

THE FAITH BUILDER

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Issue No 6.

7 April 2013

=====

From The Editor

I was really encouraged to be told that one of my articles had been received by two African pastors and was such a blessing to them that they want to teach the principles in it to their own congregations.

It is wonderful that something that I have written has an impact on someone on the other side of the world. This is part of the mission that we all have in Christ, and that is to share the Gospel to all nations.

I was privileged to be part of the ministry team for the recent Reinhard Bonnke evening crusade at the Victory Christian Church in Auckland Wednesday before last. It was the first time that I had been in such a large auditorium with up to 2000 people present in a mass meeting. I enjoyed the sermon, which was simple and straight forward, yet was powerful in its impact, that 40 people accepted Christ for the first time when the appeal was given.

After that, others were invited to come forward to receive prayer for healing and anything else that they needed help from The Holy Spirit. It was a privilege to minister to these people. It shows that while there is a decline in the numbers of people attending traditional churches, there is still a hunger for a deeper knowledge of God among ordinary people, and where the Gospel is preached, people are still responding to it.

Churches that are faithful in preaching the Gospel are being honoured by The Holy Spirit, and are attracting new members. Those churches that are preaching New Age, theoretical Bible knowledge without application, watering Jesus down to just a good guy, and Christianity merely a set of moral and philosophical ideas, are losing members and becoming smaller and smaller. We see the evidence of that in the number of closed churches, "monuments" of where The

Holy Spirit was allowed to have His way and where Jesus was lifted up and shown who He really is, but somewhere along the way, the meetings become formalised to the point where The Holy Spirit was programmed out, and that's where the rot started.

I am getting better insight about why many traditional, and some Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are declining in their membership. It is mainly the quality and depth of the ministry. Paul and the writer of the book of Hebrews saw this and commented: **"I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready"** (1 Corinthians 3:2), and: **"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!"** (Hebrews 5:12).

What this is telling us is that many members of the Christian churches in the First Century should have grown in their spiritual lives to the point where they could enter into the five-fold ministry of the church. That is, they could have become apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists. Instead, after years in the faith, they were still at the "novice" level. They were **"always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth"** (2 Timothy 3:2). They were stuck at the "baby" level, not being able to cope with "good solid food", and still being fed "infant formula".

What should happen is what the writer of the Hebrews instructed: **"Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God"** (Hebrews 6:1),

What is meant here is that Christians stop doing repeated training courses in the elementary teachings, but to progress to putting them into practice. It is not that we leave the basic Gospel of what Jesus did for us on the Cross, and His victory over death at the resurrection, but that we allow these things to work themselves out through our lives.

Church members who are always “feeding” on theoretic Bible knowledge, coming back Sunday after Sunday for their next “blessing” or next theory instalment; or if their Christian experience is centred solely around the Sunday church meeting, and do not turn what they have learned into actual reality in their lives and continued to have the same level of Christian faith during the other days of the week, have never progressed beyond the “baby” stage.

These are the ones who seem to be very religious on Sundays, but become the same as anyone else in the world during the week. In other words, they do not practice what they have learned. All they have is “head knowledge”, but have never seen the importance of “practising the presence of God” in their lives during the week, nor learned how to put what they have heard on Sunday into practice during the other six days of the week.

We have the small number of self-chosen hypocrites in our churches who, because of personal spiritual issues, are “Sunday” Christians, impressing people with their “holier than thou” attitude at church, putting on their religiosity along with their black suit to go to church on Sunday, then once they get back home, off comes the suit, and their religious “mantle”, and they revert back to what they really are: unconverted sinners pretending to be Christian.

But most church members in all our denominations are sincere, genuine folk who want to be good Christians, and are hungry for more of God and have a deep concern to live a more holy life. These are the ones to are concerned about the state of unconverted sinners, and they do their best to encourage them to consider Christ as the answer for a meaningful life and an eternity of joy and fulfilment.

Where the ministry from the pulpit encourages spiritual growth and uses the resources that God has provided to put what they are learning into practice, at church, work, and at home, members are growing in their faith and usefulness to God. These are the ones who find their calling in God and start fulfilling their role in the five fold ministry of the church. These are the ones who become preachers, intercessors, deacons, elders, itinerate evangelists, lay preachers, ordained

ministers, and all the other ministries of helps that serve to get the message of the Gospel out to the unsaved communities around the churches.

