

## **Prayer and Equipping**

### **Prophetic**

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## THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

When it comes to things prophetic, so often in the church we see two extremes in operation. The one extreme is where the prophetic is ignored, as are all other spiritual gifts, resulting in cold and often dead churches. The other extreme is where churches embrace the visiting “prophet” who occasionally comes to town, however the gift is seen to be only for those very few chosen, “super spiritual” individuals.

We have had the privilege at Northpoint to see the gift of prophecy in daily operation in the church, in the lives of the priesthood. A strong Biblical foundation was laid through the teaching and example of Bruce & Gaynor Richter. We have had the privilege of seeing the prophetic operating in the life of Gaynor, a Godly and yet fun-loving woman, who has led in this gifting in a strong and profound way.

The prophetic is not for a few individuals, for the weird loner dressed in flowing robes! It is for the priesthood of all believers. Paul the apostle writes to the church at Corinth and states: “I wish you could all prophesy” (1 Corinthians 14:5).

### **2. SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

1 Corinthians Chapters 12 to 14 give a strong Biblical foundation to spiritual gifts, with three main points emphasized repeatedly:

- There are many different kinds of spiritual gifts (including prophecy), but they are all empowered by one and the same Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4, 8-11)
- The Holy Spirit is sovereign in giving spiritual gifts – He gives spiritual gifts to each Christian as He chooses (1 Corinthians 12:11).
- The purpose of all spiritual gifts, including prophecy, is for the common good i.e. for the good of the body/church (1 Corinthians 12:7).

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 then emphasises that we are all a part of one body but made up of many parts. Each individual person, with their spiritual gifts, is a part of the body. Each gift has its place and each gift is needed to make the body a whole. No part of the body, and therefore gifting, is more important than another. So, if God has given you the gift of prophecy, it does not make you more important than someone who has any other spiritual gift. God has given us our spiritual gifts for the good of the body/church, and they are for His glory NOT our own!

1 Corinthians 13 emphasises that the most excellent way to exercise our gifts is with love! We are reminded that when using the gifts they should be conducted with love, and motivated by love – for God and for His people. 1 Corinthians 13:2 states: “If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans ... but didn’t love others, I would be nothing.”

### **3. DEFINITION OF THE PROPHETIC**

There are two distinct differences in the realm of prophecy:

#### **3.1 The gift of prophecy**

1 Corinthians 14:1-5 “Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives - especially the ability to prophesy .... One who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them and comforts them .... One who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church”.

We should be eagerly desiring this spiritual gift because it strengthens, encourages and comforts the entire church. Don’t we all need this? Don’t we all need this often? Therefore the gift of prophecy should be happening everywhere, all of the time.

In vs 24-25 we see yet another purpose to this gifting: “If all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don’t understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. As they listen, **their secret thoughts will be exposed**, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, **“God is truly here among you.”** The gift of prophecy can bring unbelievers into a place of belief!

The gift of prophecy should not bring direction, it should not bring correction and it should not bring judgement. This is usually seen in the ministry of the prophet (see below).

#### **3.2 The ministry of the prophet**

Ephesians 4:11 “Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and the teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ.”

The ministry of the prophet is usually held by an elder, who is called to speak the Word of God and be a spokesman for God. Without a prophet, a Church will be prone to sin. Weak and immature churches are prevalent because prophets are missing from the church. The office of the prophet will hold authority.

Strong eldership teams are those that have the gifts of the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, the pastor and the teacher. We see these gifts strongly operating in the life of Northpoint.

The prophet is called to this ministry – it is not just a gifting, it is a calling.

Prophets today will not bring brand new revelation. God has already said everything he needs to say and yet He is still speaking.

They can bring direction, confirmation and correction.

We see a Biblical example of a prophet in Agabus. Agabus arrived at Caesarea to meet with Paul, who was staying with Philip the evangelist and his four daughters. Although the four girls had the gift of prophecy, Agabus had the ministry of a prophet. It was Agabus, not one of the four girls, who was entrusted with a major directive prophecy for Paul (Acts 21:8-11) (Pytches, Come Holy Spirit).

