

Table of contents

Introduction: About the gift of Prophecy	6
Chapter 1: It started like this	10
Chapter 2: Purifying the prophetic	23
1. <i>Emotional compassion with someone who suffers</i>	26
2. <i>Dogmatic approach towards suffering</i>	27
3. <i>Indignation about a certain injustice</i>	28
4. <i>Enthusiasm</i>	29
5,6 <i>Prejudice; positive and negative</i>	30
7 <i>Pre-knowledge</i>	31
8. <i>Being influenced by the story of the recipient</i>	31
9. <i>Being influenced by the outward appearance</i>	33
10. <i>Reading' a person and body language</i>	35
11. <i>Relationships, love and falling in love</i>	35
12. <i>Prophesying over a given subject</i>	36
13. <i>Prophesying too quickly in a sequence</i>	37
14. <i>Personal interest</i>	37
15. <i>Partiality or opinion</i>	38
16. <i>Resemblance</i>	39
17. <i>Judgemental attitude (lack of love)</i>	39
18. <i>Fear because the word is embarrassing</i>	40
Chapter 3: Receiving revelation for yourself	55
Chapter 4: The practice of hearing the voice of God	73
Chapter 5: Limitations to personal revelation	80
Chapter 6: Prophetic mandate	86
Chapter 7: Prophetic 'witchcraft'	91
Chapter 8: Distinctions in the prophetic gifts	94

Chapter 9: About visions and their interpretation	102
Chapter 10: About prophetic words and actions	106
Chapter 11: What God has to say	112
Chapter 12: Tense and content	127
Chapter13: Fulfilment and testing of prophecy	123

About the gift of Prophecy and how to hear the voice of God

a personal adventure
in communication with the Lord

Drs. Gordon van Veelen
European HealingRooms ambassador

About The Gift of Prophecy

Today my bookshelf contains quite a few books on the gifts of prophecy. But in the time I discovered the gifts of revelation, those books were not available in my home country, the Netherlands.

There were some books that described the spiritual gifts, but none of them gave information about the possibility of soulish contamination of the prophetic word or the limitations of our prophetic mandates. None of them gave proper warnings against 'forcing answers' through the gift of prophecy or against trying to manipulate answers by 'Biblical roulette' (randomly opening the Bible) regarding situations in which God might be unwilling to answer.

In fact I had to discover the pitfalls of prophetic revelation myself, by making mistakes, that were sometimes harmless, but sometimes dramatic, at least for myself.

In this book I'll try to be very honest and speak openly about my mistakes and the lessons I learned from them. During my teaching on the gifts of the Spirit in the Netherlands and internationally as European HealingRooms Ambassador¹, I often heard the reaction: "This is the first time I am hearing such a clear and practical exposition on purifying the prophetic. I wish there was a book about this. Why don't you write it?"

So it started with some articles on my website in Dutch, but more and more I saw the need of a book in English, that could be easily translated into the languages of the countries where I am travelling.

¹ I was awarded this title by the leadership of the European Association of Healing-Rooms to enable me to represent the HealingRooms movement all over Europe.

We are all unique and different in sensitivity. Some people have by nature an outspoken artistic gifting. They connect easily to their intuitive part and they receive 'inspiration' for painting and sculpturing before they ever heard about God.

I personally belong to the group of people, who are mainly rational. I was good in mathematics and natural sciences, but bad in languages and creative arts, including writing. I remember my high school years when we had to write short stories. First of all, I never knew what to write about and even if we were told to write about a given subject, I never felt any inspiration. With this background, the books that I have written, are a miracle.

That I progressed in the gifts of revelation was solely due to the deep desire to see the power and the reality of the Kingdom of God in my own life and ministry. I am aware that this desire is not just my own, but it was the initial plan of God for my life.

When I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in February 1972, someone prophesied over me, that I would see the power of God working in my life, that I would cast out demons and heal the sick. To be honest, my life has been one long search for those gifts of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes I was progressing and sometimes there was a standstill. What I didn't realise is that the gifts of the Spirit were already present in me in a kind of dormant state, meaning that they are part of the Holy Spirit that lives in me

In my case, the gifts of the Spirit didn't come as spontaneous experiences, but as result of striving and steps of faith. I think that even those who are easily inspired will come to a point where they have to make steps of faith to develop the gifts of the Spirit to a higher level.

This book will not have the form of a structured Bible study. It will be more an adventure trip. I am taking you on this trip with my personal experiences and stories based on many years of prophesying and ministering under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the HealingRooms context.

Of course I'll take examples from the scriptures. I do understand that other believers went through a different process to develop their spiritual gifts. This my personal story, but I hope you enjoy it and feel motivated to explore the gifts that the Holy Spirit put in you.

I won't mention all the time that I am passionately in love with Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

My education includes a doctoral degree (Drs.) in Geology and a doctoral degree in Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam (V.U.). For 18 years I have been teaching at the Pentecostal Bible School (C.P.B. later Azusa Bible-school) associated with the Assemblies of God, the largest American Pentecostal denomination.

I was born and raised in the Netherlands and I ministered there for most of my life. Since 2005 I have been leading HealingRooms in the Netherlands. In 2010 I established the first Healingrooms in Romania. Since 2008 I am traveling extensively in Eastern Europe, South America and East Africa. At some point in the near future I hope to immigrate into Romania, which is gradually becoming my home .

But no longer am I a dogmatic person. I am living near to the heart of God and I found He is not dogmatic. He is a passionate lover of the souls of men. His love towards me and others is always greater than we can conceive with our human mind. Experiencing His love, His confirming words and His favour made me a happy man.

The Father is a communicator at heart. When Jesus announces to us the Holy Spirit, he calls Him the Counsellor. Counselling is communicating par excellence.

When I speak about God-given revelation, my first interest is not the exciting experiences with the gift of prophecy (that might impress others), but knowing The Father and knowing Jesus (John 17:3), knowing His heart.

I love Him.

When it's about crediting and appreciating others, it's about those many others that opened their hearts to me and my teaching. They received from me, but they gave back so much.

I want to thank Harry Coffman from Portland , Oregon, who inspired me to my 'love walks'; walking in nature, worshipping the Lord in spiritual tongues, speaking words of love and then receiving from Him words of love and confirmation, words of peace and then also words of direction. These 'love walks' of communication with God changed my life dramatically.

Then I want to thank, those who criticised me, because they made me rethink and purify what I was doing.

Also I want to thank Cristina Minculescu, who is to me like a daughter. She had the courage to debate with me and opened my eyes to certain things that I didn't see before; especially regarding the abuse of the gifts of the Spirit in certain Eastern European cultures.

Then I want to thank those who helped me in proof reading the English version, like John and Carolyne Nash and Jill Nijdam Harris. I want to thank Mirjam Makkonen for providing the necessary feedback and comments to prepare and translate this book into the Finnish language.

Chapter 1

It started like this.

At a Bible study evening in February 1972 I heard for the first time about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Of course I had heard about the Spirit before. The (reformed) tradition of my family is that after every meal a chapter from the Bible is read. So, during those many years, I must have heard the Bible verses about the Holy Spirit more than once, but it never occurred to me that I should be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

That night I heard it and realised: "This has never happened to me." I don't remember the details of the Bible study, but I do remember what happened to me. I suddenly realised that my new relationship with God missed communication. I had started to pray, but I really didn't know if those prayers were heard by Him. I felt no confirmation.

And then I heard that the Holy Spirit mediates between the Father (1 Cor.2:10,11) and the Son (Joh.16:14,15) and us. We can even experience the presence of the Father and the Son intimately because the Holy Spirit conveys their presence to us (John 14: 17,23).

I knew that I couldn't do without Him. After the Bible study was finished, those attending rushed to the wardrobe to get their coats. For me there was no time to lose. "Come back, I haven't got it. Please pray for me that I receive the Holy Spirit too." They came back and 10 people laid their hands on me. It changed my life forever.

One of them prophesied over me. I had never heard something like that before. The Lord spoke. He spoke about my future, about my destiny, the God-given purpose of my life. It wasn't very detailed, but that I would be some kind of preacher, I would hear His voice, cast out demons and heal the sick.

But much deeper than just by the words, I was touched by His presence. Peace and joy came over me. I had the idea that I could fly (I didn't try). When I arrived back at the university campus and touched my bed I couldn't sleep. The joy was overwhelming. I realised that I would probably never work as a geologist (I was studying for that profession), but that God had a different plan for my life.

From that day on I could not keep my mouth shut about what happened to me. I had to tell everybody.

Although I had this magnificent experience I didn't speak in tongues. If someone would have instructed me about speaking in tongues after the baptism with the Holy Spirit it might have happened immediately, but nobody did. Of course I did read about speaking in tongues and I prayed that it might happen to me, but it didn't happen spontaneously.

I was hoping, that at some point, I would hear the angels sing in tongues and that I could just join them. I hoped that maybe one day I would wake up speaking in tongues, or that it would just happen to me but nothing happened. There were moments that I started doubting that this gift was meant for me. Maybe God was not willing to give it to me.

Because I didn't receive it spontaneously I started thinking that it wasn't so important. Maybe I didn't need this gift. Maybe God had something else for me, but I didn't receive any other gift either.

Moments of hope and faith and moments of despair interchanged.

At that time, most publications about the Holy Spirit stated that you are only baptised in the Holy Spirit if you actually did speak (or had at least spoken once) in tongues. This teaching didn't help me either. I had experienced the power of the Holy Spirit but there was no outward proof.

I think it lasted half a year. At a certain point I asked a friend, Henny Delina, about it (later I would marry her). She said: "You have it! Now you should act and do it." I asked her how I could do that and she said: "Just make a sound; don't think about it and allow the Holy Spirit to shape the sounds that you make."

That night I tried. I made sounds and to my surprise it sounded like something and it even gave me some joy. Of course I doubted if this was really the Holy Spirit. After all I was making sounds and it could be that the whole thing came in some way out of me. But I continued to use these sounds in my prayers and very soon I discovered the enormous power of praying in tongues.

The next day I opened my bible randomly and it opened at 1 Cor. 14. My eye fell on verse 13, that says: "whoever speaks in a tongue, should pray that he may interpret it." I was a bit frustrated. I had just started to speak in tongues and it had been such a struggle for me to get it. Now the Lord was challenging me immediately for the next gift. I felt like needing a pause now, but at the same time I realised that the Lord wanted my spiritual life at a higher level.

I started praying for the gifts of revelation like interpretation of tongues and prophecy. I prayed for two years and

nothing happened. In fact I had the wrong expectations. I thought that maybe I would just understand the tongues, like I understood some foreign languages. I thought that my mind would be enlightened so that I might understand what the Spirit meant.

I thought that the gift of prophecy was a rational gift in which the Holy Spirit would guide my thoughts. I had no idea about connecting to the supernatural. I hoped that I would hear the voice of God like Samuel, or see visions like the Old Testament prophets. I hoped that maybe I would dream special things like Paul. But nothing of that happened. I never dreamt, I never heard, I never saw.

After two years Henny Delina and I (in the mean time we got married) visited a conference. For me it was exciting. During this conference there were prophecies in every meeting. Quite different from my home church where there was just occasionally a prophetic word. I felt, that this was the place where I could get it. So after one of the meetings I went forward to see the main speaker, a rather famous Dutch Bible teacher named Kees Goedhart. I asked him if he could pray for me that I would receive the gift of prophecy.

He looked at me with friendly eyes, but he said: "No." "No?" I questioned. Why don't you want to pray for this? "Because you have it," he answered. "I don't have it. I never dream, I never had a vision, I never heard a voice," I reacted. "Ok" he answered, "you may have never had those spontaneous experiences but that doesn't mean that you don't have the gift of prophecy. You do have it. It's just a matter of faith. You are baptised in the Holy Spirit, aren't you?" I nodded. "Do you speak in tongues?" I confirmed. "Then it's sure, you are baptised in the Holy Spirit and so you have the gift of prophecy."

For me this was not very convincing. I repeated that I never dreamt, or saw or heard anything from the Spirit. He smiled at me and then he said: "You just have to take a step in faith. You know how Peter walked on water? He just positioned himself at the board of the boat with both legs at the outside. And then he just pushed himself forward and jumped at the surface of the water. And then he walked on it. So you have to do the same."

"But what do you mean exactly? What should I do?" I asked him.

"This conference is a non-judgemental environment. So you can try without being afraid that we will judge you or reject you when it's not perfect. So after each time of worship we give the attendants the opportunity to prophecy. You just start by saying: "This is the word of The Lord" or "Thus says the Lord" - and the rest will be given to you. Just continue speaking, till the inspiration stops."

The idea was frightening. The next day, the last day of the conference, I was struggling within myself: "Can I do such a thing. What if....? Suppose I would say: "This is the word of The Lord" and nothing would come, or some nonsense would come out. Then I would be presumptuous or even a false prophet."

It was a fight between my desire for the gifts of the Spirit (to bless others) and my fear to step into the supernatural. Because that's what it is. After the moment I would have said: "This is the word of The Lord", I would have reached a point of no return. From there my intellect couldn't save me. I would be on my own with God.

I wanted to take that step in faith, but I didn't have the courage. My hands were sweating, I trembled, I squeezed Henny's hand. My faith had shrunk to an undetectable

minimum. I doubted if there was a mustard seed left. Then I realised it would be the last opportunity to try in a receptive environment. So I broke through my fears.

I didn't feel very inspired, but I tried anyway. So after the worship I rose to my feet and spoke out loud: "This is the word of The Lord..." And I just went on speaking what came to my conscious mind. I heard myself say: "My daughter, I have healed you." That was all.

I didn't feel relieved. In fact I was even more stressed. I questioned myself: "Is this really from the Lord? What if no woman gets healed now?"

Suppose that I had said: "My people, don't look to the right, don't look to the left, but just focus on Me." Then everyone would have been happy with me. Maybe some people would have tapped me on the shoulder saying: "Well done, not bad for a beginner." But now something should happen to prove that this word actually came from God.

According to Dutch custom every meeting ends with coffee. I got my cup and found a seat in the utmost corner of the coffee hall. There I sat, very silent, in fact afraid. It took half an hour before the teacher finished his prayer ministry. Then he appeared in the coffee-hall as well. He looked around and spotted me in the corner. Then he walked between the tables and chairs in my direction. At a distance of twenty meters he pointed at me.

It felt terrible: "Judgement is coming", I thought. He came straight to our table still pointing at me. Now I was going to face the truth.

And just in front of me he said loud and clear so that anyone could hear: "This was truly a word of God. A woman came to me and told me: "I had a terrible migraine. At the

moment that I heard the prophetic word “My daughter, I have healed you”, my pain just evaporated and I know it’s gone forever.”

A lot of stress left my shoulders. I could breathe again. So God did speak, when I took the risk of trying.

In the years that followed I never stopped taking the risk to speak prophetic words by faith. Of course there were new challenges. What to do when someone reacts that the prophetic word is complete nonsense and that it’s not applicable to his life? What to do if someone accuses me of witchcraft because they think it’s impossible to prophesy over so many?

I experienced all of this. Mostly the prophetic words proved to be right. But it’s not so much about me. It’s about God’s eagerness to speak to His people.

Once I was speaking in the Evangelical church in the Dutch village of Putten. It’s the place where my parents were living (and my mother still lives there). My parents belonged to a more traditional Calvinistic church. On this occasion (‘Our son preaches in our town’) my mother had come to the Evangelical church and during the time of worship she was sitting next to me.

I suddenly felt that The Lord had a prophetic word. I didn’t know the contents and I didn’t know for whom it was.

At that moment I realised my mother was sitting next to me. Fear took hold of me. What if I would rise to my feet and proclaim: “This is the word of God...” How would she react? What would she think of me? Right now she was completely unaware of my inner fight. She didn’t know what was about to happen. It was just my fear of her judgement.

Well of course I didn't have to prophesy at that very moment. My heart is not like that of Jeremiah. If he tried to suppress the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he felt the word of The Lord as a fire burning in his heart. He just had to speak out.

I was not like that. I could refrain myself from prophesying. I didn't have to do that. There would be other occasions and other days to prophesy.

But at the same time I realised that it was the fear of men that could stop me from proceeding to my destiny. If I would fail now by not prophesying, this could happen again and I could be paralysed by it. It was as if the Lord opened my eyes for a very important truth.

Are you allowing fear to dominate you, or are you going to conquer your fears? At that point I made a very important decision: I will not surrender to my fears, but I'll fight them till I have a complete victory. So I rose to my feet and proclaimed: "This is the word of God, for you my daughter...". Somewhere in the meeting hall a woman started crying, because God touched her by the prophetic word. She needed it.

After I finished the prophetic word I looked at my mother. She didn't react at all. But I had been victorious over the fear for her judgement..

You will have the same kind of issues. And it's so important to go for risk and never surrender to fear.

You will probably experience the same kind of fear as you start speaking out prophetic words, but do not let the fear of what others may think or say about you, dominate or paralyse you. Take the risk and speak out what God is putting on your heart, and never surrender to fear.

For me, as for most people, the battle against fear was a more or less continuous one. Just recently the Lord wanted to raise the level of my prophetic ministry to 'prophetic healings'.

During an interview for Estonian Evangelic Television the interviewer asked me if I could do some 'prophetic healings'. I knew what he meant. He wanted me to look straight into the camera lens and make statements like this: "You there, with your infected right ear, lay your hand there and receive your healing now!"

Its double difficult because you should receive revelation about things that God is about to do during the broadcast, while the camera is looking at you. Being interviewed in a studio causes some extra nervousness and that hinders us in receiving revelation.

At that moment many things went through my head. "Does the interviewer mistakenly sees me as an American television-evangelist (maybe Benny Hinn)? Does he always ask this question at any guest speaker? Or is it God himself who is challenging me to take a new step of faith?"

I decided to believe that it was God, so I tried to receive revelation and it worked. Of course I still had to get some responses from the audience later. The interviewer (and God) challenged me way out of my comfort zone and I could have easily reacted later: "I'll never do this again".

I realised that the Lord challenged me to continue with these prophetic healings. Since then I concluded most of my meetings with prophetic words about specific healings. It goes like this: "There is someone here, with pains on the right side of the face; there is someone who has a kind of cyst or tumour in the biceps of the right arm; There

is someone with a problem at the armpit etc.” Next I invite the persons recognising their disease to come forward. Sometimes they come quickly, sometimes they don’t come because they don’t believe that God spoke through me or because they are afraid.

Soon after I started doing those prophetic healings I ministered in a Romanian church. When asking God I received the revelation that there was someone with a serious problem at the right eye. When I invited the person with that kind of problem to come forward, no one came. So I stood waiting in vain. Fear came over me. Was I wrong? Was I just making up things in a kind of fantasy?

I repeated the invitation a few times. At the third invitation three ladies with glasses came to the front. They had problems on both eyes. I ministered to each one of them, but none of them received even the slightest improvement. In the mean time the whole church was watching me.

I whispered to the Lord: “Lord don’t do this to me, because I’ll lose my selfconfidence. I am taking the risk, but it doesn’t work. There is no confirmation”. I felt quite frustrated.

After the meetings was over and most people had left, a big man came to me. He probably was 2 m. tall. He obviously came ‘out of the world’. There were big tattoos of naked women at his enormous bicepses. Standing in front of me, he whispered: “I was afraid”. This giant was afraid? Then he said: “I am a recent convert. I am not used to this kind of meetings. But I am the one, you are looking for.

When I was a child I had an accident. My right eye was ruined. I can see light with it and some shadowy figures, but that’s all”. I ministered to him and after 5 minutes of

sending the power of God into his eye, it was completely restored. He danced like a child: "I can see everything clearly now! I can even read with it!"

In those many years of prophetic ministry (since 1977) people accepted Jesus because they were touched by the love and truth of those prophetic words.

I prophesied in churches when I preached and when I ministered. I prophesied in ferry boats, aeroplanes, trains, cars, buses and even at occult fairs where New Agers came to Jesus.

Sometimes the sick were automatically healed, lives were literally saved. Words of hope were spoken to despairing believers; destinies were proclaimed.

