

WHAT!

SPEAK THROUGH ME?



Brian Johnson

bj.logos@gmail.com

This book gives us an introduction into the gifts of the Spirit and how God can use us in this ministry.

Rev Pastor David Shearer, Coton Green Church, Tamworth.

This booklet stimulates both discussion and practice of a neglected topic in today's church. It will be particularly useful in home groups.

Dr Richard Massey, former Principal of Birmingham Christian College.

I found it easy to read and understand, and very helpful. I wish I had had something like it twenty-five years ago, it would have spared me a lot of agonising!

Gina Edwards, Prayer coordinator

Ever wanted some common sense quotes to put in your Bible studies or Sermons on prophecy? Well, Brian has achieved that in his study on this subject. With his wit and Bible-based notes, he has produced a publication that surpasses many longer books on this subject. It is certainly a tool I can use as a Pastor.

Pastor Peter Norris, Minister at Aldersbrook Baptist Church, London

A sound Bible-based study with varied examples of prophecy in action, all seasoned with Brian's quirky sense of humour.

Bruce Ackers, Elder, Coton Green Church, Tamworth

This is a great introduction to the gift of prophecy and its use in a contemporary setting. This short book lays a good foundation of theory and practice giving helpful guidelines and cautions. The style of writing is informal allowing a broad audience to benefit, and perhaps whetting the appetites of those who may have previously believed prophecy to be beyond them.

David Bailey, Assistant Pastor, Coton Green Church, Tamworth

Contents		Page
Preface		4
Introduction		5
Chapter 1	But . . . How much <i>can</i> we trust the bible?	10
Chapter 2	So having made a start what are the first steps to take?	14
Chapter 3	What about the holy spirit?	16
Chapter 4	What is prophesying?	20
Chapter 5	How does this work?	23
Chapter 6	Two wings, one dove	27
Chapter 7	Why does God earnestly desire that we prophesy?	29
Chapter 8	Why did God appoint these different ministries?	31
Chapter 9	A foundation element.	35
Chapter 10	Are all who prophesy prophets?	39
Chapter 11	So why is love necessary?	41
Chapter 12	What is the difference between tongues with interpretation and prophecy?	45
Chapter 13	Interpretation	49
Chapter 14	How do you enter in to receive and start using the gift?	52
Chapter 15	The test of a true prophet	57
Chapter 16	Keep a record of prophecies that stand out	62

"Scripture quotations taken from the New American
 Standard Bible®,
 Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,
 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation
 Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)

PREFACE

When I first started this work it was going to be a few pages of notes to focus on the gift of prophecy. These first attempts were circulated amongst a few close friends interested in the topic and raised so many “what ifs?” and “ah buts,” that it became necessary to add more, and more, and more!

For me to write anything more than a few hundred, or at the most, a couple of thousand words is unheard of. My biggest boast, as far as writing skills are concerned, is that my youngest son (Chris) is a national newspaper journalist.

So I am indebted to all those who contributed both material and the “ah buts”. More than anyone, I am indebted to my wife Gill who smoothed out many of the rough areas. Also, after great in-depth interrogation, she strongly advised me to add the odd extra paragraph to make a link where my mind had jumped too far ahead.

I would also like to thank Lindsey Thompson who painstakingly went through the document with a green pen correcting my poor punctuation and typos.

As well as my thanks to all who have supported this work, my deepest gratitude extends to the Lord who prompted me to step out and told me to “write your notes; don’t worry about them not being polished; in my hands they will help many”.

INTRODUCTION

My father was a countryman. As a child walking with him through the fields, he would stop by a hedge and seeing a nice tender branch he would gently bend the end over. Then taking a length of binder twine from his pocket, he would tie the branch back on itself. A year or two later he would return and cut the branch, and then, with gentle care, he would trim and polish the wood until he had a very useful walking stick. Some time later he would cut it to the right length for a person in need of one.

One night I was sharing with friends that I had started to put some notes together on prophecy and would value their prayerful counsel as to whether this was of the Lord's prompting or my own. All gave encouraging words, but Helen gave a picture (or vision, if you are used to classic terminology) of a staff-type walking stick. It was very gnarled and rugged, not smooth or polished, but nevertheless ideal if you were walking through rough terrain. It brought to her mind the memory of a rustic, bearded, Christian countryman she knew, who walked the woods and fields with a similar staff, praying as he went.

A few days later I was tidying the garden, and at the end in the thorn hedge, I saw this long, thick branch that at first glance appeared straight. Memories of my dad flooded back, and with Helen's picture in mind, I cut and trimmed the branch. By the time I had finished it was about five foot long and one and a half inches thick, quite heavy, with a nicely shaped handle - but it was not perfectly straight. So I held it between two branches of a tree in the garden with some rope, applied some twists to force it straight, and left it for a few days. I was disappointed when upon releasing, it sprang back to its slightly bent shape. So I retied the staff and left it for another week but the same happened again. I didn't have my dad's patience so I accepted it as it was - bent, gnarled, rugged and heavy, and then placed it in our 'den'.

Every time I went into the den I saw this staff and said, “So what’s the meaning Lord? What’s the significance?” One day it hit me (the meaning, not the staff!) *1 Cor 13:9-12 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ...For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.* I felt the Spirit of God saying to me, “The staff is a great help and support, a good heavy weapon to use against attacking wild animals. It is like my gift of prophecy: *my Word*, in the Words of man, which is not always complete but *in part*. The staff is like you and what you do, not very sophisticated or polished, a bit rough at times and not perfectly straight (I walk with a stoop), but in my hands a support to many, a weapon against wild animals (demonic forces) and a pointer to my Word.”

Then still thinking how inadequate I felt for the task, the Lord continued to remind me of scriptures, “*1 Cor 1:26-29 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.* Then the Spirit continued to speak into my heart, “Just as you have accepted the staff as it is with all its imperfections, I have accepted you. Write your notes, don’t worry about them not being polished, in my hands they will help many. According to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 the circumstances of your calling fit my requirements perfectly!”

As I reflect upon my life the Lord sometimes uses me to do something to provoke others. To make them think, “I could do much better than that!” I would rather do something weak and foolish for God than strong and wise in my own strength that was not God’s will. When the Spirit of God applies the Word of God to you and reveals something in

a personal way like this, it is both humbling and yet empowering for all who believe.

For those who do not believe it is foolishness or even madness; belief in the Bible and its teachings is more than accepting information. To say you believe London is in the south of England on the river Thames is accepting information.

In the Bible, to believe is to totally depend upon, to utterly rely upon, to rest your whole weight upon, and to lay your life upon Him. Yes, first you have to absorb the information but then you have to receive it in your heart (your innermost being) and submit to it. Don't be afraid to step out and believe. The rewards are life changing and certainly not boring!

John 20:31 but these (accounts) have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. Wow! To those who believed, Jesus gave His life and power, but to the unbelieving religious officials of His day, see how He verbally chewed them up and spat them out.

Jesus said in John 5:37-40 And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him (trust in) whom He sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life

Our first move is to come to Him, absorb the information, but don't be like the unbelieving religious officials of His day. Let it sink down from your head into your heart; receive His life and gifts.

The first gift is that of salvation. What is salvation? Salvation is the realisation that you fall short of the perfection of a holy God. Therefore

when you realise that you are incompatible with Him, you subsequently ask for and accept God's forgiveness and love.

It is important to grasp this concept of salvation. Many church folk think it is all about going to church, performing certain rituals and leading a decent life. But primarily it is about relationship not ritual. Maybe a simple story will help.

There was a very bright young lady who went to university to study maths. She received an honours degree with very high marks and after graduating was invited to a conference of very high level mathematicians.

During the coffee breaks she got into conversation with a young professor. They talked very easily and every coffee break they chatted and laughed together. At the end of the conference he asked her if they could meet up and spend a day walking in the Dales and finish with a meal, to which she agreed.

The day came and in their walk they came to a stile. The young professor held out his hand and helped her cross the stile. There seemed to be no desire in either of them to let go of the other's hand, so they continued the walk holding hands.

During the meal, both agreed to meet again because they had really enjoyed each other's company. At the end of the evening as they were saying goodbye he said, "Have you ever read, The Numerical Harmony of Diverse Beings?"

She smiled and said, "Oh yes, well . . . I tried, but to be honest it was the most boring book I've ever read. Why do you ask?" "Because I wrote it," he replied.

That night she never slept; she sat up reading the book and found it absolutely fascinating. Why? Because she knew the author!

