



# HEARING GOD

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## Introduction

God fills the universe. Therefore when it comes to hearing His voice, the problem is with us and not Him - He is speaking all the time!

Hearing God is not difficult but we have complicated it in many ways. We either complicate it because we don't like what He has to say and we want to do our own thing; or we complicate it with strange ideas on how God speaks, or strange doctrine we've picked up from various sources.

This short booklet aims to give some helpful, uncomplicated guidelines to hearing God's voice. It's made up of a series of sermons delivered at Cornerstone Church Johannesburg in May - June, 2014. It's a free resource - feel free to copy it, print it, and distribute it to anyone in any way you want.

You can download the series of sermons at <http://cornerstonechurch.co.za/hearing-god/>

# Part One

## Dangers and Pitfalls

### **Zechariah 7:11-14**

*“But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the Lord of hosts. “As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the Lord of hosts, “and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.”*

### **Revelation 2:7 (to the church in Ephesus)**

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”*

### **Revelation 2:11 (to the church in Smyrna)**

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.”*

### **Revelation 2:17 (to the church in Pergamum)**

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden*

*manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it."*

### **Revelation 2:29 (to the church in Thyatira)**

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

### **Revelation 3:6 (to the church in Sardis)**

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

### **Revelation 3:13 (to the church in Philadelphia)**

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

### **Revelation 3:22 (to the church in Laodicea)**

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

These scriptures show us that God's heart is that we would hear Him when He speaks. It's no different for every church today (and therefore every believer). God speaks by His Spirit. He wants to lead us!

## **Life is full of decisions**

"Am I called?"

"What is my calling/purpose in life?"

"Who should I marry?"

“Should I change jobs?”

“Should I move to another town/province/country?”

These are some of the questions we all ask at various stages of our lives. Life is a never-ending series of choices. Can we know whether we are making the right decisions? Where should we go to know what to do? The horoscope? The psychic hot-line? Do we go with what the experts on T.V., the Internet, or at the bookstore are saying? Do we go with or rely on our gut-feeling?

Should we look to the stars? Or should we seek the One who created the stars? The answer is obvious – God knows and loves us above all. He has our best interests at heart. He is a loving Father. We just need to know how to *listen* to Him and do what He says.

## Dangers and pitfalls

Hearing God should be very simple but it's become very confusing! This is because of so much of the rubbish we may have heard from many different sources. Here are a few guidelines to help discern what are the dangers and pitfalls that will prevent you from clearly hearing God:

- **Separate hearing God from spiritual fortune-telling, and other strange practices**

The stars hold no answers. It doesn't matter how accurate a psychic may be about your past, they still don't know anything about your future. Only God knows the future. Fortune-telling or horoscopes



are occult practices condemned by scripture (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10 - 13). 2 Corinthians 11:14 - 15 speaks about a fortune-teller who could tell the future until Paul casted a demon out of her. Occult practices are either fraudulent or either demonic, which is why Christians do not practice them.

**But sometimes we think of prophecy as spiritual fortune telling.**

We seek our “prophets” to tell us what to do. We think prophecy just happens at our own discretion. Prophecy is not like this at all - it is God's direct Word at God's time.

- **It's our responsibility to make a decision, and not someone with a prophetic gift or a leaders' responsibility**

We don't run from one prophetic person to the next looking for an answer. And if someone prophesies direction over us we need to practice discernment. We have to learn to hear God from ourselves and we must take responsibility for our own decisions. If a person with a prophetic gift tells you anything that goes against the Bible, would you do it? Certainly not! If someone gives you a directional prophecy and it turns out they were wrong, can you blame God? No. But you need to take responsibility for having believed made your own decisions.

- **We need to realise God has entrusted a lot of choices to us**

God gives us wisdom and the Bible to help us make decisions on our own. You don't need God to tell you directly, through a prophetic word or a sign, that you should not be flirting with that

married woman at the office! You know that God has made it clear that adultery begins in the heart and that adultery is immoral. That's why you should read the scriptures and understand what God says about every day matters.

As someone once said, "God is your Father, not your mother!" You don't need to ask God what shoes to put on or what dress to wear today. We trivialise hearing from God by asking the wrong questions like, "lead me to a parking?" or "What shall I call my new puppy?"

- **What are the life and death issues from scripture? Get the BIG things in place first**

Understand how God expects us to live. We are to place His Kingdom first in all matters. We are to be born again. We are not to marry an unbeliever. We are to keep our conduct pure. We are to foster a relationship with Him. We are to seek and save the lost and evangelise, etc. These are all things you can learn through the scriptures yourself. Don't put emphasis on what the scriptures don't put emphasis on, and put emphasis on what the scriptures put emphasis on.

