

CALL ME ANNA
(The Disciplines of a prophetess)

Introduction

Call me Anna is a look at some of the practical aspects involved in aspiring to prophesy. It is written as an attempt to encourage the women in the church to pursue this gift of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy is not so much mere prediction of happenings, as it is the ideas of men and women of vision who can picture with certainty the overruling of events on earth on behalf of heaven.

Some of the people who prophesied in the Bible were women; notably Anna, Deborah, Huldah, and Miriam. This encourages others of us to move ahead without fear or timidity into realms of spiritual experience we may not as yet have considered possible.

Anna was a New Testament prophetess. She was an everyday woman of her own generation. So deeply spiritual, however, she was able to recognise the Saviour of the world when He was still an unknown babe. How did she get to be like that? I believe there are many like-minded women, stepping out of the embryo, waiting behind the scenes, learning in a school of prophecy. This book may help to know how far we still have to go.

Both men and women in the Old and New Testaments who spoke, as from God, had a variety of personalities. Some of their main characteristics will grip our hearts more than others. Some will be underscored in our lives at various stages. Whatever we are like, Paul tells us that - 'we may *all* prophesy one by one.' (1 Corinthians 4:31) And we need to catch a sense of excitement about the things that matter to God. He is involved with us and is speaking and, within the hierarchy of the church of God, expects His beloved daughters to take their place

Contents

- Chapter 1 She is Called
- Chapter 2 She Intercedes
- Chapter 3 She Waits
- Chapter 4 She Fasts
- Chapter 5 She Sees and Hears
- Chapter 6 She is Faithful
- Chapter 7 She Thinks and Covers her Head!
- Chapter 8 She Speaks
- Chapter 9 Her Hindrances
- Chapter 10 The False Prophet
- Chapter 11 The True Prophet - 1, 11, & 111
- Chapter 12 She Worships
- Chapter 13 The Prophet's Prayer

She is Called

‘Lift up your voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid’ - -
‘I have called you by name.’ Isaiah 40:9 and 43:1

Anna was a widow, Luke tells us, of about eighty-four years of age, who served God in a strange way to our modern ears, that is with fasting and prayer. Did you realise that was one way of serving God?

When Moses blessed the tribe of Asher he added the promise ‘As they days, so shall thy strength be.’ Deuteronomy 33:25. Anna was a true daughter of Asher. Thousands of years later, she was blessed by this prophecy of Moses. There was no moping over an early widowhood. Every day and every night too, there was a fresh occasion for proving how a great God gives strength just when and how it is needed. And she was equal to her great day when it came.

Released - you dear sisters who are still with beloved husbands, will not mind me putting it like that - released after fulfilling her seven years of submissive obedience to a husband, her time became full of praise and prayer. She was quite old when her moment arrived but nevertheless well prepared to recognise the Saviour of her people when she saw him as a babe. Her whole life had been a training for this flash of recognition. She was anointed for it. The temple and the sanctuary, with all the vessels, all the service and ritual, were anointed places and set apart for the worship of God. It was here she lived. Anna never left this atmosphere. And she was constantly with others of like mind.

It seemed that no-one’s age was an excuse not to be fasting and worshipping! This must be the source of the energetic inspiration with which she spoke to all she met about her Lord.

This book is written to encourage all my sisters who read it, to follow in her steps - to enter each day with their God, looking wholly to Him but with a rekindled flame of passionate desire to hear what He has to say through their lips to a needy world or perhaps to start a flame, whatever their age or circumstances.

To begin!! There are no blessings outside our Lord Jesus. We are made complete in Him. We are His body, ‘the fulness of Him that fills all in all.’ Ephesians 1:23

Let us, then, possess our possessions that are already given to us. We know that they are given for the common good not for our own benefit. The scriptures are very emphatic about this. They dry up otherwise, don’t they?

So this particular gift of Anna’s is given for the expansion of the church, so that we may make a specific contribution to the spiritual wealth and health of His Body and further His purposes.

The root meaning of the word prophet, I think most people would agree, is ‘someone who is called by God.’ That is the passive sense; the active sense is ‘someone who, in turn, does the calling.’

It is God’s responsibility to call. Then we become the mouth piece or the spokesman.

It may seem hard to realise, but the fact is, that many people do not want to actually hear the voice of God. God said to the Israelites in the wilderness, with Moses as their leader, ‘I will raise up a Prophet and he shall speak.’ He was comparing Moses with His son, who was to come. However, the people did not want that kind of experience - Deuteronomy 18:15. If, to hear God’s voice, meant fire on the mountain as they knew Moses had encountered, then they frankly didn’t want it.

‘This awesome fire will consume us,’ they said, ‘What man can hear the voice of the living God speaking from the heart of the fire and live?’ The holiness of God was too much for them. Deuteronomy 18:16

What a tragedy! God was ready to show His glory and His greatness and to actually talk to them but they were not ready to receive it.

It is still the same today don’t you think? Not all of us are ready for the full expression of the mind and heart of God. It seems too big an experience and outside our quiet little lives. Also, what He wants to say to the church is not always acceptable. We are all built to live in His Presence and enjoy Him, but He still speaks out of the fire. And that may hurt! God still wants to be in on the action helping, if not actually solving, the whole problem. Before we go any further, we better understand that to prophesy does not mean that we automatically become prophets!

Well, we know that, because we know that we are not a bit like Moses. What we have, and you have probably already exercised it a bit, is the gift of prophecy, distinctive from the work of the prophet, who then becomes a gift himself, or herself, given as a ministry to the church. One may evolve from the other but it does not necessarily follow. God may develop the gift of prophecy into the work of the prophet but this is not automatic. Deuteronomy Chapter 18 is important to us here, as it describes what is a clear promise of the coming of Jesus. God would raise a Prophet (Jesus) like Moses and God’s words would be in his mouth and he would speak all that God commanded him. God was insuring forever that there would be this kind of powerful ministry in the midst of His people, always. From Samuel onward, through men like Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Daniel, right down to John the Baptist, the ministry of the prophet continued.

God went on calling men and women until the ministry was made specific in the Lord Jesus Christ. After that you can see the promise renewed to us in Peter’s sermon in Acts 3:22 and then quoted by Stephen in Chapter 7:37

‘A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall you hear.’ Acts 7

Jesus, then, is the absolute fulfilment of this promise to the people of God. In Him we see the completed accomplishment. He was the highest expression of the prophecy. Stephen takes time before his death to bring together the prophet from the Old Testament and the Prophet in the New. He highlights the past and brings it altogether into the present.

Well, we may not feel called this way, with such dynamic beginnings, but nothing hinders us from starting. Have we the heart for it? Are we ready to use this means, to restore and to heal and to correct? This is a way to comfort and to encourage the people of God and to repair damages.

Maybe, just maybe! We were actually called to this kind of service before our birth like Jeremiah was and we have not realised it yet. God said to Jeremiah that before he was even formed God knew him and while he was still in his mother’s womb, God was arranging for him to be a prophet to the nations. Or perhaps we have begun but due to lack of encouragement, we have petered out somewhere. Well, let us encourage ourselves. This form of service is a very practical way of helping others and that is the point, not how we feel.

When we study the lives of mighty men like Elijah and Moses, their brilliant flight through the pages of the Old Testament could really dampen the most aspiring of us. But I have found that

it is usually small things that worry us. Does it matter, for instance, if we are in a crowded service or speaking to a friend in private?

I once wrote a note quickly in longhand, the word that God was speaking, in a very crowded meeting of intercessors. The time was nearly over and the missionary being ministered to by others on the platform, had a plane to catch. She was leaving for a further term of some years in a hard and lonely area. I knew nothing of her needs but handed to her what was written as we left the hall. God speaks and we speak. But I was learning and I was a bit slow! I only knew she needed to hear what God had said simply because He had said it.

‘Do not be afraid to go back into the turmoil of activity that was left behind. I will teach you to worship in the centre of the distress and trouble of your life. I am in the sanctuary and though the sweet spices are beaten very small and the sacrifice is turned to ashes, I will have you worship until I am satisfied.’

It sounded very strange and slightly hard to me but, because of it, I learned an important lesson.

The words we minister to others, very often, if not always, become life to us also. We become what we have said and it works itself out for us, too. It costs something to speak God’s word. On another occasion the gathering of people praying was an awe-inspiring size. There were many ‘big’ speakers and lots of personalities. What to do when an inner voice with gentle persistence is met by an equal sense of timidity? Well, the fear of men has to be faced and acknowledged. Speak - or the opportunity is gone at the time He wants His people to hear. There is no need to prophesy to enhance the preacher’s message after he has spoken.

However, it does seem from the scripture that prophets are sometimes allowed to make excuses. It is almost as though, if you are going to be the genuine article, there is a time and place for a lot of reticence and sometimes false humility.

Well, the open University for Prophets accepts entrants!

No intellectual attainments are necessary. The cost, however, is high. The term has begun. There is a vast and nearly empty market for just the commodity you will be wanting to give away. Although you will not be accepted in your home town when you qualify, you will find there is the interesting possibility that you can do Postgraduate courses while actually working.

At every assignment there will be the Prophet/Teacher with you

Moses said he could not speak.

Jeremiah was too young. One of the greatest, Isaiah, said he was unclean.

When God calls, we are given time for reservations but not for disobedience and, when the right time comes, there can be no skulking behind excuses. We must begin to dispense with everything, in fact, that would hinder us. We women actually have lots of excuses for not doing the work of God. I’m nobody! (quite true) I’m too young, nothing to say, too tired, too old, too busy, they won’t listen, they won’t believe me. I am very glad, though, that we do not need big words or special learning. Just clean hearts and an all-consuming desire to minister to our sisters and brothers in need, with love. Then we find we come into the presence of a Holy God and hear directly for the sake of others.

If we move on as He leads us with the gift He has given, it may be that God will call us further into the ministry of the prophet. However, we must begin.

We may eventually become:

1. A person who is infused with inspiration and who speaks words beyond her knowledge

2. Someone of vision or a see-er, who receives a revelation while waiting on God.

No man or woman chooses this life for himself, however. You cannot say - 'I am a true prophet - listen to me!'

You have to live a prophetic-type life. This is the idea expressed in scripture, behind the many illustrations of working prophecy.

You have to hide behind God, as it were, all the time and get on with life, saying to yourself, 'if that word or that vision is from God, it will come to pass.'

Confidence in God is added, of course, but we still must make it our aim 'to live a quiet life, minding our own business, earning our own living,' as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

It may take a lifetime of preparation to say one word.

The time lapse includes prayer for the coming generation who will shine like beacon lights for their peers, bursting quite suddenly into flame. It will be an indistinguishable streaking out of darkness into the world's careful planning without warning - the fast forward button of our efforts. The ploughing may be deep in our backs and never seen or heard but with the next generation it will come bringing havoc. It will be God's word and He will be heard.

Nevertheless, we must wake up and wake up now with passion.

Let us stir up the energies of the soul and spirit for our own and our future generation's sake.

Why are such people called of God? Well, timing is all important and no man chooses himself or when. It may take a lifetime.

God calls prophets at a time of national disaster. He wants to speak to the world through the church. There is a great need of the voice of the Lord among us now. There is a tremendous moral decline in our own country and God *needs* to be heard.

Prophecy has a price, however. Eli said to the child, Samuel, 'You must tell all that the Lord has told you,' 1 Samuel 3:17, meaning, 'even if you don't like it and it might hurt someone.'

This is not a time to speak from logic or reasoning. We need divine inspiration. As natural women of our generation we have no automatic qualifying gifts to move others or to lift and help them. The inspirational heart of this kind of ministry is not an easy coming and going. It is one of spending much time with the Lord and we prophesy by faith. However, it is the church door that He is standing at in Revelation 3:20, ready to speak. Outside the building is nothing to look at!

Men need to know what God is saying at a time of national and international disaster.

This was when the Lord called Samuel. God produced the prophet to meet the need. He trains him or her for the coming emergencies. In a way there is no escape. If we are called by God, there is no way out.

Consider just one aspect of the way in which many people live. The real world where the young are growing is the television and computer screens. I was talking to a friend in her sitting room in the school holidays a few days ago. Her young son, actually about nineteen years of age, switched on a video he had just rented. Horror became a mild word! When they are called video nasties, it is an extreme understatement. It bludgeoned the mind. It was like watching activities in hell only I had not thought hell was that bad! It was all in fiery, intoxicating colours, human sacrifice, witchcraft, hearts torn out. I just did not want to think

about it. Of course, we were supposed to go on talking while this was on but after a few minutes while we were subjected to at least six, fast moving extremes of evil, I invited my friend to talk outside her own sitting room! This young man was about to take up the responsibilities of marriage and was a church go-er. I was told it was normal for him to sit for at least two hours quite regularly with this kind of video.

The air was clean outside. We spent some time looking at the green grass, listening to the birds and trying to hear what God was saying.

Another dear Christian friend of mine tells me that her grandchildren regularly watch at least two of this kind of video every night during their holidays.

Sin - seduction - spiritual dearth is all here with us now and it is all in our own community. It is a very bleak, black hour in which we live. God, however, has His servants that He is preparing. We may not be aware of the situation. We may be just continuing in a normal way and fulfilling all we have to do. We may be very keen and interested in spiritual things. Very enthusiastic about God's way of doing things and have all the right equipment. We are just not yet called.

The procedure had to be repeated three times before even Eli grasped what God was doing. Prophecy was a new way of speaking. The power of God behind it all was needed to distinguish between the voice of Eli or God. It does not come until we are ready to say 'Speak, Lord.' Then we will be properly equipped. Our word will then be God's word. We will have a message. It will be like Samuel's and will make ears tingle. That means boxed ears or warmed up ears after being cold. The key to service is the readiness to hear. There was a bad state spiritually in the country in Eli's day. Men who were set apart for service were living unholy lives. They were disobedient and had no respect for parents. They were ignorant of true prophecy and no-one was hearing from God. This is the kind of scene that God brought Samuel into. The whole nation was awaking to the fact that a mouthpiece was needed no matter what the cost. The situation demanded it.

Men are quaking now and coming to realise that matters are out of their control. Bright ideas and helpful suggestions are not heaven's way. Power, however, has already fallen and we have the privilege of knowing how to meet the needs. Yours may not be such an earth-mover of a message but how do you know?! So keep going!

When we are called is God's prerogative. It is also His when our words are will be fulfilled. Lots of the old time prophets were called when they were very young and had to wait.

Samuel was tiny - just out of infancy into childhood. Mothers take note. Give your child to God before he is born. With Hannah it was actually before conception. She probably spoke to her son in the womb. He certainly heard her praises. There is a certain trend in maternity circles where this is encouraged. It does the foetus good! Let there be no irritations in the atmosphere, speak kindly to the little thing, pat the tummy, talk down to encourage growth and sense of well-being, etc. All good! Actually, Samuel did have a remarkable nine months before he was born. In spite of distress and personal friction in the home and criticism from the church, Hannah was delighted and satisfied with her devotion to the Lord. It could quite easily have been a time of trauma in Samuel's development, but he moved in the amniotic fluid inside a woman given to worship and communion with her God. What a wonderful beginning to life! The even tenor of her life gave tranquillity to little Sam's environment.

Dear Jeremiah (I always call him dear as I just feel he needed a lot of comfort!) was called, (Jeremiah 1:5) by God before he was out of the womb. You can't get a lot younger than that. It would certainly give you emotional freedom from any sense of rejection by being born illegitimately or being adopted.

In our town at one time we had a friend who exercised a prophetic ministry among us while we were young in the faith. He spoke of his own birth before his mother was married and how unwanted he had felt for many years until God spoke to him about Jeremiah and how alike they were. What encouragement it was to him and how loved he felt from then on.

Elisha was called by Elijah when he was very young. He was the youngest of twelve in the family. We know that because he ploughed with the last yoke of oxen, each pair being the responsibility of the next son down. By slaying his own pair of oxen he deliberately gave up his livelihood and put everything behind him.

The young, of course, have a certain fire in their bones to enable them to be fully committed to a cause. It is striking to note God wants young men and women. We equate age with maturity but it is not always the case. For what do we wait? Is there something better? However, it is still vitally important to be ready when God does call, whatever age we are. Age is not the criteria.

Anna was actually over eighty when she spoke the words we remember her for but the life of the little bud-prophetess began in a godly mother. She is called the daughter of Phanuel, her mother, of the tribe of Asher. Asher is a Hebrew word for happy. This is a lovely word to mix with deep religious convictions. This particular branch of the Asherites stayed very close to the Lord. In the old days they were to live among the heathen inhabitants of the land and so become a proving ground for God - to see whether they would keep His way or not. Evidently they did. Anna's mother and her household were, in their love and loyalty to God, serving Him with the joy that was their heritage. They then produced the right heir in Anna. She waited a long, long time to be called into the front line. We are being trained in this 'school of Anna' and as the church needs servants, not underlings, we will already be serving in some way or another. We will be working with our lily-white hands doing ordinary, everyday jobs.

Elisha drove the oxen and was working to help keep a large family. He had to know definitely that he was the one who was called to inherit Elijah's ministry. That is why he wanted a double portion of the Spirit before he gave up everything he knew of an ordinary working life.

Joseph waited on tables and cleaned up prison mess. He looked after the needs of the criminal class. He did not seem to count it all beneath him neither is there evidence to show that he made any effort to change his life style for himself.

Moses guarded sheep - night and day - nothing fancy or upper-class about that kind of life in the desert. It was wild and lonely and it was hard physical work. He was forty when he started that and kept it up for forty more years.

Amos was a cattle man and cared for the fruit trees. It was a very rugged man's existence, another word for hard, outdoor labour.

Paul made tents, didn't he?

Jesus was a carpenter.

We may be a partner or helper to someone else before God calls us. Elijah was given one in Elisha. In the lives of these two men there is given a principle of shared ministry. We work together. A team is formed. We are accountable to one another and we test each other. We corroborate and support each other's work and words. We can confirm together that a certain leading of the spirit is correct. The peace of God can sometimes turn back confusion or uncertainty by simply sharing thoughts and feelings with another who is walking in the same path. Above all, timely companionship is necessary. It was Elijah who suddenly and painfully felt he was left alone just after experiencing one of God's great works.

God does, of course, change our direction quickly at times so that it seems we are almost facing another way entirely but that is all right! He will usually have given us indication in our own soul first but nevertheless, He must put us together for the time being and that is strength.

God calls! We answer! Actually, He has worked it all out before ever we thought of it and before the worlds were made really! A bit humbling, isn't it? He has made us ready for communication with Him before the foundation of the world.

We are apprehended, like Deborah. She answered a need when her country went to war to encourage others - Judges 4. She so stirred Barak and his army, arranging manoeuvres and tactics, that he became one of the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 and just like a mother would behave, leaving all the glory to her son to receive.

