

**THE NEW TESTAMENT GIFT OF PROPHECY**  
 Compiled by Dr. Jim Taylor Jr. January 1999  
 Based on Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Crossway, 1988)

*DEFINITION*

*SCRIPTURE, COMMENTS*

**It is a revelation from God**

1 Cor 14:26, 29-31 *“And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down...”*  
 1 Cor 14:24-25; 14:32-33; also 1 Cor 12:7-11, 28-31.

**that comes spontaneously to an individual;**

1 Cor 14:30 *“And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn...”*  
 You don't “conjure one up;” you wait for the Holy Spirit.  
*“Paul pictures some kind of process whereby the prophet is spontaneously made aware of something which he feels God has caused him to think about.”*  
 (Grudem, p. 81)

**it gives insight from God's perspective, information which may not be known by ordinary means (such as future events);**

Acts 11:27-30 *“During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)”*  
 1 Cor 14:24-25 *“But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’”*

Then NT gift of Teaching is different from the NT gift of Prophecy:  
 the result of conscious reflection on the text of Scripture, containing interpretation and application of the text to life      based on a revelation and is the report of something that God brings suddenly to mind  
 It would not include ESP, astrology, occult practices, etc. since they claim to divulge hidden or future facts but do so apart from the perspective of the one true God.

**it must be evaluated, since it may be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the person reporting the revelation;**

1 Thess 5:19-22 *“Do not put out the spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”*  
 1 Cor 14:29 *“Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.”*  
 1 Cor 13:8-12 *“For we know in part and we prophesy in part... Now we see but a poor reflection...”*  
 Acts 21:10-11 *“...a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, ‘The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’””*  
Agabus' prophecy has two mistakes: 1) The Romans bound Paul (21:33; 22:29). 2) The Jews tried to kill Paul, the soldiers rescued him (21:32-33, 35).  
*“It is not that Agabus has spoken in a totally false or misleading way; it is just that he has the details wrong. But this kind of minor inaccuracy is exactly compatible with the type of prophecy we found earlier in 1 Corinthians, in which the prophet receives some kind of revelation and then repeats it in his own words.”*  
 (Grudem, p.99)

How do you know if it comes from the Holy Spirit? There are two tests:

Objective: Does it conform to clear Biblical teaching?

Subjective: Does it “seem like” something from the Holy Spirit?

Is it similar to other experiences you've known previously?

Over time people become more adept at recognizing what comes from the Spirit, and congregations become more adept at evaluating prophecies.

“Perhaps church leaders today can do more to encourage Christians to mention such promptings when they occur ... Some may be uneasy about this—who knows what will happen? Yet if there are mature, biblically sound leaders in the congregation, and if they are ready to evaluate the prophecy publicly if they sense a need to do so, no harm will be done.” (Grudem, p.147)

It is not a choice between the divine and the demonic; there is a human element.

Our own thoughts and ideas can get mixed up with the message we receive.

“Though such revelations from God are valuable, they are also limited.

They must never compete with Scripture in the authority or importance we attach to them, and they must never be allowed to function without continuing evaluation by the church, especially those in leadership. All must recognize that the revelation is partial, and may not be clear to the person prophesying, and may contain elements of mistaken understanding or interpretation on the part of the person prophesying.” (Grudem, p. 133)

Therefore, what authority should a prophecy have? It is not in the category of Scriptural revelation, no matter how helpful or specific it might be:

“In practical terms, this means that even if a prophecy contains words of ethical instruction (‘You shouldn't go to London,’ or, ‘You should marry Philip’), these instructions should not be considered divine obligations (i.e., to disobey them would not be thought the same as disobeying God), but they should be viewed as the prophet’s own fairly accurate (but not infallible) report of something he thinks (though not with absolute certainty) has been revealed to him by God. The person or persons to whom the prophecy was directed should respond in much the same way they would respond to preaching or to personal advice (since both sermons and advice are often given by those who think their words generally reflect God's will also): in all three cases, the hearer(s) should evaluate (cf. 1 Cor 14:29) the prophecy, the sermon, or the advice for conformity to Scripture, to received teaching, and to facts which they know to be true.” (Grudem, pp. 167-168)

It is significant that Paul disregarded prophecies several times (Acts 21:4, 10-11).

**it is to be done  
in love, in an  
orderly and  
reasonable way,**

1 Cor 13 *“If I have the gift of prophecy ... but have not love, I am nothing.”*

1 Cor 14:26-33 *“...speak, one at a time ... For you can all prophesy in turn ...*

*The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”*

1 Cor 14:40 *“But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”*

**for the  
encouragement  
and edification  
of the church.**

1 Cor 14:3 *“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.”*

1 Cor 14:4 *“...he who prophesies edifies the church.”*

1 Cor 14:31 *“For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.”*

Acts 15:32 *“Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers.”*

Prophecy is not given for its own sake, or for the selfish use of the prophet.

The prophecy must affect the lives of the hearers in a positive way.