CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

The Key to Unlocking the Prophetic

Prophecy Is Hard to Define, Easy to Discern, and Open to Every Believer

Prophecy is not easily defined, but it can be easily discerned, and it is available to every believer. The key that unlocks it is not an altar moment but a life saturated in the most prophetic thing we have, the Word of God, in the secret place.

PREACHED BY
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SERIES
We're Openly Spirit Filled, Week 4 of 5

MAIN TEXT
1 Corinthians 14:5

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01

Sermon Transcript

Amen. All right, turn with me this morning, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 14. We've been in a series called "We Are Openly Spirit Filled." We've been preaching — or I have been preaching — since I got here through a series of values for our church... What in the world? Good morning! Hey. Hey, come here. Just say hello to everybody. We've got an evangelist in the house this morning. Come on and greet everybody. It's so good to see you.

Good morning, everybody. Good morning. Hi, I'm Jim. It's nice to see you guys this morning. This is my beautiful wife, Valerie. How's everything going today? Everybody excited, ready for the Word? Absolutely. Guys, it's an honor to be here. Pastor Jason, happy birthday again. What are you, 25 now? Yeah. What do you say? It's so amazing that he just did this, because I was just telling Valerie, if I had an opportunity to say something this morning — I'm pretty sure this is for somebody here — I was reading in Judges, I think it's chapter 6, where the angel of the Lord comes to Gideon. And I know we know that Gideon's hiding and all the things are going on against the Midianites and all that, but what the angel of the Lord told him is, "Go in the strength that you have." Okay? Whatever strength that you have is what you use to go.

No matter what you're going through right now, what you're facing, no matter what's happening around you — life, job, work, whatever it is — whatever strength that you have in you right now is what you use. I want to tell you something right now. This is not coincidence that I'm standing here today. This is February the 15th. Thirteen years ago today I was delivered and set free from drugs and alcohol, this day. So this is an amazing celebration here right now for me, guys. It's amazing to be here standing here this morning and telling you guys this. Whatever you have to go, man, use it and go into what God has for you. Because today, right now, me and my wife and my family, we're going into a completely different season in our lives. Our lives are so full. My heart is so happy and full to be here with you guys this morning, guys. And thank you so much for just getting in behind Jason and Ashleigh and making this church happen, guys. Thank you, guys. Y'all have an awesome day. All right. Bless you.

So good to see you. Sitting down there on the front row now. Let's hit that preaching slide again and give me my time back. Amen. Amen, hallelujah. Praise the Lord. So turn in your Bibles — hey, I want to just say, that might be a word for me. I was having a thought on something this morning, and you just kind of... And so, well, I'm excited, so we'll be done in five minutes. He's got presents outside. Amen. So, Lord, we thank you for everything you've done today. Amen.

All right, so turn with me in your Bibles, 1 Corinthians chapter 14, if you haven't heard that the last eight times I've said it. Amen. We've been in a series called "We're Openly Spirit-Filled" since I got here. We've been preaching through values, setting a foundation to see God do the next great work in this church. How many of you are believing that the latter glory of the house will be greater than the former glory of the house?

Amen, hallelujah. And so we are talking right now about being openly Spirit-filled. We've been talking about this for several weeks. We're not going to be a closeted Pentecostal church. We're not going to be private Pentecostals and closeted charismatics. Amen. I'll find something else here — secret Spirit-filled. We aren't going to be that. We're openly Spirit-filled. We openly express the Pentecostal experience in our church. But I, as you have probably picked up on, am very concerned about the condition of the modern Pentecostal church when it comes to actually operating in power. Because I, like, actually believe this stuff is, like, real. It's not just something we come in and mess around and do. This is

power that we have access to that gives us a cut-above advantage. This is power for life. And so we want to make sure that we are operating in the authentic power of God.

So this morning, what I want to talk to you about is prophecy. And I'm aware that I'm going to talk to you about prophecy — like a few weeks ago we talked about speaking in tongues. But today I want to talk to you about prophecy, and I'm aware I'm talking about prophecy at a time that some of you may be aware, some of you may not — depends on how deep in the YouTube rabbit holes you might get — but there is a great uncovering of abuse around the prophetic gifts in the church right now. People who have been hurt, people who have lost possessions, people who have been put in harm's way, people who have been exposed to prophetic ministries that were propped up as authentic and true, and it turned out that these people were fraudulent in the most egregious ways. But the reality is, we have access to a true prophetic power. We have access to a true prophetic power.

Let's start here in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. By the way, this message this morning is not going to be nice and transitioning and cute, and I'm going to talk to you as much as I can and give you a ten-hour lesson in 30 minutes. Okay, here we go.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 14:5** ESV
>
> 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.

1 Corinthians chapter 14: "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy." What I want you to catch in that phrase there is, "I want you all to prophesy."

This morning I will talk to you about prophecy, and one of the most important things we do when it comes to the prophetic gift is to define it. What is the prophetic gift in the church? What is a prophetic voice in the church? And the issue is that generally any time that you isolate the prophetic gift down to something that you can define, you're wrong. We in the church have been very quick to say, "This is what prophecy looks like." Different denominations have taken different views of it. But I think, as you'll see this morning, the Bible will have a very different description of prophecy.

For cessationists — people who do not believe that the supernatural power of God is for today — I'm talking about people like, and we love them, they're part of the body of Christ, but I'm talking about people like Presbyterians, a lot of Baptists, a lot of Methodists, a lot of our Reformed brothers and sisters. They believe that these gifts are no longer for today. Well, what they would do is they would put prophecy into a very rigid form and say that prophecy is only for the purpose of the Scripture being written. However, Paul says here in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, he says, "I want you all to prophesy." I promise you, I've never met the apostle Paul, but I guarantee you when he wrote to this church — which, if you'll go back and read the rest of 1 Corinthians and see how jacked up these people were, I've been telling you, they make your family look like saints. Okay? The original Jerry Springer show came out of Corinth. Amen. Okay. And he's telling these people, "I want you to prophesy." I guarantee you Paul did not think that these people were going to write the Bible. Right? So that is one frame that we kind of know cannot possibly be what 1 Corinthians is talking about.