The Bible is fascinating after you've met the author. How do you meet Him? Well He is close to you wherever you are, so just talk to Him. This may sound simplistic but it really is that easy. Your mind may struggle with the concept but as you make that initial move God will respond. *Jer 29:12-14 Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the Lord, ...'* All it requires on your part is a sincere cry from your heart to God.

After fully entering into salvation, desire earnestly the gifts of the Spirit so that you may prosper spiritually. Without making that first step of submitting to Jesus and receiving Him as your personal saviour you will probably struggle with the rest of these notes. If you have done that then read on and may the Lord bless you with spiritual insight.

Chapter 1

BUT . . . HOW MUCH CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

We live in an information-saturated world - with TV, the Internet, travel and various forms of communication. Because we have access to so much information, some of which conflicts, we can become either sceptical, not trusting anything, or all embracing, regardless of the conflict which logically requires us to accept one and reject the other. In this environment, many will fall back on their own cultural background and make a stand against anything that opposes it.

This was the dilemma I had as a young man; I spent ten years travelling the world, mixing with people of vastly different cultures and religions. So when I came up against Christians who said that the Christian faith was the one true faith, my response was a sceptical, "Oh yeah, I've heard that from so many different faiths". I did, however, start to read the Bible and became familiar with some of its teachings. But how could I trust them any more than other "sacred writings" that offered different, and sometimes, opposite viewpoints.

One day someone introduced me to the work of a Russian Jewish mathematician called Dr Ivan Panin. He discovered, within the Hebrew writings of the Bible, thousands of numeric patterns mainly based on number seven. Unlike English writing, with Hebrew, Greek and some other languages, every letter has a numeric value because they use the same symbols for letters as for numbers. Obviously this means that the symbols can be read numerically as well as in text form.

He discovered simple and complex numeric patterns flowing through the writings, and patterns also linking different books together, even though they had been written by different writers, sometimes hundreds of years apart. The patterns are like a watermark flowing through the writings. Another factor is that there are many more similar and associated books in existence, some of which are now accepted as

part of the Bible. For these patterns to remain unbroken, all the writers would have needed to know which books would ultimately be canonised so that they could include the right ones with their patterns. The non-canonised books do not have any numeric patterns flowing through them.

This discovery so amazed Panin that he and another scholar tried for three months to compose a simple paragraph that read intelligently and yet held some simple numeric patterns. They failed. Yet the writers of the Bible didn't just compose a single simple paragraph, but whole books, all with patterns flowing through them! In human terms some of these writers were uneducated, simple people, most likely unaware of the numerical patterns within their own writings.

He then went on to analyse other classical and religious writings but found that none had any kind of numeric patterning until he came to the Greek writings of the New Testament. This led him to the only possible realisation: the writings of the Bible, although written by a variety of writers over a period of 1500 years, were all inspired, Word by Word, by the same common intelligence - let's call this intelligence God. (You can use a search engine online typing in "Ivan Panin" to check this out.)

Along with someone else, I analysed these findings and discovered many numerical patterns. The significance of this fact cannot be over-emphasised. Even today with computers it would be impossible to compose such a major work. This gave me the confidence to accept the Bible as the "Word of God".

So what did the Bible have to say to me? It told me I was a sinner but that God loved me so much, He sent His Son to die for me, so that if I believed (trusted) in Him I could experience life with Him, forever, whether in this body or otherwise!

When I accepted this, suddenly Jesus was not some historical character 2000 years ago. He was REAL; He was with me. When I read His Words in the Bible it was like He was talking to ME!

This is the start of my story which will resonate with some people. I hope it resonates with you! If you can accept that the Bible *is* the Word of God and submit to its teachings, the door is opened to a whole new realm you didn't know existed!

There are many things in the Bible you won't understand but you will never doubt it is the Word of God. There are so many more proofs that set the Bible apart; here are just a couple more.

In the Old Testament there were hundreds of prophecies written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, predicting His coming and life. Most have been fulfilled in such a way that it would have been impossible to fabricate. For example, His place of birth, the massacre of babies by Herod, His genealogy, where he lived as a child, His manner of death, His resurrection and the associated details. All these and more would have been impossible to manufacture.

The writings of the New Testament go back to about five thousand copies of the originals all just over a hundred years after the originals were written. Writings about Julius Caesar are based on ten copies of copies of copies six hundred years after his life and yet scholars accept their authenticity.

With the New Testament it is possible, with that many copies, (particularly with the aid of computers) to lay them out and compare them for differences and identify any copying errors. The more copies you have closer to the original, the more accurate scholars can be. It is broadly accepted that the Bible is the most authenticated classical set of writings in existence.

Originally, because the Bible is a collection of books written by different writers at different periods, they were not laid out with chapter and verse like we are familiar with today. It was not until after the selection was canonised that the church systemised the writings with chapters and verse numbers. Some time later some interesting facts were discovered. For instance: Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. Psalm 118 is the centre chapter of the Bible. There are 594 chapters before Psalm 118, and 594 chapters after Psalm 118. They add up to 1188 chapters. Guess what the centre verse is in the Bible? Psalm 118:8.

This is not the centre verse of the psalm because there are 29 verses in that Psalm! This is the centre verse of the whole Bible! So what does it say to us? *Psalm 118:8 It is better to take refuge in the Lord Than to trust in man.* The whole psalm is about God's steadfast love. Seems quite a central point to me!

Chapter 2

SO HAVING MADE A START WHAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS TO TAKE?

Become familiar with the Bible. Start with the New Testament and read the Gospels, then Acts. Get into fellowship with a local church. Ask people their story of faith, then the people won't be part of the crowd, but individuals with real stories of their life.

As you read the Bible, keep stopping and ask Jesus to show you by His Holy Spirit the meaning of what you're reading. Commentaries can be helpful but as one wise scholar once said, "It's amazing how much light the Bible casts on some of these commentaries!"

Remember, only the spirit of a man knows what is in the heart of a man, and only the Spirit of God knows what is in the heart of God. God wants to give us His Spirit so that we might know what is in His heart. This will help to develop your relationship with Him.

When the children of Israel were entering the land God had promised them, they were slow to take possession of it. So Joshua said; *Joshua 18:3-4 So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, " How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you? Provide for yourselves three men from each tribe that I may send them, and that they may arise and walk through the land and write a description of it according to their inheritance; then they shall return to me.*

When they returned, he divided and shared out the land. We have to walk up and down in the Bible discovering what there is to possess, then go to our Joshua (which is the Hebrew version of the name Jesus) and ask for the gifts He really wants to give us.

Peter had a simple formula when preaching to the Jews: Repent + Be baptised in water = Receive the Holy Spirit. *Acts 2:37-41 Now when*

they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, " Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, " Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, " Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

Later in Acts 10 he sees Gentiles repent and receive the Holy Spirit before they had even been baptised in water, so he was more than happy to baptise them in water after seeing that the Holy Spirit had accepted their repentance and filled them. As you can see from these scriptures, the order is not important. The important factors are to repent and receive forgiveness for your sins, also to receive His peace.

Often the lead up to Christmas is usually very busy. Preparations to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace ironically bring stress. One Christmas Eve, Paul, a member of my church brought the following Word of comfort.

24 December 2006

My children I sent my Son so that this world would have peace. I sent my Son so that you will have peace. Don't put your faith in Man because he will not bring you peace. This world will not bring you peace. For those of you who want to search all the four corners of the world, I tell you this, you will never find peace. I am the only one who can bring you peace. Turn to me this day and you will find my peace, the peace that passes all understanding. Don't put your faith in Man; man will always let you down.

Chapter 3

WHAT ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Before He left them Jesus promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to His disciples and the Spirit came on the Jewish festival of Pentecost.

Now Pentecost was a sort of harvest thanksgiving, but over the centuries the Jews had grafted onto the festival a tradition to celebrate and give thanks to God for Moses returning from the mountain, where he had met with the Lord and received the Law. Jesus, however, had come to fulfil the law, so it was no surprise that He sent the Spirit on that very same day - to fulfil His promise by making the law alive with the in-filling of His Spirit.

Jer 31:33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, " I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Also in Joel it says (2:28-29) It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. "Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

When the Spirit came, many were startled. This physical manifestation was explained by Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:14-17 *But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, ' God says...(As above)*

Jesus said that you can't put new wine in old skins, it will burst them. Some may remember the explosive energy that Rock 'n' Roll music had when it first came out. You either loved it or hated it!

Chuck Berry introduced a new song called "Roll over Beethoven (and tell Tchaikovsky the news)". He was so often frustrated because his little sister, who was practising classical music on the family piano, wouldn't let him have time on it to develop his energetic form of music.