At this point I'll share just some stories. The first one happened around 1990. I was invited to preach in a local church in Friesland. During the worship I saw a woman, who was not really connecting to anything. She didn't join in singing; the expression of her face was flat and emotionless.

I didn't know her, I had never seen her before. At the end of the worship time, I stood up and looked in her direction. I closed my eyes and prophesied. The message was something like this: "My daughter I love you. Right now, even if you don't show any emotions, your life is in a turmoil. Inside it's a chaos of thoughts and you don't know how to solve this. But I have a solution for you" At that moment I felt that God had an extra message for her.

It was about abortion. I didn't know yet, what God wanted to tell her about this, but I felt that I shouldn't speak out in public. So I decided to see her at the end of the meeting and ask her about this.

When I opened my eyes, I saw that she looked at me. I saw a kind of shock in her eyes. She must have realised that this word meant her.

After the preaching she came for ministry. Surely she was impressed by the prophetic message and by the preaching. Before I asked her to share her story, I told her that God had yet another message for her. "It's about abortion," I said.

She nearly panicked. She made gestures with her hands, like: "This can't be true. You can't know about this."

"What happened to you?" I asked her. She answered: "I am pregnant, but nobody knows this, except me and my doctor. Even my mother doesn't know.

The point is, that I don't know who the father is. I have lived a very promiscuous life. Recently I had sexual contacts with two men. Either one of them can be the father of the child. I can't handle the situation, so I decided to have an abortion without telling anyone about it."

Then she told me about her life. She was 16 when she gave her life to Jesus. She was baptised, but at a certain point she had made wrong decisions. She had left the church, returned to 'the world' and had a lot of boyfriends. This lifestyle of partying went on for 8 years. And now she was pregnant.

The day before she had met an old acquaintance. That woman, unaware of her condition, had invited her to come to the church meeting. And she accepted the invitation. It was the first time in 8 years she had attended a church service.

That morning the prophetic word had touched her deeply. God appeared to know about her problems and still loved her. She surrendered her life anew to Jesus. Her life was

saved. And the unborn child? The wife of the local pastor introduced her to a support group and she decided to keep the child. She gave birth to a daughter. Now this daughter is an attractive young lady...showing that the gifts of prophecy are life saving.

The next story took place on an airplane.

Once on an airplane to Surinam I had a talk with the woman next to me. She was a pretty black lady with curly hair. I guess her age was around 35. In our conversation I addressed the subject 'faith'. She appeared to be a nominal believer, but hadn't attended a church for many years. At some point the airplane neared the coast of South America and I knew something had to happen now.

I told her: "I have a word from God for you" (I didn't know at all what it would be, but I spoke in faith). She looked at me with bewildering: "What? A word from God?". I asked her: "Can I hold your hand for a moment?" She reached her hand and I started prophesying. It was like this: "My daughter, recently you have been betrayed in a very bad way. And now you are going to your home country hoping to find a solution. You will only be betrayed again. This is not the way to solve your problems. Give your life to me and let Me guide you etc."

When I opened my eyes she looked at me and with amazement and said: "But this is true. A few days ago my boyfriend confessed to me, that he was sleeping around with other girls and that he was about to leave me. Yes I was betrayed! And yes, I am going to my home country, thinking that I might find myself another lover there". I explained her, how God loved her and that He had a far better plan for her life. By the time the plane touched the ground, she had given her life to Jesus.

Chapter 2

Purifying the prophetic

Not so long after I started prophesying I was confronted with a big challenge. My wife and I were part of one of the home-groups of our local church in Amsterdam. At a certain point the wife of our home-group leader got cancer. A big tumour, a melanoma, developed on her left arm. The doctors advised an immediate amputation of her whole left arm to prevent the cancer from spreading, but she believed that the Lord would heal her. She had experienced a miraculous healing before, so she felt sure it would happen the same way now.

As a home group we gathered around her twice a week, to worship The Lord and pray for her healing. At one of those evenings, I felt a strong conviction that the Lord was healing her and that within a short while she would be completely healed. So I prophesied over her in this manner.

In reality a few weeks later, a dangerous internal bleeding occurred in her arm. She was hurried into a hospital. The doctors could not stop this internal bleeding and decided to amputate her entire arm and block the main arteries. Then they prescribed chemotherapy, but it was too late. The cancer had already spread throughout her body and sometime later she died.

I was devastated. First of all, because we lost a precious friend; secondly, because my prophetic word was obviously not fulfilled. Thirdly, I was accused of being a false prophet. In those days people judged very simply: either you are a prophet of God or you are a false prophet.

Our local church decided to be very careful about prophecy. The freedom to prophesy was restricted and from that day on prophetic words had to be tested by the elders before permission was given to speak. The whole gift of prophecy had been discredited.

I felt very guilty and at the same time very confused. When I spoke the prophetic word about the healing, I didn't feel anything unusual. It just felt good to do so and I didn't feel any kind of warning. So I had no idea why this word was wrong and the others (my former prophecies) were right. I realised that I missed some kind of discernment between true and false prophecies. I had no idea how to solve this.

The first decision that I took, was to stop prophesying completely until I had found a good solution for this problem. It lasted half a year. I didn't prophesy at all. In the meantime, I tried to find people who could help me or at least give me a clue about what went wrong.

Nobody knew. But at that time there were not so many people who were experienced in the gifts of prophecy in my country; or at least I didn't know them.

At last I met an older pastor. He had invited me to preach in his little church and after the meeting, he took us to his house to have lunch. Again I brought up this matter. After I told him the story, he started laughing.

I was upset. "I have a really big problem; for me it's quite dramatic. And you are just laughing about it," I reacted. He smiled at me and answered: "But Gordon, this is not false prophecy. This is prophecy from the soul. You just loved that woman. She was your friend. With all of your heart you wanted her to be healed: so you completely lost your neutrality towards her. Your soul was screaming: she must be healed!"

So when you opened up to receive revelation, your soul was speaking with such a loud voice, that you could not hear the whispering voice of the Holy Spirit. Your intentions were OK, but your neutrality wasn't. This can easily be solved."

In the next hour he explained to me the basics of the following teaching.

This teaching is the result of more than 35 years' experience in the prophetic ministry. It was refined by prophesying over maybe 20,000 persons. It was purified by trial and error. It contains the lessons of my own mistakes and the mistakes of others.

Neutrality

This teaching will focus on neutrality as the main condition for the purity and genuineness of the prophetic words.

Before we start prophesying, we should do a very short self-test to guarantee that we are really neutral towards the person or situation we want to prophecy over.

Suppose we are not neutral towards a person? Then there might be an interference or contamination of the prophetic message with our personal emotions or opinions. And if these emotions or opinions are strong, we might even express these emotion or opinions in our 'prophetic' word without knowing it.

So I'll give you some 18 points for a short self-test to prevent you from hurting yourself and others because of 'soulish' prophecy. These 17 points might contaminate or take over the prophetic word, unless we deal with it and exclude their influence when we prophecy.

1. Emotional compassion with someone who suffers

Compassion in itself can be a very good emotion. Sometimes the Lord stirs up our compassion to guide us into a certain direction. Then in fact we join in His compassion. Compassion can be the motivating factor behind a lot of benevolence and actions of humanitarian aid.

But in the prophetic, compassion can really disturb our sensitivity for the real guidance of God. Mostly it goes like this. Someone you meet is in a condition of suffering. It can be a deadly disease or deep physical or emotional pain. Immediately your compassion is being stirred up.

You would like to help. You want God to help. And of course God wants to help, but His idea of help in that situation might not be the same as yours. So, if you want to prophesy over that person, you must realise that your personal emotions about the necessity of a solution can interfere with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

It's better to start the prophecy without knowledge about the suffering of that person, or else to distance yourself from your compassion before you start prophesying.

I'll give two examples about emotional involvement and compassion.

My wife died of colon cancer in October 2007. A few months later at the Healingrooms I found myself sitting in front of a woman with the same disease. Her condition was provoking so many emotions on my side, that I decided not to prophecy and to be replaced by one of my team-members. Maybe, if I would not have known about her condition, I could have prophesied over her from a neutral perspective, but not then.

Today I know I have overcome my emotionality regarding

cancer and I could prophecy, but still I prefer not to know anything before I prophecy.

2. Dogmatic approach towards suffering

There can be a strong dogmatic inclination regarding people who suffer. Healing is a part of the kingdom of God. In Old- and New Testament God reveals himself as the Healer. Jesus never refused to heal someone who came to Him for help. He never used an 'excuse' like: "It is good for you to remain sick, because that will change your character". He never taught us any of the theological explanations to explain why some people don't get healed. He just healed them all.

Even though this is all true, we should nevertheless be sensitive to God's special guidance in every situation.

One day I was in Ukraine. Our driver asked us to visit his mother who lived nearby. We agreed. When we arrived we found the house filled with family members who all wanted a prophetic word. So I prophesied over all of them.

But we came for the mother. She was 80+ years old, had shrunk to the size of a child and suffered a little bit of Alzheimer's disease. I asked her what she wanted. She answered me: "I want Jesus to take me home".

At that moment all kind of thoughts rose up in my mind. Should we go for healing? Should I try to convince her to receive healing? I realized that my theology couldn't help me, but how could I receive revelation while being so prejudiced towards healing and faith. I knew I couldn't receive a straightforward word of God now, so I asked Him for a vision.

It came quickly. I saw a beautiful island in an immense ocean. It was beautiful with green palm trees and white

beaches, a piece of paradise. But, as far as one could see, there was no land or other islands at the horizon. It was completely isolated. I understood the vision and I told the relatives: "This isolated island means that she has lost the connections with the outward world. Her (contemporary) friends have all died. There is no connection with them anymore. Because of Alzheimer's she has lost meaningful connections with you, her relatives. She only communicates with you about trivial things like food, but she can't talk about deeper things. In fact she is quite lonely and she wants to go home, to Jesus.

The whole company of relatives nodded. So I prayed: "Lord Jesus, she wants to come home; she is waiting for you to come and take her there". For me this was a strange experience, but I realized this was the only right thing to do in that situation.

3. Indignation about a certain injustice

Suppose someone you know has been laid off with the accusation of having stolen from his employer. You know this can't be true because your friend is a reliable Christian. So your indignation, a kind of anger, is stirred up. Your heart cries out for restitution: "There has to be justification for my friend. His employer should re-employ him and make his excuses or he should receive a better and probably better-paid job instead".

If you should prophesy in this mood, your indignation plays a part in the very sensitive reception of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and you might speak out your own thoughts or opinions.

It actually happened to me that I prophesied over a man, that God would return to him everything that had been taken away from him. He was so relieved and started smiling and laughing. The he told me: "Someone wanted

to take my job and falsely accused me of having stolen from my employer. They found some work equipment in my car and I was laid off immediately.”.

As I didn't know anything about his condition, I knew the prophetic word was reliable. When I met him a year later he came to thank me: “The prophecy helped me to go through this ‘valley of death’. Now I am acquitted, rehabilitated and back at my workplace”.

4. Enthusiasm

Even during the most wonderful church services or prayer meetings where the presence of God is tangible, the prophetic can become impure, because it's influenced by over-enthusiasm.

I witnessed prophetic utterances in which someone was told: “You will not die before Jesus comes back!” Years later the recipient died at a fairly old age (but the rapture had not yet taken place). Sometimes revivals are being predicted (even with dates), but they have not come to pass.

Enthusiastic travelling prophets are promising that the country they are visiting will be the starting point of ‘the revival’ that will spread over the world (placing that particular church, that particular city or country in the centre of the spiritual universe). Enthusiasm about what God is doing is a good thing, but its dangerous to prophecy in that mood.

Just read the prophetic proclamations that are spread at the beginning of each year and check what actually took place during that consecutive year. You will conclude that there was a lot of exaggeration.

5. *Prejudice (positive)*

Suppose a very famous and respected preacher is visiting your church and you are requested to bless and pray (or prophecy) over him. In fact, you feel overwhelmed because this man is anointed and very famous. Probably you will think: "Who am I to bless this person or prophecy over him? How positive must this prophetic word be!" Probably you will end up proclaiming a lot of flattering words. This is no blessing for this leader. I have heard a lot of flattering 'prophetic' words spoken over leaders.

6. *Prejudice (negative)*

A man comes for ministry. He just lost his job. In fact, you know he lost 9 jobs, all because of one reason: being late for work. Suppose you are a very disciplined person, always arriving 15 minutes early. In fact you depreciate this man, because his problems are obviously his own fault. There is a big chance that your depreciation mixes with the revelation that the Holy Spirit wants to give you for this man.

It once happened to me, that such a person came for ministry. I knew about his undisciplined behaviour and inside I felt the 'pastoral' attitude, to give him a correction. At the same time I knew that the Lord didn't call me for that.

I am called to link people to the heart of God. I mean the calling of a prophet is to express the Fathers opinions, emotions, passion and love to that person. This might include inner healing, encouragement or the revelation of Gods destiny for that person. Of course Gods grief and passionate warnings can be part of this prophetic revelation. I realized that I was opinionated against him, so I took a time-out (I actually went to the bathroom) to re-adjust my heart.

When I started to minister to him I pretended (imagined) that he was a complete stranger to me. With that attitude I opened my mouth for a prophetic word. I myself was surprised what came out: "My son, I am not as your father who always criticized you; I am not as your school teacher who always pointed to your failures, but I am your heavenly Father, the One that loves you unconditionally." The man started crying and a deep healing started to take place.

7. Pre-knowledge

Someone asks you to pray for him or her, but you already know about the problems (no job, no partner, no house, unbelieving children). So during the utterance of the prophetic word you are already searching for answers about those specific issues. Suppose The Lord gives you some image. But because you know about the specific problems, you might start to interpret the image out of your pre-knowledge.

Suppose a woman is looking for a marriage partner. In the picture you see her dressed in white. You might interpret it: "I see you as a bride." But God's message might be: "I see you blameless."

8. Being influenced by the story of the recipient

We always avoid the recipients telling us their life story or need before we have prophesied. By sharing their story they might bring you in a certain mood; maybe even transfer a feeling of hopelessness. Their story might be full of self-pity and after listening to it you won't be able to see the truth of God in their situation any more.

I'll give you an example. Once I prophesied over a man I didn't know at all. The prophecy went like this: "My beloved son, don't proclaim the negative things that hap-

pened in your life. Because when you proclaim them, these things will be like an iron ball and chain around your leg and they will prevent you from proceeding in life. I want you to focus on Me. I love you and I have solutions for you.”

Immediately after the prophetic word, he responded: “But you don’t know what happened to me. My father was arrested and put into jail and our family was without resources.”

I stopped him and said: “But listen, this is exactly what The Lord advised you not to do. Don’t proclaim the negative things that happened to you.”

He looked at me with some indignation. He insisted on presenting his miserable condition. “But you don’t know what happened to me. My neighbour came and beat me with a stick.”

“Stop it!” I said. “You heard what the Lord said to you. Don’t proclaim the negative things from your past, because this will stop you from progressing in life.”

Then he really got angry with me: “But you don’t know what happened to me. Our other neighbour came and he also beat me with a stick; and he beat me so hard that I started stammering from that day on.”

Again I stopped him and repeated to him what The Lord had just said. But he interrupted me again and again and started telling another miserable story. By now I had stopped him five times.

In the meantime, I asked the Lord: “What should I do?” He answered me:

“I can’t do anything for him, neither can you.”

In a polite way I ended the Healingrooms session. He clearly chose self-pity. I was happy that I had prophesied over him before I heard any story, otherwise he might have transferred his feelings of hopelessness onto me. I would have felt compassion and it may have disabled me from hearing the voice of God.

9. Being influenced by the outward appearance

By this I mean what is normally visible, like beauty, joy, tears or sadness.

I myself made this mistake a few years ago when we were ministering in a church in Finland. After I prophesied over a few people I was approached by a woman in tears. Tears were running down her face and there was a general impression of sadness.

When I started prophesying, the message was about disappointments and how the Lord would help her out. When I opened my eyes again, the woman looked at me with a big surprise in her expression. "I don't recognize any of this," she said. "I am not disappointed, I have no sadness at all."

Now it was me who reacted with surprise: "But why are you in tears?"

"I have an eye infection that causes tears."

I was shocked and embarrassed because I always try to have a neutral attitude before prophesying. Straight away I realised that her tears had made a strong impression on me, and that I had not removed that impression from my mind before prophesying.

Once I ministered to a young tiny girl. She was really sweet and wanted to make some confessions about the occult stuff she had been involved in. She confessed visiting

a witch to lay Tarot cards for her. When I listened to her story I got the impression she had been involved in karate and kung-fu (Eastern martial arts, fighting sports with a deep occult background). While looking at her slender figure and innocent outlook I immediately discarded this inspiration, thinking: "She, involved in karate? No way!"

When I asked her if she had been involved in anything else in the area of the occult, she responded: "Yes I did karate and kung-fu". So easily outward appearance can deceive us.

The outward appearance can also set us at the wrong track how to proceed in ministry. We often think that the visible need has to be addressed first.

Once a middle aged woman came in our Healingrooms with a walking stick. Her body was bent forward and side-ward by a severe form of rheumatism. The first idea of a team member could be to start praying for physical healing, but in my ministry this is not the right approach.

I often repeat the words of Jesus about His healing ministry in John 5:19: "Verily, verily, the Son can't do anything of himself, unless He sees the Father do it..."

So I try to operate out of God given revelation. The Lord pushed me to ask, if she ever had a sexual affair before she got married. She reacted angrily: "That's none of your business". But I insisted. Then she admitted, that at young age she had had a sexual relationship. It ended when she found out that her boyfriend was sleeping around with other girls.

I asked if she had forgiven this former boyfriend. This appeared not to be the case. After she proclaimed forgiveness over the young man that betrayed her, she was instantaneously healed of her rheumatism.

10. 'Reading' a person and body language

When we meet a person, we automatically generate a kind of judgement. From childhood we learn to read the eyes of our parents. We perceive when they are angry or happy.

Generally those that are employed in medical, psychological or social professions, have a strongly developed 'talent' in reading a person. But we all have this ability to a certain level.

We see the inner (in)security reflected in the body language. We see (lack of) self-esteem reflected in clothing, hair-style, make up, posture and of course in the eyes. We see high sensitivity reflected in the traits of the face and the shape of the hands. When a couple enters the ministry place, we only need a split second to know, who is the 'stronger' partner.

We call this 'reading'. Many 'prophets' use reading as the starting point for a word from God.

But 'reading' has little to do with the way God looks at a person, how He evaluates their character and how He sees their destiny. In prophesying we have to exclude this kind of 'natural' information to receive a pure word from God.

In social professions 'reading' is useful, but in the area of revelation it is forbidden, because it can influence the prophetic word. That's why I try to empty myself from any impression that a person makes on me. This is why I usually prophecy with my eyes closed.

11. Relationships, love and falling in love

In our HealingRooms we advise against prophesying over someone that is a family member, a close friend or some-

one, whom we love very much, maybe even to the point of 'falling in love'.

I have witnessed very destructive prophecies in these areas. I have seen young people prophesying each other into marriage with disastrous consequences. Being in love is an extreme form of prejudice. When you are in love with somebody, your prophetic word is not objective, but it mostly comes from your own heart.

On a different level, it's hard to prophesy over family members or close friends. Compassion or the desire for happiness for that person might be so great that we just prophesy happiness for him or her. When our family member visit our Healingrooms we have a general rule that the team member who is related, leaves the team voluntarily and has him/herself replaced by someone else to insure neutrality.

12. Prophecy over a given subject

"Can you prophesy over me if I'll have a visa for the USA?"

In this case, the recipient tries to set us on a certain track. It sounds a bit hard, but you should consider this: By asking you to prophesy over a given subject people want to use you as a kind of fortune teller.

If we want to prophesy over a person, we should just speak what God freely gives; His priorities. In the eyes of the Lord something else might be more important than any visa or residence permit.

