

How God Enables Us To Prophecy

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a listening ear to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying, encouraging others with God's words of love and compassion, and the need for humility in receiving encouragement from unexpected sources like younger individuals. It highlights the impact of trials in developing a ministry, the significance of love in prophesying, and the role of love and respect in fostering healthy relationships within families.

Scripture: Hebrews 5:11, 1 Corinthians 14:3, Ephesians 5:33, Ephesians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Psalms 18:25, Psalms 18:26, Matthew 6:12, Mark 9:24, John 13:34

Topics: "Listening to the Holy Spirit", "Humility in Encouragement"

Description

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Transcript

So it says here in Hebrews in chapter 5 and verse 11, Jesus, we have much to say but it's hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing. It's not because they were lacking intelligence that they could, that Paul or whoever wrote Hebrews could not explain. But they did not have a hearing ear to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying.

You know, Jesus used to say, he who has a ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. We have a ear on the outside and a ear on the inside. And this ear may be very clear to hear and yet it may not be penetrating into the inner ear.

So we need to ask ourselves, you know, I can only encourage others and bless others with what God has spoken to me. If I share my own clever ideas that go into their mind and their brain, it may not encourage them. But when God speaks to us, he's called the God of all encouragement.

God never speaks a word of discouraging, never, never, never. He never says words like sometimes fathers say to their children, you're good for nothing, you're useless, nothing will come good out of you. Those are all the words from the devil.

If ever you have said such words to your children, you need to repent. It's the devil who says, nothing good will ever come from you, you're useless, you're good for nothing. I told you a thousand times not to do that.

Maybe you told it two or three times, but that's how we exaggerate. And that's why we don't hear because we don't encourage others. God treats us as we treat other people.

That's a law that I've discovered in Psalm 18. God will treat you in the same way that you treat other people. If you're hard on others, I guarantee God will be hard on you.

And if you find it difficult to true to God, it is because you're very hard on other people. Husbands are hard on their wives and wives are hard on their husband and parents are hard on their children. And like that, Psalm 18, it says, verse 25, with the kind, you show yourself kind.

But the last part of verse 26, with the crooked, you show yourself astute. So God is hard on people who are hard on others and merciful and kind to those who are merciful and kind to others. For example, if you forgive others, God will forgive you.

It's a law. Jesus taught us to pray our Father who art in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us.

Let me paraphrase it. Forgive me, Lord, exactly in the same way I have forgiven others. That is the Lord's prayer.

And it's a, even if you don't repeat it, it's an attitude that we should have every day. Why do I say every day? Because he taught us to pray for our daily bread. That's the one word daily in that prayer indicates it's an attitude of prayer we should have every day.

Even if you don't pray those words, that should be our attitude. Lord, I want your will to be done on earth in my life as it is in heaven. I want your name to be glorified, and I want you to provide my daily bread, and I want you to forgive me today as I have forgiven everybody today in exactly the same way.

And if you have forgiven somebody with an attitude saying, well, I'll never forget that, then you're asking God, please forgive me, but never forget what I've done to you. Always remember how badly I treated you when you deal with me. Do you want that? But that's what you're praying.

Forgive us as we have forgiven others. Now, please examine yourself, my dear brothers. I'm very strong on this because over the last six months to a year, the Lord has been stressing very much on my heart to teach people to forgive others exactly.

And almost all the messages I preach everywhere now, I'm mentioning that. I don't know why. I sometimes feel it may be because the Lord is coming soon, and he wants to prepare people to somehow get ready and forgive everybody.

Otherwise, they'll have an awful time at the judgment seat of Christ. So I want to urge everybody here, forgive others and pray, Lord, please forgive me in exactly the same way as I have forgiven others. You can't take the evil that people have done to you out of your memory.

That's impossible. But God doesn't tell us to control our memory. He tells us to control our attitude towards others, not our memory.

I have no control over my memory. But I have a lot of control over my inner attitude towards people who have wronged me or hurt me. I say, Lord, I'm going to forgive them.

I'm going to be good to them. I want to be kind to them. And if you don't believe this, areas where you're finding it difficult, where you don't find God is getting through to you or helping you or answering your prayer or blessing you in some way, you need a blessing.

Try from today onwards to be kind to other people, just deliberately. Say, I want to be kind to other people and see if there's not going to be a difference in your life from today onwards. Start encouraging people a little more.

We're so quick to exhort our children. If you were to, you parents, for example, look back over the past years and see how you have spoken to your children, do we need to correct them? Of course. They've got a nature of Adam, which is evil.