That is why he wrote the song to his little sister, a song that has lasted down the decades. It's not so much the words as the power of the music. *Acts 2:1-2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

I sometimes think of the violent wind of the Holy Spirit coming on the disciples with such power, and the sound of Chuck Berry's guitar playing in the roaring wind, "Roll over Beethoven", like a blast of energy. I even wrote a tongue-in-cheek poem linking the transfiguration (Luke 9:28) to Pentecost to mark the occasion.

Jesus climbed the mountain
To the highest configuration.
Peter, James and John came
To see the transfiguration.

Moses came, Elijah came,
They all shined bright like Jesus.
They talked so plain, it was a shame.
They woke up three disciples.

cont'd

Wow! Said Peter and his friends,
Let's make three tabernacles.
But the Father told the fog "descend"
Which really raised their hackles.

When at last they saw
Only Jesus, (without the glisten),
The Father said with a roar,
This is my Son, my chosen one, only to Him listen!

Year in, year out, as Pentecost came,
The Jews they celebrated
Moses descending with the Law,
And the prophet's Words, all highly rated.

But now the promise they had heard
Was timely being fulfilled.
Not just the Law or prophets' Words
But God's Spirit came and thrilled!

Roll over Elijah,
Tell old Moses the news!
I'm pouring out my Spirit now
So push back all the pews.

Roll over Moses,
Your Words have come to pass!
The One you promised reigns.
The Law's fulfilled at last!!

Bottom line, yes you can trust the Bible, and experience the in-filling of the Holy Spirit. *Heb 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the*

division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Yet His desire is to bless, not condemn us. In fact, if we accept Christ's free gift of salvation there is no condemnation *Rom 8: 1-4*. *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

To walk according to the flesh is to live by the promptings of our natural, selfish desires. To live according to the Spirit is to submit to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This comes to us **if** we maintain an active attitude of submission to the Lord and His Word.

Both flesh and spirit prompting come to us through what we hear, see and think. So guard what you watch and listen to. Give God some space, if you are constantly bombarding your ears with music to drown your thinking don't be surprised if you never hear from God!

Sometimes music of the right kind will be a carrier for the Holy Spirit, as happened with Elisha when asked what the mind of God was. *2 Kings 3:15-16* *But now bring me a minstrel."* *And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him. He said, "Thus says the Lord...* However, a lot of the time God doesn't speak in the wind, fire or earthquake..... **but is a still small voice in the quiet.** Try filtering everything else out and **LISTEN.**

Chapter 4

WHAT IS PROPHESYING?

Gen 2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Previously God also said in Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; (Here we have the first hint of the Trinity.)

They were in communion with one another, they talked with each other. God knew if He made us in His image we would want to talk with each other like they did. So He made us not only for us to talk with each other, but for us to talk with Him and for Him to talk with us. God created us to extend the fellowship they already had together.

When God called Samuel as a boy, it sounded so normal to Samuel he thought Eli was calling him. *1 Samuel 3:4-9 that the Lord called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." (This happened three times) ... Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the boy. 9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.' "* So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord spoke again and this conversation was the start of a relationship which experienced many ongoing conversations that lasted Samuel's life time.

So when you talk to God HE WILL ANSWER! So expect Him to talk to you. If I talked to someone and they never answered, I think I would soon give up! Sometimes He talks to us personally; sometimes He says things He wants us to share with others like He did with Samuel - that's prophecy! To prophesy, in Christian terms, is to speak out and express whatever God wants to say into a particular situation.

A common mistake is that prophecy means foretelling and warning about the future. Whilst that is included, in general it is much broader. God longs to speak into our lives, and as we seek Him in our thoughts and prayers, it is highly likely that He will put something into our hearts and minds. However as we listen, and think about it, we are not sure at first if our thoughts are from God, ourselves, or even something more sinister.

He may also speak through another or show us something to encourage and confirm His Word to us. Here is a real example from Roy, in his own words.

“Two or three weeks ago God gave me a picture, but I felt He told me to wait and He would give me a sign when to bring it. When I came into the service this morning and saw the Weekly News sheet (the front had a picture of a tumbling, raging river on it) I knew the time was right.

The picture I had been given was of a person standing in a river. Behind the person, the river was a raging torrent crashing against the banks and over the rocks. When the river came up to the person, it forked into two.

One side of the river carried on out into a desert, still a raging torrent which disappeared as it dried up. The other side of the river became calm and flowed out into a fertile valley with trees on either side, bearing all kinds of fruit.

The Word from the Lord was as follows “Thus says the Lord. I am not a God who is far away, aloof and unapproachable. I am a God who stands at your left hand and at your right. I will go ahead of you and lead you into a fertile land where you will bear fruit that will glorify my name.

What I will not do is stand behind you, for you need to forget the former things (what is behind you) and not dwell on the past, for I am a God of today and tomorrow.”

The picture on the church news sheet did two things. First, even though they had not conferred, it confirmed that the picture Roy had seen in his mind was inspired by the same Spirit that prompted the news sheet compiler to insert it in *The Weekly*. This gave Roy the confidence to share what He believed God had shown him.

Secondly it answered the question of timing. Sometimes God will give you something which you have to carry, like a woman carries a baby, and deliver it at the right time. This is so that the Word is brought at the optimum moment, reaching into the hearts of whoever it is for and bringing comfort to the ones in need.

That same morning, one of the elders, Bruce, knew in his heart before-hand that Peter had a Word, which he gave, the essence of which was, “Who are you trusting, me or your own resources?”

This was obviously meant for someone who was struggling in their own strength without asking for the Lord’s help, their life being somewhat like the branch of the raging river that ended dried up in the desert.

Then followed Roy’s prophecy; which gave the other option available in the Lord - to have a life like the river and the fertile valley. So we do not operate in isolation. Piece by piece the jigsaw of information and confirmation fits together. This was all provided by more than one person’s input yet all in harmony with each other.

In addition if you examine the content of either Word there is nothing that conflicts with scripture. This is crucial – but more later about testing the prophets.

Chapter 5

HOW DOES THIS WORK?

We are all aware of a physical realm and our **body** is very much a part of it. However the Bible also mentions a **spiritual realm**. In fact it claims that God is spirit. Just as our physical body links us to the physical realm through our five senses so our spirit links us to the spiritual realm. Then there is the soul, which is more than just the mind, it is the person, the individual, the 'real me'. Try to stand back and get a broad overall view as seen in scripture.

*1 Thessalonians 5:23. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may **your spirit and soul and body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Spirit, soul and body: three parts, yet interwoven together. Not given in the order that we would normally state which is **body**, soul and spirit.*

We are very body orientated; God, however, is more Spirit orientated! The soul is the part that is not destroyed even after the body dies, but, linked with the spirit, continues into the spiritual realm. Just as the soul and body are inseparable while we live, so are the soul and spirit bonded together now and forever. In fact some scholars consider the soul and spirit as one and the same thing; however scripture states otherwise.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. This would seem to indicate that although very closely bonded, the soul and spirit are nevertheless two distinct entities with different characteristics and the Word of God is able to show what is from your mind and what has come through your spirit into your mind.

Through the five physical senses we (our souls) receive information when, for instance, we hear someone talking. When we see writing in a book. All that information goes to our minds and we process it.

Likewise our spirit is like a radio receiver picking up information from the spiritual realm which we become conscious of through our thoughts. Of course we can reject certain thoughts just as we can reject information we hear from people, because we have a will of our own. I realise this is very simplified, but it is a starting point. More later about discernment of our thoughts and even that which influences our thoughts. Now let us look at where prophecy fits in.

Some will say we don't need prophecy, we have the Bible to guide us. Yes, the Bible is God's inspired Word but it still needs the Holy Spirit to open it up to us. *1 Cor 2:10-13 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

Ah, so it is our spirit that knows what is in our mind and it is God's Spirit that knows what is in God's mind, so if He forms a link between His Spirit and our spirit, He can, (to use a computer analogy) download and paste large sections of wonderful text and pictures into our minds!

To continue with the computer analogy their files are formatted in such a way that they need certain programmes to access them. Without the programme you can't access the file. In fact some programmes are on

the host website and unless you are connected to the web site you still can't access the programme or the file.

Every file has an extension group of three letters which is the key to access the programme. A Microsoft word file has “.doc” as the file extension. Adobe reader files have “.pdf” as the file extension. So when God wants to send a believer something, first the believer has to have his “communion with God” programme running, then he can open the file God sends – and the file extension is “.Gfg” (God freely gives).

