

PRINCIPLES IN THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

By Viktor Kostov

“Prophecy,” or “prophesying,” is **a spiritual gift given to Christians** by the Holy Spirit. The gift must strengthen the believers (the church) and glorify Jesus (1 Cor. 14).

If “prayer” is man speaking to God, **“prophecy” is God speaking to man**, through man. Prophecy is usually pointed to the church but often the specific word comes to individuals. It may also concern whole cities, regions and nations and their governments.

There is yet another term, “the prophetic,” which has its meaning, regardless that it is incorrect English. “The prophetic” is used as a noun, although it is, originally, an adjective. However, in prophetic circles “the prophetic” is a term well-known and well-used. As a noun, it is generally believed to mean that activity of the Holy Spirit, and the response of God’s people, that has to do with hearing God’s voice (his mind, heart, and purpose) through different means (the Bible, an audible voice, dreams and visions, impressions and open revelations). The goals of this activity—of God speaking and His people receiving—is to draw the church closer to God, to have her follow Jesus and His purposes in a focused manner. “The prophetic” is an activity also aimed at revealing His glory to the church and, in some cases, to the world.

“The prophetic” can also mean **a lot of weirdness in the flesh** by overly-zealous attention seekers who never have enough attention (I have given an example in the last section of this article). These bad examples are not the genuine operation of the gift of prophecy. People should also not be labeled “false prophet” if they fall into the fleshly imitation of the real prophetic. We learn by our mistakes. Those who don’t learn from their mistakes should be kindly, but firmly, advised to find a better way of spending their time. One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results each time.[\[1\]](#) The prophetic and insanity are not compatible.

The following points are principles **which I have found to be important** in the use of the prophetic gift and in the development of a prophetic ministry. Some I have adopted from other workers by observing their teaching and ministry styles. Others I discovered by reading books on the subject. A number of these principles I have found in the Bible and have practically tested in my own ministry of the prophetic gift. I believe that all of these principles are biblically sound and can be applied in the prophetic ministry:

1. DEFINITION

Definition of prophecy: God speaking his mind, His heart and His intentions to men (the church) through a believer.

2. BUILD THE CHURCH

The gifts and the ministries of the gifts of Holy Spirit have the **purpose** to build the church in unity and love for Christ (Eph. 4:11). The gift is not meant to build our reputation or bank account.

3. THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY, PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD

The purpose of prophecy is to *edify, encourage* and *comfort* (1 Cor. 14:3). Some take this to mean that “only positive and **nice words** should be delivered.” This is a serious mistake. Often words of conviction of sin and of revealing deep thoughts of the heart are a source of *comfort* and *strength* in the Lord. This is because deception of the flesh and dwelling on sinful habits or thoughts bring angst, fatigue or lack of growth in the faith of a man or woman.

An example of this is **the man who attended one of our prophetic events** and he and his marriage were touched by God and mended. While I was praying for a woman I asked her if she was married. It turned out that her husband was in the same room but they were not sitting together. I called the husband to come and join the prayer. I could sense the icy wall between the two. The Holy Spirit was moving and soon they were holding hands and crying. We spent some time with them after the meeting and chatted about the ways God moves in people’s lives.

Not long after that the man decided that he was a “graduated” prophet. I heard an unfortunate report of his premature ministry. He went prophesying to a woman, whose husband was ill, that the man would soon get better, “says the Lord.” The sick man died two days later. This must have been very discouraging and confusing for the poor woman who had put her trust in the hopeful word that her husband would live. If you’re not sure what the Lord is saying do not minister in the flesh—saying what people want to or hope to hear from the Lord. It is better to just pray for healing rather than announce it prophetically.

The other extreme is as also dangerous—spilling out bitterness and gall and clothing one’s own insecurity, or even demonic deviation, in a “prophetic” message. The spirit of such messages is to be rejected as the word is judged. A lady once “prophetically” spoke to a sister in the church: ‘Jesus does not love you anymore.’ Such prophecy, obviously of demonic origin, must be confronted and discarded by a due process of testing. Although for the mature Christian such a word is in reckless dissent with the Bible, it can make a more fragile soul stumble and enter into doubt and despair. While the use of the gift of tongues concerns only us and the Lord, prophecy has the element of affecting other people since the words are spoken on God’s behalf.