The other side of it is, we've got most Pentecostals and charismatics who attempt to identify the prophetic. But what it typically comes down to is not whether or not something has prophetic authority, it's whether or not something fits what we believe the framework of prophecy is. It's normally some kind of typology, a type of behavior. And I'll be honest with you, it's not always the same thing, but it's about three ways people act that people go, "That's prophetic." If

we get into a church and there's more than three people waving flags, must be a prophetic church. If we get in there and they pronounce "God" a certain way — I've been listening to people long enough to know I can hear the words they say and kind of know what they believe. Amen. And so they'll say "God" a certain way. They'll say "hallelujah" a certain way. Or they'll walk around and do certain things when they preach. Or some people even think the uglier the preacher gets, the more prophetic it is.

I was in a prophetic church one time. It turns out the pastor was just a jerk to everybody he was preaching to. I'm not kidding. He invited people down to come down to the altar. He walked down. He got in front of this guy and he — no joke — he goes, "You know, you're the problem." I was up there playing piano. I thought, I'll do a key change right there. I don't know what that means. Amen. I don't know how to deal with y'all. Better wake up. Y'all seen some of this stuff too. I know you have. Amen.

But if you take a ten-thousand-foot view of the Scripture on the issue of the prophetic, if you get out of your rigid paradigm that either you were raised in or you've been adopted into denominationally, if you'll get out of that and actually take a Bible view of the prophetic — talking about looking at every instance of the prophetic — you're going to find that every time prophecy flows, it looks different. Every time prophecy flows in the Bible, it looks different.

On some occasions you have moments where God speaks to and through a person, and that is obviously a prophetic moment. I won't even give you Scripture here, but obviously a big example would be someone like Moses. God spoke to and through Moses. But you also have people like Samuel. 1 Samuel chapter 3 says, "The Lord said to Samuel." You have Balaam, who attempted to pronounce a curse against Israel, and the Bible says this in Numbers 5, that the Lord put the word in Balaam's mouth, and he turned around and he blessed him.

> **1 SAMUEL 3:11** ESV
>
> 11 Then the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

> **NUMBERS 23:5** ESV
>
> 5 And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

And every time he tried to curse him, the word would get put in his mouth. That is obviously prophetic — God speaking to and through a person.

But then sometimes you have prophecy that comes from a person being so in tune with the nature and character of God that they can represent his desires accurately to people, and they don't even need a further word from the Lord. Take, for instance, Daniel. The prophet Daniel, in Daniel 4, he instructs the king under the prophetic but without having any type of word from the Lord.

> **DANIEL 4:27** ESV
>
> 27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity."

In Jeremiah chapter 29, Jeremiah gives godly instruction, but this seems to be without any word from the Lord as well.

> **JEREMIAH 29:4-7** ESV
>
> 4 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

And he even goes so far as to use the "thus saith the Lord" banner, but it's not a word from the Lord. He is so in tune with the character of God, he can say, "This is what the Lord would have you do." Amen.

The third way is, sometimes prophets will declare something that at times even seems out of step with the nature and character of God, and God will seem to honor this thing just because the prophet said it. For instance, Elisha. Elisha's got some teenagers yelling at him one day, calling him bald-headed. So you're safe from this pastor. Amen, hallelujah. And these teenagers are calling him bald-headed. They're yelling at him, "You got a bald head. Baldy, baldy, baldy. You got a bald head." And guess what? Elisha calls a curse down on them, and bears come out and maul the children.

> **2 KINGS 2:23-24** ESV
>
> 23 He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" 24 And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.

Now, I've read enough Bible to know that's not what the Lord is into, but for whatever reason, the prophet said it, and it had so much authority behind it, the Lord honored it. Elisha also does that with Gehazi. Gehazi tries to charge Naaman for the prophetic ministry that had occurred, that Elisha had done free of charge, and he pronounced a curse on Gehazi, and it happened. It came true. He got leprosy.

2 KINGS 5:20-27 ESV

20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in
not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from
him." 21 So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from
the chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well?" 22 And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There
have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. Please
give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" 23 And Naaman said, "Be pleased to accept two
talents." And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid
them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi. 24 And when he came to the hill, he took
them from their hand and put them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed. 25 He went in
and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant
went nowhere." 26 But he said to him, "Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?
Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and
female servants? 27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he
went out from his presence a leper, like snow.

Peter in the New Testament — he looks at Ananias and Sapphira, specifically Sapphira, and he says, "This is what's going to happen, because you have robbed from the church. You're going to die." And she dies. He dies. From a declaration.

ACTS 5:1-11 ESV

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife's knowledge he
kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But
Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of
the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it
not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to
God." 5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who
heard of it. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. 7 After an interval
of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter said to her, "Tell me
whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." 9 But Peter said to her, "How is it that
you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your
husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her
last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her
husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

It's the prophet being backed by the power of God.

Prophecy flows in a lot of different directions. That's just three. If you go through the Bible, you will see that there is almost no two instances of prophecy that are the same. It's incredible. It's phenomenal. Y'all are real leaned in. I knew they all weren't going to Amen me a bunch this morning. Y'all are going, "Wait a minute. What? How do you know?" What — I'm going to get you there. Amen.

Our understanding of prophecy is further complicated in our churches by popular teachings on the spiritual gifts. We talk a lot about the spiritual gifts, specifically — and we'll look at this later — but from 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and there's nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. You've got the word of knowledge, word of wisdom, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues. Nine different gifts.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10** ESV
>
> 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge
> according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
> 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits,
> to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

Here's the problem with this. This is why it complicates prophecy: it's that pastors — to some degree this is no fault of their own — we like lists in the Bible. It's like free sermons. So we like anytime there's a list. But pastors have gotten up and they've basically presented this passage as to say, "Here are the nine things that the Spirit of God bestows upon people." But the truth is, if you read this with any measure of brain power, you'll realize that this passage of Scripture is not an exhaustive list. It's an ad hoc list. If you're in management or anything, you probably had ad hoc meetings. It's a Latin phrase. It just means "for this." He's saying this for this — for what? To make an argument. He's building a cadence. He's saying, "Hey, there's a lot of different stuff that goes on in the body. There's a lot of different gifts. For instance, there's word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith," and he just starts listing them off. It's never intended to be an exhaustive list.