Sometimes people try to make us prophesy over money they lost in a bad business transaction. I once had a person trying to make me prophesy over a fine he got from the tax office because he cheated on them. He wanted me to prophesy if God would give the money back to him.

Sometimes men and women want us to prophecy if a cer-

tain person will be their spouse or husband. Mothers want us to prophecy if their children will repent and be saved. married people want a prophetic confirmation that they can divorce their partners. Never fall in these traps. For this reason I immediately stop a person from talking, if the sentence start with: "Can you prophecy if..." Of course later you can counsel a person on these issues or ask the Lord to give you wisdom in such situations.

13. Propheying too quickly in a sequence

This happens when you are requested to prophesy over a lot of people, one after another. We need short breaks between each prophetic word, so that the revelation for the first one can flow away, before prophesying over the next one. Otherwise the thoughts of the former revelation may still be hanging around during the next prophecy. In such a case we suddenly find ourselves repeating the same words. We need a moment of 'cleansing ourselves' of the former revelation before proceeding to the next one.

It happens quite regularly to me, that after a meeting believers line up for a prophetic word. Once I prophesied over more than 150 in 3 hours but I'll never do that again. At some point (after 10 or 12 prophecies) I feel that the revelation doesn't come so quickly. So I introduce little pauses, take some deep breaths, drink some water, tell a little story or make a little joke, mainly to reduce the pressure and prepare myself for fresh revelation.

14. Personal interest

This is very obvious. If you have any interest in the life of another person or in a certain situation, you can't be a reliable prophet. If you want that other person to be part

of your church or your ministry, this can easily influence your prophetic word. One of my closest associates felt called to become part of another organisation. I asked the Lord: "Is this your plan for my associate?" and He said: "Yes". I could hear His "Yes", because I learned how to take a neutral position. Then I could bless the relocation of my co-worker.

Since I became widowed quite a few people received 'revelations' to connect me to an un-married acquaintance or family member. Obviously there was a personal interest in seeing that family member or acquaintance happily married. Personal interest can be a good thing, but it should not be packaged in a prophetic word.

15. Partiality or opinion

It happens quite regularly that the 'gift of prophecy' is used to confirm a fixed opinion in a situation of partiality or conflict. I heard conflicting prophetic words in one church meeting. One prophet warned the believers not to start evangelizing before a certain level of holiness had been established; another one immediately prophesied that 'all of us should start evangelizing and seek the lost ones now'. Obviously these words were the reflections of personal (or group) opinions within the church.

Mostly this is not deliberately falsifying the prophetic because the speakers are fully convinced of their own opinion. In one church I heard prophecies accusing the pastor of being manipulative and the pastor's friends prophesying about a rebellious church community. I have heard manipulative prophetic words trying to push through some kind of opinion or teaching.

If you are participating in a conflict, do not use the gift of prophecy there, because your personal feelings will influence your words.

16. Resemblance

In this case you may have some prior knowledge, but more importantly you recognise aspects of the recipient's life in your own life. So you believe the message for the recipient must be similar to God's message for you and that the solutions for the recipient will be the same as for you.

It can also happen during the utterance of the prophetic word. The message might be so similar to what the Lord has told you that you may start to add elements from your own life.

Suppose you have problem with depression in your life and God showed you to solve it by making positive proclamations. Suppose you are prophesying over someone with a similar problem. It's tempting to add to the prophetic word, that this person also should do positive proclamations (which might be a good advice). But you better postpone your personal advice till you finished prophesying. Then you can add: "For me, making positive proclamations was helpful".

17. Judgemental attitude (lack of love)

Mostly we are unaware of our own judgemental attitude. We might think that our own attitude is completely right and in accordance with the written word of God.

Sometimes we take, for example, the words of Jeremiah in the Old Testament, who proclaimed death and destruction over an unrepentant nation.

But we live in the New Testament!

When a prophet has a limited understanding of the extent of the love of God (in general or even for him personally), the prophetic words might be coloured by a judgemental overtone. Part of the message might be true, but the tone is mostly judgemental and a threat might be added in the case of disobedience.

Once a woman told me about the condition of her marriage and she depicted the insensitive behaviour of her husband. The prophetic words for her had been very comforting. After she left the ministry room it was announced that her husband would be the next in line.

Of course I was prejudiced now and my pastoral attitude told me I had to give him some strong warnings to prevent his marriage from falling apart. I have enough experience not to allow myself to be prejudiced. So I took the 'blank attitude' of not knowing anything about him. To my surprise the prophecy contained a lot of praise and not one point of criticism.

In fact God had a lot of positive to say about both of them. I don't even try to understand this logically. It seems God's love just surpasses any understanding.

18. Fear (because the word is embarrassing or contains a warning)

Normally, prophetic words really breathe the love of God but sometimes (seldom), they might contain a strong warning. In my experience the Lord will only issue strong warnings or even reveal a secret sin when the recipient is in life-danger.

So, on rare occasions I prophesied warnings (without any prior knowledge) about not engaging in a relationship with a non-believing partner.

Once I prophesied to a man a prophetic word about some kind of addictive behaviour. The prophecy contained a strong advice to go for a rehab-centre. The recipient did not take any action to change his life and as a consequence of this behaviour and the refusal of going for therapy his wife left him and he committed suicide soon after.

During such a (rare) prophetic word we might experience fear, because we don't like to accuse anyone and we can be afraid of being wrong. Of course we always must be careful not to pronounce such prophetic words in public.

We are still responsible regarding the circumstances in which we prophesy. If, during prophesying, we feel that there is a judgemental message, we should postpone uttering that content until we are able to issue that word to the recipient privately in a safe context. Embarrassing or exposing is not God's style!

So normally we don't have to fear that the Lord will make us pronounce accusing or condemning words. It really happens very rarely.

In these rare cases we can put our harsh revelation not in the form of a statement, like: "You are putting your spiritual life in danger" but more friendly in the form of a question, like: "I have the impression that the Lord wants to warn you of a danger. Are you putting your spiritual life at risk now?"

The recipient knows quite well what is going on in his life and is able to ignore and deny or to confess and receive help. If we kept a loving attitude the recipient will mostly turn to confession.

Another kind of fear might arise when the revelation you receive is a bit awkward. Once while I was prophesying over a new team member of a Healingroom in Eastern Eu-

rope. I saw a shop with ladies-underwear. This was very embarrassing for me. I am a minister of the Gospel. I am not supposed to look at ladies underwear, I am not supposed to know that such kind of shops exists.

I am joking of course. I have been married for 33 years. But anyway I felt embarrassed towards the woman in front of me and all the witnesses belonging to the Healingrooms team. There was a short fight within me. What will all those people think about me, if I say: "I see a shop with ladies underwear".

I tried to get out of this dilemma and I started lying out of fear. I said: "I see a shop with ladies clothing". At the same moment I realized that God wasn't pleased with this way out. So I corrected myself: "I see a shop of ladies underwear". My Romanian translator Cristina made it even worse (in my opinion). She translated: "Lingerie intima".

I felt the blood rising to my head. The people present started laughing. I thought I knew why they were laughing. I felt myself to be the laughingstock of them all.

I still didn't have the interpretation of the vision. So I continued prophesying. What came out was this: "My daughter, you will work at a shop of ladies underwear. That will be you terrain of evangelisation. Women will come there and hear the Gospel. Some clients will come without the intention of buying anything, just to be in your presence and feel the motherly anointing that's on you."

When I finished prophesying I opened my eyes. All attendants stood there laughing and smiling. Then someone said: "I never heard a more accurate prophecy. Our sister has been working at a shop of ladies underwear for many years. She left there half a year ago, for a position with a better payment. Exactly yesterday evening the shop owner

phoned her and begged her to come back. He said: "Please come back. My shop is dying without you. I'll give you a higher salary, but please come back!" Now she know what decision to make".

My fear proved to be unfounded. In fact this 'fearful' situation resulted in a lot of confirmation.

Discouraged?

Maybe you think this whole list of 18 points is a bit discouraging. "If I have to test myself on all these points, I'll never prophesy."

This is not the message. In fact most of the 17 criteria point to one issue:

Neutrality

When you have to train your team members in a local church or in prayer ministry, this list can also be a useful tool for encouraging them: "It's great that you prophesy, but it might be good for you to do a quick self-test on neutrality".

The 18 points mentioned are also very useful to test a prophetic word afterwards. Suppose a prophetic word causes confusion? Then you can check if the 'prophet' is fulfilling the above conditions. Maybe the prophet was not neutral.

After all these warnings about neutrality I want to encourage you to eagerly desire the gifts of revelation.

God and Jesus want us to prophesy. Pauls tells us in 1 Cor.12:31 "Now eagerly desire the greater gifts", and after speaking about love he continues in 1 Cor.14:1 "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy". Prophecy and the connected revelatory gifts are so powerful and such a blessing both to believers and unbelievers.

By words coming from your own understanding you can touch the mind of a person. But by the prophetic words you touch the heart – the hearts of believers as well as the hearts of unbelievers. Prophetic words connect the recipient with the Lord.

Sometimes I tell my audience: “Everyone who evangelizes experiences the same thing. You tell someone God loves him or her and they react irritated: “If there is a loving God, why is the world so miserable and so unjust”. We then mostly end up in an unfruitful discussion. But when an unbeliever comes into our Healingrooms and we start (as usual) our ministry with 3 prophetic words, nine out of ten will give their life to Jesus within the next five minutes”.

In Bucharest my host tested my statement. She brought her unbelieving cousin to a ministry session. I told the young man that I would not just pray for him, but would ask God to speak to him. He looked at me with unbelief, but agreed to receive ministry. So I started prophesying over him.

In my opinion the prophetic word was not that special. It was about some inner pains, about God’s love for him, but there was no revelation about secret sins or something like that. When I opened my eyes I saw him gazing at me. I asked: “What do you think? Are these words mine or do they come from God?” He reacted immediately: “They must come from God”. Five minutes later my translator led him in the ‘sinners prayer’. In prophecy the Spirit bypasses the rational mind of the recipient and speaks directly to the heart.

As a young ‘prophet’ I visited an important captain of industry. He was a believer. In the end of the visit I asked him if I could pray for him. He agreed and I opened my

mouth to receive a prophetic word. The inspiration was remarkably short and simple. I said: "My son your sins have been forgiven!" In fact I was a bit embarrassed about this word. We all know that our sins are forgiven. We don't need a prophecy to repeat such common knowledge. To my surprise this important man started to cry.

After he recovered he said to me: "Many years ago I betrayed my wife with another woman. When she found out, she threw herself out of the window at the third floor to kill herself. But she didn't die. She only broke her legs. But her spirit was broken too. Her legs healed, but she never recovered from her broken spirit. Since then she started suffering from depressions and every year she has to be hospitalized for some months.

I know it is my fault. It's the consequence of my sins. I have never been able to forgive myself, because I am still facing the consequences. But tonight God confirmed to my heart that I am forgiven and I could forgive myself".

This is the power of prophecy because it carries the presence of God.

Some years ago I travelled with my team to Ukraine. With me were Cristina (my Romanian 'daughter') and Joanne, a very prophetic friend from Holland. While we lined up to check-in our luggage we were speaking English together. Of course we spoke about God and our mission.

Suddenly a voice behind us commented: "Are you missionaries or something?" We looked around and saw a couple. They were Ukrainians. "Sort of", I answered. The man asked: "What are you going to do in my country?"

I wanted to explain that we were helping to establish Healingrooms in Ukraine. Because I couldn't explain that in two words I needed to know if he was a believer or not. So

I asked him: "Are you a Christian?". He reacted negatively: "No I am not a believer, but I have friends who are in a charismatic church, so I know a bit about their beliefs".

At that moment I realized that our meeting wasn't coincidence. It was orchestrated by God. I invited him and his wife to have a cup of coffee with us before going through the customs. They agreed and so we sat together.

First we talked a bit about us and them and our travelling, but I was preparing for something else. My companions already knew what was about to happen. At some point I looked the man straight into his eyes and said:

"I have a word of God for you"

He looked at me a bit overwhelmed. "What?" he said. I repeated: "I have a word of God for you. Can I hold your hand, please?" He reached his hand to me. I closed my eyes and started prophesying. Again it was nothing embarrassing. Just a confirmation of God's love for him and small details about his life.

When I was finished he was completely shocked. His wife jumped up in a kind of panic and said: "I must go and see a bathroom". Surely that was a lie. She was panicking and probably she was afraid that I would prophecy over her as well.

The man looked at me. Then suddenly he said: "I have a big problem. I am in love with the wife of my best friend and she is in love with me and I know its wrong!"

At that moment my two female assistants jumped at their feet as well. "We also have to see a bathroom", they said. This too was a lie. They realised that it wouldn't be easy for this Ukrainian man to confess sexual sin, while they,

being women, were present. They didn't go to a bathroom either. They just distanced themselves 30 m. and I saw them praying in tongues.

The man started to confess his sins and entrusted me with some very strange events. Sometimes he would experience the 'presence' of his secret girlfriend in his bedroom or somewhere in the house, while she was actually not there. He wanted to end this sinful relationship and wanted this occult 'presence' to stop. The next 20 minutes I ministered to him, while I saw my assistants praying at a distance.

I never asked him to start confessing his secret sins. But during the prophecy he had an encounter with the living God and he just knew he had to clean up his life.

I could add many more stories about the way people were touched by prophetic words. When you desire the gifts of revelation you are desiring an excellent thing. When you start to operate in them, you will engage in a life of miracles. Just as me, you will see how unbelievers repent and how believers receive God's love, confirmation, (inner) healing and destiny.

Sometimes while prophesying over a believer I suddenly know I have to impart ('awaken' is a better expression) the gift of healing into their life. Five minutes later I see that believer ministering in healing with results.

Just the other day at some conference a young lady came to me. "Do you remember me?" she asked. I had only vague memories as I prophesy over so many. Then she helped me and explained what happened to her a year ago. "You encouraged me to speak in tongues and then you prophesied destiny over me. And its all happening. Since you prophesied over me I led 6 people to Jesus and started my own home group. Now I am preparing for missionary

work. I want to thank you. Can I give you a hug?" Of course it's the love of God that touched her, but God needs 'partners' who connect to Him through the gifts of the Spirit and actually transfer His love.

Expression of prophetic words

Next I would like to say something about the style of our words when we prophecy. I always say: "The inspiration of prophetic words is Godly, the form of utterance is human". Some prophetic people use a lot of repetition, some need many words to say a little, other don't use more words than necessary.

As we all read the bible daily and are surrounded by people who do the same, there is a tendency to package prophetic messages in the style of the expressions we find in our Bible. Some older prophets grew up with an older translation of the scriptures, like in English the KJV, in Dutch the SV (1636), that sound really medieval. Using that kind of language may seem very spiritual, but it is very counter-productive, because modern people don't understand that kind of speech.

I don't think that a prophet should use this kind of language deliberately to impress his audience or to add some 'more spiritual' value to his words. When prophesying we should verbalize the inspired thoughts in words and expressions that are easily understandable.

Our use of language should be polite. It can be varied respecting the environment where we operate; meaning when are prophesying among teenagers our language should be different from when we speak among an older or very educated audience.

Connected to this we should think about the tone of our speech. Within certain 'prophetic cultures' the tone of speech is sounding impressive, loud (sometimes even harsh or treating), with a lot of emphasis, a lot of repetition of "thus said the Lord" or even "thus said the Lord almighty and He changes not". This is done to enhance the authority of the prophetic word and to make it more impressive.

This kind of tone however doesn't do justice to the intimacy of the way God wants to communicate with His children and the gentleness and even the tenderness of His character. I would suggest: Use normal expressions that are easily understandable. Think of your audience. Don't put heavy emphasis on your words, unless the Lord really wants you to put a lot of emphasis on part of the message (you will feel that special burden while prophesying).

*The presentation of a prophetic word
the introductory phrase*

As you have noticed I personally use a very affirmative introductory phrase when I start a prophetic word. This proclamation goes like this: "This is the word of God for you...my son (my daughter)...."

Some people however feel offense or threatened when they are confronted with such an introduction.

I use that phrase because I am putting myself in a position of faith. I normally have no prior inspiration before I open my mouth. The inspiration comes after I have positioned myself into this status of faith; "This is the word of God for you..", and then the inspiration comes while I am speaking.

I am a person that is easily correctable. I realize I can be wrong and that my words need testing. I purified my

prophetic gift by making some mistakes and accepting correction. So now hardly anyone objects me making such a statement like: "This is the word of God for you".

When a prophetic word is very directive, speaking over a specific destiny in the future, and the recipient reacts negatively, I'll will say: "OK pray about it and if you don't feel that the Holy Spirit is confirming this word to your heart, then ignore it.

My prophetic word is not going to be a prison for you. I don't want you to feel guilty if you choose another direction for your life. My prophetic words can't replace the personal guidance, that you receive from the Holy Spirit".

*My word is not your prison
test it for yourself*

On the contrary, sometimes a person comes to me and asks: "Gordon, do you have a prophetic word for me?" Of course there is always something. In the Holy Spirit there is an abundance of prophetic encouragements. So I'll prophecy over that person. Suppose the same person comes to me a week later and asks again: "Gordon, do you have a prophetic word for me?" Again I'll have one and I am ready to give it.

But if that person comes again a week later with the same request, I am going to refuse. I'll answer: "Listen, I can't do this. I am not your Christ. I may not replace the revelation that the Holy Spirit wants to give to you Himself. I may not become the mediator between you and God. You may not become dependent on me.

I would make myself indispensable to you. And that's wrong. Allowing someone to depend on me for revelation (during a longer period) would be sinful for me".

So although it might seem flattering when people look up to me as a prophet, I am refusing to make anyone a captive of my (prophetic) words and I won't allow anyone to become dependent on me for revelation.

Because it has happened that young believers became captives of prophetic revelations like: "You have to do this and if you disobey, God will withhold His blessings over your life" - some christian leaders object using the affirmative introductory phrase.

Some young people were affraid to follow their inclination towards a professional career, because some prophet prophecied over them they 'must' be a church pastor.

I mentioned before that it regularly happens that (young) men (or women) approach a possible partner with an affirmative 'prophetic' word like "the Lord told me that you will be my future partner". The poor recipients were afraid to disobey such a word of God and agreed to be married to that 'prophetic' person. Mostly those marriages ended in divorce.

I do not deny that we can have revelation about our future partner, but it's wrong to use that revelation in a manipulative way. The freedom of the possible partner must be fully respected. If we really feel that God is pointing to a specific person to be our future partner, we could approach that person in a respectful way like: "I like you very much and I got the feeling that the Lords wants to bring us together. Do you have the same kind of feeling?" In that case the other feels free to tell us that those feelings are (not) mutual.

No-one is above esting and correction

Another reason is, that some 'prophets' have used the

introductory phrase as a defense against proper testing. They start their prophetic word with: "This is the word of the Lord..." If anyone disagrees, they will react: "Who are you to criticize the 'word of the Lord' , I am a prophet of the Most High, I am speaking the word of God, so don't go against it". Thereby they are putting themselves above others and above the normal testing.

Another reason against the affirmative introductory phrase is that many christian leaders are so unfamiliar and unexperienced regarding prophetic words, that they are just affraid to test a word that is presented with high pretenses. Some are just affraid to pronounce an opinion over a prophetic word. Who want to be a judge over a prophetic word? Suppose you label a prophecy as 'false' and you are proven to be wrong? Then your credentials as a leader are damaged.

Prophetic words are meant to bless people and if a certain presentation causes offence, then it's no longer a blessing. So when you are in circumstances where an affirmative introductory phrase is not appreciated, just use another introduction that is less offensive for the recipient or the witnesses.

You could use something like: "I feel that the Lord is saying;... I am having the impression that the Spirit is saying.... I believe this vision means...."

If you are just starting in the prophetic gift, please don't give others a reason to call you presumptuous, because your introductory phrase sounds offensive to them. Just moderate your tone. Prophecy is there to bless others not to elevate yourself.