Thus if your word is one of rebuke of sin or rebellion and it does not edify, encourage or comfort in the end it is not prophetic in the true sense of the New Testament. God does not release the prophetic so He can condemn people. He convicts so people can see their sin and rebellion and turn away from them. Therefore, as strange as it may sound, even the prophetic word of judgment, if administered carefully and with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, can bring edification, encouragement and/or comfort.

A warning: do not speak your bitterness and confuse it with "The Lord's judgment." Neither speak your humanistic "compassion" in people's situations—you will give them false hope the end result of which will not be faith but disappointment. What can one speak then? That's why it is important to learn to fear God more than you fear man. Only when the fear of the Lord defeats the fear of man in us we can expect to find the balance in delivering prophetic words to the church and to individuals.

4. GOD IS MORE ZEALOUS THAN US

God's intention and desire to have His people use the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the gift of prophecy, in particular, is greater than that of many church members and leaders, or even of those who pursue the gifts. This was the most important lesson I learned after organizing my first "prophetic conference" since moving to Bulgaria to do mission work. This lesson was confirmed during seminars on training in hearing God's voice, a committed following of Jesus, and the prophetic ministry which we have held in different parts of Bulgaria. I realized that God's purpose and plan for the tired and hard pressed believers in the nation of Bulgaria was to draw back to Him in a fresh way—through teaching on the prophetic gift and encouraging people to be practical about their relationship with God and the use of His gifts. This realization boosted my faith that this ministry is needed and helpful for the church.

5. KNOWLEDGE OF THE GIFTS AND PROPHECY IS THE STANDARD, NOT IGNORANCE

Be **informed** of the spiritual gifts, not ignorant (1 Cor. 12:1). Desire the spiritual gifts and especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:3). Often the true advice—to seek the Giver of the gifts not the gifts is well-intended fallacy. How can you seek the Giver of the gifts without seeking the gifts if He has specifically instructed you to SEEK THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Cor. 14:1)!? That saying is an excuse for intellectual Christians to stick to their comfortable doctrine in which reading the Bible at night is all you have to risk in your faith.

6. THE GIFT IS TO BE USED, NOT WORSHIPED

Be **practical** and pragmatic about the *use* of the gift—the more you use it appropriately and learn from your mistakes, the more you become effective for the Lord in using it. One cannot be pragmatic about the *contents* of the gift—often prophecy has to do with visions, dreams, impressions and their biblical interpretation that call for "kingdom effectiveness" which is different from mere success in worldly terms. Scores of Christians remain fruitless in this and other gifts because they think these gifts are for great and mighty believers, not for them. God alone is great and mighty and whoever surrenders to Him in service can reveal this greatness and might by using the gifts He has given to His people.

7. THE GIFT OPERATES BY FAITH

Prophecy according to, or in proportion with, your **faith** (Romans 12:6). Faith is always a part of the equation when we come to using the spiritual gifts or even doing work for the Lord.

The way the Holy Spirit works with me is that while I am teaching or preaching in a public setting, one or several of the faces of people in attendance stand out. I may not know what the Lord has in mind immediately but I keep a mental check of the person. Then, at a later and more opportune time, I call that person and I make clear that they are the focus of God's attention. This is a step of faith. If I say, "Wow, nice face. Let's move on with the agenda," I will not be using my faith.

Using my faith (given to me by God, it's not exactly "mine") is to say "Lord, why are you showing me this face?" Of course, the faith starts operating in just stating the question—I must believe that the Lord is, actually, showing me, so and so. Then, as I call attention to the person, I don't always know what the Lord has in mind for this man or woman. The Spirit may have given me only a few details. But this is the point. If I knew everything in advance, I would not need faith.

So I wait a bit on the Lord and as I get part of the word from the Spirit, for the man or woman, I start delivering it. Often, the rest of the supernatural understanding of circumstances follows. Then I may ask questions of the individual to see if the word is to the point. Usually they are on target and I get encouraged, because my faith has worked!

Faith is always needed for the spiritual gift to operate. This is true about all gifts—wisdom, prophecy, word of knowledge, healings, leadership etc. Spiritual gifts cannot operate unless we choose by faith to see the direction God's Spirit is taking us. It is risky, but without risking there is no actual seeing in the invisible, which is the definition of faith (Hebrews 11:1). We must see with the eyes of faith the opportunities to use the gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit for His glory.

