

<b>Topic</b>	Prophecy in Community
<b>Reference</b>	1 Corinthians 14:26-31
<b>Date</b>	18 August 2019
<b>Speaker</b>	Dr Peter Ng

So today we are going to deal with a very, it is a controversial topic, which is not often dealt with. So, we need to pay, it is going to be a little bit heavy going.

Now if you look at prophecy. We talked about this at the sermon last week when I was talking, we were discussing tongues and Paul was knowing the status of speaking in tongues and actually highlighting that we should instead focus on the higher gift, which is actually prophecy because of its effect on the church, how it builds and edifies the church. Then the question comes to mind is, hey hang on, I have been in FBC x number of years and never seen a prophet. Right. So the question is, what is prophecy, how can you talk about something which you never practiced. So, there are four simple questions today.

- A. What is prophecy?
- B. Is it still relevant today?
- C. Why should we desire it?
- D. How should we practice it?

**WHAT IS PROPHECY?**

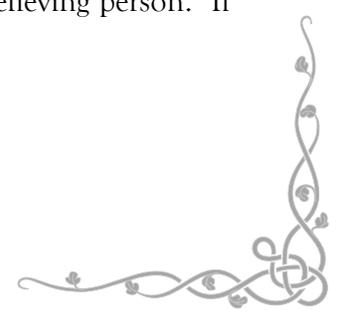
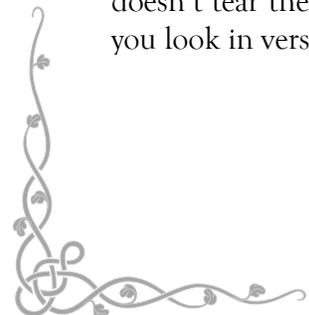
If you look in the passage here,

*1 Corinthians 14:26-30 (ESV) What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, **a revelation**, ... 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If **a revelation** is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.*

Comes from the Greek word ‘apokalypsis’, which is basically releasing information about something which has been previously unknown. It is a revelation that builds up the church, verse 3

***3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.** 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies **builds up the church.** 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the **church may be built up***

So prophecy is a revelation from God that actually will encourage, inspire and build up the church. It doesn’t tear the church down. It can be a revelation about the secret things of an unbelieving person. If you look in verse 24 to 25



1 Corinthians 14:24-25 (ESV) *But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 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*

So it is a revelation of sometimes a secret in some people. For example, there was a story by John Wimber who was on the airplane trip from New York to Chicago and Chicago to New York. He got in plane and he saw a couple there and on the man's head he thought he saw some words emblazed on his forehead which said 'adulterer'. Imagine you walk around and seeing an adulterer. It is like neon lights. John Wimber wanted to know what is happening here and he kept staring at the man. The man sat down on the plane next to his wife and he looked at him and he asked Wimber, hey why are you staring at me and when he said that, the name of a woman came to his mind and he mentions the woman's name to the man. The man face immediately turned white. He said, I think we need to talk. He pulled him aside, that was his mistress and she was sitting next to his wife. And so through that the man actually acknowledged to sin and actually came to know Christ on that plane itself. He came back to the same seat, acknowledged his sin before his wife and the wife was also led to Christ. These are unusual circumstances but they can occur.

A cessationist Baptist pastor, Charles Spurgeon writes,

*"I have little confidence in those persons who speak of having received direct revelations from the Lord, as though He appeared otherwise than by and through the Gospel. His Word is so full, so perfect, that for God to make any fresh Revelation to you or me is quite needless. To do so would be to put a dishonour upon the perfection of that Word".*

So Spurgeon is saying that the word if so perfect, the Bible is so perfect that you can't add revelation to it because that would impugn the dignity and authority of the Bible which is what he believed but yet if you look in Spurgeon's life, he was in two instances where you actually see him preaching. While he was preaching, he pointed out to a young man. He said, young man you have a pair of glove, that glove you stole from your employer and it was right. Another person he pointed out was as shoemaker up in the stands and he said, this shoemaker has opened his shop on a Sunday and he made 40 pens profit, that money goes to the devil and immediately the shoemaker actually confessed. He was absolutely right. How did Spurgeon know? So here is a guy who doesn't believe in prophecy and who actually does prophecy which is interesting.