Practically speaking, this may dawn on our consciousness slowly. Or it may be realised suddenly in an emergency. We continue with our daily tasks until, like Huldah in Josiah's reign was asked for wisdom from above. It seemed to happen without warning but the words were readily on her lips. God's covenant was subsequently renewed and idolatry destroyed. The people had found the book with God's laws and the nation shook with repentance not knowing what to do. I would think that Huldah had been praying for spiritual realities both in herself and her nation all her ordinary wifely existence until that time. 2 Kings 22:14.

Miriam was another lovely, ordinary woman but called a prophetess and obviously a comfort and a strength to both Moses and Aaron. She was the big sister and had some authority.

But then came a moment of great privilege. She led the women in their praises and singing. For a godly woman to lead a noisy, self-indulgent, self-directing crowd of female Israelites - that could only be God's doing. All the women went out after Miriam and that is recorded in Exodus 15:20.

This was a gift and a part of her prophetic calling. She led them aright.

They were found to be ministering to the Lord at a crucial point in their history.

She Intercedes

‘My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace,
nor even blessing, but Himself, my God:
Tis His to lead me there, not mine, but His
At any cost, dear Lord, by any road!’

(Gerhard Tersteegin 1697-1769)

One day, among many other wonderful things his Beloved Lord had imparted in secret, came the words, ‘I will cleanse the blood that has not been cleansed.’ Joel 3:21

In His way, God showed His servant and companion that He Himself would finish the work.

The God who loved him could hardly wait for him and began to draw him home. His wife was told by a prophetic word to prepare herself for a time of ministry with her loved husband in a far country. She obeyed and began her own time of preparation for his heavenly homeward trek. With gentle humility, the great man knew that many would find their grief hard to bear when he was gone. He had taught them wisely, however. Whatever his Lord had told him to say, he had repeated clearly. Now it was time to say to them,

‘The Lord will hear *you* - and send you help from the sanctuary.’ Psalm 20:1,2

His God had accepted his burnt sacrifice at last and turned it to ashes. The man of God knew himself to be nothing, which had always been his earnest desire anyway.

Then his God took him.

If prophecy is not anointed by intercession, it is of a very shallow kind and easily forgotten. Anointing comes only by prayer. It is much prayer, frequent and costly. Whole chunks of time and energy spent in the closet- wherever that may be for you - with the door shut!

There is a story told of a woman sitting in a rocking chair by a coal fire in the days of the Welsh revival. She had her apron over her face at times quietly rocking. The family knew then not to disturb her. She was closeted with God in the closest communion and intercession. It was the only private place in the little cottage.

The prophet Jeremiah with his energetic life has always been an inspiration. My first consciousness of the glory of actually hearing what God was saying to me at the beginning of my personal walk with Him was from something first said to Jeremiah.

‘Call unto Me, and I will answer you and show you great and mighty works, which
you know not.’ Jeremiah 33:3

These words have never failed to prove true. They have lasted through the years with great power and anointing. Jeremiah was himself a man of prayer. He lost no time in opening my eyes to something I was to hear which sent me post-haste back to my husband when I ran away one day! A true prophet! Not afraid to say what a rebel ought to hear! Action followed the hearing of the words. You will have your own special loves and lifesavers in God’s word. Be challenged to leap forward, at least once a lifetime, by Jeremiah’s words in chapter 17. Verse 8 is a sparkling stream of hopefulness in the dark tunnels in which we occasionally find ourselves.

‘Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. He is like a tree planted along a

river bank, with its roots reaching deep into the water . . . a tree not bothered by the heat nor worried by long months of drought. Its leaves stay green and it goes right on producing all its luscious fruit.'

There is direct produce in our lives resulting from prayer. Intercession anticipates trouble; so God knows just what we need to maintain our fellowship with Him in heavenly places; meanwhile bearing a good deal of limited suffering.

Some of us, including me, have a long way to go. 'Surely the Lord God will do nothing but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets.' Such a word should make us quake in anticipation. If it doesn't it is only because we are not just ready at the moment. It may take twenty years or so from the time we first heard it said before we actually tremble.

Jesus asked his disciples, 'Could you not watch with me one hour?' Sometimes it will seem difficult to suck honey out of the Rock! We may have to get up a bit earlier or stay awake a bit longer to find it. I would rather be enjoying His Presence at 4.30 a.m. It is even more important than window shopping !! Above all let us be realists with God and down to earth. There are lots of things I like and some I don't in the world around me - my scene. My personality will be different to yours. I don't like staying up late at night. I don't like a lot of fried food. I can be fanatical in disliking muddles around the house. However, I am His. Lock, stock and barrel. He can do what He likes with this physical life of mine as well as the spiritual. My husband and I have just discovered our son has a congenital heart disease. What do you do with information like that? We are still His. He can still do what He likes. Well, thank you, Lord, for giving us these precious days to get right with the boy and for him to get right with You. It has helped me to sense more of the love of God. Isaac 53:3 says, He 'is a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...' This has made a difference to our prayer life. 'Make me more sensitive to the persons I meet,' and 'Give me a word directly from You for bruised people.'

I have a prayer-partner who knows my needs and I know hers. We are committed to each other in a special way. Once a fortnight we pray together touching lives and also praying about the foundations of a new housing estate church. I have discovered she can speak one word about a situation and light and freedom enter into our praying. She has not come by this gift lightly.

When devastation or sorrow or pain enters our lives, if we can, we ought to wait quietly until God reveals Himself again. He will clear the path when there is fresh understanding of it all. My friend taught me more about this kind of attitude. Her godly young son, aged fourteen years, fell to the playground in school one day while playing a ball game. He died before he reached the hospital. At the same time her unmarried daughter imparted the information that she was going to have a child. *At the same time* she was trying to help the girl's boyfriend just out of prison. At the very same time, her husband was inexplicably made redundant. Statistics tell us that any one of these circumstances could be an early warning to a heart attack. The computer would have one too if they were all fed in together.

God, however, had a use for all of it and was not about to let His loved one sink without trace. What a power house she is. She does not now talk small-talk. Her mouth is full of wisdom. Her days never begin without in-depth searching of God's word and meeting with Him. She will drop everything in her own life to meet the need in others. Above all, she hears from the throne and uses what she has heard.

The son who died was dyslexic. She took his place and began to pray for the others in his group. From this small beginning she became a major instigator of help in our town, bringing local government aid into a struggling privately run circle of dyslexic youngsters. Her own conception of the meaning of ministry was widened. She aligns herself with God's great vision for her area. I am her student in learning how to give and how to love. Her prayers are panoramic!

There is no ministry more worthwhile than being able to pray for those who cannot do it themselves - to be able to reach the living God on behalf of others.

'Pray for us,' the people cried to Samuel. (Sam.1:12,19.) 'Enquire of the Lord for us.'

Everyone knew that the prophets were men and women in touch with God. They received their inspiration and revelation in His presence. This takes time. 'Pray for your nation,' says Zephaniah, 'while there is time.' (Zeph. 2:1-3.) The touch of heaven comes from our meeting with Him and it is recognised. No-one ever need say, 'Listen to me - I am a prophet!' They will take knowledge that we have been with the Lord and they will know.

No self-acclaim is necessary.

Our prayer identifies us with men of old. They knew their God in a very intimate and special way. Can we gain their heights of intercession? I think we can. It means putting ourselves in another's place. That great man, whose life I described, put his bodily life - his own blood coursing through his own heart and veins, completely at God's disposal. He was an ordinary, everyday man living with his family in a seaside town, but he was also a prophet. And there is the One Mighty Intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ, who became sin for us, taking our place, and still interceding on our behalf. Hebrews 7:25.

Our knowledge of God and reading the scriptures will prove that there actually is a higher law than that of prophecy, even when what we say will surely come to pass. It is the law of prayer. God listens and considers what He will do in answer to it. We can talk and argue our case with Him. That is clearly demonstrated with our friend and help, Moses. He wanted God to let him be accounted as nothing as long as the people were not destroyed for their sin. The enemy would hear of it and dishonour would be brought to the name of God among the nations. *So God changed His mind.*

Our hearts feel the weight of very heavy burdens sometimes when we pray. Perhaps we feel strongly that God could allow destruction on certain people or even a nation for their wrong doing.

We know Him to be a God of justice as well as mercy. We are called to pray and allowed to stand in the breach in this way and cry unto Him to change His mind. Your job, my job, is to pray - that is my employment. No need to think about the paid part - I know I am recompensed a hundred-fold. I am paid by my heavenly Father and He deals with the salary. All I know is that this is my job in life. All other work revolves around my times of prayer.

This is just quite simply the practical state of affairs. My heavenly employer is not harsh or hard but my work is regular and I shall never be redundant or find myself in a dole queue.

However, if I make any vows - apart from just making up my mind - those vows must be kept.

'When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it . . . Better it is that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.' Ecclesiastes 5:4-6

This could actually be a hindrance to physical healing, that is, the fact that you had vowed to intercede at certain times and then given it up because it goes on to say in the same context 'Suffer not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin.'

It is now years ago that I told God I would watch with Him and pray and intercede for my country and other nations as He gave instruction but there is still no doubt in my mind that it was no error. I knew He heard me then and I still know He heard me then. It has never been rescinded. It was a vow. I made it. He heard it. I can give you the exact date and time and place. It was in a shed my brother had built at the bottom of the garden. He allowed me to use it and had fixed up electricity and a few comforts. That shed became a sanctuary where God and I spoke together. I learnt that the pray-er is not important. The God who answers, is. Don't get any silly ideas that it is wrong or unnecessary for Christians to make vows. You would have to be very young or inexperienced to believe that. We know the weakness of our own flesh. We know the things and people and happenings that crowd in and take over every minute of the day. From morning to night and half way through the night sometimes we can be rushing from child to sink to husband to dog. You name it and we haven't managed to get around to it yet! So vows and set times and the will behind it, all are important.

At one time my home and family seemed not to need me quite so much. My daughter was about to be married, her brother was independent and my dear husband was apparently managing after redundancy. I found work almost immediately, doing something that I love as a hobby-cooking for an extended family of 10 elderly ladies. I badly wanted the part-time aspect of it to become full time but fortunately for me the occasion did not arrive but while working my prayer times gradually very imperceptibly became shorter, more hurried, lacking the waiting time and lacking the intensity. Sometimes the day passed without the one thing necessary to my own life, health and strength - prayer.

This kind of prayer is in itself a work. It cannot be done lightly. God stepped in and kindly supplied a caring young woman with a heart to give more than just calories and vitamins to those I cooked for.

My heavenly Father also very graciously took the trouble to show me that it had not all been a mistake. My needs had been met for a while, I had badly needed to know I could be used in that way and we also had had time to adjust to the financial troubles.

There is now another sphere of life in the town about which I previously knew nothing and around which now my prayer life could be extended. Let us state our request, write them down and we can look back in amazement and be encouraged at the way they are answered.

Prayer

Prayer is the most powerful form of energy that one can generate. The influence of prayer on the human mind and body is as demonstrable as that of secreting glands. Its results can be measured in terms of increased physical buoyancy, greater intellectual vigour, moral stamina and a deeper understanding of the realities underlying human relationships.

True prayer is a way of life; the truest life is virtually a way of prayer.

Anon.

3. She Waits

‘My soul, wait thou only upon God’ Psalm 52:5

Silence is a wonderful thing. It is not easy for a woman. Let the women learn in silence, Paul writes to Timothy. They were evidently always chattering. Well, we still are, but nevertheless there is some wonderful sweet-talk we can have together. Loving administration of others needs, involves talk. I see my friends regularly and we talk!

There are, however, some marvellous silences recorded in the Bible. Job’s friends sat down with him and said not a word for seven whole days. They just mourned and wept with him when they saw how great his grief. Seven whole days and nights they sat, those three dear friends. The determination of their hearts was just to be with him where he was and to share his suffering.

Ezekiel is a better example for us really when he sat silently for seven days because he was also learning the rule for prophecy. You receive first the message into your own heart. Seven is the number God uses for judgement. Ezekiel had already accepted and absorbed his commission to become a prophet. The hand of the Lord was upon him and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was there with the captive people before (1:1) but now he was a different man, aligning himself with them and in the same situation.

He was seeing all that was on God’s heart toward them. (3:15). He was to show them the sins that had brought them low but also there to remind them of their Father’s lovingkindness.

Then what a majestic silence it was in John’s heavenly vision - ‘silence in heaven for half an hour.’ It must have seemed an eternity to the lonely watcher. Our worship and praise is all noise sometimes, isn’t it? Could we be silent for half an hour in church, waiting to know what heaven wanted to say.

Consider Proverbs. Speaking there is often equated with foolishness or conceit and pride but withholding words is almost the same as wisdom!

‘Do not talk so much. You keep putting your foot in your mouth. Be sensible and turn off the flow!’ Proverbs 10:19 in The Living Bible.

If God Himself is to train us to speak on His behalf, there will have to be - there will just have to be - a time, or times, when the flow is turned off. In fact periods that will seem like years when we will not say a word - that is, in public, or even to be allowed an opinion. Can we wait? God must find out whether we will wait for Him or whether we will speak our own words to fill the empty spaces. It is absolutely imperative to wait for Him.

I thought I might make the following my clan motto if I ever did a heraldry of my family.

‘Ego Non Eloqui Usque ad Deus Eloquit’ I think that more or less from the Latin this means, ‘I spoke not until God spoke.’ May God help me to be true to this in connection with prophecy.

God is not afraid of silence but His silences are sometimes disquieting to us. We wait, with some disturbing heaviness on our minds, but God, it seems, is speechless most when we need to hear from Him. It is unnerving if it goes on for more than 24 hours! One thing we wait for, of course, is for *His* time and not our own. Both to hear Him speak and to say what we have heard.

My stubborn nature has to learn these things in an alarming way, sometimes.

My sister and her friend ran a business together successfully for some years and they enjoyed life in a fresh and creative way. They also made their own furniture, grew all the fruit and vegetables they needed and gave away their lives and their substance in ever-developing ways. Their doors were always open to neighbours and family and everyone’s need was automatically theirs. Life was good. They worked hard and enjoyed the expanding business opportunities.

Then, with grave suddenness, the friend was taken into hospital with a terminal disease and my sister was warned. They both prepared for the end and nothing was left that could provide comfort for the last days. The doctor advice was - one night more may be all that was left. In all my praying and pleading for them both I felt a great urgency and wanted to rush over to the other side of the country to tell them how much I loved them both and ask if I could pray with them. ‘Wait for My word and instructions’ was all that I could hear from heaven. As calmly as I could I waited until a telephone call told me the end was near. ‘Could I come?’ I asked. I could, but I was told I was not able to see the friend. My cry was getting desperate. ‘Just go!’ Was all God seemed to say. It seemed that each step was made clear as the next one was taken. It occurred to me at that point that I might just as well stop fretting and travel down the motorway singing and praising God!

On arrival I sat in their home praying for my sister to come and take me to hospital. She had no idea when I would arrive and was too distressed to think of it. She was also not about to leave the intensive care unit at that moment but she came!

Then the Lord showed me I must pray for the right time to be allowed in. It all happened unbelievably slowly but by this time there was a certain peace about it all and I was allowing Him at last to take me step by step. I was taken to hospital but told to sit in the car! After a short while I felt I should now walk quietly toward the ward. My sister came out at the same moment and needed someone to sit by the bedside while she spoke to the doctor. Could I do it? I certainly could. I had three minutes. No-one told me not to pray so I lifted my hands, placed them where there were no needles or tubes and said, as gently as my beating heart would allow, ‘Be healed, in the Name of Jesus’. It was all God gave me to say. Within seconds I was whisked away.

My sister’s friend did not die and the following week, she was allowed home. The whole neighbourhood rejoiced.

I had leaned that what God is doing cannot be precipitated, certainly not death. Rashness and undue haste also must be dealt with. He gave the friend her health back and she was able to ask ‘Is it really easy to be born again?’

Nothing we attempt for God must be presumptuous. We cannot run ahead of Him. God has His own time and we wait for it.

Prophecy will come with greater anointing when the prophet or the one who speaks has delayed and tarried for His time.

Elisha was very quick when Elijah called to him. There was no hesitation to follow the master prophet, although he already had a full-time job. He was swift in rearranging his life and he was purposeful and young, but he was not hasty. Long before his own ministry flourished, he had learned to wait and serve by washing Elijah's hands or waiting upon him, as the book of Kings tells us in 2 Kings 3:11

He was apparently silent, serving and waiting.

We have to know the difference between our own imaginative thoughts, sometimes painfully vivid, our own desires, even our own intelligent understanding and what God really would want to say.

Saul's story is very sad. He had every advantage in learning to become God's man. He was head and shoulders above every one else in stature for a start. There was great wealth in his father's house and he had tremendous physical beauty and personality attributes. However, he couldn't wait. He forced himself to move presumptuously. The preciousness of God's anointing was lost. It was the priest's, in this case, Samuel whose responsibility it was to ask the blessing, not Saul's in spite of being king. He was moving in the right direction but had not learned to trust God fully.

We may be asked by God to warn someone. If so, we must do it. We can only say what we have heard or seen - no more and no less. We may have to train ourselves to be more alert and perhaps do what Ezekiel did and repeat it in God's presence until we are sure. Is that really what you said, Lord? Did you honestly show me that? Is it this, really, that you wish me to say? Do I keep silent about what I think you have shown me until it is clearer? We are subject to God and to others but also to ourselves. Paul makes that clear in 1 Corinthians 14:32, when he says, 'the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.' We *can* contain ourselves. It may be that a degree more faith has to be imparted by the Holy Spirit.

'You young people cannot wait,' my bible College principal used to call to us as we bounded up the stairs ahead of the escalator. It was actually a sterner warning to wait that he gave us when we rushed ahead in unseemly haste, looking for a life's partner among the students of the opposite sex. It all had to be done 'now.' He was right, of course. We couldn't wait! As the soul grows and becomes a partaker of the Divine nature we learn that a feverish heat of haste does not come from God.

The Son of God walked in calm peace through the world He came to save, and rest and blessing and life were given by Him on every hand. There is a contrast between this quiet restfulness of the Saviour and the fragmented feverishness of mind and action of the fallen Archangel our adversary the devil. His character, the bible tells us, is given to those who are under his control - 'the wicked are like the troubled sea' - 'aimless' - walking up and down' - 'a wondering star', always restless but 'the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.' Isaiah 32:17

It is good that we learn to know people only by spiritual means. In that way we are not hampered by knowledge or preconceived understanding or even slight prejudice, for instance, where he or she comes from; how bad circumstances are; exactly what she is worried about, etc., etc. These things may not be what God wants to deal with right now. There are many walls

and boundaries around people who need help. Many doors are closed in the inner recesses of their being; much from the past that causes hurt and may be unrecognised and long forgotten. Only Father knows what is best to break down or build up or even acknowledge at this time. There are influences that undermine the work of the Holy Spirit. Foundations must be laid and foundation digging is time consuming and costly. While we wait we can ask that the ones we pray for may have 1) a desire for spiritual things 2) an increased capacity for the Holy Spirit and 3) that the eyes of their understanding may be enlighten. That's just a beginning! The stones to excavate may be large and a long time on site. They often are. Weeds and roots have grown around them. Jeremiah had to root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, build and plant! This was with whole nations and kingdoms. If that is to be our lot, we better wait until we hear God say to us as He said to Jeremiah - 'Be not afraid of their faces.' Jeremiah 1:10 and 7

Daniel waited until he knew with mind-calming assurance that 'the heavens do rule'
Daniel 4:26

All this is too much for us really. We can, however, maintain certain disciplines within ourselves while we are being prepared.

