

## **HOW TO BE A PROPHET, PART 1**

### **Romans 12:6**

**Dr. George O. Wood**

The subject of prophecy. It really has impressed me how prophecy has that sense of immediacy. The Lord is speaking, and prophets—whether Old or New Testament or in the Church—deliver a direct revelation of God in a moment of prophecy that, in any other context, would be blasphemy to say, “I, the Lord thy God, speak to thee.” But when prophecy is given, it is for upbuilding. It is for encouragement. It is for comfort and consolation. And it is appropriate, when the Spirit speaks, to speak as though God himself were speaking—which, through prophecy, of course, He is. That’s why one can naturally, in giving prophecy, lapse into the first person, speaking on behalf of God.

Romans 12:6: “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith” (NIV).

That’s a short Scripture for me to read on a Sunday morning! I have really felt the Spirit speaking to me in this last week—basically, in two words, “Slow down. If you will cause the church to know the truth in Romans 12, this church will prosper beyond measure and be blessed individually and corporately.”

I have no idea how long it’s going to take us in Romans 12, but the principles that are here are absolutely so vital for our functioning as a church that if we never get out of the chapter until Jesus comes, we would be better for it. The Lord is saying, “My word and My work will prosper. Give attention to what I’m saying. This is the Magna Carta of the Church, the way I’ve designed the body of Christ to function.”

I would just encourage you in these next weeks in Romans 12, unless you have some legitimate reason for being absent, I’d like to encourage you—and I very rarely do this from the pulpit, but do something which is very scriptural—that is, not to neglect the gathering of ourselves together,

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as is the habit of some. But together, take this Scripture and make it living in our corporate experience together.

It's always good to survey the context of where we're at. We look at an individual verse, and want to find where it fits. Romans 12, as we've indicated previously, falls easily into three divisions. The first two verses speak of our personal commitment to God. There's no functioning within the Body unless, as individuals, we have willingly offered ourselves to the Lord for His use as our reasonable service.

Then verses 3–8 speak of our uniqueness within Christian community. Here's where we will be for a while. What is it, uniquely, that you can contribute to Christian community and to this body?

Then, verse 9 to the end of the chapter speaks of the universals. That is, the attitudes and actions which are meant to be a part of all of our functioning and living together.

As we look at verse 6, which tells us “having gifts that differ,” the word “gifts” suggest to us that you have charisma. We think of charisma in the political sense. Kennedy was said to have charisma because he was one of the beautiful people, one of the electric people, one of the bright, intelligent people, one of the charming and dashing persons. You hear this word “charisma” used of individuals like that, and you say, “But I'm not electric. I'm not bright. I'm not charming, and I'm not dashing. So do I have charisma?” Yes. According to the Scripture, you have charisma. Charisma is a singular Greek word. And charismatic is the plural for the same word. They come from a noun, which means “to show favor, or to give freely.” This word is related to a Greek noun that is the word for “grace.” Therefore, charisma is a gift of grace. And charismatic gifts are simply grace gifts. They're not earned gifts. They're not natural endowments, although God can work through your natural abilities. But fundamentally, they are that which God gives to us. And all Christians have charisma. All Christians are charismatic.

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I discovered that truth in a fresh way. We have a habit of dividing the church world up into charismatic and non-charismatic. Persons will go a great length if they don't believe in the charismatic renewal of saying, "I'm not charismatic!" But the Scriptures clearly teach that every Christian is a charismatic. Romans 6:23, which has already used the word "charisma" says, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The charisma of God is eternal life. So if you've received Jesus Christ, you've already received the free gift, and you're charismatic. Next time someone asks you, "What is a charismatic?" don't go to 1 Corinthians 12 or 14. Go to Romans 6:23 and say, "Here is where a charismatic begins. They are persons who've received the free gift of God, which is salvation."

Since God has given us the free gift of salvation, it should not surprise us that the Lord would want to star-spangle His Church with gifts. He is a giver, God is. When we look at the charismata in the New Testament we find many, many different gifts which are given to the church—grace gifts. Four of the major listings are found in Romans 12; and 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, and also verse 28; and in Ephesians 4:11. If you put these four lists together, you will come up with—and people disagree as to the parallelism of some of the gifts, as to whether or not in one of the lists it exactly matches a word that's used in another one of the lists—but about nineteen or twenty different charismata are found in these four listings that are given for spiritual gifts, or grace gifts.