There are three sets of gifts that we have;

- The priestly gift where we understand and supply the basic needs of people through counseling and healing.
- The kingly gifts which are understanding direction and group needs, like apostles, leaders, administrators.
- The prophetic gifts are those of us who understand and articulate the truth. Evangelist, prophets, teachers, preachers, discerning the spirit.

So these are the prophetic gifts that were given to build up the church.

Prophecy is not teaching. Because it says,

1 Corinthians 14:26-33 (ESV) What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.

It is different. It is mentioned separately in chapter 12 verse 29

1 Corinthians 12:29 (ESV) Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

In Ephesian Paul says,

Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

So they are separate. They are not the same gift. Paul's emphasis is order.

31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

So there is control. You can't come up to the meeting like the Greeks. The Greeks like the Oracle of Delphi and the Greeks and the prophetess. What they have is ecstatic speech. Suddenly they are filled with the spirit as if they are possessed and suddenly they are going to blurt out the revelation. It is not like that. For Christian prophecy it is controlled by the prophets themselves and they can either bring it out spontaneously or something which they can reflect.

This is Peter in Matthew 16

Matthew 16:16-17 (ESV) Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Here you have a situation where Jesus is recognized to be the messiah, Jesus is recognized to be the Christ, who told him that. The Father in heaven revealed it. So it is an inward revelation, inward eye of faith. If you look at 1-Corinthian chapter 2

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 (ESV) But, as it is written,  
 "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
 nor the heart of man imagined,  
 what God has prepared for those who love him"—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

So it could be a revelation through a vision or it could be revelation through reflection and God speaking to our hearts with an inward eye of faith. Is this still relevant today? That's the biggest question. Christian theology is divided into two camps. One that says the miraculous gifts including prophecy are available today that are called the Continuationist. The other ones are called the Cessationists who say that all these miraculous gifts have ceased, we don't need them anymore.

One of the most famous prophets is an American called, Harold Camping. He kept on making predictions of the end of the world and he will put up posters like 'Judgment Day, May 21, 2011'. He started off with May 21 1988, the world didn't end. Then he went to 1994, 2008 and his two predictions was in May and October of 2011 where he predicted the end of the world and this is not a simple prediction, because each time he did that there were actually people who believed him.

I remember there is lady in California who actually took a knife and stabbed her 11-year-old daughter and 14-year-old daughter because she didn't want them to face the terrible end and then she slit her own throat with a box cutter. Man in Taiwan jumped from the 15-storey building because he believed Harold Camping on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2011 the world would end. So prophecy is controversial.

What about the Trump prophecies that we have today? If you look at all the opinion polls in United States, they are always 38% of people who will vote for him, no matter what he does. And a lot of them believe there is a prophecy. It started off with a chap called Dr Lance Wallnau who actually wrote the book called 'Trump: God's Chaos Candidate'. That this is the person that God will actually bring about to bring change back to America and replace the Bible in the center of the life of society, so he believe that and a lot of evangelicals have bought into it. Then there is Trump of God. Did you know that there is a prophecy in 1-Thessalonians 4, on the last day before Jesus comes there will be a last trumpet by the archangel then the dead in Christ will rise. The last trumpet is Trump. Can you imagine this? So therefore people believe in him.

Another fireman called Mark Taylor watching TV suddenly said that Jesus came and appeared to him and said 'Trump is the man, he is the prophet'. So if you believe that then no matter what happens, you are so tied to that prophetic vision that you will not leave it. In fact, they believe that Trump is Cyrus. Cyrus was the Persian emperor who allowed Nehemiah to come back and Trump is that Cyrus and actually if you do a proper prophecy like that, you can actually make money.

So if you look at that, it is no wonder many people in the Christian church don't want to have anything to do with prophecy because you got all these funny ideas and how much trouble it causes to the church and if you ask me I would rather not have it, but we have to be faithful to the word of God. Let's go and look, is it relevant today by looking into the past. We look at Old Testament prophets. Old Testament prophets were singularly authoritative and infallible.

*Deuteronomy 18:20 (ESV) But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that **same prophet shall die.***

It means that prophet is infallible, you cannot make a mistake, 'oops, I am sorry, it is not 21<sup>st</sup> of May, it is October', but too bad you killed yourself already. You can't make a mistake. Old Testament prophets are spot on. In fact, if they are wrong, there will be consequences that they will die.