And one of the reasons I know this is because out of my own Pentecostal experience, I have watched people flow in certain gifts that are obviously specific and yet they're not listed here. For instance, I know a man — and you could put it under gifts of healing, but it is bizarrely specific. I know a man. He lives in Alabama, at least he used to. He prays for deaf people all the time and they get healed. He doesn't do this with everybody, but if he's going to pray for a deaf person, it's pretty much a sure thing. This person's going to get healed. It's real weird. It doesn't happen with everybody. People aren't getting out of wheelchairs with him. People aren't — blind people don't see. But deaf people, he'll pray for him, and here's what he does: he goes up and he puts his fingers in their ears and he prays, and then he pulls them out and they can hear. That just seems real specific. That seems like that would exceed this small list of things that we say that the Holy Spirit can do in people in the church.

So the issue with this is that because it lists prophecy as a gift along with other things, we think of prophecy very narrowly. Here's what I want you to see. If you go back to this list, about five things in there operate in what would be an obvious prophetic realm. I would really ask you to go home and think about this today. What's the difference between a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge and prophecy? That seems narrowly different. If you all of a sudden know what's going on with somebody out of nowhere, you just read their mail, that seems an awful lot like prophecy. If you can discern a spirit on somebody, that seems an awful lot like prophecy.

What I want you to catch from this is that prophecy is very broad. It's very wide. It's a large — I don't like using the word "realm," because then it sounds like I'm getting weird spiritually, and I'm already talking about prophecy, so, you know, I need all the help I can get. But it's a real large category. It's a large umbrella of spiritual power that you can receive from heaven. If you're with me or you aren't, say amen. Okay, good. I thought that would help. Amen.

It operates in a realm. What I want you to catch as we move on this morning is that prophecy is not easily defined, but it can be easily discerned. In fact, Paul even says to test the prophetic word. He says that in 1 Corinthians 14, but in 1 Corinthians — or I'm sorry, 1 Thessalonians 5 — he says, "Do not reject the prophetic." This is what he says, after he goes, "But test all of it." Too often what we do is, if we like the style and we like the type of ministry and we kind of like the atmosphere, and we like the stuff that's going on around a certain ministry, we receive it without any question.

> **1 THESSALONIANS 5:20-21** ESV
>
> 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good.

But I'm here to tell you, folks, every time you receive anything in the prophetic, you have to give it the test. You have to give it the test.

And here is the first and best way you can test all prophetic ministry. Are you ready? All right. You just ask this question: How helpful is it? How helpful is this prophetic word? If you can answer that question, that's most of what you're testing. Because what I've found is a lot of people like to prophesy stuff. By the way, prophecy usually in our churches is something that people do. It's an activity. There's no power behind it. It's just people saying stuff. Lord Jesus, I ain't got no time for that. I'm just telling you, I feel like preaching all of a sudden. I'm halfway through my clock and I'm ready to go. Amen.

I have no need for people to get up in the pulpit, or put on a conference, and just say a bunch of stuff that nobody can test, nobody can verify, nobody can check on, nobody can look into, or it's so far off in the future that nobody's — or out of your realm. The amount of stuff that people prophesy one to another that has nothing to do with either person in the conversation is amazing to me. If you go to a prophetic conference today, I promise 80 percent of what they're going to talk about is what's going on in Israel. I'm telling you. Let me get up here so I can get a good look at you. Yeah, I don't see anybody in here who's really impacted by what's happening in Israel right now. Eggs cost twenty-eight dollars and ninety-seven cents for a dozen, and everybody wants to write a new book every time a yard flamingo falls over in Tel Aviv. Oh, man, I'm telling you, I'm going to have to get a laugh track or something on the computer. I'm going to have Makala back there hitting it. Amen.

Look at this.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 14:3** ESV
>
> 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

1 Corinthians chapter 14 says, "On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their" — listen to these — "upbuilding and encouragement and consolation." How helpful is a prophetic word? How helpful is a prophetic word to your life? How helpful is a prophetic word right now, or in this season? We often think about prophecy as a future tool, but most prophecy in the Scripture is actually present tense.

If you go back and read most of the prophets, you'll find prophecy is kind of divided in two sections in the Bible. You have prophetic figures, people who are written about — think about like a Nathan, or an Elijah and Elisha. These are prophets who are written about. And then you have the writing prophets. These are prophets who we have their

ministry written down from them. Their actual preaching ministry is written down. Think about Daniel, or Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, people like that. These are writing prophets. If you look at prophetic figures versus writing prophets, it's almost unanimous across the board — almost all of their prophecies have to do with what was happening in that moment. There is no future implication. When you look at the writing prophets, who do write about future things that are going to happen, it's still about sixty-forty. About 60 percent of what writing prophets write is still present-day ministry for the time that they wrote it. Only 40 percent looking off in the future. Here's where it gets even more fun: that 40 percent that looks off in the future, almost all of it has some present-day implication. There is some instruction for present day connected to it.

In the New Testament, 1 Corinthians chapter 14, there is no indication of future prophetic ministry. And anybody who did do future prophecy outside of the apostle John — anybody who does future prophecy in the New Testament, it is within a matter of a short period of time that that thing would come to pass. Think about Agabus, who prophesied to Paul and said — now I'm just off the notes — who prophesied to Paul, and he takes off his belt and wraps up his hands and says, "So shall you be bound in Jerusalem."

> **ACTS 21:10-11** ESV
>
> 10 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.'"

Well, he was bound in Jerusalem within a few months. This wasn't something that happened 30 years down the line. This is future. How helpful is it?

I'll never forget — this was before me and Ashleigh got married, and I'm a little funky on the timeline, but it was before we got married, I think we were engaged, or we were getting real close to it — and I had two things that happened in this season that were pretty dramatic. One of them is, I had gone to a church in Phoenix, Arizona. This is a church called Phoenix First Assembly, the great Tommy Barnett, for a long time known as the church with a heart. Well, I went out there and I'd had probably the closest thing to an impartation I've ever had. I went out there and I left different than I came. Like, I went out there, and what happened was, the Lord showed me how to love people when I went out there. Because before that, I just did not care about people at all. We got things to do and we need to do them. And Ashleigh watched me in leadership like that. She saw the stark change between those moments. But I was ugly. I was — I must have been prophetic. Amen. I was mean. I was just mean to people. And I went out to Phoenix First Assembly, God showed me how to love people. I'm telling you, it was a dramatic spiritual experience, and it didn't happen in an altar. It happened in the foyer. You got what you needed before you even got in this room this morning. Amen.

