

1205
MATURING CHRISTIANS-PROPHECY, TEACHING
Spiritual Growth-Part 5
DR. ROGER BARRIER

As we have studied spiritual gifts, we have organized them around their function:

REACHING PEOPLE: Apostleship-Evangelism-Miracles-Healing-Mercy

MATURING CHRISTIANS: Prophecy-Teaching-Wisdom-Knowledge-Encouragement-Distinguishing Between
Spirits-Faith-Tongues-Interpreting Tongues-Giving-Helps

ORGANIZING THE CHURCH TO REACH PEOPLE AND TO MATURE CHRISTIANS: Administration-
Leadership-Pastoring

Only Two Gifts Mentioned in Every List: Prophecy and Teaching

READ I CORINTHIANS 12:28; ROMANS 12:6-7; EPHESIANS 4:11.

Look at Prophecy and teaching today. Prophecy is the preeminent gift. Teaching is next in importance. We will examine teaching first.

TEACHING

DEFINITION

Teaching is the spiritual capacity to clarify and to preserve the truths of God.

The preacher is one who stands up and announces the message of God. The chief function of the teacher is to interpret and make clear the Word of God to the church.

IMPORTANCE OF THE GIFT OF TEACHING

HEBREWS 5:12: "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God"

These believers should have grown sufficiently to instruct others, but they hadn't.

Note the sentence, "Ye ought to be teachers."

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. 28:20).

After the conversion of the 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (teaching)" (Acts 2:42).

Barnabas and Paul taught new believers a whole year in Antioch (11:26)

At Corinth, Paul continued "a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them: (18:11).

At Ephesus, Paul taught "publicly and from house to house: for two years (19:10; 20:20) The charge brought against Paul which precipitated a two-hour uproar was, "This is the man that teaches all men everywhere" (21:28).

TEACHING PASSES THE TORCH FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT.

2 TIMOTHY 2:2: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Four links can be discerned: Paul to Timothy to faithful men to others.

The teacher is a link in the living chain which stretches unbroken from this present moment back to Jesus Christ. The glory of teaching is that it links the present with the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

In the face of the anti-intellectual trend of today, we need to remind ourselves of the truth content of Christianity.

Dr. John R. W. Scott says, "Experience without truth is the menace of a mindless Christianity."

All new converts need to know that Christianity involves not only excitement but instruction.

THE END OF THE SERMON IS NEAR.

CRISWELL 20 MINUTE SERMONS?

"If all you are doing is giving sermonettes for Christianettes then 20 minutes is too long. but if you are expounding the Word of God, 20 minutes sometimes hardly suffices for the introduction!"

SUPPOSITORY PREACHER

DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING

SPIRITUAL CAPACITY

It is quite possible for a Christian to have a talent for teaching, but not have the spiritual gift of teaching. If he were asked to teach a Sunday School class he would be quite capable of imparting considerable information and knowledge of facts about the lessons to his class but his teaching would lack the power to bless, to advance his students spiritually.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION takes hard work. Doesn't come easily.

The pedagogical principles used by Jesus.

He began where people were, using at-hand, simple things like sheep, vines, candles, to go on to the new and unfamiliar.

Often He asked questions. He frequently countered a question with a question.

He illustrated by parables.

He took advantage of occasions to make a point. At a dinner He spoke of people who made excuses for not coming to God;s great banquet.

He taught by example, as when He washed the disciples' feet.

Possession of the gift of teaching does not guarantee polished ability to communicate truth. The gift needs to be developed.

EFFECTIVE APPLICATION

Teaching should involve more than impartation of information.; it should lead to involvement.

A senior high class studying 2 Corinthians came across the verse, "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (6:14).

Susie had been dating a non-Christian boy quite steadily. When its personal meaning dawned on her, she realized she would have to make a decision about her going steady with an unbeliever. The truth really got through to her when she decided to call her boyfriend that very afternoon and cool their relationship.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFT OF TEACHING

- * People will understand truth as a result of what you say about the Bible.
- * You will have a tremendous drive within to understand truth and to see ways to explain it to others.
- * You will find yourself unsatisfied with unclear explanations (either by yourself or others).
- * You place a great emphasis upon the accuracy and meaning of words.
- * You continually test and question the knowledge of those who teach you.
- * You delight in in-depth research to validate the truth
- * You resist scriptural illustrations out of context.
- * Your orientation always goes from scripture to experience (opposite of an exhorter).
- * People will become more Christ-like in their actions and thoughts as a result of your teaching.
- * The people you teach will know God in ever increasing depth.