Many times prophecy is quoting the right scripture or information at the right time to the right people. You can sit in a car reading the manual, pushing pedals and buttons, but going nowhere. Then someone taps the window and says, “First turn the ignition on!” It was the right piece of information, at the right time, to the right person.

However, if you say, “Go away and don't tell me what to do! I've got the manual here”, then you still might not move for a very long time. What does scripture teach us? 2 Chron 20:20 *Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.* This is the old King James version.

It is twofold, you have to believe in the Lord and secondly hear and recognise His voice in your brother or sister to prosper. A friend of mine tells, in her own words, of an incident that happened with her.

“A number of years ago, I was at a Prophetic Dance Workshop where we prayed, then we were attentive to what the Lord may wish to say to each other through dance. For one of the ladies there, I had a picture that I gave through movement. It was of a bird with a broken wing. The broken wing was offered back to God time and time again. There was immense emotional pain as the bird tried to fly with one wing. There was such a sense that healing would only come through God, but it

would take time. The lady was very moved and said that the Word had spoken to her.

Many years later I met her again at a Dance Conference. During the night the Lord woke me and reminded me of the Word/movement I had given her all those years before. Then He said, "Tell her there is more! I will teach her to soar like an eagle." The Word was based on Isaiah 40:31 *Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles,*

The following morning I asked her if I could share the Word God had given me. She was so excited that God had another Word and immediately recalled my previous Word and disclosed what the broken wing had been and how the Lord had healed and restored her. The Word had helped her to keep going back to the Lord knowing He knew about it and was to be the source of her healing.

Then I told her that last night the Lord said, "I will teach you to soar like an eagle," she just filled up and shared her heart with me. "Wow!! Thank you for the Word, I so needed to hear that." She then shared that over the years her ministry had developed to an international level. She spent a lot of time travelling all over the world.

Just before coming to the conference (where she was going to teach) she was in her garden laid out on the grass crying to the Lord saying, "Lord I am utterly exhausted, I can't keep this up much longer". Then she looked up into the sky and saw two eagles soaring over head on the thermals. She had soaked up the beauty of what she saw, but God had used the incident to reinforce and confirm His Word to her.

She was already established with her faith in God, but she needed to hear a Word from the Lord, to lift her out of her weakness and enable her to soar in God's strength. When God speaks into a situation His power is released!

Chapter 6

TWO WINGS, ONE DOVE

Sometimes in churches where the gift of prophecy is not openly recognised, it still happens in the form of Godly counselling. Wherever the Spirit is allowed access He enters in. However the more legalistic a church is the less likely it is that the gift will be evident. In some churches the gift is openly opposed and spoken against; in such places the body will not prosper spiritually.

The roadside of church history is sadly scattered with the wrecks of churches or groups of churches that literally fell by the wayside. God, the eternal optimist, only recognises One Church. This church is the collection of true believers, wherever they meet, whatever the name on the door. He will raise up believers to bring to all the knowledge of His love and power to save and spiritually prosper them.

The dove is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. There are nine main feathers on each wing. There are nine spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit and nine fruits of the Holy Spirit. To re-introduce the fruit, God prompted some believers with a desire for holiness. This group became known as the Holiness Movement. Christians drawn to this movement experienced a baptism of the Spirit and soon the fruit became evident in their lives.

Gal 5: 22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;

However, He prompted other believers with a desire for the gifts of the Spirit, hence the Pentecostal movement. Christians drawn to this movement also experienced a baptism of the Spirit and soon the gifts became evident in their lives. *1 Cor 12:8-10 knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of*

spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

The problem arose when these two groups started to interact, or should I say, react. Each group claimed their experience was “the baptism of the Spirit” and that the other group was “in error”!

Coming back to the dove, if you majored on the fruit, you flew around in Holiness circles; if you majored on the gifts, you flew around in Pentecostal circles! Eventually some of them got together and formed “Pentecostal Holiness Churches”. They didn’t fly around in circles any more! We need to be balanced. Both wings of the dove need to be developed in our lives. As seen in the last chapter a disabled wing can bring great emotional pain. We need the fruit and the gifts to personally mature in our lives so we taste like a good wine in the mouths of others. If we focus only on one wing we will taste like vinegar which admittedly some people like in very small quantities on their chips. You may enjoy a mouthful of good wine but not many enjoy drinking vinegar with their favourite dinner. Neither will many want our company if our Christian lifestyle is unbalanced.

Many years ago I went to a midweek meeting. I had had a hard day and was absolutely shattered. I felt I needed to receive not give. Then the Lord gave me a Word for the gathering. I said, “Oh Lord give it to someone else, I’m shattered”. I listlessly sat there but no-one else had the Word, so reluctantly I stood and gave it. As I was delivering the Word my whole being was flooded with energy! Yes, the Word of God is POWERFUL!!! So hearing a Word from God is not just receiving useful information. With the information comes the power and energy from God’s Spirit to your spirit to fulfil the task.

Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Chapter 7

WHY DOES GOD EARNESTLY DESIRE THAT WE PROPHECY?

The teachings of Paul said in *2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.* Let us look to scripture for guidance. First recognise that God, next to His desire for you to receive and show love because He is love, really does want YOU to prophesy.

It is amazing the different views there are among Christians. Some believe the gifts are not for today. Others will readily accept that tongues are all right but not prophecy. Yet **God says** although He wants us all to speak in tongues, we should desire even more the gift of prophecy.

Many years ago, leading a small meeting, we were singing a few choruses when the song "There once was an ugly duckling" kept popping into my head! Finally I realised God was trying to say something! "My children, you are not ugly ducklings, I love you! You are beautiful swans in my eyes!" Whilst this Word caused many to smile and laugh, nevertheless it went straight to their hearts.

So why is this gift that God wants us to possess always pushed to the back? Yes there are risks when the gift is used but life is full of risks. We don't stop toddlers trying to walk because there is the risk of falling. We help and encourage them until they are happily running around. Oh that we would encourage believers to prophesy and become so skilled that even the nations would be guided in the ways of the Lord. No longer would Christians be seen as 'ugly ducklings' but as the children of God that they truly are.

1 Cor 12:27-28 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second

prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

*1 Cor 14:1-25 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but **especially that you may prophesy.** For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying... Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; So be eager for spiritual gifts **especially that you may prophesy,** and don't forget the "humbling gift" of tongues! Through Paul, God said he wanted you all to speak in tongues - that builds you up, but even more that you would prophesy - that builds others up. God's desire is for us to be built up and for us to build others up in a balanced way.*

That is why Paul laid down some ground rules 1 Cor 14:[29] Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

Unfortunately many think this means after two or three prophecies that's your lot, no more today folks! However, it doesn't say that. It says after two or three prophecies to stop and weigh up what has been said, even discuss, before continuing. That way the church becomes strong and is not a problem looking for a solution, but a solution looking for a problem.

Chapter 8

WHY DID GOD APPOINT THESE DIFFERENT MINISTRIES?

Eph 4:11-15 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

So these different ministries, including the prophetic, were given to build the body (Christian community) up and make it spiritually strong. Here are some early church examples of situations where, for the benefit of His people God felt it necessary to say something and He did this through a prophet.

Acts 11:27-29 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

Here is another example.

Acts 13:1-3 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul

for the work to which I have called them." Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

And another: Acts 21:8-11 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. '"

God spoke through prophets and support came to those in need, a ministry was created and a warning given. This is how God works.

It seems necessary for God to speak before something can happen. When God's people speak, inspired by the Holy Spirit, His Word also has creative power. In the beginning God spoke and said, "Let there be light" and there was light.

The significance of the second prophecy (Acts 13:1-3) is that Paul then began to lead the ministry; up to that point scripture said "Barnabas and Saul" from here onwards it was "Paul and Barnabas" (Act 13:42 and beyond). Paul takes the lead and Barnabas, a wonderful mentor, takes a back seat. Would we ever have had the writings of Paul years later if he had never been told by God, through prophets, what his ministry was?

Some may say, "Ah but, God could still have led Paul without there being prophecies". I find it rather interesting when theologians talk of a hermeneutical spiral. We all have information we have picked up on the way.

When new information comes, we automatically lay it alongside the existing information then make an assessment of what it means. That is why many of us will come up with different understandings of the same text. The hermeneutical spiral kicks in when we lay aside all our preconceived ideas one by one and bring the text alongside only the information that is in the context of history and the culture of its day. The more we do this, the closer the spiral gets to the centre. It's a bit like the frog that jumps halfway to the centre of the pond with each jump. It never actually gets to the centre, but not far off. Try thinking of why you may be opposed to the concept of prophecies; off-load information that may not be relevant and see if the hermeneutical spiral kicks in. When looking at scripture it is very important to use this principal.