But in a lot of churches, the ministry from the pulpit consists of spiritual “baby formula” from ministers who have not progressed from the “baby” stage themselves. They may be highly qualified in theology studies, but it is head knowledge. They may preach from the Bible, but it is based on grown-up versions of Sunday School Bible stories. They are strong on knowledge but very light on application. Because, in many cases, they either do not, or cannot apply their Bible knowledge to their own lives. This means that they cannot inspire the hearers to action. Therefore, because of insufficient spiritual “nutrition” the spiritual growth of the church members is stunted, and their Christian experience is anaemic, lacking power, passion and drive to work the works of Christ in the church and the community.

Of course we have to say that it is not always the minister’s fault either. It has a lot to do with how the minister is trained. In some denominations, ministers’ training is mainly based on theological knowledge, and many seminaries are cessationist¹. After spending a number of years in that environment, the minister is called to a church, and his preaching and teaching is flavoured by the education that he has received. This is especially true if the minister is relatively young and has attended seminary during his “formative years”.

Charles Finney reports that he had quite a number of good lay preachers in his church, but once they had been through seminary training, they were of no use and had to be “untrained” before they could have successful ministry again to contribute to the revival that he was having in his churches.

"I mention this as a matter of duty; for I am still solemnly impressed with the conviction that the schools are, to a great extent, spoiling the ministers. Ministers in these days have great facilities for obtaining information on all theological questions, and are vastly more learned, so far as theological,

¹ They teach that the supernatural gifts of The Holy Spirit ceased at the end of the Apostolic Age.

historical, and Biblical learning is concerned, than they perhaps ever have been in any age of the world. Yet, with all their learning, they do not know how to use it. They are, after all, to a great extent, like David in Saul's armor. A man can never learn to preach except by preaching.”²

“The student spends four years in college at classical studies, and no God in them, and then three years in the seminary, at theological studies; and what then? Poor young man. Set him to work, and you will find that he is not educated for the ministry at all. The church groans under his preaching, because he does not preach with unction, nor with power. He has been spoiled in training.”³

Not all Bible Colleges are like what Finney described. The good ones that turn out effective, powerful ministers give a great service to the Church; but nothing compares to experience, maturity, and a close relationship with God to provide the basis for ministry that attracts people to that minister's church.

If a church calls a minister and has made it quite clear that the basis of the calling is because the church needs to grow, and that prospective minister undertakes that if the appointment is made the church will grow under his or her ministry, then it is the responsibility of the minister to conduct the ministry to bring growth to the church.

If the minister decides to handle all the ministry, and has “a finger in every pie”, exercising “power and control” over the church, then he or she is solely responsible before God for the consequences and the health of that church.

If after a reasonable time of ministry and the church does not grow, spiritually, and/or in numbers of members, then that minister has not fulfilled his or her obligations under the terms of the calling. In fact, if that minister did not have the skills to grow a church, and agreed to become the minister, then that minister has been dishonest and accepted the calling under false pretences.

²Aaron Merrit Hills, *Life of Charles G Finney*, chapter 15, Finney on Preachers and Preaching. http://www.swartzentrover.com/cotor/e-books/holiness/AaronHills/Finney/CGF_15.htm

³*The Gospel Truth*, By Charles Finney.

http://www.gospeltruth.net/1868Lect_on_Rev_of_Rel/68revlec12.htm

I don't accept the excuse that churches can take years to grow. This has not been true with churches that have had ministry that have been attractive to the community through the work of The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit knows how to grow a church, and He does not take years and years to do it. The Scripture does not say, "If Jesus is lifted up, He may draw some men to Himself over the next five to ten years." So an incompetent minister using that excuse is just talking nonsense to justify him or herself.

Charles Finney was equally scathing about this:

"I would not for the world say anything to injure the influence of a minister of Christ, who is really endeavoring to do good...This class of ministers will recognise the truth of all that I have said, or wish to say. They see it all, and deplore it. But if there be ministers who are doing no good, who are feeding themselves and not the flock, such ministers deserve no influence. If they are doing no good, it is time for them to betake themselves to some other profession. They are but leeches on the very vitals of the church, sucking out its heart's blood. They are useless, and worse than useless. And the sooner they are laid aside, and their places filled with those who will exert themselves for Christ the better."⁴

The salary of a minister is a large part of the expenditure of many churches. It is a big investment for a church to make, and it has the right to receive the best that a minister can provide. If a minister is godly and honest, he or she will know that only out of a close relationship with God, a good prayer life, and being led of The Holy Spirit to be able to apply Scriptural truth to the congregation will he or she will be able to give good quality ministry.

