

The Holy Spirit and Prophecy

by Stewart Ruch

Prophecy is a divine impression or intuition that comes from God, given human expression, and seeks to minister Scripture and bring clarity to the word of God.

Duration: 30:34

Scripture: John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 13:12 - 14:1, 1 Corinthians 14:8, 1 Corinthians 14:12, 1 Corinthians 14:15

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares two personal experiences related to the prophetic ministry. The first experience involves a woman named Joanna who unexpectedly starts speaking in tongues during a meeting. The speaker is initially confused and unsure of what to do, but prays for her and leaves the situation open-ended. Later, another student named Roger approaches the speaker and reveals that he heard Joanna speaking in tongues. The speaker realizes the importance of pursuing love, pushing past passivity, and proposing humbly when sharing prophetic words. The sermon emphasizes the need to strive for excellence in building up the church and to seek understanding through the metaphor of seeing dimly in a mirror. The speaker also highlights the importance of learning how to hear from the Lord and taking action based on what is perceived. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the need for particularity in prophetic ministry, where specific messages are given to prepare for spiritual battles.

Transcript

This is Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, Illinois. This week's sermon is by Bishop Stuart Ruck. I want to tell you a story that in so many ways could be lifted right off the pages of what was read earlier by Chris in 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

I was involved in a campus ministry at the University of Illinois at Chicago many, many years ago. And our campus ministry was very diverse. It was very diverse ethnically and culturally.

It was very diverse with people of a lot of different church backgrounds, as well as many people who didn't have any church background at all, which meant different traditions, different customs. So it was a very exciting group to lead and also very challenging. And there was a day where one of the women in the group came to me and said, you know, Stuart, I'm working through some hard things.

Would you meet to pray with me? And I said, of course. So she and I and a friend of hers met in our offices, and we sat down together. And I said, what's on your mind? What's bothering you? And for the

next half hour, she had the hardest time articulating what it was that was bothering her.

There was anxiety. There was agitation. But she just couldn't name it.

She just couldn't get specific. And I was wanting to help, and I was asking her questions and trying to draw things out of her. But we just weren't getting anywhere.

And so I said, you know, maybe we should just pray. And so we bowed our heads to pray. And I just prayed, Lord, you know, please help Joanna to share what's on her heart so we can serve her.

And she stopped and said, whoa, whoa, whoa, hang on a second. She said, would you mind if I spoke in tongues? I was surprised by that question. And before I could even answer, she said, by the way, I don't believe in tongues anymore, but I want to speak in them.

So at that point, I was so confused, I just nodded my head. Sure, whatever's going to happen is going to happen now. So we bowed our heads again, and she just, boom, burst out in what the Bible calls a tongue.

And by that, she was praying out loud, but they weren't words that I knew. I didn't recognize it as a language. It was nonsensical, but it was something that was coming out of her mouth.

And I knew from the Bible that tongues are spoken. It's often a prayer language, and I knew that if it's spoken out loud, you need an interpretation. So she stopped and kind of took a breath, and I looked at her friend, and I said, do you have any idea what she just said? Do you have an interpretation of what she just said? I have no idea what she just said.

I asked her, do you know what you just said? She said, I have no idea what I just said, and I didn't have any idea. So I just chalked the whole experience up as unusual and prayed for her and walked away a little kind of open-ended, like, what just happened there? Several hours later, I was leaving campus in the evening, and there was another student named Roger, and he had converted later in life. He had been a Marine.

He converted into the Marines, and he had embraced a theology that was extremely rigid, and there was a way in which there were things that fit and didn't fit, and he had everything squared off and was actually a wonderful presence, but at times could be a little intimidating because he was very bright, and he wanted to make sure everything fit within his theological paradigm. So honestly, even though I was several years older, I was a little intimidated by Roger. So I'm leaving, long day, tired, and I'm walking out the door, and he says, Stewart, may I speak to you? And literally, I was like, oh, I'm in trouble.

What did I do? What happened today? What happened to him? What happened today? And I turned around and said, yeah, sure, Roger. What's on your mind? He said, well, he said, I was studying outside of the office this afternoon when you were meeting with Joanna. I went, oh, no.