People have differing ways of dividing these grace gifts up. We've used the terminology last week that the gifts in Ephesians 4:11 speak of ministry gifts. God has given to the Church some apostles, some prophets, some pastors, teachers, some evangelists, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry. Here are gifts which are related to functions belonging to a person. Then there are what are commonly known as the charismatic gifts of 1 Corinthians 12, gifts which relate to the mind—wisdom, knowledge, discernment. Gifts which are power gifts—

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faith, miracles, and healings. Gifts which relate to speech—tongues and prophecy and interpretation. Then another division; some have looked at and said Romans 12 speaks of the motivational gifts in the church—how we can stir one another up through prophecy, and serving, and teaching, and giving aide, and showing mercy, and the like. Others divide the gifts up by saying there are some gifts that relate to an office—like pastor, teacher, prophet, evangelist, apostle—then other gifts simply distributed within the Body. Others say there are some gifts that embrace the totally supernatural dimension, and some gifts which embrace the natural dimension. Like, faith and healings would be on the supernatural side, and serving and giving mercy would be on the natural side.

I think a basic summery of the way the gifts fall is found in 1 Peter 4:10-11, which kind of conveniently divide up the subject for our consideration. “As each has received a ‘charisma,’ employ it for one another as good stewards of God’s very grace. Whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God. Whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies.”

Notice what Peter says—whoever speaks, and whoever serves. As you look at the gifts in all of the lists, you’ll find that some of the gifts indeed do fall in the speaking category and some fall in the serving category. Some may be overlapping, such as faith and miracles. But wherever the gifts are distributed, they are for the benefit of others. They occur through the power which God supplies, and their end is to bring God glory. God has given to His Church gifts. We’re all charismatic if we’ve received Christ.

And even when we go to charismatic prayer meetings—when that term is used as we have used it in the Church—it means simply that we’re going to a place where people are seeking the Holy Spirit, that He may pour out upon that gathering the grace gifts of His Spirit. It is not simply a

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meeting where people speak in tongues. That is only one of the charismata. It is a meeting in which we seek to see embodied the totality of what the gifts of the Spirit may express.

When we come to the gift for today—the grace gift of prophecy—we immediately run up to something which is common to many of the gifts. That is, while in certain persons this gift functions especially on a continuing basis, there is a sense in which all Christians are encouraged at one time or another to participate in the expression of this grace gift.

We'd have to go back to the Old Testament first for a reference to prophecy. Numbers 11:24-30, where Moses had come down from the cloud, and where God has spoken to him, and Scriptures say, where God took some of the Spirit that was upon Moses and put it upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. All of a sudden, somebody came to this distinguished group of persons who were prophesying—Moses and the seventy elders—and said, “Have you heard what’s happening in the camp, outside the tent of meeting? Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. Prophecy is something that should be institutionalized. Only a certain select group should do it. What about those two heretics out there that are prophesying? God’s Spirit isn’t supposed to fall upon them.” Moses came back with a retort. “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets. That the Lord would put His Spirit on all of them.”

This idea, would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, really does not occur as an Old Testament theme again in a significant way until you come to Acts 2—where, on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit has been outpoured and Peter picks up that phrase of Moses: “Would that all God’s people were prophets.” And he links it together with a prophecy in Joel 2, and he says, “In the latter days I’ll pour forth My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy. In that day, I’ll pour forth My Spirit upon your handmaidens and your menservants, and they shall prophesy.”

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In other words, the Lord is saying through that prophetic word of Peter, “Your nobodies are going to prophesy. People you don’t normally listen to. Your teenagers and your hired help!

When you speak for God, it’s the gray-beards that you listen to. But the gift of prophecy is meant to be so prevalent that your young people and your hired help also can speak authoritatively on behalf of God.”

Paul reinforces this in 1 Corinthians 14:1, and also at the end of the chapter in 14:39, when he says to all the believers, “Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” And he says, “So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy.”

When Paul is coming to describe the motivational gifts which are to stir one another up in Christian community for the Lord, the first thing that he ticks off—top of the list—is prophecy. If you’re called to prophesy, as God has called every believer to prophesy, what is it that I can share with you that will help you to become a prophet?