I will finish with this:

"Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

⁴ *The Gospel Truth*, By Charles Finney.

<http://www.gospeltruth.net/1868Lect on Rev of Rel/68revlec12.htm>

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 1:11-16).

Paul Christensen, 7 April 2013.

A young man asked an old rich man how he made his money.

The old guy fingered his worsted wool vest and said, "Well, son, it was 1932. The depth of the Great Depression. I was down to my last nickel."

"I invested that nickel in an apple. I spent the entire day polishing the apple and, at the end of the day, I sold the apple for ten cents."

"The next morning, I invested those ten cents in two apples. I spent the entire day polishing them and sold them at 5:00 pm for 20 cents. I continued this system for a month, by the end of which I'd accumulated a fortune of \$1.37."


"Then my wife's father died and left us two million dollars."



Grab all the kicks you can, baby... You only pass this way once!

A Wounded Spirit

By Rodney Francis

IN my travels I am continually meeting, and being led to minister to people who are carrying a wounded spirit. Something has happened in their lives that has knocked them back and from which they have been unable to rise above, or get totally free from. When we are afflicted by a wounded spirit we are unable to step out boldly to obey the Holy Spirit, and therefore so much of God's purposes for us are lost in our inability to release faith in a consistent manner. The subject of a wounded spirit is an important one, as it affects so many people. Many don't even understand what it is, or how it affects us. The Book of Proverbs Chapter 18 is a key chapter on this subject. Proverbs 18:14  makes a statement, then asks a vital question:

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity (sickness, disease, weakness), but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

We can endure all kinds of physical affliction, but when our spirit is wounded – and a wounded-spirited person is someone who has been hurt and bruised and/or damaged in their spirit – it can be very painful.


A wounded spirit comes as a result of a re-action to negative words, events, actions, or a violation of your person or rights – a re-action that crushes you, knocks you down and from which you cannot seem to rise. It crushes an area of your life – your spirit – which is quite devastating in how it affects us. It seems we cannot heal ourselves of a wounded spirit. We need someone else to release it in positive, believing prayer.

There are many ways that we can receive a wounded spirit:


NEGATIVE, CRITICAL WORDS

Someone says something to you that “knocks you flat” and you can’t get over it. Those words have penetrated deeply into your spirit in a hurtful, crushing kind of way.

“The words of a man’s mouth are as deep waters”

(Proverbs 18:4 , NIV).


“Death and life are in the power of the tongue . . .”


(Proverbs 18:21 , NIV).

Words produce either death or life – in those who speak them, and in those who receive them. Marriages – even Christian marriages – are broken by the critical words spoken between a husband and a wife, and vice versa.

“A fool gets into constant fights Those ***“inmost parts”*** are his spirit.

SIN

Sin is the curse of humanity! Sin is whatever comes between us and God! **It affects our spirit!** In Psalm 38  we read of David acknowledging a wounding in his life and spirit:

“Your arrows have pierced me, and Your hand has come down upon me . . . there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly . . . ” (Psalm 38:1-5 , NIV).

“A wounded spirit who can bear?”

David was hurting because of his guilt and consciousness of sin.

“For your sin is an incurable bruise, a terrible wound. There is no one to help you or to bind up your wound and no medicine does any good. All your lovers have left you and don’t care anything about you any more; for I have wounded you cruelly, as though I were your enemy; mercilessly, as though I were an implacable foe; for your sins

are so many, your guilt is so great” (Jeremiah 30:12-14 🗨️, TLB).

Sin wounds us! When we put sin out of our life (through genuine repentance), our spirit is released to heal.

SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Sexual immorality is a breeder of wounded spirits. Perhaps more people get wounded in this area of human relationships than anywhere else? Every wrong relationship can do damage to our spirit. The Bible separates sexual sins from all other sins (1 Corinthians 6:15-20 🗨️). Christians are joined to the Lord as **“one spirit.”** Sexual immorality joins us to the body of the other sexual partner. It is spiritual. **Sexual immorality affects every part of our being: spiritual, physical, emotional, our conscience and our mentality. It has the power to create another human being “in the image of God.”**

“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body”

(1 Corinthians 6:18 🗨️, NIV).

“His mouth is his undoing! His words endanger him”(Proverbs 18:6 🗨️, TLB).

The words we speak penetrate very deeply! The repeating of negative and critical gossip about others is not good:

“The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man’s inmost parts”

(Proverbs 18:8 🗨️, NIV).