Oh, no. She spoke quite loudly in this tongue when she did so, and I thought, he heard her. He's upset.

He doesn't believe in this. So I said, yeah, yeah, that, yeah. And he said, I feel really bad because I feel like I was made privy to information that she wasn't sharing with me.

She talked a lot about her dad, Stewart, and the relationship, the heartbreak, the need to forgive him. It was just kind of this, like, two-minute thing about her father, and I had to kind of put it all together. And I

realized that Roger, despite his particular theological perspectives, had been given an interpretation of the tongue that Joanna had prayed in.

So I said, Roger, she wasn't talking in English about her dad. She was praying in a tongue, and the Bible would say that you had an interpretation of that tongue, which essentially the Bible would say makes that prophecy. She spoke, and you're giving a prophetic word about what's on her heart, a word of knowledge about her own heart.

And he got super stiff, and he looked at me, and he said, with a step back as he said it, I'm sure it was a passing and momentary phenomenon. I don't know. You may hope this sermon is a passing and momentary phenomenon.

But it's a really important story because what happens is what the Scripture says needs to happen, and that is that prophecy is given by God. Roger didn't make that happen. He even had concerns about something like that happening, but God so loved Joanna and so loved Roger, he overrode Roger's theological system in the moment.

He used Roger as the people of God and the body of Christ to minister to Joanna. Of course, the Lord could have spoken to Joanna directly. He could have given her clarity, but he wanted the body.

He wanted Jesus together in his body. He wanted different people to use different gifts because the Holy Spirit was on the move. The gifts are about the Holy Spirit and Jesus himself, and he sovereignly works as he will when he desires.

And he desires for us to know how deeply loved in Christ we are. So this happened to Roger. He ministers to Joanna just how deeply she loved in the Lord.

She felt known by the Lord. This thing she couldn't even articulate that had to do with her dad and prayer and healing she needed around her relationship with her dad now came to the surface. We can move her into more intensive discipleship and a healing process around that.

I was profoundly edified and built up to see this happen before my very eyes. I read 1 Corinthians 14 on my way home on the train and was astonished that I had seen that very thing play out. Paul makes prophecy a very significant priority, not only in his own ministry, but in the ministry of those who follow Jesus.

And we'll look at this passage together, starting with verse 13 of chapter 13, and we'll go down to 14.12. And this section, this passage breaks into two main parts. The first part of the passage is Paul sharing that prophecy is a priority for the people of God to engage in and learn, and that prophecy should be practiced. He actually gives some similes, some illustrations about the practicing of prophecy.

So two parts this morning. Prioritize prophecy and practice prophecy. 13.13 to 14.5 and then 14.6 to 14.12. First of all, we see that prophecy is a biblical priority.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three. But the greatest of these is love. Pursue love.

And earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. Immediately we see Paul saying, I'm putting it especially in front of prophecy. There's many spiritual gifts.

Father Matt taught on the spiritual gifts a few weeks ago in this Holy Spirit series. Paul is taking one spiritual gift and he's giving it in significant priority, especially in verse 1. Then look at verse 5 with me. Now I want you all to speak in tongues.

So there's a hope on Paul's part that they'll have a prayer language. I'm not teaching on that today. We do teach on it here at Resurrection.

But even more, Paul says, to prophesy. Then with even greater clarity, the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues. Could Paul be any clearer about the priority he's putting on prophecy? Now this isn't the only section where Paul teaches on prophecy.

If you look at all of his writings over the course of his writing work, which is extensive, ten different sections or verses where Paul will teach or highlight the importance of prophecy. And what's even more important, if you know anything about this church, this was a church that was in the ancient Near East. It was a Greek area, Corinth.

It's that this church very likely had an imbalance in how it was exercising the spiritual gifts. So it wasn't like Paul's going to a church that won't exercise the spiritual gifts or are afraid of them. It's the opposite.

As a matter of fact, look at verse 12. You can learn something about this church by what Paul's saying to the church, which is always interesting and important when you do Bible study. He says, So with yourselves, Corinth, church, since you are eager for the manifestations of the Spirit.