Here we have an OT example of the activities of a prophet: The people were in a lose: lose situation and came together to cry out to God.

2 Chronicles 20:13-20. All Judah was standing before the Lord, with their infants, their wives and their children. Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel...

he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the Lord to you, ' Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's...

You need not fight in this battle; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. ' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out to face them, for the Lord is with you." Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshipping the Lord...

when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed."

Now let me quote the King James version of that last verse:

*Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be **established**; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.*

This has been mentioned previously that anyone who trusts in the Lord shall be “established”, but there is a stage further that is necessary to (spiritually or otherwise) “prosper” and that is to believe in God’s prophets.

Obviously test all things. We do this by listening to the prophet in our hearts with one ear and the Holy Spirit with the other ear. Then we share with other believers to check that they have the same inner conviction.

Chapter 9

A FOUNDATION ELEMENT.

It needs to be recognized that prophets are an important element in the Church's foundation. The parts of the Church that are spiritually prospering are those assemblies where the prophetic is recognized. In fact, just as a building is limited by an inadequate foundation, so a church assembly is limited by its foundation of doctrine and beliefs.

1 Thess 5:19-21. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;

The Holy Spirit is a real person. He can be offended and back off just like you and me. He wants to help us and guide us but He will not push in. The more we submit our hearts to Him the more likely He will interact with us in our gatherings. He will give gifts to many who should have an opportunity to express them.

1 Cor 14:26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Every month or so at house group we have a "hatha night". In the previous scripture, the old King James Bible says "hath a" revelation etc, instead of "has a" revelation. Prior to meeting on those nights every one is encouraged to contribute (bring their "hatha") and it is amazing that many times without pre-planning there will be a theme running through the "hatha" contributions showing a unity of the spirit in the people gathered - of course the Holy Spirit!

Some years ago after the Soviet Union collapsed, I was with a group in Estonia encouraging the pastor of a small island church which had about 12 people, and half of them were his own family! There were only about 300 people on the island. The pastor was despondent because everything he had tried failed to reach the people.

He said, "I am like Peter, ready to give up and go back to fishing." He was truly broken and crying as we prayed with him and ministered to him. Then we went out and prayed all over the island with him, showing him how to recognise and bind evil forces that we saw signs of. He showed us the house of the most troublesome family on the island. On the field in front of it we prayed and bound evil forces.

The next day the little chapel had 60 to 70 people in the congregation; and right there on the front row was this very family! Almost everyone went forward for prayer, including them. The service lasted for hours. I sat back and watched, then the Lord gave me a scripture,

Deut 28:13 The Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully,

Here I have included some of our conversation after the service. I spoke to him regarding the scripture, plus some of the other things I shared :

"I believe the Lord wants to show His power in this place now that the spirit of atheism that worked in communism has been crushed. You will be the head not the tail in this community.

The door will be opened for you to establish social reforms and support structures in this place; people will look to you for solutions and you must point them to Christ. Follow Him closely, but test what I am saying; don't just accept it blindly, pray about it."

I delivered this with trepidation not knowing if he understood about the prophetic ministry.

What he said in broken English humbled me to the point of tears. "I was assistant pastor here. Three years ago I became pastor after the chief pastor died when our car went through the ice." (They used to drive over the frozen sea to the main land in winter.) "Three times I dived in to try and save him but he was old and died and I was left to lead the church, not really knowing what to do.

I tried visiting every person on the island to help them but very few wanted my help and I would cry out, 'God send a prophet to tell me what to do!' This week God has answered my prayer; I now know what to do. Thank you for coming here and bringing God's Word; I have waited so long for this day."

Did I think, "Yes! I'm the man!" Did I stick my chest out with pride? No. I weep nearly every time I think of it; that God who can do anything, should want to use me as His instrument, humbles me beyond belief.

But it is a blessed circle, because after He humbles you, He elevates you into His presence so He can share more with you which you then feel compelled to share with others. *Amos 3:7-8 Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! **Who can but prophesy?***

As the scripture points out, when God says something how can you refuse to share it? However, always be aware of the possibility of being wrong. It is totally different to preface something, "Thus saith the Lord" than to say "Check this out I may be wrong, pray about it and see how you feel." You really must test all things and particularly in the

areas where you are emotionally involved or have an agenda in the situation.

Some years ago a non-Christian neighbour was dying of cancer. I told his wife I was praying for his healing and believed God would heal him. I desperately wanted God to heal him. "It makes sense Lord, this could bring the whole street to you" and in my heart I was probably thinking "and bring me a load of street cred too!" He died and my pride was hurt but He taught me to be more humble and more sensitive to God's will than my own will.

God has given me many prophecies that were right, both before and since that incident, but that one fell to the ground with a big clatter. I have not forgotten the lesson I learnt. Yes, sometimes our mistakes can be even damaging to ourselves and others. But when we bring an anointed prophetic Word into a situation it can create and release the power of God! That is why He wants us to prophesy and why we should earnestly desire the gift!!

God is a God of variety: for many who believe in the gift of prophecy they feel it is for Sunday at church. However the gift can come at any time, in any place, as can be seen even from just the examples given here.

The prophecy can come in different ways too. Some people feel led to sing the Word they have received. Ezekiel had to act God's message out with signs over a large number of days. John the Baptist had to wear rough clothing to match the message of repentance. Some today feel led to express prophecy through dance. Please don't view this lightly as though it were entertainment. Dance can have a very profound effect on the ones who receive the message. Eg Chapter five. There are many ways in which God can communicate to us; we need to be open to all His possibilities!

Chapter 10

ARE ALL WHO PROPHECY PROPHETS?

Matt 7:16 You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

Some may carry the official title of prophet but it is meaningless if they do not bear fruit and prophesy. Others may bear the fruit but never claim the title and would be embarrassed if you called them such.

Personally I don't mind what people say. Some will say, "He is used in prophesy but he is not a prophet". Ok, I can understand that. There are a number of buildings that I have designed and built to the satisfaction of many clients, but because I have never formally studied and qualified as an architect officially I cannot hold that title.

Some will call me "The architect" because I designed their house; others will call me "The builder" because I built it. Pay the money and you can call me whatever you like!

I really don't think that it matters. I can fix one or two simple problems on a car but I would not call myself a mechanic. Some would say just because God gives you the gift of prophecy to build up the church it does not necessarily make you a prophet. But conversely, I would not say, "I'm not a prophet so I can't prophesy".

It could be reasoned that all who prophesy are prophets, some will bring Words like, "I really believe God wants to tell you He loves you." But some He calls to a deeper ministry: "God is saying go and buy that field and you shall see my glory!"

However most of us range somewhere in between and that doesn't really matter. God says, *1 Cor 14:5 Now I wish that you all spoke in*

tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; Don't get hung up on the title, get hold of the fact God wants YOU to prophesy!

*1 Cor 12:28-31And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? **But earnestly desire the greater gifts.** And I show you a still more excellent way.*

After saying not all have the gifts HE reinforces His desire for you by saying, **But earnestly desire the greater gifts.** That includes prophecy. Then we go onto a “*a still more excellent way.*” in the next chapter, after we have some gifts to use.

Chapter 11

SO WHY IS LOVE NECESSARY?

In 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13 and 14 we have a sandwich. Chapter 12 and 14 are the slices of bread. Chapter 12 shows the list of the gifts of the Spirit. Chapter 14 explains the use of the gifts. Chapter 13 is the filler, the most nourishing. Without chapter 13 all you have is two slices of dry bread. Chapter 13 talks about love. Without it, *I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. . . I am nothing. . . it profits me nothing.*

*1 Cor 13:1-3 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, **I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.** If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, **I am nothing.** And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, **it profits me nothing.***

A great man of God with a powerful healing ministry and countless miracles happening at his hands, but also an abrupt man, not demonstrating much love, was asked in his older years, "Is there anything you regret?" "Yes, I wish I'd shown more love." People received healing but, by his own admission, he agreed with the above scripture: "***It profits me nothing***" and it was without the wonderful presence of God's love. Christ looked on the crowds and had compassion on them and out of that love flowed the healings and miracles. Christ would not have performed healings without compassion because it would have been against His nature, and love **does not seek its own** desire

At the end of chapter 12, which is all about the gifts of the Spirit, Paul says, *and I show you a still more excellent way*. This way which is *still more excellent* is **LOVE**. So what has love got to do with prophecy?

A Godly catholic man I admire, the Spanish architect Gaudi, said, "Let all that you do be inspired by love and executed with excellence". To see his workmanship proves it: his buildings show majesty but also joy and fun and colour, not rigid and harsh like some gothic buildings.