A few months later — I know me and Ashleigh are engaged at this point — we get engaged. The pastor who I was working under at the time, he had known we were going to get engaged. He knew it was coming. And this man had played a significant role, him and his wife, and Ashleigh's — like, they had been her youth pastors and then became the senior pastors of the church. We get engaged, and he calls her and tells her to come meet with him in the office, and she goes over there. This is how the meeting goes. He makes her take off her engagement ring to even have a conversation. He says, "I won't talk to you with that thing on your finger." Let me put in a note here: when you hear about people who have real crazy experiences with church leaders, give it the benefit of the doubt, because there's some knuckleheads out here. So she takes her ring off, puts it on the desk — which we'll talk about that later. Amen. Still

got it. And he tells her, he says, “You can’t marry him, because he doesn’t love people.” “You can’t marry him, because he doesn’t love people.”

Okay. So like I said, this thing happened when me and Ashleigh were somewhere around those two instances going down. Phoenix First happened before that meeting happened, so God had done a work in my life. We went out one night to a church. This is how you date when you’re saved — you go to revival services. And we had gone over to a revival service at a church, and there was an evangelist there, and he got to the end of the service and he said, “If you want a prophetic word, I want you to come to the altar, and I’m going to be prophesying over everyone.” I thought, okay, well, I’m going to just see how it goes. To be honest with you, I don’t have a lot of experience down at the altar outside of being a teenager, because in all of my adult life I’ve either been on the keyboard or the guy down here praying for people, so I don’t get to go to a lot of altar calls. So I thought, let me go down there and we’ll just see what happens.

Well, he starts going through, and I’m going to be honest with you, the closer he got to me, the more I thought, here we go, this is going to be nonsense. I could feel it in my gut. It’s just going to be nonsense. And he comes up to me and he looks me in the face — I mean, I remember this, you know, this was, what, 19 years ago or so, 18, 19, somewhere in there — he looks me in the face and he goes, “As you care for your hair, so the Lord is teaching you to care for people.”

And I’m telling you, to be in the situation that I am in now — I’m going to be honest with you, if I heard him say it to anybody else, I’d be like, this goober saying this. I’d think that. But I am juxtaposed in this season of my life where, I’ll be honest with you, it’s the only time — but that night that he had that conversation, we almost called it off. I had to fight for us to stay together that night. And she had been shaken by that word that he had spoken to her, that the pastor had spoken to her, that nonsense. By the way, he’s not in the ministry, and none of his family seems to be serving the Lord anymore, just in case you’re wondering how that shook out. Hope this makes it to Colorado. Amen.

And so I’m between these, and I get this prophetic word. Was it helpful? Absolutely, it was. Because this man had no way to know me. It wasn’t a circle I ran in. It wasn’t an Assemblies of God church. It wasn’t even a Pentecostal church. It was a charismatic church. We went in there — this is a guy who was on TV. It was on Tuesday night. That’s why we went. Amen. That’s what you do when you’re a preacher: go to Tuesday night and Thursday night services. And so we went in, and he prophesied this word that is just bizarrely accurate for my moment in life. That’s how you test prophecy. How helpful is it? How helpful is it?

Now I also want to just say this: when it comes to the prophetic, you have to give a little room for the margin of error. Because where he almost lost me was when he said, “As you care for your hair.” And I want y’all to know, it drives me crazy, but people seem to think I have some obsession with my hair. I do my hair in like three minutes. I got a system. The reason I have them cut the part in is, this is like, you know, paint by numbers. You know what I mean? I know exactly what to do. I don’t spend a lot of time on my hair. I really don’t. So when he said it, I thought, he sees the hair and he’s saying something. But I hung with him, and the next five words out of his mouth hit me right in the chest. Do you hear what I’m saying?

This even happens in the Bible. Agabus, I mentioned a moment ago, he goes and wraps up Paul’s hands and says, “So shall you be bound in Jerusalem.” Well, here’s the thing: Paul got thrown in prison, but he didn’t get bound like that. So he was wrong about the means, but he was right about the outcome. Sometimes you’ve got to look past the details to what the person is actually saying — an art that has all but lost us in 2026. Amen. And so you have to look at what the person is actually saying.

The Bible says this, that the spirit of a prophet is subject to the prophet.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 14:32** ESV
>
> 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.

Now, the way we use that most of the time is to say, "Don't scream out prophecies when the preacher's preaching." That's how we use it in church. We use it as a "behave yourself in the middle of church," which, I'll be honest with you, we're going to hold that line still. Amen. But there's another way to look at that, in that the spirit of a prophet is subject to the prophet — in other words, every prophetic word will be filtered through a prophet. You may not realize this, but the coffee filter you use, it's small, it's marginal, but it does affect the way your coffee tastes. It's hardly noticeable, but what filter it passes through affects the taste. What the prophetic filters through — the person that it filters through — is going to affect the prophetic word to some degree. And it'll usually be a matter of paradigms.

This is one of the reasons that it's tough to get prophecy to go from the pulpit to the pew, is because people who stand up here have such a different lived experience than people who live out there. Because people don't apologize to you when they start saying cuss words. I had a guy give me a quote one day, and I asked him — he was getting ready to give me a quote — I said, "Is it going to be more like five thousand dollars or more like fifty thousand dollars?" And he goes, "Oh, hell no." "Oh, I'm so sorry." I looked at him, I said, "No, that's actually how I want you to respond when we're talking about fifty thousand dollars." You were right. You were right. We forgive that. Amen. That's acceptable. You know, people apologize. It's just a different lived experience. And so a lot of times when it goes through this filter, it goes through a preacher filter, or it goes through a musician filter, it goes through a church filter, and it's tough to get it operating out here in the pew.

But if you can give that margin of error — this happens again another place in the Bible. Naaman, it happens with him. I'm not — not Naaman, Nathan. Nathan prophesies to David. David wants to build the temple. Nathan looks at him and says, "You should do that." Because sometimes the apparent gets in the way of the prophetic. And it's apparent: if you want to build a temple for the Most High God and you're the king of Israel, absolutely, the answer is yes — unless the answer's no. And he goes home that night and he just can't rest in his spirit, and he comes back the next day. He says, "The Lord doesn't want you to build this temple. The Lord wants you to wait and let Solomon build it.