Regarding adultery, the Bible declares:

“But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul. Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot . . . ”



(Proverbs 6:32-35 🗨️, TLB).



The physical act has spiritual consequences – a wounded spirit. (Proverbs 7 🗨️ has more to say on this).

David picked up a wounded spirit as a result of his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11 🗨️ and Psalm 51 🗨️).

According to his confession in Psalm 51 , David lost so much in his relationship with God because of his adultery. He paid a high price spiritually and he paid a high price physically. His family were also “wrecked” through immorality. David’s son (Amnon) raped David’s daughter (Tamar) (half sister) (2 Samuel 13 ) , which led to murder, etc. All in all, a real tragedy of events. It isn’t worth it! *(For further reading on this subject, see my book "Counselling & Deliverance")*.

SATANIC ATTACK

The thief comes to **“steal, kill and destroy”** (John 10:10 ) . Satan loves to wound our spirit. He knows that when we carry a wounded spirit, we are no real threat to him. In Psalm 143:1-4 (KJV), David is crying to God because **“the enemy has persecuted my soul. He has smitten** (“bruised and wounded”) **my life down to the ground . . . therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate** (“laid waste” – Wilson’s; “made numb, stunned, devastated” – Strong’s).”

A wounded spirit brings down. It never lifts us up. Satan knows this. He wants us down! The Good Samaritan is a good example of knowing how to lift up the wounded. He knew what to do. He knew to pour in *“the oil and the wine.”* Why? He identified with the wounded man’s condition (Luke 10:25-37 ) . Samaritans knew what rejection was, as **“the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans”**(John 4:9 ) . The man was restored.


REJECTION FROM LEADERS

As this paper is written in the Christian context, we’ll keep it to Church authorities - and other Christians. We have such high expectations of Leaders that when they fail us, or especially knock us back, or overlook us, it is easy for us to get discouraged and wounded. David experienced that rejection with King Saul (1 Samuel Chapters 18 to 31).

It also happens when Leaders promise certain positions to individuals – and then don’t deliver, or they do not

communicate the change of plan. Numbers get wounded when they are encouraged to go through training courses in order to be better prepared for church ministry, but at the end of the training it doesn't happen. Broken promises lead to broken hearts and wounded spirits. Some have been wounded trying to obey the Lord in the exercising of Spiritual Gifts and been "rebuked" or "cut down" publicly. Those "woundings" are hard to recover from, especially if one is sensitive and shy in the first place. Whatever the conflict or misunderstanding, don't hold a grudge against Leaders. Pray for them! Give them over to God. Give the hurtful "happening" over to God – release it from your spirit. Get healed of any wounding of spirit. Press on in Jesus!

UNFORGIVENESS

With holding forgiveness from those who have disappointed and hurt us will "lock our spirit into" its wounding. We cannot heal if we do not release the hurt to God. 2 Corinthians 2:1-11  teaches us that if we don't forgive those who have caused us harm, Satan will take advantage of us. Let's not be ignorant of him wanting to get his "sticky paws" into wrecking our lives and future ministries that will impact the nations.

No matter how much someone has wounded us, we do have to come to a place of being able to release forgiveness to that person. If we don't, we will be the one who pays the highest price. We cannot afford to let anyone destroy us (because we can't or won't forgive) and therefore can't heal from the original damage caused.

"A crushed spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14

, NIV).

In discussing this subject further (in a large group), we discovered some people have suffered a wounded spirit through the following:

BETRAYAL

This is indeed a very hurtful thing to work through, especially a betrayal of confidence. To be betrayed means “to disclose a secret or confidence treacherously; to break a promise, or be disloyal to a person’s trust; to disappoint the expectations of” (Collins).

When the children of Benjamin and Judah sought out David in the wilderness, one of the leading questions he asked them was, ***“If you come to betray me to my enemies, seeing there is no wrong in my hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it”*** (1 Chronicles 12:16-17 🗨️, KJV). David knew the power and hurt of betrayal, and he guarded against it as much as possible. Jesus warned there would be ***“many offended, and shall betray one another”*** (Matthew 24:10 🗨️). The keeping of promises and confidences is very necessary if we do not want to be guilty of wounding our friends.