8. MAKE RECORD OF PROPHETIC WORDS

Record on tape, or in writing, prophetic words for future reference, encouragement, and accountability. If you know that all is recorded you may try to be more responsible with what you say. And if on Judgment Day we are to be judged for each word we've spoken there should be no problem for the prophet to have the prophecy recorded on tape or paper. The word is being recorded in much more important and safer place (heaven) anyway!

I was once in a dry place and needed a prophetic word to encourage me. Ministry to others had taken its toll and I needed to be ministered to, myself. However, in my context, as a missionary, I did not have faithful partners to help me in my place of need. The Lord, however, is not unaware of our deep needs and desires.

I was fumbling aimlessly through my work and records on my computer. Although aimless for me, this activity turned out to be of the Holy Spirit. I came across a record in my computer of a prophetic word given to me 5 years previously. It was given to me by a friend in seminary with whom I used to pray weekly. The word had an anointing to it back

then when my friend delivered it to me. But reading it 5 years later I was stunned to see how accurately it spoke about the circumstances I was in today! Just reading the record of this prophecy filled me with faith and comfort as I knew that the Lord had spoken in advance for what I was to go through. His peace and love became real again in the time of my reading this word.

On another occasion this same brother, a Presbyterian pastor in Los Angeles, but of charismatic theology and practice saw a vision about me during a prayer time in his church. He said I saw a Gypsy royalty that you will connect with. I had ministered some among Gypsy churches in Bulgaria but did not have any specific calling to continue nor did I know especially and "royalty" among these people. Two years later (2009) after I had been invited and conducted a conference at a very popular "multiethnic" church led by a Gypsy pastor I remembered this prophetic word. That word popped into my mind while I was trying to make sense of the situation I had found myself in the way this pastor (belonging to a Bulgarian "apostolic movement"). Just that one word made me fully understand why he was behaving the way he was behaving. He was acting as a royalty and that was his view of himself. This word gave me wisdom as to my further choices regarding connections with this pastor.

The word was not recorded. But the Holy Spirit very timely and clearly reminded me of His prior information given me by my Presbyterian friend.

To put it in a sentence: God's word will not be lost; but it will be helpful if you try to **keep a record of prophecy and prophetic words whenever possible.**

9. RECEIVE WISE OPINIONS AND ADVICE

Seek **feedback** from people immediately and/or after a period of time—this part is the testing of the prophetic word. Take notes of needed adjustment and corrections. Be aware that many believers are not used to the operating of the prophetic gift in public and/or are not used to or trained in hearing the voice of God. Such may even deny what the prophetic minister is seeing in their lives and sharing with them simply as a reaction to the unusual (for them) way the Spirit is moving and talking. Be discerning and not discouraged, do not try to prove yourself with further prophecy or by arguing with them. They will come to you themselves.

This has happened to me. I was with the ministry team at a village church where a group of young people were visiting from a different church. I shared several encouraging insights God had given me for a young woman, from the visiting group, in front of the whole congregation, right before the church service started. This was in front of the whole congregation. There was nothing embarrassing about what I shared. When I asked her if she could relate to the word she said that she couldn't. Later she came to me in a setting where the group's attention was not focused on her any longer and shared that what I had said to her was correct.

Sometimes when checking with the person you are ministering to you can simply misunderstand each other.

I had just delivered a word for a young lady at a public meeting and finished with the words "You didn't see this coming, did you?" This was still part of the prophecy. I wanted to

emphasize the fact that God can surprise us even when we don't expect Him to. Her response was, "No, I was praying for this." In a conversation with this sister she confirmed that what I had given her as a word from the Lord spoke to her state of heart and circumstance. I then asked her about our last exchange: about her not expecting the prophetic word coming. She told me that what she understood was that I was asking her if she had not expected to come to the conference. Her response, "I was praying for this" meant that she was praying to come to the conference. She wasn't actually praying to receive a prophetic word. We simply miss-communicated and had to clear it up.

Do not hesitate to **ask questions** if in doubt about certain conversation, or communication.

10. PROPHECY HAS AN EFFECT, ALWAYS

There is **no "neutral" prophecy**. It is good, bad or a combination of both. It is speaking through the Holy Spirit the mind of God and according to 1 Cor. 14:3 the purpose of prophecy is to encourage, build and comfort. A prophetic word cannot just do nothing. The prophetic word communicates God's thoughts and plans, or so it claims; it cannot be just casual chatter, even when it is delivered in a casual manner. It either does good or bad or a mixture of both. By testing and discernment, take the good and leave the bad. Help the prophetic minister sharpen his skills by providing honest feedback.

