

# THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, I feel like I have really grown in the Spirit – in my understanding of who the Holy Spirit is, what His role is in the Father’s will, in my life, and in the world. I feel like I have grown in my understanding of spiritual gifts and their purposes, how we are to steward them, and how we are to walk in step with the Spirit. At the same time, I have discovered a great diversity in how people think about, and respond to the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Mostly for myself, but also because I hope this will help people in their own journey with the Lord, I want to summarise some of what I have learnt about these things.

### **Some questions to ponder:**

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. Who receives the Holy Spirit, and how?
3. How and what does the Holy Spirit work in us?
4. How do we communicate with the Holy Spirit?
5. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?
6. To whom, are spiritual gifts given?
7. What is prophecy?
8. What examples of prophecy are there in the Bible?
9. Is prophecy relevant today, and what is its purpose?

## QUESTIONS 1-3 KNOWING, RECEIVING AND THE WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Questions 1,2 and 3 can be answered all together. [John 14:15-18] says this:

- *"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever (other translations – "may be with you to the age") – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."*

### **1. Who is the Holy Spirit**

- Another Helper (*intercessor or advocate – see Greek translation*)
- Sent by God to abide with us forever (*the Greek here describes an indwelling of the Spirit that lasts from now into eternity, and results in a change within our being*)
- Spirit of truth (*giving divine truth and revelation – see Greek translation*)
- The Holy Spirit is God in us – Jesus says He will not leave us as orphans, but will come to us. He explains further in John 14:19 – "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me..." He then explains in John 16:14 that "...He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." In John 14:11, Jesus also says, "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me..."

The Holy Spirit is sent by God, to be with us forever, and to give revelation of Jesus and of the Father. The Holy Spirit speaks of what Jesus speaks, and this includes what Jesus speaks of Himself – that He is in the Father, and the Father in Him, and that we will still see Him (this is the revelation of Jesus' face that we are given in the Spirit). Jesus is coming again in the future, but He is also here with us now, as the indwelling Holy Spirit.

### **2. Who receives the Holy Spirit, and how?**

- Those who love God, who keep His commandments
- Those who are not of the world, but belong to God
- The Holy Spirit then dwells with us and will be in us

The indwelling of Christ and His Spirit within our very being is emphasised again in John 14:21, and 23: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him... (v.23) If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." I just want to share one more passage from Romans 8:9-11. If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, we are not His – so then, every believer has the Spirit of Christ, and this Spirit is also one of life.

- *"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."*

1 Peter 3:24 again emphasises these points:

- *“Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”*

So then, if it is by the Spirit that we know Christ abides in us, we need to recognise who the Spirit is and what the Spirit does.

### 3. How and what does the Holy Spirit work in us?

Wow. This is such a broad question and there are so many references to the work of the Spirit all throughout the Bible. To address this questions, let's look at some of the many descriptions of the Holy Spirit – names given to the Holy Spirit and its purposes (some of these descriptions are used multiple times in both the old and new testaments).

- *Spirit of Truth [John 14:17]*
  - Greek: ἀλήθεια (alétheia) meaning “divine truth”
- *The Helper, the Holy Spirit [John 14:26]*
  - Greek: παράκλητος (paraklétos) meaning “advocate, intercessor, helper”
  - More on the Interceding Spirit: <http://lostnowfoundk.wordpress.com/2012/12/05/the-interceding-spirit/>
- *Spirit of Our God [1 Corinthians 6:11]*
  - In this context – the Spirit washes, sanctifies and justifies us.
- *Spirit of the Lord [2 Corinthians 3:18]*
  - In this context – the Spirit transforms us into the same image of the glory of the Lord as we see and behold Him.
- *The Holy Spirit of Promise [Ephesians 1:13]*
  - In this context – the Spirit is a guarantor of our inheritance in Christ, and of our salvation in Him.
- *Spirit of Holiness [Romans 1:4]*
  - This is the Spirit described, that declares Jesus to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead. He declares Jesus is Holy, Sanctified and the Firstborn from the Dead.
- *Spirit of life in Christ [Romans 8:2]*
  - The law of the Spirit of life in Christ makes us free from the law of sin and death.
- *Spirit of Glory [1 Peter 4:14]*
  - The Spirit glorifies God even when we are reproached for the name of Christ.
- *Eternal Spirit [Hebrew 9:14]*
  - In this context – the Spirit through which Christ redeems us to enter relationship with God is ageless and eternal.
- *Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation [Ephesians 1:17]*
  - The Spirit gives wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.
- *Spirit of Grace and Supplication [Zechariah 12:10]*
  - In this context – in that day, the Spirit of grace and supplication will cause the house of Israel to recognise Jesus as Messiah and understand the implication of His death and resurrection.
- *Spirit of Adoption [Romans 8:15]*
  - This is the Spirit that cries “Abba Father” and “bears witness of with our spirit that we are children of God.”

