite real, and the prophecies spoken over me had never really settled right in my spirit, not to mention the fact that nothing much

had happened as a result of them. None of them had offered clear guidance, but since I hadn't been overly caught up in their vague promises, they were quite harmless.

I can remember thinking to myself when I realized what was happening, "All I really asked for was healing for my sore gums!"

Then the words came:

"God, He's yours . . . He's yours . . . He's yours . . . He's yours . . ."

Tom, He's going to give you a lot more . . . he's going to give you a lot more than the healing of your gums . . . or anything else . . .

He's going to give you the *challenge of your life* right now . . . the *challenge of your life* . . . He's going to give you the *challenge of your life* right now —

And He's going to say to you right now, *Obey Me*. I have prepared an anointing for you — an anointing that will come with *obedience* — if you are *obedient* unto me, saith the Lord, then your hands shall burn like a flame of fire and your lips shall be warm like you have never known and in your spirit there will be a burning — and my anointing will come upon you greater than you have ever known and you will be moving in a realm you couldn't possibly hope for, saith the Lord.

Obedience . . . this is the lesson I've been teaching you . . . these are the words I've been speaking . . . *obedience!*"

With the words "the challenge of your life," a holy and awesome fear of God gripped my heart, and when I heard him speak of hands like a flame of fire, lips to be warm, and a burning in my spirit, I actually felt like I was going to explode into flames at any second. Although my mind was rejecting what was said, in my spirit I had an overriding sense that God had spoken to me.

As Mike touched my forehead, I collapsed in relief that the whole thing was over. I felt so weak that I was perfectly content to lie there, peacefully stretched out on the nice, cool floor.

I don't know how much time passed — probably just a few seconds —

before I got up. Half-stumbling and half-walking back to my seat, I noticed that people were looking at me kind of funny and that many of the women in the audience were crying. When I got to my seat, my wife, Billie, had tears streaming down her face.

Hoarsely I whispered to her, "Do you think that was God?" Quickly she nodded an emphatic "yes." I prayed, "Lord, what did you mean, the challenge of my life?" I was impressed with the thought, "Your wife will have the key to it." Again I asked Billie, "What do you think the Lord means?" She stared at me wide-eyed and blank, and said she didn't know but that she felt God had really spoken to me.

Billie and I walked back to our mobile home in the camp park that night with a mixture of doubt and belief. What could the Lord have meant by "the challenge of your life" and all this obedience that was to be required? I didn't know then, but we were soon to find out.

THE EARLY STEP

Prior to joining Christian Retreat in January of 1974, I had been vice-president in charge of sales and marketing for a truck/trailer manufacturer located in Bradenton. During my last several years with that company, I had known the charismatic ministry at the camp and had been given more than one invitation to work there. Throughout my final year in secular employment, I had grown increasingly aware that I was going to leave that job, even though God had placed me in the company, blessed my efforts, and made it clear that I should not move until He sovereignly directed me to.

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That word of direction from the Lord finally came to me through some verses in 2 Corinthians that God made very real to me. I had been aware that those verses were for me for over a year, but they hadn't fit in with the circumstances of my life until that particular time. When God opened my eyes to see that now was the time to apply this scripture, it became "rhema" for me: that is, the Holy Spirit made it alive to my spirit and understanding, bringing me the release and life needed to do what He wanted me to do. It was then that I knew He wanted me to leave my job.

Armed with a peace and release in my spirit about my decision — which was solidly confirmed by my wife — I went to see my boss. Just a day earlier, he had told me that if I were willing to make certain commitments to the company, it would mean a handsome salary increase and a newer and bigger company car. So, when I instead told him my decision to resign, he thought I had flipped out completely.

There I stood: a man with a wife and four children, a mortgage, bills, and all the other responsibilities that go with caring for a family, asking my boss to "please accept my resignation," with no other reply to his inquiries of how I would earn my living than, "I don't know just yet."

Although I honestly envisioned myself as trusting God for all provision, the uncertainty of future finances was genuinely unsettling. I have to admit that even as I answered my boss' question, the job offer from the campground was in the back of my mind as a safety valve. Though the pay would be considerably less there, at least it was a job and a way to live. My boss' final words to me were that he would let me have one month's salary to tide me over after I left.

