



The Gifts of the Spirit

#6 Prophecy

Courage Church, Detroit, MI

March 11, 2018

Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 14:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, Acts 16:9, Hebrews 1:1-2, Deuteronomy 18:20-22, 1 Corinthians 14:29-33, 1 Corinthians 13:9, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Corinthians 13:3-4, 1 Timothy 1:18-20, Psalm 105:19, 1 Corinthians 13:2

This morning we are going to look at the Gift of Prophecy, and we are going to start with a passage in a letter that we haven't read out of at all this series until now... we have mostly been in 1 Corinthians and in Acts... and we will go there today today too, but this passage that we are going to start with, this week came alive to me in a way that it never has before.

I have taught on this verse before and on prophecy before but this passage as a whole really just ministered to me this week, and I hope it does the same for you. So lets open together to 1 Thessalonians 5:14-21...

Usually if I am talking about prophecy I just focus on verses 20-21 but this is all such golden stuff. This is a passage people often overlook because it is categorized just as a "final greeting" or a "benediction" to the first letter to the Thessalonians. But this is what it says:

"we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is

the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.”

Lets Pray

I promised you last week that I would show you a little bit of footage from a band that I played in for many years, we were called “Hyperbole” and I will do just that... So here it is:

VIDEO.

So thats early 20’s me in my oversized clothes trying to be cool with an electric guitar, and we tried to have lots of really easy to learn and sing-a-long sections in our songs because we loved getting people together and all singing, so that was what we were doing there.

Now, That short video was from a show we played many many years ago at a venue just outside of Flint, so only a little over an hour from where we are in this very moment.

and here is why I played it for you:

When I was growing up, obviously I played in this band, and I took it incredibly seriously (and I know a lot of people do when they are in bands) - like, when everybody else in school was playing basketball or football, we were writing songs, recording albums, playing concerts, skateboarding and trying to build something.

I remember one day we shot a music video... and it was nothing fancy, it wasn’t a great video at all... but the people who were editing the video, I felt, in my impatience... **THAT THEY WERE TAKING TOO LONG...** So I went out and bought a computer, and spent all night and all day for like 5 days straight learning how to edit, and then editing our first music video. It was how I started doing video work.

I was also very involved in our church and in that world and I would often go to the youth camps and conventions and all of that, and I would always

go up for prayer and place myself into positions where people could speak into my life, and prophesy over me and give me a word from the Lord.

And every single year, every single time it would always be the same thing... people would always prophecy over this music thing in my life... they would tell me "this is good... this is from God... this is going to reach a LOT of people, you are going to do amazing things through this, people are going to come to Jesus through this." I would even have people getting visions of concerts in huge stadiums and telling me "you are going to play for THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE!!!"

and this helped me! Because it was my dream.

and this really influenced me, and gave me an added confidence moving forward about my dream, so much so that when everybody else I knew was going off to college and getting degrees, we opted out of all of that, we got in a van and traveled around the country and played punk rock, in different venues and clubs and churches and really anybody who would have us... and we got to really play all over the place. and it really started to grow and take off in many ways and before we knew it, many of those camps that I used to attend and they would prophesy over me... we were now playing at them.. the youth conventions where all of the churches in the whole state come together that we used to attend, we now were playing at.

And we absolutely loved that. And I remember we were at a youth convention we were playing at in West Virginia, and I had never been to West Virginia but they asked us to come and play for all of these churches all at one time... and we had just gotten done playing, and we were in the lobby selling CDs and there is a ton of excitement in the air so there is this natural high already... I am just so excited, and I get a call from a Pastor of mine in California - we had met them on the road playing and they had been mentors to us over the years... and over the phone she gave me a prophetic dream that she had and then proceeded to give me all of these details, many of which didn't necessarily turn out the way she said but ultimately her message was this:

"you are so on the right track, keep going, keep doing this!"

and we did, we kept going, we kept doing it.

And we kind of got to a point where we thought we had maxed out and reached our peak in our hometown and our tours and that was half of the reason that we moved to Los Angeles in the first place, to basically pursue that further, and BE ALL IN. Lets give it all we have. Lets give it everything.