## 4. HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

### A. WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16-26 speaks of walking in the Spirit. The Greek word here for the instruction of “walking”, is περιπατέω (peripateó) meaning to “walk, conduct my life, or live”. Walking in the Spirit is living in the Spirit, and as we see in Romans 8:9-11 (see previous reference), the Spirit is life because of righteousness. So, there are two aspects to walking and living in the Spirit – (1) We walk in the Spirit and we live lives obedient to the word of God, (2) We live in the Spirit as we receive the life of Christ, His Salvation, which is the light of men [John 1:4]

***Walking in the Spirit therefore results in fruit, or light – these are things that are visible, or stand as evidence of our being in the Spirit.***

- [Hebrews 11:1] – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” The Greek for “evidence” here is ὑπόστασις (hupostasis) meaning “giving substance to, or assurance/guaranteeing”. So a life lived for God, or act of faith is a guarantee, assurance or evidence of things of not seen; and the One who created these things? [Colossians 1:15-16] – “He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”
- We overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony and that we do not love our lives to the death. [Revelation 12:11]
- [1 Peter 2:11-12] – “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”
- [John 17:10] – “And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.”
- [Matthew 5:16] – “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”
- More about the light and life of Jesus reflected in our lives:  
<http://lostnowfoundk.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/light-unveiled/>

***These things, the evidence of our living in the Spirit, are available to all believers. It does not mean we will be perfect in all of these characteristics right now, but we grow in them, and we attain to them.*** As Ephesians 4:13 says, “...till we all come to unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” The context of this verse is found in the description of the purpose of spiritual gifts and their role in building the individual and the church. Paul then goes on to describe how this results in spiritual maturity, that we are no longer “...tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ...” [Ephesians 4:14-15] Instead of being unable to discern truth and false teachings, those who are mature in the Spirit know the truth and are able to speak it in love, with the purpose of growing themselves and each other in Christ.

Galatians 5:22-23 describes some of the fruit, or evidence of the Spirit – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” Luke 1:80, and Luke 2:40 describe how John and Baptist and Jesus “grew and became strong in the Spirit”. There is a process of growing involved with becoming strong in the Spirit.

## B. RECOGNISING THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus says His sheep will know His voice, recognise Him and follow Him. Consider Jesus' words in [John 10:1-6]

- *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."*

There is so much in this passage alone! The core message that Jesus gives here, is the assurance that His voice is audible and recognisable. We CAN hear Jesus' voice and we CAN recognise it. Jesus gives us instruction of how we might recognise His voice. We know that the Scripture is *"given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Indeed, we need to know the word of God, and to understand it. Just in this passage, we are given instruction for how to recognise the leading of Jesus' voice.

### Who is the shepherd, who are the sheep?

- Jesus is the shepherd, and those who know Him and follow Him, are His sheep. [John 10:11] – *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep"*. [John 10:14] – *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by them."*

### What is the door, and who is the doorkeeper? What are the other ways of entry?

- Rather, who is the door? The door is Jesus – *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture..."* [John 10:9] Jesus is the only way to the Father, the only way to Salvation and the only entry point into the kingdom of heaven. *"...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* [John 14:6] The doorkeeper is the one who can open the door, open the revelation of Jesus so that we can see the Father in Christ. Who can this be other than the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit who enables us to know Jesus, and dwells in us so that we are able to recognise His voice.

### What does the voice of the shepherd sound like?

- The shepherd knows the name of His sheep. [Psalm 139:1] – *"O Lord, you have searched me and known me..."*
- The shepherd leads His sheep with humility, and His sheep imitate Him. [Philippians 2:5-11], [Ephesians 5:1-2]
- The shepherd goes before His sheep
- The shepherd's voice is that of the Father's

### What does the voice of the stranger sound like?

- [1 John 4:5-6] – *"They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."*
- When we recognise the voice of the shepherd, we know that what is not His voice, is the voice of a stranger.