A week later, though, when I went to collect my check, it was only for a normal week's pay, and I just assumed that he had decided not to give me the extra money after all.

For a week after my resignation, Billie and I had tremendous times of worship and fellowship with the Lord, but still no guidance came about how

to support my family. By the following Tuesday, I was starting to panic. Although I was as certain as ever that God had told me to resign, I was getting worried because I didn't have the cash reserves to support my family indefinitely without increasing our debts.

The only door that might lead to employment was the position at the camp, but I didn't have a solid word from the Lord to take the job. Even so, I decided to drive out there to discuss the situation. Uncertainly I prayed, "Lord, if you don't want me to get this job, don't let the car start." Well, the car started, and as I drove out to the camp, I reassured myself with thoughts like, "It's got to be all right; after all, God doesn't want me to not have a job!"

Before the morning was over, I had convinced myself that it was right to accept the job in spite of a nagging uneasiness with the decision. I just dismissed my misgivings and told myself again that I had no other reasonable choice.

When I returned home and told Billie of the outcome of my trip, to my amazement, she was not relieved, or overjoyed, but disappointed. In my frustration at her reaction, I became defensive and argumentative. After all, wouldn't I be working full-time for God now? And wouldn't the exposure to great Bible teaching and working with wonderful, Christian people help me become a mature man of God? Despite all my attempts to justify myself, Billie couldn't shake her depression and my uneasiness grew.

A few days later, a surprise came in the mail: a check for one week's pay from my previous employer. The next week, another came; then another and another until I had received the whole month's salary that had been promised. Each week's check came as another nagging reminder that I had failed to trust Him, convicting me that I had not waited on God the way I should have. But since I was already committed to the job at the camp, I had rationalized that the extra money was just an extra blessing from the Lord.

Here I was, a year after joining the staff at the camp, with a powerful prophecy calling for the "challenge of my life" and "obedience," and neither Billie nor I could figure out what God meant. Nothing happened in the first few days after the prophecy that gave us any clue to its meaning, so we began to wonder if it was real.

Within two weeks, however, events began to occur with lightning-like rapidity. First, I picked up an old Bible in which I found some notes I had taken long before, of the first message I had ever heard Bob Mumford preach. He had been sharing on seven areas of our lives where God strips us in order to produce the Kingdom of God in us. As I looked at the seven areas I had noted, I realized that God had dealt with me in each one except for the area of employment, and the thought struck me that perhaps God would someday work with me in that part of my life.

The very next day, Charles Simpson was teaching at the camp, and at the end of his message he said, "God has a plan and you have a plan. Drop yours and take His!" I raised my hand in prayer and said, "Lord, I do want your plan and not my own."

Within two weeks events began to occur with lightning-like rapidity.

Two days later, on Monday morning, I was called to meet with the president of the organization. We discussed various business projects, most of which were finished. Watching all my work nearing completion, area by area, I had actually been looking for things to do to stay busy, and as with my former job, I had the growing feeling that I would be leaving soon.

The president of the ministry remarked that there just didn't seem to be any more work for me to do, and I agreed that we had really just about accomplished the business reor-

ganization we had planned and started a year earlier. His response to me was that though it hurt him to do it, he would just have to lay me off. I would remain on the payroll for another month, until the end of December, and that would end my term of employment at the camp.

After a few seconds of shock, I began to experience a peace inside, and in my mind I again heard the words of the prophecy. . . . "I'm going to give you the challenge of your life." It was as if God were telling me that the challenge had come. Little did I realize, though, that this was only the beginning.

THE CHALLENGE

When I shared the news at home, Billie and our two older boys, Charlie and Tommy, surprised me by encouraging me with their strong support. We agreed that this time we would really wait until we got solid direction from the Lord before we made any big decisions.

For another month I continued my job at the camp, and though the situation was a little awkward, and we had no idea what would happen next, I had a real peace that we were in God's hands and He would see us through.

Then, one day a very significant thing happened. The one thing that had puzzled me ever since the night of the prophecy was God's statement to me that my wife had an important key to understanding what He had said to me that night. And yet, up to this time, Billie had been unable to offer any explanation. But on this particular day, a month after the prophecy, she came across three verses in Hebrews 5 in which she had underlined four words some months prior to the prophecy.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death in that he **FEARED**.