- **Dreams and their meaning**

God can speak through dreams but He initiates these. We don't consult "dream dictionaries" but wait on God to provide an interpretation.

- **Misunderstanding one-off occurrences in scripture**

God initiated Paul falling off his horse, or Moses' burning bush experience, and so on. None of these were sought for - God initiated them!

- **God generally speaks to us more about correction than direction**

Often God does want to leave decisions to us and wants us to make a decision that lines up to His ways - for example, taking a job that you know will take away too much time with your family is obviously going to lead you down the wrong road. If you decide to take the job God will provide correction. It's still up to you to then find another job - and perhaps any job will do at that point!

God will more often provide direction on issues that are close to His heart - for example, direction for how to speak to someone who doesn't believe in Jesus, etc. He may provide this direction in the moment or ahead of time. We should be open to hear from Him either way.

- **Utopianism - it all must go well, otherwise it can't be God**

God actually does ask us to do things that are going to be uncomfortable and difficult. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 - 7) isn't easy to live by and Jesus even promises us that we will experience persecution and difficulties! Many times we feel that if things are going well then it must be God's will, but when they are

not then God is either against us or we're not in His will. This isn't true.

- **Have we made hearing God more about me and mine?**

We often make decisions based on what's important to our self-centred pursuits. We want God to bless what we're doing rather than get on board with what God is doing. This problem can often go deeper than we realise. God is not all about putting everything on our lap and making us comfortable!

- **We call our own erratic behaviour “God's Will.”**

Also, we often say things like “God told me”, it was “God's will” and “I'm looking for confirmation” and then later on things change again and we say, “God told me.” For example, “God told me to date that girl,” or “God told me to move to that church” and then later on, “God told me to break up with that girl” or “God told me to move to another church again.” Either God is erratic or unstable, or you are! We can't hide behind the cliché of “God told me” when someone challenges us on how it seems God's will keeps changing and shifting for us, and how it seems that we are not living in God's clear will as revealed in scripture at all!

We also hide behind the statement, “That's not God's will for my life” when we are challenged to do something that's uncomfortable (but not life-threatening!) For example, “It's not God's will for me to greet people at the door,” or, “God hasn't called me to invite people into my home for a meal,” etc.

- **We look for confirmation for the wrong things**

Some people are looking for “confirmation” for the most basic and obvious practices in Christianity, for example loving our neighbour, reading our Bible, or speaking to someone about Jesus.

- **Always looking for signs or “laying out a fleece”**

The story of Gideon in Judges 6 is often misinterpreted to mean that we should “lay out a fleece” or look for a sign for practically every decision, even obvious decisions such as loving our enemy. God doesn't primarily speak through signs or billboards. We need to know His scriptures first of all.

- **No accountability and submission to local church authority**

If you are not accountable to the authorities God himself has set up there is a problem. You will find yourself easily able to drift rather than being firmly grounded in God's Word. Elders and leaders are able to bring correction, guidance in hearing God, encouragement along the right road, and grow you into maturity. God has chosen elders to lead us and He speaks through His leaders. This doesn't mean leaders are always right, but it does mean that we should obey God's word which says we must be accountable to them!

## Part Two:

### Biblical Principles

We need solid biblical doctrine on hearing God! The following matters are foundational to hearing God:

- Our relationship with God
- God has already spoken to us through His Word
- Common sense: What God has deposited inside of us

### Our relationship with God

Hearing God flows out of a healthy relationship with God.

#### **Hebrews 1:1-2**

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

Jesus came to heal the rift between mankind and God. The very basis of any relationship is two-way communication. In our relationship with God, we are also journeying together with him.

Immaturity treats our relationship with God as a monologue of ongoing requests. He is a person who is also our Father and King. He is not a distant Father Christmas who we only hear from when we want things!

We must learn how to listen to the whispers of God's voice and pick up the intents of His heart. God usually does not shout. In fact, when he does it's usually because we haven't been listening to what He has been saying! Hearing God and knowing His voice primarily comes out of the intimacy in a loving relationship with God.

### **John 14:18**

*"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."*

When Jesus left, He said He would not leave us as orphans. Instead, he promised His Holy Spirit to us to guide us into all truth and walk with us through life's path.

### **John 14:16, 17**

*"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."*

### **John 14:26**

*"He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

### **John 16:12-15**

*"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are*

*to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

We have a perfect example of this in Revelation 2-3 where God exhorts us to "hear what the Spirit is saying." If God spoke then through His Spirit, He speaks today through His Spirit! Nothing has changed!