Recognising the Spirit of God requires us to know how He speaks. As we test and discern more and more, we will grow more and more familiar with His voice.

- **[John 16:13]** – “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”
- **[1 Kings 19:11-13]** – “Then He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave...”

### C. DISCERNING THE TRUTH

[1 John 4:1-3]

- “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

**False prophets and teachers are described as having the following characteristics [2 Timothy 3]:**

- “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives from gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as their also was.”

**In amongst the many descriptors of “perilous men”, a few things stand out:**

- **The “evidence” of their lives are in direct contrast to what is described regarding fruits of the Spirit and the evidence of walking in the Spirit.**
- **They are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God** – God does not have the first place, or the first priority in their lives.
- **They have a form of godliness but denying its power.** Outwardly, they appear religious, but in truth, they do not believe in the power of God, of His Spirit or of the purpose in His holiness. Matthew 23:25-28 describes this more – ...,you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also... For you are like whitewashed tombs which appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness... you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness...” Paul describes what it is like

to have godliness with power in [1 Corinthians 2:4-5] – “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

- **They creep into households and make captives.** Deceivers can subtly work their way into the hearts of individuals, families, even the church. A quality of being deceived is the fact that you don’t even know you are deceived! We need to be alert, and watchful. As 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Who is he able to devour? This leads on to our next observation.
- **Those who are gullible, loaded with sins and led away by various lusts will fall into the trap of deceivers.** To avoid being led astray, we must recognise our sin, come before the Lord, repent and receive His grace. We do not do this in a strict, legalistic way, but we do this in submission of our lives to Him – it is an automatic response to His grace and is done out of love and desire for Him.
- **They are always learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.** Why is it that they cannot come to the knowledge of the truth? It is because we need the Spirit to know the Son, who is the way, the truth and the life. Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” We need to know Jesus! He is understanding of the truth. In Luke 12:56, Jesus speaks of discerning the times – “Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?”
- **They will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all.** Jannes and Jambres were the Egyptians magicians who opposed Moses and Aaron when they came to confront Pharaoh. Their power could not match the power of God. In the same way, all deceitfulness will be revealed in the day that the Lord returns. “For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.” [Luke 8:17] In that day, there will be justice with all acts of the light and of darkness revealed.

**Another passage describing “idle talkers and deceivers” can be found in Titus 1:10-16. It is a call to the elders to shepherd and protect their flock.**

- “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

#### **D. STEWARDSHIP – an additional note**

1 Corinthians 4:1 says, “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” The word “steward” is the Greek οἰκονόμος (oikonomos) meaning a household manager, usually a freed man given responsibility over affairs of the household. To be a steward of the mysteries of God implies that we have been given responsibility to make decisions concerning these mysteries – we want to live by them, shine them out, but also be wary of who we throw our pearls to. The Holy Spirit reveals the mysteries of Christ to us, and it is up to us how we will respond to this revelation, and steward the spirit of wisdom and revelation within us. Paul uses the example of his gift in preaching when he says, in 1 Corinthians 9:17 – “For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.” We need to know the will of God if we are to wisely steward what He has given us.

## 5. WHO RECEIVES SPIRITUAL GIFTS, AND WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE?

### A. THE FUNCTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Corinthians 12 speaks about the diversity of spiritual gifts in the church, yet the unity that these bring. Paul begins by asking the church not to be ignorant of spiritual gifts (v.1), then goes on to explain their function in the church.

#### 1. Spiritual gifts operate under the name of Jesus and by His Holy Spirit.

- (v.3-5) – *“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.”*

#### 2. Spiritual gifts unite the church.

- (v. 6) – *“And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.”*
- (v. 12-14) – *“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.”*

#### 3. Spiritual gifts are for the profit of all.

- (v.7) – *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”*
- (v.17-18) – *“If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*

#### 4. Spiritual gifts should be stewarded in love and grace.

- [1 Peter 4:7-11] – *“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

#### 5. Spiritual gifts are to be desired.

- (v.31) – *“But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”*
- [1 Corinthians 14:1] – *“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts...”*
- 1 Corinthians 13 suggests that different gifts are given to different people, all by the same Spirit and same Lord, all according to God’s will so that they might work for the good of all. At the same time, we are encouraged to desire the best gifts (or “greater gifts” in other translations) We may have a strength in one area of spiritual gifting, and we should steward this in the grace of God. As we do, and as we seek after God, we should also desire greater gifts, or greater understanding of spiritual gifts. They may not be our “primary gift”, and we do not want to lose focus of what God has given us and purposed for us, but we also want to know and experience Him in His fullness. So, desire to understand the purpose and workings of different spiritual gifts, even apart from your own strength.