2 SAMUEL 7:1-13 ESV

1 Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, 2 the
king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." 3 And
Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you." 4 But that same night the word
of the Lord came to Nathan, 5 "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house
to dwell in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day,
but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. 7 In all places where I have moved with all the people of
Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel,
saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' 8 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David,
'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince
over my people Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from
before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will
appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be
disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed
judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you
that the Lord will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will
raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall
build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

You can't do this." So sometimes you have to give a little margin of error to the prophetic. You gotta — some people would say it this way, you got to eat the fish and spit out the bones. Amen.

So let me get into a little application for you. I know this is a bizarre message. I feel weird preaching it, but it's all right. We'll run around the room and wave flags when we're done and everybody will kind of come back together. It'd be good. I don't have any flags, but we've got bed sheets. We'll get those. Amen.

I started with this premise, and I want to circle back around to it, that prophecy is for everyone. Prophecy is for everyone. Prophecy is for every believer. Prophecy is for every person in the body of Christ. Prophecy, to some measure, is available to all people. But this is a real tension point in the church. On one level, you've got a tension with people who don't even believe it's for today versus people who do believe it's for today, that's still a present active ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church. But then there's also just a tension in the Scripture that we're kind of always dealing with, and this might be a question that's on some of your brains, and I'm going to answer it for you this morning.

That tension point comes from this. 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 5 says this: "I want you all to prophesy." "I want you all to prophesy." "I want you all to prophesy." But then if you go over to 1 Corinthians 12, which precedes this — you know, it's an implied no to all of these questions — but he says here, he says, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets?" No.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:29 ESV

29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

Everybody's not a prophet. And there is a genuine tension here. There's a genuine tension. But here's what I would encourage you with. You can't read the Bible like a trifold brochure that you set aside and move on with your day.

Sometimes you have to lean into the tension. Sometimes you have to spend time in the tension. Sometimes you have to sit in the tension of Scripture and not try to resolve it, but let it resolve you. Man, that would preach right there. You got to let the Bible do its work. People talk about going and doing Bible study. I don't Bible study — the Bible studies me. I'm going to tell you right now, sharper than any two-edged sword. Ooh, I feel it. Feel it right now.

So you got to sit with the tension. So I want to try to break this down in a way where I'm not going to give you a full dissertation on this. Everything I'm telling you requires a lot of time. This is what I want you to see this morning. There are basically three levels of prophecy. One is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, but I'm going to tell you what it is.

The first is canon-level prophecy. It's canon-level prophecy. That's Moses, that's Isaiah, it's Ezekiel. People who prophesy and it becomes the Scripture. It's canon-level prophecy. This is a lot of the rub between Pentecostals and charismatics and Reformed folks, because there is a real tension there in the body of Christ. And the issue is that no matter how many times we say it, Reformed folks cannot wrap their brain around that, when grandma stands up in church and goes, "Thus saith the Lord, if you draw near to me, I'll draw near to you." They cannot wrap their brain around the fact that grandma ain't writing the Bible. They think we view all prophecy at that level, and that is not true. That's not true. The Bible has carte blanche in prophet and in prophecy. Amen. That's — you ought to say amen loud to that. Amen.

So there's canon-level prophecy that is closed. No one will ever do it. No one will ever prophesy at that level. The other two, what we see in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, is what I will call institutional prophet. An institutional prophet. This is someone who prophesies, but they actually fulfill a role in the church as a prophet. They hold an office, or at least a position, as a prophet. Now when someone is — we'll call it a prophet proper — when they are a prophet, a big-P Prophet, they prophesy to the church at large, and they prophesy to the culture. That's what they prophesy to.

And then when we get to 1 Corinthians 14, it says that "I want you all to prophesy." This is the third level of prophecy, and that is individual prophecy. These are people who speak to themselves and individuals in their sphere. I promise you, whenever prophecy comes out of the body that is to the nations — which, if we're honest, we see this more often than we like to admit we do. You get into the right environment and you got somebody down on the front row, towards the third song in worship, stands up: "Thus saith the Lord," and it's some prophecy to the nations. No individual in the church prophesies to the nations. I'd say it's very rare that people who are proper institutional prophets prophesy to the nations, but that is the office that does it. When you operate in the prophetic as an individual, it is for you and your sphere. Everybody has access to this. Everybody has access to this.

One way I would say it is — I just actually got me some basses for my birthday. I'm a bass player. If y'all didn't know, that's my bass back there. We looked up when that was made. It was built on January 23rd, 2001. I've had that thing for a long time. Amen. And I'm a bass player. I have a friend who is — he travels as an evangelist. He plays, he sings, he leads worship, and I used to travel with him before I started working in a church. Now, I'm a bass player. I think like a bass player. I hear music like a bass player. I'm a bass player. And he was doing a Christmas record, and I had been part of writing some of the songs. I said, "Well, you want me to lay down the bass tracks?" He goes, "No, we'll handle it." Well, I finally get the record and I listen to it, and I'm listening to it and I'm like, what is this? So I called him on the phone. It's my friend Tony Sutherland. Love Tony Sutherland. I called him. I said, "Who played bass on this record?" And he goes, "Oh, Brown." Love Brown, but Brown's a guitar player. Brown is not a bass player. And I could tell immediately that a bass player did not play bass on that record, but only somebody who could play the bass.

And there's a difference between someone who is a bass player and somebody who can play the bass. There's a difference between somebody who can coach the New York Yankees and someone who can coach a Little League team. There's a difference. And there's a difference between a prophet proper and a prophet who is an individual, an individual prophet. There's a difference. But it's helpful to you.

So the question is, how do we unlock the prophetic? How do we do that in our life? This is where y'all get irritated with me in this season, because the way we think that this stuff gets unlocked is, we do an altar call and somebody lays hands on you and you get the gift, you shake and shimmy, and you go out here and all of a sudden you can prophesy. But I'm going to tell you how to actually activate it this morning. I'm going to give you the actual key to unlocking the prophetic.