*1 Samuel 3:19 (ESV) And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.*

Which means his words were perfect? There is no falling to the ground. They all come true. If you look at Hananiah

*Jeremiah 28:15-17 (ESV) And Jeremiah the prophet said to the prophet Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah, the Lord has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie. 16 Therefore thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the Lord.'" 17 In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died.*

So a false prophet confronted by a real prophet and the false prophet died. Jesus is the ultimate prophet. The job of the prophets in the Old Testament was to pave the way for the ultimate prophet. The ultimate prophet is Jesus Christ. He brings true revelation of who God is.

*Hebrews 1:1-2 (ESV) Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

So Jesus is that final prophet as it were and Jude says

*Jude 1:3 (ESV) Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*

That means the entire gospel is delivered to you once and for all. So if that is the case why would you need other prophets. The function of prophet is in redemptive history. Prophecy is the fulfillment of the covenant promises that will come in Jesus Christ. So what the prophets do, they explain, and they unpack the significance of what Jesus has done in redemptive history. Now given that kind of idea of what prophets are, why would you need prophets today. Now let's look at that verse in chapter 13

*1 Corinthians 13:8-10 (ESV) Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.*

Now there are two sides, whether the continuist or the cessationist read this verse and they both find evidence there. The whole crux of the matter is what does it mean the perfect. The partial is obviously knowledge, prophecy and tongues. They were all ceased. The perfect can be three things. Some people say it is the Bible or the matured church or the second coming of Christ, which one is the correct answer. If you look here in chapter 13, it gives you some idea. He uses illustration of a child.

*1 Corinthians 13:11-12 (ESV) When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but **then face to face**. Now I know in part; then **I shall know fully**, even as I have been fully known.*

Now this is an illustration of what the perfect is going to be. So therefore, if you look at the first principle when you come to interpreting scripture is, when Paul writes to the people of Corinth in AD 55, what did they understand was the meaning of the word 'perfect', because you are now in 2019, your ideas of perfection is different from what they would have believed. Now if you look at this scheme,

Creation, Christ coming, the Canon which is when the Bible was assembled together, second coming of Christ and eternity. Love is eternal. It goes all the way to the end. So you must desire to love. Then you actually have either the spiritual gifts and when the Bible was created in AD 39, the perfect is perfect revelation of God or spiritual gifts and the second coming of Christ. If you were a Corinthian Christian reading the Bible in AD 55, which do you think he will be thinking the perfect is, second coming of Christ or will they be thinking 300 years from now the Bible will be created. Obviously, if you were the first century reader you would be thinking, it is this one. So it is very hard to justify. Cessationist for you justify that when the perfect comes, even now we still fight over the meaning of the Bible. How can you say that our understanding is perfect as it were.

Professor Thomas Schreiner is one of the foremost Baptist theologians. He is the professor of biblical interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He writes,

*Certainly, this text teaches that the gifts could last until Jesus returns. There's no definitive teaching in the Bible that they've ceased. We might even expect them to last until the second coming. But we see hints from Ephesians 2:20 and other texts that the gifts played a foundational role. I conclude, then, that 1 Cor 13:8-12 permits but doesn't require the gifts to continue until the second coming.*

So from a staunch cessationist theologian, he will permit this idea that the gifts may continue, which is a very fair comment. The Old Testament looks forward to the New. If you look in the Old Testament, there is a time during Moses time when they are about 70 elders and all of them were filled with the Spirit of God and they began to prophesize and actually Moses said these words,

*Numbers 11:29 But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? **Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!**" 30 And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.*

Moses desired that everybody would be filled with the spirit, everybody would desire, and in the Old Testament you have got the Holy Spirit filling prophets, but in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit fills every single believer. Joel prophesize

*Acts 2:17-18 (ESV) 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*

The coming of the Holy Spirit immediately results in prophecy. So is there a difference between an Old Testament prophet and a New Testament prophet or some prophet sitting in First Baptist Church somewhere out there, is there a difference. It is sound of like looking at policeman. You look at policeman they are all dressed same and I see same color uniform everywhere in Malaysia. So the issue here is authority.