## 6. Spiritual gifts are for ALL believers.

- There are already so many passages included here which say spiritual gifts are for all (see above). Just as a little extra, I would like to add this reminder of God's blessing upon us – [Ephesians 1:3, 13] – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...(v.13) In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” The Holy Spirit is available to all who believe in Christ, and works through all for the glory of God.

## B. TYPES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We could look up each spiritual gift individually, and there are all sorts of “what spiritual gift is your strength” questionnaires and descriptions, but let's just take it back to basics and look at the types of spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. I'm not going to go into detail about any gift (and in fact, I don't think I fully understand some of them yet!), but I just want to list them out so we have an idea of how the Spirit may work in different people.

- Word of wisdom
- Word of knowledge
- Faith
- Gifts of healings
- Working of miracles
- Prophecy
- Discerning of Spirits
- Different kinds of tongues
- Interpretation of tongues
- Apostles
- Teachers
- Helpers
- Administrators
- Love (the greatest gift, and the pre-requisite for all gifts)

Again, I want to finish with an additional note about stewardship. In Matthew 13:11-13, Jesus explains why he speaks in parables to His disciples – “...Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” I eagerly desire to know God more, to be able to comprehend His fullness more, and to steward all he has given me (to “invest my given talents” well). This includes my understanding and use of spiritual gifts as I have been given them. I am aware of the spiritual gifts and strengths I have been given and I want to use these for His glory. As I grow in these, I also desire to understand and practice other spiritual gifts so that in all things, I will grow up in the fullness of Christ. My heart and soul hunger for more of God, in every aspect, and in every way. I desire wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Him, and in the stewardship of His gifts, given to us through His Spirit.

## 6. WHAT IS PROPHECY?

### A. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

There is much that could be said about prophesy, but I would like to break it down to the following points (and we will explore these further later in this piece (see section B).

- **The word “prophesy”** is the Greek “pro” (meaning “before”) and “phemi” (meaning “to speak”). It is generally thought of to include “foretelling” and “forthtelling”, both of which involve speaking forth God’s message. Foretelling involves speaking forth a message about the future, whereas forthtelling may be a message regarding present, past, or emphasising a doctrinal truth.
- **The Prophet** had a unique role amongst the people of God in that they were ordained by God to speak and live as a prophetic testimony to the people. This includes people such as Samuel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hosea, Ezekiel and Deborah. They spoke of times to come, prophesied about the Messiah and His coming kingdom, and prophesied the heart of God toward His children Israel. I.e. These prophets spoke of future events to come (“foretelling”)
- **The gift of prophecy** was not limited, but occurred when then Spirit of God was poured out on people – eg. The seventy elders with Moses, King Saul, the believers in Acts. This kind of prophecy was not deliberate, but resulted from the outflowing of the Spirit.
- **The gift of prophecy** can also be desired and cultivated. How? Through prayer, through fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit and delving into the mysteries of Christ and the desires of His heart. If we are to prophesy, we need to know God. I.e Prophecy for edification, exhortation and comfort (sometimes referred to as “forthtelling”)

**In order to understand the above, we need to understand that prophecy has the following purposes/characteristics:**

- It is spoken out of love
- It is inspired by the Spirit of God
- It therefore reveals a mystery, but a truth – what is unknown to men, but known by God (ie. Prophecy reveals something)
- The purpose of prophecy for men is to edify, exhort and comfort
- The purpose of prophecy for the church is to build it up, and offer testimony of God’s glory to unbelievers (they may know God who knows them completely)