And we know from other sections within this book that they actually just love speaking in tongues. As a matter of fact, they've made it the case that unless you speak in tongues, you can't be a leader. You can't be seen as mature, which is not what the Bible teaches.

Speaking in tongues is not a correlation with maturity. It's a gift that God gives. It's not the most important gift.

But in Corinth, it's the most important gift. And prophecy as well. They want these spectacular gifts, these supernatural gifts.

And those people who think they're more spiritual than other people because they have these gifts and those who don't have them aren't as spiritual. So you would think for Paul as a teacher who's coming into this problem, when he had this idea that all this stuff is realized now and everything that's going to happen in the kingdom and the future is happening right now in every single way, you'd think Paul would say, Whoa, stop. For you guys, no more prophesying for a year.

I've got to control you. But he doesn't. Why wouldn't he? Because Paul submitted to the Bible.

He knows his Hebrew scriptures. He knows the book of Joel talks about all sons and daughters of the church, particularly the next generation, prophesying all of them. He knows Moses said, Oh, that all the people of God would be prophets.

He knows his Bible, so he knows he can't teach to shut this down. So why don't we try to shut it down? Or why don't we just ignore it? Or why do we say, Oh, prophecy and these more manifest gifts or sign gifts, they belong to certain traditions. I'm fine with it being in the Pentecostal church.

If you're familiar with that tradition or the assembly of God church, or I get that many Latino churches work in this way or African-American churches, not all, but some many do. So that's awesome. I've been to global areas and I heard them doing stuff like this.

That's so great for the Africans. Do you see what you might be doing? You may be actually finding a really convenient way whereby you're saying it's for them, but not for me. But Paul seems to think it's for everyone.

Even some kind of prophetic wackos here in Corinth. It's still for them. Now he's going to teach them how to do it properly and in order and biblically.

Very important. And he'll call them when they use it for control. Because prophecy can never be used for control.

God's in control when prophecy happens. I'll get into that. Okay.

So I just want to be really clear. It's not a certain personality type that you have and thereby you prophesy or more extroverted people prophesy. There's just nothing like that in the Bible.

And it's not a certain tradition. As a matter of fact, in the early traditions of the church, there was a bishop named Melito in the 100s. So right after the early apostolic generation, there's a sermon we have of Melito's.

He was known as a teacher and as a prophet. And you see him teaching the Bible like I'm attempting to do this morning. But then you see him in the text of the sermon.

Second century, go off road and prophesy over his church. And it's recorded for us. He speaks to them specifically about things they're going through and persecutions and that the power of God is there for them.

And he speaks specifically to them. And then he goes back to the teaching of the text. You'll see that kind of interweaving happen a lot at resurrection.

So if you've been here even for several weeks, you've experienced prophecy or prophetic ministry. We don't always stop and say, here now is a prophet. Although we will try to say sometimes, that was prophetic.

But you've watched it woven in. You come to a res fast, it's woven in. The people of God prophesy and we have a process by which they can share.

It has to be discerned. If you were here last week, you heard my wife Catherine teach on Jesus' authority over the demonic. Now she taught from a prepared text.

She taught from the scriptures. But then after we taught, after she taught, we began to apply the teaching. And that was a prophetic moment.

And by that I mean everything got kind of clear and vivid and sort of intense. Because prophecy brings a clarity. It brings a vividness.

It was woven into the rest of the service. Why is prophecy such a priority? Why is it a priority in the Hebrew scriptures? Why is it a priority for Paul? Is it a priority for Peter and for John and other writers of the New Testament? Why? Why does it matter so much? I hope you feel like I haven't answered that question yet. I hope you're a little bothered that I haven't answered it yet.

Because I haven't. And that question should be answered. If you're looking at your Bibles, this gets a little confusing.

Because they have chapters in your Bible. Now that helps us. But those weren't put in until many, many centuries after this was written.

So when Paul wrote this letter, he didn't go, and now chapter 14. He wasn't writing that way. It was a flow of thought.

So if you were reading Paul's original manuscript, you would read, Faith, hope, and love abide. These three, the greatest of these is love. Pursue love.