Why do I personally still use the affirmative introductory phrase? Because in the Bible this the common way to intro-

duce a prophetic word. Never a prophecy starts with: " I believe the Lord says...." In the scriptures prophetic words are introduced as: "The Holy Spirits says...This is the word of the Lord" or something similar.

In this matter however it's not about having the 'right' scriptural foundation but about the purpose of prophetic words. It is supposed to be a blessing. And when the introductory phrase cause offence, just change it. At the end it's about the content that should be accepted and not about a particular presentation.

Sometimes we are not fully sure

There is something else. When a prophetic words starts with a vision or contains a vision, the interpretation of the vision may not be clear at first. So then we are ourselves in a process of getting the right interpretation. It's not a shame to say: " I am seeing a vision, but I am not yet sure what it's means. I have the impression it's about...."

While listening to the Holy Spirit or while prophesying the interpretation of the vision may become more clear. It's really not a shame when the recipient notices that we are still struggling to find the right interpretation. In that case we are more cautious and won't use strong words. Until we are sure about the meaning of the vision, we will say: "I believe it means... I think the Lord want to illustrate.... This kind of vision normally describes a certain condition of life, but I still have to discover the proper meaning".

Of course the character and the anointing of a prophet plays a part. If a friendly person with a loving fatherly anointing and a gentle voice presents a prophecy with an affirmative "This is the word of God for you..." It will be more acceptable than when an authoritarian person with a very sharp tone or a young man with a presumptuous

attitude uses the same phrase.

I can advise to use that typical introductory phrase that is acceptable to your audience.

Some prophets speak on behalf of the Lord without any introductory phrase. They just start talking or praying over someone and without transition they are suddenly prophesying. The recipient suddenly realizes, that it's no longer a prayer but that the minister is actually prophesying. In that case there hasn't been any introductory phrase.

Usually no-one objects against this procedure. It is prophecy but it wasn't presented like one. It will happen to any prophet, being in the middle of a conversation and suddenly realizing that it's not you who is talking, but that the Holy Spirit has taken over control of your thoughts and you are actually prophesying.

Chapter 3

Receiving revelation for yourself

Receiving revelation from the Holy Spirit for yourself is obviously more complex than receiving it for others. The reason is that it's hard to be neutral towards yourself and to be objective to the conditions of your life.

Probably you have the same experience as me that spontaneous revelation for oneself is rather seldom. Sometimes, the Lord really invades when He wants some turning point in our life. It happened to me a few times.

He spoke to me in 1979 to give up my preconceived ideas about going to India as some kind of missionary. He told me to go back to university and study theology. I really experienced entering into the will of God for that time.

But very often we allow the circumstances and 'open doors' to rule our lives, believing that it's God who rules the circumstances. Sometimes it is, but sometimes the circumstances or 'open doors' bring disappointments and cause even more confusion. Sometimes we make key-decisions (and depart from the will of God) based on our former experiences of pain and disappointments.

Occasionally, there might be a prophetic word for us that helps us to stay in our vision or see our destiny. Sometimes it can be a Bible-verse that stands out when reading the Scriptures and we just know it's God speaking to us. Sometimes we have an impulse of the Holy Spirit to undertake some immediate action. But when we don't react immediately, because it's a bit weird, we end up in even

more confusion.

Children of God in confusion
The body of Christ in confusion

Most children of God really have problems with hearing the voice of God. Wherever I travel I perceive a lot of confusion among my fellow believers regarding the will of God for their lives.

That's why they run after prophets to give them some guidance. Some even become dependent on prophets for their guidance.

I have seen mature Christians using the method of Bible-roulette to find the will of God in a certain situation, and I did it myself too. (Bible-roulette means: randomly open the Bible and randomly pointing to a verse to obtain an answer). Sometimes God is willing to answer our prayers in this way, but it should not become our constant method of receiving guidance.

Confusion is not the will of God. God is a communicator par excellence. If we look at the way Jesus communicated with the Father, we realise that there was a permanent contact between them.

In John 5:19, 20 Jesus reveals the secret of His ministry: *"Verily, verily I say, the Son can't do anything by himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. Because what the Father does, the Son does likewise. And the Father will show Him greater works, so that you will be amazed"*. Then in vs.30 He repeats: *"The Son can't do anything by Himself. He judges, like He hears."*

So Jesus was in continuous communication with the Father about what He did and what He said.

When Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit to His disciples (John chapters 14, 15, 16), He used the title 'Parakletos'

meaning 'comforter'.

Try to imagine how you want to be comforted when you are left alone. Well, a comforter speaks and hugs! In the above chapters in the Gospel according to John, the focus is not about the miracles but about the communicating aspects of the Holy Spirit. He helps us to remember Jesus' words, He speaks to us about the future, He takes from the Father and gives to us, He lets us experience the presence of the Father and the Son (although They are actually in heaven).

It's surely the will of God that we communicate with Him daily at many instances or even in a kind of continuous talk. Probably it is a bit difficult for us to be conscious of that communication all the time, but we can learn and try. It's surely not the will of God that we live in confusion and just guess about His will for our life or for the present situation.

He loves to be a real Father who communicates with His children on a daily basis. He did that when Adam and Eve were still in paradise, and it must have been traumatic for God when this open 'father-child' relationship was disturbed by sin and later was replaced by religion.

Walking with God

In Scripture we find people who 'walked' with God, like Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others. What does that mean, to 'walk' with God or to 'walk' before God? It means: living your life, aware of the loving presence of God, transparent, and communicating with Him.

It's like the advice Jesus gives to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:23). "*Those who worship the Father should worship Him in Spirit and in truth, because the Father is look-*

ing for such kind of worshippers". Jesus speaks there about the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship and about a complete transparency (truth) towards Him.

In John 17:3 Jesus states: *"This now is eternal life, that they know You, the everlasting God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."* This is not the same as knowing God through Scripture. This is about intimate knowledge that can only be achieved by communication. It can't be obtained when we are the only ones who speak (pray). We too must have an openness to hear God's reactions and answers.

But is God willing to speak to us on a daily basis?

David writes about this in Ps 139:17, 18." *How precious are to me your thoughts, O God; How vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of the sand. When I awake I am still with you."*

David was not a religious person in the modern sense. He was one of the first (in Scripture) to verbalize his emotions in his relationship with God. If he says that God's thoughts about him outnumber the grains of the sand, he could only know that because he went into the adventure of getting to know these thoughts. He was just overwhelmed.

Indeed, God has a lot to say. He wants to express His love to us, not just to our mind (by Bible verses) but straight into our hearts by means of revelation. God always has to say something to us. He really wants a more or less permanent communication with us through the Holy Spirit.

Is it God or not?

In the Bible we meet people who heard the voice of God and they recognised it. They were not questioning whether it was God or not, although they might have had big

problems regarding obeying that revelation.

I am thinking of Abraham now. At one point God spoke to him to take his son Isaac and sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. For a moment put yourself in his place and imagine waking up the next day after this frightening dream. Maybe you would react very relieved: "Oh, it was just a very bad dream; nonsense of course. God would never ask something like that."

The point is that Abraham recognised the voice of God and that he had no doubt that it was God. The main struggle was that the command was completely unreasonable, because Isaac was the son of the promise.

In the past he had asked God to transfer His promises to Ishmael, but God refused and had said to him: "No, the son that Sarai will give you, will be the heir to the promises. Abraham had waited for his birth 25 years. How could God ask him now to kill Isaac?"

What I want to make clear is that Abraham didn't doubt that it was God who spoke to him. The 'voice' of God was far too familiar to him. He didn't doubt that. He struggled with the command.

Now back to our problem. We are so unfamiliar with the voice of God, that when He speaks something weird, we start asking for confirmation just like Gideon. We first want to be sure before we act, and then it's often too late.

But how to receive this intimacy with God?

How can we hear His voice?

I must make an important statement here: "God is not an answering machine," He is a lover and therefore He is a communicator. He is not willing to answer our questions

whenever 'we want it'. He is not our servant!
Sometimes, when I am teaching a group, I'll present a kind of joke about our willingness to hear the voice of God. I'll say: "We will now have an offering for the work of God. Just ask the Holy Spirit how much you should give." Then I take my hat and shake it a bit, as if I actually want to collect an offering. But after 30 seconds I'll tell them. "It is a joke; don't be afraid; I am really not going to do an offering."

Then I address my pupils: "I am sure that most of you just switched off the Holy Spirit because you didn't want to know what He would want you to give in the offering. You already decided on a certain amount that fitted within your budget. And most of you would not be confident about the amount that the Holy Spirit would tell you. It could be that His amount was a bit more than you intended to give. And you didn't want to know that at all."

We love to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit when we expect to receive something, but we don't like to hear His voice when it's about giving. So we don't want a balanced communication! And then God is not interested.

At that moment most of my audience starts laughing because they understand the real issue. Mostly we want to be independent and make our own decisions. Only when we have no way out we start asking God for guidance. And then we find it difficult to hear His voice. There are several reasons for this.

A whisper between our screaming thoughts

First of all we have been trying hard to find our own solutions for our problems or questions. We tried every option and deliberated on their viability. In the end we couldn't

make a decision because every option brought new disadvantages or new insecurities. We brought ourselves into a state of stress, confusion and maybe even hopelessness.

There were so many ideas in our mind that we couldn't hear the gentle whispering voice of the Holy Spirit in our intuition. There were too many other voices. Even when we could distinguish the voice of God, we have already considered the disadvantages: cutting ourselves off from the peace that obedience to His voice normally brings.

First intimacy, answers come later

The other reason is that God really might not be willing to give us the answer that we are looking for. He might have quite different priorities. He invites us into intimacy with Him. Maybe he is not interested in giving an answer to our problems right now.

Of course, eventually He wants to give that counsel, but then it will be under His conditions.

I found that there are two important preconditions for hearing His voice on a regular (daily) basis. These conditions are firstly 'surrender' and secondly 'His agenda'.

Surrender

Sometimes I try to sing the well-known song to my audience. It goes like this: "I surrender all, I surrender all; all to Jesus I surrender, I surrender all". Everyone is humming the song with me. Then I state: "This song is a lie." When we are honest, the song should sound like this: "I surrender all, but I am still in control."

Maybe, when we sing the original song during worship, we agree emotionally and we really believe that we are surrendering all. But when it comes to a point of testing,

we are often lacking the courage to obey. Surrender means that God may say “No” to our wishes. Surrender means, that we are willing to obey, even if God’s requests seem irrational or unreasonable. Surrender means that we are willing to obey, even if it means that we are losing control over our life.

And believe me: God will test and challenge us regarding every area in our life where we try to keep control. When we want to walk with God, He will ask us to give up our ‘right of independence and self-determination’. We will start as servants, but after we passed the test of obedience, He will treat us as His partners. Without obedience, we will not reach that position! The experience of royalty comes after obedience.

Obedience

After my wife died I obviously felt lonely. At a certain point I was ministering in Ukraine and I had a beautiful translator. She was such a perfect translator, that she was able to transfer my jokes and imitate my mimicry. I felt very comfortable with her.

Soon I discovered that we were on the same spiritual level and had the same ideas about priorities in life. During the breaks she poured me coffee; and surely there was some chemistry. I found her very sympathetic and I knew, I could easily fall in love with her.

Then she told me, that she was single, had never been married and was desperately looking for the right husband before it would be too late to have children. Could she be the right partner for me?

In this case I immediately turned to God and asked Him: “What do you think?” He answered:

“Don’t meditate on this!”

About the gift of Prophecy

That settled the matter. I stopped having any expectations and banned the whole idea from my mind. We worked together for a few days. There arose a kind of friendship and appreciation, but I didn't allow any deeper emotional involvement.

But I was not always that wise. On another occasion a nice woman translated for me. She was a medical doctor, very intelligent. She was attractive too' she had such beautiful eyes! At a certain point she shared her desire about getting married. We weren't so much together, but I started imagining, that she could be my wife. For some days I cherished the thought of being together with her. And only after five days I asked God.

Well, I was still able to hear His voice. It was a clear

“No”

But it felt very painful. I had already invested emotionally in the idea of having a relationship with her. So now the answer of God was more painful.

It could have become worse. Suppose my imagination would have gone further. Suppose my heart was already singing: “Yes Lord, Yes Lord etc.”

Would I be able to hear his “No”? I don't think so. I would probably hear my own wishful thinking.

Maybe I would be convinced of His “Yes”, because it was the only thing that I wanted to hear. Maybe I wouldn't hear or receive anything and start to look for a 'godly' confirmation of my own will and plans.

Maybe I would look for bible verses that confirmed my desire. Suddenly certain verses would 'pop up' while reading the Bible.

You know, even when we read the Bible, there can be a 'selective perception'. We are struck by those bible verses that agree with our emotions and we don't 'perceive' those verses that disagree with our desires. This is called 'selective reading'. Or we might even interpret bible verses in a way that agrees with our emotional condition. It has happened in my life and I see it happening to others.

So if we really want to hear the voice of God, we should get out of the stress of wanting to hear 'what we want to hear'.

We should not even focus on something that we want now. But we should detach ourselves from the stressful situation and be willing to hear 'whatever He wants to say'. This means He can say "yes" or "no" or "wait" or completely ignore the subject we are so desperate about.

I'll give you an example out of the prophetic ministry. It happens now and then, that after I have prophesied over someone, that person reacts saying: "This is not what I wanted to hear."

Sometimes I ask: "What did you want to hear?"

The answer could be: "I want to hear if I'll be a medical doctor;" or "I want to hear if I will have a visa for the USA".

In both cases, that person didn't actually want to hear what God says. He just wanted to hear if his personal desire would be fulfilled. Maybe, God is more interested in a deeper personal relationship with Him. At a later point He might be willing to speak about the future or the destiny of that person.

So if you want to hear God's voice, don't focus on getting 'your answer', but focus on what He wants to say, whatever it is. Of course, during the process of learning

to hear His voice even better, you can ask Him: “What do You think about this?” Mostly He will be willing to give His opinion. But His opinion can be: “Wait, have patience, I’ll explain later, just trust Me”.

So this ‘whatever He says’, is the position of surrender. Surrender also means obedience. At some point the Lord will stop talking to you (not immediately), if you continue to disobey what He says, or when you have already decided on ‘not-obeying’, when He says something you don’t like.

Disobedience

I recall a passage in Jeremiah 42 where the leaders of the remnant of Judah approach the prophet and ask whether they should flee to Egypt or stay in their country.

Jeremiah knows that those leaders have already decided on going to Egypt and just want ‘the great prophet’ to confirm what they already decided. Jeremiah prophesies over them: “If you stay in the country God will be gracious upon you because He is compassionate. But if you flee to Egypt, all of you will perish”.

The leaders then accuse Jeremiah of being a false prophet and that he is under the influence of Baruch (Jeremiah’s scribe). They don’t listen to the word of God, but leave for Egypt and probably they died there. This is one of those clear cases where people just want to hear their own will.

Of course, they were afraid (there was a war going on). So they would like to have some kind of godly approval for their (ungodly) plan.

Often believers are not that wicked, but still have their own agenda. It can even be a religious agenda.

But back to the point of disobedience. If we are disobedient in one area of our life, God might still be willing to speak to us on other areas of our life. But there are limits.

In the Bible we encounter the consequences of disobedience in the life of King Saul (1 Sam. 28). At the eve of his last battle, he doesn't receive any answer from God, neither by dreams, nor by prophets.

It's clear that his disobedience to God's voice on earlier occasions, his violent persecution of David, and the murder of the priests of Nob, is blocking him from hearing God's voice. Even his prophets can't receive anything for him!

In pure despair, he then turns to witchcraft and fortune telling. Once Saul had been among the prophets, once he was prophesying with them. Now he tries to manipulate 'revelation' and it results in his untimely death.

So if The Lord gives us a certain guidance and we refuse to obey, we generally end up in some kind of confusion. The Lord will give us another chance to obey and even more than one. But if we continue just disobeying what He says, at a certain point we will lose the connection with Him.

I have met Christians who were completely confused (even to the point of psychosis), having no idea about God's guidance, because they just disobeyed Him wilfully (or they never asked God about their decisions).

I have met Christians who ignore or even deny the gifts of the Holy Spirit, because they had been disobedient and got frustrated as a result of that disobedience. Next they blame the gifts of the Spirit to have caused their confusion.

I have met Christians, who turned to 'bible-witchcraft' or "bible-roulette", using the Bible just like a non-believer

would use tarot cards. If someone is continuously trying to get answers by randomly opening the Bible and randomly pointing to verses, it's very much the same thing as using cards.

So, let's return to surrender and let God be God. Let Him say whatever He wants to say. This will give us the right motivation and attitude to receive.

God's agenda

When I look at my past I must conclude that my way of relating to God was very 'conscientious'.

Before any work activity I would read some chapters in the Old Testament, some in the middle, next some in the New Testament, to see if 'something' was touching me.

After that I would pray for some friends and missionaries and after this I would tell the Lord: "Today I have to do this and that. Bless this, bless that etc." I knew, that without my 'quiet time' there would not be much blessing on what I did.

After that I started with my activities. My activities as a travelling preacher and teacher were obviously not so bad and the Lord was quite willing to bless me to a certain level.

The only but important weak point in this was, that my activities were very much under my own control. It was largely me who determined what had to be done and the way it should be done.

My way of receiving guidance in this, was mainly 'looking at opportunities and open doors'. It means that my guidance was mainly reactive (reacting to circumstances and opportunities). Because circumstances can change at any moment and open doors sometimes are traps, this way of

receiving guidance can bring a lot of stress.

Now I see that I can trust God completely in organising my life. I am asking God's will about the so called open doors. "Is this really You opening a door for me, or is this coincidence, or even the will of men?"

Then I also ask about His timing. I mean if I am invited somewhere in the very near future, I might ask if this is God: "Are You really in this? And is this your timing?"

Gods timing

I give you an example of not synchronizing with Gods agenda. There is a church that has 400 members. Their building can contain 500. One day the pastor announces that he has faith that by the end of the year the number of believers will have doubled. "I believe that by the end of the year we will have at least 800 members." Some church members start applauding now. They are encouraged by the level of faith of their pastor

Surely he is a man with vision and up to now there has been continuous growth. Next he declares: "Our building can't contain that number of people. So we will need a new, bigger building. Because we are expecting future growth, we will need a building with at least 1000 seats."

At that point some people get nervous. Some exclaim an enthusiastic "Amen!" Others are remarkably silent, they have made a very short calculation and have some idea about the costs of such a building. Every family will have to invest a lot and most will have to skip their holidays for the next few years.

In the following week the plans are unfolded. The cost for the new building are higher than expected. Each family

will have to economise for some years.

From that moment on, the teaching in the church is changing. A lot of emphasis is on investing in the Kingdom and sowing and reaping.

The first offerings and voluntary commitments are really disappointing. Now the tone of the preaching is changing. It's more manipulative like: "Those that sow sparingly will reap sparingly."

The first members of the church start to leave. At the end of the year the church has shrunk to a mere 200 members. There is a very frustrated pastor. He sees his dreams shattered. The remaining church members have lost their confidence in him. It will take years to rebuild trust.

Now there are some questions. Did God want this church to grow? Probably yes. Would they then need a bigger building? At some point of time: Yes.

We might suspect the pastor of wishful thinking instead of 'having faith' or 'having vision'.

Surely the whole building project was untimely. When we are in the timing of God He provides in a way, that doesn't need any manipulation.

The same can happen in our own lives. If God shows us a vision, we might try to realise it immediately. Generally this leads to bitter disappointments. Surely the Lord wants to guide us towards our destiny. We get there in a process of communication, obedience, (inner) preparation and following His signs.

Gods way

Let's turn to Joshua's conquering of Jericho.

The nation of Israel had laid siege around the city; no one

could get in or out. Of course, Joshua realises that this way of conquering a city takes a lot of time. It will take probably 2 years until all the food supplies in Jericho are used up. Then they will surrender. This way takes too much time. There are a 100 more cities in Canaan, that have to be conquered. It should not last 200 years.