***Note:** Prophecy is not the same as “word of knowledge”. A “word of knowledge” may be a specific telling of what someone is going to do, or what their current situation is. For example, Jesus saying to the woman by the well that she has had five husbands and the one she has now is not her husband. Some of the prophets also gave words of knowledge in speaking of specific events to come. However, prophecy as it is more commonly instructed to be used in the church, consists of words that reveals the depth of God’s knowledge about a person – how He sees them. Thus, it encourages, exhorts, comforts, and builds up the church. As such, I believe prophecy can also be a form of encouragement.*

## B. INSTRUCTION GIVEN REGARDING PROPHECY

- **Paul encourages the believers to especially desire the gift of prophecy** – *“Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy... But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men... he who prophesies edifies the church... I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive edification...” [1 Corinthians 14:1-5]*
- **Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 14:22-25, the purpose of prophecy in the church is explained** – *“Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. Therefore, if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus, the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”*
- **We need to discern what is good from what is bad so that we do not despise the Spirit, or prophecy, but are also not led astray by false teachings.** [2 Thessalonians 5:19-22] – *“Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.”*
- **Effective prophecy is born out of love.** *“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”*

## 7. WHAT EXAMPLES OF PROPHECY ARE THERE IN THE BIBLE?

There are too many examples of prophecy in the Bible to write them all down here, especially since a number of books are basically all prophecy! Here are just a few examples of where prophecy has occurred:

- **[Numbers 11:24-29]** – *“So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took the Spirit that was upon him and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again. But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” So Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!” Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!”*
- **[Acts 2:16-21]** – Following the outpouring of the Spirit on the disciples, Peter raised his voice to speak to the crowd and explain what was happening. He described what happens when the Spirit is poured out, quoting from the book of Joel – *“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:  
And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,  
Your young men shall see visions,  
Your old men shall dream dreams.*

*And on My menservants and on My maidservants  
 I will pour out My Spirit in those days;  
 And they shall prophesy.  
 I will show wonders in heaven above  
 And signs in the earth beneath:  
 Blood and fire and vapour of smoke.  
 The sun shall be turned into darkness,  
 And the moon into blood,  
 Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.  
 And it shall come to pass  
 That whoever calls on the name of the Lord  
 Shall be saved."*

- **[Luke 2:29-33]** – Simeon prophesies over Jesus –  
*"“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,  
 According to Your word;  
 For my eyes have seen Your salvation  
 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,  
 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,  
 And the glory of Your people Israel,”  
 And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him.”"*
- **[Acts 21:8-11]** – *“Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”"*
- **[1 Timothy 4:14]** – *“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.”*
- **Paul begins most of his letters to the church** Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians etc. with a word of encouragement – something that reveals the heart of the church and their direction in Christ – ie. A prophetic word for their encouragement.
- **The book of Revelation** is an entire book of prophecy which both tells what is to come, and reveals God’s heart for those on earth. In Revelation 22:7, Jesus says, *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*
- **Passages about the prophecies spoken over Israel can be found here:**  
<http://lostnowfoundk.wordpress.com/2014/01/18/israelwhatisyourname/>

## 8. IS PROPHECY RELEVANT TODAY, AND WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

The purpose of prophecy – let us take a look at some of the verses previously mentioned again.

[1 Corinthians 14:1-5]

- *“Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy... But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men... he who prophesies edifies the church... I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive edification...”*

[1 Corinthians 14:22-25]

- *“Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. Therefore, if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus, the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”*

I believe prophecy is still available to believers today and that its primary function is to edify the church by giving revelation of God’s heart in accordance with His word. We have already explored some of the instructions given about prophecy and some of the examples of prophecy in the Bible. In prophecy, the “secrets of [the] heart” are revealed and this causes us to worship God – thus prophecy that reveals God’s understanding and knowledge of a person and their situation exhorts, encourages and comforts. 1 Corinthians 14:20-40 gives further instruction on order in church ministries. Paul begins by saying, *“...Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”* [1 Corinthians 14:26] He continues, speaking about the stewardship of prophecy in the church – *“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But, if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets..”* (v.29-32) Finally, Paul concludes – *“Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.”*

In the end, we need to remember that prophecy is done in love, in knowing God’s heart and desiring to bring forth His revelation. At the same time, we are humble and accountable before one another so that prophecy in the church can be tested against the word of God, and against the aforementioned characteristics. Let us test all things but hold fast to what is good! [2 Thessalonians 5:19-22] – *“Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good...”*