So we are there, and after we start performing and playing more in LA, all of the sudden our drummer gets homesick, and he misses his girlfriend and he misses his family so he decides "I am going to move back home." and every now and then he would fly back and forth for some concerts or to work on an album with us...

but he was distant.

and about a year after that our singer, his Father had a stroke, and so he and his wife decided to move to Wisconsin to help his mom take care of his dad. So he went to Wisconsin.

and it was only a couple months after that when Pastor Brad met with Dawn and I during Pastors School in Phoenix, Arizona and formally invited us to come join his team in New York as the Creative Pastors and it really felt right and we took that job, but all of the sudden this dream that we had, was now divided by people living in New York, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Three cities not connected at all.

and as we closed that book and that chapter of our lives, it really left me with a dilemma... and if I were honest, it really kind of messed me up a little... Because now, the way I saw it in my mind was that Godly men (and woman) who I had trusted, had grown up around... they prophesied over my life saying:

"this is what you are going to do!"

"this is what is going to be the fruit of it"

"this is what is going to come"

and it didn't.

There I was, stuck in my mind, staring at the outcome... and it didn't.

IT WASN'T WHAT THEY SAID.

So I began to wonder, "are they false prophets?" Were the people that I trusted my whole life... was it a lie? was it false?

NOW:

I have always loved Jesus, I have always loved people, and so I what I began to do was to just GIVE MYSELF TO LOVE, and AVOID ALL OF THAT OTHER STUFF. 1 Corinthians 13 says love is the greatest, so I determined to just stick to love.

Because the spiritual gifts felt so kooky... like, my dad told me this story one time about a lady, they were in the sanctuary at a church they had just started attending... years and years ago...

and this lady got on the mic and she started prophesying that a dentist chair came flying down from heaven with a GIANT drill and it fixed all of her teeth. THAT IS JUST KOOKY. And that was the vision that I had of prophecy.

either it is kooky and I don't want anything to do with it, or it might feel real, but it is NOT really real because it wont come true and it will leave you disappointed when at the end of the day, it didn't come true.

So I started to despise it. I grew bitter, I grew cynical. And I think that probably happens to a lot of us.

It obviously happened in the Bible because Paul had to address it in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 when he says:

"Do NOT despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast to what is good."

Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia, and Acts 16 gives the account of how the Spirit of God was prohibiting Paul from going anywhere but Macedonia during that time... everywhere he wanted to go, the Spirit prevented them until Paul saw a vision of a man from Macedonia saying "Come and help us" (Acts 16:9)

Now, the Thessalonians were Gentiles, and people were coming in there prophesying that when the Messiah comes back, God was going to destroy the Gentiles. Obviously that is false, but would be fair to assume that it left the Thessalonians not loving prophecy.

So Paul addresses that issue, and tells them "God did not destine you for wrath! But that you would obtain salvation through Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

He clears up what was wrongly spoken over them, before ending his letter by telling them not to let a few people who distorted the truth to cause you fear, or rob you of something that God has given you as a gift!

and I think a lot of us need to apply that same understanding, as we try to relearn something that a lot of us have had not so great experiences with in the past, yet it is something God has made so clear that it is from Him, and is actually the greatest of all Spiritual Gifts and can have the greatest impact on your life and the Church.

So what I want to do today is explore this verse, this is the main verse that I want to look at.

Test everything, hold fast to what is good...

But how do we know what is good?

What is the difference between something BEING GOOD, and something just seeming good? Like, it seemed good to me, what people were saying about my life and music...

and we will talk about that, and we will talk about what prophecy is and what it is not... but first, WHAT IT IS NOT:

Prophecy is NOT perfect.
it is not Authoritative and it is NOT Equal to scripture.

now you may not agree with me, YET on the first one and the second one but hopefully you at least do on the third. The Bible is God's literal word and if any prophecy ever goes against that, obviously that needs to fall to the ground right from the beginning. If a prophecy does not line up with the New Testament guidelines for prophesying, it needs to fall to the ground from the beginning.

The Bible is the starting place... think about it... it is God's literal word...

If you aren't moved by the word of God, why would you move on a word claiming to be from God?

In other words, if you read the Bible and it doesn't motivate you, then why would you care if I, speak a word that I SAY IS FROM GOD, as a human, imperfect vessel...

even if God had put it perfectly in my mind, I STILL COULD MESS IT UP BY THE TIME IT GETS TO YOU. I am human.

and the most important thing before we do ANY MORE WITH PROPHECY IS, if you want to practice in this gift, YOU HAVE TO BE IN THE WORD OF GOD.