1. Our compassion

Is it adequate or in other words do we recognise it in ourselves? Can it be experienced with the ignorant and the weak and those who oppose themselves? Do we weep as we pray?

2. Fasting

Is it under control? Long - short - regular or is it a weak point?

3. Waiting on God

Is it for Himself alone - for His coming into a given situation - for His voice. Include in this, prayers; intercessions; speaking in tongues; just waiting; hands in air or face down.

4 Worship

Definite periods should be given. It will change lives; divert the course of Satan's activity; magnify the Lord Jesus Christ in everything.

5. Bible Reading

Time; time and a half, and more time, set aside each day for study, meditation, memorising, reading; make it central or first in the day. What has God said - to you - today?

5. Fellowship

We need fellowship with those of like mind as much as possible. Be subject to others. We don't walk alone. There will be at least one who is over you to whom you listen and submit in difficulties.

7. Good Works

Whether you like the expression or not, cultivate and continue therein! However rejected your actions may be, help others. Old and young and very young need you. Your husband needs you Do not separate yourself from close relations. 'Kindness makes a man (woman) attractive.' Proverbs 19:32 T.L.B. Wait for your opportunity sometimes - you are to be like Dorcas as well as Anna. You may not have a special gift of helping as described in 1Corinthians 12:28 but nevertheless you can come alongside and be a help. Whatever the Lord says to you - do it! Be remembered when you are gone!! I shall never forget the lady who arrived on my doorstep the morning I had to move home on my own. She gave up a whole day just for me. There is non-stop blessing coming her way when the Lord hears my prayers.

8. Celebrations

Feast days, play days and special times together to enjoy. 'Blow up the trumpet . . . In the time appointed on our feast day . . . This is a statute and a law of the God of Jacob.'

Thank God for Christmas, Easter, for holidays. Make special meals and gather the poor to praise the Lord. Some people with small children and others never have a special occasion. Make much of birthdays, revel in the noise, the talk, the play - and 'send portions for whom nothing is prepared . . . The joy of the Lord is your strength . . . All the people went their way to eat, and to drink and to send portions, and to make great mirth.' Nehemiah 8:10,12

9. Confession

Be guided by the Holy Spirit. There are shortcomings, failures and mistakes you need face before you go to sleep at night, but sooner if possible.

10. Watch or Watch out!

Beware of that which would detract from healthy spirituality and undermine His work and word in you heart; the company of those who mock and are scornful; those who do not believe; beware of watching the devil at work, on television; listening to his music - be careful, keep your own home as though the Lord Jesus were coming to visit. You may entertain angels unawares.

11. Praise Take up this weapon against the enemy constantly. It was lovely to hear that superb actress, Wendy Craig, talk about the beginning of a downward pull in her life as starting from the day she stopped walking her dog - she had filled the daily walk with praises and then the dog had died. She missed the dog and God missed her praising heart. The depression lifted as the regular, daily praise session began again.

12. Acknowledge - openly -

'The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night' 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony . . . Revelation 12:12,11

Don't be surprised when you feel like Job, but use his tactics - 'I know that my Redeemer lives.' Job 19:25 He confessed openly what he knew to be true and from that moment his inner turmoil lightened.

13. Attitudes

Forgiveness must come as easily as eating sticky buns! No grumbling please. No criticism. Let the anger and envy go. 'Agree with your adversary quickly'. Matthew 5:25

Be like Corrie Ten Boom in a concentration camp who found strength in prayer or Henrietta Soltau who laughed at impossibilities. Let God's agape love motivate everything. You haven't got it so ask for it. If you prophesy without love the prophecy may not fail but 1Corinthians 13:2 says that you become nothing and seems to imply that although you have this marvellous gift, the word you speak, without love, becomes useless.

Don't be discouraged-wait on. The cloud moved then the Israelites moved and when it stayed so did they. Psalm 106:13 'They waited not for His counsel.' is a tragedy.

A simple prophecy in our little church in Swindon waited for fulfilment. It was 'many will come in and go out and wash their feet in refreshing waters.' Ten years later, mini-revival came and we all experienced the green pastures and the living, running water. It had been kept fresh by the small congregation who did not allow themselves to faint or be discouraged by the passing years of drought.

Waiting on God

By Andrew Murray

‘Wait thou only upon God’ my soul, be still,
And let thy God unfold His perfect will,
Thou fain would follow Him throughout the year
and fain with listening heart His voice would hear.
Thou wouldest be a passive instrument,
Possessed by God, and ever Spirit sent
Upon His service sweet - then be thou still
For only thus can He in thee fulfil
His heart’s desire. Oh, hinder not His hand
From fashioning the vessel He has planned,
‘Be silent unto God’ and thou shalt know
The quiet, holy calm He does bestow
His Presence, and His life and light even where
The night is darkest, and your earthly days
Shall show His love, and sound His glorious praise
And He will work with hand unfettered, free,
His high and holy purposes through thee.
First on thee must that hand of power be turned,
And you come forth a vessel for the Lord,
So frail and empty, yet since He hath poured
into your emptiness His life, His love
Henceforth the power of God through you shall move
and He will work for thee. Stand still and see
The victories your God will gain for thee;
So silent, yet so irresistible,
God shall do the thing impossible.
Question not henceforth what you can do;
You can do nought. But He will carry through
The work where human energy had failed
you nothing. Then, my soul, wait and be still;
Your God shall work for you His perfect will.

If you will take no less, His best shall be your portion, now and through eternity.’
Here is the story of Sister Francis Cabrini taken with permission, if acknowledged, from ‘The
Word for Today’- written by Bob Glass. It is about a woman with a dream who waited.

At 6, Francis Cabrini felt called to be a missionary to China. But at 18, when she
applied to join a religious order, she was rejected because she was too sickly. That did not make
her give up her dream. After spending the next 6 years working in an orphanage only 50 miles
away from her home, her Superior said to her one day, ‘If you want to be part of a missionary
order, you’ll have to start one yourself.’ So she did! With the help of half a dozen orphans,
she spent the next eight years building foundations in Milan, Rome and other Italian cities.

Still she kept trying to earn a place in Asia. However, it was not to be. The church finally sent her of all places, to New York City, to build a school and an orphanage there. Even that was problematic. When she arrived, she was told that the plans had fallen through and that she should go back home to Italy but she refused. Instead, she stayed, solved the problems and built the facilities anyway. It didn't matter what difficulties she faced, she believed that with God on her side, she could overcome anything. And she did!

By the time she died at age 87, she had founded 70 hospitals, schools and orphanages in America, Spain, France, England and South America. Her impact was amazing. She was the Mother Teresa of her day - displaying the same compassion, grit and leadership. She would never have made a difference if she had allowed her past to hold her hostage. Instead of lamenting the loss of her dream and the hurts of her youth, she moved on and did what she could where God put her.

The prophetic ministry is tried and tested and practical.

Our God is a God of patience. The Lord Jesus is the great example of patience. The Holy Spirit is the agent producing patience. Patience is the daughter of faith and is a principle point in self-government. Impatience really needs to be confessed and forsaken. For haste in our speech will lead us to dishonour our God. It will also make us miserable!

Unfortunately, it is mainly trials, troubles and disappointments that exercise and strengthen it.

‘Look at the prophets . . .,’ says James (5:10) ‘who have spoken
in the Name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction,
and of patience.’

4. *She Fasts*

‘I wept and humbled my soul with fasting.’
Psalm 69:10

Unnatural Fasting

Fasting? Who me? Stay off food? I'd starve! I'm too old! Too young. I've tried it and I seem to eat double the amount later!

These are strange thoughts when considering that nothing but good can come from fasting.

The little understanding we may have acquired about the subject is gleaned from hearing about the month long Muslim fast or the occasional advertising of health farms. This does not amount to any real depth of knowledge for most of us and anything touching the subject is probably second-hand theory. 'To fast' is simply a matter of missing a meal or meals, regularly or haphazardly. The Oxford dictionary says - 'To go without food.'

Fasting has nothing whatever to do with hunger strikes, an increasingly popular idea in an endeavour to obtain one's own way when all other means fail. It is like the last word in violence when other acts of anarchy are no longer possible or profitable. This kind of rebellion is basically always against God who is, of course, the ultimate authority. Without going into the psychology of it all too deeply it may be that having accepted adequate punishment for the crime given by the courts the guilty conscience finds its own answer in trying to take life itself.

Natural Fasting

We need to disassociate 'missing a meal' from diseases such as anorexia nervosa or any other eating disorder that need early prognosis and careful medical and psychological treatment. We are not trying to punish ourselves by fasting nor are we trying to get our own way. On the contrary we all, without exception, care very much for our own bodies. We cosset them all we can. We certainly make sure they are warm and comfortable as well as being well fed. We take some time each day to see that we keep them covered adequately and protected from harm - from the sole upward!

Apart from any spiritual value, any normal healthy, balanced individual in our society, from housewives to factory workers, middle-aged business people or old-age pensioners, any of us could benefit physically from missing a meal or two. The more regularly it is undertaken, the more benefit. In fact a recent survey by the medical profession has found that people who eat less tend to live longer. The idea is to give the alimentary tract from the stomach to the intestines and all organs associated with digestion, a well-earned rest. Of course, if the time can be lengthened, without overindulgence at either end of the fast, it is remarkable the degree of fitness that is felt when it is over. It is hardly necessary to say how little sense there is in stocking up the day before or over feeding the day after!

Anything more than one meal is entirely helpful for everyone except perhaps those who are ill or expectant mothers. One to three days, consecutively, can usually be undertaken while continuing a fairly normal daily routine - perhaps with a slight reduction of activity. Normal fasting does not include going without liquid. Any advance on one meal missed would necessitate plenty of water, or watery liquid being consumed.

Our present Queen Elizabeth regularly benefits from two days on occasions with nothing but lemon barley water made from an old recipe. This has a lot to do with keeping her youthful figure and lovely skin.

No one would lose weight by a one day a week fast but it would certainly cause the weight to remain steady. Diets, without a doctor's supervision, are largely unhelpful as far as permanent weight loss is concerned as it is far too common for the old eating habits to be renewed. Regular fasting, however, trains the body to eat in a more disciplined manner.

An ancient papyrus from Egypt, approximately 3,000 years old, states that -

‘Man eats too much. Thus he lives on only a quarter of what he consumes.

The doctors, however, live on the remaining three-quarters.’

It might have been written last week. It is surely true of our present day western society. The strains upon the body that overeating can cause could largely be avoided if we simply cut down our intake.

Scriptural Fasting

When faced with the very real spiritual benefits of fasting, some dear people excuse themselves by thinking that it is possible or better to fast from all sorts of other things, apart from food. A friend of mine gave up all sugar for lent. (Why not always?) But this is not true fasting as unto God. The rigours of giving up food and buffeting the body in this way has a deep significance in the life of faith. God somehow knows you mean business with Him when you will go this far. It is not easy especially at the first try. It takes a setting of the will as well as a leading from the scriptures.

Jesus said, ‘when you fast,’ not if you fast. (Matthew 6:16). He began His own ministry with a prolonged period of fasting.

Exodus 24:18 - Moses had to be called by God to the mount to be with Him forty days and forty nights. If God did not feed him supernaturally then he was fasting supernaturally for this time. Did Joshua fast too as he never left the mountain during that time? He was there while all the laws and commandments were written indelibly in rock and also indelibly on Moses’ heart for that vast crowd of delinquent people. Fasting must be a way to begin such a ministry.

Ester 4:16 - Ester fasted in the face of national disaster. She knew she would have no answers until the three days were accomplished. It is worth noticing that she did not need to ask Mordecai whether this was the right course to take. She had taught her household well, too, so well that they had become spiritual daughters as they joined with her without a murmur in passing three days without food or water. This cannot be undertaken lightly and is for exceptional emergencies.

1 Samuel 30:11 - There was a man, an Egyptian, left in the fields during war time without food and water. He was left there as one who was dying and a dead man does not need food and drink! Three days like that and his health was restored completely. He was able to continue with David and his men of war.

Specific guidance is needed for longer fasting than one or two days a week. I believe this rule should apply also if it is intended to fast from fluids as well as food. It surely must be every Christian woman’s desire to draw nearer to her Lord. This is our attitude if we fast for spiritual benefit.

It is a fact that the mind becomes clearer. Spiritual things become more real. Faith finds strength as the fast continues. It becomes easier to give up the cossetting of our bodies and unwanted bodily desires or habits. We can get to grips with that which is unseen and uncomprehended as we pray. It may be that with fasting, God will honour our earnestness in intercession. Fasting with others of like mind, our church life would move forward rapidly. We might become like the early Christians who are recorded to have fasted twice a week and experience the same miraculously expanding growth.

Fasting is an imperative when considering the prophet and the operating of the precious gift of prophecy. It is an urgent necessity. There are no options. Faith, an essential requisite to prophecy, is wholly quickened while, and after, any length of time given to fasting. God has always been ready to communicate His mind to us. We, therefore, need to be prepared. We do not need to fear being called fanatical, particularly as Jesus tells us to do it privately, but we do need to test everything by the Word of God.

When we give up food with some dedication in the matter, it may be that we find a sharpened sensibility along the lines of receiving supernatural visions and revelations.

Daniel 1:8 - Daniel, we know, was trained to this kind of discipline and received much wisdom and understanding. He started slowly. First, purposing in his heart then only vegetables and water for ten days. Then he set his face to longer times, up to three weeks.

We need light and fresh vision on our own problems as well as national difficulties, just like he did. Could our lives be an expression of depths and an open acknowledgement to our God that we will be as dedicated as possible in His service if we fast?

We are getting people ready in our ministry for eternity, not ready for a garden party. Let us be up-to-date in our fasting programme to be there - His woman, for His next step. We simply make up our minds and choose His way and then do it! That is what 'setting the face' as Daniel did, means.

Jesus did not please Himself. His life of self-discipline is to be ours too. It may not be entirely possible for us to continue with the fruit of the Spirit of self-control without some practical steps along these lines in going without food.

'Run your race to win,' says Paul. 'To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things that would keep you from doing your best. I run straight to the goal, with purpose in every step. I fight to win - like an athlete I punish my body, treating it roughly, training it to what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise, I fear that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside.' 1 Corinthians 9:25-27 TLB

My particular lump of flesh grumbles atrociously about going without food. It just does not like it and I hear its moaning almost every time I attempt to dissuade what can only be described sometimes as an unrestrained lust for food. Strange as it seems, it is not until the body is told firmly that it is going to go without a meal that it begins to complain. I call it a normal healthy appetite but it is nothing of the kind!

Because of our lack in this area I believe that sometimes Christians of long-standing who really love the Lord and are blessed with loving families and good fellowship in church life, can, and do, find that actually they have lost touch with the majority. There is a world of darkness outside the church which is a kind of empty coldness of the mind with very little light on the horizon. The shocks and pressures of normal living cause havoc and chaos we Christians know nothing about. Heaviness and deep depression can descend like a cloud and just as suddenly without warning. What is worse and to our shame, there are not many to help. We need clarity in the Word of God and physical and spiritual discipline to be able to alleviate some of this. We also need to be able to make relevant to another's need our own understanding. This will come only by prayer and fasting.

The effects of fasting are remarkable. I resolved to find out some answers about it. It would not be an absolute fast I would drink pints and pints of various liquids. The first day and part of the

second were a bit miserable. I cried to God constantly to hear me and answer my overwhelming problems and say something - anything as long as I knew He was there.

The third day was worth it all. I sensed heaven and began with worship. There was a great cloud of witnesses nearby that the Bible speaks of.

There was quickening in my daily reading of the Scriptures. Instead of hopefully picking up an impression of what God wanted to say, every word now became weighted instead of three chapters, three verses were beginning to be too much. It all became alive. Every word written was heavy with meaning. It was food. However had I picked up this awful habit of skimmed milk when here was all this cream! That was the first noticeable change in my three days. God was once again being allowed to feed my soul by His Holy Spirit. How long had He waited?

We had a family problem and there was a clear impression that it had been allowed to produce despair and anxiety that had not been recognised. The heaviness had been presumed to be condemnation and it was paralysing. My prayers had been fretful and the Lord spoke into the situation showing that there was still time to tell our son that he needed God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ in spite of the incurable heart disease that threatened him.

How absolutely basic this was and we had not noticed but God knew the emergency action needed. We had only seen the resentment and bitterness in the boy's eyes. We loved him but he and his problems were breaking up the home and tampering with our own desire to go on with God. Now life was no longer the same. God had spoken. Our son still needed to accept this word and even to actually hear it and he still needed to be delivered from the demonic influences he had allowed in when he decided to practice extra sensory perception but doubt had fled after months of wavering unbelief and now God was in control. I had forced myself to repeat in the face of the enemy that Jesus Christ is Lord of this situation and now it became real.

God was blessing my husband as though he were fasting too. Well, we are supposed to be - er - in fact, are, one whole being. He is off to work after three years grappling with being the Director of a failing soft drinks firm, then a joint Director after being taken over or merging and it had felt to him like being swallowed up.

God's timing on this third day was so touching. You always know it is God because of the punctual way He fits things into the schedule. Yes, He always does. He stooped down on that day and gave my husband job and restored the years that the locust had eaten.

Nothing can take away the joy of a man looking forward to going to work. It is God given. My husband did not realise the bonus of working for others instead of himself. For the first time in his life he knows he has a paid holiday confirmed and sure within a certain time. In my well ordered nursing history I had taken this for granted but he never could. It had to be fitted in, if at all, when the season was 'low' or others were there who could take the responsibility. Time was always money. God Himself changed all that and changed us as well. How gracious and kind He is.

One of the direct blessings of fasting is an increased freedom in intercession.

'When you fast as unto Me - you shall call and I will answer.' Isaiah 58:9

Sometimes it is just a good idea to go for a walk and continue to praise Him for all the delights in nature. How can the people walking their dogs around the countryside be not equally in love with Him? In this simple exercise there can be a relinquishing of our own ideas and a new agreement with God and His ideas. There will be a real relaxation and instead of veiled complaints there will be increased thanksgiving. Life can take on new meanings, new purposes

and fresh desires, a fresh vision too. 'Be still and know that I am God,' Psalm 46, verse 10, will mean so much more. Rushing headlong to do things and be someone will take second place.