11. PROPHECIC PROTOCOL IS GOOD BUT MUST BE CAREFULLY TESTED AGAINST THE SCRIPTURES

Prophetic words do not have to be **submitted** to the church leadership first before being released to the congregation.^[i] Such an order, or protocol, has no support in the Bible. The order is the reverse—the prophetic word is released first and then it is judged for how good it is. To treat prophecy with contempt is to put out the Spirit's fire (1 Thess. 5:19-20). However, we must test everything, meaning every prophecy.

Testing everything and *criticizing* everything are not the same thing and should not be confused. The purpose of *testing everything*, including every prophecy, is for the good. Testing means to sift the good from the bad and hold on to the good in order to "avoid every kind of evil" (vv. 21-22).

The purpose of *criticizing everything* is bad—it is to prove that there is nothing good unless I approve of it (the person is the ultimate standard and judge, there is no external measuring stick).

If there is a proper understanding that prophecy will be tested, and knowing that the good will be taken and the bad discarded, there is more freedom for disciples to learn how to use the gift. If the reverse order is kept—the elders check the word and if it is appropriate they allow it—discourages people to react spontaneously to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Such "censorship," no matter how well intended, will allow for only "nice" words to be spoken. The result will be prophecies that are dull and out of balance, simply for the sake of being "safe" and avoiding "harmful" words.

The ill effect then stems from the good effect: harmful words **will not be released**, but they also **will not be tested**, because... they are not released. Thus the believers' body will only be accustomed to the niceties in the use of the prophetic. They will not be well trained

in discerning the genuine work of the Holy Spirit through prophecy because there will be a pressure to always be nice and safe. Being “nice in the Spirit” is prophetic humanism and is actually not prophetic at all.

False prophets are produced very easily following this routine. I call the practice of insisting on safe words only the “**puppy-dog-prophets**” syndrome. To make all look nice and preppy is the other side of criticizing everything. Such prophecies do not equip soldiers, but puppy-dog attitudes where disciples remain dependent on their leaders.

At the same time, I must admit that often **it is very difficult to find true “soldier material”** among people attending churches. A lot of church service attendees are more concerned with how they can benefit from visiting the church rather than with how to serve Jesus. To allow immature people to “prophesy” their fears or their need for attention in the church meeting would be a mistake for any church leader.

Both extremes—being too suspicious and critical of the prophetic or being too eager to tailor the words so that they are something that the people can handle, can diminish the effectiveness of the use of this gift. The desire for a “sterile” church experience with clean-cut services is fostered by church leaders who are afraid of delegating responsibility to the people. It is a lingering by-product of the cultural church model of the “senior pastor.”

At the same time **it takes wisdom not to “throw pearls to swine”** and to avoid training people in the prophetic if they are not interested in Christian service, live in sin and/or are irresponsible with the Word of God and His calling in their lives. I do not want to encourage recklessness and an all-inclusive attitude in leadership which feels compelled to have everyone prophesy in church meeting only because the Bible says so.

There is a genuine need today for leadership to have a say in the church service and the ministry of the gifts. One reason for this is because the standard of attendance and calling oneself a “Christian” has dropped so low. In order to secure public access to the meetings of the Christian congregations and have people saved, we see that all sorts of attitudes can sneak in and try to disrupt the flow of the ministry because of immaturity or sheer ill-intent. This naturally evokes the need for the leadership to be on their guard for a misuse of the gifts aimed to confuse and hurt the body of believers. However, to go to the extreme of “caring” too much for the health of the sheep is to not feed and train them for the battle but to make them dependent solely on the leaders for their growth and relationship with the Lord. If you’re nurtured in a true and passionate relationship with Jesus as a disciple, you will not be unprepared to battle deception, hypocrisy, and the improper use of spiritual gifts. The balance of the Holy Spirit is much needed in defining prophetic protocol.

12. THE PROPHETIC TEAM

The best format for prophetic ministry is the **team**. A team is two or more who help each other in the work. The team ministry philosophy has two major purposes: **a) encouragement** and **b) accountability**.

These two are like the “+” and “-” sides of the same equation. Encouragement is needed to press on with the goals of Jesus Christ when we are weary, weakened and tired by the challenges of walking the path of the Lord. The enemy does not like the prophetic because it restores vision, zeal and faith to the Church and therefore he aims to counter the work of

the prophetic. Accountability is necessary to keep Christian ministers from falling away from humility and the standards to which the servants of God are called. Unless you have friends and peers to give you an honest feedback about mistakes that you make you may fall into deceiving yourself about yourself. Accountability helps us see our weaknesses in the healing truth of a friendly and godly perspective. It is not by accident that prophetic ministers in New Testament times traveled and ministered together, in teams (Acts 11:27; 15:32).