The more your gift, or whatever you do, is motivated by pure love, the more your prophecies are likely to convey God's love, because God is love. Therefore there will be more of God in the outworking.

The more of God's love you express (I don't mean Sunday smiley love, but true, heartfelt love) the more others' needs will be met. If something is said harshly without love, it completely alters the impact. *Matt 15:18 but the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.*

Depending on the delivery, the same words can have a different meaning. Take the example of a naughty child who says "sorry" because the parent demands an apology. It is blatantly obvious the child is not sorry by the petulant look on his face. Sometimes children say "sozz" which is supposed to mean "sorry". In actual fact it means "I'm saying 'sozz' to make you think I'm sorry . . . but I'm not!!"

It does not matter what you are talking about, what you are really expressing is the spirit in your heart at that time. I'm sure there are times you have felt uncomfortable when a person says all nice, positive things to you, but underneath the words you just know they dislike you and are being false! However if the same words are said with love, the impact is likely to have a more wholesome effect, and you feel good about the conversation you have just had with that person.

However, when the heart is filled with compassion, the words expressed will carry that spirit of compassion as well as the message.

God knows that a deepening relationship with Him is the best thing possible for us. The following prophecy was brought on one Sunday morning service by a lady who is a member of my church. She is someone who spends a lot of time in the Lord's presence praying and it shows; her voice was full of compassion as the Lord spoke through her, and the anointing of compassion gave added power to the Words.

“Know this my people, know this - Your victory is in the time you spend with me.... Your victory is in your close walk with me..... Your victory is in your obedience to me..... Your victory is in your worship of me.....Your victory is in your time with me.”

1 Cor 13:4-13 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Oh, just soak up the scripture and feed on the sustenance of chapter 13! Matt 4:4 *Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* This is because what comes out of God's mouth is also carrying the Spirit of love (whatever He is saying), from His heart to your heart. If we receive this love then we can give prophecies with love and have the impact that our Father desires.

Chapter 12

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TONGUES WITH INTERPRETATION AND PROPHECY?

I think there are a number of differences between tongues-plus-interpretation and prophecy. Firstly it spreads the anointing so that more than one person is involved and therefore there are more people operating in the gifts of the Spirit. Someone feels the prompting to express a message in tongues, so when it is brought, this awakens others to pray for an interpretation. This may then come either through themselves or others.

The Spirit will either give the interpretation to someone, or prompt another to speak the Word they've been too nervous to bring for some time. There may be two or three others who then bring a Word they've been holding onto, having been prompted by hearing the tongue and/or the interpretation. Sometimes as a group matures in the use of the gifts, there is more prophecy and less tongues with interpretations, but we must always be open to the gift, as it can alert others to seek God for whatever He wants to say to His people. The added bonus is that young Christians also begin to learn more.

A few years ago I was on a retreat with a group and we were coming to the end of the day enjoying a powerful time of worship. I had been nursing a Word I thought may have been just for me when Alan started to speak out in tongues. I was then prompted to give the Word I had had during the time of worship.

He later shared that it was the first time he had publicly brought a message in tongues. It was a real icebreaker for him! However, the fact that there was an interpretation confirmed to him that God had given him a message and confirmed to me that I should give the interpretation too. The content of the Word was significant not just for me but for all of us.

It was a picture of the Father in human form sitting on a fallen tree in a high clearing overlooking beautiful mountain scenery. He was sitting there wearing a tartan lumberjack shirt and a pair of jeans, just enjoying the scene.

Then He half turned, smiled and with a beckoning arm said, "Come, my child, sit with me and let my Spirit permeate your whole being". For some of us we can have a picture of a distant God, a grey-haired, bearded, serious-looking character who makes us feel guilty even if we are not!

Although our Father is God Almighty, in this encounter there was no sense of me not being wanted. He truly was delighted to see me. He invited me to go and sit with Him and enjoy the view, soaking up the power and warmth of His presence.

Many times since I have recalled that scene and, in a time of public worship, have sat down and just soaked up the presence of the Lord. Spending time in God's presence is vital to receiving not just His gift of prophecy, but also soaking up more of His Spirit to flow out to others. Remember the prophecy in the last chapter said, "Your victory is in your time with me".

When you hear someone speaking in tongues and are not sure whether it is prayer, personal worship or a message, the simple solution is to quietly pray and ask for someone to give an interpretation. Of course, you yourself need to be prepared for God to give you the interpretation! Some who bring a tongue are not sure what they are bringing, just a conviction that they should bring it!

Don't bring an interpretation unless you are truly convinced there is one and if someone brings an interpretation to anything, don't blindly accept it. Test all things! Later you can talk to others, asking if they felt

strongly one way or the other. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of peace and harmony.

If God wanted to say something, you will know and others will confirm. You may start with simple “safe” messages, (like “God loves you”); soon God will trust you with more pointed detail, whether it is tongues with interpretation or prophecy.

Just something I want to add in this section while we are comparing tongues and prophecy. Earlier I spoke about spirit, soul and body: tongues is a gift that bypasses the mind. It is given by God to our spirit, which we then express through our mouth (part of our body). We have no idea what we are saying, the mind is not in gear, just the mouth straight from the Spirit. Also a word of warning, other non-Christian groups sometimes use the gift of tongues!

This means it is possible for us to be used by an unclean spirit. Oh no, where is the safe guard? In the Word of God, Luke 11:9-13 *“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?**”*

Therefore our hearts must be constantly submitted to the Lord, and then we are safe. It always comes back to relationship not ritual, or formula.

With a prophecy, however, His Spirit links with our spirit, which then transfers input to our mind, which we can then express with understanding. It can be usual for only the first few words of a

prophecy to be given – so, in this case, there is limited understanding but there is the start of something God wants you to bring.

At other times you might receive all of the prophecy and you need to seek God about how to give what you have received. Should it be in the form of a picture, a short narrative, a poem, a command – God will guide on that as well as the actual words to say.

There is a point of view that states that tongues is speaking to God and an interpretation will be some form of adoration to God rather than God saying something to us. *1 Cor 14:2-3 for one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.* From this scripture I can see how some people can come to the conclusion they have, but I'm not so sure that I completely agree.

I think as you speak mysteries by the Spirit, God could also be responding in a tongue which will require an interpretation. Also if we make a “doctrine” of that point of view it means people who are carrying a prophetic Word will hold back after such a tongue if what they have does not fit those criteria. Let's be careful when creating doctrines that as well as giving supporting structure they are not so rigid that we quench the Spirit!

Chapter 13

INTERPRETATION

We really must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit when we first receive an image or a Word. Our first reaction is to try and figure out the interpretation. We receive an image of, say, a whale swimming up the flooded streets of London then think, "Oh there is going to be a great flood in the capital", when on closer yielding of the heart to the Holy Spirit there may be more. God may be saying, "Just as I sent a reluctant Jonah to Nineveh I'm sending you to London to tell everyone that I love them".

In my introduction you will remember Helen had the image of the rugged staff. There was no understanding then of what it meant. It was days later that I saw the branch at the bottom of the garden and made a staff. Then followed times seeing the staff in the den and asking the Lord what the significance was.

Finally the answer came, but it took a number of steps and days to reach. Yes, God can give revelation instantly, but often it comes bit by bit – something like the saying, "softly, softly, catch the monkey".

This gradual revelation gives a wonderful opportunity for your relationship with the Lord to deepen. As with the interpretation of the staff - every time I saw it, I was prompted to ask the Lord what it meant.

Don't give up. God really enjoys fellowship with you. So keep asking. He wants to reveal the prophecy's meaning to you. He wants to make it clear and also He wants to teach you more along the way. Anyway, all the time you are talking to Him, that's less time for the enemy to get in and fill you with red herrings.

But beware: so many prophecies start in the Spirit and end in the flesh. Or a perfectly true Word will be misinterpreted by others. That is why when reading scripture or listening to a Word, we need a heart yielded to God for correct understanding.

For a classic situation take the scripture from Isaiah 61:1-2 *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn,*

This scripture is read by Christ in the local synagogue but He stops in the middle of a sentence! He declares the year of the Lord's favour but not the day of vengeance! No wonder every eye was on Him because He effectively continued with "That scripture is now fulfilled today, that's Me folks"! Many were ready to kill Him at this point.

He also discerned that there was going to be a huge gap between the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God. This is not obvious in the text (that is why I've used light grey) but was made clear in His Spirit. We are still in the year of the Lord's favour two thousand years later! The day of vengeance is yet to come!