By the end of the third day I realised the amazing truth that God actually delighted in being with me. He took the trouble to show He cared. It was enough. Without becoming ultra-sensitive or hyper-spiritual I knew I was very gently being told a few home truths.

1. I was selfish - no cover up - no excuses. And do not compare yourself with others, either. Definitely do not ring your dearest friend who will always support your side of the story. She would tell me what I wanted to hear and put her metaphorical arms around me. Ego must be stamped upon and sent out of the window. (I opened the window at that point to make it more real!) I am self-centred and that is final.

2. How is it that I am so unstable in a crisis in the home? I realised that my loving, tender-hearted Father would fix me in these situations that cause tension until He knew that finally, in them, I may possibly be relied on to show His character.

At this point there must be more of His grace asked for and received. No provarication, quibbling or shuffling, just ask.

Thank goodness he is not One to allow these sick places to lie there gathering pus and causing an abscess. Some will be dealt with, with a sharp knife, and the sword of the Word is very pointed and painful. Mistakes, misdemeanours, lies of the enemy, cover-ups can all be dealt with and cleansed away.

There were, however, some lovely things to say to me during this three day fast and it proved to be guidance that was unexpected.

'The Lord God is my strength, He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk on my high places.' Habakkuk 3:19

Amy Carmichael enlarges this verse and shows that we must be ready for changes and new direction. 'These places,' she says, 'are not easy. They are high places but the hinds' feet are wonderfully prepared to stand on places that would be impossible to most creatures. 'He makes *my* feet like hinds' feet' - Psalm 18:33 - 'and sets me upon *my* high places!' Feet that can stand steadily in difficult places, can spring easily and calmly from point to point, not afraid of suddenly having to change direction.' Then, in case we should feel afraid of these difficult places says David, in verse 32 'It is God that guides me with strength and makes my way perfect.' In verse 36 he say 'Thou hast enlarged my steps under me that my feet did not slip.'

These few days were not, as sometimes, a particularly 'asking fast' or desperate-for-guidance' fast. I was looking for help and direction but not frantically wanting my own way. God Himself had some ideas that had not occurred to me.

I did ask, however, if it would be seemly and to the point if I continued to write. Manuscripts had been put aside, tucked at the back of drawers and the writing desk inaccessible with other clutter. Even God had, I thought, dried up and was bored with the whole idea of yet more writing. But within hours, my head was bursting with words.

I hate the idea of all the trees that need to come down to make paper. I am aghast at some of the books that flood the market in the West. I am amazed at the thought that anyone might actually want to read it all, but none of this really counts. I write now, because after those three short days, I cannot help it. He has given me thoughts, inspiration has returned and He has given the time to do it.

The words of Isaiah 58 always mean so much when contemplating a fasting period. They are expected to work!

‘You will receive His light;
Your health shall come speedily;
You will call; He will answer - in fact, come into the situation Himself
He will guide you;
Satisfy you;
(and finally) rather than faint from hunger, you will be fattened up!’

The whole chapter needs to be carefully read until you can grasp hold of these glorious facts. It will do immense good long before any fasting commences.

5. *She Sees And Hears*

‘Whatever He (the Holy Spirit)
shall hear, that shall He speak:
and He will show you things to come.’
John 16:13

The prophetic word is the audible expression of that which has been seen or heard. It is for the benefit of the church. The prophet herself has nothing and is nothing in herself, it is all of Him and for use in His purposes.

My mother saw, in her mind’s eye, as she put it, a church full of adults and children in an area where no homes had as yet been built and certainly no church was even contemplated by the local council. She began to visit the people she knew to see if anyone else was interested in a church building. She pushed her young family of five around in a pram when we were all under eleven years of age. There was no encouragement whatever from senior members and ministers of other churches. They wanted her lovely brood in their own congregations.

It seemed extremely difficult to convince the church councils that there were going to be many families in her area who would not be able to take young children miles away from home every Sunday to worship in places that were only accessible by car or bus. At this time there were neither cars, buses nor people.

For a while the whole family walked five miles both ways to a local Sunday assembly. This finally became too exhausting. She still felt the Lord was silently planning for her and her children although she recounted, it seemed very silently indeed sometimes.

She still had the vision in her heart but now she had a strange word too to encourage her that God spoke to her through a certain scripture.

‘And Abram journeyed, going on still..,’ or, as the Living Bible puts it in paraphrase, ‘He continued slowly, pausing frequently.’ What a thought for a tired housewife!

There came a day when she finally convinced a dear elderly man of God on the Free Church Council. He said he would see what he could do. True to his word, he spoke to the general gathering of all the denominations and found that only the Baptists at that time were interested in any building in that area. It was not difficult to imagine their slowness in responding to an unknown woman’s fanciful ideas! At that time there were just no people living there! There were no houses anywhere, just one short road, no buses and not much in the way of access. Amazingly, my mother discovered that nothing could be done unless they were already formed into a church. So she and seven friends had a service in a local hall and became a ‘church.’

The Temperance Building Society then became interested and the Baptist Home Mission Fund gave some money. The local ‘seven’ began to give their monthly collections, tithes and offerings of whatever they could afford. They met once a week for prayer and to behave in a way they laughingly called a committee, and with great courage had drawn up plans for their own building. The council then gave them an architect. She began to find how wonderfully God had arranged every detail. Her husband became the guarantor and in a quiet, unassuming way helped with the plans as he had already built himself a home and a caravan for his little family.

My mother had intended just to have an old hut nearby and teach her own children but God had much bigger plans. The council began to build homes around the church! Where there were once wastes and deserted acres of land, there is now a thriving community extending for many miles with many hundreds attending every week to worship God.

She and her friends had shared a vision. They saw something no one else saw. They also counted the cost and laid the foundations and then finished the work. It is still flourishing half a century later. There must have been great joy in her heart as well as in the councils of heaven when her own children committed themselves to the Lord. They then became some of the first to be baptised in the new baptistry.

If God is on your side - and He is - and you have seen what He sees, it doesn’t really matter who is against you. I say it courteously and gently, neither does it matter who is for you.

We could call this kind of seeing, a sort of contemplative meditation while praying. We are using a sanctified imagination but it is more than that. We can climb into the reality of the presence of God using our inner eye. We can then ‘see,’ for instance, an illness giving way under the touch of Christ and the person for whom we are praying being filled with His wholeness. We can hold on to this picture as we continue to pray and realise just *how* God is going to do His work in the one who is sick.

Hearing and seeing were a way of life to Jeremiah.

‘I have heard, O my soul . . . the blast of the enemies trumpets.’ Jeremiah 4:19

‘How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet . .or see war and death.’ Jeremiah 4:21 ‘I heard a cry . .the cry of Jerusalem gasping for breath.’

All the catastrophe was taken upon his own heart, not only to pour out again to God but to enable him to know what it was that was on God’s heart to do.

A prophet is a watchman who knows that the enemy is coming and warns the people. If he does not, he may be responsible for the people’s defeat.

Just like bold Ezekiel, always being told to lift up his eyes and to say what it was he ‘saw.’

David had a way of thinking and seeing prophetically. He was in the habit of looking at the daily newspapers, papyrus, listening at the gates or whatever, with the deliberate consciousness of putting it all into a spiritual dimension.

Check one of his Psalms and see if you can get into the same habit. Reading a Psalm is not prophesying, but what you read can have the same guidelines for practising in the prophesying ‘school of Anna’ we are in. It needs to be relevant, applicable, not confusing or moss-gathering, but sound and valid, as you know God’s word always is. It will then be unshakeable in a shaking world.

We’ll take Psalm 74 for instance to check out, but any one of them will do:

1. He cries out to God. v.1
 2. He reminds God it is His own people being affected v.2
 3. He is fully aware of current events v.3
 4. He puts the physical and moral devastation from the enemy before God. v.3 to 7
 5. He relates it to spiritual life and the dearth of revelation v.7 to 9
 6. He recognises the real truth behind evil, for example-to wipe out all traces of God v.8
 7. He argues with God, reminding Him of the past v. 13 to 15
 8. And pleads with Him with God’s creative works in mind v. 16 to 17
 9. Revels in what God can do v.18 and 19
 10. Acknowledges His justice and mercy and finally knows that God can do it all v.20 to 23
- David has ‘seen’ God in the sanctuary, as he says, and then heard God’s answer from His own lips.

Start this way. Prophecy to yourself about all you see on the television newsreel. There will always be something there to grip and stir your heartstrings.

Where there is despair about the world situation; the latest multiple pileup on the motorway; headlines of a skiing disaster; civic unrest or strikes; whatever it is, the prophet and God’s signs and the woman with vision have the answer.

We will first of all discover within us that we really care. We are deeply concerned about people and God’s answer to their problems.

Very troubled by a checking hindrance to prayer in our sessions at a conference for Christian women, Pat decided to bring this matter to the Lord privately and ask for the reason. Pat had had a deep experience along the lines of deliverance in her own life and received from the Lord some spiritual heart surgery as she called it, for herself. The experience had made her quick to sense

something wrong elsewhere. She called this a mind-binding atmosphere at the conference and the prayer times in the hall were being hindered she knew by Satan and his cohorts.

The same night she decided to pray, she was startled by a half-waking dream. A colossal ultra life-size serpent was menacing her. It wasn't the venom or the strength of the coils that dominated the dream so much as the fangs in the mouth - wide open, ready to strike and devour. That morning we discovered the conference centre had previously been used for an international assembly of a false religion. Their principle was to devour and imprison the souls of men and women with their overpowering words and to conquer the world was their aim. Their women were already oppressed and she felt this was significant in all she had seen.

They were all subsequently able to pray about this more intelligently and to free the meetings by the power of the blood of Christ and the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Now, if you really feel you have never prophesied at all, and I say, feel, as you may have done without realising it in your own prayer life or if you are part of a group. If you do feel like this - practice!

There was a school for the prophets in the Old Testament, so we are not alone. They didn't all start perfectly. Take time off right now and contemplate. For an instance, think of a bird. Speak to yourself about it. Picture its flight, watch one from the window. Read Psalm 124, verse 7, 'Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowls: the snare is broken and we are escaped.'

We have escaped with our lives, says The Living Bible. Consider the bird's flight; its freedom. Ponder on the way Jesus spoke of a simple sparrow and how He watched them and knew God's provision for them and us.

Contemplate means to reflect studiously or thoughtfully. Now quietly and confidently expect God to bring into your mind some other aspect of the liberated joy of birds that He created. He has given them an unfettered existence. Free from care.

Corrie ten Boom noted how birds could fly heavenward over her prison camp in Germany during her war years. It encouraged her. There was access upward.

You have prophesied to yourself

It will do wonders for your wrinkles, your digestion, your night's sleep and for your whole demeanour and nervous system. It will also take you to your knees in thanksgiving.

'How we thank you, Lord. Your mighty miracles give proof that you care.' Ps.75:1

Can you believe it, sometimes the unwillingness to be alone is our only hindrance.

'Morning by morning, He wakens my ear to hear.'

(Oh, I didn't know that Lord - Well, now you do.)

'that you may know how to speak to him who is weary.' Isaiah 50:4

Expect God to reveal to your spirit all He wants you to know. You can trust Him also to bring along the weary. You do not know anything even about those who live with you. But He knows. Many of those we love deeply are, what others would call private persons. I think that means they keep themselves largely to themselves but I'm not sure! I have a sister like that. It doesn't help when I am trying to pray for her.

The Lord revealed in a small and insignificant picture in my mind, that she was, in fact, a butterfly in spiritual realities. It was as though she was just coming out of her particular

chrysalis and needed the covering of prayer and the strength that it brings so that she could grow in all that God had for her.

We do not have to put our brains and our intellects on one side to have the Holy Spirit work within us this way. The apostle talks about us having the mind of Christ and bringing the mind into the obedience of Christ. The mind can be used by God to think His thoughts after Him. So it is nonsense to think of dispensing with the mind. Paul's scholarly mind was certainly used when writing Romans, for instance, also Corinthians where he talks of visions and revelations. 2 Corinthians 12:1

There is, however, a certain change of emphasis from teaching. A prophetic word can be dealt with in the context of the teacher's or preacher's message, but it may be that the emotions are more stirred with the one who prophesies. It is the same Holy Spirit but you, his instrument, become inspired while absorbed with a certain train of thought. There will be something enhanced or enlightened in the message to speak it, as from God.

The prophets Jude and Silas both exhorted and taught and confirmed the people, so we can do both. Acts 15:32

This word, exhortation, may have something to do with the ministry of the prophet that Paul speaks of in Romans 12:7,8 - 'he that teaches, is to wait on teaching, or he that exhorts, to wait on exhortation.'

Let us just stop for a moment and be clear in our usually womanly woolly thinking! (Mine, not yours!!) We know the scriptures, as written, are wholly inspired by the Holy Spirit and nothing must be taken from them or added to them. That would bring the anathema, or curse, of God. But we cannot be shallow in our thinking, either.

God has much to reveal and impart to His people still. There were, in the scriptures, many prophets whose words are not recorded for us at all. Not much of Anna's words are told us and she was in the temple in Jerusalem as a prophetess for a good many years.

We have so much that Jesus said on earth recorded for us but John ends his gospel by saying that if all He did (and we can safely presume, said) 'the whole world could not contain the books that should be written.' John 21:25

Of course, we need to be quite sure that God is speaking but it can be just as much inspired now as when it was written so long ago.

So, if any man speak, let the word of God, as written, be our reference for what we see or hear from Him. He will certainly never contradict Himself. Give yourself time and check it out. The actual style or fashion or mode of thought may not satisfy all of us but the faith and the 'seeing' or 'hearing' of the one who prophesies, cannot be denied and will always witness in our hearts to be true anyway. We can have confidence as women and 'speak as the oracles of God,' says Peter in his first letter, 4:11

None of this can be stereotyped. Our own personality will hold true even when we know we have the authority of God to open our mouths. It is not necessary to tell you, you strong and beautiful women with vision, king's daughters, that if pictures or 'seeing' is emphasised more than the precious Word of God, then this does not hold true to the scriptures.

Nevertheless, let us be women who know with assurance that God and His purposes are overruling in this world of ours and He can use this means of imparting His mind to us in a very vital and moving manner.

Dreams can also be incorporated into the whole prophetic experience.

Because of a dream, Joseph, the father of our Lord Jesus, had to become a kind of refugee. It was painful for both himself and his beloved wife and also for the tiny child. Instant obedience was asked of him to escape danger more than once, and he managed it, entirely on the strength it seems of a dream. He knew he was guardian of the Messiah, the One who would be called Emmanuel, who would save his people from their sins; he had been told that in a dream; he now had to move them both to a strange land - and yet again to Nazareth at a later date. Joseph and this precious family had their lives dominated by the reality of dreams. Our Lord of glory spent his first days on earth fleeing from one country to another because his father dreamed dreams!

Would we respond with such urgency? Would we recognise God's voice by His angel in our calm existence? Would we be able to recognise the difference from our own vivid imagination and what we saw on the small screen last night and all our muddled anxieties, and an angel directing us in a dream?

All this, by the way, does not seem to have caused any physical or emotional stress in the formative years of our Lord Jesus.

What was asked of Joseph in dreams, Joseph performed and did it all without doubts and fears and no conferring with elders and betters!

This is all amazing really, isn't it? We all dream dreams. Some of them can be more vivid than others. Usually they flit away with morning light. They have no more substance than they are worth. They are mixed-up airy segments of our recent or past experiences and worries. They can be thought of as a mental safety valve. We see, hear and worry about too much and life is far too complicated for most of us. Our emotions, and what we feel by proxy are now global. And very thankfully, most of us have a few hours of darkness-related relief between that and fresh experiences.

There may or may not be some importance knowing in which strata of sleep we dream most, but if we catch hold of whatever picture we can before the day takes over and it has to be done quickly because of the gossamer-like substance we are dealing with, we can almost always note the central figure of our dreams is the big 'I'!

Men of greatness in scripture, nevertheless, had dreams. They were not especially visionary or dreamy people. They were hearty, lusty, men of action, most of the, like Jacob or warlike Nebuchadnezzar. And it is interesting to note that they were all different. Their dreams, however, were recounted in great detail and were always of tremendous significance.

God used this way to communicate.

They awoke to find themselves the possessors of information with a life changing force and some action had to be taken as a direct consequence of the dream content. They knew, without doubt that the sleeping experience was, in effect, to do with reality. Not only that, but others accepted the weight of the thing too.

Well, what makes the difference between our muddled fantasies at night and a real dream experience as from God.

One was that no matter what the content, however scary or unreal, it will not go away. If it needs interpretation, there is no inner rest until the significance is made clear.

Nebuchadnezzar could not excuse the 'night vision' in his head, as he called it, by knowing of anxieties with ruling a country. He was at rest, he said, and flourishing. (Daniel 4:4) But the dream so continued to trouble him, he called all the men of wisdom and leaning from the whole of Babylon. That must have taken some time. Then they all took their own time to give their version of what it was all about. At last, it says, Daniel came. How many weeks had gone by? Still it persisted to trouble the king and none of the details were lost.

When it was recounted for the umpteenth time it remained clear and unchanged.

To be of significance make sure the dream fills these criteria. Does it last? Could you write it down a week later? A year later?

Secondly, the dreams that are told to us in scripture, recounted for our learning and instruction in righteousness, had a life-changing force within them.

Jacob's ladder dream changed him. Jehovah from that time became his God not only the One of whom he had heard and knew about second-hand. God takes pains to show Himself to every generation. Salvation is not automatic or inherited. There is God's act and our response. Jacob responded and from that time forth his life was charged with vision. One day he would so have grown spiritually he could tell his family to put away the strange gods that were among them, to be clean and be obeyed. God took this suspect, shady character and opened heaven to him in a dream.

Thirdly, and perhaps best of all, these dreams can be clearly seen to reveal a way God communicates with us ordinary people. Sometimes in scripture it was perhaps, as it might be with us, the only way to stop the headlong trek through life. God was not about to let Jacob go on running away without him knowing that He was with him.

Desperate situations call for desperate measures as they say. However, in your particular desperation, get this into your head if it is not there already - astrologers cannot interpret your dream. If it is from Him, only God can do that. Daniel said, and it is still true, astrologers cannot tell you what it is all about, either life or dreams.

'The secret which the king has demanded the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers cannot show the king' (even the king). No amount of his demanding could, with threats or not. 'But' he says, 'there is a God in heaven who can.'

While I was writing this my husband came into the room and I asked him what he thought of dreams - did he ever have any?