13. MOTIVES ARE IMPORTANT

Exercise the prophetic gift as you would exercise other gifts, like tongues, teaching, helps, or leadership. Remember, however, that what you say affects other people. You should not prophesy out of selfish ambition or to try to appear spiritual. You should prophesy out of love that cares for the other person. After all, God wants to reach them through you rather than build your reputation. Your reputation is in your character, not in your gifts. Yet, a solid character will produce a responsible use of the gifts.

14. YOUTH SHOULD PROPHECY

Young people must be trained and expected to prophesy (Acts 2:17). I was ministering to a youth group in a very popular church, known for prophetic conferences in Southern California. It was interesting to see that among those kids who "had seen it all" in terms of having the church visited by major prophetic ministers, only 3 answered "yes" to my question if they prophesied.

15. HAVE PROPER REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAINING, DO NOT BE OVERBEARING

If you are ministering you must be sensitive to where the group you're working with is at. When training, create assurance and a **safe environment** so that the ones learning feel OK to make mistakes and receive correction. It is better to speak up and be corrected rather than wait for the "perfect" prophecy to come your way so you can say it. Waiting too long for the perfect timing and the perfect moment is a mistake that has doomed many generations of Christians to be anti-prophecy or "puppy-dog prophets." This, of course, is not to encourage rash chatter with a prophetic aura about it. Calling everything prophecy cheapens the gift, its effect and your ministry.

16. JESUS IS FIRST

Prophecy has the goal to help the church but to **glorify Jesus**. Prophetic words and ministry should not glorify the prophet, the receiver of the prophecy, nor the church that allows the prophetic to operate (Revelation 19:10). However, you cannot fulfill this requirement by inserting the name Jesus into your speech, teaching, sermons and prophetic words. The Spirit of Jesus cannot be simply "evoked" by repeating His name like some formula. You must know Jesus in a deep and personal way and use faith in order to glorify Him in your ministry.

17. CALLING MYSELF A "PROPHET"

My personal preference regarding **titles**: do not be in a hurry to call yourself a "prophet" nor get yourself a business card with that title. Just do what is right in submission to God's call and follow His plan for your life and that will help more. At the same time, this is not to discourage people from **honest evaluation of their prophetic gifting** and pursuing a higher calling in Christ. Doing the job is more important than getting a title. If for you your title is more important than the work you are doing you'll have to do things that you do not know or understand. There is no joy in such ministry.

If your title was prematurely adopted you will load people with expectations that you won't be able to meet. On the other hand, if you choose to grow in the work of the prophetic ministry, rather than looking for recognition first, two things will happen: 1) you will be delighted in doing God's ministry so that the title will not be really important to you; 2) the title will follow you, because God does make sure that things are called what they are.

You will feel much more comfortable **applying the prophetic label to your ministry** after it is tested in real life and you have enough evidence that the Lord backs you up in your claims.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment**, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. **If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.** (Romans 12:3-6)

18. START WITH HEARING GOD'S VOICE

Try to become sensitive to the ways **God speaks** to you. The foundation of any ministry is good knowledge of the Scriptures. Do not forget that knowledge of the Bible in and of itself may not be helpful without the Holy Spirit to enlighten you in your gifts and those that receive the message. Many cult leaders started their deviation from excellent knowledge of the Bible but having wrong motivation in their hearts. One sure way of hearing God's voice is being his sheep. This is a metaphor for humility before Jesus Christ. His sheep hear His voice (John 10:1-18).

19. IF THERE IS A TRUE PROPHETIC THERE WILL BE FALSE PROPHETIC, GUARANTEED

Be aware of **false prophets**. The greatest enemy of Jesus was false religion and to that effect he issued warnings to His disciples (Matthew 16:5). The yeast of the Pharisees is still in the church today and a genuine prophetic message or ministry will face opposition. Let the opposition be not for reasons of stupid use of the gift but because the enemy is upset.