But we are often too busy or too distracted to hear. **Listening requires time.** But our culture and our own restlessness works against us from spending time with God. **Time spent with God is never time wasted, regardless of how it may feel.**

## God has already spoken to us through His word

We have a record of God's will in His word. God gave us the Bible for a reason - so we could know Him, learn His ways, and do what He says in it.

Whatever we read in scripture we can take as God speaking directly to us and we can apply it to our lives. It's not complicated or difficult. God's instructions through the Bible are straightforward and clear. It may take some time to unlearn some of our preconceived notions, but He has given us His Holy Spirit so we can be guided into all truth.

The Holy Spirit will take scripture and open it up to us, bringing us a revelation of Jesus, His Kingdom, His will, His ways, His heart, and so on. This is how we get to know God, and it's through knowing God that



we will learn how to hear His voice.

When God speaks directly to us it will never be contrary to the scriptures, the Word of God. The Word of God will always be the final authority to judge whatever we believe God has said to us.

**But we must read and understand scripture in its context.** In other words, you can't quote scriptures out of context to justify something you feel God is leading you in. Whatever scripture meant when it was written is what it means for us today - it applies as much now as it applied then. But if your understanding of it means something different to what it meant then, then your understanding is wrong. You can't claim a prophetic gift or apostolic anointing - if you deliberately take scripture out of context your misusing the Word of God.

Also, you cannot use scripture randomly as directional leading in your life. In other words, you can't just open the Bible, read the first verse that your eyes see, and claim God gave direction. It's helpful to know that God doesn't deal in fast food - direction often takes time.

## Good interpretation skills

We should correctly interpret scripture, using good interpretation skills. Here are some guiding principles

- **Always understand the context.** Read whole portions of scripture and follow the thinking closely.

- **Let scripture interpret scripture.** If you don't understand one portion of scripture, find out where else it talks about the same subject. That will help you to understand.
- **Know the original meaning.** What it meant when it was written is what it means today. There's no adding, subtracting or twisting of scripture. This includes trying to be more contemporary and user friendly. Neither science, spiritual gifts, or cultural views have the right to change what scripture says.

## Common sense: What God has deposited inside us

### Hebrews 8:10-12

*“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbour and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”*”

God has made us in a His image and expects us to make good, godly decisions. When we are in a right relationship with God and are submitted to His word, God wants us to get on with life.

There's no use trusting God for confirmation of what's already clear in His Word. Waiting for confirmation won't change the Bible!

Our conscience, in tune with God and His Word, will enable us to walk in obedience to His will. Hearing God will come from an understanding within of what is right and wrong.

## Part Three:

### Hearing God

#### Habakkuk 2 : 1 – 3

*“I will take my stand at my watch-post and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”*

**Hearing God is more about a relationship than a technique.** When we get into techniques we miss the relationship. The Holy Spirit is not a mechanical tool, He is a person!

#### Exodus 33 : 11

*“Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.”*

## How do we hear God?

- **Make time**

We're restless beings. Even when we have time and life has slowed down a bit, we're still restless. Our restlessness brings great

tragedy in this world, even war.

We know we ought to make time for our spouses and our kids and our work. But do we make time for God? Why not? The answer to why not will tell you a lot. Time spent with God is never a waste. You might not feel goosebumps or get direction, but you will always be glad you did, even if it takes time before you see how much you've matured in your relationship with God.

- **Approach God with a heart of thankfulness and worship**

Don't just rattle off a list of wants and needs. Worshipping God leads us into a closer relationship with Him. Thank Him and worship Him in addition to asking and trusting Him.

- **Ask God**

### **Matthew 7 : 7 - 8**

*“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”*

- **Get rid of distractions**

Firstly, get rid of distractions in your life, from the big things to the daily things. For example, if your phone is a distraction in your life (if you can't live without Facebook) think about changing your habits - leave your phone somewhere else when you want to spend time with God, or delete Facebook from your phone so you don't always look at it whenever you have some free time but rather

spend that free time in conversation with God, even if it's only a few minutes.

- **Have the right attitude**

- **Have a hearing posture**

This may mean that, if you're going to spend time with God, you find a place that's easy for you – your quiet study, the garden, or anything where you won't be distracted. We are creatures of habit and it's good to develop habits that help you to quieten your heart. But, even more, get ready to hear – quiet your soul and be intentional about listening.