You need to correct them. But you need to be merciful to them because they got that nature from you. So how can you blame them? They got that nature from you.

So in addition to correcting them, you have to say, Lord, I have to be merciful to them because my son and daughter got that nature from me. So why in the world am I blaming them? Let me be encouraging to them to help them to be free from it. That's how the Lord delivers us, with the kind.

He will always show himself to be kind. If God is not kind to you, I'll tell you this, it's because you're not kind to your wife or your husband or somebody else. You're absolutely unmerciful.

That partner of yours, husband or wife, did one thing wrong. Boy, you come down hard on that. I tell you, God will come down hard on you.

You'll probably get sick and not be healed, no matter how much you pray. I don't want that. I don't want to come down hard on people.

I deal with so many people in different churches. And I remember in times when I've left Bangalore and asked somebody to do some work in the office, one of the last things I tell them is, listen, by the time I come back, the work is not done. Forget it.

The only thing serious is sin. I keep on saying that. Remember, the only thing serious is sin.

Not that you didn't complete a work in time or something else was not done perfectly. Forget it. We can always do it again.

The world is not going to collapse if something wasn't finished by a particular deadline. So the only thing serious is sin. And one reason why God takes us through difficult times is, you know, we heard about prophecy.

How do I get the gift of, not the gift, how do I have a word of prophecy for other people? I'll tell you how the great apostle Paul got it. I want to give you two examples from Paul's life. He was probably the greatest example of one who prophesied.

2 Corinthians chapter 1. It says here in 2 Corinthians 1, how Paul got his ministry. And I remember studying this and discovering that if I had to have an effective ministry myself, I must go this way. 2

Corinthians 1, he says, blessed be the God, the God of all comfort.

The word comfort also includes encouragement. And what does God do? Remember, this is how Paul got his ministry. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 was for who comforts and encourages us in all our difficulties.

So that, why does he comfort us in all our difficulties? So that we'll be able to encourage others in their difficulties with what? With the same encouragement that we got from God. So how did Paul get his ministry? Not by studying the Bible. They didn't have a Bible to carry around with them in those days.

Remember, the first printed Bible was only in the 1400s. So if you told the early Christians to read the Bible every day, they'd say, we don't have a Bible. There's only one in the synagogue or somewhere, right? What can we do? But you can hear God.

How can you hear God? In your difficulties, you ask God to give you a word of encouragement. And that encouragement that you get from God is what you give to others. And the more you give to others, the more God will give back to you.

It is more blessed to give than to receive. That's another lesson which I feel that many have not understood. When you get something from God, if you keep it to yourself, it's like when people collected manna in Israel, and they said, oh, we better store up this.

I may not get something tomorrow. It began to stink by the next morning. It says worms got into that manna.

Food that came from heaven got worms in it in less than 24 hours. Now, we have a lot of food that we have on earth, which doesn't, I mean, it may get a little old, but worms getting into it. What food do you find worms getting into it within 12 hours? Only food that came from heaven.

You'd think worms would never get into that. What you get from God, if you have extra, share it. If you keep it to yourself, it'll stink with worms.

It's God gives us so that we can bless others with it. So, we are thinking of the gift of prophecy. How did Paul get a ministry in his trials to receive something from God, some word of encouragement, some blessing, and keep it to himself? He shared it.

That's what you need to share in the midweek meeting. Did you receive something in some trial? But you say that's not so impressive. Aha.

So, you want to share something impressive. That's why you don't share. You're seeking honor for yourself.

Why not share that little thing which you got? It can bless somebody. We encourage others with the same encouragement we get in the trials we go through. So, if you pray and say, Lord, don't let me face any trials, you'll never have a word to encourage others.

I'll tell you something. People who go through trials may not tell you about all the trials they've gone through. But I have found that almost all my ministry has come not out of Bible study.

I studied the Bible almost fully in the first six years after I was born again. I knew the Bible pretty thoroughly by the time I was 26 years old. But after that, what the Lord taught me was through different

trials and testings and opposition and ridicule and being called the devil and being taken to court, being taken to the Supreme Court in India, that's where I got my best ministry through the trials and having no bitterness against the people who did those evil things to me.

So, don't be afraid of trials if your boss treats you badly. Wonderful. If you're a whole-hearted disciple of Jesus Christ, you'll get a ministry out of that.

Whatever may happen. Do you have a very difficult wife? Wonderful. You'll have a great ministry, brother.

Do you have a difficult husband? You'll have a great ministry. You try your best to change her and she doesn't change or you try your best changing and he doesn't change. You have affliction.