Prophetic preaching will identify sin and weaknesses, and there will be a warning to turn away. Jesus is the greatest example of the prophetic preacher!

“Mere preachers may help anybody and hurt nobody: but prophets will stir everybody and madden somebody. The preacher goes with the crowd; the prophet goes against it. A man freed, fired and filled with God will be branded unpatriotic because he speaks against his nations’ sins; unkind because his tongue is a two edged sword; unbalanced because the weight of preaching opinion is against him. The preacher will be heralded, the prophet will be hounded!” (Leonard Ravenhill, “Why Revival Tarries”).

#### **4. THE NEED FOR ORDER & DISCERNMENT**

Some people have asked the question – can I simply utter something with no control over what I say? We can find the answer to this in scripture. 1 Corinthians 14:32-33: “Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.” (NLT) “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets.” (NIV)

The prophetic gift should be done in an orderly fashion, as God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. So when in a church meeting, you feel God has given you a prophetic word to share, it does not mean that you stand up in the middle of the meeting and shout it out, but in vs 29 we see a description as to how it could be done: we take turns and do it in an orderly manner. If you have a word, take it to the elder who is leading the meeting. If he feels it should be shared, you will have your opportunity. If he feels it should not be shared right then, you wait on God for another opportunity and do not get discouraged.

If something is bought from the Spirit of God, there will be clarity, confirmation, joy and peace. The word will line up with scripture. The Word of God is the ultimate authority in our lives – it must remain the infallible standard.

The Spirit of God is likened to a dove – the Holy Spirit will be gentle – He will not possess a person and take over their ability to speak. A lying spirit and a demonic spirit will do this.

We need to exercise a spirit of discernment when a prophetic word is bought. 1 Corinthians 14:29

states: “and the others should weigh carefully what is said”. Prophecy is a spontaneous revelation from God, reported in the person’s (merely human) words. This by definition means that it is fallible. The revelation itself is from God, but the interpretation might not be correct. Sometimes a word can be bought out of wishful thinking, or a person can have an issue with leadership and wants to make their point, or it can be a lying spirit (Ezekial 13 and 14 speak of false prophets and their “imagination”).

There are a number of scriptures that give guidance in this area.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-20: “Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but TEST everything that is said.”

1 John 4:1 “Do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must TEST them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God.”

Revelation 19:10 An angel says to John on the island of Patmos: “Worship only God. For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus (to testify of Jesus).

The prophetic must never contradict the Word of God and it must always point to Jesus.

We can say with full confidence that Northpoint is a safe place – the prophetic can be bought and if there is error, it will be pointed out. Francois Botes says it like this: a trapeze artist will have great confidence to take risks with their jumps and acrobatics, if they know there is a safety net in place. In the same way, prophecy is safe with good, strong leadership. When a person receives a word from God, but they want to confirm that it is acceptable to bring, it is best for that person to check it first with an elder.

## **5. WHERE SHOULD WE SEE THE PROPHETIC IN OPERATION?**

Everywhere!!! It should not just be seen in the church context – yes, it is there to bring strengthening and encouragement to the church, but it can be used in other contexts.

The prophetic will be used when counselling, where the word of knowledge will break down spiritual walls of bondage; with a teenager in the mall, needing the word of encouragement; with the stranger in the restaurant, that God has not forgotten them; and with the work colleague, who is reminded that God exists and that they need only believe....

We need to be prepared and ready in every circumstance to receive revelation from God, hear his voice and act upon it. We need to be faithful, no matter how small the revelation might be, no matter how insignificant the word might be!

## 6. HOW DOES THE PROPHETIC HAPPEN?

Francois Botes speaks of the revelation coming visually and perceptual.

Visually: dreams, visions, trances, a picture framed in your mind, a physical object that prompts a God thought, nature

Perceptually (sense): a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, discernment of spirits.

Mike Hatchett spoke at an NCMi National Elders Time (2010), and he spoke of 4 things in the "How": Revelation comes, interpretation, application, timing!