As a very practical and reserved Englishman and unused to talking about his inner experiences, 'Yes,' he said, 'two days ago I dreamt of swimming without any effort whatsoever but moving forward faster and in increasingly swift waters.' The importance to him was the complete absence of any fear. The significance to us both was the sweet and easy way we related to God's noteworthy spiritual impetus in his life. There was point and sense to the dream.

There is no doubt that God has to speak sometimes in ways in which we are unfamiliar to give more serious meaning to our day-to-day normalities.

The fulfilment of things comes by His Spirit. God Himself makes it real and a study through scripture of results will show how God engineered it all.

Joseph of the Technicolor dream-coat had a dream. In fact he had two. I doubt whether I would have told those dreams! Every detail of a family of strong men bowing to the youngest came true. It took a catastrophic lifetime to perform and complete with plenty of heart-rending sacrifice. But eventually he became a founding father to millions, a world figure, central in his time to politics, commerce and social economy.

A vision is a waking dream, isn't it? Joel separated them in his prophecy, saying 'your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams,' Joel 2:17, so don't limit God and do not make the mistake of giving dreams too much emphasis either. Dreams will not change things, the hard work of prayer changes things. And remember this, if seeing and hearing and dreaming creates a picture of multitudes gathering around the big 'I', then forget it quick!

6. *She Is Faithful*

'For He spake, and it was done,
He commanded and it stood fast.'
Psalm 33:9

We had a short prophecy this year in church about tithes and offerings.

'All must be brought in - all that is owing; to where God has already revealed it should be. The guidance and blessings of the Lord will once again be known but in ways not before experienced.'

The congregation was visibly shaken when the collection swelled to three times its customary size the following week. It seemed everyone had sorted out their finances. It was later discovered that the family responsible for receiving most blessing at this service had given up their lucrative business and were now fully involved delivering bibles to people without the scriptures and in their own language.

The words spoken will benefit wherever God is directing it and we may never know that.

'Let the prophet speak. . .and let the other judge.' 1 Corinthians 14:29

This does not mean we are to critically look into what is said to see whether it is 'in the Spirit' or not or relevant to anyone. We are to weigh up what God has said and let it sink deep into our hearts. Two or three minutes quiet after a prophetic utterance or even longer, for this benefit, would seem to be a normal waiting time. The Spirit of God needs to be able to bring us into an awareness of what is significant for us, personally.

One day, the Lord Jesus baptised me in the Holy Spirit. I had a bad time living on the edge of my seat for three years after that, I was so full of joy. In the particular church to which I had committed myself, the worship was wonderful. Sooner or later, though, every few weeks in fact, one particular person would speak in an unknown tongue and the same dear lady would interpret this, using words in the form of a prophetic utterance.

It just sounded all wrong. It was always the same message, along the general lines of 'If you are good, bad things won't happen'. I had to deal with a certain critical attitude in my own heart before finally coming to the conclusion that this was definitely not the faltering steps of an infant which would one day mature. It was out of place and not from heaven. The congregation was too familiar with the same sounds. There was a lot to learn before anyone could go beyond the Pastor in such matters anyway and if ever! The Lord kindly told us that He would deal with it all and in the course of time He took the speaker to be with Himself. What I had heard seemed unreal. There was a harshness in the voice which was unacceptable and not only to me.

Heaven forbid that we should sit with our eyes closed, lapping up everything that is said for fear of hurting someone. I prayed fervently at that time that God would let me know, or allow a friend to tell me, my own blind spots.

It may be that we need to know more of the dread of the Presence of God in our meeting together, the holy awe of it. What is most alarming is that we may not hear what it is that God really does want to say or to answer us.

It is alarmingly possible, according to the Lord Jesus, for some to say, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name,' and He will have to say, 'I never knew you.' Matthew 7:22

A sense of His greatness, His holiness and awesomeness needs to be upon our meetings and our words. He has given gifts to men to the end that He will be exalted and the risen, ascended Christ will be glorified.

The work of the prophet is to build up the body of Christ. It is for the perfecting of the saints until we reach 'the measure and the stature of the fulness of Christ.' Ephesians 4:13

We are, by this method, among other ways, reaching maturity. We are to be concerned with the building of His church.

The word of God spoken prophetically is for the following reasons:

1. Edification or building up.
2. Exhortation or encouragement - taken from the word paraclete or coming alongside to help in time of need.
3. Comfort - this word can mean to calm or take away the disquiet and anxiety from a disturbed mind. It is like pouring oil on troubled waters.
4. Enlightenment. It is clear that if all prophesy and one comes in to the meeting where Christians are gathered, something happens. He hears that which reveals the secrets of his own heart. He is convicted of sin and immediately begins to worship God.

1 Corinthians 14:24 and 25

Prophecy is primarily intended for the believer, but there are occasions when the Holy Spirit uses it to speak to the unbeliever. It can wonderfully be used with other gifts and teamed, or incorporated into a word of knowledge. It is also closely connected to speaking in tongues. It

should have a very big part to play in church life. Shame it is that it is possible to ignore this gift or even, as the bible says, to quench it. It must never replace scripture, of course, and the daily discipline of reading the bible. This will provide us with instruction and warning necessary to maintain our abiding in our Lord. But we also need to be stimulated and refreshed by the use of this marvellous love gift.

To be true to our gift and faithful to God, we must diligently cultivate a life of communion with Him. There are many legitimate pursuits in life for us lovely females that would turn us aside and take up more time than they need.

Check your heart, for instance, to the possibility of compulsive buying. It does take a lot of our time, doesn't it? Or just window shopping. A spirit of covetousness or acquisitiveness may have gripped us of which we may be largely unaware. These things really do need quite harsh treatment, or even stopping altogether. Do you think you could? Try it! The life in the secret place with God must be sought after with such whole-heartedness that many of our own personal projects will be dispensed with or just left to wither away.

You will know, I am sure, that the first prophet mentioned in the Old Testament is often not thought of as a prophet at all. We remember Enoch because of the phrase 'he walked with God.' Yet his great privilege was to prophesy of the Lord coming again 'with ten thousands of His saints.' (Jude 14)

All the way through scripture men and women, like him had the closest communion with their God. Basically the Old and New Testament prophets were the same. Unless their ear was close to His mouth, it seems that they could not hear what was said. It will be true of us.

I once heard a preacher call Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, a Hazy Guy! He was closest to the greatest man on earth at the time, it seems, yet there is no mention of him in the closet, learning to listen to God. Instead, he was running after men for rewards. He could have been next in line to Elisha, but because of covetousness he went out from the presence of the prophet with leprosy clinging to him. There is no record that he came in again.

This is not an easy ministry. It does not rest lightly upon a woman who thinks she might just as well say something. It may be a very hard word given at great cost. We will be careful.

You notice that when the child of the Shunammite woman died, she could not talk of her soul's deep need at that moment to Gehazi. We don't, do we? We shy away from people we know who cannot help us. And where was he to pray for his lord when Elisha was sick? He had had plenty of experience and testing, but no meeting with God.

What we want is something from God that makes our own hearts burn first. Hearts that are on fire with a message that cannot be contained. There is a cost to us if we will go on. We will be searched and purified again and again. He wants, and will have, clean instruments, wholly dedicated.

So this is our commitment - we just lean back and let Him do it! All of it.

Our part is to be more in touch with God than with the latest sequence of our favourite soap.

Even understanding His ways more than you know what your pastor will say or do. Is that difficult?

We are more aware of what God says about a flammable situation than knowing what the papers say about it. More conscious of spiritual realities than the floor we kneel on.

Without prejudice;

Without preconceived ideas;

Without vivid imagination; (which can be demonic, did you know?)

Non-judgemental;

Motivated by love.

And these days very, very awake to prayer and waiting upon God by the power of His Spirit, around our Christian festival time. These are times when demon forces are especially active. Watch out at Easter, Christmas, Whitsun, Hallowe'en.

Let's see now! Have you a grasp of what you yourself in your quiet moments, want for yourself, this coming year?

1. Renew your motto for the year. Has God given you one yet?
2. What is your vision of all that needs to be accomplished through you in prayer and in other ways this year? In the next month? Before Easter?
3. Renew your commitment.
4. Renew your desire to grasp hold of God's word.
5. Sense His majesty - His mighty power over all the power of the enemy - the wonder of His Presence with you.
6. Review what you know to being faithful to your vision.

Now let's be practical. We cannot manufacture prophecy or stereotype it;

It is not thoughts from your own mind;

It is not teaching or preaching;

It is a divinely-inspired inspiration.

It may be that at times your mind is strangely devoid of any constructive or consecutive train of idea or thought. That is, until faith is exercised and the mouth is open to begin. And we know that the personality of the speaker is not set aside. It will all sound strange at times. We can only be as faithful as possible to the words or the vision of what we know we have seen or heard. I have known occasions when a few words, very few, were said and these were immediately or subsequently used as a basis for the preacher's message. This is not the preacher-man not knowing what to say! It is more like God encouraging him in his message and/or showing him that now is the time to begin.

Prophecy can never take the place of preaching. It is this way, by the foolishness of preaching, that men come to be saved. This pleases God, Paul tells us. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

Neither is there any point in prophesying along the same lines afterward. God has already spoken by the preaching of the word.

Actually, God is the faithful One, not us. We may speak, but He will keep to His Word and fulfil it without doubt, whether admonition, reproof, encouragement or whatever it is. If it is from Him He will do it. That is how we know it is a faithful word. It comes to pass, now or in the future. Whether I believe it or not, it all depends on Him, not me. Humble-making, isn't it?

How about taking Zephaniah's prophecy, as a start, for yourself, your church, the new now-generation, emerging from the shambles. Or as a vision for the 2020. Believe it. It is His prophetic word and will surely come to pass.

'Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel;
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem. For the Lord will
remove His hand of judgement, and disperse
the armies of your enemy. And the Lord
Himself the King of Israel, will live among you!
At last your troubles will be over -
you need fear no more...'Cheer up, don't
be afraid. For the Lord God has arrived to
live among you. He is a mighty Saviour. He
will give you victory. He will rejoice over
you in great gladness; He will love you and
not accuse you.'

Zephaniah 3:14-18

7. *She Thinks and Covers her Head*

'Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed. Rightly dividing the word of truth.' 2 Timothy 2:15

It is a sign of maturity. She thinks! She actually uses her mind. Yes, it does need to be said. Especially when thinking about prophecy. Everything in life has to line up with God's word, for one thing. This may sound too simple for you to even bother reading, but a grown or growing woman needs to be familiar with her own ideas; to construct them and to build on them. Today's thinking processes are constantly being blunted by advertising. We do need to take some of the thoughts of others, we cannot help doing that. But they must be given our own or a fresh approach.

All Christians - especially Christians - even when they do not aspire to prophetic utterances, should be thinking. And the deeper the better. We should have answers to our drifting, sometimes mindless, culture.

Our minds need to be organised as well as dedicated. We cannot expect our Father to do everything for us. Sometimes our minds are not made up about anything vital at all, for instance, euthanasia, abortion, the death penalty. Do you actually know how New Age theorists think?

It is quite in order to desire the joy and quiet satisfaction of knowing that God has given words for us to help and to encourage others, but we also need to motivate our intellects to consider persistently the whole implication of a life lived like Anna's life. Meditate for a while, for instance, on the disciplines necessary to receiving visionary news straight from heaven for the direct purpose of being given to others. Our peers or not, as the case may be.

Can our lives and our minds contain the weight of it? Where will it personally lead us?

What must be trimmed off our own lives or forfeited, if we do so?

Are we willing to be changed to learn anything? Or do we expect it to come floating down on a fluffy white cloud; gift-wrapped and ready to be dispensed to an eagerly awaiting public? It is hard work exercising our minds but God does expect it.

There is much to be discovered yet in God's creative forces around us. We can still ask him why, when, how.

It would be good to move about within our own environment, considering carefully the limits and boundaries God has given us. Who know? We may spend eternity continuing where Adam and Eve stopped, in the garden of Eden; discovering, cataloguing and analysing.

Mind-users are able to present facts in an understandable way to others. This is important. Mind-users who do not profess to a committed Christian life will leap on, leaving us trailing along on their wave length, if we do not use our heads in the way that God intended.

You must know people who do crossword puzzles every day. It is simply to occupy and use their minds. To make them sharp and keen and quick-thinking. This sort of activity often becomes obsessive but the end result is to become discerning, discriminating and intelligent.

The end result of a Christian's mind-exercises and thinking study is, and must be, service to others. I cannot imagine the Lord Jesus doing a crossword puzzle. It is not a soul-healing-friendly exercise but prayer, for instance, needs greater exercise of mind; more concentrated refinement and a greater degree of centralising all our faculties.

Take a theme and think it through. The following are some options while you are thinking what to think about!

A) What about some of the great moral problems of your generation? Try and understand what would be the mind of God to confused people about genetic engineering. And what do you think about by-passing the normal means of procreation? Supposing you could put two potatoes together and make one that far surpassed the growing power of one on its own?

B) What does God really think about space travel? Not what we think He ought to think! Have we any clues anywhere in scripture to go on? Are millions being spent on excesses in this realm, or not? There are many godly men and women working in this field. Would you go 'up there' if you were given a chance? Separate your thoughts from your fears!

C) How do you view a world monetary system? How would you react to having no money at all - just a number on one card? Where would that put the children on the rubbish mountain -

wherever it is by the time you read this. What does God really think about money? The bible is full of illustrations, and the Lord Jesus Christ uses it in his sermons and talks many time.

This was the way with Old Testament prophets. It was always up-to-date news they gave. It was relevant. It takes work to keep our minds from the deceptions possible by simply following thinkers of our world.

This is a habit of mind that needs to grow and flourish, being well-watered and is the basis of all good education as any teacher will tell you. You teach the child to think for themselves. To consider every possibility and every opinion and to come to a conclusion that is God orientated needs the mind of Christ. And that is exactly what we have been given as Christians. There is no excuse for lack of exercise

So stir up your pure mind and think!! Why? Well, we do have a tendency to follow men. Do not leave it to your pastor to guide all your thinking. Consider his thoughts, feed your spirit on them, worship God during and after the sermon; meditate on what is said and incorporate it all into your daily life. That is one of our priorities. There are many hours of study, prayer, writing and thought in the making of an anointed sermon. This moves and changes lives and should make a difference to the whole of life, individually and as a family congregation. The foolishness of preaching that causes life to flow, does not come from a foolish man. According to Proverbs, a fool is one who is conceited, proud and boastful. So we can safely absorb what God has given our pastor to say!

The same God has given us hearts, emotions and will with which to love Him wholly. This involves that vital part - our mind.

We are out to know God's mind before we communicate, so our intellects must be jostled and shoved and driven to grow and develop.

I am not arguing that we should be great intellects. It is not within the purpose of God to glorify the mind and its attainments. I do suggest, however, that with myself, if I am honest, I am always petering on the edge of least effort to gain a desired end. I know I am capable of slovenly mental snoozing!

How is your relationship between yourself and your church? Are you to be in submission to or independent of a local congregation or hierarchy?

Anna served God within the temple precincts. She had complete freedom to speak to anyone but would also keep the strict laws of the Lord as all the priests would. I don't really see her as a submissive little woman, just one who discreetly lived and agreeably submitted to temple order.

What about Deborah in Judges, Chapter 4. She was a thinker. No wonder people call their daughters after her. Large, beautiful and with a commanding presence, a charisma about her, she was completely fearless in all she said in a man's world. 'Up,' she said, as part of her prophecy, and her supreme commanding officer with one hundred chariots of iron and men to go with them, got up! But she worked with him. The land could not have had rest for forty years without him. They were confidently subject to one another and inspired one another. Deborah was also subject to her husband at the time.

Huldah also was quietly living with a spouse, tailoring for the palace household. With a sudden major alert within the nation causing an emergency by the realisation of sin and the finding of the book of the Law the men at the top knew to go to an almost unknown prophetess, although

well known to the leading court officials. She was known to be in touch with God. The high priest should really have been the man to help the king but he and his companions found themselves unable to cope with the situation. Her reputation as a woman walking closely with God was justified and she sent back a message which was so balanced with true righteousness and true mercy that it was recognised as having come from Him. 2 Kings 22 12-20

There is no mistaking where Miriam came as a prophetess in the three-in-one partnership with Moses and Aaron. She was a forceful leader among the women but did not operate on her own, although she spoke her mind and was a quick thinker.

Where you speak, in whatever the situation, the prophet is, in one sense, the church's possession. 'There is nothing left to show we are your people,' cries the psalmist in verse 9 of Psalm 74. 'We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet.'
'Christ gave some as prophets,' part of a block gift to build up his people.

None of this eliminates the possibility of speaking what you know is true, to people outside the four walls called a church, chapel, cathedral or house group, or inside, but speak after the thinking not before if possible.

Have you thought clearly enough of the following? In the New Testament, after an introduction from Joel stating clearly that the Holy Spirit would come upon all and not just a chosen few, the Holy Spirit came to all who would receive Him.

'Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed,' said Paul to certain disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:2) -(The Greek - Lambaro - to receive by taking.)

And, of course, the Holy Spirit comes with His gifts - first, with a new tongue which Jesus speaks of in Mark 16:17.

These signs shall follow those that believe - In My Name, 'Shall they speak with new tongues.'
We will, therefore, not be rude enough to disparage, reject or neglect something that edifies us.
Who does not need it?

In her ministry as an evangelist in Hong Kong among the Triad gangs and drug addicts, Jackie Pullinger describes how devastated she became at continual discouragement however much she lived as Christ among them and however much she spoke about the love of the Lord Jesus, no-one seemed to change. There came a day when much against her will she was advised to exercise her new tongue daily for 15 minutes. Her ministry was revolutionised. In her own words, miraculously many lives were convicted of sin and committed to the Saviour.

(Chasing the Dragon by Jackie Pullinger)

We need to be able to pray with inexpressible thoughts and words from deep within the soul by passing over hindering minds and intellects, speaking only to God. Edifying is a word the dictionary describes as morally inspiring or instructing - preparing us for publicly stating something from heaven.

To tell about Jesus, we need some help. Well, the Holy Spirit is No. 1 prime worker, take it from God if you cannot take it from anyone else. We agree with the scriptures when it says in Romans 8:26 'The spirit helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.'

She Thinks and She Covers Her Head

‘Every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, dishonours her head.’ 1 Corinthians 11:5

‘No one wears a hat unless they are elderly,’ my beloved spouse tells me! I am so thrilled he has seen me as young enough to go without one. No one does wear a hat in the church he and I attend together. But then no one prays or prophesies publicly either.

But the matter of wearing a head-covering in church when we women would pray or prophesy out loud needs to be thought about.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, we read of the authority that God has established among His people. It is this particular chapter I would like you to look at for a moment. His authority is in the context of the church and by the church. In this instance it is meant the local assembly of God’s people where we worship with an anointed leadership. That is it is not so much the general term given to the whole body of believing Christians world-wide. Verse 3 of this chapter states quite clearly the status of the authority:

1. Christ in God - who thought it not robbery to be made equal with God but submitted to His Father’s will. Philippians 2.
2. The head of the man is Christ - Christ is the head of the man and the man submits himself to Christ.
3. The head of the woman is man - in the church, God has placed authority in man.