FALSE ACCUSATIONS

From time to time there are people who, for various reasons, have delight in making false accusations. Sometimes it is because of jealousy, sometimes it is just enjoying seeing one put down; other times ignorant gossip. Many false accusations have no affect upon us, but then there comes one that is “a bit close to the bone.” It is directed at a loved one, or yourself, or your ministry. If we don’t see those false accusations as being what they are – false! – we can take the accusation “on board” and it lodges in our spirit. We get wounded. This is where honesty is so important. We have to be honest with God, ourselves, and other people. If the accusation is false, keep it false. Don’t give room for the enemy to “take us out” because we re-act wrongly. (If the accusation happens to be true, then we need to do something about it).

DIVORCE

This is another “biggie,” especially as it is so rampant in society today. To experience going from one extreme of being so in love with someone that you marry that person, and then to see it all change to the point where they can no longer love and live together, is a great tragedy. It affects the emotions, afflicts the mind, throws the children into turmoil, upsets the wider family and relatives, and changes the course of one’s life. Rejection can become a huge issue. Many hurts are picked up. Attitudes are hardened. Later on, if those woundings are not dealt with and healed, the “baggage” from the broken marriage is carried over to a new relationship. Often the process repeats itself. More hurts and woundings eventuate.

RELATIONSHIPS CUT THROUGH A DEATH

The loss of a close loved one, relative or friend, can be a devastating blow. We all face the losing of someone to the death process. It is a sad fact that many people do not know how to relate to those who are suffering loss and grieving the death of a husband, wife, child, parent, close friend, etc. Our spirit, which is very vulnerable at that time, can be wounded by the words and actions of someone who doesn’t understand what is going on inside the heart of those suffering loss. Sometimes the wounding happens because their close friends say and do nothing – just sitting in silence can sometimes be very hurtful. Other times people talk “rubbish” – or too much – and that can be equally hurtful. We need to be sensitive to the needs of those grieving the death of a loved one. If you’re not sure, Ask! Don’t let your friendship be cut off with those who grieve. Be mindful of the shock and “numbness” they’re experiencing.

HAVING TO ACT AS AN ADULT WHILE STILL A CHILD

This was an interesting discussion. To listen to those who had experienced being the eldest child in a large family and being made to take major responsibility for all the younger

brothers and sisters – while they themselves were still so young – brought about a wounded spirit. To expect a tender young life to do what it is not made to do at that stage of their development can only cause damage. That damage is carried through in attitudes that cause hurt in others. "Hurt people hurt people."

A wounded spirit comes into the lives of those children who are subjected to incest, prostitution, and other abuses (emotional, mental, physical, sexual, verbal, etc.). Many develop such a poor, low image of themselves that they feel the only way out is suicide. And it is no secret that the numbers of young people committing suicide today is very high!


Here is a prayer you can pray (please pray it out aloud):

"Dear God, I come to You in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son. You know all about my life and circumstances; nothing that has happened to me is unknown to You. I now consciously forgive all those who have spoken negatively and done hurtful things to me. Lord, I place them on Your altar and ask You to bless them.

I now submit all my hurts and woundings to You, and ask You to release my wounded spirit to be healed, in Jesus' mighty name! I speak to my spirit to come into divine order, that I may rise up again in Your name and know the joy and freedom of being made whole! I thank You, Lord Jesus, that You hear and answer my cry. Right now I accept my healing and give myself afresh to You. Please take over my life and let me live it in abundance to glorify You every day. In Jesus' name I pray these things, Amen."

In Conclusion:

I pray you will be aware of these eleven areas that can keep you down through a wounded spirit. If you feel you are suffering from a wounded spirit, seek out someone who is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and knows how to minister healing to you in a loving, compassionate way. Be prepared to forgive

those who have (in your eyes) "*sinned against you*" (Matthew 6:12 , TLB), and then forgive yourself. Don't tie the hands of God from healing your spirit because you won't forgive yourself.

Thank God, that in the love of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, people can be healed of a wounded spirit. Life can change for the better when we let Jesus heal all the hurts of the past. If you are aware of having a wounded spirit right now, seek out a Holy Spirit-filled Christian with love and compassion, and ask them to pray healing into your spirit. This is important, as you cannot heal yourself of this. Reach out today. If you are unable to find someone, then please contact us at "The GFM" Ministry, and we will do what we can to minister that healing to you. God bless you.

"The Gospel Faith Messenger" Ministry. PO Box 57, Paraparaumu 5254, New Zealand. Email gfm@gospel.org.nz

A man arrives at the gates of heaven. St. Peter asks, "Religion?"

The man says, "Methodist."

St. Peter looks down his list, and says, "Go to room 24, but be very quiet as you pass room 8."

Another man arrives at the gates of heaven. "Religion?"

"Baptist."

"Go to room 18, but be very quiet as you pass room 8."