In that affliction comes a ministry. So, when you think of prophecy, don't think it's by sitting and studying the Bible and trying to get some reading some commentaries and trying to get some thoughts. That's not the way.

That's for Bible school people who waste people's time. No true prophet in the Bible ever came out of a Bible school. No apostle came from a Bible school.

They went through trials. Paul says, I went through trials and that's how I got a ministry. Trials are our Bible school and every one of us has gone through.

Can any of you say, I've never gone through any trials? I've never gone through any testing. People lose their jobs. People have sickness in their home.

All these things are trials and in those trials, if you say, Lord, please give me a word, that will be your ministry to others. That's what we prophesy and I want to say another thing, you know, it requires a little humility here. We read in 2nd Corinthians 7. How do we get this? Think of the word encouragement whenever you read comfort.

Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 7, first were these afflictions he went through and in those afflictions, he tried to hear God and God spoke to him and that became his ministry to other people. Now here in 2nd Corinthians 7, he says, when we came, verse 5, when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest. He was in a very difficult situation in Macedonia.

I don't know what it was. He doesn't explain it. We were afflicted on every side.

Now remember, he's trying to get, this is how God was preparing Paul for a ministry. Not in a Bible school. This was his Bible school.

Afflicted on every side. Do some of you feel like that in some situation? Afflicted this side, that side, the other side? Difficult people at work, difficult in-laws and difficult neighbors and afflicted on every side. Wonderful.

That's how Paul had a ministry. Afflicted on every side. Conflicts, you know, it means outside there are people attacking him and maybe accusing him and all types of problems and fears within.

I love the honesty of Paul. Many people are afraid to say that I had some fears within. Oh, I look unspiritual if I say I have fears within.

Paul had no such fear. He was not bothered whether you thought he was unspiritual or not. We are so concerned.

If I tell somebody I have fears in my heart, oh, they'll think I'm unspiritual. Why not be honest, brother and sister, you have some fears. Admit it.

Apostle Paul writes in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I had fears inside my heart, but I didn't give in to those fears. That's the point. And then he says, I got an encouragement that delivered me.

And how is that? Not by a word from heaven. That's the thing I want you to see. Sometimes God would speak to him directly.

But here it says, a young brother called Titus, verse six, God used him to encourage me. I want to ask all of you brothers, questions, sisters. When was the last time you got an encouragement from a much younger brother? Have you ever got one? Or you think you're too big to be encouraged by younger brothers, only older brothers, only the big prophets and the apostles can encourage you? That's why you don't grow as you should.

What if God sent somebody half your age? I think Titus must have been half Paul's age. Was he 30 years old? I don't know. Paul was around 60.

And God sent Titus to encourage Paul when Paul was having all these fears. So what I want to say to you, dear brothers, I myself am open as always. I've been encouraged tremendously as I moved around in the villages of India, among very poor people, uneducated, who can't speak a word of English.

And because I understand Tamil and Malayalam, I listened to them. And I'm encouraged by listening to them, some of them half my age. I've been so blessed.

Be open to encouragement from weak, younger brothers who came to the church 30 years after you came to the church, who were born again long after you were born again. The Tituses that God sends into your life, be open to receive. Sisters, be open to receive encouragement from younger people, maybe from your own children.

Why not? Are you so proud that you feel your children come encourage me? God who encourages those who are depressed. Boy, I like that. Paul, you were depressed.

So tell me again, were you depressed? He says, yes, but I didn't stay there. I got encouragement. I got out of that depression.

I got out of that depression because a young brother called Titus came along and said something. I don't know what he said, but it encouraged me tremendously. That's how Paul got a ministry.

Through the trials he went through, through the humility that he had to be willing to listen to a much younger person. I want to ask you husbands, are you humble enough to listen? Wives must be encouraged by the husbands because I'm the head of the house. That's a lot of garbage.

The Bible says, encourage one another. And so if you have that attitude, it says here, we were comforted by the coming of Titus. He just came and Paul just looked at him and he was so encouraged.

Not only by his coming, he said, I was also comforted when he reported about how it was going on with other churches. So Paul had such a concern for other people that he got encouragement from the fact that some other brothers were doing well spiritually. I like that.

When you hear that it's going well with some brothers, does that encourage you? So this is the reason why the writer to the Hebrews says in Hebrews in chapter five, he says, there are some things concerning Jesus, which I want to share with you. Hebrews 5.11. But it's very hard to explain, not because you're not intelligent, but because you're not able to hear. Why did they become dull of hearing? Because when God sent some young brother like Titus to speak to them, they were too proud to listen to him.