The guy in Sunway Pyramid wears a police uniform but they are auxiliary police. Their authority is just in Sunway Pyramid. The whole issue is semantics. What do you mean by prophets?

So the issue is authority. Paul says that

*Ephesians 2:20 (ESV) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*

There is a foundation of the church. The concern is as expressed by Thomas Schreiner, if prophecy still exists today, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the foundation established by apostles and prophets hasn't been completed. So the risk which the evangelical church struggles with allowing prophecy is that, if you say revelation come from God, which means it is possible to add to the foundation. So that's the perfect risk there. Now let's look at New Testament prophets. This is what Paul says,

*1 Corinthians 14:29-32 (ESV) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.*

So somehow when you prophesy, it is got to be wait. Wayne Grudem from Trinity Evangelical College in Chicago writes in his book called 'New Testament Prophecy'. He suggests this, in the Old Testament all of them were authoritative. The authority of the words. In the New Testament, equivalent of the Old Testament prophets were actually the apostles. This is authoritative and actual words and firm foundation of church but the others have another group of New Testament prophets, which are not apostles and who live under the authority of apostles and their authority of general contentment of the word itself and they actually function as to upbuild the church.

Now let's look at the verse here,

*1 Corinthians 14:29-32 (ESV) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.*

The word 'weigh' is very carefully chosen. The word is diakrino. There are two words in Greek, that could be used. You could have someone say a prophecy then you could judge the word, the word is 'krino'. You could decide. Good prophet, bad prophet or no prophet. That is krino. Instead he used diakrino, which means to listen carefully and sift the good from the bad, accepting some and rejecting the rest. There is a deliberate use of the word 'diakrino'. So 'krino' is to judge 'diakrino' is to sift through, good grain, false grain, keep this, throw that away.

*1 Corinthians 14:29-32 (ESV) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.*

So you are not weighing the prophet. You are weighing what is said. So that's a difference there. So the controversy is, in Old Testament prophecy you've got to score 10/10, New Testament prophecy is a mix bag of nuts, some good and some bad, so you are going to go and listen and see whether, you know what he is saying is actually true revelation or not. So the issue is authority. Obviously, Old Testament prophets, the authority is absolute just like the apostles but the other New Testament prophets which Paul talks about are

not completely authoritative. So what Wayne Grudem has done, he has pointed us to the Agabus prophecy, which is the example of New Testament prophecy. Here we have Paul

*Acts 21:10-12 (ESV) While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, This is how the **Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.**" 12 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

So here we have, he goes to Agabus' house, he grabs Paul's belt and he ties it on his hands and legs and says the man who owns this belt will be handed to the Jews who will hand him to the gentiles which are the Romans. What actually happened? If you look at the actual event

*Acts 21:30-33 (ESV) Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. 31 And as they were seeking to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. 32 He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. ***And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.*** 33 ***Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains****

Now look at the prophecy which Agabus gave. Is it accurate? There are problems with this prophecy. First of all, did the Jews hand him to the Romans? No the Romans rescued him from the Jews. If you gave Jews half a chance, they would have killed him off. It was the Romans who saved him, but the actual prophecy says, the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns the belt and deliver him. They never bind Paul and gave to Romans. The Romans came to rescue him. So if that is the case, then the Agabus prophecy is inaccurate and so therefore New Testament prophecy needs to be carefully weighed. So that's the argument Wayne Grudem gives. But in defense of Agabus, if you look at Paul's own testimony. Seven chapters later on when Paul was testifying. He said

*Acts 28:17 (ESV) After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a ***prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.****

Now if Jerusalem is a metaphor for the Jews, so Paul is saying I was delivered from the Jews to the hands of the Romans. So Paul interprets his whole experience in the light of the prophecy and yet it wasn't exact, but the problem is that, most prophecies aren't exact, you give the prophets too narrow margin and then Agabus used prophetic symbolism which what Ezekiel used and he also used the phrase, thus says the Lord. So there is some evidence that New Testament prophecy has some error there, but this is controversial and then just before that happened, the disciples with Paul also had a prophecy

*Acts 21:3-4 (ESV) When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. ***And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.****

Here is prophecy. Here is a bunch of disciples, when you say through the spirit it means prophecy, telling Paul not to go, so was the spirit wrong or was Paul disobedient, big problem here. Because the spirit said,

don't go and then Paul purposely went. So there is a difference between revelation and inference. See God can reveal something to you but as a human being you can infer. So the fallibility comes, when revelation comes and there is inference. So here we have inference causing issues here. So we have the wheat and the shaft. Inference is human and revelation is from God and you need to be able to discern the two.