Though he were a Son, yet learned he **OBEEDIENCE** by the things which he **SUFFERED**;

And being made **PERFECT**, he

became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:7-9).

The four words underlined in her Bible — feared, obedience, suffered, and perfect — suddenly brought the words of the prophecy flooding back to her. Billie was breathless with excitement as she shared her interpretation of the passage with me, connecting it with the prophecy:

God, he's yours — in fear,
he's yours — in obedience,
he's yours — in suffering,
he's yours — in perfection
(right thinking and right actions).

I didn't totally understand this process of getting from fear to perfection, but I took the pattern that Billie shared as the key to the prophecy concerning my life. I realized that the four times "he's yours" was spoken meant in light of Hebrews 5 that God intended to make me His by four definite steps . . . and that called for some testing.

TESTING

Finally the end of December came and I was off the payroll, unemployed for the first time in my working life, with no inkling of where to look for a job. As before, I had very little cash in reserve and, without realizing it at the time, I was in basically the same place I had been when I went to work at the campgrounds. Despite our lack of funds, we had decided to keep our financial situation secret for the time being.

I determined to maintain discipline in my life by getting up early in the mornings, exercising, jogging, and then settling down to study the Scriptures until noon. After lunch I would help Billie or study some more until late afternoon when I would spend time with our two smaller children.

For a couple of weeks it was a nice change, but then I began to get restless again. Although I was really trying to be obedient and wait for direction from the Lord, each day I would

check the mailbox or the switchboard for phone calls. Not many came and those that did never pertained to a job.

Our waiting went on for another month, and still there was no direction or job offers, so I continued to seek God. My family was unflinching in this time of trouble, and at times they had more confidence than I did.

The four words underlined in her Bible suddenly brought the words of the prophecy flooding back to her.

I can remember arguing with the Lord on occasion, pleading my case with Him, and then repenting for arguing; still nothing would happen. This was not the challenge I had expected — to lose my job and just sit there on the shelf! What was the matter with God, anyway? Didn't He know I was a capable businessman?

By the time two full months of unemployment had gone by, I was a basket case. We had even gone through a family famine before the Lord released some money to us through a faithful brother. After that, barely enough money dribbled in from various sources to buy food; there was no way I could pay on my mortgage or the utility bills, and it looked like we were going to lose our home. I had even put it up for sale, but no prospective buyers came.

The days and weeks passed slowly. What seemed at first a reasonable test became an unreasonable nightmare to me. Then a ray of hope appeared.

Through a series of phone calls and circumstances, I found myself talking to the company I had worked for prior to joining the camp. I was offered the job of managing their new million-dollar branch facility in Atlanta. In my heart, though, I knew I couldn't accept the position, and when I shared my feelings with Billie and the children, they agreed. Once again I could hear the words of the prophecy: "obedience — this is the lesson I've been teaching you." The truth is, after

refusing the offer, I was more relieved than disappointed.

JUDGMENT

At this point I felt like I had really hit bottom, and then one day Billie said to me, "You know, Tom, I feel like we are in some kind of a punishment or judgment or something."

I was quickened by the word judgment and remembered that Psalm 19 talks about it.

I got my Bible and eagerly turned to these words:

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the *JUDGMENTS* of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward (Ps. 19:9-11).

Once again, living words from Scripture ministered life to our weary spirits. It was like breathing oxygen and getting a transfusion all at once. I still didn't understand it all, but I knew we were in a situation sovereignly arranged by God.

In the prophecy God had promised that He would take care of us. Scriptures kept reminding me that He was still in charge. If I could hang on in obedience, it would become a positive experience more desirable than fine gold and sweeter than honey and honeycomb.

Fresh hope began to form in my spirit and within a few days something new began to happen. I started to get scriptures that convinced Billie and me that I should go to Fort Lauderdale to seek advice and counsel. I had come to know Ray Ostendorf through business telephone conversations, and I knew he was at that time vice-president of Florida Christian Broadcasting, and an elder in Good News Fellowship in relationship to Bob Mumford.

When I called Ray and explained my situation to him, he invited me to come down and talk. A few days later the Lord provided funds for the trip.

At the first meeting I shared openly

with Ray. It was his feeling that I should come back again to talk with some of the other brothers and with Bob Mumford.