At a certain moment the angel of God's heavenly army appears to Joshua (Josh. 5:13). He presents himself as an armed man, with a drawn sword. He doesn't properly answer Joshua's question: "*Are you for us, or are you for our enemies?*" He just answers: "*No.*" This is very confusing. He seems to belong to no party. Then He introduces himself: "*But as commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come... Take off your sandals!*"

There is an immediate change of atmosphere. This angel demands surrender. He doesn't negotiate with Joshua about some strategy. He just tells Joshua what he must do. He is commanding, He is in control. Joshua just has to obey.

The Godly strategy is rather strange. The whole nation has to walk around Jericho in a large procession (including all women and children's) for 7 days. And they may not say a word.

Did you ever try to keep women and little children silent for a walk that takes 1 or 2 hours? You'll probably fail. Imagine that Joshua would have thought: "*This is too difficult for them. I'll try to have them walk around Jericho once (only the first day) and then I'll have them shouting and proclaiming victory. God can also do His miracle after one day*".

Of course, nothing would have happened. The wall of

Jericho would not have crumbled. The result would have been confusion and disappointment. It would be an untimely proclamation and surely not synchronous with the actions of God.

I am not trying to make you nervous in this sense: "If I don't do exactly what He says, I'll utterly fail."

Generally The Lord is not that precise and He leaves us a lot of room for experimenting. But at the end it's about obedience and acting in synchronisation with him.

One day I was on a trip abroad. I just had €200 with me. I met a couple of missionaries and the Lord told me to give them these €200. I protested: "But lord, this is all I've got and I need supplies for another two weeks." Of course God was aware of that. I just distrusted Him and I believed the lie that God was after my money. So I disobeyed.

After they left, I felt really miserable. Of course God wasn't after my money, but He needed my partnership at that moment. And I was refusing, because I distrusted Him. He surely knew that I only had the €200 (if I would have had more He might have asked me more).

I didn't believe that obeying God would always work out in my advantage (sooner or later).

Of course I missed the opportunity that God would have done a miracle for me the next day, to provide for me.

I felt guilty after this failure to obey and decided to transfer the money to them as soon as I came home. But it wasn't the same. I was not willing to move with God, when He wanted to bless those missionaries in their need of that moment. The donation, two weeks later, didn't have this synchronising with God and so it brought no satisfaction.

To have a satisfactory communication with God we need an attitude of surrender and the willingness to go in His agenda and timetable. So, when He says: "Now" this includes a kind of instant obedience.

To develop a satisfactory communication with God, we need to invest time. Jesus Himself probably used the store-room (Matt. 6:6) as a place of communication with His Father, because there no-one could disturb Him. Outside were the crowds that hardly ever left Him alone. Immediately after His baptism the Spirit send Him into the desert for the same purpose. Occasionally he would withdraw to lonely places (Luc.5:16) or spend the night somewhere in the mountains alone (Matt. 14:23).

Of course we are all a bit different and our circumstances differ. If you have a peaceful home, your living-room or bed-room could be the right place. For me the silence of nature is the best place to be. Some enjoy the presence of God best during worship music. For me the singing of birds is enough; silence is even better. Anyway peace of mind is necessary.

The more you invest in the intimacy with God, the easier communication with Him will be. Soon you will discover that He is accessible anywhere and any time. For some intimacy with God becomes just as easy as speaking in tongues. You can do that during car-driving or house-cleaning.

I need some focus and don't want to be distracted. Because that is going to happen. The devil surely wants to disturb our communication with God by unexpected phonecalls, disturbing noises, fighting children and by distracting our thoughts. So try some kind of isolation.

Chapter 4

The practice of hearing the voice of God

Chapter 3 gives us the necessary preconditions for hearing the voice of God (and not be deceived by our wishful thinking). Now we come to the practical implication.

Hearing the voice of God is not a rational thing. Revelation is never the result of rational thinking or making comparisons and calculations. The descriptions of receiving revelation always point to some intuitive process. In Numbers 12:6 or Acts 2:17 it's about dreams and visions.

Sometimes it's like an audible voice, sometimes it feels like a sudden thought, an impression, or some kind of impulse.

Mark and Patti Virkler explain the process of revelation in their very practical books 'How to hear the voice of God' and 'Dialogue with God'. If you can get them, read them. They explain how our brain is divided in two halves. In the left half reside our rational knowledge and the things we have learned. In the right half we find imagination and intuition.

In many cultures only the left half is trained and developed (in education), while the right half is underdeveloped.

According to the Virkler's books the gifts of the Holy Spirit reside in our right brain half. Many of us in the Western world are unable to access that area of our brain. Some people (artists or writers) can easily access that intuitive, inspirational part of their brain, while others (like me) feel

mostly uninspired.

Some people just close their eyes and automatically they see visions and little movies (that are inspired by the Holy Spirit). Others are waiting for something visual to appear and just get frustrated because they don't 'see' anything. I belonged to that category; but not any more.

Just as with prophesying over others we can force ourselves into that area by setting certain steps of faith.

General revelation from Scripture

To reassure some of you who might think that I am just advising people to start fantasising; I regard a deep spiritual foundation in the Scriptures as essential for a healthy spiritual life.

I consider regular Bible readings an important aspect of receiving general guidance. I do believe that 'being under the Word' (weekly listening to preaching) and belonging to a church community are essential for spiritual growth.

So in no way am I encouraging an experimental lifestyle, without testing our revelations by the word of God.

But when it comes to specific revelation (Is God calling me to Romania?), the Bible cannot confirm it for me, because that country simply isn't mentioned in the Bible.

So we need personal revelation or prophetic words to help us.

How can we connect to the revelation that is stored in the Holy Spirit? How can we connect to this intuitive kind of revelation?

Rational people have to switch 'on' that part of the brain, by switching 'off' the other part. Many of us have learned to do that (to a certain level) when we started speaking in

tongues.

So we will set a 'step in faith', firstly by believing we have already got the revelation somewhere inside of us and secondly by 'acting' out of that kind of faith.

There are several ways to do that

1 Receive a vision

The most indirect (but easiest) way is to ask for a vision. If you never saw one, believe that it is there (in the Holy Spirit) and speak to yourself: "Now The Lord is showing me a vision and I see..."

The first thing that comes to our mind is the thing the Lord wants to convey to you (not the second one). If you don't like the picture, just take it for granted. There is no reason why the Holy Spirit should postpone giving you the right picture.

If you have just been intensively looking at something, like a movie, it might be that this latest image pops up, because that was still in your memory. So if that happens, just try again.

Once in Finland I had been picking mushrooms for some hours. I was very focused on finding a particular kind with a very specific colour and structure. Just after this search party some visitors dropped in and my hosts asked me, if I could prophecy over them. I closed my eyes and saw... a mushroom. I started laughing because I realized that I had been focusing on mushrooms for hours. I just had to empty myself from that picture and started again.

However, in Acts 10:10 Peter is hungry and has just asked for some food to be prepared for him when he 'sees' a vision - a sheet filled with unclean but edible animals.

But to prevent you from seeing your 'own' picture, discard it, if it's something that just made a strong impression on you.

Normally some image will pop up. It can be an immediate picture, in the sense that its clear. It can be something that is at first unidentifiable, but gradually becomes clearer. It can be a single picture, a kind of movie (someone walking on a road) or a sequence of pictures, one after the other.

Sometimes, with the pictures, we experience a kind of emotion (happiness, sadness, danger) and there can be a kind of voice or impulse, like "Watch out!"

So now you have the first (indirect) impression of revelation. Sometimes it's immediately clear what it means. Sometimes it's a complete enigma.

To discover the message that God has for you, you can start asking little simple questions. I'll give you an example. Maybe you see an object: 'a car'.

You can ask the Lord: "Is it symbolic or is it about a real car?" When it's real, we can ask: "Is it my car, should I go somewhere or should I give away a car?" When it is symbolic you can ask: "What is the relation between me and that object? Am I this car, or does it represent something in my life?" While we ask those questions, we will just 'know' the answer, because the Holy Spirit in us will confirm (by a feeling of peace) what He means.

Maybe at the end of this simple inquiry, there are still some questions unanswered.

In that case we must turn to a different level of revelation,

that is more direct but a little bit more difficult.

2 Prophecy over yourself

If you have prophesied over others, you can do it over yourself. But be sure that you are not trying to have God answering your urgent questions and wishes. Remember; it's about real surrender and going for His agenda. That's why many people will not advise you to try to prophesy over yourself. But you can, provided you fulfil the prerequisites.

You might start saying to yourself something like this: "This is the word of God for me: my son (daughter)....I (God in 'first person')....." After you said this, you can continue speaking, till the flow of inspiration stops.

Remember, don't try to manipulate God to say something you definitely want to know. In that case you might 'tap water from your own well'. You might speak out your own desires.

You will need this approach, when the revelation you got from the first method (visions) remains inconclusive. In that case 'prophesying over yourself' will probably give you the meaning of your vision.

I suggest that you always make notes later about what you prophesied over yourself. Later you can show those notes to someone that's more experienced in the gifts of the Spirit and discernment, so that it can be tested.

3 Write a letter to yourself

Another way of receiving from God is to write a letter to yourself. In this case the sender is God and you are the recipient. So you might start the letter like this.

Sender: The Lord.

Recipient: Me.

The letter can start like this: "My son (daughter), I (God speaking in first person)....."

Remember it is not a rational process. Don't try to imagine what God might say to you. Just go on writing while inspiration lasts.

Again I agree with Mark and Patti Virkler to make notes of what you receive from God and show it to someone who is more experienced in hearing the voice of God. That person will immediately discern if it's God speaking to you, or that you are writing your own frustrations or fears.

Sometimes, when we are still suffering from a spirit of rejection or self-accusation, that rejection or self-accusation will speak out. A balanced prophet will immediately discern that and correct it.

What kind of things will God say to us? He wants us to engage in a love affair. He will not start giving us information, but He want to share His loving heart with us.

Of course, I want the revelation that you receive to be authentic and not a copy of what I receive. But I found out that the revelation of the heart of God is far more positive than I imagined.

I expected that God's words to me would be mostly warnings, admonishing and accusing. In my personal life I found them 90% loving and affirmative, 8% directive and only 2% warnings. And no, I'm not mistaken.

When I tried, for the first time, to prophesy over myself, I was in my car travelling to a preaching appointment.

So I said to myself: "This is the word of God for me....My son I am very proud of you, because you are so trustworthy and reliable."

After saying this to myself, I was a bit surprised. I am a

reliable person, but not to the extent that God could be proud of me (I thought). I replied: "Lord, this can't be You; this is too much. Now and then I am reliable, but not to the extent that You could be proud of me".

So I rejected this word and concluded that prophesying over myself was not the right way to receive revelation. God couldn't be that positive about me.

I arrived at my preaching appointment. After the worship time the congregation celebrated Holy Communion. The leader, who introduced the Holy Supper, told us that in the back of the church would be a ministry team. "They would like to pray for anyone who needs prayer before partaking in the Holy Communion".

I considered it a good idea for myself. So I left my seat and went to the back of the church to receive ministry. There was a couple standing. They said to me: "Pastor Gordon, do you need ministry? Do you have a need?"

I responded: "I have no special need or problem, but I wish someone to pray for me".

The woman put her hand on my shoulder and started to pray for me: "Father, you are so proud of this man, because he is so trustworthy and reliable". I started crying because she had used the same phrase that I spoke to myself an hour earlier. That could not be coincidence! And I realised: this is the way God thinks about me.

Similar things happened to me in the next weeks. Six times the prophecies that I spoke over myself were repeated by other people who prophesied over me. Then I was convinced that God wanted to speak to me by this 'method'.

In the years after that, I developed a deep communication with the Lord using the approach of prophesying over myself. It dramatically changed my life. I have become a

communicator (with God).

Chapter 5

Limitations to personal revelation

God's priorities

I have already indicated that we can't force God to speak over a certain matter. This is one of the main problems in the prophetic: We have a problem, we need an answer now. And it seems we can't get it. When God speaks, He speaks about His priorities and not about ours.

One day I took a walk in the forest of my home town. I try to do that every day, but when I am travelling I often can't find time for this. On this particular occasion I had just returned from a long ministry trip and the next day I was about to leave again.

I definitely needed fellowship with The Lord, but I also had some urgent questions about purchasing airline tickets. I tried to get the answers. I said: "This is the word of God concerning my (particular) problem...My son...." Instead of getting any answer about my questions, God started to talk to me about relaxation and enjoying His presence during my walk.

He simply wanted 'prime time' with me. He was not willing to answer those issues. And to be honest, I enjoyed His presence. He took away the burden of making all kind of decisions at that moment.

Free will of other people involved

Some people have the idea that God is almighty and that He knows and controls all things. Just putting doubt to this doctrine might shock you. When Gods omniscience is an important issue for you, maybe you better skip this little item. For the others, let's deal with this.

*Does God know the future?
Does He foresee everything?*

Yes and sometimes no! God knows a lot of things, but sometimes He has to deal with our inconsequent behaviour. God is interacting with men and their choices! And men do have a free will. There are some doctrines that deny free will to men. But those doctrines are questionable and not without reproach.

In Dutch Calvinism the doctrine of predestination became very important. This doctrine states states that eternal salvation or eternal damnation of a person has already been determined at the beginning of time; so even before we came into existence.

The Heidelberger Catechismus, one of the main doctrinal writings of Calvinism, states that everything (health and sickness, prosperity and poverty, abundance and famine, life and death) has been preordained by God. So His omniscience is complete. Without Him nothing and nobody can move.

This doctrine has tremendous implications if we think about the Holocaust, abortions, sexual abuse etc. Has this all been preordained by God? This doctrine was the cause of deep divisions between believers. It divided John Wesley and George Whitefield in the 1730's. This booklet is not the place for such a discussion. I cannot penetrate into the

secrets of God.

In this chapter I'll take the position of believing in the free-will of men.

Criminal behaviour, killing and abuse can't be connected to God's allowance or admittance. God gave us the possibility to sin or not to sin (right now I am not addressing the problem of addictive behaviour).

People have the choice to follow God completely or follow Him half way. People have the choice to believe or not to believe, to obey or not to obey. And God is reacting to that.

In Ex.19:6 The Lord states that He wants Israel to be a kingdom of priests. At a certain point this is no longer possible (because of idolatry and rebellion) and only the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron are appointed for a priestly ministry. So God's plan had to be changed because of the disobedience of men.

Suppose a pastor invites me to preach in his church next year. I am asking God about that and I feel that He wants me to go there. Now during that year this particular pastor is criticised by a few of his church members. He gets frustrated and makes the (maybe wrong) decision to leave his church.

Maybe now the appointment that I made with him is cancelled. Somebody else has taken over his office and is making his own selection of guest-speakers. Does this mean that I got it wrong when I received God's confirmation? Probably not! Even God could not foresee that this pastor would become so frustrated that he chose to leave his ministry.

This implies that revelation is not always conclusive, when it involves a long time span and presupposes the (positive) reactions of other people involved.

Very often we see people asking God for a partner in life. There is nothing wrong with that. It gets a bit problematic when they start asking God if a particular person will be their husband or wife.

Mostly they don't receive an answer by direct communication, so they start looking for signs. For instance: If I see three swans today, that person will be my wife or husband. That day three swans appear. A positive sign.

At a certain point they connect to that partner and tell him or her: "The Lord told me, that you will be my partner." Maybe that person bluntly refuses. Now there is a lot of confusion. The first reason for our confusion is that we tried to force God into an answer about this matter. The second reason is that the matter involves the free will of that other person.

I met an unmarried person who went into a love-affair. Both partners received a lot of confirmation and even prophetic words that this relationship was the will of God and they started to prepare for a marriage. The wedding date was set. The wedding dress was ordered, the invitation cards were sent to the guest.

But at a certain point one partner got nervous (that partner was born in a broken family), cancelled all the preparations and broke off the relationship. The other partner now blames the Lord, because the break-up caused so much pain. She/he complained: "Is the Lord playing a game with my feelings? Why did He give so many confirmations? Why didn't He prevent my partner from leaving me?"

Again the presupposition is that God is in complete control. The reality is that God might have been positive about

this relationship, but it included the free-will of both partners. The one who broke up the relationship might not be willing to give up personal freedom or might feel insecure in taking responsibility for a marriage.

Your own free will

The same is true for your own life. The Lord might speak to you that He wants to use you in a ministry of healing. But if you don't invest in this ministry, it may never come to pass. The reason might be fear and the choice to stay in your comfort zone.

Once I prophesied over a group of people; among them was a little girl. When I wanted to prophesy over her, I felt that the Lord wanted to tell her that she would have a baby-brother. Her mother was sitting next to her and I knew that the conception of another child was her mother's and her father's responsibility.

So I whispered to the mother and told her what I received. I asked her if she was open to have another child. She told me that she had had a difficult pregnancy with her daughter and that she was not willing to go through that again.

I said that one difficult pregnancy didn't imply that the next one would be equally difficult. But she seemed very reluctant. I am happy I hadn't told the child what I received. Surely the Lord wanted to bless this family with another child, but the mother simply didn't have faith that the next pregnancy would be bearable.

Sometimes people want me to prophesy whether their non-believing husbands would eventually turn to Christ. Maybe the Lord might give such a revelation occasionally because He sees the processes in the heart of such a person

and already knows how that will end.

But even this includes the free will of the person that should come to Jesus. So even for God it's impossible to give a guarantee for the repentance of a family-member.

*Revelation regarding details,
like specific dates, in the future*

First regarding receiving revelation for yourself; don't try to receive detailed revelation about the far future when it includes the free will and cooperation of other people. Occasionally God might give it to you, because He knows the hearts of the people involved and knows that they will react according to His will.

The same is with dates. Even when God is planning to do something, the (dis)obedience of His other servants might postpone what He wants to do. And then we have to wait a bit longer.

I am aware that at certain points in my life I was disobedient and thereby missed some of God's plans for my own life. It did have consequences for others too. So probably God had to find someone else to fulfil that particular task.

Reinhardt Bonnke once said that God spoke to him about the evangelistic ministry he has in Nigeria and other countries in Africa. Sometimes more than a million of people show up in his campaigns.

The Lord told him once, that He had asked someone else to evangelise Sub-Saharan Africa. But that person had refused. Then The Lord spoke to another one and even this person was not willing to give up certain securities.

Only then, as a 'third choice', The Lord asked Reinhart to follow Him to Africa. He obeyed and he has become may-

be the most successful evangelist of history.

God's plans are in cooperation with men. Very often God has to change His plans because men are not cooperative. So when we work for Him and ask for revelation about the far future or about events that include other people, we might be facing similar problems. God shows us His plan, but the plan might change in time or the dates could be changed.

Once more I want to emphasise, that in receiving revelation for yourself, it's up to God to set the agenda for that revelation. We can ask God's will about many things (in order to obey Him), but we should not try to manipulate Him to answer us.

Mostly I'll ask the Lord to speak to me about next Sunday's message. Sometimes He tells me what it should be about. Sometimes He tells me: "You will know it, when time is right," (meaning: when I am standing at the platform).

But remember, I am asking how I can obey Him. Or I am asking Him what He thinks about a certain situation. I am not trying to extort any kind of information. I am willing to accept "I'll tell you later" as an answer.

Chapter 6

Prophetic mandate

Extension and limitations

Paul strongly encourages us to desire the gifts of the Spirit and especially the gift of prophecy. He illustrates the importance of this gift in 1 Corinthians 14:3 *But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*

About the gift of Prophecy

This is the most essential use of the gift of prophecy; the encouragement of fellow believers. Every Christian has an obligation to encourage fellow believers. This is a kind of basic mandate.

In my ministry I have seen so many tears of joy as result of prophetic words. I have seen breakthroughs in situations of depression. I have seen new hope arising. I have seen (inner) healing take place as a result of prophetic words.

Another use of the gift of prophecy is indicated in 1 Cor.14: 24, 25 :*But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

We have seen many people turning to Jesus after prophetic words touched their hearts deeply.