A third man arrives at the gates. "Religion?"

"Jewish."

"Go to room 11, but be very quiet as you pass room 8."

The man says, "I can understand there being different rooms for different religions, but why must I be quiet when I pass room 8?"

St. Peter tells him, "Well the Jehovah's Witnesses are in room 8, and they think they're the only ones here."

AGREEING WITH GOD AS A KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE

By Paul Christensen

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”—Amos 3:3.

Introduction:

The gift of prophecy is a blessing to the Church when people hear the voice of God, obey it, and speak confidently into the lives of those who could really do with the right word of encouragement that will set them up for their future. The key to it is **hearing the voice of God and obeying it.**

But there are deeper considerations, because it is not as simple as it sounds. This is because there are many voices in the world and we have to take special care that we are hearing the right voice. Too many well-meaning “prophets” have heard voices, spoken things into the lives of others and, as a result, have caused deep hurt, discouragement, disappointment, and set good people in a wrong direction (that in some cases has taken years to unravel and correct).

The Devil Can Mimic The Voice Of God:

It is vitally important that we follow the Apostle John’s advice :

“Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world” (1 John 4:1, NLT).

Now, I don’t want to “spook” anyone who is seeking to, or is currently operating in the gift of prophecy ~ if the fruit of your prophetic gift shows that the ones you are ministering to are developing a strong faith in Christ, and are becoming more devoted to

Him as a result of what you are speaking into their lives, you have nothing to worry about.

But, we have to face the unpleasant fact that the devil is very cunning, and can mimic even the Lord Jesus Himself. We know that Satan can **appear “as an angel of light”** (2 Corinthians 11:14). This shows that the devil can mimic the gift of prophecy so closely at times that, in some cases, the counterfeit may not be detected without the use of the gift of discerning of spirits. He (Satan) is a very determined enemy who knows the power of the prophetic more than anyone, and when people are moving effectively in the gift of prophecy, he is threatened and will do anything to try and undermine the ministry, and bring it into disrepute, which he has done in so many people and churches already.

So, What Do We Need To Do?

This is where we consider the text at the start of this article. The text is vitally important for the prophetic ministry, and taking heed of it can make the difference between prophesying from the flesh or the devil, and ministering genuine prophecies that can so activate the Holy Spirit in a person that they can be totally revived, activated, and set on the road to absolute fruitfulness in Christ.

Amos asks the question: ***“How can two walk together except they be agreed”?*** We have often viewed this text as speaking of personal relationships in the Lord and unity in fellowship with each other. But there is a more important principle when we are considering the prophetic. We need to know beyond doubt that what we are believing, and the type of life we are living, is in full agreement with God.

This is more than just agreeing with the doctrines of your church, or the teaching of your pastor, or even the views of your closest friends in the Lord. We have to go beyond that. We have to know that we are in complete unity with the Lord in how He sees the Church, and the lives of the people who are being influenced by your prophetic gift.

The Absolute Need For Being In Right Fellowship With God:

The prophetic works most effectively when we are in a right relationship with God and in close fellowship with Him.

“We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3, NLT).

Fellowship with the Father and the Son has to take absolute priority above everyone and everything else. Problems arise when people try and move in the prophetic and yet have no abiding experience of close fellowship with God. This often happens when people read books written by successful “prophets” and then try and copy their methods; or they see successful prophetic ministries operating in their fellowships and try to copy their style. They forget that there are no short-cuts to the prophetic ministry. There is no alternative to developing a close, personal relationship and fellowship with Christ. It is not enough to know **about** Him, but to have the same attitude as the apostle Paul when he cried:

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10, NASB).

How Do We Have This Close Fellowship With Christ?

We know that the physical presence of Christ is with the Father in heaven, and He has sent the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in us. This is actually better than having the physical presence of Christ with us, because we have the Spirit living right inside us, and therefore is with us and ministering to us at all times. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us, it is the same as having the Father and the Son in us. This is very powerful, more powerful than we realise at times.

A Sound Bible Knowledge:

But being continually filled with the Spirit depends on having a solid foundation, and that foundation is God's Word in the Holy Scriptures. Some put the inward influence of the Spirit over and above the printed Scriptures, and I believe this is a mistake. These people are prone to error and disappointment because they tend to obey "impulses" which they believe to be of the Holy Spirit, without checking whether these "impressions" are consistent with Scriptural teaching.