No stop. No pause. And earnestly desire the spiritual gift, especially that ye may prophesy.

Do you see how Paul ties love, the greatest of these, with prophecy? When Paul says love, what he is talking about, very specifically, is the cross of Jesus Christ. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, John says, and gave himself as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. The heart of love in Christianity is very clearly defined.

It's completely misused within our larger culture, understandably. But in Christianity, it's very defined. Why is the greatest of these love? Because that is the heart of the good news of Jesus.

That he has died for our sins. And prophecy seeks to serve the cross. It seeks to minister the reality of Jesus and forgiveness of our sins.

It seeks to minister to you the fact that God so deeply loves you, he gave his only son. So prophecy is a priority only because what? Love is a priority. Only because what? The cross of Jesus is a priority.

Prophecy builds up. Paul says, verse 3, verse 4, verse 12. That's used over and over again.

And it builds the church. The church is built up as the people of God take the word of God, eternal, but then minister in a temporal way and apply the word of God to one another in the power of the Holy Spirit. If I were to define prophecy, I would define it this way.

Prophecy is a divine impression. I think God may be saying this. It's an intuition or it's an idea that comes into your head.

It doesn't have to be intuitively necessarily. It could be a dream that you're given when you're sleeping or when you're praying. You get a picture of something in prayer.

It can happen in a lot of different ways. It's a divine impression given human expression. Divine impression given human expression.

It is in no way on level with Scripture. It seeks to only minister Scripture to bring Scripture even greater clarity. It's never new revelation but revelation renewed.

Let me give an example. So I was a senior at Wheaton, and as some of you know from my spiritual story, at that point I was very far from God. I was in a place of high rebellion.

My parents had just divorced. So I'm at Wheaton. I'm going to classes.

I'm living in college apartments, but I'm breaking every single rule of which I came to a place of shame and repentance and went to the leadership of the school to repent. But at that point I was not there. I was not repenting.

I was locked into this position and very justified and very hard to reach. My friends were worried about me. Many were worried about me, but I had defenses that were very strong.

And into that time, my pastor's wife from Indianapolis started calling me. And she'd call, and that's when we had a telephone, and she would leave a message with one of my roommates. And I would get this written note, you know, Sarah called your pastor's wife.

And I'd be like, why would she ever call me? That's so weird. I am not calling Sarah back. That's for sure.

And I said to my roommates, hey, guys, like if she calls, you know, I'm not here, right? That was a lie, but I was doing way more than just lying about things like that. So that was easy for me. Just tell them I'm not here.

Well, one roommate wasn't there. Phone rings. It's Sarah.

He answers. Oh, sure, Stuart's right here. What? Who is it? Who is it? Is your pastor's wife from Indianapolis? No.

So I take the phone. I stretch the long, long cord into my room. I say, hi, this is Stuart.

And she says, God will not give me rest till I talk to you. I can't stop praying for you. You're in trouble, aren't you? No.

No, no, I'm actually completely fine. Now, at that point, I'm seeing a psychiatrist for anti-anxiety drugs. I can hardly go to class.

I'm not fine. No, I'm great. I'm fine.

Why? What do you want? Well, she said, I believe the Lord wants you to know he is ready to move powerfully in your life. As a matter of fact, Stuart, at some point, I want you to know that all the theater work you're doing and the fact that you think you're going to be an actor someday, that's not going to happen, she said. But you're going to be a pastor.

And you're going to use all you've learned in theater, and your pastor will work. I'm like, what? A pastor? He's got a good wife for you and several children. Some folks are laughing.

I have six kids, and I have an awesome wife. And it is possible that some theatrical training I got has seeped into my ministry. Okay.

So I am so upset by this intrusion in my life, I just hang up. I can't handle it. You know, when you're new to this or you're opposed to this, it's just so overwhelming.

I just shut the phone down. I took a deep breath. When I was 21, that was preposterous.

Now at 51, it was prophetic. But you know why it mattered? I needed to know that God loved me. I needed to know personally that He knew who I was.

I felt totally unknown. I felt abandoned. I felt forgotten.