It seems obvious that we are encouraged to prophesy over one another and over unbelievers.

But the prophetic gifts should not be abused in order to gain authority over others.

Presumptuous authority

On one hand we are encouraged to grow in our prophetic gifts, but this should not lead to presumptuous behaviour. In the church and in the world we all have a kind of position or mandate. Of course we can say that in Christ we are the rulers of the future world. But we have to be careful here.

I have met young believers who started out in exploring their prophetic gifts. They didn't realise that their pro-

phetic mandate was limited to encourage fellow believers and started to prophesy over the leadership of their local church or church politics. The leaders weren't always happy with their interference. The result was that their words were rejected.

Of course they tried to defend their prophetic ministry (like: "It's God who speaks through me!"), with the result that they themselves also were rejected and sometimes thrown out of their church. Some of them ended as isolated 'prophets', no longer welcome in any church.

When I am invited in a local church to preach, I know that the leadership invited me as well to prophesy over the believers who come for prophetic encouragement. But I'll refrain from prophesying over the church as a whole or over its leadership. I simply have no mandate for that.

I am an invited (guest) speaker. Nobody gave me authority over this particular church. I was not recognised as an overseer or apostle. So I should not interfere with church politics or prophesy over their leaders.

Of course it's different if the leaders ask me to prophesy over them or over their church community. Then I am willing to do that. In asking, they just gave me the mandate and authority to prophesy over them. But this is their choice. I am not taking that authority presumptuously.

It happens quite often that young (or old) prophets start to prophesy over churches, church leaders, nations and countries. The results can be very disastrous.

Sometimes they prophesy directional or even critical words over the leadership causing overt rebellion. Some church members who already had a critical attitude towards their leadership regard such a critical prophecy as a confirmation to rebel against their leadership ("God is on

our side”).

In other instances young (or old) prophets are prophesying revivals or disasters over countries and nations which do not come to pass. The point is that The Lord never put them over nations and countries, so their words lack authority. Their inspiration is mainly generated by their own will, imagination and enthusiasm.

The prophet Jeremiah received a special mandate and calling from God. We read this in Jeremiah 1:5

*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.*

And again in Jeremiah 1:10

*See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms,
to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow,
to build and to plant.*

This was a special mandate, not automatically given to any prophet. Jeremiah’s life proved that this mandate was not presumptuous. His words were fulfilled.

First of all, he did have some primary authority because he belonged to a respected priestly family from the priestly city of Anatot.

Secondly, he was actually consulted by the Judean kings and leaders. They recognised his mandate as a prophet. In the end they did not listen to his warnings but they still wanted to know what God had revealed to him.

Not every believer is called to be a church leader. Not every prophet is called to prophesy over church leaders or churches. Not every prophet is called to prophesy over countries.

So in order to prophesy over churches, church leadership,

nations and countries, you need some special mandate. This mandate can be given to you in a personal revelation, but still I would be cautious about that. It needs to be recognised by others.

At this point I am thinking of the anointing of King Saul and later King David by Samuel.

They were both anointed as kings, but they did not act (rule) as kings before they were formally recognised by the people.

I am always suspicious if an unknown person gives prophetic words that have implications over 'higher authorities' like churches, leaders and nations.

But when a recognised leader, a person with a recognised authority, prophesies over big things, I am very interested.

David Wilkerson published a book entitled 'The Vision', while he was the leader of the world-wide organisation 'Teen Challenge' involving thousands of staff. He was recognised as a very influential person. So when he received a revelation over developments in the Christian world, I took that very seriously. A big part of his words were fulfilled.

I would generally advise: Submit to the church authorities that are over you. Be willing to receive their corrections. One day they might recognise you and give you a bigger mandate.

At this point I would like to talk to the leaders as well. The people that God uses in prophetic ministry are often very sensitive and some of them even have a rejection issue. When I was a pastor myself, I wished to have a certain level of control over what happened in church. I experi-

enced the local prophets mostly as friends that supported me. In one occasion a particular church member dreamt a prophetic dream over 'my' church, but in the revelation I was nowhere to be found (and I was the pastor). I reacted by rejecting this prophetic message, because I didn't like it. Then I missed the wisdom to be friendly and and really communicate with that prophetic church member.

Where are the 'fathers', more experienced in the gift of prophecy, who are willing to correct in love and who know what they are talking about?

Chapter 7

Prophetic 'witchcraft'

In other chapters I already indicated that God is not an answering machine. He wants a relationship. He can't be forced or manipulated into answering our questions.

Sometimes we want those answers and if we can't get them, we try all kinds of methods to 'get' revelation.

To be honest, I did it myself: and probably you did it.

The most common method to receive answers from God is to open the word randomly and see if there is some Bible verse that relates to the subject.

Sometimes God is quite willing to speak to us by this method. He is gracious and He knows about our limitations in hearing His voice. But this can't be our main approach towards revelation.

In some critical situations I have opened the Bible and God spoke to me in a Bible verse. But more often I opened the Bible and received nothing. I would try again and turned the Bible upside down a few times behind my back so that I wouldn't know where I would open it. I opened it ran-

domly, and with closed eyes I pointed to a verse. It did not work. Mostly the verse was not related to my question, sometimes it had more than one interpretation. So this cannot be the way to receive regular revelation.

Once I met a man who was in a lot of distress. He told me: "Please brother, open the Bible randomly and read verse 7 from that page. That will be the verse for today". During the subsequent conversation I discovered that he would do this all the time and tried to get answers in such a way. It brought him a lot of confusion, even to the point of getting upset with God because 'He obviously gave him false and contradictory revelations'. At a certain point I told him:

"What you are doing is witchcraft". At the end, the Bible is made out of paper and has a lot of words and sentences. It really makes no difference if you would take any secular book and open it randomly and just take the seventh sentence of that particular page. In fact this method doesn't differ from drawing cards and ascribe a meaning to that. You are trying to 'force supernatural information'.

Urim and Tummim

Someone else made use of a kind of 'Urim and Tummim'. He fabricated two objects of exactly the same size but different colours. He kept them in a pocket and whenever he needed an answer, he put his hand in the pocket. When the black object appeared, the answer was 'no'; when the red object appeared, it was 'yes'.

In this way he was able to force answers for his questions. Not to mention that he got himself into problems because one day he would get 'yes' and the next day he would receive a 'no' for the same question.

The defence for this method (casting lots by means of

two similar objects) is that it was commonly used by the high-priest in the Old Testament (Ex.28:15-30), and even the apostles used it (before they were baptised in the Holy Spirit). Acts 1:26 *Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.*

What I have against this method is that it forces 'God' to speak while God might not be willing to speak at all.

The Moravian brothers (Hernhut) used something like this in the 18th century. When a missionary was ready to be sent out to some foreign country, they cast lots. Their method had three objects; one meaning 'yes', one meaning 'no' and the last meaning 'wait'. This method was not used for daily problems, but only to find God's approval for sending out a missionary. But at least they included the possibility of 'no answer' (wait).

Confirmations

Another way of receiving revelation is to ask for confirmations. Those who apply this method refer to Gideon, who asked for confirmation twice before he went into battle (Jud.6:36-40). The first time God answered him very clearly, but he wanted a second confirmation.

Two confirmations, two tests

I find the story a bit funny. Gideon asked for confirmation twice and twice he was tested. After Gideon did gather his army, the Lord told him twice that he had too many men. The first time two thirds of his men left, the second time only 300 remained.

I am not saying that it's always wrong to ask for confirmations. It depends on the situation. Sometimes God's inspiration requires immediate action. In that case asking for

confirmation will cause us to miss the 'now' moment. When the Lords is revealing something important to us, like His calling for ministry, He usually confirms our calling many times without us asking for it. He doesn't want us to be insecure about important things. In a regular communication with God He will confirm us regarding His will all the time. So we need fewer external confirmations.

Chapter 8

Distinctions in the prophetic gifts

When Paul speaks about the gifts of the Spirit, he mentions several gifts that we would call 'gifts of revelation'. I think he just tried to distinguish several aspects, or several dimensions, of the revelatory gifts that are often intermingled and sometimes can't be distinguished from one another.

I even think there are a lot more aspects. Some of them can be found in the Old- and the New Testament, some might be completely 'new'. In the Bible we read about prophetic words, prophetic songs, prophetic symbolic actions, interpretations of tongues, dreams, visions.

Certain kinds of revelation I can't trace back to the Bible directly. I'll give you some examples that belong to the so called category of 'words of knowledge'.

Physical sensation like emotions, pain or smell

During a meeting I might suddenly experience a physical sensation, like a pain in my knee. I know there is nothing wrong with my knee, so it is probably an indication that there is someone in the meeting who is suffering from a knee-injury. When I invite people with knee-problems to

come to the altar, we mostly see all of them healed. This so called 'word of knowledge' can also be a vision. I see painful kidneys in a vision, so I know there must be someone with kidney problems. I might also 'know' in the Spirit, that there is someone who has a speech problem. So I know God wants to heal someone with such kind of problems.

Prophecy is in fact revealing God's heart and His will to people. The way He looks at people is radically different from the way we look at one-another.

Revealing His heart can be done through words (traditionally called 'prophecy'), by prophetic actions (like giving) or by touch (like empowerments by laying on of hands, 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6, often called 'impartations').

Sometimes God uses physical or emotional sensations (in the prophet) to reveal His message. A few times the Lord made me cry to express His emotions. In fact there is a broad spectrum of revelatory gifts working during ministry. And it's even hard to distinguish between the one and the other.

Many authors try to identify the manifold ways in which God reveals Himself within the few categories of 1 Cor.12. In that way they can give each gift a 'scriptural' basis. In fact Paul names just a few gifts. He is not at all trying to give an all encompassing list, because that's not the theme of 1 Cor. 12 and 14. He just wants to regulate the imbalance in the use of the gift of speaking in tongues during the meetings in the church of Corinth.

Word of knowledge

Paul speaks about '*word of wisdom*', '*word of knowledge*', '*prophecy*', '*discernment of spirits*' and '*interpretation of tongues*'. I regard these gifts as revelatory gifts, because

they reveal the heart of God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) to our mind.

There are a lot of books that deal with these distinctions, so I'll pass these subjects quickly.

The name 'word of knowledge' implies that God reveals something that He knows. Now He wants us to know it as well. I am well versed in the Greek New Testament, so I realise that 'knowledge' is not just information of understanding, but always includes 'intimate knowledge' like getting acquainted with God and knowing His heart by means of intimacy. So 'knowledge' includes knowing His heart and His love (for us and others).

The expression 'word of knowledge' is widely used by people who minister in healing. They 'know' that God is (or 'will be') healing a certain sickness. It can be revealed as a sudden 'knowing' or even as a physical sensation. For instance, I could feel a certain pain in my body and thereby 'know' that God wants to heal somebody with exactly that kind of pain.

I don't think Paul meant something like that when he coined the phrase, but I understand that ministers would like to put these sensations under the scriptural expression 'word of knowledge'.

Word of wisdom

The name 'word of wisdom' implies that God is revealing practical wisdom to deal with a certain situation. One of the best examples of the 'word of wisdom' is found in Acts 15:28, where the apostles face an issue that could have divided the early church.

To what extent should a Christian with a pagan background be subjected to the Jewish dietary laws and the

law of circumcision? The apostles debate this and find a common ground accepted by all.

It seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements...

Then follows a description of how Gentile believers should behave. It is a very practical solution to define a way for 'Gentiles' and Jews to live together as one community.

Prophecy

The gift of 'prophecy' implies that someone is speaking as a mouthpiece for God.

In Ex.4:16 Moses complains that he is not eloquent and has problems to speak. Then God tells him to instruct Aaron, his brother, and to put the words in his mouth.

The text continues: *He will speak to the people for you and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him.*

The inspiration for the prophetic word can come before the expression of it; it can come simultaneously; or it can even be unconscious, in the sense, that we don't realize, that we are actually prophesying.

Prophecy can be the result of a given revelation. First comes the revelation in the form of a dream, vision or inspired thought. Later comes the expression in the form of words or a song. We call the verbal expression: prophecy.

Prophecy can also be the direct expression of a flow of revelatory thoughts. This is the way that I mostly receive prophetic words.

Prophecy can be the expression of inspired words without us consciously realising it. This can happen when we pray over someone or have a spontaneous conversation or

while we are preaching a sermon in church.

In John 12:49 the high priest Caiaphas speaks out: *It's better for you that one man die for the people, than that the whole nation perish.* Surely Caiaphas was not aware of the godly truth in his words. John continues, that *he didn't say this on his own, but as high priest of that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation, but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.*

Discernment

The gift of 'discernment of spirits' is often interpreted as a gift to detect the presence of demons. I surely recognise that kind of sensitivity as a gift of the Spirit, but I believe this is not what Paul meant. I believe it's about testing the spiritual gifts like prophecy. He mentions this gift right after the gift of prophecy, meaning that prophecy should and can be tested. The verb connected to 'discernment' (*kritein*) is used in 1 Cor.14:29 *'the others should weigh carefully what is said'*.

Interpretation of tongues

'Interpretation of tongues' is obviously an important revelatory gift.

In Romans 8:26 Paul speaks about the prayer of the Holy Spirit using 'wordless groans', meaning utterances that cannot be expressed in normal human words.

In the gift of tongues we are expressing the thoughts the prayers of the Spirit. When we speak in tongues, the Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God, He speaks secret (hidden) things. He communicates on our behalf with God the Father and the Son.

The gift of 'interpretation of tongues' is meant to grasp

what the Spirit is saying. Sometimes it's just worship, sometimes it's love, sometimes the Spirit is communicating messages back and forth. Interpretation of tongues is not a 'word for word' translation of this language, but a kind of 'feeling' or 'knowing' what the Spirit has to say. It comes very close to prophecy. Sometimes we can interpret what is said in the Spirit by a word of faith. Meaning that we proclaim: "This is the interpretation of the tongues...." We just speak in faith and the Spirit will inspire us during our speaking.

Surely Paul was not trying to give us a systematic or comprehensive list of all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit. He just wanted to give some idea before he would bring some correction in the use of the gift of tongues.

There are so many gifts of the Spirit!

Some people would rather define them as 'ministries'. I am OK when we try to give definitions or distinguish between gifts and ministries. But remember that we (as humans) need those distinctions to order our knowledge and make it accessible for our brain. God is beyond that.

Just think of 'prophetic songs'. Sometimes we hear directly inspired singing in which God speaks to individuals or to the whole church. Some of our most famous hymns started as inspired messages during dreams or as result of 'prophetic singing'.

Just think of the anointing of certain evangelists. How are they able to touch the hearts of people with really simple and 'clumsy' messages? Whatever I try, eloquent or simple, my words don't have that impact!

Just think of the different gifts in worship. I have seen peo-

ple getting healed under the anointing of certain worship leaders. The word 'healing' was not even mentioned; it just happened.

Just think of the gifts in ministry for children.

Just think of the gifts of compassion that are supernatural in nature.

The area of revelatory gifts is huge. I am sure we haven't arrived at the end of our discovery tour.

I myself am still growing in my prophetic gifts.

Others are surely more sensitive than me and have a more natural inclination towards these gifts. I had a natural inclination towards empiric sciences. During my education, first in a gymnasium and later in geology, the analytical side of my brain was developed.

In my teaching however, this is an advantage.

Suppose I would tell you about fantastic dreams or raptures into the third heaven. At that moment I would lose you because you could be jealous. You might say: "Well I wished this happened to me. I never have such encounters with the supernatural". At that moment my teaching would have no significance for you. I am out of reach!

But the truth is that whatever I received I had to fight for it. I had to conquer my fears and act out of faith taking the full risk of failure. For me prophecy didn't come spontaneously.

I started to prophesy by a step of faith; just believing that the revelation of God must be available. I said: "This is the word of God", without having any prior revelation. And I still work that way. The result was that many people came to Jesus because they encountered God in those words. Many more were comforted and received all kinds of healing.

For me visions didn't come spontaneously. At a certain point I had to take a step in faith proclaiming: "Now the Lord is showing me a vision and I see..." without having seen anything yet. And something appeared in my mind that had significance for me.

So, if I can have it, you can have it too. Maybe your fears are stopping you. They nearly stopped me. But my desire was bigger than my fears and so I started conquering them. When I now prophesy over my brothers and sisters, I am not that nervous any more. In the beginning I experienced a lot of stress. I questioned myself: What if.... Suppose I would try to prophesy over someone and there would be no message? What if.... I would prophesy out of fantasy? It all occurred to my mind. But I took the risk and so can you.

I don't have the mandate to prophesy over world events and end times. To be very honest, I tried it privately (in myself), to see if I could hear the voice of God in political events. But this private experiment didn't yield any real revelation (in fact it brought nonsense), so for the time being I'll not try again.

Maybe, one day in the future, my mandate will grow and things can be different.

I don't want to accuse (I have no right to judge), but I have heard some prophets make predictions about future developments that really did not come to pass. I did hear excited prophetic interpretations of present day politics that definitely worked out in quite a different way.

So I see no reason for presumptuous predictions, until the

Lord gives me that mandate. Then I'll try again.

Chapter 9

About visions and their interpretation

A vision is a mind picture or movie that originates from the Lord. It obviously has a pictorial element, because it depicts something that we recognise from the visual realm. We see a bird, a train, a boat, a landscape, a person.

When it's a movie, we see some action, like a train that's moving (or not moving), a person who is handing out food, or someone who is leading others on a tour.

During the picture (movie) there can be sounds, like a voice, bringing a message, or the singing of birds. There can be the sounds of trumpets or the clashing of swords. Sometimes a picture includes a taste, a smell or even a temperature.

Next to these sensual aspects there can be emotions. Sometimes the picture has an emotion of joy or maybe danger, or we feel sadness even to the point of crying. These emotions are also part of the picture and should not be discarded. They can be important for the interpretation or make it more recognisable for the recipient.

In some way it's easier to get a vision, because it doesn't contain a direct interpretation (unlike a direct prophetic word). Therefore visions are less susceptible to our own partiality. The problem arises with the interpretation.

Sometimes the meaning of a vision is very obvious. For instance, we see someone who is writing a book. Probably

this means that the recipient will write a book. But very often the message of the picture is not that clear. Don't try to get a rational explanation of your vision. A vision is a revelation from the spirit realm and should be interpreted with the help of the Spirit, not with our rational minds.

It's good to know that a vision mostly is a symbolic representation of a spiritual truth. For instance, you see a donkey with a heavy load: the interpretation is that the recipient is carrying too many responsibilities that are really burdening him or her.

But a vision can also be a real (non-symbolic) representation of a natural truth. Once I saw in a vision an old-fashioned bicycle. I had no idea what it meant. When I explained what I saw, the recipient reacted: "Well I know what it means. I have been a bicycle repairman for 40 years".

Simple questions

If you have received a vision for someone and you don't (fully) understand what it means, you could ask God some simple questions. The first two questions could be: "Does this vision have a mainly symbolic meaning, or is it a representation of a natural reality?" Mostly you will 'know' (feel) the answer because the Holy Spirit will give you peace with one of the two possibilities.

The next questions can be about the character of the contained message: "Is this vision a neutral description of a situation or does it indicate an encouragement or a warning?"

Once I saw a person with a fishing rod trying to catch one fish. The message was: "With a fishing rod you can only catch one fish at a time (description of a small evangelistic

ministry). But I want you to use a net so that you can catch more fish (meaning that God has a better method for you to evangelise)".

Then you can try to identify the different objects that you saw in the vision.

Once I saw a girl playing with a black-coloured ball. At a certain point the ball rolled away, got out of reach, leaving the little girl crying (because of the loss).

When I explained what I saw, the female recipient started crying, but I didn't know yet what it meant. She told me: "I have a lot of sadness, because my husband died some time ago". So the ball signified her husband, the black colour spoke about his death and the rolling away of the ball, signified his death and her feelings of loss.

Next you can ask the Lord: "Does a certain object in the vision signify a thing, or a person or maybe a problem? And if this object represents a person; is it the recipient or is it someone else?"