PROPHECY

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5 to show the importance of Christianity to the church.

Prophecy stands supreme among spiritual gifts.

Why, because it is unto edification, exhortation and comfort. Nothing edifies, exhorts and comforts like the Preaching and Presentation of God's word.

DEFINITION

The gift of prophecy is the spiritual capacity to report a message from God to a particular situation in a current context.

THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF PROPHECY

1. REVELATION (the message)

THE SOURCE OF THE PROPHECY

God speaks in a general way to all men and women through creation (Ps 19:1-2)

God speaks through our consciences (Rom 1:14-15)

He communicates more directly through the Bible

God speaks in dramatic, sometimes startling ways; dreams and visions, inner impressions, angels, tongues and interpretations.

A 'REVELATION' FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NECESSARY FOR A PROPHECY TO OCCUR

In I Corinthians 14:29-33, Paul assumes that the person who prophesies has received a revelation.

In Acts 11:28 and again in Acts 21:10-11, Agabus' predictions are descriptions of future events, and thus based on something that had been revealed to him.

In John 4:19, when Jesus startles the woman at the well with knowledge of her previous life, she says, 'Sir, I can see that you are a prophet'.

In Luke 22:63f, the guards blindfold and beat Jesus, then cruelly demand of him, 'Prophecy! Who hit you?', apparently employing a popular conception of a prophet as one who can know things through 'revelations' and need not rely on ordinary means of acquiring information.

AMOS 3:7: "Surely the Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."

2. REPORT

The reception of a 'revelation' alone would not constitute a person a prophet. Only where the revelation is also proclaimed to others, as in 1 Corinthians 14:29-33 or the examples with Agabus or the prophets at Tyre, is a prophecy said to occur.

Larry Hagberg quietly reporting to Steve Dowdle. School of the Prophets.

THE VARIOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF PROPHECY

1. "FORTHTELLING" GOD'S WORD AND WILL FOR THE PRESENT

The English word *Prophet* comes from a Greek work composed of two parts which mean literally--forth-tell. A prophet is a forth-teller. Prophecy is forth-telling for another.

When God called Moses to deliver Israel out of Egypt, Moses objected on the grounds he could not speak well.

Angry, God answered: EXODUS. 4:14-16; 7:1: "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well...Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth...and he shall be my spokesman unto the people;and he shall be ...to thee instead of a mouth...and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."

The prophet is a man who lives so close to God that he knows God's mind and heart and will and intention, and so can make them known to men.

John Calvin: "A prophet is an interpreter of the will of God."

Prophets are God's loudspeakers. How they are needed in national and local politics, education, journalism, family life, sports, science, racism, materialism, immorality, and a host of others, lest we suffer the decline and fall of our nation.

For example, Amos analyzed the current condition and the consequence of continuance in that course, then counseled repentance.

For example, John the Baptist exercised a prophetic ministry when he admonished Herod that he should not have taken his brother's wife.

2. "FORETELLING" GOD'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Like Isaiah 7:14.

Like Jeremiah and the coming destruction by Babylon.

Like Agabus in Acts 11:27,28: ". . . signified by the Spirit that there should be great drought throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Like Agabus in Acts 21:11 warning Paul of persecution if he continued his journey to Jerusalem. Taking Paul's girdle and graphically binding the apostle's hands and feet, the prophet said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." (Acts 21:11)

3. REVEALING THE SECRETS OF THE HEART FOR EVANGELISM

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:24-25: "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you."

In this case, those who prophesy make a public disclosure of the secrets of a visitor's heart. The visitor responds in a way that indicates that, at least in his view, only God could have made these things known to the prophets.

Illustrate this at the close of my sermon.

THE NEED FOR TESTING

A person delivering prophecies should be willing to have his or her words tested by the elders of the church
READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:29-32.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPHETS WITH A CAPITAL "P" AND PROPHETS WITH A LITTLE "p."
Prophets with a capital "p" never miss.
Preachers aren't perfect. "The School of the Prophets" existed in Old Testament times to train prophets.

STORY OF WOMAN WHO CALLED AND CLAIMED TO HAVE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY: ROGER AND JULIE WILL HAVE A DIVORCE, AND THEIR CHILDREN WILL GROW UP APOSTATE!

No hope for a way to change (Ahab and fasting)

Knew her character (Branham follower reading karma)

1. Personal prophecy should glorify Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit's primary mission is to bring glory to Jesus (John 16:14). Any prophecy, dream or vision should point us toward Jesus.

