**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH -BIBLE STUDY**

**“ASK THE PASTOR”**

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**Where does the church stand on the topic of the Prophetic Ministry? The Prophetic Office verses the Prophetic Gift? Is it ministered in this church?**

One of the areas in which there is presently a great deal of confusion and abuse over recent years has been the office of the prophetic. Just before COVID 19 and culminating with our recent Presidential election this ministry gift was in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons like never before. The title of Prophet and Prophetess became the most desired one of the day and it seemed as though pop up prophets and prophetess were, in the terms of the old timers, coming out of the woodwork. To this there has been two main reactions.

1. An Over Emphasis of the Prophetic

\* Building the totality of the Ministry around it.

\* Everyone pursuing the gift and claiming Prophetic Utterance

2. A Total Rejection of the Prophetic Ministry- In many places the abuses have resulted in Pastors becoming Leary and overprotective of their churches and a total rejection of the ministry and office.

**CORRECT RESPONSE**: Balance and Understanding

**What is the Prophetic Ministry??**

The prophetic ministry and demonstrations of prophets are seen in both the Old and New Testaments, and they seem to be very different! The Old Testament prophet seems to call down fire from Heaven, speak words of judgement and warning to God’s people and the surrounding nations, have bizarre visions, or even carry out strange prophetic acts such as cooking food over animal dung or marrying a prostitute. Yet there is none of this in the prophetic ministry in the New Testament, which seems to have a very different flavor. Why is this? The role of the prophetic ministry has changed because we are now living in a new and better covenant. We must interpret the teachings and examples of the old covenant through a new covenant lens. In some cases, this actually overrides certain aspects of the former covenant, with elements of the prophetic ministry being one such case. In the Old Testament we see a recurring theme concerning the people of God. We see them enjoying God’s blessing but then become complacent, embracing sin and compromising through idolatry and sexual immorality. God, in His kindness, sends a prophetic voice to them to warn them to repent, but the people (or the representative of the people, such as their king) refuse to listen. The judgement God had warned them about comes about, aimed at bringing them to repentance and therefore back into a healthy relationship with God. The nation turns back to God, and He blesses them. They seem to repeat that pattern until the patience of God finally runs out about a thousand or so years after He initially gave the people His Law. Because the nature of the new covenant is different from the old covenant, it follows that the nature and role of the prophetic ministry must also be different. One of the most striking differences between the covenants is that the old was all about works, but the new is all about grace. In the new covenant, the opportunity for intimacy is given, again and again. This reiterates why the prophetic in this age is to build up, encourage and comfort. New covenant prophecy is less about judgement and more about encouragement.

**What is a Prophet?**

A prophet (Greek prophetes) is a spokesman or interpreter of divine truth. They are someone who reveals the mind and heart of God through word and deed. We can define the prophetic ministry as **‘connecting people to the Presence of God so they see, hear and experience Him for themselves.** Through the influence of one or more prophets, a [healthy church](https://anthonyhilder.com/healthy-church/) receives prophetic ministry that creates an [atmosphere primed for spiritual encounters](https://anthonyhilder.com/prophetic-culture/) with God. We will later see that there are various levels to prophecy that determines wether someone is used to prophecy or is considered a prophet.

**The Purpose of Prophetic Ministry.**

Paul encouraged the prophetic ministry to the church in Corinth. Arguably, he considered it the most important of the spiritual gifts, one to be eagerly sought after.

**I Corinthians 14:1 says, “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, *especially the gift of prophecy.”***

**I Corinthians 14:24-25 says: “But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’”**

The gift of prophecy is often the most prominent, because through it God can speak directly into a situation.

**I Corinthians 14:31 also says: “For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.”**

The following outlines what prophetic ministry seeks to accomplish and how it ought to be received by the church.