In major doctrinal issues the church doesn't come together and wait for one prophet to stand up and the prophet says, 'thus says the Lord'. It doesn't happen. In fact, if you look in the New Testament, there was a situation

*Acts 15:1-2 (ESV) But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**"*

How do you decide which is right? So they went to Jerusalem and in the process, this is how they decided. In Jerusalem, number one Paul and Barnabas testified that God have saved the gentiles, gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Number two, Peter testified as to what God had done with Cornelius and the gentiles, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they were prophesying with tongues and its implications and then they began to debate. Debate means sharing of ideas, who has got better ideas and the last one was James appealed to scripture. At the end of all of that, they wrote and said

*28 For it has **seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us** to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:*

Even after all that discussion, all they can do is conclude it seem good to the Holy Spirit and yet you have no New Testament prophets nowadays in certain churches, come and say, thus says the Lord. I think it is very-very arrogant. So you have all the apostles, the church, all gathered through all the scripture reading and through all the discussion they came out and says, it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us. That is the kind of humility that we need to have.

*Acts 15:32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.*

So the main function of prophecy was not to decide the doctrine but to encourage with words and the main ministry

*35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, **teaching and preaching the word of the Lord**, with many others also.*

The teaching and preaching function is number one. The prophecy is just encouragement. So there is also misunderstanding on the meaning of prophecy. We are not meaning the same thing. There is inscripturated prophecy which is basically Moses who wrote Pentateuch, Isaiah, Jeremiah, those are in the bible is inscripturated, but do you know there are a lots and lots of prophets whom you have never heard their names, nor their writings. If you look at 1 Kings 18

*(1 Kings 18: 4) **Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.***

Do you hear about any writings about the 100 prophets? What about Moses?

*(Num 11: 25) Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied.*

70 elders prophesied, but they are not recorded in the bible, non-inscripturated prophecy. What about Saul?

*1 Samuel 19:23-24 (ESV) And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he (Saul) prophesied.*

So Saul prophesied too but we don't have a book which says the Prophecies of Saul. Because there is inscripturated prophecy and non-inscripturated prophecy. So New Testament prophecy is non-inscripturated. It is an application of gospel truth, such prophecies must still be evaluated and they are principally submissive to the apostle and the gospel. So here we have a summary, Old Testament and New Testament prophets.

Old Testament Prophets	New Testament Prophets
Once he is verified, there is no repeated check on his authority and his content.	Always checked every single time.
Actually killed if he is false	There is no death penalty. Paul never mentioned a death penalty because it is different.
They say, thus says the Lord.	Such words are very rare
Prophet held authority	Prophets are under the authority of the apostles, elders and the scrutiny of the church
High profile	Low profile

So Grudem I think is correct. The infallible prophecies are actually from apostolic witness and the fallible New Testament prophets are the prophets of chapter 14. The other issue is fallibility. You cannot have prophecy which is fallible. If that's the case then when about teaching and preaching. Do you think all the preachers who come up here are infallible, heavens forbid, right, they make mistakes. So but the same thing is that prophecy can be, just as you check the preacher up here, you also check the prophets up here, they don't have the aura or authority as well. So I think a good summary is you take Grudem's position and Schreiner's position is that, it is a distinction without the difference. You have the revelation of God and Thomas Schreiner says, this revelation of God is called impressions. You go to your brother and say, you know I have an impression that you shouldn't go on this trip you know, let me pray for you. If you were Wayne Grudem, you will come up to the person and say, I think I receive the prophecy from the lord that you should go on trip. You are both using a distinction without a difference. You are both saying the same thing, but one is a prophet and one is an impressionist. It is like you come to Baptist church, you call it impression. You go to charismatic church, you call it prophet. But actually they mean the same thing, you know, why, because they are both revelation from God. They are both fallible, they need evaluation. They both confer on check authority, they both cannot go beyond scripture and they both applies scripture to the situation. So it is basically a distinction without a difference.