2. Prophetic messages should conform to the Bible. (Titus 1:9)

3. Prophecy should not establish doctrine.

Scripture is the ultimate test of all doctrine and.

4. Those who deliver a prophetic word should be of sound moral character.

Jesus warned that false prophets would come in "sheep's clothing" (Matt 7:15:23). So how are we to know the difference between a true and a false prophet? Jesus said we are to be fruit inspectors: "By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt. 7:16)

5. Prophetic messages should be given in the spirit of love (I Cor. 14:3; James 3:17).

Even a word of rebuke is to be given in the spirit of love. Prophetic gifting should never be used for controlling purposes.

6. Proper decision making: No one should make major decisions based on personal prophetic words alone (I Cor 14:27-32).

Personal prophetic words should be weighed by elders, pastors and other prophetic people, as well as the person who is receiving the word.

For example, the prophet Agabus warned Paul that if he went to Jerusalem, he would be arrested, and the other disciples pleaded with him not to go (Acts 21:10-14). Paul accepted the prophetic word but still went on to Jerusalem, where he was later arrested. He accepted the revelation of his coming suffering, but he rejected the disciples' application--that he therefore should not go.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

- * You are willing to speak out publicly.
- * You are willing to take strong and sometimes unpopular stands.
- * You tend to see needs of groups as a whole instead of individuals.
- * People are convicted by the truth you share.
- * You are persuasive when you speak or present an answer.
- * You have an ability to disarm the character and motives of people.
- * You are able to identify and define innate evil.
- * You are willing to experience and to prompt brokenness.
- * You long to see outward evidence of an inward conviction (a plea for decisions).
- * You have a special concern for the reputation and program of God.
- * The sins of people and groups often break your heart and bring tears.

POWER EVANGELISM

I had just completed a teaching conference in Chicago and was flying off to another speaking engagement in New York. Seated across the aisle from me was a middle-aged man, a business man. But in the split second that my eyes happened to be cast in his direction, I saw something that startled me. Written across his face in very clear and distinct letters I thought I saw the word "adultery" I blinked, rubbed my eyes, and looked again. It was still there. "Adultery".

By now the man had become aware that I was looking at him. "What do you want?" he snapped.

As he spoke, a woman's name came clearly to mind. Somewhat nervously, I leaned across the aisle and asked, "Does the name Jane mean anything to you?"

His face turned ashen. "We've got to talk", he stammered.

We were on was a jumbo jet, the kind with a small upstairs cocktail lounge. As I followed him up the stairs to the lounge, I sensed the Spirit speaking to me yet again. "Tell him if he doesn't turn from his adultery, I'm going to take him."

We sat down in strained silence. He looked at me suspiciously for a moment, then asked, "Who told you that name?"

"God told me," I blurted out. I was too rattled to think of a way to ease into the topic more gracefully.

"*God* told you?" He almost shouted the question, he was so shocked by what I had said.

"Yes," I answered, taking a deep breath. "He also told me to tell you . . . that unless you turn from this adulterous relationship, he is going to take your life." I braced myself for what I was sure would be an angry defensive reaction, but to my relief his defensiveness crumbled and his heart melted.

In a choked, desperate voice he asked me, "What should I do?"

I explained to him what it meant to repent and trust Christ and invited him to pray with me. With hands folded and head bowed, I began to lead him in a quiet prayer. "O God."

That was as far as I got. The conviction of sin that had built up inside him seemed virtually to explode.

Bursting into tears, he cried out, "O God, I'm so sorry" and launched into the most heartrending repentance I had ever heard. Before long everyone in the cocktail lounge was intimately acquainted with this man's past sinfulness and present contrition.

When he finished praying and regained his composure, we talked for a while about what had happened to him. "The reason I was so upset when you first mentioned that name to me, he explained, "was that my wife was sitting in the seat right next to me. I didn't want her to hear."

I knew he wasn't going to like what I said to him next. "You're going to have to tell her." "I am?" he responded weakly. "When?" "Better do it right now," I said gently.

So again I followed him, down the stairs and back to our seats. I couldn't hear the conversation over the noise of the plane, but I could see his wife's stunned reaction, not only to his confession of infidelity, but also to his account of how the stranger sitting across the aisle had been sent by God to warn him of the consequences of his sin. Eyes wide with amazement (and probably terror!) she stared first at her husband, then at me, then back at her husband, then back at me, as the amazing story unfolded.

In the end the man led his wife to accept Christ, right there on the airplane.