Lets look at what the writer of Hebrews says: (1:1-2)

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

Now, in the Old Testament the prophets had a different role than they did in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the prophets were literally God's "covenant messengers" because He wrote the Bible *through* the prophets, they had the highest authority in the entire church... so, if a prophet said something to you, you pretty much had no choice, you had to do it.

BUT BECAUSE OF THAT, they were also held to a MUCH higher standard. Deuteronomy 18:20-22 paints a pretty vivid picture of what happens if a prophet gets it WRONG.

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’ And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?’— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.

Now the reason that they held them to that high of a standard is because they had THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY and with that authority came the responsibility to get it right... because they could literally say anything that they wanted and if they didn't say what was actually from God, how would people know?

the assumption would always be, yes... this is from God.

Because the prophets had that channel to God... they were actually God's covenant messengers. They had the highest authority in the church.

but this is what changed in the New Testament:

In the Old Testament, they judged the prophet.
In the New Testament, we judge the prophecy.

and I will explain that more in a second... but where the Old Testament the prophet was the highest authority, in the New Testament it is not that way.

In the New Testament the highest office of the church was the Apostles, they were the only ones who could actually speak from God, because they spent SO MUCH TIME WITH GOD. They were ALWAYS WITH GOD. They spent all of their time hanging around Jesus. And because of that, they had the authority to speak on His behalf at that level, now... in the New Testament we actually judge the prophecy so we don't judge the person.

So if Austin gives me a word, and it doesn't seem right, we want to test that, but I don't look at Austin and say "OK, you are a false prophet! That didn't resonate with me! and then stone him" that is not what we do anymore.

it is different.

Look at 1 Corinthians 14:29-33 (this is talking about the order that we now structure prophecy)

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and **the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.** For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

So its talking about order, and the good news is that if you think you have the gift of prophecy, even though you are no longer the highest chair in the church, at least this says, "hey, everybody does have access to this!"

so everybody can do it. In fact, Paul encourages everyone to want this gift:

1 Corinthians 14:1 says "pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophecy."

Paul says "of all things... this is the one to earnestly desire. More than anything else."

But WHEN we do it, it has to be judged this way. The reason that we have to hold each other accountable THIS WAY, and the reason the Bible says that the church weighs every word that every prophet says... and that is how we determine if it is good...

the reason is because like we listed earlier: PROPHECY IS NOT PERFECT.

in 1 Cor 13 it says (v9) "for we know in part, and prophecy in part" (v12) For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Pastor Chilly posted this incredibly enlightening post of Facebook a couple of weeks ago about this very topic...

I asked for his permission to share with you... because Pastor Chilly is moving to Vermont... his house is for sale in Lansing, and he, in a similar way to what people said to me about my band, he has received several words that people said were from God, words for his house selling.

One of the words was: "Some have told me that we were going to have a bidding war on our house, or it would be sold in a certain amount of days, or simply SOLD TODAY... well, those deadlines came and went without so much as an offer."

He then went on to say that he could give lots more examples like that. He then went on to say something that we will get into more in a minute, but he said:

- 1) Instead of saying, "the Lord gave a me a word for you," try saying, "as I sought the Lord for you, I felt like He said..."
- 2) Don't use the titles, "Word of Wisdom," "Word of Wisdom," or "Prophetic Word;" unless you have truly received it right from the lips of God -- and be sure you know the difference between these words. An authentic word from God, burns in you to the point that you would say "woe unto me if I did not share this" and even then, it can still be spoken with humility.
- 3) Give your own disclaimer, by saying "please test this and pray about it and see if it lines up with what God is saying and doing in your own life. What he was doing was demonstrating the way that an inaccurate word CAN, when given as if it is authoritative... become destructive to a hearer if that word is not truly from God. It can build hopes up only to let people down in a great way.

We all want to encourage one another, and should seek in every single thing that we do to BE BUILDING EACH OTHER UP... but when we enter the prophetic, WHICH WE NEED NOT BE AFRAID OF ENTERING... but when we go there, we have to understand that we as individuals are not God's covenant messengers... we are a part of a body and the New

Testament specifically says that in testing prophetic words, it goes through the BODY... and is weighed to determine if it is good...

The incredibly crucial element called love

This is why it is so important that we have love, before we even begin operating the gifts... that's why 1 Corinthians 13 is the sandwich chapter, telling us that these gifts are NOTHING, even HARMFUL, if they aren't done in love. That is why 1 Corinthians 14 starts by saying:

PURSUE LOVE...

think about this, and this is especially hard to navigate when it comes to the vocal gifts, which are tongues, the interpretation of tongues, and prophecy...