## WHY SHOULD WE DESIRE IT:

Paul says, you have to earnestly desire

1 Corinthians 14:1-3 (ESV) Pursue love, and **earnestly desire** the spiritual gifts, especially that **you may prophesy**.  
 2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, the one who **prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation**.

Paul's warning to the church, FBC, today is twofold. You should not reject nor should you abuse prophecy and he summarizes this best in 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (ESV) Do not quench the Spirit. 20 **Do not despise prophecies**, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Why would you despise prophecy? Well John Piper tells a story that one day his wife was pregnant and a woman in church came to him and gave him quietly a slip of paper. On that paper he read, I heard from the Lord, He revealed to me, your wife will die during childbirth. Imagine the shock on his face. He never told his wife and he kept the prophecy to himself. His wife gave birth, survived and his son was well. So obviously this is not right. So after that experience, John Piper describes that he tended to despise prophecy because it is such hurtful things if people get it wrong, but Paul says do not despise prophecy. So even though you want to protect your wife and all that, you allow yourself to be vulnerable because God may speak, may be that woman was wrong but somebody else may be right. On the other hand, you are not supposed to abuse prophecy he says but test everything, hold fast to what is good, which means all the bad stuff you through away. You don't let the bad stuff tell you that all prophecy is wrong, you hold one to what is good. So I think that is a very-very-very important advice to us that we do not despise prophecy and we test everything that is forward.

Anthony Thiselton describes prophecy

*“Prophecy, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared with judgment, decision, and rational reflection) leading to challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressees.”*

Which means the people who preach the gospel are also prophets in the sense that sometimes when you preach, you feel the lord is leading and that it actually touches people's life. So that is a prophetic gift as well.

## HOW SHOULD WE PRACTICE IT?

Well corporate participation

*1 Corinthians 14:26-27 (ESV) What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 2*

Which means you might have a choice of a song. I mean in this church we have a big problem for us, we never give you a choice of a song but if you go to a brethren church, that's the closest I have seen. Somebody will suggest a song and then they will sing, so that is kind of a brethren kind of setup where the New Testament is practiced like this, which means the prophecy is same level as the hymn. Same level as teaching. So everything is corporate participation and if you are speaking in tongues it must be intelligible.

When the prophet speak, the others could the prophets, the whole church or church leaders, it is unlikely to be the prophets. So most likely it will be the whole church or the church leaders to come and weigh what is said, because you could have said things wrongly. So in this particular church in the last few years we haven't had any prophets come. I had one lady who comes out of the blue some years ago. She came off the street, never know who she was, with a look of urgency she came to me and said, look I got a prophecy for FBC. I said, good, tell me what it is. She said, cannot tell you, must tell the whole church first. Obviously, you cannot even tell me, how can I let you come up here and tell the whole church. So everything must be weighed. So you have to go through the elders.

The important thing is that when your prophecy is wrong I expect you to come back up here and apologize. There are charismatic churches I have talked to where the person actually comes up and say, look I got it wrong I am sorry and that's good because you allow yourself to be vulnerable. You don't despise prophecy and yet you don't actually abuse it.

In Acts 16 a vision appeared to Paul. Visions are so authoritative. People say, I got a vision, means it has got to be true. But look here

*Acts 16:9-10 (ESV) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

Listen to the words. Paul has got a prophecy, we sought to go into Macedonia. 'We' concluding that God had called, which means when Paul had the prophecy he actually consulted Barnabas and all the rest and they concluded after discussion that he should go. Unlike many of the prophets today, they say God told me, means you all shut up, I have got to go. So it is a corporate thing together. So prophets are under authority of the apostles.

*1 Corinthians 14:37-38 (ESV) If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.*

So which means there are no apostles today but we have the bible. The Bible with the writings of Paul and James and Peter, they form the bedrock foundation of our truth and all prophecies will not go beyond scripture.

Now lets come to the interesting part that will be upsetting to some woman.

1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches.