- **Have a heart poised**

If God is going to challenge you, be ready for it. Open your heart to hear what God is saying; be open to saying, “Yes Lord” to anything He says – even if it's something you don't want to hear.

- **Be prepared to wait on God**

You might spend some considerable time with the Lord in the morning but find he gives you direction, almost out of nowhere, when you're getting into bed at night. Be prepared to wait on Him no matter what. Spending time with Him is primarily about spending time with Him.

- **Read loads of scripture**

- **Journal your thoughts and impressions, the things God is**

### **speaking to you about**

It's helpful to put your thoughts down. Over time you will find a pattern. It also helps to stop you forgetting what God really said.

In the Bible, David was disciplined around enquiring of God. But Saul, his predecessor, wasn't and eventually resorted to consulting a spiritual medium. This proved to be his undoing.

### **1 Chronicles 10:13-14**

*“So Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. He did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”*

The differences in approach spoke more about their relationship with God than anything else. David became known as 'God's friend' and Saul will always be remembered as one who was disobedient and self-absorbed.

## **How does God speak?**

Does God speak in a specific way? We've covered that he most often speaks to us through the Bible and by the Holy Spirit. But in the scriptures we see many other ways in which God revealed Himself to men and women.

What are we to make of these? We read about prophets, dreams,

visions, audible voices, angels, a burning bush, a blinding light, and God even speaking through a donkey. Here's a list of ways in which God speaks that we can see in the scriptures:

God speaks through His Word

God speaks through His Son

God speaks through the Holy Spirit

God speaks through the Gospel

God speaks through the spiritual gifts

God speaks through dreams and visions

God speaks through situations and circumstances

God speaks through difficulties

God even speaks through weather

God speaks in our day to day routine

God speaks through others

God speaks through His inner witness - His still, quiet voice

Overwhelmingly, the conclusion is that God wants to reveal Himself to us! We don't take everything we see in the Bible and expect it (none of us will probably see a burning bush) but the principle is that God wants to speak to us and we must be open to hearing from Him.

God has given us certain principles that help us to test whether he is really speaking or not. Sometimes we think things; sometimes we're being influenced by many other ideas and voices. Perhaps you think God spoke to you in your day to day routine today, but how can you be sure?



## Tests to hearing God

The Bible gives us some basic keys or filters through which every possible leading should be judged. We are to carefully examine the thoughts and intentions of our hearts and the words of godly people who may have influence on us by their words and actions.

We use the following tests:

- **Scripture**

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

### **Psalms 119:105**

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

By now you would have noticed that this has come up again and again. Our best port of call is the scriptures.

- **The witness of the Spirit**

### **Romans 8 : 16 - 17**

*“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”*

## Hebrews 10 : 15 - 16

*“And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds.””*

We've already covered the leading of the Spirit in detail in Part Two.

- **Discerning the voice of God from the many voices**

There are many voices that vie for our attention. Hearing God is learning to discern which is which. As we get to know God we learn to distinguish between His voice, the voice of our conscience and reasoning, the voice of our flesh (our fallen human nature) and even the voice of the devil.

- **The Prophetic**

God has given us the gifts of the Spirit which include (a) The word of knowledge; (b) The word of wisdom and prophecy.

## 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

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

## 1 Corinthians 14:3

*“On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening and encouragement and comfort.”*

The purpose of prophecy (the gifts of the Spirit) is not so much

directional as it is to build up and encourage us. This helps you to discern when prophecy really is from God. If it breaks down, judges, or gives direction, you need to practice much more discernment.

This is also why it's good to know the person who is prophesying, which we generally can only do if we are involved in a local church. If someone always brings critical prophecies, or directional prophecies, they may be practicing the gift incorrectly.

- **Godly counsel**

#### **Proverbs 11:14**

*“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety.”*

Our leaders are not there to hear God for us but are there to help us hear a God. God has instituted leadership and accountability. If you think God is saying something that contradicts His word, your leaders can help you see that God would never do that.

- **The peace of God**

#### **Colossians 3:15**

*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

- **Circumstances/Timing**

Circumstances and timing can play a part. Although, we do not allow circumstances to hinder what a God wants us to do, you should consider strongly whether God is telling you to (for

example) plant a church full-time when your family is in disarray or your finances are not in the best of places.

- **Confirmation**

Many times the Lord will confirm His direction to us through a few of these tests. Obviously, the more important a decision, the more confirmation we need. Also, some need more confirmation than others. God understands this and will confirm in a way that we can understand.