Following the second meeting, I returned to Bradenton and waited. Two weeks later, Ray called me to say that they agreed I belonged in Fort Lauderdale, and I was offered a job with Florida Christian Broadcasting as operations manager. This confirmed both the scriptures I had received and our own feelings. The long test was finally over. A short time thereafter we sold our mobile home, paid off all our bills, and relocated in Fort Lauderdale.

Later, following the decision of Florida Christian Broadcasting to sell Channel 45 and cease operations, I accepted the position as administrator of Christian Growth Ministries, which publishes *New Wine Magazine*.

Looking back, I realize that every problem we encountered and every lesson we learned during those long months of testing was absolutely necessary for our spiritual growth.

Here are some of these lessons of obedience the Lord was speaking about in the prophecy:

(1) I had to develop a hearing attitude!

For me, the first step in learning obedience was learning to listen. The word submission has been translated literally "to hear under." Obedience has been translated to "stand under," but you can't obey if you can't hear, and you can't hear if you aren't listening or don't know the ways in which God speaks to his people. Isaiah 45:19 says, "I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth: I said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right." God had been speaking to me in many ways, just as he does to all of us; only, I didn't know how to listen. The Lord had a plan designed to improve my hearing and my obedience. After my seeming initial failure and a year of painful preparation, God used a strong prophecy to get my attention. He followed this with a series of circum-

stances uniquely prepared to change me. Because He knows our hearts, and our inward parts, He is faithful to provide exactly what we need to accomplish His purpose.

I had to learn that God speaks through His written Word, through that Word coming alive, through prophecy, through our subjective feelings or "inner witness," through the circumstances of our life, and directly through those to whom we are submitted. He also speaks to us through the subjective feelings of those in submission to us. In this case, a strong prophecy was used and *it really helped me stand the test*.

It is also important to note that none of these directional means **SHOULD BE IN CONFLICT WITH ANOTHER**, but should all agree and work together.

(2) God is source.

We have all had many teachings on God as source. We hear scriptures like John 1:3: "All things were made by him (Jesus): and without him was not anything made that was made."

I had to become aware in my heart that Jesus really was ALL in ALL.

The Bible also teaches in James 1:17 that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

I also came to have a deep awareness that every blessing, every job, every ability, everything I had ever done that was right came as grace from above and did not have its origin in me. Paul said, "In my flesh (sin nature) dwelleth no good thing."

This new awareness gave me an attitude of thankfulness and appreciation for God. We tend to think that before we knew the Lord we did all things for and by ourselves. Then after we became Christians, God took over. I came to see that God had always been in charge of my life and, that often in spite of my blindness and ignorance, He had blessed and helped me.

This understanding has given me an added confidence in God's ability and faithfulness to provide. Certainly He uses people to be the vessels of His

blessings, but He is absolutely the source behind all of it.

(3) God's loving judgment of the believer: a negative experience designed to bring a positive result.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

For the time is come that *judgment* must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that *obey* not the gospel of God? (1 Pet. 4:16,17).

What I am talking about is the judgment we Christians must submit to if we really desire to change and please God. In other words because God judges or knows our situation, as we seek to obey Him, He will provide events and circumstances uniquely designed to correct our deficiencies. In my situation, God's motive in judgment was to bring me into the same kind of obedient walk that Jesus demonstrated.

This awareness helped me in the midst of all we endured. I came to see that His judgment was not punitive. Psalm 19:9,10 says that His judgments are more to be desired than fine gold, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, as well as true and righteous altogether.

I can remember sensing this in an overwhelming way a year and a half ago, on the first Sunday morning service that I attended in Ft. Lauderdale. As I sat listening to Derek Prince teach, I realized once again what the Lord had accomplished in all that my family and I had endured, and I felt so deeply grateful for the faithfulness of God that I became choked with emotion.

As I look back on the last three years, I realize that God was really building my ability to obey Him. That prophecy spoken over me in November of 1974 played a significant role in the course of my life. And while I knew I had heard God, I still had to learn to trust Him. My obedience is still far from perfect, but I know I can trust Him to finish the work which He has begun. ♥

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This month's answers by Don Basham and Ern Baxter.



them?

