

Σ Title: What do you see?

Series: We believe

Our current sermon series is attempting to outline the critical areas of our foundational beliefs to ensure we have a clear idea of what it is we are building on.

Today we are going to look at one of our statements that says:

Σ *“We believe that the Lord speaks prophetically and progressively, a Present Word for each generation.”*

Let me start by defining the gift of prophecy. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood before the crowds of people who had gathered outside of the upper room where an amazing prayer meeting had just finished (Acts 2:1-13). He says to them:

Σ *“...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.”” (Acts 2:16-17 NIV)*

Men, women, children, high born, low born, every race, culture, nationality... all people will encounter the Spirit of God in these days. Whether they accept Him is their choice. Hundreds of years earlier Joel foretells the outpouring of the Spirit and that the prophetic gift will flow.

The Apostle Paul later tells us in his first letter to the Corinthians that this gift of prophecy:

Σ *“...speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort... edifies the church” (1 Corinthians 14:3-4 NIV)*

This is not about fortune telling or reading your future in the stars. As a Christian, you already have a promise about your future – eternity with Him – starting now. **The prophetic word has three primary purposes:**

1. Σ **To edify** – which means to build up, to strengthen.
2. **To exhort** – to stir up, to stimulate, to admonish, to encourage – it doesn’t mean to condemn but can contain words of warning or even rebuke. Prophecy (from God) will never contradict the Word but will reinforce it.
3. **To comfort** – to empathise and bring hope.

I remember praying for a couple here in Church some years ago. I simply began praying for them but then, without thinking, prayed that bareness would be broken in their lives. The women began to sob and later told me that they were unable to have children. They now have several kids!

During times in my life a timely prophetic word has helped me regain focus, restimulated my faith and passion for the mission of my life. I've also had prophetic words that I simply didn't understand or even know what to do with. So I put them on the shelf – some of them remain there. Some of them have become more understood as my life has progressed.

The last significant prophetic word I received was about cloaks of authority. Pastor David McCracken prophetically spoke to me about three stages of my ministry.

- The first was a cloak that I wore which didn't really fit but I made it work (I saw that as my early years of ministry life)
- The second he said was a cloak that fitted well and it grew on me (I saw that as the past 10 years of my ministry life)
- Then he said that the third cloak would be like a uniform that I would wear and it would fit well and express the authority I had grown into. (At that time I really wasn't sure what that meant, possibly a greater role in the church world, but here I am today wearing a police uniform).

Σ **Prophecy brings a word in season.** Solomon said:

Σ *"A person finds joy in giving an apt reply— and how good is a timely word!"*
(Proverbs 15:23 NIV)

The Lord speaks prophetically and progressively to His people. A present word for each generation.

Think about some of the **biblical examples** we have:

- **Noah** (Genesis 6-9) Build an Ark – things are about to happen
- **Abram** (who became Abraham) (Genesis 12: 1-3) Leave your country – I'm going to make you a great nation
- **Moses** (Exodus 3) Take off your shoes for where you are standing is Holy ground – I'm sending you to Egypt to free my people
- **Ezekiel** (Ezekiel 37) Prophecy to these dry bones – life is being restored
- **Micah** (Micah 5:2) Out of you Bethlehem will come the Saviour – The King of Kings
- **Zachariah** (Luke 1:5-25) Your son will be the one who prepares the way for the Messiah
- **Mary** (Luke 1: 26-38) You will call him Jesus – everything changes from today

Our focusing statement today was:

"We believe that the Lord speaks prophetically and progressively, a Present Word for each generation."

The scriptural reference connected to this statement is found in **Proverbs 28:19**; which says:

"Where there is no revelation [prophetic vision], the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law." (NKJV)

Σ *“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed” (Proverbs 28:19 The Message)*

Noah, Abram, Moses, Ezekiel, Micah, Zachariah, Mary and countless others allowed their faith and trust in God to **“see”** what God was doing.

When you look outside – what do you see?

- Noah saw his neighbours jeering and ridiculing him – but he built the Ark
- Abram probably got questioned about his departure from the family – but he went
- Moses had escaped from Egypt as a fugitive – but he went back
- Ezekiel was in a graveyard – but he prophesied
- Micah lived during incredibly tough times – but he saw a new day coming
- Zachariah and his wife Elizabeth were barren – but they continued to pray for a child
- Mary was unmarried and pregnant – and she sang *“My soul does magnify the Lord”*

The Lord has promised good to you. When you look at your circumstances, or the condition of the society around you – what do you see?

I see possibilities, opportunities. I also see difficulties that the Lord alone can overcome – but He is able. Perhaps in my simplicity I hold tightly to those words Solomon wrote:

“If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed” (Proverbs 28:18 The Message)

There are several distinctives that are evident in prophetic people.

1. Σ Those who have grasped the biblical, eternal purpose of God.

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:10-11 NIV)

2. Σ Those who have committed themselves to the mission of the church

“...one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14 NIV)

3. Σ Those who practice and participate in spiritual warfare to defeat the enemy’s schemes

“Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” (Ephesians 6:11; also versus 10-20 NIV)

4. Σ Those who have/seek wisdom to carry out the mission

“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established.” (Proverbs 24:3 NIV)

5. **Σ Those who have a spirit of faith**

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.” (Hebrews 11:1-2 NIV)

We [the leadership of the church] see God establishing a progressive, prophetic pathway before us that specifically and confidently declares Christ to our generation.

Here’s how I have found all of this to work out in practice:

Σ What.

How.

When.

God, **What** are you up to? When we “see” **what** He is doing we are already positioning ourselves to get it done! But He is preparing us for the next stage [often we have already run down the road trying to get it done before we realise He hasn’t moved yet].

Here’s where we can become a little jaded. Lord, didn’t you reveal to me **what** you are doing? Did I get it wrong? God will reply, “No, you didn’t get it wrong but you didn’t wait for **How** I was going to get it done”.

God is a genius because the **How** never looks like anything any human being could even dream up! And so we run again – because we have the **What** and the [often] unconventional **How** – so let’s get this thing done!

But there’s one more step – **When**. Not sure about you but my timing tends to be very different from the Lord’s. But the more I’ve journeyed along this road the more I realise that His timing is perfect. He “sees” much more than I can. But he “reveals” prophetically glimpses of his purpose as we wait.

Because He wants to exhort, to edify and to comfort us along this road we travel. The road He has called us into and will Shepherd us to the green pastures promised.

Σ *“We believe that the Lord speaks prophetically and progressively, a Present Word for each generation.”*

If we attend to what he reveals, we are most blessed.