A practical example of this is:

1. Revelation: Whilst praying for a person you receive a picture of .....
2. Interpretation: You pray for understanding as to what the picture means. God places the words and scriptures in your spirit.
3. Application: You receive clarity as to how you should share the word with the person, either one on one with the person or in a meeting. And you share the Word!
4. Timing is key! Sometimes a word needs to be bought as it is received, otherwise the opportunity will be lost. Sometimes a word is incomplete and God needs to fully reveal the meaning through continued prayer and meditation.

## 7. HOW CAN WE FAN INTO FLAMES THIS SPIRITUAL GIFTING?

We acknowledge that the gift is a spiritual gift, freely given by God, and that it requires no effort to receive it. However, just as we can receive a gift and then put it into a cupboard and ignore it, so too with this gift of the prophetic. **Our giftings can lie dormant and can be neglected.** Paul writes to his son in the faith, Timothy on two occasions and encourages him in his gifting. 1 Timothy 4:14: "Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you." 2 Timothy 1:6: "This is why **I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you** when I laid my hands on you."

The gift of prophecy will flourish when the fruits of the spirit are in abundance and when the character has been tested and refined. Yes, a prophetic gift can be evidenced in a person's life even when there is sin and disobedience, but the long term integrity of the prophetic word shared will be questioned.

Here are some things that we can do to fan this gift into flame, and to receive greater revelation from God.

***The strongest calling of the prophetic gifting is to walk in revelation – these are things that can only be revealed by His Spirit!***

### ***7.1 Be Seated before Christ, Surrendered, Submissive and Humble before Him***

Isaiah 57:15 “The high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, the Holy One, says this: “I live in that high and lofty place with those whose hearts are contrite and humble. I refresh the humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts.”

The word “contrite” means to acknowledge sin and be repentant of it. God wishes to break down the stiff necked person within, to break down the pride and the arrogance in our hearts. God will give refreshing, revelation and new courage to those with humble, contrite and repentant hearts.

So often when God places a word in your heart for someone, you don’t have the courage to step forward. God says that he will give courage to those with repentant hearts!

We’re reminded of Mary, the sister of Martha, in this. She was so often found at the feet of Jesus! To have the spirit of Mary! Luke 10:38 speaks of Mary being found at the feet of Jesus. We see a picture of a servant, humble, listening, taking the time to listen! Jesus said in this context, “There is only one thing worth being concerned about, Mary has discovered it!” What Mary did was abnormal. In that culture at that time, men sat with the rabbi, but women served. Mary broke a social norm. Mary was sensitive to Him – she could sense his impending death – she knew she had little time with Him. Mary had discovered the joy of sitting at His feet, listening to His voice. We have to find the time to seek His face. “Are we sensitive to Him?” “Where are we to be found?”

In Isaiah 50:4 we see Isaiah the prophet (one of the greatest Old Testament prophets) speaking personally, revealing something of his heart: “The Sovereign Lord has given me His words of wisdom, so that I know what to say to all these weary ones. Morning by morning He wakens me and opens my understanding to His will. The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me and I have listened.” This should be our heart, waking up early in the morning, receiving His word, praying, interceding, hearing Him speak, and receiving revelation from Him.

Bill Johnson says it like this: “God invests his treasures in the surrendered heart”. (Johnson, Dreaming with God)

### ***7.2 Be Grounded in His Word***

The prophetic needs sound theology – a strong foundation in the Word of God. Our roots need to grow down deep into the Word, and we need to be not only people of the Spirit but also people of the Word. We need to be found reading His Word and studying it daily. Most of the prophetic words that we bring will be scripture. Often, as we pray for someone, the very scripture that we read that morning, is what is highlighted in our spirit at that time, and the revealed word then breaks the yoke of bondage.

Bill Johnson says, “Proper foundations attract the builder (the revelator) to come and add to those foundations, to add further revelation”. (Johnson, Dreaming with God). If God sees that an

individual that He has already gifted in the prophetic, has strong foundations of the Word in their life, He knows that he/she is a safe person to whom to bring more revelation. He knows that he/she will be diligent with the revelation and will have the Word of God as their foundation.

