

I. GOD DELIGHTS TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO THOSE WHO SEEK HIM

- A. The gift of prophesy is “hearing” from God and speaking what you “hear” in order to strengthen, encourage and comfort someone. Prophecy is not necessarily foretelling the future although it can include elements of the future. Prophecy is primarily speaking God’s heart.

But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men (1 Cor. 14:3)

- B. God does not only speak through the gift of prophecy, but He communicates in diverse ways: Nature/creation (Rm. 1:20; Ps 19:1-6), conscience (Rm. 2:14-15), Prophets and the Scriptures (Heb. 1:1; 2 Tim. 3:16), audible voice (Mark 9:7), the Son of God (Heb. 1:2; John 1:1, 14), the Holy Spirit and His gifts (Acts 8:29; John 16:12-14; 1 Cor. 14:1; 1 Pet. 4:11), dreams and visions (Joel 2; Acts 2:17-18; Job 33:14-16; Matt. 2:19-20), etc...

- C. God is always speaking we need to “tune-in.” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)

- D. Hearing God. We can generally categorize the ways that God speaks:

1. What Bible verse(s) comes to your mind? (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

2. What do you “see?”(Jer. 1:11, 13; John 1:48-49; Acts 9:12; 14:19)

Acts 14:9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed.

3. What do you “hear?” what word(s), phrase(s), or sentence, or impressions come to your mind? (Isa. 30:21; 1 Sam. 15:10)

1 Sam. 15:10 Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying,

4. What do you “feel, sense, or perceive?” (Heb. 5:14)

Mark 2:8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves.

- E. 3 different components/dynamics to consider when God speaks: Revelation, Interpretation, and Application.

- F. The “flow” of the prophetic. One definition of prophecy in Hebrew is “to flow forth.” We can tune into the flow of the Holy Spirit, the manifestation of His presence (1 Cor. 12:7; cf. 12:4-6)

- G. Faith and prophecy

1. Faith is needed to move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including prophecy. You need to desire it and open to all that God has for you. Gifts are not rewards. Reward is what we get when Jesus returns. Gift is what Jesus gives.
2. Faith is needed to fulfill prophetic words. Prophecy is not automatic. You need to combine prophetic words with faith, obedience, patience, etc..

II. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES TO KNOW IF IT IS GOD SPEAKING TO YOU:

- A. Does the message line up with the teaching/principles of Scripture? (Col. 3:16; 2 Tim 3:16-17).
- B. Does the word exalt and glorify Jesus? (John 16:13-14; Rev. 19:10)
...For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."(Rev. 19:10b)
- C. Does the word edify the church?
But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men (1 Cor. 14:3)
- D. What is the long-term fruit that results? Does it result in a life that is transformed into the image of Jesus Christ? (1 Cor. 13:1-2)
Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-2)
- E. Do other spiritual leaders confirm the word? Wait for confirmations.
Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge (1 Cor. 14:29)
For we know in part and we prophesy in part (1 Cor. 13:9)
By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established. (2 Cor. 13:1)
- F. Is there a "witness" in your spirit? Is there a "check" in your spirit?
 1. This is not the same as doubt of the spiritual gifts, etc..
 2. It is possible for the word to be tainted. E.g. interpretation or application can be wrong. Or, people can prophesy out of their own heart (Eze. 13:2; Jer. 23:16). Be sure that friendships, loyalties (to anyone other than God), control/manipulation are not tainting the "message/word."
Ezek. 14:4 ..Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols.
1 Thes. 5:19-21 Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ Test all things; hold fast what is good.

God sometimes allows false or misguided people to speak to test and humble you (2 Chron. 18). God sometimes even allows true prophets to give a purposely misleading word (Psa. 18:26). So what to do? Lay it all down at the altar. Lay them down instantly. If they are true and meant to be, the Lord will give it back to you in due time. The Lord is more interested in whether we will stand in humility, obedience, loyalty, and Christ-likeness than whether we accomplish great things in the world.

3. The Holy Spirit will confirm to your spirit of the things of God (Rom. 8:16)

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

4. If unsure, put it on the shelf and wait on the Lord. In the mean time, live in faith, obedience, patience, meekness and submission.

Luke 2:18-19 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

III. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO INCREASE YOUR SENSITIVITY TO GOD'S VOICE?

- A. Listen. Pay attention to God. Put up your spiritual antennas. Expect to hear God. Stop and listen. Then you will hear (1 Sam. 3:10)

Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." (1 Sam 3:10)

- B. Value God's eternal Word. His eternal, unchanging voice. Expect the Lord to speak to you through the Bible.

- C. Get rid of distractions. This will help you make space so that you can listen to God.

- D. Get around people who hear God. Prophets and people with prophetic gifts can help people hear from the Lord.

- E. Be filled with God's love (1 Cor. 14:1)

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy (1 Cor. 14:1)

- F. Desire to grow in hearing God's voice. Burn with zeal and desire for it.

Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with Tongues (1 Cor 14:39)

- G. Grow in faith. Start where you are. Don't be afraid to take a risk. Don't let the process of growth discourage you. Your faith will increase. Start small. It will grow.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith (Rom 12:6)

Acts 2:17-18 ...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. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.