Let us realise that this does not mean that every male in the church is in authority over every woman. Rather, that when God gives authority in the church, it will be given to a man, not to a woman, unless there is no man available.

We women are not built for that sort of responsibility. God has made man the head and this is over a woman in a church gathering. The kind of submission that the passage suggests is not subjugation or domination, or dominated-over, but more of a responsibility privilege role.

Incidentally the man mentioned is literally ‘the man,’ so no distinction is made between single men and husbands. Therefore, the whole is not just referring to the single woman or the married one particularly.

This may all trouble you a bit so let us pray that God will reveal all He wants you to know from His word and we will endeavour to be obedient even in these small matters.

If we do not cover our heads when we pray or prophesy and the simplest of scarves is all that is necessary, the passage teaches us that we are dishonouring our head. In other words, we dishonour the man who is the God-given authority in the church.

Her covering is not her hair, if it were, then the man would be under the same ruling.

So, the first reason that a woman should cover her head when praying or prophesying is, that if she does not do so, she is showing those in authority that she is rebellious to God.

The second reason has to do with the angels.

We know from the first book of Peter, that the angels desire to look into the ways of salvation. So we women have a message for them We are recognising God's order of authority in the church. We are, at the moment of speaking publicly, in a sense, leading the church. However, we are not, in any sense, seeking to usurp the authority God has placed in man. It must remind the angels to continue to submit to the authority of God.

We stand before a Holy God. We are not free to think as we please. Weigh this up and tarry before the Lord. See if He will reveal more to you on the matter. We have come this far so do not let it be complicated or become a burden to you. Put all the arguments quietly to yourself then just let it be a matter of simple but swift obedience.

8. *She Speaks*

‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ Authorised Version

‘The purpose of all prophecy and all I have shown you is to tell about Jesus.’
The Living Bible

Revelation 19:10

'I am going to come down, now, into the congregation, where you are sitting,' said our minister one Sunday, almost too casually! 'And ask some of you to let us all know what God has said to you in the past twenty-four hours.' Some of us slunk down in our seats a bit more and some eyes that had been half-closed were now wide open. Exclamation marks became visual in my mind. Hold on, I said to myself, you can't do that!" I imagined myself tiptoeing out with the Sunday School. However we all sat still. No one moved.

I cannot think for men. I am not one. In God's imaginative forethought, I am a woman. I like to think of myself as an inset woman, a fairly high-flyer, free but not too liberated if you know what I mean. I know that I love life. There is so much to do and hopefully, an on-into the century woman. Nevertheless, I try to sit still and listen when my pastor speaks.

He kindly led us on with his remarks without too much of the action we anticipated but making us think.

Later in the day my heart continued leaping with the thoughts and feelings stirred by the embryo reflections from the morning. Suppose he had said, or someone said, anyone; at any time;

'You there, the one bathed, perfumed, manicured, freshly clothed woman,
who almost ran to worship your God this morning, could you, now,
let us all know what the Holy Spirit has imparted
within you, that you could pass on for our benefit?'

Not, you note, share with us. That is for other occasions, more intimate gatherings, perhaps. It may or may not be good to share too much, but we do need that kind of meeting together.

No, what was implanted then and before and is being nurtured since, is for us to be ready to speak at any time a word of authority. A word that concentrates or illuminates all the loving, caring qualities of the Father's heart behind it and with the authentic ring of the Godhead.

The normal word used in the Old Testament for prophecy was one which meant 'an inspired utterance.' The prophet was an inspired man. This is a basic and simple explanation of the prophet. He mediates, as it were, between God and men until people are ready themselves to hear His voice; where they will not be afraid to wait to hear what He has to say for themselves. If *we* cannot hear His voice then the prophet must for God will be heard. Someone must endure the experience it takes to create the correct type of listening ear. The Holy Spirit of God may then be allowed to quicken His people. When the prophet speaks, or the prophetess, their spiritual life will be raised to heights otherwise impossible.

It is always on the heart of the Father to communicate to His people. We are all meant to live this close. This is where God started in Eden; a loving communion face to face. 'Walking with Him,' as Genesis puts it with nothing between. Surely He is still wanting this unobstructed and intimate attachment. Sometimes it is a fact that we can get so taken up with the person who is speaking that we are not really hearing the thing that God is saying to us, particularly. We become enamoured with the messenger and not the message. Although we have ears we are not always hearing. Prophecy has a way of making us listen.

'In this short, uncertain life!' Martin Lloyd-Jones, that great preacher in London, Westminster, in the fifties and sixties, could be counted upon to end his prayer after a powerful sermon with those words.

We never missed a Sunday to listen. It was a matter of life and death to us in our student days and I wrote a number of hymns around the precious words that flowed from his anointed lips. But those particular words have been a criteria for life. They were prophetic for me and never forgotten. They put an immediate and lasting seal on the perspective of days on earth. As he spoke those words (heard at least fifty times a year!) I made my vows before God. Life may be short and uncertain but it would be an expression of depths. I would go for things that were truly meaningful. It may be only getting ready for eternity but I would be as diligent as possible in running after God. Well, nearing middle life is a time to renew those vows. Never let it be a time to put up the feet and turn on the television and the fire with one twitch of a finger, mentally or physically, and never allow anything or anyone to stop the climbing, reaching, searching after God. Let me now be just as persevering and active to see and hear what He wants to impart in the school of prophecy, just as we were when young and in a crowd and always moving, seeing and being seen.

Those few words made a difference to one life's starting point. What an explosion there must be waiting to be expressed. If only all Christ's words were on tape. Why were there no microphones in those days? If Nicolaus in Sweden had been able to fax Dominic in New Guinea to 'catch the next flight, there is a Man here who could tell you all you ever did and incidentally explain how to get rid of the contentious feelings,' wouldn't it be marvellous? Or He could have allocated time on the telecommunications hot help-line! There would be every possibility that Jesus could have had his words noted on the big screen - in person.

Our words may or may not have His impact. He knows what is deep in the heart of His hearers, hidden by respectability and reserve. We still need His gracious words that bring life. Even the Pharisees' hit-men could not lay a hand upon Him. Their defence was, 'Never man spake like this Man.' (John 7:46) He was so swiftly obedient to every smallest prompting of the Holy Spirit. We will need to say quite often; 'Lord, please just continue with me.'

Isaiah 55:11 puts it for me right where I need it

'So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth; it shall
not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which
I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.'

O God, I thank you.

I bow my head and worship at times when I think of my godly mother. At ninety years of age she continues to walk calmly through valleys of experience. Carried out of the mission field on a bullock cart apparently dying of septicaemia; through two world wars and spending the first years of her married life in the Australian outback; this amazingly fragile body has moved house ten times in almost as many years and loved every minute of it. Her stimulating accounts of life in boarding school before the first World War, eating dry bread and dripping and drinking mugs of cocoa, make some of our ordinary day to day meals sound positively unhealthily rich! She tells me how glad she is to be given the extra years now, to enable here to know her bible better. Helping a large family to stand on their own took a good slice of time and energy. This amazing woman has never failed to direct the word of God, heard in her own communion with Him, across the one hundred miles that separate my family from hers. There have been many prophetic words that have come to pass. I have no doubt my four lively and sometimes rebellious brothers and sisters have had the same treatment.

My mother's latest phone conversation caught me just before I slept and it was 4.30 am when I woke to write it down. I just could not wait to get to grips with it. It came in the middle of a monstrous attack of the enemy to break my marriage. She had no idea of this. It was this -

'Just get on now with what God wants you to do, forget about everything except to do His will, whatever that is. The Lord Himself on occasions passed through the midst of those around Him, enemies, but who happened to be His own people, and went on His way. Now you do the same.'

Words like this can change the whole tenure of life, even its direction. It means God is actually thinking of you, sees what you are going through and is working out His purposes in it. Although it was only spoken one to one - how else? - God's heart to mine, it is relayed at the exact moment when he desired to counteract the damage of the enemy. It changed all the anxiety and unproductive reasoning to peacefully handing over everything to Him.

So it is written down in my Preppie Gal exercise book under 'Answers, Personal' and also carefully printed with the date in the margin of my bible near Luke Chapter 4. This is for remembering and using again and again. It has brought action too. I am up, drinking hot tea, dipping the biscuits and getting on with the thing that God wants from me at this time. No more lying in bed, kicking my beloved husband (mentally!) and fretting over not being able to praise God. There is a lot to do as it is pancake day and there is the ironing for a family of four and another day of excitement, seeing my daughter through her new engagement. But just now, rising to be with Him, alone, to catch a fresh vision with much to learn is more than I need. What a productive word!

When the prophetess speaks, it is like introducing a government health warning. 'Ignore it at your peril.' According to the bible, without the prophets, the church loses her vision and fails. If the church fails, there is not much hope for the rest of the world.

Well, here we are, ready to speak at last. No, sorry, not quite. I'm afraid I have got news for you. You will have to go on being silent! That is until you speak! Do not let us have too high an opinion of ourselves, just yet. The reason for more silence yet awhile is that it is not absolutely necessary that you *must* speak. 1 Corinthians 14:32 says 'The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.' It means your spirit is subject to you. It is not outside your control. You will find that in a glorious, worshipful time of free-flowing praise, someone will have a word or a message from the Lord. (Don't confuse this with an interpretation of tongues, which goes heavenward.) Then, after the prophecy, which has greatly blessed everyone, or someone in particular, there should be an awesome silence while the words spoken are judged, and rightly so. Then in future services or meetings you may find that the group or attenders will stop still in their worship *every* time this particular point is reached or this same person speaks. It may be you! Beware!! Especially if you happen to be a known leader or worse, actually sitting on the platform. Everyone becomes enamoured with your words. You begin to be enamoured with your own words. After that it quickly becomes easier and easier to produce a flow of words at almost every meeting, in any quiet space. I am not arguing to hinder liberty. What is now happening, however, is that a weightier word from God's heart, which is relevant and timely but has not a chance to come from the lips of one who might be quick to hear but slower to speak.

'A wholesome tongue is a tree of life.' Proverbs 15:4

'Gentle words cause life and health.' Proverbs 15:4 TLB

‘In their mouth was found no guile.’ Revelation 14:5

‘No falsehood can be charged against them.’ Revelation 14:5 TLB

‘Keep the door of my lips.’ Psalm 141:3

‘Help me, Lord, to keep my mouth shut and my lips sealed.’ Psalm 141:3 TLB

‘Jesus answered her not a word.’ Matthew 15:23

‘The tongue can no man tame.’ James 3:8 God can, and according to James, if the tongue is controlled, the whole body can be conquered and subdued.

The old-time prophets spoke almost conversationally sometimes and they quite at liberty to write it all down. In fact, Habakkuk was told to do just that. His words were for another generation and the vision he had been given was to wait its time. God would make it speak by bringing it to pass. In that way there would be no doubt that it could be verified as coming from heaven.

Isaiah wrote reams. However did they manage it all, without computers, word processors, audio cassettes, etcetera, etcetera. Men and women were used. God has given men for our life. That is what He will always do. It will be men and women who will stand upon their watchtowers to see what God will say. Habakkuk 2:1

So write it all down if you think your tongue needs training. It will all mean just as much in ten years time if it came from heaven in the first place. Nothing limits God.

A major point about all this is that we women need to be broken in this matter of the tongue. It runs away with us and the bible teaches that sarcasm hurts; belittling destroys and retaliation is totally unnecessary. ‘Thinking before speaking’ takes on a whole new meaning in the life of the prophetess and has got to become a habit. It may take years!

Right; begin! Speak, as from God. The church is on your doorstep.

1. Your niece needs to know that her new home can be used by God to be a blessing to many. You could tell her - ‘Let the front door be always open - provisions always at hand - God knows you have an open heart and He will use your home for refreshment to all who come.’ She needs confirmation that her own longings which cannot be put into words, will be fulfilled. You have started to think prophetically - good.

2. You know, without being told, that your son, or daughter, or friend’s daughter, must not go much further into life with a challenge about spiritual things. It should have been done earlier, so you confess his/her wasted years as though they were your own and also acknowledge your own sins of omission.

3. Your next door neighbour, so near and yet looks so distant and preoccupied. You pray for a while and the Lord tells you ‘I will direct her steps.’ There is nothing for you to say just now. It will wait for the next coffee session and if there isn’t one, make one quickly.

Attention-seeking, self-motivated, accolade-accepting as we are, God has a further and vital reason for prophecy. Quite simply He says what is going to happen in advance and then does it. No one can say, then, I made it happen by my intellect, resources, personality or by whatever other gods we trust in. He does this, cause and effect, for His own sake, for the honour of His Holy Name.

Our words do not need to be lengthy and padded. It may be that the shorter they are in sentence form and content, the more impact they have.

Here are some short phrases that will come to pass.

‘Be born again’	Dr. Billy Graham
‘Every day with Jesus’	Selwyn Hughes
‘Jesus, a word that needs to be spoken’	Mother Teresa
‘He that is mighty has done to me great things’	Mary, the Mother of Jesus
‘God is greater than any problem you have’	Oral Roberts
‘As He has led, so He will lead’	Douglas McBain
‘Study to shew thyself approved unto God’	Timothy
‘Give Me back My church’	John Wimber
‘A light to lighten the Gentiles’	Simeon
‘Tell my people I love them’	Clifford Hill
‘Let My people go’	Jehovah and Martin Luther King
‘I am come, that they might have life’	Jesus of Nazareth

A Prayer

Lord of my life, I face this challenge of speaking for You, afresh.
If I have allowed any preconceived ideas to hinder the flow
of your Sprit, please forgive me.

I reach out to You with faith. I surrender myself and my will to you, now.
I know I shall receive from Your endless resources the power to fulfil
your purposes for a needy world.

I thank You that the words I speak will be Your words and not mine and,
therefore, You will be responsible for the results.

Only let my reaction to Your call be like Isaiah; that I might have clean lips;
and like Hannah who bore a true prophet and in all her circumstances knew
how to worship You alone.

9. Her Hindrances

‘You shall receive power,
after that the Holy Ghost is come
upon you: and you shall be
witnesses unto Me.’
Acts 1:8

1. Incompetence

‘Shut up, get out of here, you are not wanted.’ Amos 7:12 TLB

Amos could describe the feeling of unsuitable for the position, exactly. Something like this was said to him by those who could, actually, enforce their words- the rulers of the land.

However, Amos knew his own worth - he was nothing. He was just a shepherd, looking after the herds. He also gathered sycamore fruit. Was that an important job?

Ravenhill says in his book about revival, ‘You have to be totally rejected before you can be totally accepted.’ This man, Amos, seems to be rejected and not at all accepted. But he had his eyes on the Lord. He did have reasons to feel inferior but then so do we. This did not stop him and it ought not to stop us. Unlike many other prophets, Amos was neither a student nor a priest but a working man who eked out an inadequate livelihood. It was God who took him away from this work and sent him to the unfriendly people of the Northern Kingdom. It was thought that he only prophesied to earn a living but he was a true servant of the living God who did not allow himself to be hired by men. He was criticised by the professionals who work only to earn a living but his prophesying was the result of a divine urge. He lacked the culture they thought necessary and he could have had no sense of prestige that academic study can bring.

Some very hard words were given him to say and whether they heard or not made no difference to Amos -

‘Thy wife shall be a harlot and your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword.’ 7:17

‘Can two walk together (you and the Lord) except they be agreed?’ 3:3

‘I have given you cleanness of teeth’ (famine) yet you have not returned to me.’ 4:6

So Amos spoke and did not flee as he had been told. His worth was in His God.

2. Worthlessness

Moses felt very insignificant indeed by the time he had spent forty years away from the superior Egyptian upbringing he was given.

It was painfully obvious to him that he could not deal with the multitudinous problems confronting him. The influence of the past could not possibly determine anything for him in the present. All his knowledge and experience was useless, even in his own sight.

We must learn thoroughly all that God had to show Moses.

Neither pride in education nor disabilities and inadequacies disqualify us. Both superiority and inferiority must be disannulled by a steady diet of God-consciousness. The grace of humility will perhaps take their place. We may learn to live in the light of the fact that God will do what He says, and not according to how we feel.

3. Inferiority

I've never been able to speak, I just cannot get things across' a friend of mine confided one day. Nevertheless she does! What she suffers from is an overdose of inferiority. It make you suffer! 'You must go to everyone I send you to', said God to Jeremiah in Chapter 1 verse 7. God went on to highlight a main cause of the problem of Jeremiah's. His nervousness, and also my friend's fear, had a great deal to do with looking at people's faces. What will they think of me? How we impress others is not important. 'They are My words, and I will put them in your mouth.' (1:9)

Nothing must be allowed to nullify the impact of all He wants to say. The prophet does not want to confess that he or she is more self-conscious than God-conscious. Inferiority, says Yonghi Cho, is one of the hindrances to being filled with the Holy Spirit. And as the head of one of the largest churches in the world, he should know!

4. Scepticism

'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets,' said Moses, and more importantly 'that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them all,' Numbers 11:29. Why did the young men, in this account, want the two, still in the camp, stopped? The same passage clearly states that the Spirit rested upon them also. Apparently, those left in the camp were away from the great leader and 'the' prophet, Moses, and so they were suspect. This may have been one reason.

Some people are definitely offended by prophecy that does not come from the platform. It may also be unacceptable if it is not a soft, kind word of encouragement that is instantly palatable.

It was very unacceptable to me to hear, one particular evening, that strength and grace would come after suffering and hardship. That was for me and I knew it! I had equal doubts when great glory and exultation and resurrection joy was the promise to a friend of mine in the same meeting. It was unfair discrimination but the speaker did not know either of us. The Lord Himself had to rebuke me.

Two years later He took the friend to be with Himself after a short illness and the hardship came also, almost at the same time, into my own life.

1 Thessalonians, 5:20 says 'Do not scoff at prophecy.'

We may feel we do not want to be involved in anything spiritual that is too deep. We just want to be spectators, coasting along. We may feel that personal revelation in the form of prophetic utterances are too controversial, too imaginative. However, if God takes control of us, than we

will hear and also we will speak. There will certainly be times when we will say, 'that cannot possibly be what God wants me to say,' or 'I shall be openly mocked.'

Well, so be it.

'God is not a man that He should lie,' said Balaam, when God met him. My lesson was unmistakable; the prophet must say what has been given him to say, however unpalatable and to say it to whom he is told. The one who spoke at that meeting was faithful. I have never forgotten that faithfulness. We need to wait before we judge and not criticise but verify what is said. After all, we can ask Him for confirmation or a further sign that this is definitely from Him.