The New Testament prophet, according to Paul, is INSTANTLY subject to the prophets... what that means is that the moment you speak a prophecy... INSTANTLY 2 or 3 others need to weigh that word... and help determine if it is from God... we don't DESPISE when someone does that... because we understand that there is probably some good in there... but an unchecked prophecy can be very destructive.

But here is why love must be central... here is why we have to be operating in this gift out of love for each other and in loving communities...

imagine you are the one prophesying. Which in and of itself takes a lot of courage to do... imagine you really believe that God has spoken to you a word, and you work up the courage to speak that word...

if we are functioning within the order that the church is called to, that word then gets weighed...

and WHAT HAPPENS IF...

myself or someone else responds, hopefully lovingly... but saying that "we don't feel like this was from God... which would happen, for example, if it wasn't edifying... Paul says that prophecy is ALWAYS for the BUILDING UP... and if that word was one that caused fear or anxiety in people rather than built them up, though your heart may have been right, when we test

it, we have to say to the person being prophesied over “don’t allow that word to weigh you down, it is not God...”

BUT - imagine you gave the prophecy... now what? you are embarrassed. You probably want to run out the door and never come back... you are probably even angry.

That is the result of operating in the gifts, without love being the centerpiece. Because in a community where people understand that we belong to each other, and are here together for the betterment of our world...

we know that we have to have the hard conversations sometimes. You simply can’t have a church that operates in the gifts of the Spirit without having the hard conversations.

Otherwise you will have dentist chairs from heaven coming down from the ceiling... and first time guests saying “these people are crazy”

and you will have people saying that you are going to be a rock star...

and your house is going to sell in a day.

and its not that those things aren’t good things or even true things... I certainly believe that Pastor Chilly’s house IS GOING TO SELL. But just like 1 Thessalonians says... TEST EVERYTHING... then hold onto what is good... Because we do only see in part. And whatever part said that there would be multiple offers on the first day... its okay to throw that out... because its wrong. its already proven itself to not be true. But we don’t throw out the PERSON. Because they are a member of our body and we need what they have.

These vocal gifts have gifts that balance them... the gift of tongues when used publicly should be partnered with someone with the gift of interpreting the tongue... another gift of the Spirit is the DISCERNING OF SPIRITS (1 Corinthians 12:10)... when people prophecy, and speak on behalf of the Spirit, others have a supernatural gift to know whether that is from God or not. And for those of us who don’t have that gift, we have the Bible which lays out some very clear signs as to whether or not it is good.

So prophecy is not perfect, it is not authoritative, and it is NOT equal to scripture.....

SO WHAT IS IT????? and why should we EARNESTLY DESIRE IT?

Lets put it this way...

What it is:

A revelation from God, that is publicly proclaimed, for the purpose of edifying the church.

let me break this down just a little bit for you, first of all, a revelation...

this is something that God brings to mind, it is NOT fortune telling, and its not mind reflection (it is NOT thinking back on something that we have already seen or experienced).

Prophecy is something that God reveals to you, in a moment, for a person or a group of people. Now, you could have a revelation... God can reveal something to you, and you can keep it to yourself and that can still be VALUABLE... and it may be edifying to you but it is not prophecy unless you actually proclaim it.

So once you get the word, you now need to proclaim the word, publicly... now you are prophesying.... and the third part of this is SO important... it is for the purpose of EDIFYING the church.

The first reason that we can tell if a prophecy is good or not, is by asking this question: is this edifying? Does this edify the church?

1 Corinthians 14:3-4 says:

the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

This word “encouragement” can also be translated: exhortation... which means “to draw them near” - one of the purposes of prophecy is to draw people into the direction of their calling.”

The word “prophesies” is the word *prophēteuō* and it literally means “to speak forth divine INSPIRATIONS” - so when you are wondering if something is edifying you can start by asking... “does this inspire me? will this inspire somebody else to do more, to be better than they are right now? will this inspire us to do more for Jesus? Will this inspire us to do more for our community? Does it inspire us to be better people?”

IS IT EDIFYING?

you know, I mentioned this last week, but about ten years ago my Mom got diagnosed with cancer. And my Dad worked at a large Church in Michigan for over 20 years, for a pretty well known pastor named Pastor Dave Williams. And my Dad went to my pastor and he said “Pastor Dave, my wife has cancer” and our pastor looked at him and he said these words: “she will live and not die.”

what was he doing when he said those words?

he was BUILDING UP.