How many of you remember the series that I taught in the fall called "We Are Rooted in the Bible"? Wave at me. Wave at me. Okay. Well, I taught this series, "We're Rooted in the Bible." Throughout the series it morphed from the importance of the Scripture — its inspiration, its authority, its infallibility, its inerrancy, its immutability. We talked about that. But somewhere we morphed into how to hear from the Lord. Folks, I don't know if you understand this. I did not say it in the series. I did not say it in the book that I wrote about it. But I was teaching you how to prophesy. I was teaching you how to prophesy the whole time. That's what prophecy is. It's hearing from the Lord. It's getting a word from God. That is prophecy.

And the best way to unlock the prophetic in your life is to get familiar with the prophetic base. So when I taught you a little while ago about three levels of prophecy, those aren't three options of prophecy — they're a hierarchy. There's a canon-level prophet, there's an institutional prophet, and there's an individual prophet. The best way to get familiar with prophecy is to engage with the thing that is the most prophetic. The Bible says of itself that it is sharper than any two-edged sword, that it's able to pierce down and divide between the bone and the marrow.

> **HEBREWS 4:12** ESV
>
> 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

There is something about the Scripture that when the Holy Spirit gets a hold of it — John chapter 14 says that the Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring to your memory what Jesus has said.

> **JOHN 14:26** ESV
>
> 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

This book — when he brings him, he starts to teach you the Bible, starts to do things in your life that is absolutely unmatchable. It's unreal what work God can do in your life just through the Scripture.

But then, as you get more and more familiar with this, you're getting familiar with how the prophetic operates. And so all of a sudden you're able to sense when you're getting something from the Lord. You know when it's from the Lord. You know when it's from the Lord or it's from you, because the spirit of a prophet is subject to a prophet. So you got to know when it's you and when it's the Holy Ghost. Amen.

I know I'm going to lose some of y'all on this, because y'all think AI is the antichrist, but I used AI to do something for me while I was prepping for this sermon. So I've got a pretty high-power little AI system that I use, and what I did is, I had it solely look at the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, which would have been the canon for prophets. We have the Bible; they have the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. And I asked AI to look at three minor prophets. I asked it to look at Amos, Joel, and Malachi — three minor prophets — and I asked it to figure this out: knowing the Torah, how much of the prophetic statements that these prophets made could have been deduced from the Torah without any prophetic word? If these prophets would have never said it, how much of what they prophesied could have just been drawn up from the Torah?

I was stunned. Between the three books, the three prophets, it said that 78 percent of what they prophesied you could have figured out just by reading the Torah. I'm telling you, we walk around acting like this stuff is so high in the clouds and it's inaccessible, and we let people fool us into thinking that prophecy is some mystical thing that you get into that nobody can touch. The Bible talks about people like this. It says they make much of you so that you'll make much of them, and they take advantage of people.

> **GALATIANS 4:17** ESV
>
> 17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

Bible says they take advantage of weak people who don't think for themselves.

> **2 TIMOTHY 3:6** ESV
>
> 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions,

And we let people get away with this, when, folks, prophecy is available to you. It's available to me. It's available to the person sitting next to you, if we'll just get familiar with God and his word.

I promise you, you cannot read the Bible five times and not have it leak out of you. I knew a lady one time — her husband told me, said she's read the Bible 17 times. She can't quote a verse, but godliness just pours out of her. It just seeps out of her. Why? Because you can't ingest this and not flow in some measure of the prophetic. That's how you do it. You get in the secret place with God. When Jesus needed a word, he got in the secret place. When Elijah needed, he got in the secret place. Elisha stayed in the secret place. They couldn't even get him to come out and talk to people. I kind of like that. Amen. When you get alone with God, God will move in your life in a special way. Prophecy will unlock for you. If you receive the word this morning, give the Lord a hand clap of praise. Amen.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This is week four of a five-week series on being openly Spirit filled. The previous messages dealt with the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues; next week takes up discerning of spirits.

Two things to say up front. First, this is preached at a time when abuse in prophetic ministries is being exposed publicly. Name it honestly: people have been hurt, lost possessions and been put in harm's way by ministries that turned out to be fraudulent. Then say plainly that there is still a true prophetic power the church has access to. Second, this message carries a lot of teaching ("a ten-hour lesson in 30 minutes"). Tell the congregation it will not be tidy, and keep moving.

Introduction

We are openly Spirit filled. We are not going to be a closeted Pentecostal church. We openly express the Pentecostal experience, and we want to operate in the authentic power of God, because this is not something we mess around with. It is power for life.

So this morning: prophecy.

> 1 CORINTHIANS 14:5 ESV
>
> 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.

Catch the phrase: "I want you all... to prophesy." Paul says it to the whole church.

PROPHECY RESISTS DEFINITION

One of the biggest problems with the prophetic is that people think they can define it neatly. **Generally, any time you isolate the prophetic down to something you can define, you are wrong.**

Cessationists, believers who hold that the supernatural gifts are no longer for today, put prophecy in a rigid box: its only purpose was the writing of Scripture. We love them; they are part of the body of Christ. But Paul tells the Corinthian church, "I want you all... to prophesy." Read the rest of 1 Corinthians and see how messed up that church was. Paul did not think those people were going to write the Bible.

Pentecostals and charismatics often go the other way. They do not ask whether something carries prophetic authority. They ask whether it fits a style: a certain way of talking, of saying "God" or "hallelujah," a certain kind of

music, or more than three people waving flags. Some even think the harsher the preacher gets, the more prophetic it is.

Illustration: "You're the problem." I was in a "prophetic" church once where the pastor called people to the altar, walked up to one man and said, "You know, you're the problem." I was on the piano. I did a key change.

1. Prophecy Looks Different Almost Every Time

Take a 10,000-foot view of Scripture. Get out of the paradigm you were raised in or adopted into, look at every instance of the prophetic, and you will find that every time prophecy flows in the Bible, it looks different. Most people would say prophecy is "God speaking through a person." That is only sometimes the case.

Sometimes prophecy is God speaking to and through a person.

- Moses.
- Samuel: "Then the LORD said to Samuel" (1 Samuel 3:11).
- Balaam: hired to curse Israel, but "the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth" (Numbers 23:5), and every time he tried to curse, he blessed.