I would divide my consideration into these four areas. If you’re going to be a prophet, first of all we need to look at what prophecy is. Then we need to know what purposes prophecy serves. Then we need to know how prophecy functions, its practical outworking. And we also need to look at some of the forms in which prophecy comes. I’m not going to get all through this today. It’s going to take me at least two Sundays to get through this one verse. So today, we’ll just spend a few moments looking at what prophecy is.

If I were to suggest to you, “What is your image of a prophet?” it would probably be someone like John the Baptist—ragged and rugged and hearty and in the wilderness. But if you’re to be a prophet, this image may not fit you. I think it’s well, in looking at what something is, to look at what it is not. Spend a moment looking, from a scriptural point of view, at:

#### **I. What prophecy is not.**

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**A.** First thing prophecy is not. From a scriptural point of view, prophecy is not speaking from a trance or from a state of ecstasy. It is not working yourself up until you're in a catatonic fit, or whatever. In Greek mystery religions, you're familiar with the Oracle of Delphi where the prophetess would get into such a state of ecstasy—"ecstasy" literally means being outside oneself—and in that state of irrationality, then the prophecies would flow forth. When we gather together in Christian community, we do not expect the prophets to be nuts, to be mystics, to have lost control of themselves.

We find that Paul says in 1 Corinthians that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. That means their rationality is in control of their spirituality. And they can be told to sit down, or they can arrange their timing. And they don't have to speak in a tone of voice which is shrill or religious, or the kind of tone you use when you're supposed to pray or supposed to give an utterance in tongues or something. It can be normal. Normal to the range that you have as a person. Sometimes I get very loud. I expect, when I prophesy, I have that latitude of going loud or going soft. But one thing you won't see is me in a trance when I'm prophesying. There may be one or two exceptions in the Old Testament, but certainly not within the New Testament framework.

**B.** Prophecy is also not fortune telling. It is not consulting astrological guides or Ouija boards. We know this. It just needs to be clarified again, though. The Old Testament has something to say about how we can abuse prophecy, for prophecy can so easily be bound up in that word "prediction." We want to know what's going to happen next, a curiosity about the future. That's the whole purpose of fortune-telling. Prophecy is not fortune-telling. And it's not meant just to satisfy our curiosity of what's going to happen with our life, or what's going to happen next week, or are we going to make this decision or that decision, or who are we going to marry, or the like. The Living Bible translates a passage in Deuteronomy 18 this way. I like the Living

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Bible's clearness on this: "No Israeli may practice black magic, or call on the evil spirits for aid, or be a fortune teller, or be a serpent charmer, medium, or wizard, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone doing these things is an object of horror and disgust to the LORD. And it is because the nations do these things that the LORD, your God, will displace them."

Many within our culture have some strange ideas when they think of prophecy. You ask a non-Christian who they'd think of as a prophet, and they'd probably pull out Jeane Dixon's "A Gift of Prophecy." I was looking through it this week because I thought it might be sort of a helpful negative definition. If any of you wonder whether or not Jeane Dixon is a prophet of God, reading this book will tell you rather rapidly whether she is or not. Near the end of the book, she has a vision of a serpent appearing at the foot of her bed, wrapping itself around her and then getting close to her face. For a while, she didn't see its eyes. Its eyes were headed toward the east because something dramatic was happening in the east. In fact, as she later revealed, there was a baby born on February 5, 1962, who was going to unite all the world religions, and all nations would worship him, and the like. When the serpent finally looked her in the face, she said, "I saw in him the all-knowing wisdom of the ages." It doesn't take a great deal to figure out where she's coming from. Prophecy is not this fascination with prediction which Jeane Dixon has.

**C.** Prophecy is not necessarily being a great moral or political leader. Gandhi, for example, of India—many called him a prophet. But a prophet is one who has contact with the living God as revealed in Scripture. While Gandhi was a great social reformer, he could not qualify as a prophet in the biblical sense of the word.

