

Spiritual Gifts : Prophets and Prophecy

Spiritual Gifts : A General Definition

- Spiritual gifts are **abilities (divine enablements)** empowered by the Holy Spirit given to **all Christians** by God's sovereign grace according to His will, intended primarily to glorify God through service to and through the body of Christ.

Prophets, the Gift of Prophecy, and the Prophetic Voice

- **Distinction** : There are many in the Christian community who believe in a distinction between a prophet (an office into which one is called), the spiritual gift of prophecy, and a "prophetic voice."
- A **Prophet** is someone who periodically communicates under inspiration from God; this may or may not involve foretelling.
 - Romans 1:1-2 Prophets were inspired to **write Scripture**.
 - Numbers 12:6 God often spoke to prophets in **visions and dreams**.
 - Deut.18:21-22 A prophet, when claiming to speak on behalf of God, was/is **infallible**.
- The **Gift of Prophecy** is the ability to clearly communicate God's will in an authoritative manner that edifies, exhorts, and/or comforts, but often also exposes sin and prompts either (1) conviction, penitence, repentance, and reconciliation, or (2) rejection of the message and judgment.
 - 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 The gift of prophecy was exercised by both **men and women**.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 Prophecy is a **manifestation** of the Spirit.
 - A **manifestation** is the demonstration of the existence, reality, and/or presence of a person, object or quality (American Heritage Dictionary).
 - The gift of prophecy (and all other spiritual gifts) are thus a demonstration of the existence, reality, and presence of a very special Person, **the Holy Spirit**.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:28 God has **appointed** prophets in the Church.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:29 What is the implication here? **All Christians aren't prophets!**
 - 1 Corinthians 13:2 Prophecy without **love** is nothing.
 - 1 Corinthians 13:8 Prophecies will **fail / cease / be done away with (they won't be necessary)**
 - 1 Corinthians 13:9 Prophecy only reveals **part** of the mystery.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:1 **Desire** to prophecy!
 - 1 Corinthians 14:3 Prophecy is for **edification/upbuilding/strengthening**, and **exhortation/encouragement**, and **comfort/consolation**.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:4 Prophecy is for edification/upbuilding/strengthening **the church / all Christians**.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:5 Prophecy is greater than uninterpreted tongues for it brings forth **edification/upbuilding/strengthening**.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:6 Prophecy is **profitable / for good**.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:22 Prophecy is primarily for **believers / Christians**.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 Prophecy is secondarily for **unbelievers** who **will be convicted of sin, repent and glorify God!**
 - 1 Corinthians 14:29-32 There are two possible interpretations here:
 - **Prophecy can be Fallible**. By instructing others to "judge" or "weigh" or "discern" the words of a prophet, some teach that Paul could be implying that the prophet's message could be fallible. Thus, some Christians teach that although those with the gift of prophecy receive infallible revelation from God, these people are human and thus will err in their understanding and sharing of the prophecy, such that they should not be held to the infallibility standard of a prophet. In this sense, they argue, a contemporary prophet should only be held to the same standard as a teacher, all of whom are generally considered to be fallible (capable of error).
 - Those who teach that prophecy can be fallible often refer to this gift as the **Prophetic Voice**.

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- *Prophecy is Infallible.* Some teachers, such as myself, view the infallibility standard for a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:21-22 to still be in effect, and thus understand the instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:29-32 as most likely referring to the understanding and application of that which was spoken by the prophet, or to the identification of legitimate and illegitimate (actual and false) prophets.
- 1 Corinthians 14:32 What's the implication here? Legitimate prophecy is 100% consistent with that which has already been revealed!
- 1 Corinthians 14:37 What's the implication here? Paul's instructions are authoritative!
- 1 Corinthians 14:39 Desire earnestly to prophecy!
- 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 Don't despise prophecies, but test all things and hold on to the good!