Therefore, to develop a strong and close relationship with Christ, we need to study the printed Scriptures in close detail, using the best commentaries and teaching of men of God who, through the ages, have demonstrated powerful ministries in bringing revival to the Church, winning souls to Christ and building up the Body of Christ. This is important, because no-one is a "Lone Ranger" in his interpretation of Scripture. It is true that the Holy Spirit helps us to have insight and to understand the Scripture, but it is unwise to try and "re-invent the wheel" and base any interpretation on one's own perception without consulting with good men of God to check to see whether the interpretation is consistent with the thread of sound doctrine. Unless we do this, it is possible for "Johnny to be the only one in step out of the whole group"; in other words, he is the only one out of step (and doesn't know it)!

A Regular Prayer Life:

The other important key is for the Lord to hear your voice a lot. His promise to me (when He first revealed Himself to me 45 years ago), was that if He hears my voice a lot, I will hear His voice clearly when He speaks to me. I have found this very true over the years.

Too many people do the bulk of their praying in front of others, in church and prayer meetings, but spend insufficient time in private prayer to enable them to enter into that close relationship with God that they need. Jesus warned about this:

“When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get” (Matthew 6:5, NLT).

He goes on to say:

“But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you” (Matthew 6:6, NLT).

The key to answered prayer is to pray much in secret before the Lord (where there is no-one to impress), and to pray briefly and sparingly in public. When you have spent much time in private prayer, you won't find the need to pray long prayers when you go to church, or fellowship with others. Jesus knows what we have need of before we even ask Him! (Matthew 6:8). Actually, we do our praying in secret, and then use that as the foundation of our authority in the Spirit to heal, cast out demons, and prophesy when we are in the presence of others.

When we do pray, be honest and sincere. **You cannot put on an act with God.** He knows you inside out, and He accepts your prayer when you pray in your normal way of speaking, without having to resort to King James English, or use grand theological words to express yourself to Him. **Speak to Him from your heart, and He will share His heart with you.**

“The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant” (Psalm 25:14, ESV).

Fearing the Lord consists in honouring Him, having a passion for being holy before Him, enjoying being in His presence, gaining great satisfaction in ministering as His representative for His glory. When you

have that attitude, then you will hear His voice speaking to your heart and you will recognise it clearly:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”
(John 10:27, ESV).

Putting All This Into Practice:

The best and safest place to develop your sensitivity to the voice of God is to start in the secret place with God. That is where you will be studying the Scriptures and, at the same time, asking the Lord to speak to you, and to show you what He wants you to know.

The way to start is when you start to read the Scripture, a commentary, or a good Christian book, ask the Lord to teach you what He wants you to know from it. Then read. When something “jumps out of the page” to you, thank the Lord for it. I have had the experience of reading page after page, receiving fresh insights on every page and saying, “Thank You, Lord”, and, “Praise You for that!” over and over again in a reading session. And it is amazing how, when I go to a fellowship meeting where the prophetic ministry is functioning, how those very things turn out to be very relevant in the lives of others as I use my prophetic gift.

When you are interceding for someone, ask the Lord for a word for them, and then write it down in a journal or diary. Keeping a journal is a good thing, because often when a word comes to you, you can forget it quickly if you don’t record it. I have got words in the middle of the night, and have had to get up, get my diary and write them down before I forget them, because invariably, if I wait until morning, the word has gone. And when it has gone it is gone for ever.

Asking the Lord for a prayer (for someone you have on your heart) is another way of developing your skill in hearing God’s voice. Open your journal, take up your pen, and ask the Lord to dictate a prayer for that person. If the Lord, through The Holy Spirit, dictates the prayer, then you can have greater confidence that He will answer the prayer. Can

you see how the Lord will be much more likely to answer a prayer that He Himself has dictated to you?

I have seen some, in our prophetic equipping evenings, writing the words that have come to them when a person is in “the hot seat”. This is very acceptable, because they are often getting it word for word from the Spirit, and are accurately recording it. Often, when a person is relying on memory after getting a picture, impression, or just a phrase, they can go sometimes into their natural mind as they try to express that word. Remember, we have a Bible full of prophecies that someone wrote down at some stage.

Summary:

So, to be successful and effective in the prophetic ministry, we have to be in full agreement with God, not just in the moment of ministering prophetically, but in our basic doctrinal beliefs, and the way we live our lives before the Lord and before others. We do this by:

- Making a close and comprehensive study of the Bible, through direct examination of the Scriptures; through reading good, sound commentaries; and reading spiritual literature written by holy men and women of God with proven, Christ-exalting ministries.
- Having a free, enjoyable and sincere prayer life in secret with the Lord, where as you share your heart with Him, He shares His heart with you. If you are hearing and recognising God’s voice there, you will hear and recognise Him anywhere else.
- Living a holy life before the Lord, and before others, so that they will see your good words and works, and glorify God because of your testimony.