He was doing was building a prophetic foundation for our family that really gave us peace through extremely trying times like the one I talked about last week.

and I remember my dad telling me the story of this moment with our Pastor and the way that it carried him and the way that it built up and edified our family. And it was something worth holding on to.

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But I think a lot of us have missed blessings in our lives because we were so quick to rule out a word that could have propelled us to something better that God wanted to do...

in our cynical world, we are so quick to label things as “FALSE” when they are not, like... Thessalonians... WE HAVE TO TEST EVERYTHING... we do! but we also CAN NOT be SO QUICK to rule it out.

1 John 4:1-6 is amazing.. John the apostle who was with Jesus and had a first hand experience with Jesus throughout ALL of Jesus’ ministry.. he explains that this is HOW YOU TEST THE SPIRITS: Any spirit that says that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is from God. and if it says that Jesus did NOT come in the flesh, that Spirit is NOT from God.

now why is the flesh so important?

The word flesh there is the word “sarx” and it means the same thing as you or me, its our skin, our body. it means that Jesus came as a human. Now, in Genesis when God created man what did he say? it was good!

and Jesus thought that we were GOOD ENOUGH that we were worth coming and living amongst and dying for us... so even though most of the time you and I probably don’t feel like we are worthy of a love like that, Jesus thought that we WERE WORTHY of it.

So the second way that you can tell if a prophecy is good is “did Jesus come in the flesh?” if it denies that, or points people away from Jesus, it is a really good sign that you might want to disregard that... the fact that Jesus came in the flesh IS THE GOSPEL.

a good question to ask would be: is it from God’s Spirit? the human Spirit or an evil Spirit?

even when John writes telling his church how to tell if the Spirits are good or not, he writes them telling them “you can do this! you have what is needed to discern this.”

IF it does say he came in the flesh, and it is EDIFYING... don’t be SO FAST to disregard it... test it... but don’t IGNORE IT... and here is why...

in 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy, (1:18-20)

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Now if you need to read this again, please do... but this is what Paul is telling Timothy...

these two received a prophecy, a word over their life... and for whatever reason.. maybe it was like me, and they heard it and they tried to pursue it and for whatever reason it didn't work out... maybe they heard the prophecy right after the lady with the dentist chair gave her prophecy, so they were irritated and closed off to it... whatever it was, **THEY REJECTED** the word spoken over their life and because of that, Paul says they ended up shipwrecking their entire life.

and the word that **PAUL USED FOR THAT IS BLASPHEME.**

Because they denied the work of the Spirit in their life.

Please hear this:

there are going to be prophetic tests that are going to happen in your life, like... when somebody gives you a prophecy, they give you a word... you are going to want that come to just come to pass **RIGHT AWAY**. You are going to be just like me and be like "ok where is my record deal?"

"where is the million dollars?" "where is the stadium concerts?"

But its almost never like that... **THERE IS A PROPHETIC TEST!**

I think of Joseph... He gets this word from the Lord that he is basically going to rule over everything... all his brothers, everything... and then what happens?

he gets betrayed by his brothers, he gets thrown into a well, he is sold into slavery, and through it all, he builds up a GREAT reputation for himself by doing the right thing... he keeps doing the right thing and doesn't sleep with Potiphar's wife when she tries to seduce him...

and then she gets really mad that he doesn't sleep with her so she lies and says that he tried to sleep with her, and then he gets thrown into prison for that...

then from prison he interprets some dreams, tells the guy to remember him, but of course, the guy forgets him the moment he gets out... he is just rotting away in prison... So what is happening?

the Psalmist put it this way:

Psalm 105:19 (NLT)

“Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the LORD tested Joseph's character.”

Steven Brooks puts it this way:

“Many people do not realize that God is an accountant. In the eyes of God, accounting doesn't just involve numbers; God is looking for our faith, which he can accept and use as a deposit toward the manifestation of the prophetic word. Many prophecies are conditional and without faith they can't be fulfilled.”

and I love the way Robert Morris puts it:

“God tests our faith with prophetic words. He tests our character with his literal words.”

There is going to be a prophetic test in your life, whether you want it or not. If somebody gives you a word, they are tossing you a ball that in most cases you still will need to do something with.