How much faith should we put in predictive or personal prophecy; what action should we take in response to them?

DON: Many people labor under the misconception that prophecy, to be really valid, must contain prediction or direction. It needs neither to be valid. Paul says, "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). There's no mention in that verse about prediction or direction. Obviously then, prophecy can edify, exhort and comfort *without* containing predictions of the future or specific directions.

Personally, I feel most comfortable with prophecies which do not predict or offer direction since I'm aware of the tremendous dangers inherent in such messages. The Scriptures make it plain that we are to walk by faith, not by prophetic utterances. While predictive and directive prophecies *can* be genuine and do at times provide marvelous encouragement to the Christians who receive them, I believe God is very sparing in His use of them. My personal experience has been that I've heard eight or ten times as many erroneous predictive prophecies as valid ones.

I can't begin to count the times I've heard good Christians prophesy out of their own desires and wishful thinking. Some well-meaning saint prophesies that his 90-year-old grandmother, dying in a hospital is going to be miraculously healed and that her healing will amaze the hospital staff and the community, and that it will begin a revival in the town. Only, the next day Grandma dies.

The prophecy hasn't been Satanic or evil — just misguided and originating in the human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit.

What should our response be when someone prophesies over us? If the prophecy contains predictions or direction, we should neither accept nor reject it. We should rather place it in our "pending file" and pray and trust the Lord to confirm it out of the mouths of at least two other witnesses if it is of Him. We should *never* act hastily on the basis of an unconfirmed predictive or directive prophecy, regardless of how inspired it may sound.

ERN: I believe the New Testament distinguishes between the prophet who holds an office for ministry along with apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers as recorded in Ephesians 4:11, and prophecy which functions as a gift of the Spirit and which every believer may possess (1 Cor. 14:31). Contrary to the gift of prophecy, which all may exercise, the ministry of the prophet is not open to all (1 Cor. 12:29). The gift of the Spirit, as exercised by believers when "the whole church be come together in one place" (1 Cor. 14:23) is said to be for "edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). In other words, as someone has said, they are inspired messages urging the Christians to "Build up! Stir up! Cheer up!" It would appear that the gift as thus used is not intended to be predictive or for personal direction or guidance. Ministrations which do this would more likely come under the heading of the gift of "the word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge" (1 Cor. 12:8).

Those who prophesy in the assembly by means of the gift of prophecy, we might designate as prophets with a small "p." However, those who are men given by the risen Christ to hold the office of Prophet we would designate with a capital "P." So we have prophets and Prophets. The Prophets operate alongside the other leadership ministries such as apostles and elders. Agabus in the New Testament is a good illustration of a Prophet who forecast the coming of a famine and also the prospective sufferings of Paul as he made his way to Jerusalem (Acts 11:28; 20:10,11).

Speaking from experience, I am aware of much predictive and personal prophecy which has not come to pass and has caused considerable distress for those to whom it was addressed. There are those who are quite sincerely anxious to be used of the Lord who actually prophesy from their own mind. In the case of the Prophet, I think we are protected by the fact that such a person should be moving in the area of leadership and be surrounded by mature and responsible men who can vouch for his integrity and the authenticity of his gift. The whole tenor of the New Testament indicates that Christians should live their lives in the redeemed community with all of the checks and balances that are available through co-plurality of leadership and relationship to other believers. Whether prophet or Prophet, my opinion is that they should necessarily be operating under proper authority and in right relationship to the

entire redeemed community.

Through the years I have observed people moving around independently, some with a measure of spiritual pride and arrogance who felt they had the unilateral right to do whatever they wanted. The New Testament withstands this attitude and urges that we all function in relationship to others in the Body. But rather than close our minds to the supernatural activities of God and become over-cautious to the point of questioning everything, we should operate within the checks and balances provided by the New Testament. If we do this, they will keep people from falling victim to improper or false utterances directed to them in terms of prediction or personal guidance.



What particular training should a prophet have? How can someone with the gift of prophecy nurture and increase his capacity for ministry?

DON: I'm not sure you can set out to "train" a prophet. Certainly you can't go to school and take a "how to" course in it. Personally, I'm a greater believer in "watching things happen" than "making things happen." While I believe God is beginning to raise up prophets who will serve the Body of Christ, I'm more interested in function than label. I'd rather see a man functioning with a prophetic ministry, yet not bothering to call himself a prophet, than to see a minister or teacher who *claims* to be a prophet (and who will prophesy at the wink of an eye), but whose ministry produces little lasting fruit.