In Greek there is no full stop. You can either do, For God is not a God of confusion but of peace as in all the churches of the saints. Which is a nice innocuous way. But because of the full stop in the wrong place. We read it, As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. So you translate it that way. I prefer the formal one. There is a tension in 1-Corinthians chapter 11, the woman are allowed to

1 Corinthians 11:5 but **every wife who prays or prophesies** with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

So you've got to cover your head but you can speak. Here you ask them to keep quiet, to be silent, but there is a different context. In that area, they are prophesying or they are praying. In this area, they are checking the prophecy of their husbands. Now there are three passages. The third passage is in 1-Timothy chapter 2

1 Timothy 2:11-14 (ESV) Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I **do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man**; rather, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

We will preach on that one day, that passage is enough to fill books, but this afternoon I am just going to summarize the commonalities in all the three passages and to be able to harmonize them into a paradigm that works. First of all, there are restrictions in all three passages to woman. So that's why I don't take an egalitarian stand to say they all do the same thing.

	1 Cor 11	1 Cor 14	1 Timothy 2
<b>Restrictions</b>	Wives can pray and prophesy but use head covering	Wives cannot weigh prophecy of men.	Wives cannot teach or have authority over men

Now these are restrictions but you must understand why.

	1 Cor 11	1 Cor 14	1 Timothy 2
<b>Rationale</b>	Issue of shame in their culture and gender distinction. There is a gender distinction. That's why woman should be seen to be submissive to their husbands and so therefore they wear a veil.	The issue is shame and submission.	The issue is shame and submission.

This is the same issue which Paul brings up in each situation but why. Is this Paul's thinking or Paul realize in the scripture and he goes back into the theological basis. The theological basis in chapter 11 is Genesis chapter 2, woman created for man and not man for woman. So therefore if the theology supersedes the culture, which means the time, Genesis 2 is written so long ago and if it applies to AD 55, it also apply in 2019. So therefore the issue is gender distinction, woman created for man and not the other way around. Verse 14, the law is invoke and I think by inference this law is Genesis chapter 2, which means is issue of submission and shame. So you cannot have a woman coming up during the prophecy time and whatever husband say, she stands up and say, hey that was wrong. Because it doesn't show gender distinction, it doesn't show submission.

In chapter 2 of Timothy, the law is invoked. Genesis chapter 2 and 3 talking about Adam being created first. That's why the woman don't play a leadership role in terms of teaching or having authority over man. So here harmonizes all the three things. Paul is not discriminating against woman. He just says that there are different gender distinctions and roles within the church, of which he is comfortable with and is based on scripture as it were.

### CHALLENGE:

*1 Corinthians 14:39-40 (ESV) So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But all things should be done decently and in order.*

We need to do things properly. There are a lot of prophetic abuses. For example:

- Prophecies are intentionally given to people of wealth.
- Prophecies are based upon on prior knowledge.
- Dramatic prophecies are given to build an audience.
- Prophecies are used to manipulate relationships
- Prophecies commissioning people to high-level leadership.
- The prophecies draw attention to the prophet
- Prophecies are given for monetary gain.
- Prophecies go beyond the Scriptures to teach doctrine

For example, I was in Melbourne, Australia in a big church, City Life. There was a Malaysian gentleman who actually went full-time, he functions as a prophet, giving prophecy and we asked him, hey how you survive. The church doesn't support you here and the church doesn't support you there. He said, 'Oh, you know I am a prophet and God gives me insight into the stock market'. So he says, he doesn't need tithing from you guys because the stock market gives him all the money. So he tells people, the Lord has given me revelation, you must buy this stock called KMN. So everybody in the church and all the Chinese bought it. One guy who was so rich, he sold his whole business there and he opened up a post office which is very boring in Australia and he spent 2 million dollars buying the stock, which was only 10 cents and it went to 80 cents. He made huge. One day the market crashed and everybody lost. Prophets for monetary gain is the oldest game in the book. Don't fall for that.

Prophets use to manipulate relationships. A patient of mine came to me, a Chinese man married Indian girl. They haven't had sex for five years. At the end of five years he said, I think we must have babies. How

do babies come about without sex. So they come and consult me. And I asked, how did you guys get married because you are not sexually attracted to her, you can't get an erection. He said, one day I was sitting there and then God revealed to me that you must go next door and marry the woman next door. He went next door, knocked on the door, she opened it and he explained that, you know we are from the same church and God has told me to marry you, and the stupid woman said 'yes'. They never checked and weigh what is being said. They actually got married because they both thought that they are being obedient to the will of God. And five years down the road, the wheels fall off the wagon. Thank God for Viagra, it worked.