How to recognize *untrained* prophet from a *false* prophet? False prophets can originate from the very core of a solid Christian group (see Paul's warning in Acts 20:29-30). One way of this happening is having unchecked bad prophecy for a long enough period of time. Then issues of pride, control, independence from the Word, and the congregation and leadership, can develop into a self-deception that turns into a deceptive teaching and practice. Paying inappropriate attention to the person who is the prophetic minister, especially when he is wounded or trying to compensate other areas of his life, can be dangerous to his relationship with the Lord and his standing as a minister. Other false prophets pretend to be servants of God but are after their own gain from the onset. By the fruit we judge, as Jesus, our Lord taught us.

The most fundamental test is to ask to whom does the prophet's message lead? False prophets lead people to themselves. True prophets **point people to Jesus Christ**.

20. PRAISE AND WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH RELEASE THE PROPHETIC ANOINTING

Worship and praise music are an excellent way to enter the presence of God and allow for the prophetic gift to operate. True worship does release a strong sense of the presence of God. **Grab the momentum and open your mouth.** The spirits of the prophets are subject to them. Unless you decide to open your mouth the prophetic word will not come forth.

21. DO NOT TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY

Do not be prophetic at all times. It can lead you to super-spirituality and being hyper rather than sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Be naturally supernatural. Try to find God and hear His voice in the daily things of life. Go grocery shopping, watch a soccer game, tickle the neighbor's baby, play a game with your children: all good prophetic activities.

22. TEST PROPHECY

Test the prophetic word. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 is clear that one of the ways to put the Spirit's fire out is to treat prophecies with contempt. The following verses give us the plan what to do with prophecy—test it, keep the good, avoid the bad. One may call this a "balanced approach" to prophecy. I would call it "the right approach." The Holy Spirit, combined with a zealous but sober exploration of the spiritual in the light of God's Word, will give us the specific revelation we need for strengthening, encouragement and correction.

In this sense the testing of prophecy is also "prophetic." In other words it helps to tame the fleshly and demonic utterances and encourage the workings of the Spirit of God in a man or a woman. In our church there was (and still is!) a sister who definitely has the prophetic gifting. She is however of quite harsh nature and needs work on her character. The leaders in the church were encouraging her to find herself a job and try to have an income as a priority. Instead she decided to come across as a prophetess. At one point she prophesied that the sickly mother of another sister in the congregation would "very soon die." She also not long after that released a prophecy that my wife and I were going to have a fourth child. I realized that this sister needed some attention in regards to her use of the prophetic

gifting. I and other brothers had a chat with her. We assured her that she is not hearing from God but is using the clout of the formula "I am the voice of God" to receive recognition and attention.

I flatly told her that her "prophecies" were not real prophecies. This proved to be true. Over 14 months later the sick mother, cared for, is still alive although very, very sick. Neither did my family grow. Obviously by speaking on issues of death and life, this sister was aiming to become important in the small Christian community. Such type of manipulation is not only prophecy it is on the verge of witchcraft. Although she felt offended this Christian is now much more careful in her attempts to use the prophetic and continuing to grow. In this situation it took the spirit of true prophecy to counter the false "prophetic" spirit this sister was listening to – her own fleshly visions. If these "prophecies" went untested and respectively – unchallenged, then instead of letting the Spirit of truth and freedom rule we would be agreeing with the oppression that comes along with spiritual manipulation.

The principles I discussed above pose some interesting questions. How to be healed from the "puppy-dog" mentality? How to submit yourself to the leaders in the ministry and learn from them without being intimidated or unruly? How to discern who is a false prophet and who is a genuine prophet? What is the function of the prophet in the Old Testament versus the New Testament and what are differences? What is the difference between prophesying and being a prophet? Can you prophesy if you don't believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit? These questions are important and a legitimate avenue for learning more about the prophetic ministry. They will be however, addressed in a separate work.

[1] Quoted in one of Rick Joyner's publications. Rick Joyner is a popular prophetic minister in the USA and internationally.

[i] I have since revisited this item. Here it sounds as if no word should be submitted to the church leadership. This is not what I am saying. I rather encourage a more open approach toward the prophetic ministry where not only words are freely released but words are openly tested in the congregation. We are used to church today where we have to be nice to the visiting ministers, and to people in general, so if a word sounds strange, chances are the issue may not be addressed publicly, as the word is delivered publicly. I imagine the leadership wants to spare some embarrassment to people and not to have to counter their word if it is wrong in the meeting. Sometimes, this, done in love, is the best way for all to learn. In no way does this point justify free loaders and "loose canon prophets" in church meetings.

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