* To see and hear from God for the sake of others
* To encourage faithful endurance and perseverance
* To reveal the secrets within human hearts
* To call into being God’s future, shape history (See Jeremiah’s call narrative in Jeremiah 1:9-10)
* To challenge the status quo with heavenly and spiritual vision; to reveal reality (See Revelation 4:1:11 and Rev 21:1-4 as examples)
* To predict and warn of coming events (See Acts 11:28 as an example)

**What to expect in prophecy:**

**\* Expect to be challenged and convicted, especially in your perception of things**

* Expect to be encouraged to remain faithful to God’s calling
* Expect to see God’s glory revealed
* Expect to be reminded of what is yours in Christ - your identity, your calling, his Spirit

**How to respond:**

* Receive prophecies with openness and humility. Paul teaches the church not to treat prophecies with contempt (I Thessalonians 5:20).
* Use spiritual discernment to test the validity of the prophecy. False prophets abound, so prophecies must be tested. The first test is whether the prophet acknowledges the lordship and real coming of Jesus Christ - 1 John 4:1. Secondly, Paul says all true prophets will acknowledge the scripture and Paul’s commands (I Corinthians 14:37). Third, prophecy will never contradict the written Word of God but will uphold and honor it. Fourth, Jesus taught that true prophets would be known by their fruit (Matthew 7:20). Finally Moses also taught that you could very simply determine a true vs. false prophet by whether or not their  prediction comes true (Deuteronomy 18:22).
* If a prophet is reliable and trustworthy and shows the fruit of God’s Spirit, and if the leaders of the church discern its validity, then it is advisable to receive the prophetic word as God’s word and to act accordingly.

**Level One: Occasional Inspirational Prophecy**

***All* believers, can prophesy. Remember what Peter said on the day of Pentecost, quoting the prophet Joel:**

**And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions,Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above *And signs in the earth beneath* (Acts 2:17–19, nkjv).**

In other words, any believer is able to speak out something that God brings to mind. In addition, Scripture urges us to seek the gift of prophecy (see 1 Corinthians. 14:5).

**Level Two: Consistent Prophetic Gifting**

The key word here is “consistent.” Prophets at this level experience a consistent stream of words, open visions, and dreams, which they are often able to report, interpret, and apply in an accurate way. Their prophetic output is still limited primarily to upbuilding words, but they are beginning to receive words with a greater weight of authority on them. Often people at this level of giving become quite interested in and committed to intercessory prayer. This makes sense, because while prophets make the desires of God known to people, intercessors make the desires of people known to God, even as they endeavor to pray according to the will of God.

**Level Three: Proven Prophetic Ministry**

People with a proven prophetic ministry have demonstrated over time that they possess mature character and wisdom regarding God’s purposes for His people. At least occasionally, their prophetic gift will operate in tandem with “signs and wonders” gifts such as healing, miracles, or deliverance, and they will have earned the respect and authority to administer corrections and possibly rebukes. Like all words from God, theirs will need to be confirmed by witnesses and judged by other prophets, but they will be uncommonly accurate and edifying.

**Level Four: The Office of a Prophet**

A person who holds the New Testament office of a prophet, although he or she will speak God’s words in a powerful way, but we must not make the error of placing their words on the same level of scripture. This level of prophecy goes way beyond the scope of an inspirational gift, and they will be used most often to speak encouragement but also direction and correction, equipping and commissioning. Through their gifts, they provide edification, confirmation, direction, and correction to those in church government and often to leaders in the secular world. They establish, articulate, and emphasize what the Holy Spirit wants to have highlighted. In addition, they may predict future events with accuracy to help the Body of Christ mature in its position in the world. As they are fulfilled, these predictions are used to amaze and wake up unconverted people so that they will want to encounter God for themselves.This may include the prediction of “unspiritual” events such as weather patterns and natural signs (storms, droughts, earthquakes), international political shifts, and so on. Their accuracy gains them recognition on a broad scale, and they are used to address people of influence in the secular world as well as individuals, congregations, and streams within the Body of Christ.