**D.** I would say also, prophecy is not simply engaging in end-time speculation. I think of a book that came out a few years ago that prophesied the Lord would return September 5, 1975. It sold rather well in Christian circles. I think a few people may have gotten themselves ready for that. The prophecy didn't come true. Prophecy gets a bad name through some persons that start out

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with what are called amazing prophecies. Actually, they are amazing speculations. I almost think there are some people that engage in end-time speculation who started out as a prophet and became a capitalist—rendering the word “prophet” (or “profit!”) in two ways. I would trust some of the prophets better if they donated their earnings to the building of churches. Let’s be careful. Not everyone who engages in end-time speculation or has a new revelation that you should convert all your money into gold or silver is necessarily prophesying on behalf of the Lord. Watch their moral life when you watch some of the amazing prophecy people. I can think of one in particular, Doug Clark, who has been the amazing prophecy kind of person—left his wife, married a young woman, living in a state of adultery. Yet he’s prophesying for the Lord. I wrote him a letter because I know him personally. I said, “Please get out of the ministry. This is unfair, what you’re doing to yourself and the body of Christ.”

**E.** Being a prophet also is not bringing revelation that exceeds or contradicts the doctrine of Scripture. It’s not some new thing—like, for example, we have in the Mormon faith—where we have additional revelation through someone like Joseph Smith. In fact, the prophets are regulated by the Scripture, regulated by the teaching of the apostle. This is clear in 1 Corinthians 14, for example, verses 37 and 38. There were prophets in the Corinthian church that were exceeding apostolic doctrine, bringing revelation that was not within the teaching of the apostles, who were the only credentialed people who could speak on behalf of Christ authoritatively, in a doctrinal sense. “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.” In other words, if anyone does not recognize what I am saying and what my authority is, he’s not prophet. Paul goes on in Galatians 1:8 to say that “anyone who brings to you another gospel, something of a different kind than the one I’ve brought to you, even if it

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would be an angel of light, let him be accursed.” So all of these are the kind of things prophecy is not.

#### **II. What it is.**

I think what it is can be divided into two areas rather easily. The most popular way of looking at prophecy—the most popular understanding of biblical prophecy—is, first of all, “one who sees.”

1 Samuel 9:9 puts it to us this way: “Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God he said, ‘Come, let us go to the seer,’ for he is now called a prophet who is formerly called a seer.”

There are two dimensions to prophecy: foretelling and forth telling, and a seer seems to have more dimension on the foretelling side. There is a wide range of seeing. Scripture is replete with examples of the kind of sight that is possible within prophecy, ranging from the kind of insight which is the result of spiritual intuition, all the way to predicting an event. A prophet sees and hears with a spiritual aliveness that is not present within the normal, rationalistic way of looking at life or things.

**A.** Prophecy could simply be an intuition, a reading of character. Paul does a sly thing in Titus 1:12, where he says, “One of themselves, a prophet of their own...” Referring to the people of Crete. Paul calls this person a prophet. When Paul uses the term, he’s conveying what the popular conception of prophet is. He’s saying this is what a prophet is like, a prophet of their own, “said Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true.” That’s really good insight, isn’t it? People’s characteristics as a whole.

But if you look to the Gospel of Luke, you get a deeper awareness and insight. In Luke 2, we find two elderly people—one Simeon and one Anna. Anna is described as being a prophetess. She was eighty-four years of age. She devoted herself to prayer and fasting and ministering to the Lord in the temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus to the temple, this prophetess, Anna, came up that very same hour and gave thanks to God and spoke of Him to all who were

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looking for the redemption of Israel. What was it that enabled this eighty-four-year-old lady to be able to look at one of the babies that was coming for dedication at the temple—of the thousands and thousands of babies that streamed through that place probably every month—what gave her the capacity to recognize in that poor peasant family this one child who was unique and different from them all? It was the Spirit of the Lord coming to give her awareness that this child's destiny was different. Simeon had the same perception. The Lord can make the prophet especially aware of things that, to the common eye, would just pass by us as ordinary.