5. Lack of Knowledge

We may have read the bible too long if we are still taking out that which is for our own use and not, as we should be, also involved in study.

- A. We want to know all that is said that we can use to help others.
 - B. We will want to note all that is prophetic and has been fulfilled already.
 - C. We could mark all that is taken up with words spoken to individuals and then mark all that is said to nations.
 - D. Check how much has come to pass and how much is still to come of all that you feel God is saying to you, personally.
 - E. God has done and will, speak to the nations about their attitude to His people, the Jews and their nation. They have a very special part to play in world affairs. He is intent on getting them back to Israel, for one thing, but there is much more. Our larger vision of world affairs must always hold this thought within it. But He loves all nations and colours of people. What is our attitude toward these prophecies? How do our ideas about Israel fit in with them?
 - F. Imagine you are Esther. What would be your own heart's cry for your generation.
 - G. List the comfort and encouragement God gives. You will never get to the end of that one.
- These are just a few suggestions for study.

6. Troubles

What can you do when people all around you are hurting? Well, it is comforting to know that you can only do what God tells you to do. That is really comforting. If not, apart from loving them, you would soon be exhausted. You would be overwhelmed just to think about it all. So what you did would not be a help at all, except for your own ego-building. It is pathetically possible, in the suffering cities we dwell in, to be so hooked onto problems and other people's nightmares we are caught in a trap and silenced. Help where you can, physical, practical help, care where you see the need, but, as Jesus says, 'See that you be not troubled.' Matthew 24:6. There will always be wars and rumours of wars.

In the last six months as I write this, there has been bombings and killings all over the world; at least three large jet planes, full of humankind, crashed, killing all on board; an unannounced

tornado bringing their homes crashing down on the midnight-sleeping families; sixteen missionaries, as well as a six-week old baby, murdered; and (horrors!) in the town next door - is that worse? A man with a gun, slaughtering thirteen innocent bystanders. What is it all for? How can we manage to even think it through? We can't. Sometimes we must just go out into the garden and do a bit of digging! Or make a cup of tea!

The wars and rumours of wars Jesus spoke of are not as bad as the catastrophe down the road.

Time was, when Anna was in the temple, muggings, thieving, assaults, and murders were all around her. Crucifixions were commonplace. Men were in subjection to violent dealings and corruption. She did not pray and worship in a plastic bubble, with an allergy to human affairs. Her practice was to look for a prophetic word to hold the hearts of the righteous quiet and still. I am absolutely certain her life would be full of doing what she found to help others according to the needs.

I love the word they use to describe those who help in sheltered accommodation for the elderly - Care-Assistants. She would be all that, plus the best in mothering or nursing or whatever came to hand. But all the time her heart was set on looking for the One Prophetic Living Word, who was to come. And most of her time was concerned with worship and prayer. Those of us who feel that life has had our best years ought to take heart. Don't wallow in past failures or regrets. Anna did not and so she was ready.

It is never too late to do something beautiful for God - Mother Teresa's exquisitely charming phrase, whose words and works testify to a heart wholly toward the Lord Jesus in later years.

7. Barrenness

Many of you will know, like Anna, how to fast and pray. The Lord brought many into maturity quickly around the fifties and sixties when He poured out His Spirit in a fresh awakening. My friends and I were among them and the habit of fasting and intercession became a part of our new life. However, I was told by people I trusted, that there might possibly be no need to spend long hours in waiting upon God with such intensity any longer.

The fact was, they said, that God was now working and prayer was being answered. It was a time for doing and seeing miracles. A time in other words, for action. All very heady and exciting stuff. But the fact that I had largely stopped much of the prayer I was used to brought a certain coldness and barrenness in my relationship to the Lord. I was becoming weighed down with condemnation and depression. A mature friend waited in silence while I poured out my anxieties and then answered simply saying 'sometimes God freezes things for a while.' Those few words brought instant relief. God did not condemn me. Things were just being held in abeyance while I learnt a lesson. It brought me back to my senses and defrosted my relationships.

8. Adversity

Adversity has a great way of making us panic. When things go wrong, we immediately start asking questions. Am I on the right track? Is my guidance right? Have I done something wrong? Have I made my bed and now I have to lie on it?! That hurts. There may be some truth in it.

Our Furguson clan heraldry states quite unapologetically,

‘Peace through Strife’ or ‘Sweetness through Adversity.’

I do not like it much but did not know it when my husband and I first met. Nevertheless, I would still have married him! All my light-headed thought would have been concentrated on the peace and sweetness bit. Now I am learning to go quietly on through the strife and adversity times. Sometimes we have a habit of pretending all the bad spells are not there but we must have them and they must be real, so that we learn to be tranquil and steady whatever happens.

But adverse circumstances, must never - ever - cause us to be blind, or like David ‘so troubled that we cannot speak,’ or the other way round, ‘They provoked his (Moses) spirit so that he spoke unadvisedly.’ This must not happen (Psalm 106:33)

What is important, is to know what God says about these times of trial and what He says in them. If He can impart vision to me right there in the middle of the chaos and darkness, then He will be able to reveal the Lord Jesus through me to others.

9. Warfare

All right! You get wounded; it is a battle. The enemy is a sly and dangerous foe. We must get quicker in taking up the weapons; praise, worship, using the word of God more boldly and so on. We can retire and be healed but be like Uriah. He was not going to be side-tracked, even by King David. He was not going to weaken the advance by personal consideration. He went again to the front as soon as he could.

We may not like all this but in the nicest possible God-way, we are being used by Him. We are being given for other people’s lives, for their advancement in the kingdom of God.

We will get to know a deeper trust in our heavenly Father with warfare experience and will be able to say with absolute assurance, ‘Thus and thus’, says the Lord.

When warfare gets a little beyond strength try the following -

A quarter to half an hour speaking in the tongue you have been given for prayer and, incidentally, it does not have to be at top speed.

Try one hour’s intercession (excluding personal needs)

One meal missed as fasting unto God.

Ten minutes worship with thanksgiving and praise.

The war is unrelenting and we are not casual snipers nor is there any easier option.

When you come up against a wall with your back against it, just remember, He is there too and will show you clearly what to do.

There is no such thing as a prophetess, budding or not, who cannot be touched with this world’s and the other world’s problems and difficulties. She does not sit in a high tower surrounded by the Lord’s people who are waiting for the dewdrop pearls of wisdom from her lips. She must fight the battles before she can stand for others. She will be, at times, so much in the thick of it she cannot even be seen let alone prominently, while God is putting fire in her soul and iron in her backbone.

You may feel you are much on your own but nevertheless you are actually being formed into an effective army. The good part is that our God Himself, will never let you give up or leave you. Faith is growing.

Consider Anna again who is becoming more and more familiar. She was well into the Senior Citizenship category. How do you think she managed? Were her fasts voluntary or was there not much left after the priests had taken their lawful due? Was she comfortable? Enough warm rug skins to wrap herself in at night? Was there a quiet place or room she could call her own? Even somewhere to sit by a fire. Was there anyone there to love her and to care for her needs? Was there any kind of National Health Service? She had a task and like everything else that is of God, it was done on time. Coming in 'in that instance,' she spoke. I am so proud of her and of my female heritage!

10. Prejudice

We all have it!

How loving the Lord is!

How 'be kind to me, I am'

How kind the Lord is!

How callously indifferent I am.

I find I am on my side, but how He has cared for my sister-in-law's needs when I say 'Oh, that is just my sister-in-law again.

I say 'Lord that man has been against me.' The Lord says, 'I have not been against him.'

I say, 'Is my friend really delivered from all her hatred and unforgiveness?

He says, 'she is all pure and lovely to Me.

'I'm biased enough to ask You, Lord if you will particularly bless my Mother.'

He says, 'I can give you mothers by the dozen if your heart is large enough!'

Something I have always had to discipline myself with ever since I began to drive a car is a tendency to overweight. Now I know I find it difficult to pray for anyone's healing when I also know that they are more kilos per square metre than they should be. I must get to grips with that oversized prejudice. God can heal anyone, anywhere, no matter what they look like. There are deep hurts that contribute to our fat cells. God does not seem to be influenced by overweight that largely goes with affluence or anything else. It is my compassion that needs to be enlarged not my dimensions or my bigotry.

God is no respecter of persons. If He was, He might not have chosen me. He has no bias, partiality or unfairness. We are all equally dear to Him, all equally died-for.

11. My Wealth

(Or lack of it!) The only point here is that 'no woman can serve two masters, either she will hate the one, and love the other; or else she will hold to the one, and despise the other.'

Matthew 6:24

There is not a verse that only operates if there is any abundance. If your hand is firmly in your pocket you cannot serve God. That is a fact. More than fact, it is a life force. On the other hand, you can be actively taken up with developing business and making money the whole of your life and yet be serving God.

If you have lots of it, God is the One who supplies all your needs.

If you have none of it, God is still the One who supplies all your needs.

Sooner or later, though, if you are in earnest, He will show you that there is just no security in material possessions; then you will be free. One day we will be free from greed, acquisitiveness, coveting, possessing. These are particularly but not entirely some of our womanly troubles.

12. Lack of Surrender

The Holy Spirit works in wonderfully illuminating ways. We easily become hung up on our own preconceived ideas. Just as we need the fresh dew of His anointing each day from the word of God, we also need to surrender ourselves, our lives, our hearts and our emotions and everything that we are and have, anew to Him. We need His power to be a continuing, constant reality. Self-erected barriers need to crumble, or actually be pulled down sometimes with force.

Ask Him to reveal any such hindrances and He will. Let us have no shadow in our lives or any hidden motives. He will show any areas of thought that need adjusting. Love may need to be cultivated more. It is quite important that there is a chapter on love right in the middle of talks about the gifts and operation of the Holy Spirit, especially how to operate the gift of prophecy, by love.

We could know everything, all that is going to happen in the future, move mountains and give up our lives but if we have no love we would be only making a noise. Well, now we can speak! We don't have to wait until we are perfect!!

10. The False Prophet

‘...smoothed tongued prophets ...,’
‘I stand against these prophets who
get their messages from each other ...’
Jeremiah 23:31 TLB

It is possible to be false and not faithful or true. There were prophets in Samaria who had a nice easy message. But ‘they walk in lies,’ said God, through Jeremiah. ‘Hearken not unto their words, they speak a vision of their own ear, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.’ V.17.

‘They speak peace and not evil,’ ‘I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.’ What a word to take to heart; it could have been different, ‘If they had stood in My counsel.’ ‘I am not a God afar off.’ Jeremiah 23:14-23.

God shows clearly that there is an answer to that which is false, deceits, lies, perverseness and even lightness. The answer is for the prophet to speak the truth or the true word of God.

His word is like fire and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.’ Jeremiah 23:29

Our words may even be used by God to become ‘His battle axe and weapons of war.’ 51:20

This is what God wants. Words that will break in pieces attitudes and actions that rear up against God and His cause. We are at liberty to ask counsel from others and from more mature brothers and sisters in the church. We need to be realistic where prophecy is concerned and line it all up with the scriptures and there are certain clear guidelines laid down about that which is false.

1. Be alert to the possibility.

‘Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.’ Matthew 7:15

‘Take heed that no man deceive you. . . . many shall come in My Name . . . and shall deceive many.’ Matthew 24:4,5

2. False prophets attract men to themselves and seek positions of authority -

‘Of your own selves shall men arise; speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.’ Acts 20:30

Paul says they entice men to themselves and it is possible they may be of the church or have begun with the Lord.

‘Those they lead, they captivate and control.’

‘They creep into houses and lead captive silly women!’ (My exclamation marks)

2 Timothy 3:6 TLB

3. Their teaching does not ring true - Peter tells us in his second epistle, Chapter 2

‘There shall be false teachers among you, even denying the Lord.....’

They themselves may not know they are false - Matthew 7:21 ‘Not every one that says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven.’ Therefore, there will be a destructive work in their teaching which will divide and undermine the scriptures.

4. There will be overemphasis on certain doctrines - even prophecy or visions - ‘a show of wisdom’ Paul calls it in Colossians 2.

5. Presumption or doing or saying their own thing; or speaking their own words.

‘Despising governmentpresumptuous.....self-willed.’ 2 Peter 2:10

6. Their fruits are suspect, thus providing an infallible test.

‘You shall know them by their fruits.’

Matthew 7:16

The Holy Spirit within us will enable us to repent of former sins and we will bring forth good fruit, love, joy and peace, etc. There can be no false freedom. Integrity in our freedom that we have gained in Christ must be particularly guarded especially in matters relating to finance and sexual sin.

We had a bad time once with someone who was a false prophet. Those who thought so were in the minority! Our little group of praying women on the estate were being born again, filled with the Holy Spirit and going on with the Lord with difficult lives but ministering to others. Some were divorced sadly before they met God and one or two had serious health problems. We were all neighbours living where we could meet regularly for worship and prayer and bible reading plus a lively time of fellowship and a cup of coffee. Ladies came in after the children had gone to school with singles who were not working. It was always on a certain morning so that we all knew.

God was working miracles in hearts and bodies. Mary was delivered from agoraphobia; Joyce’s husband was soundly converted ; Josie was baptised and Grace’s hearing and moody blues were dealt with. Gradually young mothers, husbands and children joined the local churches. It was good and we were refreshed and helping each other.

We wondered why a young man in his early thirties and appearing not to be married and not working want to join a group of noisy women mostly with that married look about them. We soon discovered why.

He sought out one of the divorcees among us and began to buy groceries for her. What a cunning temptation it was to accept them by an attractive thirty year old trying to manage on social security and with three young children to care for. She was a leading light in the small community but also lonely. It soon became obvious that he sought leadership among us and that the man's attention had the guise of spiritual and material help. This was nothing less than the subtleness of Satan sending in his emissary to take away our liberty in the Lord.

It was discovered later that the man was already married and living with another woman.

There was complete unreasonableness in his desire to be in authority over the women and as such it was not seen for some time that some of us were standing on ground that belonged to the enemy.

Conviction without authority from God produces intolerance to all other viewpoints. This is a mark of the false prophet and was soon realised in this young man. He was not humbly seeking the truth, he already knew it!

We must never have our attention fixed on people. We do need leaders, however, but preferably not the ones who own the homes in which we meet. We are all vulnerable in certain areas and need each other. We need more men and women with 'eyes that see' as Douglas McBain calls the gift of discerning of spirits in his book of that title.

We are quick to note when the pastor makes mistakes but are not too quick to understand our own. Matthew 24:24 says 'Even the elect shall be deceived' (if it were possible)

But there *shall* arise false prophets so we better believe it and be on our guard. We are the guardians also of our daughters.

We also ought to ask God to teach us about money. It affects us all and is a very relevant factor when considering, as we must do, the probability of false prophets coming into *your* well-organised, invincible group, church or assembly. Our Father may just want to entrust more of it into our keeping for ourselves or for distribution or provision for others. He has unlimited resources. We need not believe it when people tell us that money is scarce. It is not. There is plenty of it around although regrettably it sometimes takes God years of careful training to teach us that money talks - to Him and for Him and to others.

There is a description of Paul's that shows a character that is untrue, misleading, deceptive and treacherous.

'For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, unthankful, unholy....truce-breakers, false accusers...traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.' 2 Timothy 3: 2-7

There can be no argument or even exchange of views with such. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the Living God.

God may show us, occasionally, one or two, who can no longer even be prayed for. We need to remember that Michael the Archangel, would not bring any railing accusation even against the

devil, but said, 'the Lord rebuke you.' Jude verse 9. The Lord can deal with it and can also keep us safe into the bargain.

Our answer is to build ourselves up in our holy faith by praying in the Holy Ghost. Jude 20

The Antidote to the False Prophet

There is no compromising with sound biblical doctrine. It is essential both for belief and for practice.

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' 2 Timothy 3:16

Not even signs or wonders or miracles, let alone dreams can replace it. These are no proof of a true prophet.

'Fear Him and keep His commandments, obey His voice, serve Him, cleave unto Him.' Deuteronomy 13:4

This is a priority.

We do not try to change the false prophet but

'receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed!' 'From such turn away, says Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:5 These are strong words.

Moses was very meek we are told, and the Son of God Himself was like a lamb in His character and was *the* Lamb. A lamb submits and a wolf does not. The one who is false does not submit to authority.

If we labour after the prosperity of the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives and walk with Him, we will be going far to counteract the possibility of error in ourselves. -- 'Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.' Galatians 5:22,23

God, Himself will provide us with a certain amount of antidote medicine and here are two exacting principles we can count on.

A. We will be without honour in our own community, home, area or church group for a good part of life. Maybe always. Jesus said it and meant it for the prophet,

'He is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house.' Matthew 13;57

B. We will be persecuted, misunderstood, sometimes openly criticised and unaccepted.

'Blessed are you...when men persecute you for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.'

The false prophet is sought after, pampered, fawned over. We run after them and we want to please them. That is why money can be extracted at times very easily from the unwary, by them. The false prophet arrives and expects to be paid for his services.

Not so for us. We can rejoice, have a cup of tea and go home to bed to sleep easily!

11. *The True Prophet - 1*

The true Prophecy 1. Reveals Jesus

2. Draws Worship

3. Imparts Vision

Micah is a typical example of all the disciplines of the prophetic life paying off. He spoke and the men of his day listened. Their ears tingled. You will know, of course, that the Minor Prophets were not minor in what they said. They were called that way because of the length of the books. Their words were major. Micah burns a hole in the heart.

He describes the world we live in now almost exactly and yet the words were written during the lifetime of King Ahaz and the reigns of King Jotham and King Hezekiah.

These were formidable rulers with undoubted powers but men who had to face equally mighty prophets like Isaiah and Micah.

We, too, face alarming and dreadful adversaries, but listen, says our Micah, 'God has come down and is even now on the mountain tops.' He is not far from us. He spoke through Micah to all the earth and all the people in it.

The man Micah and his message are worth a deeper study to note the marks and facets of his character. He is a true Prophet, held in miniature and not elaborated but there, just the same. His word from God is spoken to Judah and Israel in particular, but he highlights the sins that dominate our society now.

1. Idol worship - not only committing the sin but giving a clear lead to others to do so.
(1:13, 5:13, 14)
2. Violence with oppression - plotting wickedness and also performing it because they have the power.
(2:1)
3. Fraud with threatening - peace for those who pay but threats to those who do not.
(2:1,2; 3:5,11)
4. Stealing with lies and deceit - thieving, purloining, embezzling both from those who trust them and from the children, taking away their God-given rights.
(2:8; 6:10; to12)
5. False prophets - not only allowed to continue but 'fawning upon the Lord!' TLB
It is almost the last straw. (3:5,11)
6. Rebellion - witchcraft and fortune-telling common practice (5:12) - knowing that God has forbidden it throughout their history.
Micah is a humble man. Not overly humble like Uriah Heep in one of Charles Dickens' books, who says I'm ever so 'umble,' rubbing his hands. Micah does not bulldoze his way through too authoritatively, but he does make sure, however, that what God says is going to be absolutely clear. A kind of quiet assurance rings through the book and causes the knowledge that what Isaiah says in Isaiah 45:19 is right - God does not 'whisper obscurities in some dark corner,' so that no-one knows exactly what He means. If it is false we are certain that God Himself will cause something else to happen than the things the prophet has said.
There were proverbs that even the children could not easily forget. 'Follow the example of Ahab and I will make *you* an example!' Or 'They say nothing can stop them but God says, 'Nothing can stop Me.'