For example, Bishop Carlton Pearson had a dream, the Lord told him in a conversation that all people will be saved, no need to have anyone go and sacrifice their lives, no need for anyone to risk their lives, after all everybody will be saved. So this is called the doctrine of universalism, which means it goes against scripture.

Jim Bakker had a scandal. He had sexual affair with Jessica Han and then he got resurrected again. He is still on TV and he advocates vote for trump. He says,

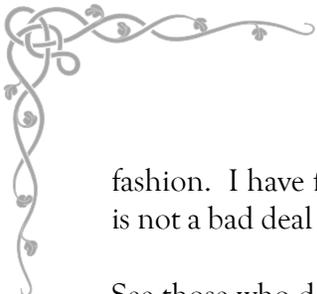
*"What's coming next, if we keep losing, you're going to see the leaders of the church and the leaders of the gospel and the political conservative leaders that are powerful, you are going to see them suddenly die, suddenly killed. Suddenly as they were driving, suddenly as they were in a boat, suddenly in an airplane ... You're going to see it one after another."*

*God spoke this to me years ago what would happen near the end and I believe we're in that time. There's so desperate – this is life and death. This is the hatred of murder is in the country."*

This is a prophet. He runs a TV program. This is what we need to avoid. We need to avoid, when you come up to have prophecy over you, the prophets will always say, release your faith for your miracle from God today, something good is going to happen to you today, God has a wonderful plan for your life. Sometimes prophecies are like reading your horoscope. Why do you see, go through a horoscope, why do you see a prophet because you want to know the future. It is the same thing. It is the same curiosity that you want to, you know not wanting to trust God. That's the problem. In fact, prophets are like doctors. You go to doctor and the doctor and this doctor tells you the truth, you are going to die and you don't like. So you go to another doctor who tells you, you are going to live, we just need to operate on you and we leave you a lot of your money. So you find a doctor who will sing the song that you like to hear. That's the doctor you want and that is exactly like a prophet. You find a prophet who will sing the song that you like to hear and I tell you Jeremiah 23 says this,

*Jeremiah 23:16-17 (ESV) Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, **filling you with vain hopes**. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. 17 They say continually to **those who despise the word of the Lord**, It shall be **well with you**"; and to everyone who **stubbornly follows his own heart**, they say, **No disaster shall come upon you.**"*

Somebody just shared with me how somebody came to two prophets who came to his father, who was suffering from terminal cancer and told the father, you will not die. Obviously he died. I mean, you are pushing 75, you have to die, death is natural. Death will come to all of us. We have the second healing of the Lord, complete healing when in heaven and yet we go against this grain of reality as if death doesn't exist for us simply because we are Christians. God does heal and when he heals, he heals in dramatic



fashion. I have full belief He does that, but for most of us we are going to be with him in heaven and that is not a bad deal and yet we are always doped by these people because we want to hear what we want to hear.

See those who despise the word of God, those who stubbornly follow their own hearts, many are searching for prophecies because we despise the word of God, we don't want to listen to word of God. If they tell us about our sin, we get upset. They tell us that we are going to be rich and have a good job and a wonderful wife, we are very happy. So therefore, it is our own despising the word of God that brings us in the problem. Then we get in bondage to certain individual leaders, presumptuous beliefs or we are led by human thoughts and impressions.

Let me end with Matthew Chandler. He says,

*"We receive from the Lord a word that doesn't contradict the Scriptures, doesn't stand in contrast to the sufficiency of the Scriptures, but it personalizes the Scriptures."*

It means it applies the scripture to your own life and the message of scripture is always the same. Repent and believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. So when you come to the church, we encourage prophecy, we encourage people to teach, who lead, who have the hymn, who are evangelist, who are teachers, you bring it to us for us to evaluate, to weigh and whatever builds up the church we will celebrate that together, so that the church is built up.

**PRAYER:**

Father Lord, we thank you that in these last days, you have not left us without a witness. You have put the Holy Spirit in all of us, in all flesh. We can see visions, we can dream dreams, we can hear from you in a living manner and that we have the precious word of God. We pray in this church that we will be neither afraid or that we would be against the use of prophecy, so that your name will be glorified, and we ask for Jesus sake.

End of Sermon