And here are a couple of good Scriptures to finish with:

"Then if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14, NLT).

"You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13, ESV).

A large two engined train was crossing America. After they had gone some distance one of the engines broke down. "No problem," the engineer thought, and carried on at half power.

Farther on down the line, the other engine broke down, and the train came to a standstill. The engineer decided he should inform the passengers about why the train had stopped, and made the following announcement:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that both engines have failed, and we will be stuck here for some time. The good news is that you decided to take the train and not fly."





..... Church growth tip

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked and said. "*Behold, the Lamb of God!*" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "*What do you seek?*" They said to Him, "Rabbi, where are *You staying?*" He said to the, "*Come, and you will see.*" So they came and saw where He was staying; and they *stayed with Him* that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard Jesus speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon and said to him. "We have found the Messiah (Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas." "**Follow ME.**" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, *I saw you.*" John 1:35-48

When we speak do people follow Jesus or us? *and they followed Jesus*

When Jesus asked *what* (not who (*m*)) *do you seek*, notice they answered '*where are YOU staying*'. Even at that early stage they wanted HIM.

NOW this is the key: When they found where He was *they stayed*. Now notice what happened after **being** (not been) **with Jesus**, perhaps, for

just a few hours. We read Andrew then *went* and found his own brother!

We notice in this short chapter that first Jesus says *'what'* do you want. When we answer with a *'who'* and not a *what*, then we *'see'* him and *'hear'* him saying, *'come'* and after being in His presence we cannot stop ourselves from *'went'* *'going to tell'*!

When we truly see/know Jesus as the *"Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel (that person we have been born/waiting for)"* we begin to *'see greater things than these'*.

John is an amazing book that reveals to us Jesus, Church growth and personal growth (which is not growing older but growing up in Jesus).

If we don't don't manifest (see/know) His presence (HIS LIFE) in our lives and churches we might still be the best communicator, we might still have the best worship team, have the best and biggest building with the most people but we might not have His life or His church and they might be following us and not Jesus.

The two disciples heard him (us) speak and they followed Jesus!

What an awesome privilege to be able to say 'Behold the Lamb' and to be on this earth and to be called the Church!

By Linda Rose Buttner

Visit Len and Linda Buttner's website:

<http://www.eagleascend.com/>



“Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.”

— [John Wesley](#)
[33 people liked it](#)
[like](#)



“We need never shout across the spaces to an absent God. He is nearer than our own soul, closer than our most secret thoughts”

— [A.W. Tozer](#), [*The Pursuit of God*](#)



“Strength of my heart, I need not fail,
Not mind to fear but to obey,
With such a Leader, who could quail?
Thou art as Thou wert yesterday.
Strength of my heart, I rest in Thee,
Fulfil Thy purposes through me.”

— [Amy Carmichael](#)



“The greatest mistake we can make is to stay on the ground after falling.”

— [Victor Manuel Rivera](#), [*In Search of True Freedom*](#)

The Editor



Paul Christensen

This magazine's purpose is to build up the faith of believers.

I am an elder of St Aidan's Presbyterian Church in Conifer Grove, Auckland NZ. At present, I am assisting with the ministry of the church along with the other elders and very capable preachers as part of an elder-run church.

I am including articles from recognized, effective pastors and ministries that have proved themselves in having the Holy Spirit work with them in the conversion of sinners, effective and powerful impact that they have on believers, and in the growth of their churches. I think that it is important for the members of the congregation to have a range of ministry outside of their usual one-person ministry that has been the norm for a number of years before our current minister recently resigned.

You will notice that I have included jokes and humorous pictures in this magazine. I am a strong believer in humour as a healing resource. I believe that the business of sharing the Gospel is serious, but some become so serious that they are dour and humourless. I don't think that these people are a good advertisement if we want our church to grow and be filled with believers who are passionate for Christ and who approach their faith with joy. "In His presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11), and good, clean humour is an important part of that.

All articles are printed with the kind permission of the authors, who believe that it is important that the message of the Gospel gets out there, and the importance of walking with God in love and faith, along with unity among Christian believers.

Email: paul90@slingshot.co.nz

Once you have read this, pass it on to someone else who might be encouraged by reading it.