Not only do we need to be reading His Word, but we need to be obeying it. Jeremiah 6:16: "This is what the Lord says: "Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, Godly way and walk in it. Travel its path and you will find rest for your souls." (NLT) "Ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls." (NIV) What are the ancient paths, the old Godly ways? They speak of the scriptures which are eternal and unchanging. Every day, God speaks to us in a loud, booming voice- His Word, His revealed, spoken Will. Are we obeying His loud, daily, booming voice? If we are, then we will also be able to hear the gentle whispers and receive the secret things, the words of knowledge, the prophetic.

### **7.3 Learn the Biblical Art of Meditation** (Johnson, Dreaming with God)

The dictionary definition of meditation is to "Exercise the mind in contemplation". It means to ponder and reflect upon. Religious cults teach us to empty our minds when meditating, however the Bible teaches us to fill our minds with God's Word, with His exploits, with His love. Our minds needs to be quiet and "directed" before him. We need to mull over a word in our hearts.

Ps 48:9 "O God, we meditate on your unfailing love as we worship in your Temple."

Ps 145:5 "I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendour and your wonderful miracles."

If we've meditated on God's Word, "chewed" on it, reflected on it, and deposited it into our spirits, it'll be highlighted in our spirits at a later time, when a revealed word is needed.

### **7.4 Blessed are the Pure in Heart for They Will See God**

Matthew 5:8: "God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God". The person gifted with the prophetic wants to see God. How can we see Him? We need to have a pure heart, be holy and set apart for God's plans and purposes. Holiness is a key foundation.

2 Tim 2:20 -21: "In a wealthy home, some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions and the cheap ones are for everyday use. **If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honourable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.**"

We want to be the instrument for noble purposes. We need to cleanse ourselves of the clutter and of the things that hold us back.

2 Corinthians 3:16 – 4:1-2 "But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.... All of us who have had the veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord... Therefore since God in His mercy has given us this new way, we never give up. We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the Word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this."

We need to live in purity before God and men with our tithes, our taxes, our relationships with our family, friends and neighbours. Are we living in a place of forgiveness? Are we kind with our words to our husbands, our children, the lady at the cashier till, the petrol attendant?

R.T. Kendall spoke at an NCMI National Elders Time (2009) and said this: “Understand that the Holy Spirit is sensitive.” The person of the Holy Spirit is sensitive; we see Him depicted in scripture as a dove. John 1:32: “I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting on Him.”

He gave a beautiful example of a family living in a house in Jerusalem. There were roosting doves in the roof of this house. The family soon came to realise that the doves would roost when the house was quiet, when there was gentle, soft music, and when the family gently spoke with each other. However when there was slamming of doors and shouting voices, the doves would fly off, and would only return when peace was restored. The Holy Spirit can be like this in our lives.

A dove is shy, it cannot be trained, it is afraid of people, it is peaceful and gentle and it mates for life (which speaks of loyalty and faithfulness). If the Holy Spirit, in the form of this dove, loves peace and gentleness, it will be drawn to people who are gentle and at peace. If the Holy Spirit is drawn to loyalty and faithfulness, it will be drawn to people who are loyal and faithful. The Holy Spirit will desire to stay in the heart of the person who is holy, at peace, faithful and loyal. And just as the Holy Spirit is drawn to the heart that is at peace, so too people are drawn to that heart. Do people want to spend time with you? Are they refreshed by you? Or do they run when they see you?

RT Kendall spoke of how it is so easy to grieve the Holy Spirit – when we lose our temper, are impatient, have that nasty comment. The dove flies away. RT Kendall spoke of true holiness as closing the time gap between the sin and the repentance, and of how we should bring that gap down to seconds! May God help us in this!

### **7.5 *Live in a Place of Abundant, Generous Giving***

John 12: 1-7 We see Mary again at the feet of Jesus. We have seen her seated before Him listening attentively to Him, humble, surrendered. Now we see her anointing Jesus’ feet with an expensive perfume called spikenard. It is the oil from a plant grown in the north of India, imported to Palestine at that time. It was extremely expensive as it cost almost the equivalent of a year’s wages. She had a spirit of extreme generosity – it involved a great sacrifice. This spirit was ridiculed by those there – people said that it was a great waste. She knew that she was anointing Him, preparing Him for burial – she was doing something prophetic.