So interpretation of a scripture or prophecy may not be as it first seems. It is therefore important to keep open to the Holy Spirit and further revelations. It's a case for the hermeneutical spiral again.

Another example of starting out right but going off at a tangent is Peter telling Jesus who He is. Matt 16:16-17 *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

The next minute Peter says something else and Christ is rebuking him! Matt 16: 23 *But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me,*

*Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on **God's interests**, but man's."*

Oh dear Peter, FOCUS! Set your mind on the interests of God, not what seems right to man! Matt 5:8 "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" You want to see God in all this? Keep focussed on God and you will be pure in heart.

Warning! Satan reversing! Just when you thought you had the anointing of the Holy Spirit and whatever you said was from God, Satan backs up with a truck and tips a load of rubbish! When prophesying, it is important to keep focussed on the Lord. Keep your heart humble before God then He won't allow one Word to fall to the ground in error.

Now you may be saying "Oh this is too hard for me, I can't do this". On your own you can't, but with God everything is possible! All we have to do is walk humbly with our God and trust in Him to guide our steps. Sometimes that is resting in not knowing, and waiting and praying for the time God chooses to reveal something.

Chapter 14

HOW DO YOU ENTER IN TO RECEIVE AND START USING THE GIFT?

How do you learn to swim? Well first of all you must get in the water! In some cultures they throw a two year old child in the water and they flail about and splutter to safety. I'm sure they don't let any drown but there are probably a few screams accompanying their attempts! In our culture we are gentler, giving buoyancy aids until they learn the right movements. So let's build that principle into our way of entering into this gift!

How do you learn to talk? Toddlers listens to us and copy. Sometimes they try to tell us things with made up words of their own. We haven't a clue what they are saying but we smile and join in the conversation with real Words.

Gradually they drop a real word in the middle of the gobbledegook and we begin to understand what they are trying to say. Then they get to two or three years old. Every time we say something they respond "Why?" They just want to hear you talking and they've found out if they say "why?" you talk some more.

When my daughter Anna's son, James, was two, he was in the car with me and I said "Oh look James, there's a squirrel crossing the road." "WHY?" "Oh no", I thought, "here we go!" So I paused then said, "Well the squirrel assessed the eco-social situation and made an executive decision that it would be detrimental for him to remain in his existing environment, so he crossed the road". There was a long pause then he said, "Oh".

I managed to use that trick for about six months. Every time the "Why?" came up I would respond with techno-speak. Then one day

when I started to respond he interrupted with “Yeah, yeah, yeah”. He’d sussed me out!

Why is this relevant? How do *you* begin? Learning to prophesy is like learning to talk and swim. You need to be splashing around learning the moves, getting familiar with the environment and having a go!

The water is being in God’s presence so you can hear Him even if at first you don’t understand. The Bible is like listening to speech. So submit to the Spirit of God and read His Word stopping and asking God for understanding is the starting point.

Gradually, like the toddler learning to speak, you will reach the “Why?” stage of your relationship, but here’s the good news. God is not like some impatient granddad! He will always answer and tell you what you need to know.

He will not respond as I did to James! We can also give “buoyancy aids” to young prophets. When they first start to use the gift and it sounds a bit incoherent, like when a two year old is trying to tell you something, don’t get angry and say, “Who do you think you are, trying to prophesy?” Try and make sense of it ask them to explain what they were feeling or thinking at the time. Discuss scriptures that are relevant with them. Point out the discrepancies but also ENCOURAGE them.

I remember my son Michael when he was about two running to me saying “Daddy, daddy, fire got my shoe!” I went into the lounge to see one of his shoes stuck between the guard bars of the gas fire burning away and just about to drop on the carpet!

If when he told me I had said, “What on earth are you talking about?” and walked away ignoring him, I would have ended up with an insurance claim for a new carpet, or worse.

Also as a young Christian starting to move in the prophetic, don't be afraid to ask more mature Christians you recognise as having spiritual insight what they think. Listen to them with one ear and the Holy Spirit with the other ear.

Let's look at some testimonies of different people's experiences of how the Holy Spirit prompts them. Everyone is different and so are their experiences of the Holy Spirit.

When asked how he was aware that the Lord wanted to minister through him, this brother said, "Sometimes I feel a gentle shaking or trembling; at other times there is a sense of heaviness, not oppressive, more like being wrapped in a heavy blanket, plus palpitations. I don't tend to get a picture in my mind but a couple of lines of text, usually of scripture to start, then more words follow. As the physical feelings subside I know it's time to stop, otherwise what follows may be more of me and not the Lord."

Here is a quite different testimony. "When I was a young Christian and a thought came into my mind, it was so distinctive and powerful that I just knew it was the Lord and not me. But over the years, it becomes so much a part of your every day life that it actually becomes harder to tell whether it's my own thoughts or the Lord saying something. So I have to be more careful before delivering the word, and usually it is words, because I'm a word sort of person."

These prophecies have come in the form of words; here is a testimony that is half and half. "My mind starts to wander and every time I re-focus on what is at hand my mind wanders off again back to the original distraction.

If this keeps happening I realise the Lord is showing me a picture in my imagination. This may develop over a number of days until I have

almost a short video clip; then the Lord will give me the words to describe the meaning of the picture.”

With some people, especially if they move among different groups ministering, the Lord will show them a picture in their imagination. It may represent situations in the life of an individual or a group.

It may be something as obscure as a white blizzard which shows that a certain group they are visiting has no clear vision for the future so you can then pray against the blizzard and for the way forward to be clearer.

God wants to speak through you even when you are unaware of it. We had just started a new house group and at the end, folk were asking each other for phone numbers so I said, “Do you know God’s phone number?”

There were a few grins with “go on then, what is it?” “Jeremiah 333.” “Oh, so what does that say?” *Jer 33:3 Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.* At that point I looked at Ann who was standing dumb struck.

Finally she spoke and said, “I’ve been waking up every night this last week at 3.33 am and couldn’t understand why”. “So,” I replied, “Now you know. Whatever the problem is, call on Him in prayer and He will show you what to do.”

God also linked it further: her mother was ill and dying and when, a few weeks later, Ann went to sort out a plot for the burial, the plot number she was given was number 333!

God loves us so much! He wants to share our burdens. He wants to be part of our lives. He wants to talk to us and for us to talk to Him.

Years ago BT had an advert which said "It's good to talk!" The hymn writer sums it up beautifully,
"What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

Although primarily we need to develop our relationship with God in this way, we also need to be in a spiritual environment that is accepting and active in the prophetic. That gives a greater opportunity for the Holy Spirit to move on you in prophecy.

1 Samuel 10:10-11 When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them. It came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" Stick around people with a spirit of bitterness and you are likely to become bitter. Why do we prevent our children from mixing with "the wrong sort"? - because we don't want the children to become like them.

Do you want to increase in the use of the prophetic? Then mix with prophets, catch their spirit! In the RSV Bible it says, *Gen 49:6 Oh my soul, come not into their council; oh my spirit be not joined to their company.* This was Jacob referring to his two vicious sons, Simeon and Levi. There is the possibility of your spirit being affected by the spirit of the company you keep; especially if your soul is influenced by their attitude and approach to life. So pick your company wisely!

Chapter 15

THE TEST OF A TRUE PROPHET

I think most of us have heard when a large delivery truck is backing into an area that may have people standing around. There are loud bleeping sounds and a recorded message, "WARNING, VEHICLE REVERSING. Bleep, bleep. WARNING, VEHICLE REVERSING. Bleep, bleep."

I wonder if the idea would catch on if we had an automatic message come over the PA at church whenever a prophet starts to prophesy, "Bleep, bleep WARNING PROPHET PROPHECYING bleep, bleep!" And of course the warning would continue for as long as the prophet spoke!

This is not to deter the use of the gift. Just as we want the delivery truck to bring the goods, we want the gift to operate too! But just as we don't want anyone injured by the truck because of where they are standing, neither do we want anyone injured by the prophecy because of how they receive it. It's important not to blindly accept, but neither to dismiss prophecy without consideration. And of course, we do want people to LISTEN UP - this could be important!

In the Old Testament they were told to test the prophet, *Deut 12:32-13:5 whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it. "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' (in our culture 'other gods' means to place anything of higher importance in our lives than God. It is not necessarily bowing down to a statue and saying prayers to it. It could be a car or even a fashionable item of clothing.) you shall not listen to the words of that*

prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

Bottom line - know scripture so you can test that what is said does not go against the Word of God, even if the false prophet performs signs and wonders! The more you saturate yourself in the Bible with a heart submitted to the Holy Spirit, the easier it becomes to test the prophet. Christ said, *"My sheep hear My voice,"*. Read John chapter 10.