They say, no, no, no, I only listen to an apostle or a prophet. Who is this young brother to come and encourage me? Or maybe God had a word for you from your wife, who is much younger than you in the Lord. And you say, how can my wife encourage me? I'm the head of the house.

So you become dull of hearing. If we are open to say, Lord, you can speak to me through anyone. You know how Paul, how the Holy Spirit convicted Peter of his terrible sin of denying the Lord, you know, through a cock crowing.

Can you imagine an animal convicting a person of sin? That's how Paul, Peter was convicted. He heard the cock crow and he suddenly realized, hey, I've sinned against the Lord. Be willing and open to allow the Lord to convict you through anyone, to encourage you through anyone, through a young brother, through your wife, through your children.

Take the place of humility, my brothers and sisters. I believe we miss out a lot in our life because of high thoughts. I believe it is God's will that we should live always in triumph.

That's been my goal in my life. There must never be a single moment of a day when I'm defeated. I want to be an overcomer.

I may be in trials, difficulties, and the Bible says He will never allow me to face a trial which is too much for me. So, I want to be encouraged all the time. But I have to remain in a place of humility and faith that God will give me grace in every situation to be an overcomer.

And if you keep that attitude, I believe brothers and sisters that every one of us can have a rich word of encouragement, maybe one minute, that will bless and challenge others if you share with them what God spoke to you through your trials or through some younger brother during the week. It is a lack of humility that prevents us from having a word of prophecy. Now, finally, let me just conclude by telling you what prophecy actually is.

1 Corinthians 14. It's a very big word, prophecy. But 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 3 says, prophecy has got three parts.

Some people can speak in a way that they build up others. You hear something and people are built up spiritually. Maybe you don't have that gift.

Okay, never mind. Another part of prophecy is to challenge and exhort. Maybe you don't have that gift also.

You can't speak in a way that will challenge and exhort people. You can't speak in a way that will build up people. Fine.

But there's a third one. Prophecy also includes comforting and encouraging. That anybody can do.

Just to say to a person, don't give up. If God be for us, who can be against us? Can't you say that in a different situation? Prophecy includes building up, challenging, and comforting. And it tells us in the first verse that if you want to have prophecy, the gift of one of these three things, you must, verse 1, pursue love.

In other words, you will never be able to prophesy if you don't love people. If you want to have a word to bless other people, would start loving them. That's what verse 1 says.

You think something's wrong with your wife? Start loving her. You think something's wrong with your husband? Start loving him. God will give you a word to encourage him.

Otherwise, you won't have a right word. I was sharing with the brothers in the church in Tamil Nadu, their Sunday morning service, which is Sunday or Saturday, last night here, from Ephesians 5. I'll just close with this. Ephesians 5, Ephesians 6, children obey your parents and the Lord for this is right.

Honor your father and mother. And where do children learn their habits from? I remember a brother once telling in one of our churches saying how he saw his older child speaking in a very hard way to his younger sibling. And he asked him, how, where did you learn to speak like that? Son said, that's the way you speak to mummy.

I heard you speak like that. That's how I learned to speak to my younger brother like that. And he got convicted.

Children learn from how parents talk to each other. So that is why before it speaks about children and how they are to grow up, I want you to connect Ephesians 5.33 with chapter 6 verse 1. That means if you want your children to grow up properly, start with Ephesians 5.33. Husbands love your wives and wives respect your husbands. What is the greatest need a wife has? Love.

She must know that her husband loves her. And there must be not only evidence of it in one's life, but words of expressions of love. Don't hesitate to say that.

When was the last time you told your wife that you loved her? You say, well, the day we got married, I told her and that was permanent for the rest of the life. When was the last time? It's like your wife saying, well, I mean, I cook food on the first day. What about the rest? Every day she cooks food for you.

The most important requirement a wife has according to this verse is not mine. I'm not talking psychology. I'm telling you what God's word says.

The most important thing a wife needs is for a wife to know that she is loved by her husband. So let's begin today, all husbands, don't hesitate to express your affection to your wife and to tell her in words that you love her. What is there now? All the wives are very happy now.

I want to speak to the wives. What is the most important thing your husband needs? Not love. Men don't need love.

Respect. That's what it says here. I'm quoting scripture.

It's not psychology. The wife must see to it that she respects her husband. And I want to ask all of you wives here, do you really respect your husband? Can you stand before God and say, I respect my husband and I will make it clear in my, the way I behave towards him and the way I treat him and the way I talk to him that I really respect him.

If husbands begin to love their wives and wives begin to respect their husbands, then you can go to the next verse, your children will obey the parents and it'll go well in the family. So these are ways by which we can encourage one another. Amen.

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