I was falling apart at the seams. God loved me. God knew me.

God knew I was a wreck. Now, I didn't receive His word at the time, but you know that word went into my heart. That was the deepest thing that I actually wanted.

I wanted everything that she said. But I just couldn't admit it to myself or anyone else. Sometimes I wonder if the dearth in the Christian church of people knowing how much the Father loves them is because there's such a dearth of prophetic ministry done biblically.

And there's other reasons why there's a dearth of people knowing that God loves them. I'll get to another one of those in a moment. But I think one reason is that we're not prophesying in the Holy Spirit over one another, applying the truth of God's word, the love of Jesus to one another in specific and particular circumstances.

It's a priority because love is a priority. And love's a priority because the cross is a priority and they're tied together. But for Paul, he always moves from his theology into the practice of the theology.

It's very important to him. He's writing letters to people who need to know, okay, now what? And he does this. He gives us this first half on why prophecy's a priority.

Now he moves. Brothers and sisters, he says in verse 6, If I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? It's so clear, isn't it? By the way, he's not down on tongues. He just primarily sees it as a private prayer language whereby you interact with God in your spirit.

That's another teaching from another time. But he's not going after tongues. It's just that he's trying to prioritize prophecy.

Then he uses this incredible picture where he says, Even instruments, if they're played properly, give a distinct note. If a bugle is played properly, it gives a distinct note to go into battle. So what he is doing is he's training, saying, first of all, practice prophecy.

How do you begin that? How do we begin that? Begin by pursuing love. Pursue love more than you pursue prophecy. Love is the priority, which is to say what? That you're going after Jesus.

You're going after who he is. You're going after life in this church even before you're going after prophecy. But it also means, and Catherine taught into this when we're dealing with the reality of demonic spirits, in the same way when we're learning how to prophesy, what that means is it's your life being lived in the love of Jesus, which means what? You're reading your Bible daily so you can hear from God in his eternal word.

You're praying. You're learning how to pray, which takes a long time and it's really hard. So if you're just learning, don't get discouraged.

You're learning how to fast so that your physical hunger reflects your deeper God hunger. You're taking the Eucharist, the ministry of the cross and the resurrection given to you in bread and wine in the body and blood of Jesus. You're involved in a res group.

You're living life with other people closely where they're learning how to prophesy with you and you're learning how to prophesy with them. So you pursue love. Second, though, you must choose to push past passivity.

Here's what I mean. This is the kind of teaching that presents you with a decision. Sometimes it feels like, oh, the person preaching, they're doing all this work up there and everything else and my job is just to listen.

In part, that's part of your job, but you have a bigger job. Is it true? Is it a priority like I'm teaching? Do you agree with that? Does it reflect and minister the cross? You have to decide if that's true or not. My hope is that you won't be passive in the face of prophecy.

My hope is that you'll wrestle with the Bible. You'll go read other sections where Paul talks about it. You can look it up online and it'll show you where he talks about it.

You'll look at the 16 out of 39 books in the Old Testament that are prophetic books. I don't want you to disagree with this because I think this is the teaching of the Bible, but I would rather you disagreed than that you were passive in the face of it. Because Paul's not leaving room for passivity.

It's why he even says there in verse 12, strive to excel in building up the church. It's an active call, which would mean to push past passivity, you'll have to decide and then you'll have to choose to risk. You'll have to learn how to hear from the Lord, which we are really glad to teach you here, and then how to act on what you think you've heard.

Pursue love, push past passivity, and propose, don't impose third. You propose what you think you may be hearing from the Lord for somebody else very humbly. Why? Look at verse 12 of chapter 13.

For we now see in a mere dimly, we don't see perfectly, what Paul's saying, but then face to face when the Lord fully returns and establishes His kingdom on earth. Now I know in part, then I shall know in full. So when we're teaching and sharing prophetic words, we're saying, I know in part, I have part of a picture, or this scripture verse may help you with part of what you're struggling with.

One reason why we also don't live in the love of God is that we have sinful natures that we're still getting free from, and we don't know in full how He loves us. We don't speak in full prophetically. So we do so, and we're called to be prophetic, but we do so humbly.