I remember, Dawn and I after only dating for a month or so, visited a friend's house for breakfast... my friend's mom invited us to come over for breakfast. SHE HAD NEVER MET DAWN, AND WANTED TO... and at breakfast she looked at us and said:

“you guys are going to get married”

Now remember what we learned about authority, if someone says something like that to you and it doesn't sit right (which often it doesn't) don't feel bound! But in our case it really didn't feel wrong, it felt right, and she was the first person to ever say that to us. And then she went on to prophecy over us that we would be this “power couple” and do many amazing things together - it probably freaked Dawn out but I left on top of the world like “yeah! you heard her! its in the books, now we just need to plan the wedding”

But just because she told me that, DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE GOING TO GET MARRIED!

I still had a lot to do. I had to continue pursuing Dawn... date her, buy an engagement ring and propose to her... we had to plan a wedding, we had to have a wedding, and we have had to work through many difficult times in our marriage figuring out what needs to happen for us to be who we are called to be. Because just because we are called to something, doesn't mean that we are going to embrace that calling or that we can coast through it.

The truth is: God can be IN SOMETHING, AND WE NOT BE, and it still fall apart.

Because there is always going to be a prophetic test.

So the best ways to know if a prophecy is “good”

1. is it edifying
2. is Jesus in it

and then the third way is: is it done in love?

1 Corinthians 13:2

if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Now why is it nothing?

If I am prophesying over you and I don't have love for you, how could that word possibly resonate? Even if God gives me a clear and perfect word for your life, how am I going to convey that to you, if I don't love you.

IF YOU DON'T LOVE ME, and I bring you a word, it is going to go in one ear, and out the other. so it is important that we cultivate communities that are okay with this and who understand that this is all part of living out the Bible, it is all part of the Christian life, and all for the sake of building up the Church of Jesus Christ and telling more people about Jesus.

The entire purpose of the Holy Spirit is to point people to Jesus, he never speaks on his own accord. The entire old testament IS a prophecy of Jesus... it leads to Jesus.

The one who taught us love, and gave us a grace gift. So when we think of these gifts we must realize that God gave us these gifts for the purpose of leading people in that direction... in the direction of Jesus... pointing people to Jesus.

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We were at Pastor Brad and Stella's apartment, it was our second year on staff in New York, and we were just about to start a new season with a new set of interns.

Dawn and I were sitting there, eating donuts, and this young man came up to me, and he said:

“excuse me, are you Jacob Bender?”

and I said “yes I am” and this is what I am thinking... I am thinking “okay, this kid wants to make videos, or do graphics, or something like that, and was told to talk to me about being on the creative team... that was what we do... creative pastors...”

but that wasn't what he wanted.

He looked at me, he shook my hand, and he said “My name is Greg, and about five years ago, I gave my life to Jesus at a Hyperbole concert in Flint, MI.

The same small concert that I showed you a clip from at the very beginning.

There were maybe 200 people at it, it wasn't very big, just a small little event.

and so I am thinking... wow, thats crazy...

and in my life, we have played for a lot of people, we have seen a lot of great things happen, we have seen altar calls and many people coming to Jesus... and as discouraged as I sometimes got, I knew that in the back of my mind... I knew “hey, God is doing something in me and through me... and there IS a reason for what I am doing even though we don't always see all of the fruit of it. Because when we don't see it, it can be very easy to forget it.

But when God actually brings something full circle like that, like, here we are, in this little town that I am just passing through on a tour in a little room performing for 200 people... God is in the midst of it... and He does something amazing.

He uses something that was spoken over me, to prompt me to go and do something that will mean the difference in someone else's eternity.

and then here we are, many years later in a new place... doing something that neither of us thought that we would ever be doing, in New York... now working together to plant this church.

God can use anything.

I remember I was in Michigan, and we were just about to move to Los Angeles, and we were going to pursue music and art and all of these things, and one of my mentors sat me down and we had a meeting, and He had been watching me over the last year, I had just done an internship with him for that entire time, and he was watching me closely...

and honestly I don't know if what he said to me was a prophecy, or it was just an observation... I can't really say... but I do know that it stuck with me... and I know that he was the only one in my entire life up until that point who actually had the courage to say this to me....

because during that time I ran the videos for our youth group, and he slowly began to give me more and more opportunities to teach and be a part of teachings... things like this... stuff that I did because it was needed but it was never on my radar for the future of my life.

And he just sat me down, and he looked at me, and He said:

"I know that you are going to California, to do your thing... AND DO IT!" but then he said this:

"Jake, THIS may be your calling."

that's all he said. he left it at that.