Are we living in this place of abundant, generous giving? And this is not only with our finances, this is with our spirits, our time, our gifts. Are we always encouraging? – do we encourage a person after they’ve preached a good word? Do we encourage the musicians in their giftings? Do we express our thanks to the Children’s ministry teachers? Are we praying for a word of encouragement for people? A prophetic person needs to have a spirit of encouragement. This spirit of generosity has to be regardless of our circumstances, regardless of whether we receive encouragement.

When we are in a place of continual giving, God will give more. As we are faithful with releasing the

small word, he'll release more and more to us. The word of encouragement to the individual given in humility and love, will lead to God giving you a deeper, more revealed word of knowledge.

#### **7.6 Give God your nights** (Johnson, Dreaming with God)

God loves to visit us at night and give us instruction that we might not be receiving during the day. Job 33:15 "For God speaks again and again though people do not recognise it. He speaks in dreams, and visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. He makes them turn from doing wrong; he keeps them from pride." Ask him to minister to you in the night with visions and dreams. If he gives you a dream, ask him for understanding and interpretation.

### **8. HONING YOUR GIFT**

An example can be given of a fast and sleek Ferrari sports car. It is a beautiful car however on its own it cannot drive from A to B. It requires a driver with experience and skill to truly reach its maximum speed and potential. The same can be said of the prophetic gifting. The gifting is there regardless of the "driver", however with time and experience the "driver" improves, gains experience and learns how to "operate" the car with skill. Here are some practical tips to remember and ways in which we can hone this gifting.

8.1 It is a supernatural gifting that some could then boast about – do not boast about this gift. Have your feet firmly on the ground.

8.2 Do not be weird for weirdness sake and yet know that sometimes God will ask us to do something strange or unusual. God asked of the prophets strange and unusual things in order to impress a point upon the people (Hosea 1, Isaiah 20:3).

8.3 Do not harshly impose a word on people – ask them if you can share a word with them.

8.4 Do not bring specific words of direction unless the elders are present. First share the word with an elder, before giving it to the person.

8.5 Be specific, especially when reading scripture. Try not to read an entire chapter of scripture, when one or two verses would have sufficed. Focus on the specific point that God wants to make – this will have a greater impact. Too much and you will lose the attention of the listeners. The most impactful prophecies are sometimes brief. For example, Haggai 1:13: Haggai spoke this message from God "I am with you". Very short, but very comforting.

8.6 Watch your emotions. Keep them in check, without becoming robotic. Be clear with your words. Watch your breathing.

8.7 Watch your emotional state after a prophetic utterance. Prophets like Elijah and Jonah experienced depression, anger and suicidal thoughts after God had used them in a mighty way.

8.8 Recognise the peculiar way in which God is urging you to speak. It might be a physical sensation, an unsettledness in your spirit, an urgency, a heaviness. It's a feeling that if you don't release the word, you won't have peace.

8.9 God can often use a physical feeling to speak to you – to demonstrate something happening in the spirit. For example, you might suddenly experience a spirit of fear in a meeting, something that you don't normally experience – you know that someone in the meeting is experiencing this very thing.

8.10 Ask God to give you wisdom and discernment to know if a word is for you personally, for someone else or for the larger corporate body. Learn to distinguish and discern.

8.11 Only repeat what the Holy Spirit says or shows you – don't embellish. Don't bring your own personal interpretation, only what God has said.

8.12 Release what God gives you as the occasion presents and the appropriateness dictates.

8.13 Record and journal prophetic moments.

## **9. SOME CAUTION**

9.1 Be aware that satan can also use the prophetic gift – he can use a person to bring a counterfeit miracle, word, utterance.

9.2 Be aware that the gift is supernatural, powerful and should be treated with caution and respect.

9.3 Be aware of the response you are receiving from the person or group to whom you are ministering. Sometimes it is good to ask them if the word was helpful. It often brings confirmation and encouragement to you that you are correctly hearing God.

## **10. REFERENCES**

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