We propose, we never impose. Some of you got caught up in cultures where they taught on prophecy, or they practiced prophecy, and that was good. But it actually became controlling, or it actually became elitist, or became a way in which they were used against you.

Some of you might have actually suffered actual spiritual abuse at the hand of prophets, or it was just confusing, and you never understood it. That is not what Paul is talking about here. Indeed, there must be discernment from others.

When there's one prophetic figure in a community and no one else, I get very concerned. I don't see that in the Bible. It says that several prophets talk with each other about things.

Two or three prophets will often prophesy within one meeting sometimes. When we do prophetic ministry at Res Fast, for example, it's a great place to see it in action. We break into small groups.

We pray and intercede. We listen for words of prophecy, knowledge, wisdom from the Lord. Then the people in the small group share with their small group leaders what I think I heard.

They discern it. Then they bring it to a priest or a deacon. We discern it before we share with the people of God.

You see the accountability? You see the levels? It needs to come. It must come forth. It must come forth from the body of Jesus.

So when you're seeking to be prophetic, you're saying to somebody, I think I got this word, and I'm hoping that many of you are going to do this in the next week. We're actually going to practice it in just a moment. I think I got this word.

I'm not positive, but I wanted to share it with you. Does it resonate? It's that simple. And they may, like I did with my pastor's wife, say, No, you're absolutely off.

But you're actually on. Or you're just off. You just didn't get it clear.

You did it with love. They'll be edified. But more often than not, you'll have something for them.

How will you find that out? By doing it. It's the only way you're going to find it out. This is not theory.

Finally, learn particularity. Part of the prophetic ministry is particular. So it's that bugle note that Paul says in the second half of this section that gives a distinct note so that you're ready for battle.

Catherine laid this out very clearly. We are in a spiritual battle. Paul's referring to it as a backdrop here on prophecy.

We need clear prophetic words that minister in a vivid way the Bible because we're in a battle. And every single human soul is in a battle. Every single human soul is in a fight.

And so what happens, we can give a distinct word is we can build them up. Now, when you first learn how to share prophetic words, they may be more vague, and that's okay. I don't want you to hold back because you have a word for somebody that says God loves them.

Share that word with them. Absolutely. It's true from the Bible, and it's true.

But as you grow in listening to the Lord, I actually want to challenge you to grow with greater and greater particularity. And try that. That is as prophecy matures and as we mature in it, we get there.

Let me close with this. It was a very particular word that was given. Trevor and Bonnie McMacken were here for many years.

We were having a 24-7 season of prayer, 40 days of prayer around the clock. They were praying and seeking the Lord, and there it became very clear to them they were called to plant a church in Aurora.

They shared it with the leadership of the church.

We got very excited about it. We were all moving forward with it, but they still felt like they needed more confirmation from the Lord. They were in Aurora on a prayer day.

We hadn't announced to the church they were thinking about Aurora. They were at a coffee shop. They especially loved Aurora because it has a beautiful and large Latino and African-American population, and they wanted to have a church that had more kingdom diversity.

So they're there, and a Latino couple walks in that had been visiting resurrection. They did not know Trevor and Bonnie were thinking about Aurora. But they walk in and they say, Oh my goodness, it's great to see you guys here.

What are you doing in Aurora? And they said, Oh, we're just spending the day here. They didn't say much yet. And the woman said, This is so interesting because last night I had a dream about you two.

You're in my dream. And she'd seen Bonnie lead worship. Bonnie's a worship leader.

And in that dream, Bonnie, you were leading worship, but you weren't leading worship at Rez where I've seen you. You were leading worship here in Aurora. Isn't that strange? To which Bonnie and Trevor said, No, that's prophetic.

And we receive it as an edification. Pursue love, especially that you may prophesy. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Thanks for listening. Our vision at Church of the Resurrection is to equip everyone for transformation.

As part of that vision, we love to share dynamic teaching, original music, and stories of transformation. For more of what you heard today, check out the rest of our podcast. To learn more about our ministry, visit churchrez.org.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28760.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stewart-ruch/the-holy-spirit-and-prophecy/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net