I believe it is through the exercise of the *gift* of prophecy that a man will be led into the *ministry* of a prophet. Paul teaches that "we may *all* prophesy, one by one . . ." (1 Cor. 14:31) but that not every one who prophesies is a prophet. "Are all apostles? are all prophets . . .?" (1 Cor. 12:29) means clearly, "No, all are not apostles; no, not all are prophets."

If a man manifests the gift of prophecy effectively and consistently, I believe it *may* be an indication that God is preparing him for the ministry of a prophet. Of course, to be set into such a ministry would require an acknowledged maturity and stability in the total Christian life, plus the confirmation and ordination of the responsible elders who oversee the church or fellowship to which the man belongs.

One thing the Body of Christ does *not* need is more self-appointed, self-ordained "prophets" conducting vagrant ministries across the country with no acknowledged authority over them. Even though a prophetic ministry may have a considerable degree of spiritual validity and accuracy insofar as the content of the ministry is concerned, I would hesitate to accept it unless I knew what proven spiritual authority the

prophet operated under, i.e., from what local fellowship is he sent and to what eldership must he give account.

ERN: Since both the man who is a Prophet and the spiritual gift of prophecy are gifts from the Lord, it would follow that there is no such thing as training to *become* a Prophet or to exercise the gift of prophecy. However, since all these gifts are manifested in and through redeemed human beings, it is necessary that the human instruments become, by the responsible and regular use of these gifts, more and more aware of how best to yield their bodies and minds to the Lord. By being sensitive to the need for excellence in the things of God, such people ought to continually "seek that ye may excell to the edifying of the Church" (1 Cor. 14:12). In Romans 12:6–8 the Apostle Paul establishes clearly what we have said. He points out that all of the ministries and manifestations of God's love and purpose are gifts proceeding from His grace (verse 6). He then goes on to pick out some of the various ministries and expresses the need for the recipients of those gifts to apply themselves to their use as would best glorify God and edify their fellows.



What exactly is the meaning of Paul's comment that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32)?

DON: At least two things seem clearly implied in Paul's statement.

(1) That the prophetic urge can be controlled by the man who is to do the prophesying. We control spiritual gifts, the gifts do not control us. In the next verse (1 Cor. 14:33) Paul adds "God is not the author of confusion . . ." The implication is that the immature Corinthians had been giving vent to an undisciplined and disorderly display of gifts — speaking in tongues and prophesying at will. In the whole passage from verse 26 to 40 Paul is giving instruction as to how a believer's meeting should be conducted, with the manifestations of the spiritual gifts operating under proper discipline.

(2) The other implication of verse 32 is that, as verse 29 states, both the prophet and the prophecy are to be under authority.

ERN: There is some relationship between this question and the last one. It is obvious from the letter to the Corinthians that people can have spiritual gifts and yet use them improperly. The Corinthian use of the gifts was creating confusion and disorder in the church, rather than glory for God and edification for the people. Paul makes it clear that while these gifts are freely given by God, their proper use depends on the obedience of the gifted one to the order of God for the exercise of gifts as

INSIGHTS

The Church does not have to get the nation's permission before it speaks to the nation with a prophetic voice!

— Ken Chant

Here is the supreme glory of the Christian man — he is part of the Body of Christ upon earth.

— William Barclay

God has worked some surprising results with imperfect people.

— Anonymous

God speaks to those who are still enough to listen.

— Anonymous

given by apostolic authority. Obviously, there were gifted ones in Corinth, as there are in the world today, who felt because they were gifted and had an urge to express their gift, that they had sufficient permission to go ahead. Some will even say, "I had to do it — I could not help myself." On the contrary the Apostle Paul states that while the gifts are supernaturally given and are manifestations of the Spirit, they are nevertheless subject to the control of the gifted person. Paul points out that only confusion can come when several people are speaking at the same time. Therefore, he insists that the gifts be exercised one at a time so as to enable people to receive the full benefit of them. The Living Bible presents the sense of this verse very well: "Remember that a person who has a message from God has the power to stop himself and wait his turn."

