

How to Test a “Prophetic Word?”

Biblical training to discern what God is really saying to us in “Listening Prayer.”

“Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good.”

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 NIV.

❖ **Preface:** The church in America is in trouble today. “Cultural Christianity” is largely lukewarm, vastly compromised, and ineffective. Yet parallel to this anemic spiritual condition is the rise of a Spirit-filled people of prayer, searchers of the Word of God, an arising “remnant” of the revived, being called as intercessors in these dark times. We see increases of activity in the realm of the prophetic. Evangelical and Charismatic saints alike are awakening to the voice of the Lord – yet are mocked by the voice of the deceiver. How are mature believers to sort out from a myriad of “words from the Lord” the truth of God?

❖ **Preliminaries:** Before testing, we must be clear on what we are testing.

1. **What is “the Realm of the Prophetic?”** We can use the general term “prophetic” to refer to the whole range of how the Holy Spirit communicates directly with believers today through the full array of spiritual gifts – words of prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, an interpreted tongue, dreams, visions, teachings, burdens, promptings, leadings, etc. Jesus promised that the Spirit of Truth would guide us into all the truth.
2. **What is a Spiritual Gift?** A spiritual gift is defined in **1 Corinthians 12:7** in these words: “*But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*” A “gift of grace” is simply the Holy Spirit manifesting, or showing, Himself in the way He chooses to minister through you to others. Therefore, the gifts are never independent of the Giver. And the Giver is the author of the Bible. So, all prophetic words must be tested and brought into alignment with the unchanging, absolute truth of the Word of God.
3. **What is “Pleromic Unity?”** The healing of the division between Evangelical and Charismatic Christians is essential as Christ’s return draws closer. Let’s call this “Pleromic” unity. The term *pleroma* means “fullness.” Pleromic unity is the pursuit of **fullness of Christ**, through the **fullness of the Word** (Evangelical strength) AND the **fullness of the Spirit** (Charismatic strength). Unity is served by this new term – “Pleromic.” Practically, this means gifted Christians partner together to test a prophetic word.

❖ **Principle:** Jesus communicates His heart and will to His people today. He does so through His Word and His Spirit. God’s Spirit can bear witness with our human spirit in meaningful terms which reflect the heart of God (**Romans 8:14-16**). A spiritual “word” we sense in our hearts can be tested by God’s “Word” written in Scripture. Indeed, when this alignment is in place, we can say that we have “the mind of Christ” (**1 Corinthians 2:16b**). Consider how urgent it is to “hear” what God is saying:

Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” (John 10:27) “A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John 10:5)

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. (John 16:12-14)

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. . . .” (Jesus speak this seven times, in **Revelation 2:7a, 11a, 17a, 29a; 3:6a, 13a, and 22a.**)*

❖ **Predicament:** Not every “prophetic word” is pure. Each must be “tested.”

There are other “voices” that come to our minds and spirits which are not from the Holy Spirit. Elements of the world, the flesh, as well as outright demonic influences must be acknowledged as possible in what we perceive God is trying to say. Scripture gives us instructions to test the prophetic:

📖 **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.** ¹⁹ Do not put out the Spirit's fire; ²⁰ do not treat prophecies with contempt. ²¹ ***Test everything. Hold on to the good.*** ²² Avoid every kind of evil.

- 📖 **1 John 4:1-4.** ¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, **but test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² **By this you know the Spirit of God:** every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is **the spirit of the antichrist**, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because **greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.**
- 📖 **1 Corinthians 14:29-33.** ^{26b} Let all things be done for edification. ²⁹ **Let two or three prophets speak,** and **let the others pass judgment.** ³⁰ But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; ³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; ³³ for **God is not a God of confusion** but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
- 📖 **2 Corinthians 10:4-5.** ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

❖ **Pathway:** How to test a “prophetic word:” How can we validate the true voice of Jesus as He directs us through the Holy Spirit today? Here is an important sequence of steps on the pathway of discerning God’s voice. The first three steps require testing by the firm foundation of the Word of God. The sequence is important. Always start with the Word of God, so as to bring any subjective emotional “feelings” under submission to God’s revealed truth in Scripture.

1. **PASSAGE:** IS IT IN LINE WITH THE **WORD** OF GOD?

- ✓ Be open, but test. In **Acts 17:11b** the Bereans “...received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”
- ✓ Look for specific texts, principles, or promises of God that support the essential elements of the “word” given. You may also find a biblical text that directly contradicts all or part of the “word.”

2. **PERSON:** IS IT IN LINE WITH THE **CHARACTER** OF GOD?

- ✓ Does it fit with what you as a mature, Spirit-filled, Biblically literate saint have come to know to be true of your Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, who perfectly revealed God to us?
- ✓ For example, **John 1:14** says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- ✓ Does it fit with other relational attributes of God – love, patience, justice, holiness, and mercy?

3. **PLAN:** IS IT IN LINE WITH THE **PURPOSES** OF GOD?

- ✓ Be a student of God’s plan of the ages. Study His redemptive work through Christ, and the extensive biblical prophetic material - **Daniel, Matthew 24-25, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-14, Revelation**, et. al.
- ✓ Prophecy can be “forth-telling.” **1 Corinthians 14:3** says, “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.” Does it build folks’ identity and hope in Christ?
- ✓ Prophecy can be “foretelling.” Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “. . . He will disclose to you what is to come” (**John 12:13b**). Does this prophetic word fit within the broader scheme of God’s plan?

4. **PROMPTINGS:** IS IT IN LINE WITH THE **CONFIRMATION** OF GOD?

- ✓ Ask God for confirmation. God honors two or three witness to establish truth. (Cf. **Matt. 18:16, 1 Tim. 5:19**, et. al.) For example, Gideon asked for double confirmation (Judges 6:36-40).
- ✓ Is the prophetic word confirmed by other mature, Bible-taught believers who walk in the Spirit? A fresh word should be offered and released to the discernment of elders and/or other trusted saints.
- ✓ We can listen better together than by ourselves. “We [plural] have the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor. 2:16)

5. **PATIENCE:** IS THIS WORD **COMPLETE**? IS IT FOR NOW? IS IT TO BE SHARED?

- ✓ Let God complete and unfold His spiritual prompting in His time. Ask God for clarity; wait for it!
- ✓ God may be preparing you to confirm a word He is giving to another believer. Watch discerningly.
- ✓ Patience requires that we embrace only what is confirmed, and let the rest go! Keep listening to God.