And to this today those words have always stuck in my mind... because what He was telling me was this... he was saying (at least this is what I believe he was telling me):

"Don't be so locked in to YOUR DREAM... and what you think you are doing... go do it... pursue it, but pursue it knowing that it is going to lead you SOMEWHERE.

It is going to lead you somewhere that you never, ever thought that you would end up.”

Now IMAGINE with me... if I was in like 10th grade, at a youth camp, and I was getting prophesied over... and somebody were to tell me THAT:

“you know what... you are going to do music for all of these years... you are going to skip college, you are going to try really hard... but you aren’t actually going to make it quite as far as you think you are...

and then when you turn 25 you are going to quit it, you are going to uproot your family and move to New York, (a city that was never even on your radar to do something that was never on your radar) - and you are going to serve and HELP SOMEBODY ELSE WITH THEIR THING...

I would have rebuked that word because it was NOT what I needed in that moment. and it definitely was NOT what I wanted to hear.

But what I did hear was: keep going... keep digging in... keep doing more... keep getting in that van... keep meeting new people... keep playing your songs.

Keep doing it.
Keep doing it.
Keep doing it.

and what was it doing? it was prompting me... to the next step, and the next step and the next step. If there was no band, there would be no Greg. If there was no band, there would be no pursuit of video production... if there was no video production, we would not have had a reason to be hired at the Dream Center... if we had not been hired at the Dream Center, we would not have eventually helped plant the New York Church and developed the heart that we have for the inner city, or any of the Pastoral work that we now do, which ULTIMATELY LEAD US TO YOU.

and what I believe that every word spoken from the mouth of every well intentioned person who ever spoke over my life was doing, ultimately, was it was leading me to my destiny.

So may it be the same for you.

May your dreams lead you to your destiny.

Because God has a plan for your life, and it is better.

It is better than you had hoped, or dreamed, or imagined.

Its bigger.

It is better than the prophesies that we prophecy in part. Because right now, we see through a mirror, and we see through it dimly.

But then... then we will see face to face.

and I don't want to get to the end of my life... and finally get that picture... finally see clearly... finally be face to face...

and look into that mirror clearly for the first time, and see a reflection only to **REALIZE THAT THIS IS A REFLECTION OF WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN!**

instead of what actually was.

I would hate to get to a point where God has to tell me:

I TRIED TO TELL YOU.

I tried to speak it... but you were skeptical.

You were cynical.

You brushed me under the rug you failed the character test. You failed the faith test.

I don't want that for my life because I can't embrace what the Holy Spirit is doing in my life...

No... I WANT TO MEET THE GREG'S.

I want to meet the Greg's that I didn't even know existed. I want to meet the fulfillment of the prophecies that I didn't even know are out there.

and that is why I do NOT despise prophecy anymore. Because it lead me somewhere.

It lead me somewhere that I never thought I would go, in a million years.

It lead me to you. and to New York. and then it lead me here.

And I don't mind the journey anymore. I don't mind the fact that there are going to be detours.

God is taking us somewhere, he is taking you somewhere. and we need to learn to fall in love with the journey.

Now, in closing, I want us to read the same passage that we read at the beginning, this time with hearts that have determined to NOT DESPISE PROPHECY:

"we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle," - urge those who are standing still... who are ignoring the Spiritual Gifts... let them know what they are missing... let them know that there is a whole world out there for them to experience...

"encourage the fainthearted," - if someone has been burned by prophecy... picked them back up... carry them if you have to. Encourage them to dream again... to open their hearts to the Spirit again... to open their hearts to the Church and to the Gospel, again.

"help the weak, be patient with them all." - not everyone will get it all at the same time... but show patience... 1 Corinthians 13 says that LOVE IS

PATIENT... it doesn't run ahead expecting the weaker one to catch up. It meets them where they are.

“See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.”

AND THIS NEXT PART IS CRUCIAL:

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” - BECAUSE God see's what we do not see... so even when our circumstances maybe don't line up with our dreams, the cure is always Thanksgiving... because behind the things that we see, is a world of things happening that we can't. Behind the things that we can see, are the Greg's of this world whose entire eternity has been changed because you were faithful...

the will of God for your life is that you would be thankful for the lot which he has given you... and HE WILL EXPAND YOUR TERRITORY when you have been faithful with what you have been given, and he will use that faithfulness more than you could EVER IMAGINE.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.”