Sometimes prophecy is a person so in tune with God's character that they can represent Him accurately without a fresh word from the Lord.

- Daniel counsels the king: "let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness" (Daniel 4:27).
- Jeremiah writes godly instruction to the exiles under the banner "Thus says the LORD" (Jeremiah 29:4-7): build houses, plant gardens, seek the welfare of the city.

Sometimes a prophet declares something, and God simply honors it because of who the prophet is.

- Elisha and the bears (2 Kings 2:23-24). Boys jeer at him, "Go up, you baldhead!" Elisha curses them, and two bears come out of the woods. That does not seem to be what the Lord is into, but the prophet said it, and it carried authority.
- Elisha and Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-27). Gehazi takes payment from Naaman for what Elisha had done freely, and Elisha pronounces Naaman's leprosy on him. It comes to pass.
- Peter and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). After Ananias falls dead for lying to the Holy Spirit, Peter tells Sapphira, "the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out" (Acts 5:9). And she dies.

That is just three. Go through the Bible and you will find almost no two instances of prophecy that are the same.

2. The Gifts List Is an Ad Hoc List

Our understanding of prophecy is further complicated by the way we teach the spiritual gifts.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10** ESV
>
> 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of
> knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing
> by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to
> distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

1. Word of wisdom 2. Word of knowledge 3. Faith 4. Gifts of healing 5. Working of miracles 6. Prophecy 7. Discerning of spirits (next week) 8. Different kinds of tongues 9. Interpretation of tongues

Preachers love lists; they are free sermons. So we have taught this passage as "here are the nine things the Spirit gives." But it is not an exhaustive list. It is an *ad hoc* list, Latin for "for this." Paul is building a cadence to make a point: there are many different gifts in the body.

Illustration: the man who prays for the deaf. I know a man in Alabama who prays for deaf people, and they get healed. Not the blind, not people in wheelchairs: the deaf. He puts his fingers in their ears, prays, pulls them out, and they can hear. You could file it under gifts of healing, but it is bizarrely specific. It exceeds the small list we say the Holy Spirit can work through.

Because prophecy appears as one item on a list, we think of it narrowly. But look again: about five things on this list operate in an obvious prophetic realm: prophecy, a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, faith and discerning of spirits. If you suddenly know what is going on with someone, that looks a lot like prophecy. If you can discern a spirit on someone, that looks a lot like prophecy.

Prophecy is not a rigid, definable activity. It is a large umbrella of spiritual power you can receive from heaven.

3. Not Easily Defined, but Easily Discerned

Prophecy is not easily defined, but it can be easily discerned.

Paul says to test it: "Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21). See also 1 Corinthians 14:29. Too often, if we like the style, the ministry and the atmosphere, we receive it without question. Every time you receive anything prophetic, give it the test.

THE TEST: HOW HELPFUL IS IT?

The first and best way to test prophetic ministry is one question: **How helpful is it?**

Much of what passes for prophecy in our churches is an activity with no power behind it, just people saying stuff. Words nobody can test, verify or check on. Words so far in the future, or so far outside anyone's sphere, that they have nothing to do with either person in the conversation. Pastor Jason's observation: go to a prophetic conference, and much of what you will hear is about events in Israel, while the people in the room are worried about the price of eggs.

> **1 CORINTHIANS 14:3** ESV
>
> 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

Upbuilding, encouragement, consolation. How helpful is this word to your life, right now, in this season?

MOST PROPHECY IS PRESENT TENSE

We tend to think of prophecy as a tool for the future, but most prophecy in Scripture is present tense.

- **Prophetic figures**, prophets written *about* (Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Huldah): almost entirely about what was happening in their moment.
- **Writing prophets**, whose preaching was written down (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel): by Pastor Jason's estimate, roughly 60% present-day ministry and 40% future.
- **Future prophecy** itself almost always carries instruction for the present.
- **New Testament prophecy** as described in 1 Corinthians 14 is overwhelmingly present-focused. Outside of the apostle John, future prophecy in the New Testament comes to pass within a short time. Agabus took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands, and said the man who owned the belt would be bound in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11). Within days of arriving in Jerusalem, Paul was arrested.

Illustration: "As you care for your hair." Before Ashleigh and I married, two things happened close together.

First, I went to Phoenix First Assembly, Pastor Tommy Barnett's church, known as "the church with a heart," and had the closest thing to an impartation I have ever experienced. The Lord showed me how to love people. Before that I did not care about people at all; I was all about getting things done, and Ashleigh had seen it. It did not happen at an altar. It happened in the foyer.

A few months later, after we were engaged, the pastor I was serving under called Ashleigh into his office, made her take off her engagement ring before he would talk to her, and told her, "You can't marry him, because he doesn't love people." That night we almost called it off.

Around that time we went to a Tuesday night revival service at a charismatic church. The evangelist, a man who had no way of knowing me, offered to prophesy over anyone who came forward. I expected nonsense. He looked me in the face and said, "As you care for your hair, so the Lord is teaching you to care for people." It was bizarrely accurate for that exact moment. Was it helpful? Absolutely. That is how you test prophecy.

4. Allow a Margin of Error

When it comes to the prophetic, you have to give a little room for a margin of error. That evangelist almost lost me at "your hair," because I do not spend much time on my hair. But I hung with him, and the next words hit me right in the chest. Sometimes you have to look past the details to what the person is actually saying.

This happens in the Bible. Agabus said the Jews in Jerusalem would bind Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles. Paul was seized by a crowd and then bound with chains by the Roman tribune (Acts 21:33). Agabus was right about the outcome, though the details did not unfold exactly as he described them.

"The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Corinthians 14:32). We usually use that verse to say, "Don't shout out prophecies while the preacher is preaching," and we will hold that line. But it also means every prophetic word passes through a person.

Illustration: the coffee filter. The filter is small and almost unnoticeable, but it affects the taste of your coffee. The person a prophetic word passes through affects it, too, usually through their paradigm. That is one reason it is hard to get prophecy from the pulpit to the pew: preachers, musicians and church people have a different lived experience from the people in the pew.

Illustration: the quote. I once asked a contractor whether a job would be closer to five thousand dollars or fifty thousand. He blurted out a curse word, then apologized. I told him that was exactly how I wanted him to respond to fifty thousand dollars. People in church apologize for language like that; people outside do not. Different lived experience, different filter.