**B.** Prophecy—on the far side of the continuum—can be the prediction of events. This happens in the New Testament. Agabus, for example, is one that sees that a famine is coming upon the church, and he also sees that Paul is going to be bound if he goes to Jerusalem (Acts 11 and 21). Interestingly enough, when Agabus prophesied he does not go on and give guidance. He does not say, “In light of the famine, I propose that we get a food fund together.” Nor does he say to Paul, “In light of the fact that you're going to be bound in Jerusalem, I recommend that you don't go.” As a correction to some of the prophecy that I see from time to time emphasized in charismatic renewal and circles, the prophet in the New Testament—when he's predicting—stops short of giving direction. He just simply says, “This is what's going to happen,” and it's left up to the person to decide what they're going to do with the prophecy. The church decides, in regard to Agabus, to get a fund together. Agabus doesn't decide it. They send help. And Paul decides to go on to Jerusalem in spite of the prophecy.

Prophecy differs from prediction in that prophecy always has some underlying, deeper motivation and purpose. Prediction just satisfies one's curiosity. A prophet is one who sees. He's tremendously conscious of what God is doing—all the way from a very simple level of being aware of character to being aware of a special event and the significance as it's occurring, and being aware of an event which has not yet occurred.

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C. The most fundamental definition of prophet, however, is simply one who speaks for God. A prophet is one who sees, and a prophet is one who speaks. I think the clearest scriptural example of this is found in the Book of Exodus 4. Moses does not want to be God's spokesman. He says, "Lord I'm not eloquent, and I don't have a tongue. I need a spokesman." So the Lord says to him in verses 15 and 16 "You're going to have Aaron. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you what you shall do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be a mouth for you and you shall be to him as God." Then later in Exodus 7: "The Lord said to Moses, 'See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.'" Aaron was Moses' prophet, only Aaron could never speak on his own. He could only speak what Moses had given him to speak. That's a fundamental concept of a prophet. A prophet never speaks on his own. He always speaks what God is telling him.

This idea of speaking for God embodies at least two fundamental concepts. One is the fact that the Lord desires intensely to communicate with His people. Is this surprising to you? It's not if you look at the imagery of God as presented in Scripture. He's presented as a Husband, as a Father, as a Mother, as a Shepherd. All these relationships speak of one who is communicative. Can you imagine a husband who doesn't communicate? Or a father who never communicates to his children? Or a mother who does not communicate? Or a shepherd who never calls his sheep? God is communicating God, and He wants to break through to us. We know, on the human level, that relationships get jammed up when we do not speak. The thing about the gods that are heathen, they are idols. The Scripture makes that point over and over again. These gods do not speak.

I remember in China, the gods, beautiful things. But they do not speak. But God speaks. God is powerful. The Scriptures begin with the announcement, "And God said...and God said..." And

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God has continued speaking until the ultimate of His speaking was the revelation of Jesus Christ.

He's still speaking to us through the word of prophecy.

When we come to the use of prophecy in the Church (and we're not talking about prophecy as scriptural revelation or prophecy as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ) we see the need for prophecy in the body of Christ, in that prophecy is a supportive instrument the Lord uses to apply teaching that is given to keenly cut through barriers we may be raising—and, in a moment of time, get through to where we're at.

I think a chief example of this is a situation that occurs in 2 Samuel 12, where Nathan the prophet is aware of David's sin. Nathan comes up with this story of a rich man and a poor man. The poor man owns the little lamb that eats at his table, sits in his lap, kind of the family pet. And the rich man has all the lambs of the world. But a traveler comes through town and is a guest of the rich man. The rich man takes the poor man's lamb and kills it. Nathan says to David, "What would you do with that man?" David says, "I'd kill the guy! But since I can't do that for killing a lamb, at least he should restore it four-fold." And Nathan says, "You're the man!" That's a moment of prophecy.

Can you imagine teaching in this situation? What if Nathan had been a teacher instead of a prophet? What would have been the difference? A teacher would have come and held an audience. David would have had the service with the king's chaplain, who was invited in to give the message. He might have taught, "Five rules for a happy home life." And David, sitting there listening, agreeing: "I know the rules are there, but I'm glad you're just dealing with principles today and not my situation." Or when David ordered Uriah to the forefront of the battle so he would be killed, the teacher might have said something like, "My sermon today is helping men in the army to become better men of God." A wonderful, safe sermon. But the prophet comes along and says, "You've done it. Thou art the man." God is speaking through communication.