In our culture, we don't go around killing those who try to deceive people or who try to make others disobey God. But we can pray against anything that is evil so that they are ineffective if their intentions are evil. The parallel to execution is to cut yourself off from them.

Sometimes all it needs is to draw the individual to one side and give them some Godly counsel. The leadership needs to watch over the people and guard them from "wolves" who would come in and try to lead people astray with false teaching.

When a stranger comes in and starts to prophesy, a leader should ask them later where they are from and if they come under any authority elsewhere. If they are spiritual kangaroos, hopping from one church to another and not submitting to any leadership anywhere, they should be told not to prophesy there until they have attended for a while and the church has got to know them. My belief, based on scripture, is that

people who will not submit to any leadership should not be allowed to have any authority or hold any office.

Deut 18:21. Now if you say to yourselves, 'How can we tell that a message is not from the LORD?' Whenever a prophet speaks in my name and the prediction is not fulfilled, then I have not spoken it; the prophet has presumed to speak it, so you need not fear him." Oh so simple, if it doesn't come true, it's not of God; don't be afraid!

After my first child (Tina) was born, my late wife, Ronnie, had a miscarriage. Then she had a very difficult pregnancy that resulted in the loss of twins. So later when she found herself pregnant again; she was obviously very worried as to how this pregnancy was going to be.

Shortly after this we were driving up the motorway when suddenly I began to prophesy. Normally the Lord will give me some strong thought and I will have to find the words to express it. Not this time! I was speaking, listening to what I said as it came out of my mouth! "You are going to have a little girl; she will be born at home; there will be no complications!" There was stunned silence for what seemed ages. Then Ronnie said, "Was that from God?" and in a quiet voice I said "Yes".

Well, everything tried to make that Word fall apart. Ronnie went to clinic and the midwife wasn't happy with the baby's heart beat it seemed twice as fast as normal. So she had to see the doctor.

The doctor said the midwife had confused both the baby's and the mother's heart beat as one. So, no problem with the baby but, because of Ronnie's history, she would have to go into hospital to have the delivery!

Another challenge! I just replied, “Well God says one thing, the doctor says another. The test of a true prophet is whether his Word comes to pass; so let’s wait and see!”

At the time of delivery there was no time to go into hospital. Ronnie (who was a district midwife) just phoned her team mates who lived close by and said “I’ve started and I’m dilating fast!” They ran round and delivered Julie! I was there and even at the last minute Satan tried to spoil things. As the midwife held Julie up, her uncut cord was hanging down between her legs and Satan whispered in my ear, “Look! It’s a boy”.

Everything was fine, every aspect of the Word was fulfilled. Ronnie and Julie stayed at home being looked after by a nurse friend. A few days after the delivery, Ronnie’s friend called us all to the table for lunch.

As I arrived the Lord said, “Your next child will be a boy and he will have brown eyes”. “Oh no!” I thought, and went to the bathroom to pray. “Lord, if this is not of you, please take this thought away.” But the thought just got stronger.

So I returned to the table just as Ronnie was carefully sitting down and I said, “Your next child is going to be a boy and he will have brown eyes”. My poor wife just shouted, “Will you let me get over this one first!”

Thirteen months later Michael was born and had brown eyes. Yes, the test of a true prophet is whether his Word comes to pass, but always check and test everything. **Also pray for wisdom as to when a Word should be given!**

As mentioned before, sometimes a Word has to be carried until the timing is right. God so wants to communicate with us but we have a very real enemy who constantly tries to destroy what God is doing.

Once tested, it is important to act upon prophecies. Paul, in writing to Timothy says, *1 Tim 1:18-19 This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith... 1Tim 4:14 Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery (Elders).*

Paul was no doubt also thinking of the occasions when believers had prophesied over him at different stages of his life and the wonderful benefits that had had. If God tells us something and we ignore it, we are the ones who lose. Think of the Children of Israel wandering round that mountain for forty years! They could have been in the land after a few days if they'd only trusted God's prophetic Word through Caleb and Joshua! Read Numbers chapter 13.

God, however, is not vindictive! He will try constantly to get us back on track for our best interests, but if we keep stalling we are the losers. God can be a bit like a Sat Nav: when we ignore it, it quickly comes up with another route, always trying to take you from where you are at, to where it wants you! God comes alongside you, right where you are and guides you forward from there no matter how many seemingly wrong turns you have made. Although He can also, like the Sat Nav, say, "Turn around when possible" and that is sometimes the best option.

Chapter 16

KEEP A RECORD OF PROPHECIES THAT STAND OUT

Sometimes people will say, “Wonderful meeting; the Spirit really fell. There were a number of prophecies, all very moving.” “Oh, what did God say?” “I don’t remember but it was really moving.”

That must be so sad for God. He spoke and people remember the emotion but not the content. How are we ever going to learn and move forward with that attitude?

Here are a couple of consecutive weeks in the history of my church which I wrote down. One very hot, sunny, Sunday morning in church we were all singing “Show your power, O Lord our God”. Later my wife, Gill, shared with me that twice during that hymn, the Spirit said to her “What if I **did** come in my power?” Shortly after that hymn Peter brought the following prophetic Word.

“The sun is always there, a powerful fireball in the sky. On a cold winter’s day or grey, cloudy, wet day it is always there, just as powerful. Sometimes, especially in this country, when we get a really hot day, it takes us by surprise. One week we have the central heating on, the next we have to dig out the shorts and reach for the suntan cream.

God is like the sun; He is always there, always powerful, but we don’t always see and experience His full power because, like on a cloudy day, there is a blockage. We need to be asking God what in our lives is blocking His power and believe that He can remove that blockage and enable us to be open to Him again.

Just like on a hot sunny day when all the clouds are no longer around, we need to be prepared for the full force of the sun. We need to be

ready for when God comes in His full power. He can come in an instant!"

The following week I had been reading 2 Kings 3 where Israel was having trouble with Moab. The king enquired of Elisha the prophet as to what to do.

He didn't know at first so asked for a musician: *2 Kings 3:15-19 But now bring me a minstrel.* "And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him. He said, "Thus says the Lord, 'Make this valley full of trenches. 'For thus says the Lord, 'You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts. This is but a slight thing in the sight of the Lord; He will also give the Moabites into your hand. Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones. '" On that Sunday morning, entering the church building for the service, Tim (one of the elders) told us all that while the musicians had been practising the Holy Spirit fell on them.

After hearing this the Spirit revealed to me the significance of what I had been reading earlier. Like Elisha, many of us do not know the mind of the Lord. Why wasn't the Spirit coming in His power?

Let the musicians play so that the Spirit would come to the people individually and show them what to do. If we opened our hearts to the Spirit the Lord would fill them with refreshing water just like in the story where Israel dug cisterns.

Now Moab was immoral; the nation was conceived in incest. Israel was told to block up their springs, cut down their productive trees etc. So as the Lord showed us the areas in our lives that were not right, we had to cut ourselves off from those things. This was preparing

ourselves for the Lord to come in His power. This I shared with the congregation.

At a suitable point in the service Peter came and gave me a written copy of the prophecy that God had given him the previous week and added that he felt there was more to come and that he was praying for himself and the church to be ready.

That night someone shared with me that the morning's prophetic Word I brought had already had an effect on someone who realised the need to block up some Moabite wells in their life.

The Word of God is powerful *Heb 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.* We cannot survive in isolation we need each other to encourage and confirm God's Word to us and make us glow like coals in a fire. On our own we would be like a coal that falls out onto the hearth, growing cold and spiritually dying.

Keeping a personal record of prophecies that speak to you can be so helpful, especially if you go to places other than your home church, when visiting family etc. The input from elsewhere really proves to you that God can speak to you through anyone and it's not just your local church getting at you!

Many times in the Bible, God instructs His servants to write down what He has shown them. Some of those writings have become canonised scripture. Having prophetic Words and important thoughts recorded can bless you and others. I believe that is why God prompted me to write these notes. If He can talk through a donkey to Balaam (Numbers 22) He can speak through me and you.

“Write your notes; don’t worry about them not being polished; in my hands they will help many. According to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 the circumstances of your calling fit my requirements perfectly!”

When He called Jeremiah it is recorded, *Jer 1:9 Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth."*

Trust Him!
Step out and let HIM!

“What! Speak through me?”

Enquires to:-
Prison Ministries
The Coton Centre
Comberford Road
Tamworth B79 9AA

Email:- bj.logos@gmail.com