

Managing Prophetic Messages

What should you do if you are given a personal prophecy

(& some safeguards against misuse):

Look at a Bible example from Acts 20 & 21 Paul determinedly heads for Jerusalem even though repeatedly warned by others (led by the Holy Spirit) of trouble ahead. Was he refusing the direction of the Holy Spirit?

The prophetic message when given to you will often not be a new understanding to you, but **will confirm something God is already revealing to you**. Paul was already aware of the issue Agabus raised (Acts 21:10-12). Ask yourself “does this message confirm something the Holy Spirit has already been showing me”?

The prophecy or ‘word’ is **not to be** considered to be **controlling over you**. You do not have to ‘obey’ it! It is not to be perceived as dominating over your free-will nor overturns the need for your own personal assessment and decision-making. Christian living is not cultish, governed by omens or guru type counsel. Paul did not change his plans because of Agabus’s prophecy or because of the urging of others (Acts 21:12-14). He received the word graciously, listened carefully but held firm in his plans because he thought this was the best thing to do.

All prophecy is “**in part**” (1 Cor 13:9), which means that, as true as that ‘part’ may be, **it does not give the whole picture**. Agabus’s word was true. Yet Paul was headed for Jerusalem, and this eventually opened the opportunity to minister in Rome, which he knew was coming in his future. You know the full picture of your situation better than others. In the light of a prophetic ‘word’ to you, **prayerfully consider the word**. A hasty response is never required. Simply wait on God in prayerful consideration until you are able to sense his direction. Then move ahead in what appears to be **wise decision-making** in trust in God.

Some ‘prophecy’ is a word of warning, more than being a directive message. Note how Hezekiah was told he would shortly die, but instead of surrendering to the prophecy, he prayed and his life realised its intended length (Isaiah 38).

All personal prophecy needs **to be assessed in your own personal prayer** before God and with the counsel of your spiritual elders if necessary before being accepted as truly from God. Reject what is wrong or affected by inappropriate thoughts, attitudes or spirit of the one bringing it. Some prophetic ‘words’ are not clear in their meaning initially and need to be ‘left on the shelf’ until clearer understanding comes from the Lord (either made clear or to be rejected).

Most prophetic ‘words’ to individuals are to **bring encouragement or confirmation**. They are to build up the person and inspire them. **Take considerable care** in accepting ‘words’ that bring **correction, rebuke or unusual directions**. This is where misuse and misunderstanding commonly occurs. Corrective messages from the Lord are usually given through the church leadership and not usually through others. They are to be brought with grace, support and privacy (rather than open for all to hear). These messages definitely should be subject to all the points in this article. The person receiving it needs to be given the freedom to assess if it is from the Lord or not and is not to have their obedience demanded.

The **character** of the person bringing the prophetic word ought to be weighed. Agabus’s credibility is related not to his claim to having a ‘word’ from God, but to his record as a trustworthy man of God familiar with using this gift (Acts 11:28, 21:10)

Personal prophecy needs to be **consistent with the teaching and testing of the Bible**.

Personal prophecy is **not to be the main way** we plan and direct our lives, but God will use it when needed to affirm certain things to us to understand.

Guidelines for delivering prophetic messages

Prophetic messages given from the Holy Spirit are a valuable benefit and demonstrate God's desire to be intimately involved in our lives and in the Church. Yet there needs to be real wisdom in managing this subjective process.

Here are some pointers to guide you:

Firstly, desire to strengthen, encourage, and comfort the people you are speaking to. 1 Corinthians 14:3, 24-25, 31

Exhort: to encourage, invite, advise, earnestly warn, urge strongly.

Comfort: to bring relief, to console, treat tenderly with the personal concern of God, and show that God is so concerned and aware of us.

Love the people you speak the message to.

If you are angry with them, have lost respect for them, are offended by them or think they need to be told to pick up their act about their spiritual lives and behaviour, you cannot bring an accurate untainted message. You need to first deal with these attitudes and issues before the Lord.

Have every message you bring assessed by mature and strong spiritual leaders before you deliver it. It needs to be tested and confirmed as being from God. We do not want to have confusion or misunderstanding by believing everything we hear.

Prophetic messages are subjective – they can easily be influenced by your own ideas or emotional responses – watch carefully for this. 1 John 4:1 Test the spirit. Isaiah 8:19-20 Judged by the Word of God.

Bring the message or vision as you received it, and do not attempt to explain or interpret it too much. Do not add other comments to it.

Live in a teachable and correctable heart. It's OK to be off the mark and then have it amended. A rejection of the message as a valid prophecy is not a rejection of you or to say that there is anything out of order in your character. Be willing to be truly accountable.

The prophetic message will usually confirm something that the Holy Spirit is already impressing upon the receiver. Your message is to build confidence in what God is already revealing to them. It is not the norm for it to be something unexpected and radically new in concept for them. If it is, this is a strong indicator that it needs thorough checking out before accepting and needs "putting on the shelf" for some time for more revelation to bring confirmation or otherwise.

Corrective messages to the church or individuals that you may think are from God are for the leadership to deliver, with wisdom and after prayer and full preparation of heart. Do not speak in a manner that condemns people or "exposes" their sins in public. Do not bring a corrective message to the church/ people in public. If you believe you have a corrective message, bring it to the pastor/ central church leadership and give it to them to assess and act upon. Trust God to follow up on this even if you do not see anything being done about it by the leaders of the church. Realise you don't see everything going on behind the scenes.

Judge the message by the fruit of it. (1 Corinthians 14:3,4) Assess the fruit of the message, and also the fruit of the life of the messenger.

Be willing and available. He may want to use you. Live in expectation. Samuel said: “speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”.

Live in faith, not in fear, when speaking out a prophetic message.

Live in humility. No room for pride that God has used you above others.

When you think you are receiving a prophetic message, ask “Is this you, Lord?”

Ask “what is this about, and who is it for?” If you are unsure of what to do, you have the full church leadership to use for advice.

Remember prophecy is “in part”. See 1 Corinthians 13:9. As true as the part may be, **it does not give a completed picture** to your understanding. Yet, it is important in itself.