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This is the idea—one of the basic ideas associated with prophecy—that is true is seen in 1 Corinthians 14:25, where Paul says that when an unbeliever enters into the midst of Christian believers and the prophets begin to prophesy, the secrets of his heart are disclosed. It's in that moment, through words of prophecy, God is reading an individual and disclosing to him what is in his heart. So that person then says, "Truly, God is in this place." And he falls down and confesses Jesus as Lord. One who sees for God. One who speaks for God.

So the prophet, on the one hand, is saying something very unique and profound for the occasion. He's realizing that the Lord desires to communicate to His people. But the prophet is also very aware of God's immediate presence in the moment, so that the prophet is continually saying things like, "Thus sayeth the Lord..." or, "I, the Lord thy God, say unto thee..." There is none of this idea that God is somewhere remotely in the past. It's more than a theological belief that God revealed himself once upon a time. The prophet has that understanding of God that puts God right now into the immediate, in this very moment.

I think it is this understanding of God's being in the immediate, in this moment, now, that makes a difference between the ecclesiastic and the charismatic. Ecclesiastic comes from a Greek word that means "to gather together." It's become associated with church form and church organization and church tradition. In an ecclesiastic service, the minister can come and simply read through it. If God's there, fine. If He's not there, we can still make it. Charismatic can't. An ecclesiastical worshiper can come and not prepare his heart for the worship—just simply arrive, mouth through the songs, and listen to the prayers and the message, and not participate in anything that may be unique and individual to what the Holy Spirit's wanting to draw forth. It really doesn't make any difference whether God's here or not. We've put in our appearance. We're ecclesiastic.

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A charismatic—one who is concerned with the grace gift of the Lord, who's desiring to receive the prophecy that the Lord has for that moment—is intensely desirous and aware of God's immediacy. God is filling this moment, even now.

When I look at the qualities of what it is to be a prophet, some features that make up the life of a person who prophesies, I would use, in the Old Testament, Isaiah as a model, and in the New Testament, John as a model from the Book of Revelation. Three features that I see that are outstanding. Isaiah says, "I saw the Lord." Then he says, "Woe is me!" Then he says, "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6).

"I saw the Lord." It's possible to come into the sanctuary, into the temple, into the people of God, and simply see the externals. But Isaiah's experience of prophecy began when he looked beyond all the externals and suddenly was caught up, and he saw the Lord. The same thing happens to John in the Book of Revelation. He says "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1). There's a lot of things that John could be in, other than the Spirit. He could be in depression, or loneliness, or all these things. But he says, "I was in the Spirit." Paul gives the admonition to Timothy, "Stir up the gift which is in you." This means an act of our own, to stir it up. Which may come through preparing our hearts through prayer, through the singing of worship songs, or the like. But there's that preparation of being in God's presence.

And then the revelation of being in God's presence. "Woe is me." The prophet is acutely aware. Before he's aware of anybody else's shortcomings, he's aware of his own. "Woe is me. I am undone." John, in the Book of Revelation, falls at the feet of the risen Lord as though he were dead, unworthy to stand up and face Him. But when that's over, God says, "Will you speak?" Isaiah says, "Here am I, Lord. I'll speak." And the Lord says to John, "I want you to start writing." And John starts writing.

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Would that all God's people were prophets. Would that all of us, as a body of believers, could have stirred up within us—just from this teaching—a desire on our part. And we are to desire prophecy, as Paul says. A desire to prophesy. Maybe in a setting such as this. Maybe in a small group meeting. Maybe within a home situation.

I'm leaving you incomplete here because I don't want to convey the image that prophesying is always saying something about the future. Prophesying may be something so simple as what Haggai the prophet did in chapter 1. The Lord gave him a message, and he said, "The LORD is with you," as a prophecy. How easy can you start out?

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, we're starting this series together to discover Your Word and how it will teach us to become Your people as community. In this Word today, Lord, You've been saying to us that You want us to move beyond being a passive recipient of Your Word to an active communicator of it. You want us to go from the position of being learners to being doers. You want us to come out of the lack of confidence that we often have in ourselves, that doubt that we can ever do anything for You or we're worthy enough. You want us to move beyond that, to have the confidence that we can speak a word in Your name that comes authoritatively from You. So Lord, let what is shared be a seed in our lives to excite us, to stir us up to prophesy. To be Your heralds, Your announcers, Your spokespeople in this age—in our church, in our world. We ask this, Lord, in Your Name. Amen.