The details of your vision can be very important or just the decoration of the vision. So it's best to share them.

But realise they can be unimportant. I experienced both. Once I saw the recipient of the prophecy doing counselling from behind a desk. The desk was made of light birch wood. The recipient replied: "I am invited to take a job as a counsellor, and this is exactly the colour of the desk at my future work place. So now I know that I should accept this job-offer".

One of my team-members saw in a vision how a house collapsed. He gave a detailed description of that particular building. The recipient answered that the description of the building didn't match his house. However his house did collapse some years ago and he and his wife barely

survived.

Sometimes we can ask if the vision (picture) is timeless or refers to the past, the present or the (far) future.

Sometimes God gives us a picture about the past, to show the recipient that He knows him or her. Or He might do that to point out something from the past that He wants to heal or correct.

He might show a picture about the present to give His perspective on our situation.

He might speak about the future to give us some indication of His destiny.

We also have to take into account that God has a different idea about time than we. He might say something is going to happen 'soon', but it might take a few years.

In asking these questions we might have come closer to the meaning and the message of the vision. But still there might be a lot undefined.

Even if we tell the recipient what we saw, he or she might have no idea what we are talking about.

It's never good to leave the recipient with an undisclosed secret. We are talking about revelation, meaning that God wants to reveal something, and not about riddles, questions and secrets. I believe that if the Lord gave us half the message, in the form of a vision, He is quite willing to give us the rest as well. If we didn't receive it by asking the little questions, we should take set a step in faith.

Prophecy to explain a vision

Without having the information in our conscious mind we should act as if that information is available. So we make

a statement like: “This is God’s message for you, my son/daughter...” or “This is the word of God for you, my son/daughter..” And we just continue speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We will continue speaking, till the inspiration stops (if we try to continue to speak longer, we would just repeat ourselves). Nearly always the prophetic word will explain the undisclosed aspects of the vision.

Only seldom have I got stuck somewhere and had to admit that although there was a lot of revelation, maybe some part of the vision remained unexplained. In that case, the Lord will surely speak to the recipient and clarify what we could not yet receive.

Chapter 10

About prophetic words and actions

Abundance vs. scarcity in inspiration *Piercing the darkness*

In the last chapter we arrived at prophecy (by faith) to disclose obscurities in visions. I think for most people who want to be prophetic, steps of faith will always be necessary in their prophetic ministry.

Of course there have always been believers or seers who received most of their revelation spontaneously without having to fight for it. It just came.

I don’t belong to that category. Now and then I have a spontaneous impulse of the Holy Spirit when He tells me to do something immediately, or when He is leading me into to some important adventure. Sometimes He just informs me about something without me asking for it. Like: “Stop that person and minister to him or her”. Or “Give

that person your money”.

For me, and for many others, prophecy starts with the desire to bless others, realising that the ‘words of God’ reside in the Holy Spirit who lives in me. These ‘words of God’ are available to share with others who need it. God has enough to say to everyone. It’s my task to open my mouth and speak to them, believing that the Spirit inspires me.

Before I speak about the richness of God’s communication to people, I want to share something about the ease in which we can receive. It differs from person to person.

Of course the level of revelation that I can receive can be different from time to time. After a time of worship or soaking, the words come more easily than when I have just come from a shopping mall.

When I am asked to minister to a line-up of people, the first is easier than the last because I am getting tired. It is costing me a lot of energy to stay focused, to get rid of the previous inspiration and receive the new one. Maybe such line-ups of people are not a good idea for me. But I still do it, because people are in need of hearing from God. But there is also a great difference between the recipients.

Young vs. old

Generally young people receive more promising prophecies, because their future is still open and they can still make the right choices regarding a partner in life, education and studying languages.

Older people have often made some wrong choices in life, thereby they have limited their chances.

I mean this: When you are a teenager, the Lord may tell you, that He sees you as a medical missionary in Africa.

Well you still have plenty of opportunities to get your medical licence.

But when you end your teenage years with unwise love affairs and having a child out of wedlock, you have limited your possibilities considerably. Still there will be a lot of promises for you, but God knows, that there are self-imposed limitations.

I don't want to discourage older people. There will be plenty of promises for you. And you can walk in your destiny, if you have courage.

You should not believe the lie that you are old and that you should enjoy your pension at a sunny coast.

Faith vs. unbelief

In prophesying over so many people, I have discovered a difference between those believers that have a positive expectation of God and those that have a rather negative belief system.

Without being judgemental (certainly not regarding those that are in a desperate need like famine or sickness), we meet people who have an attitude of passivity and begging.

Because of their past, their history and upbringing, they have no initiative and are just passively waiting for others to do something for them. They see themselves as the victims of ill fortune.

Regarding God they have the same attitude: "Give me, please!" If they don't come out of this attitude, their future destination will be limited.

Through 'our' prophetic words God is also reacting to the recipient's faith. So, if we don't receive so much for the recipient, don't worry. Maybe that person is not so recep-

tive, or even self-pitying.

Blessings and curses

There are differences in the levels of blessings or curses on the different recipients. The faith of the ancestors of the recipient has positive influence on the prophetic words that we receive.

Believers can carry the blessings of their believing ancestry. We see this in the life of Timothy, who carried the blessings of the faith of his mother and grandmother.

Of course God in His grace sometimes has great promises for believers that come from a family of lawless people.

Promises and conditions

Sometimes God's foresees the positive choices that someone is about to make. Then He opens a perspective about His destiny with that person.

Promises about a (great) destiny though are always conditional; meaning that the recipient must walk in the will of God to reach that destiny. For Abraham the road towards destiny started by leaving his habitat and family. If he had stayed in Haran, we would have never heard about him. This is true for every believer.

Sometimes we feel during the prophetic word that we must include conditions, like: "If you follow Me and obey, then I'll send you as a missionary to ..."

We can't help but sense that maybe this person is at the point of making wrong choices or doesn't care so much about God's perspective.

All have a different calling

Believers do have different levels of responsibility and

anointing. When prophesying over so many different people, I sometimes know that I should do some symbolic act in order to call forth or strengthen an anointing or calling in that person's life.

As I am called to be an instructor for the HealingRoom's movement, these special acts mostly involve healing anointing. However, it's not my decision to make such a symbolic act. It's just now and then.

Suddenly I know I should take the hands of a recipient and put their hands in the position of receiving (open hands). I feel like squeezing those hands. Then the healing power (anointing) comes over me and that person. I speak words of 'life' or 'empowerment' to the recipient. For some it's stronger than for others.

In some cases I don't feel it (inspiration to impart that anointing) at all. That doesn't mean that this recipient won't have an anointing for healing. I believe all believers should desire those gifts and should explore them.

Struggling for revelation

Sometimes, during prophecy, it seems that the revelation is not coming easily. For me it feels like being in a dark room with a lot of curtains. The first revelation might just be: "I love you my son/daughter". It seems that the flow of revelation doesn't come.

At the same time I have got the idea that I should invest a lot more faith to find or grasp the revelation from somewhere.

It feels like removing some curtains or even breaking into some other room. I might say: "Now about your future, this is the word of the Lord..." It feels like every new revelation takes an extra step of faith. At the end I'll have a complete message.

Is this the resistance of satan who wants to prevent the recipient being encouraged and tries to obstruct the flow of revelation? I think so, but I am still in the process of learning.

Emotional blockades with the recipients

I am still investigating this. But it seems more difficult to prophesy to people with emotional blockages than over believers who are emotionally whole. Generally it's easier to prophecy over women, than over men, because women are more open.

No revelation at all

Only once in my life (and I am speaking about 10.000+ prophetic words) have I received nothing while trying to prophesy over a young man. I knew it couldn't be my problem because I prophesied a few minutes earlier without any problem.

So I asked this young man what his problem was. Reluctantly he told me that he was living a promiscuous life (sex with many girlfriends). This was the result of abandonment by his own father and the example of his mother who survived poverty by having different 'boyfriends' (stepfathers).

His soul was completely detached from his body. For him, sex was a consumer product and had nothing to do with emotions of love or faithfulness. I couldn't receive any rev-

elation for him until after confessions and repentance.

Chapter 11

What God has to say

Believers, who desire gifts of revelation, can have some kind of preconceived ideas about what God might be saying. This expectancy might even influence them while they are trying to receive.

This expectation might be based on the Old Testament and in particular on the proclamations of judgement that seem so common there.

Others base their expectancy on the book of Revelation and think that prophecy should be apocalyptic.

When Paul gives a short definition of the gift of prophecy, he says in 1 Corinthians 14:3 *But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*

In the New Testament's perspective, prophecy for believers is mainly positive.

Of course we have to deal with the 'so called' difference between the Old Testament prophecy and the gift in the New Testament.

First of all there probably isn't so much difference between Old and New Testament prophecy. I can't prove that of course. Next to the 'writing' prophets, there were thousands of unknown prophets between the 11th and 6th century BC. Their prophecies were mainly oral, or anyway they haven't been preserved in writing for us.

In 2 Kings 2:16, just after the ascension of Elijah, the prophets of the town of Jericho meet Elisha and say to him: *Look,*

we your servants have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley.

I use this verse just to give an estimate of their numbers. Jericho was just a small town. It had 50 able male prophets. There must also have been some less able (older) prophets. Let's say they count for 50 as well.

Then I presume there must have been female prophetesses. As the Spirit doesn't discriminate, they also must have numbered a 100 in total. This brings the count of the prophetic community to 200 people.

This is just Jericho, one of the many towns of Israel. And that's just the days of Elijah. For the whole of Israel, from the time of Samuel till the days of Jeremiah we must reckon with thousands of 'prophets'.

We don't know so much about their revelations. It cannot have been all negative. In 1 Sam.8:6 Saul and his servant go to the 'seer' (Samuel) to get information about their lost donkeys. This was a general practice. People would go to the seer for help. These kind of personal prophecies are rarely recorded in the Old Testament.

The activity of the writing prophets of the Old Testament stands in the context of the total backsliding of Israel from the Lord. Four hundred years of rebellion and sin upon sin resulted in the downfall of the two kingdoms and the captivity of the whole nation. The 'writing prophets' had to announce the judgement of God over the nation unless they repented. But there must have been a more positive tradition.

New Testament prophecy

When we speak about the gifts of prophecy within the

body of Christ, we are not dealing with prophecy on the political level. We are not dealing with the judgement of God over the nations. The prophetic mandate that we have is mainly directed towards the individual fellow believer. So this truly is encouragement, strengthening, and comfort.

A return of the 'judgemental' prophets?

Yes, it is possible. In the book of Revelation two prophets of this kind are announced. They are called the two 'witnesses' in Revelation 11:3-6

And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth."

If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

The two announced prophets have a very great mandate which is confirmed by godly protection and the destruction of their enemies. In the next verse though you will read that they will be killed (and later raised from the dead).

Nobody (with sound mind) will presumptuously claim to be one of those two witnesses. So, unless God gives you a mandate like He gave to Jeremiah, to destroy nations etc., don't put yourself in that category of prophets.

The gift of prophecy, mentioned in the New Testament, is mainly meant to encourage the believers and only seldom had a judgemental tone. Those 'prophets' that generally

have a judgemental message generally usually have inner wounds and pains and suffer from rejection. Whatever they receive is filtered by their (self)accusing spirit.

So-called 'independent' prophets

What do I mean by this expression? On my trips I encountered this phenomenon, mainly in Eastern Europe (but I encountered it also in Holland). It's about 'prophets' who operate without any kind of accountability. Whether they voluntarily left their churches, or they were thrown out (mainly because of presumptuous prophecies over leaders and churches).

Of course it happens that certain churches don't accept the gift of prophecy. I witnessed some instances that believers or ministers were thrown out of their churches as soon as they got baptised with the Holy Spirit and started talking about this experience.

But what I mean with 'independent prophets' is this. It's about men and women, mostly with a rejection problem. Of course they can't help that. It can be the result of their upbringing. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and started to move in the gifts of the Spirit. This brings some recognition and gives them some self-esteem. At a certain point the gift becomes important. It gives them some sense of identity.

But all of us make mistakes and then we need correction. For believers with identity (rejection) issues correction is a hard thing. They perceive correction as an attack on their identity (which it is not). It's only a correction towards one of their actions, or towards a certain attitude.

Believers (and unbelievers) with rejection issues find it very hard to be corrected. When it's about a prophetic

word, they can't handle the fact that one of their words is not accepted when tested and found to be faulty.

So they start to defend themselves (porcupine reaction or aggression), and if the correctors are persistent, they will accuse the correctors to be unspiritual, disobedient to God, false leaders etc. They might try to instigate rebellion towards the leadership of their church which will end in their expulsion.

Mostly however they will leave that church voluntarily and try to find another one where they will face a similar situation.

They may end as 'independent prophets', because they themselves never got healed of rejection, they will have an accusing undertone in their prophecies, and their attitude towards 'the church' might be very negative.

To discern if you are facing a mature prophet, love, accountability and correctability are important factors.

Eschatologic prophecies

Now about the apocalyptic or eschatological content of contemporary prophecies. How should we deal with them? I really advise caution in this.

The 18th and 19th centuries literally abound in 'prophets' who claimed to know about the return of Jesus and end time events. These predictors were the cause of many divisions and started their own sects (like Jehovah's witnesses).

Sometimes 'eschatologic prophets' persuaded their followers to sell everything and give the money for their

'ministry'.

I found very few positive exceptions among current prophets who received precise messages about '(end) time' events, like worldwide revivals, political events, wars and about future disasters. So before you even try to receive these kind of messages, think twice.

Chapter 12

Tense and content

Past, present, future and destiny

Love and praise; ('how God sees us')

When we start to prophesy, it's up to The Lord what He addresses. We can't just prophesy over a given subject. Often the recipient of our prophetic word wants to get an answer to a certain question, even to the point of asking us: "Can you prophesy if I'll have a new job?"

Normally I don't want to go into this. Usually I don't allow people to tell me their story before I have prophesied. Of course this is not a law.

What I mean is: Prophecy is speaking out of the heart of God. So it's always about God's priorities in a certain situation. It's not just answering requests.

Recently I was walking in the forest, talking and hearing from God. At that moment I had quite a lot of questions and in my opinion, it was time for decision making.

However, all He told me was to relax, to enjoy His presence and to enjoy nature.

I tried to provoke Him saying: "But Lord, I need to know about my program for the next 3 months. I need to buy the airline tickets before the prices go up". But He refused to answer at my questions. "Just relax, enjoy My presence and enjoy the moment. Everything will be all right".

So I had to surrender my troubled heart. And I did. For Him this was the priority. The 'necessary' information did come at His timing, some days later.

So in prophetic ministry, don't be persuaded to try to please the recipient. Of course you can ask the Lord about it and maybe He will tell you. But I prefer to start with just proclaiming His heart, His priorities.

What kind of things might be revealed? Or one can ask: "What's in God's heart?"

The Past

There is some kind of idea that prophecy is prediction and will always be about the future. I found this is very often not the case. The past can be very important to The Lord. He can give a revelation about how He is interpreting the past.

We all have some kind of interpretations or perception of past experiences. Our interpretation can be very wrong and God wants to address that.

When we are confronted with unfaithfulness or betrayal, so our reaction can be: Never trust anybody.

Maybe we gave money for a noble purpose and we discovered it was not used in the proper way, so we conclude: I'll never donate money again.

A family member died, although we prayed, so we conclude: miracles seldom happen.

So in prophecy God might address the way we perceive the past and correct the way we interpreted it.

Revelation about the past can be very important for 'inner healing'. Sometimes The Lord reveals things from the past

that we would rather forget. But He wants to heal the pain coming from that memory.

Sometimes, the Lord wants to address unrealistic self-accusations about the past. We think that we weren't a good mother because our children went astray. God might tell us that we were a good mother and so remove these false feelings of guilt.

Sometimes the Lord just reminds us about events in the past to make us realise how well He knows us and how He was watching over us. This might have great impact on non-believers because they recognise that we can't have this information from ourselves and that it must be God who speaks.

I remember prophesying over a person: "In your youth you nearly died, but you were saved by God's intervention". Immediately the recipient cried out: "That's true; I fell in the water and I would have drowned if there hadn't been someone who jumped after me and saved my life".

And sometimes (not often) God brings up something bad from the past and urges the recipient to solve that situation. I remember a situation when the recipient was urged to resolve a responsibility he had decided to ignore. It appeared he had an illegitimate child (outside his marriage). He had tried to 'solve' the issue by ignoring the existence of that child who grew up without a father and who never received any kind of support. He repented, asked forgiveness and invited his rejected child to become a part of the family.

The present

Prophetic words can be about the present.

The Lord can speak about the present because He wants to give direction in decisions we have to take now or an action we have to undertake now. Or he urges us to stop worrying and to return into His peace and relax.

He can speak about the present to encourage us that we are on the right track

Or he can speak about the present to prove that it's Him who speaks. This again can be very important for unbelievers because we will speak about their actual situation or even their actual thoughts. And of course we can't know about them in a natural way.

The future

Prophetic words can also deal with the future.

I must differentiate between future facts and destiny. The Lord can reveal (immediate) future facts because He already knows that it will happen.

Near future

I'll give an example. I prophesied over a young man that he would be asked to take the responsibility of becoming a youth leader and that he should accept this offer although he felt not qualified for that responsibility.

A week later the elders of his church came to him with exactly this request. He accepted and is now an established youth leader. Probably the Lord already knew that this was in the mind of the elders of his church.

Destiny (far future) and conditions

Another thing is destiny (or the plan of God for someone's life).

I believe that before or around the time of conception God has an idea about the kind of person (DNA) that you will be, and that He has some plan with the possibilities that you will have. So he knows that you will have a musical gift or an adventurous nature. So He might envision you as a future worship leader or as a missionary.

At a certain point in your life He might reveal His ideas about you by prophetic words, or by personal guidance or by a deep personal desire. Often there can be a natural inclination towards that destiny.

But to reach your destiny, you still have to accept Jesus (in the first place), be filled with the Holy Spirit, and then you have to overcome a lot of fears, make important decisions regarding education, finding the right partner in life etc. So in this development many things can and will go wrong. This implies that we might not come to our full destiny and not develop our full potential.

So prophecies about the near future can be very secure predictions, in order to prepare us. But prophecies about our future destiny can be highly conditional.

Intermediate future

Then prophecies regarding the intermediate future can contain directions and commissions that we have to fulfil. It can be a request to invest money or time or follow a certain training. Failing to do so can block, limit or postpone the plan of God.

The same is true if God's directions imply to forgive someone else or dealing with past disappointments. Failing to do so might surely block the plan of God for your life.

To a certain extent the obedience of others that are connected to God's plan with our life, can have influence. This is especially true if our partner is (temporarily) unwilling to comply with the plan of God. Sometimes people that God intended to cooperate in God's plan for our life may cause a delay in the fulfilment. I believe this can never be conclusive. If the recipient is obedient, God will find other people who will help us to come closer towards our destiny.

Love

In many prophecies there is a strong declaration of God's love. The Lord wants to express His Love for that person and His love is unconditional. He is willing to give new responsibility and a new mandate to those that really failed. He is the God of new chances.

Even when we would give up on a person, He offers a new chance. He is not going to accuse us over and over again because of some disastrous sin. It is the devil who will always remind us of the bitter consequences; not God. He is truly forgiving.

Praise

Next to His unconditional love is His favour and praise on account of our character and obedience. This is a different thing. I often experienced exceptional grace or favour while I was serving Him. You may look at it as a kind of reward but it doesn't feel like earning something. Because I am obedient God regards me as a partner (not as a servant) and treats me like that.

This is also reflected in prophetic words. I found that God is often praising people for their character and choices. Coming from a culture without much praise (only idolisa-

tion for football heroes, as long as they score), I was very surprised to hear God praising people, because of their demonstration of love, compassion, perseverance and faithfulness.

Chapter 13

Fulfilment and testing of prophetic words.

Many prophecies do not contain predictions about the future, but describe the past and the present or reveal the heart of God to a person. So it's not so much about fulfilment. It's about truth. Of course these words need to be tested or confirmed.