## Part Four:

### Personal prophecy

Dr. Bill Hamon defines prophecy as:

*“God communicating His thoughts and intents to mankind. When a true prophecy is given, the Holy Spirit inspires someone to communicate God’s pure and exact words to the individual or group for whom they are intended. It is delivered without any additions or subtractions by the one prophesying, including any applications or interpretations suggested by the one speaking. To be most effective, it must also be delivered in God’s timing and with the proper spirit or attitude.”*

This is a good definition. In this part we will examine personal prophecy much more closely as this is often misunderstood.

#### **2 Peter 1:21**

*“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

In the Old Testament, prophets were one of the primary ways in which God made His will known to man. God spoke through the prophets.

Today, in the New Testament, we have a continuation of that prophetic ministry in two ways: (1) the office of a prophet (Ephesians 4:11) and (2) the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:10). But nowhere do we see these prophetic ministries of God superseding our personal responsibility to

hear from God, and overriding our corporate responsibility to judge those prophecies.

## Revelation 19:10

*“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*

Jesus must be at the centre of all prophecy. He is at the centre of the whole Bible and God's plan for man!

Personal prophecy can both **open up** (initiate something new) and **confirm** (add another layer of confirmation to what God is already saying or doing).

Examples can be seen in Paul's life:

### 1. Open Up

#### Acts 9

*10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” 11 And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” 13 But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and*

kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;

## **2. Confirm**

### **Acts 21**

10 While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.”

Personal prophecy is partial, progressive and conditional in nature, and should always strengthen (edify), encourage (exhort) and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3). In other words, prophecy should build up!

## How to test personal prophecy

### 1 Corinthians 14:29-33

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

Prophetic words are given by fallible human vessels and must therefore be weighed up or judged to determine whether the prophecy is true (from God) or not.

#### 1. Judge the message

- God is not confused. He will not say one thing in the scriptures and then give you a prophetic word that contradicts the scriptures.
- Does the prophetic word line up to something God has said to you before?
- Does the prophetic word witness to your spirit? Don't do something you don't witness with.
- If the prophecy is from God, it will come to pass.

#### 2. Judge the messenger

- Is he/she under authority? I.e. Are they an accountable part of a local church?



- Do they display godly character? Is the prophecy given in love and grace, or in anger and judgment?
- Is there some sort of religious bias in the attitude of the person giving the word? Is there some kind of doctrinal hobby-horse that they keep pounding?
- Is there good fruit of their prophetic gift or office?
- Do others endorse this person's gift or office?

### **3. Let others also judge**

- 1 Corinthians 14:29 gives us a context of weighing up a prophecy. The context is a public meeting of the church, where leadership is present.
- Leaders around us, especially those with a prophetic inclination, should help us weigh up a prophetic word.
- If a prophetic word is given in private, it's important to let those in authority over you know about it, so they can help you weigh it up.
- Therefore, when direction is given for the individual or church, God has given us spiritual authority safety nets, to ensure that error and manipulation don't take hold of us. E.g. In the church in Thyatira in Asia Minor, a false prophetess had crept in and was deceiving the church. (Revelation 2:18-23.)

## **How to respond to prophecy**

This also applies to general prophecy (any word from God – perhaps a word to your church) in addition to prophecy personally given to you.

### **1. Record the prophetic word**

It's good to keep a prophetic journal, so you can refer back to it when necessary.

### **2. Meditate and pray over it**

You don't need to rush this - take time to meditate over the prophetic word. Let God show you what He is saying.

### **3. Compare it to the record of how God has led you so far**

Add it to the richness of how God is speaking to you.

### **4. Respond in faith**

When you know that the prophetic word is from God, you need to respond to it as you would respond to the Bible: with **faith, obedience, patience, humility, meekness and submission.**

### **5. Use it**

Then, use the prophetic word to persevere through trials and adversity.

### **1 Timothy 1 : 18 - 19**

*"This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience."*

## Part Five:

### Obeying the word of God

Once we have heard from God we need to follow through with faith and obedience!

#### **Matthew 14:28-29**

*“And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.”*

We can pick up some sound principles from these two verses:

#### **1. Peter says, “Lord, if it is you.”**

We mature in hearing God so that we can be sure that it's God speaking. You don't want to launch out with something unless God has spoken!

#### **2. “Command me to come to you on the water.” Then Jesus said, “Come”.**

When you know that you have heard God there will be a command from God that you must follow through.

#### **3. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus**

The flow is important: if it's Jesus, you can follow through with obedience, no matter how impossible or intimidating the circumstances. The important thing is to obey! Put into practice what He has commanded. And keep going, trusting and relying on Him!