Nathan is another example (2 Samuel 7:1-13). David wanted to build a house for the Lord, and Nathan said, "Go, do all that is in your heart." Sometimes the apparent gets in the way of the prophetic. But "that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan" (2 Samuel 7:4), and he went back to David with a correction: not you; your offspring will build it.

Sometimes you have to eat the fish and spit out the bones.

5. Prophecy Is for Everyone: Three Levels

Prophecy, to some measure, is available to every believer. But there is a real tension in Scripture.

On one hand, "Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:5). On the other:

> 1 CORINTHIANS 12:29-30 ESV
>
> 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

The implied answer is no. Not everybody is a prophet.

You cannot read the Bible like a trifold brochure you glance at and set aside. **Sometimes you have to sit in the tension of Scripture and not try to resolve it, but let it resolve you.** I do not just study the Bible. The Bible studies me.

There are essentially three levels of prophecy:

1. **Canon-level prophecy.** Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel: prophecy that became Scripture. This level is closed. Much of the friction between Pentecostals and Reformed believers is here: when grandma stands up and says, "Thus saith the Lord, draw near to me and I'll draw near to you," they think we believe she is writing the Bible. We do not. Scripture stands above every other prophetic word. 2. **Institutional prophecy** (1 Corinthians 12). The prophet as an office or role in the church, a "big-P" Prophet, who speaks to the church at large and to the culture. This is rare. 3. **Individual prophecy** (1 Corinthians 14). Believers who speak to themselves and to individuals in their sphere. When you operate in the prophetic as an individual, it is for you and your sphere, not the nations. **Everyone has access to this.**

These are not three options; they are a hierarchy.

Illustration: a bass player vs. someone who can play the bass. I am a bass player. I think like one and hear music like one. Years ago a friend I used to travel with recorded a Christmas album, and when I heard it I called and asked who played bass. It was a great guitar player. I could tell immediately that it was not a bass player on that record, just somebody who could play the bass. There is a difference between someone who coaches the New York Yankees and someone who coaches Little League. And there is a difference between a prophet proper and an individual who prophesies. Both are helpful.

6. The Key to Unlocking the Prophetic

How do we unlock the prophetic? We tend to think it comes through an altar call: someone lays hands on you, you shake, and now you can prophesy. Here is the actual key.

Last fall, in the series We're Rooted in the Bible, we moved from the inspiration, authority and inerrancy of Scripture into how to hear from the Lord. I did not say it then, but I was teaching you how to prophesy the whole time. **Hearing from the Lord, getting a word from God: that is prophecy.**

The best way to unlock the prophetic is to get familiar with the prophetic base: the Scripture.

The Bible is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow" (Hebrews 4:12). When the Holy Spirit takes hold of it, He "will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). The more familiar you are with the Word, the more you recognize how the prophetic operates, and the more you can tell when something is from the Lord and when it is from you.

Illustration: the Torah and the minor prophets. In preparing this message, Pastor Jason asked an AI tool to look only at the Torah, the canon the prophets had, and estimate how much of what Amos, Joel and Malachi prophesied could have been drawn from the Torah alone. Its answer: about 78%, nearly four out of five statements. Present this as what the tool estimated, not as a published finding.

We let people convince us that prophecy is a mystical thing high in the clouds that nobody can touch. Scripture warns about people who "make much of you, but for no good purpose" (Galatians 4:17), and about those who take advantage of the vulnerable (2 Timothy 3:6). Prophecy is available to you, to me, and to the person next to you, if we will get familiar with God and His Word.

You cannot read the Bible five times and not have it leak out of you.

Illustration: the lady who read the Bible 17 times. Her husband told me she had read the Bible 17 times. She could not quote a verse, but godliness poured out of her.

Conclusion

It comes from the secret place. When Jesus needed a word, He got alone with the Father. Elijah got in the secret place. Elisha stayed there. Get alone with God, day after day, and you will step into a prophetic flow that is available to every person in this church.

Prophecy will unlock for you.

OPTIONAL: PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT

Pastor Jason's notes end with this verse, but it was not preached on February 15, 2026.

The notes quote Isaiah 28:13 as a picture of how the Word builds in us "precept upon precept... line upon line." Handle it with care: in context, Isaiah 28 is a word of judgment on people who mocked the prophet's simple teaching, and the verse ends "that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken." If you use it, use it as a warning: the same Word that builds up those who receive it becomes a stumbling block to those who refuse it.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:5	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.
1 CORINTHIANS 14:3	3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

1 SAMUEL 3:11	11 Then the Lord said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.
NUMBERS 23:5	5 And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."
DANIEL 4:27	27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity."
JEREMIAH 29:4-7	4 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10	8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.
1 THESSALONIANS 5:20-21	20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good.
1 CORINTHIANS 14:32	32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.
1 CORINTHIANS 12:29	29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?
JOHN 14:26	26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

2 KINGS 2:23-24	23 He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" 24 And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.

2 KINGS 5:20-27

20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "See, my master has spared this
Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the Lord
lives, I will run after him and get something from him." 21 So Gehazi followed Naaman.
And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to
meet him and said, "Is all well?" 22 And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to
say, 'There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young
men of the sons of the prophets. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes
of clothing.'" 23 And Naaman said, "Be pleased to accept two talents." And he urged
him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and
laid them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi. 24 And when
he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house, and he
sent the men away, and they departed. 25 He went in and stood before his master,
and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant
went nowhere." 26 But he said to him, "Did not my heart go when the man turned
from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive
orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants?
27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants
forever." So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow.

ACTS 5:1-11

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and
with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought
only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has
Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of
the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own?
And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this
deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." 5 When Ananias heard
these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who
heard of it. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and
buried him. 7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing
what had happened. 8 And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so
much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." 9 But Peter said to her, "How is it that you
have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who
have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."
10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men
came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her
husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of
these things.

ACTS 21:10-11	10 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.'"
2 SAMUEL 7:1-13	1 Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, 2 the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." 3 And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you." 4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, 5 "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. 7 In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' 8 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
HEBREWS 4:12	12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
GALATIANS 4:17	17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.
2 TIMOTHY 3:6	6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions,

Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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