Mostly the recipient 'knows' that the word is true, because of the contained facts, which impact the soul on a very deep level, or because the Holy Spirit in their own heart harmonises with the prophetic word.

Once I was shocked by a prophetic word that was spoken over me. It implied that there was something wrong in my thinking. But the word was a bit incomplete and I couldn't figure out what it really meant and I decided to ask the Lord about the contained information.

He confirmed to me that I actually was doing something wrong which could have very harmful effects on my life. It was about my tendency of men-pleasing. The basic reason for men-pleasing is fear of rejection. I would try to please the people and the churches that I was serving, with the result that I wouldn't guard my boundaries and would get really exhausted.

I thank God for this warning which opened my eyes to a realistic danger that could have shortened my life considerably. Up to that moment I had not been able to receive

such a revelation myself.

The first person to test a personal prophetic word is the recipient. If the recipient is baptised in the Holy Spirit this testing is rather easy. The Spirit will mostly rejoice, resonate, agree or harmonise, when a true word is spoken. Of course, as in my case, mind and soul can be offended and scream louder than the soft voice of the Spirit.

The gift of discernment of Spirits (1 Cor.12:10; 14:29) is basically the agreement of the Holy Spirit in our own heart, that confirms the prophetic word, spoken by someone else.

In 1 Cor 14:29 Paul says that the 'others' should carefully weigh (or test or discern) a prophetic word. The 'others' are in the first place the other prophets who are used to receive revelation and therefore have become far more sensitive to the voice of the Spirit, than most believers.

The 'others' does not mean that just any other person (like non-spiritual Christians or even unbelievers) is able to test prophetic words. It is primarily the role of the other prophets.

I realise that sometimes just a bit of common sense is necessary to filter out highly exaggerated 'prophetic' words or blatant lies which can be presented as prophetic revelation.

Regarding the last category; those lies often contain promises about the great rewards we will receive when we donate to the 'prophet's' charity now.

The same is true when the message has a lot of self elevation. During an election campaign in a tropical country five church pastors proclaimed they had received revelation, that they would be the next president

Limitation to our own mandate in discernment

When the Holy Spirit in our own heart is unrestful and we lack peace about a certain revelation, we should first ask whether we have the right mandate to judge.

So we can ask whether the content of the prophetic word is within our prophetic mandate. If it's a revelation about something bigger than our position in the body of Christ, we probably are not entitled to judge about this issue. Someone else with a bigger mandate should test that revelation. We have to be a bit cautious.

So if something big is announced by a Christian leader who is known to be a man or woman of revelation, I'll take it seriously, even if I don't feel the Holy Spirit in my own heart is confirming that revelation. It might just be beyond my prophetic capacity.

Sometimes we may know that the 'prophet' himself is speaking beyond his mandate. In that case we will discern that the word is presumptuous.

I heard several prophecies announcing the rapture within a very short time (1 year or so) or predicting big disasters coming over my home country (a tsunami destroying Holland) within a given time interval. The 'prophets' were believers who were young or inexperienced in the prophetic gifts.

I felt they were not called to that level of prophetic authority. They had no record of experience and didn't have a recognised mandate. Yet they cause a lot of unrest in immature believers.

Neutrality, if we want to discern

We must realise that a prejudice in our own mind or

emotions can overrule the agreement of the Holy Spirit. Suppose there is a prophetic word over someone that we know. We think the word is too positive because we have some judgement about the character of the recipient.

Again, be very careful in rejecting the word. The Lord can be positive beyond our imagination. His love for everyone (including those with weaknesses in their character) is of a different level than ours. His dreams about every man or woman are just great!

Suppose there is a prophetic word that your child is called for the mission field. But it is your wish that your child will stay around and that you will enjoy your grandchildren. Of course, it's natural to be upset and protest against such a word. But this sensation of unrest may not come from the Holy Spirit.

It doesn't feel good

Normally, when we witness a prophetic ministry and we have the right mind-set, we will feel the consensus of the Holy Spirit within us. Maybe we will even feel joy and excitement.

However when we witness prophetic words (or hear about it later) and we sense the disagreement of the Holy Spirit, the first thing to do is ask the Lord: "Lord, I feel displeased about this prophetic word. Is that the Holy Spirit warning me? Must I warn or even 'deliver' (from manipulation) the recipient from this 'prophetic' word?"

He will surely answer us.

In the process of analysing a prophetic word that caused unrest, we can ask some questions about the conditions of neutrality which I discussed earlier in chapter 2.

The questions could be like this: "Did the prophet know the recipient? Did he (she) have a kind of emotional relationship with the recipient? Could that person be prejudiced (positively or negatively)? Can this prophet have any personal interest in the recipient's life or in the matter he prophesied over?

Is it a person with a loving heart? Is he (she) connected to a local church, or is he (she) a 'wild prophet'?"

This will mostly give an explanation to our sense of disagreement. There are lots of 'soulish prophecies' around certain issues, like love affairs or when someone wants to manipulate the recipient.

The Bible

It may sound a bit strange that I didn't put the bible as the first means of testing. The reason is that generally the Bible isn't appropriate for the testing of specific personal revelations.

Of course the knowledge of the Bible is the conscious and subconscious background of all that we do, including the testing of prophetic words. So if a word contradicts our profound knowledge of the Scriptures we should be on highest alert.

Occasionally, prophetic words focus on doctrinal issues. In that case we can try to test them with the scriptures. But we must take into account that we all have a biased attitude.

I mean that all churches have their special doctrines developed with the help of selected bible verses. Their doctrines are so different as a result of different interpretations and

different weighing of verses. So prophetic words may not confirm our doctrine and our interpretation of the Scriptures.

About 15 years ago I was prophesying over a group of believers after a meeting. When prophesying over a lady I felt the Lord wanted to say something beyond my understanding. He wanted me to say: "I am so proud of you, because you clung onto me in your time of despair". For me the idea, that God could be proud of us, was 'over the top'. Up to then I believed He loves us, but at the same time He is mostly disappointed about us. I didn't know how deep my vision about God's character was influenced by the character of my own earthly father, who was a good but strict and demanding parent.

In a split second I had a very quick discussion with God: "Lord I can't say that You are proud of her. That's beyond my theology. I can tell her, You love her, but I can't go beyond that". But this particular inspiration was like a burden on my heart. I had to decide quickly what to do; obey or stop the prophetic word.

Somehow I knew I had to go beyond my own limitations, so I uttered the inspiration: "My daughter, I am so proud of you, because you clung onto Me during your time of despair". The woman bursted into tears. I had to continue with the others that were lining up.

After I finished the pastor of the church approached me: "What did you do to this lady? Your word touched her so deeply. It was so healing for her. She really needed a word like this. You don't know her, but she is suffering from bipolar depression. But she is faithful. When she is in her down-period and everything turn grey and she feels nothing, she simply clings to God and His grace".

For me standing in the flow of Gods love (prophesying

love) at that moment was probably more life changing than for her.

Of course, if a prophetic word conflicts with our 'scriptural' doctrine, we should immediately test it thoroughly.

Agreement with former prophecies

There are other ways in which we can test a prophecy. When the prophecy deals with the future, we can ask: "Is it in agreement with former prophecies?" If our former words (received prophecies) describe a particular future ministry we do not expect predictions that are contrary. Generally, the prophetic words in our life picture a development. We do change, we do develop. Our mandate should grow. Our experience and openness for the gifts of the Spirit should grow. But mostly things should be in line with one another.

If we ourselves have a healthy relationship with God, prophetic words should not have many secrets or surprises. Most of the contents should already have been revealed to us (partially).

Life and character of the prophet

If we doubt a certain prophetic word we can look at the life and the character of that particular prophet.

Again, we must be very careful here. David wrote the most beautiful Psalms in which he described the suffering of Christ like no one else in the Old Testament. Yet his life was far from perfect. Although he had many wives and concubines, he didn't refrain from plain adultery and murder.

Also in our times famous prophets are sometimes 'unmasked' as having secret sins. Yet they were famous because of their prophetic accuracy.

But of course, a prophet who discredits himself by a sinful life will have lost his mandate in the eyes of the people. This is especially true when the prophet tries to benefit from his prophetic gift. Even here we can make a too quick a judgement. Every accurate prophet does benefit from his charisma. People will honour him!

Right now, as an example of a prophet who didn't fall into this trap, I am thinking of Elisha (2 Kings 5:15-16), who refused to take any present from Naaman the Syrian general.

At the other end of the spectrum, we encounter Balaam, the famous prophet from Mesopotamia, who was feared because of his curses and revered for his blessings (Num 22:6). He got into trouble because of his greed. But his words were still accurate.

Prisoners of a prophetic word

Some immature believers are really captured by directive prophetic words or by prophets. They have a fear about taking any decision in their life, because the 'prophet' told them how their life should be, or should not be.

They are unable to enter an open door or a new opportunity that the Lord might show them, because somewhere in their life there was a 'prophetic' word that pointed them in a different direction. If we are not able to hear the voice of God for ourselves, we might be stuck in a 'prophetic prison': "I can't go anywhere else, because the prophet said, I 'must' do ..."

True, but not in details

Once I received a prophetic word from a foreign prophet

who certainly had no prejudice towards me. It happened at the office of a missionary organisation and probably he supposed that I belonged to their staff. He prophesied that I would be in the very centre of that ministry, having my own team around me, having my own office and employees.

Now he was quite close, because most of it was prophesied before. One day I'll have my own office and I will lead a team of people. The only mistake he made was about the connection with the office of that missionary organisation.

I more or less happened to be there. I am a friend, but I never received a confirmation to work at their head office or be one of their key leaders. Of course, things can change in the future.

But I have more than one prophetic word about leading my own ministry and having my own office. Right now I am inclined to think that these prophecies are about my ministry in Romania, where I hope to have a centre for my ministry regarding HealingRooms.

Prophecies regarding destiny

Regarding our future destiny there might be a long time to go and it is dependent on our own choices

When I was a young believer a foreign prophet prophesied over my future. He did give some details about the way The Lord would call me and he spoke about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in my life. The prophecy dealt with education and training. Most of that was fulfilled. Regarding the development of the gifts of the Spirit in my life everything was fulfilled, but it included my personal involvement.

When I look back I think I missed certain details about my training and education because at that time I wasn't listening very well and I probably made some wrong decisions.

But overall I would say the prophetic word was correct and it was fulfilled (not in all details).

Many times this prophetic word stimulated me to re-focus at God's calling for my life. If it hadn't been there I might have given up somewhere.

Prophecies about destiny are always conditional in the sense that we have to comply with it and make the right decisions on the way.

The strategy against our destiny

The devil has devised a strategy against us in order that we won't arrive at our destiny.

First he introduces lies, fears and traumas in our life to get hold of us and discourage us.

Then he tempts us to make wrong decisions. The most common 'wrong decisions' are:

- 1 marrying the wrong partner,
- 2 wanting security versus risk,
- 3 leaving the path because of offence, rebellion, unbelief, self-pity, disappointments and bitterness,
- 4 complying with cultures or belief systems

When God speaks prophetically about our destiny, He reveals His 'dream' about your life. He knows exactly who we are and what natural gifts we have. He has a concept of how our life should be and in what way we can minister in His kingdom. This doesn't always imply full time ministry. God calls people in trade, business, manufacturing, arts, family and all kinds of professions.

But in some way it's always related to establishing (promoting) His kingdom on earth. We are all called to rule over our (little) domain where we will bring peace, joy,

and righteousness. We all are called to develop the gifts of the Spirit in our domain.

When we receive a prophetic word regarding our destiny this will not come to pass automatically.

fear, lies and trauma

I know someone who surely has gifts for healing. He had prophecies about it and some dramatic healings happened. But his fears are paralysing him. So the full potential of his healing ministry is not developing. He needs to realise that he should fight for it. As long as he is stuck in fears his ministry will be very limited and go unnoticed.

So what could he do? He should attend courses on the ministry of healing and read book about it. He should connect to ministers that operate in the gifts of healing. That will encourage him and enlarge his faith. Next he should join their ministry teams and take every opportunity to start ministering to the sick. Then his gifts will be noticed and God will enlarge his mandate.

Of course this should go together with an increasing intimacy with God. The trajectory to our destiny cannot be programmed by ourselves. We need to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But in order to get at our destiny we need to enter some kind of cooperation a kind of partnership with God.

Thee road towards our destiny is mostly blocked by lies (believing that we are not capable), fears (what will other people think of me) and traumas, which cause us to perceive ourselves as victims instead of conquerors.

Of course the lies, fears and traumas might be very intricate and complex. We have to deal with these things and the best way to do it is to learn to communicate with God.

He will show us these lies, fears and traumas and has way to get us out of them. He has the ability to heal us completely.

But that doesn't normally happen without our cooperation. We should be humble enough to ask for ministry and receive help and correction from others. Very often we have to go through deliverance ourselves and receive inner healing from traumas that occurred during our lives. We need intimacy with God to get over our rejection issues. Rejection will cause us to fail as leaders, because we will be men-pleasing and are in need of titles or the honour of men.

Steps towards our destiny choices and decisions.

1 Marriage

A lot of believers find their partner based only on physical or emotional attraction. Every year I witness how promising young believers end up marrying an unbeliever. They are craving for the sensation of being loved and appreciated. We all face some rejection problems and so we are vulnerable in this.

This book is not a marriage course, but I do think that a common destiny is an important condition for a marriage (next to a certain level of wholeness and stability). Of course, marrying the right person doesn't guarantee, that your life will be without problems and that marital problems can't arise.

2 Security vs. risk

When we want to get to our destiny, we always have to give up natural securities. Abraham had to leave his family and home country; others had to give up their job or regular income.

In our destiny there will always be insecurities regarding the natural world. This is because God's kingdom is a supernatural kingdom. We will be tested on anything (in the natural world) that we rely on. God wants us to be dependant of Him.

There was a man who told me: "I want to serve God, but I first want financial security. So I want a business and when I have earned enough, I'll put myself in pre-pension. Then I can serve the Lord full time". Maybe at that moment his health will not be good enough for the destiny that God had in mind.

In the road towards our destiny we need to communicate with God and obey Him when He is asking us to give up the things we are relying upon.

Then the development of the gifts of the Spirit always implies taking risks. Growth in the gifts of the Spirits demands faith, meaning that we will have to do things, that are beyond human control just trusting that the Lord will do His part. Very often growth in the gifts of the Spirit implies a choice for a risky living.

I don't have to prophesy... but I am taking the risk of investing faith and effort to bless others. This brought me where I am now - on the road towards my destiny, I am no longer at some kind of detour.

3 Leaving the path

There can be many reasons to give up. We can falsely be-

lieve that God gave up on us.

We can rebel or give up because of disaster, death, or unhealed sicknesses. We can be offended by the behaviour of fellow believers. We can be confronted with lack of recognition or even overt rejection. The road towards self pity and unbelief is very easy. Some believers yield to a temporary frustration, some stick in it for the rest of their lives. The devil managed to neutralise them.

4 Complying with culture or belief systems

What I mean by this is that all of us have a certain mindset. It can be to some extent unconscious because it's so 'normal'. When travelling between cultures we often see how different people react and believe, because it's 'normal'. Some cultures are extrovert, others introvert. Some are more liberal, some are more stringent.

The Dutch culture is anti-authoritarian. Government officials are considered 'civil servants'. They are there to serve and not to rule. This is even true for church officials, like pastors. They are mostly under the authority of the elders. So in that culture strong leaders are not accepted. It takes courage to lead. You will face accusations of being a dominant person.

Can we go against our culture? Sometimes, going for our destiny, we are challenged to do so.

I am not fully sure how to deal with this. In some cultures women are not allowed to be active in public Christian ministry, because of their gender. Yet I found that sometimes God has a destiny for them beyond their cultural limits. I met excellent female pastors in predominant male cultures. Of course they had to cope with prejudice against

them. I believe sometimes the Spirit tells us to comply with local culture, sometimes he calls us to overcome it. I could refer to Debora (Jud.4) who is actually called a 'judge' and even had the courage to admonish the male leaders of Israel (Barak).

I am very curious to know how she ever got into this unusual position of being a judge (without university degree). And how she got this level of recognition by male leaders.

In some cultures women are supposed to get married really young, and give up their own career for marriage and children. Staying single (as a woman) and having a ministry is regarded as 'suspect'.

Sometimes we should face the challenge of going against culture or belief systems.

Paul was facing this problem regarding the slaves. "Obey your masters," he advised. But God regards slaves as equal to their masters.

Of course, I am part of my own culture and I am not sure how far I was able to gain my Godly freedom. Anyway The Lord helped me out of the judgemental and critical attitude of my Dutch heritage, and He delivered me from 'mammon' that is ruling the Western Hemisphere.

He delivered me from feeling a wrong kind of responsibility and made me dependent on Him. He opened my eyes from seeing human and financial limitations into seeing His kindness, mercy and provision. He delivered me from the paralysing self-accusation - never feeling good enough.

The doctrines of my Calvinistic and Pentecostal background made me prejudiced towards other Christian communities. The Lord helped me out of this judgemental

attitude and now I am seeing other believers through His eyes as His dear children.

Before that time, I would not have been able to serve those other communities as I am now. Certainly my old doctrinal attitude limited my ministry and my road towards my destiny. Well I am still walking with Him and He changes my heart continuously.

During one of my trips to Romania I was invited to preach in a Charismatic Roman Catholic community. I agreed although I had some prejudices against the Roman Catholic church. Some of my ancestors had fled Roman Catholic countries where they were persecuted. They came to Holland as religious refugees, because of the religious tolerance there. They had to leave their possession behind. Up to that moment I always sensed a kind of pride, because of this ancestry. But I agreed to this invitation and I came in their community.

The meeting took place in a secular building and I was amazed, that they sang 'our' songs and that we had so much in common. They invited me again, but because it was winter the meeting took place at a different location. It was a Catholic church full of statues. I remember entering the door and looking at the interior of that church; statues of saints and Mary all over the place.

According to my tradition this was an idol temple. I was shocked. "Can there be any anointing in this place?" I thought. I felt like walking out and not 'compromising' myself with idolatry. Then I did the only right thing. I asked God: "What do you think about this?" His response came immediately:

"I don't mind, I only care for the people"

. A big burden fell off my shoulders. Jesus doesn't mind.

He is searching for the hearts of people. In that moment He delivered me from the prejudices that I had against the Catholics.

Today a large part of my work in Romania and Hungary is in cooperation with the Roman Catholic charismatic communities in those countries. Bringing people together from different denominational backgrounds is part of Gods destiny for my life (I realize now). But I had to overcome my dogmatic prejudices. These prejudices could have easily stopped me from proceeding into the plan of God with my life

Now back to destiny. When God reveals destiny, He probably reveals what is still possible at the time of speaking. That's why young people mostly receive a bigger destiny than older people.

Young people can still make choices that enable them to follow the road to destiny from the very start. Older people have already made many (wrong) choices, so new possibilities are somewhat limited (although still surprising).

Through prophetic words the Lord may reveal a destiny that we may not reach. In this case the prophetic word is not false. It contains God's vision. If the recipient listens to His voice and obeys, he or she may come very far towards that destiny. If the recipient starts making ungodly decisions, he or she might limit the development towards destiny.

This should not put a burden on you. You will not lose your destiny because of a little mistake. But big decisions like picking up the wrong education, finding a non-believing marriage partner, leaving a church because of frustration, might have a big impact on your progress towards destiny.

I lost four precious years in trying to get a doctorate degree in geology. I already knew (through the Holy Spirit) that I would never be a professional geologist, but I just didn't want to be a loser. I had to do it without God's blessings.

I once accepted a position as a church pastor. The main reason was frustration in my own church. Two years later I gave up that position because I was frustrated again. In both cases I acted without revelation. The consequence was at least 'a bad reputation'.

I don't know how far it affected my road towards destiny, but it certainly delayed it.

Now I am on the road towards my destiny and the road is exciting.