Prophecies of a harsh and critical nature, threatening judgment and punishment, seldom originate in the Spirit of Christ; they more often originate from an unholy source or from a man's own critical spirit.

ERN: All gifts and ministries are to be exercised in a context of love. This is probably why 1 Corinthians 13 appears between chapters 12 and 14. Only as we are love-dominated can we properly give or receive anything from one another. This is true in all the interpersonal relationships between Christians. It is a sad but obvious fact that Christians can conduct themselves outside of the boundaries of divine love. It is also possible to misuse gifts and ministries and to allow improper motives, which result in hurting rather than helping. There are times when the Word of the Lord is "a hard saying, and who can hear it" (Jn. 6:60), but such a Word must be given out of a spirit that is free from any wrong motivation. When a "hard saying" must be given in any form, the one giving it should insure the purity of his or her motivation and attitude. 🍷



How should one give or receive a prophecy which is corrective in nature and harsher in tone than most?

DON: Prophetic admonition should be given with loving and gentle wisdom. My personal feeling is that most of such correction would not take the form of a prophecy but would be given as private spiritual counsel by a shepherd, pastor, or overseer.

I tend to be suspicious of loud harsh prophecies which lay heavy criticism and correction on a person or a body of believers. I find that prophetic utterances genuinely inspired by the Holy Spirit are seldom if ever "harsh." The Holy Spirit does not condemn. He may convict, but with the conviction there nearly always comes the promise of encouragement and comfort as the correction is made.

BIBLE STUDY ANSWERS (From page 15)

1. John the Baptist; 2. God's Word; 3. Went naked, 3 years; 4. Saul; 5. Agabus; 6. Every, Holy Ghost, bonds, afflictions; 7. Spirits, prophets, subject, prophets; 8. Christ's, suffer, glory; 9. a. Edification, exhortation, comfort, b. Church, c. Interpretation of tongues, d. no; 10. Despise, prove, hold fast, good; 11. The still small voice; 12. His mantle; 13. Light, treacherous; 14. Nothing; 15. Early each day; 16. Visions, dreams, similitudes; 17. Precious, open visions; 18. None, words fell, ground; 19. Almond tree and seething pot; 20. Good, evil; 21. All, learn, comforted.

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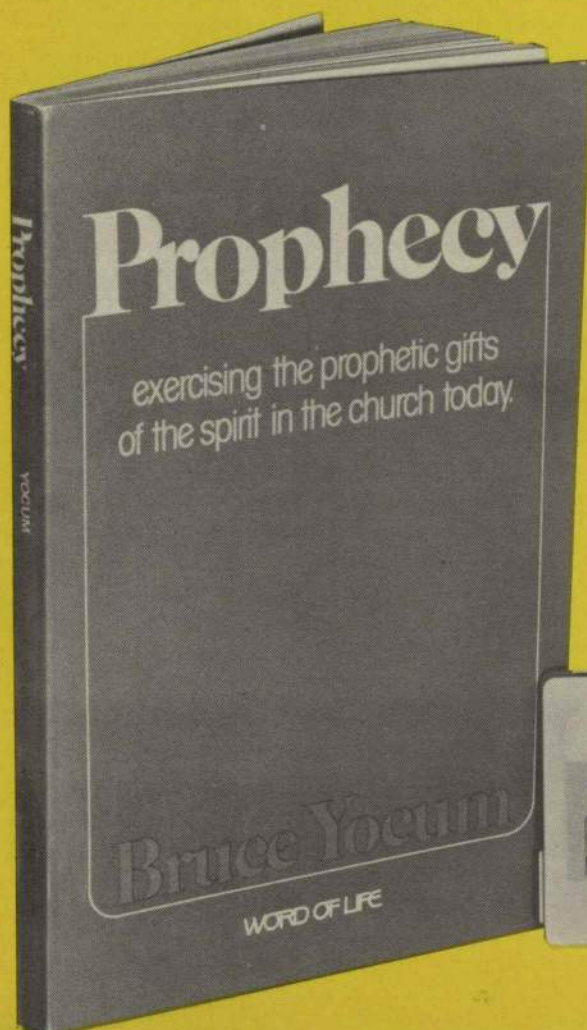
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