The more seriously-minded who want to get to know Micah, his character and his message, might try reading the book throughout, non-stop about ten times. It is a wonderful exercise and will move you boldly forward in understanding what a stronghold our God is. There is a loveliness in Micah's companionship with God. There is a simplicity in it, although he is looking at horizons as well as near troubles.

Micah is like the Lord Jesus Christ in that he had no fear of men but knew what was in their hearts. He had the compassion needed for the message but the discernment to recognise the spiritual nature of the problems; the awareness of human need as well as vision.

Reading the book and absorbing the message you begin to relate to the man himself. He had a great love for God and His holiness and you will sense his loneliness and single-mindedness. The 'now' and 'the impending future,' as well as the far distant days to come, all appear equally weighty and real in his eyes.

He seems vulnerable to the abuse of his hearers while living on their doorstep but he speaks as God with no sentiment or fear.

If there was one verse to memorise it would be Chapter 6 and verse 8.

'He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?'

It sums up the attitude to be taken in the face of opposition of man against himself and against God. The only way to live is quietly. To be still and at rest and listening - for the sake of intercession.

Do we have Micah's problems? Do we face those who 'do evil with both hands, earnestly?' (7:3) and yet still long to be able to speak words that God gives us, for the sake of those who are close to us but also for a needy nation?

Then we must turn aside and intercede as Micah did.

There is no chapter I have call 'She Suffers,' because I know that all through the experience of the previous chapters there will be trials and various afflictions and sometimes walking right through unashamed suffering but with a steady heart. It will come in all degrees, all depths and will be suited to each one of us in a variety of ways.

Sometimes it will be continuous for a while and very occasionally it will be more than we think we can bear. If there is no trial there will be very little prophecy and not much of a prophet, apart from very little knowledge of what our Lord went through. 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: but rejoice...' (1 Peter 4:12,13)

Not only will the spirit of glory and of God rest upon us, but judgement, Peter goes on to explain, must begin at the house of God. So we commit the keeping of our souls to Him.

The suffering may only be of the amount in which we are willing to be aligned with those for whom you pray. Micah's heart was desolate for his people. 'Woe is me.' He cries. It may not ever be physical pain we are asked to go through, but it may often be more like Micah's burdened alignment with others.

The true prophet intercedes until he becomes one with the people and takes their place before God. '*I sit in darkness - I bear the indignation - I have sinned,*' Micah says in chapter 7:8,9

But at the last - 'He will have compassion upon *us*; He will subdue *our* iniquities.'

There is no better way for God to administer His healing balm to the prophet and to the nation than through prayer and intercession.

Micah was justified in his prophetic power by his accurate prophecy concerning the ploughing up of Zion (3:12) This unlikely prediction was literally fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans

were so convinced that treasure had been secreted in Jerusalem that they actually tore up the ground and used a ploughshare on the foundations of the temple.

And the whole Christian world knows that it was Micah who foretold deliverance and peace by the birth of the Lord.

‘But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Juda, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting...

And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the lord, in the majesty of the Name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.’ Micah 5: 2-4

Although the rebellious prince Nimrod, the one who built Babylon, will come and all his hosts with him, yet Micah’s word will stand true, the Lord Jesus Christ will rule *in the midst* of rebellion and He will be our peace.

The True Prophet - 11

In his book describing Bible Character, Harry Foster talks of the prophet Isaiah in glowing terms. ‘Uzziah,’ he says, ‘went to his place of worship in a wrong spirit.’ As a result he became a menace to others and had to be shut away. His relative, Isaiah, went to the same place of worship in a right spirit. He was so met by God that rich blessings flowed out from his life that continue to this day. The first effect of the vision he had was to unnerve him but he found that God had the answer to all his needs and was ready to use him. It was a transforming vision. Out of lips that had been defiled until God cleansed them came a flow of gracious prophecies, describing Christ in passages of ineffable beauty.

In his burden of the valley of vision in Isaiah 22, the prophet speaks of the troughs and depths that the Lord shows him. There will be some for us so tread softly in them they may go deeper yet, even when the way up the mountain can be easily seen. Inspiration comes pumping up out of the wells found down there. The good land the Lord would bring you into is ‘a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys,’ according to Deuteronomy 8:7. It is almost worth Anna, even in her old age, climbing down voluntarily to find them.

Isaiah uses the term ‘valley’ symbolically. It describes his feelings when he saw what he saw in the lower part of Jerusalem.

How low does the prophetess have to go before she touches bottom! And then lower still to look up to the bottom. It was a burden of a valley cries Isaiah. He was a very heavy hearted man crying out to his God and God was causing him to see things that he could only describe from this non-vantage point. You can get swamped in valleys; bowled over by flood water; heavy

winds sweep through with groans that seem to come from another world. Your frantic calls for help can echo back to you from desolate mountain edges - or even the sitting room wall. The goats look up in astonishment but nobody answers.

Isaiah's was a vision with a capital 'V'. This was not to be a light-hearted meandering through a so-called prophetic utterance. God was to be heard calling to men by the throb of a broken-hearted man who had seen the broken heart of God. It was painful

If you find yourself down there, surrounded only by scrub land, nothing profitable or good for food, have you the faith to pitch your tent and stay awhile, listening, waiting, hoping?

In Isaiah's valley was the Lord of Hosts Himself. He was there, but it seemed that only this man was ready to hear. The Lord had called to mourning and sackcloth, but the people were concerned with eating and drinking. The kind of heady pleasure seeking that we are all capable of was in process.

There was a certain time after a wedding when the guests gathered back at the church after the bride and groom had left. There was to be a time of worship and thanksgiving. All of the church there had been friends for years, and the groom's mother had provided extra food and the minister conducting the ceremony was one we all greatly enjoyed listening to. What was more, God had filled us all with His Holy Spirit in a fresh and vital way.

The town about us was growing fast. It had changed from a small railway centre to a well-known, euro-industrial place to live and the church seemed to be keeping up.

As we worshipped this sunny July day dressed in our finery without a care God suddenly spoke and called us to weeping for His church. There came a general stillness and a carefulness as the meeting progressed. We did weep, but it was frankly a shock to hear such a message. We were used to singing happily and a general happy-making preaching. Here we were being asked to mourn and at such a time. That wedding stayed in our hearts for some years. There was an obvious sense of His Presence and a unity of purpose in our immediate response. The joy of the wedding fellowship was still there but God had spoken and everything was different. The light-hearted, careless gaiety had gone. His church was in trouble and He needed our attention and intercession. We were given no indication of either the problems or the solution. That was not our business but we did weep and we did pray.

To come up from our valley times there will be a new place of encouragement and enlightenment. There will be fresh strength and a new gentleness within us and a deeper tenderness. We come from the depths changed and inspired, sometimes limping but definitely different.

Isaiah devoted his life to preparing God's people for the recovery that lay beyond their immediate distresses. In doing so he gave us some of the most wonderful chapters of the whole Bible. He also showed himself to be a man of rare virtues, patience and long-suffering.

The True Prophet - 111

An important facet of understanding God's work of disciplining the prophet is a training in the realisation of cause and effect. Our consciences, unfortunately, have been dulled to demand 'What I like or what I don't like.' Sometimes it is even par with prevailing society changes. We are fickle as a season of soccer but there is not one of the true Biblical prophets who were afraid to pronounce judgement, God's judgement as an answer to blatant opposition of His laws. We are not so black and white.

Punishment was often held back, mercifully awaiting repentance and very often warnings were given but the authority for official evaluation was always present then, plus the power to execute the answer. It should be still present.

God would say something like 'These people have sinned again and again,' as He said to Amos. No haste about His anger nor any prevarication but the words are repeated over every city and the whole nation. His meaning was never obscure and the sin not left to the imagination or the particular punishment undecided. In fact, God told Amos 'I never do anything without revealing the plan to my servant the prophet.' In relation to the nation's insincerity and lack of true justice, their religious observance was not real.

Their own justice was tempered by who did what and what position they held publicly, and worse, how much wealth there was to gain or lose. But on the whole they expected punishment.

'When will you punish these who persecute me' Psalm 13. Not 'if' but 'how much longer must I wait?' cried David. These old time prophets and nations knew their God. If not, they had to learn He was to be trusted, not out for gain and not subject to tabloid speculation. Psychoanalysts, mostly, do not start with a pre-knowledge of God's love and chastisement on the one hand and an acceptance of guilt on the other.

If we call ourselves His, then it is just a duty to hearken to Him and eventually the listening ear leads to a quickened conscience, exercised by use. But it does take a great deal of courage to be on God's side altogether. This is especially so for the budding prophet.

Amos was a humble man who listened and then spoke.

It is an amazing thing that through one meek follower, God can show His thoughts, His will and His power although it cannot be gabbled off in between cups of tea and a biscuit and waiting for the next meeting place.

False modesty may make us feel we are altogether a miserable instrument to talk/prophesy about judgement but Amos learned to let no such feeling bother him. If the prophet will not hear, God will make His words weighty. He also has other means of opening ears.

He has sent messengers

Micah 6:1-4

He has given us a written law

Deuteronomy 31:24-29

He has given judges

Judges 2:16-20

He has given prophets

Jeremiah 7:23-28

His own Son came.

Matthew 21:37 and Acts 7:52

Our answer to all this must be 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak.' Psalm 85:8

It may be that ‘the Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem.’ Amos 1:2 if we will not.

The consequences of open and receptive ears are wonderful - our enemies will be subdued; His enemies will be subdued; we will find ourselves fully satisfied. Deuteronomy 11:22-25 backs up all that Amos says to those in authority that not only departed from the set rules that govern human society but showed an appalling lack of true justice.

‘If you shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways and to cleave unto Him, then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you and you shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: . . . , there shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that you shall tread upon - as he has said.’ We can still choose the prophet’s message and it is still valid today.

‘Hate what is evil, love what is right, and see that justice prevails in the Courts,’ says Amos in chapter 5 and God will always wait with patience for righteousness to prevail.

Amos trembled at these messages - ‘I hate your religious festivals,’ for instance, and he prayed until he heard that God would change His mind. It was purposed that the country would be destroyed utterly and overtaken by foreign armies and it is not difficult to see it happening today but the prophet had heard and would pray.

The disasters did not take place. This is the way God has chosen to change the course of events and a country’s history and to save the people. This does not alter the number of deaths, that stays the same! What it does do, however, is to allow time for a generation to repent but the plumb-line is always there.

Amos records in his book as God having the last word. It is a compassionate and loving word and is totally like Him. A day is coming, he says, when God will restore, repair and rebuild. There is a time to be done with judgement. He will have mercy and His people will see overwhelming prosperity and fruitfulness.

The messages proclaimed by the prophets of old were like lamps shining in dark places and so can ours be. Practice in discernment or true judging does not necessarily mean we wait until we are showing grey hairs as it is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. Words like Amos gave the people are an act of faith and not emotion but the discernment he had of all that was really wrong gave his words a depth of meaning.

‘So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.’

Isaiah 55:11

12. *She Worships*

The wonderful thing about the gifts that are given to the church by the Holy Spirit is that they bring us into touch with God Himself; the God upon a Throne and the throne in heaven. Little

unknown me - speaking and hearing from Him and communing with a Holy God. It is awe-inspiring. It should make us want to sing and shout and jump up and down. It is exciting. So sweet to be in secret and holy communion, we will just want to stay there and ask for nothing more.

While she is waiting, the godly woman, totally at her Lord's disposal is learning to worship. We need never think of ourselves as out of our depths or be anxious if nothing is actually happening in our world at present. Nothing that happens in this secret place with him is without significance. He may show us some deep waters we must learn to swim in. We cannot afford to remain immature in worship, now. He is busy enlarging our capacity to praise Him. He earnestly desires to broaden our horizons where intercession, praise and thanksgiving is concerned and to get us beyond our own borders.

We need to prove that our Lord will be a wall of fire around us in times of trouble and trial - to go on to find Him absolutely faithful in all His promises, however faintly they may sound in our ear at the time.

Have you found His guidance to be absolutely sure as you look at the paths behind you? I would like to suggest that you write it all down. Have an exercise book marked 'faith' at one end and 'prayer' at the other. Put down all that is found in the scriptures on these two subjects. See what God says to *you* about them. It will be found to be great comfort in times of stress. He is full of answers and surprises and this will all cause great thanksgiving and lead on to confession and praise and then be the means of drawing into worship.

But more than all this, worship is the most important part of life and God will encourage it especially if we aspire to prophecy.

He will help to build a personal and very private altar where He is worshipped by you alone. Sometimes when we can do nothing else and no other kind of building is taking place spiritually, we can build this altar to offer the sacrifice of praise.

This is what they did in Ezra and Nehemiah's day when there was nothing else to be seen at all of God's house. Long before the foundation was laid (Ezra 3:6). We will offer our burnt offering until it is completed and we will offer it in the place that the Lord our God chooses and that is, until it is turned to ashes. Psalm 20

Our gifts cannot be consecrated to God but we can give ourselves to Him or give up the right to ourselves or even the right to use the gifts He has given us.

To discipline ourselves in the place of devotion gives Him our undivided adoration. However long it takes of our day and our precious time, it will be given willingly. It is of the spirit so none of it can be itemised as it is just a time when He has our heart-whole attention.

Sometimes, amazingly, nothing can be expressed. We gaze, totally enamoured with our Saviour. Worship of Him will sweeten all we do; but beyond that, it will satisfy *His* heart.

You might consider writing your own hymns! Why not? Wander through other hymn writers' works at times to inspire your own heart and to encourage yourself. It is quite difficult to find any hymns that are wholly concentrated objectively on the Lord Jesus Christ. Most have some subjective point to make. Look through the book you use in your own devotions and see if you

can find any. Let me know!! I would like to use them. The following hymn was written by a Mrs. Barnes of Highworth who has now gone to be with the Lord (2)

We would see Jesus
See only Jesus
Gaze on His lovely face
See only Him.
Shew us Thy beauty, Lord
Thy grace and purity
We would see no-one else
Jesus, but Thee.

Father, we come to Thee
Only through Jesus
His blood our only plea
Made nigh through Him.
Draw us yet closer, Lord
O, wondrous mystery
That we are lost to all
Jesus, but Thee.

Sweet fragrance of our love
Rise unto Jesus
Filling all heaven above
Praise unto Him
Draw back the veil, O Lord
Shew us Thy glory -
We would that others know
We have seen Thee.

Or, this one from the Baptist Church Hymnal -

I hunger and I thirst - Jesus my manna be
Ye living waters burst - Out of the Rock for me.
Thou bruised and broken Bread - My lifelong wants supply
As living souls are fed - O feed me or I die.
Thou true life-giving Vine - Let me Thy sweetness prove
Renew my life with Thine - Refresh my soul with love.
For still the desert lies - My fainting soul before
O living waters rise - within me evermore.

Or this one (Anon) 'His attributes all-glorious, No spot in One so fair
Such cause for Holy wonder, that we His fulness share.

Imperial and princely, revealing God's own plan.

Majestic Mediator - The perfect son of Man.'

God sees worship as an imperative. To the prophet it is his life blood, his reason for anything and everything. So where is the prophet's chamber, the hideaway, the retreat, the secret place? Moses, for instance, was told, 'There is a place by Me.' Exodus 33:21

There must, of necessity, arise an increasing loneliness for him in our hearts. Not a spirit of loneliness confused with something morbid and associated with homesickness, fears or a sense of rejection. This needs to be dealt with severely sometimes by deliverance. This kind of loneliness for Him is an ever-increasing desire for God and just to be with Him. Not to hear from Him or to receive help for someone else's need but just to be near, with Him alone, because you love Him so much.

'I cannot breathe enough of Thee,' cries W. Spencer-Walton in his lovely hymn (3) His are some of the richest and most beautiful lines introduced into our songs of worship and will express our own longing for Him.

The first commandment is harder than we think. To love God with the whole 'heart, mind, soul and strength' becomes, not a binding law, but a promise that He can help us fulfil.

'Come ye apart,' quotes Matthew when Jesus calls to his disciples. There was no going on for them without constant, regular communion with the Source of all rest.

Worship is not something ethereal or too heavenly to be of everyday, gutter use in the city-centre needs. This is factual; re-enforcing; making-the-man-over and life-giving. Doctors cannot do it for us; the psychiatrist cannot because it is God's own springtime life-force.

The mainstream needs of others, therefore, must never take its place. It is not fair to them or to ourselves. The needs of others have an unrelenting way of trying to put a stop to it. The worship is upwards, not horizontal.

The secret place of the stairs in the Song of Solomon (2:14) has a lovely ring of climbing up higher. There is some hidden chamber at the top where we find the One we seek. It is a secret place that only you and He know of. We grow there, we blossom and there is no discouragement there. Actually, we can be caught away in adoration and worship in the centre of the ordinary life we lead. Not just the over-the-kitchen-sink life, we ought to have found Him there, anyway - but while we are listening to the most horrifying experiences, or helping people out of dunghills. We can be quite still inside and in touch with God. Elijah knew he stood before God all the time. (1 Kings 17). That must have been very good to know when telling an angry king that he would not hear rain on his sun-drenched land for so many years. He was constantly in the centre of national catastrophes but he really did need that quiet brook as well as his inner understanding that God was ever present. He had his own room set aside for his personal use. Elisha badly needed the prophet's chamber that was provided for him. Like him, there may be a candle, a table to write or work on, a bed to lie down on or kneel by; and silence; His Presence invited in. We may need some helps. A book of Ter Steegen's hymns, a bible, but He will be there and He will reveal Himself how He will. We are there for 'Jesus' sake only'. (John 12:9).

Mother Teresa used to rise at 4.30 every morning just to get time in her busiest of lives, to be with her Lord. She knew no other way to gain the strength for all she did. Her work stretched into continents and millions of lives have been touched and saved because of her dedication.

He is the Lily of the Valleys - the joy and desire of the heart and He is the Pearl of great price. Good and very good though other voices may be there are times when all other voices must cease and he knows we have this need. Never let it be said that we do not find God everywhere. We would be totally wrong if we thought that. God is omnipresent. However, it is for our sakes as well as for His that we need a definite place. It is so absolutely necessary to get away and to be with Him.

A Prayer - 'I cannot explain it adequately, in emotional, psychological or even spiritual terms, dear Lord, but I must be with Thee, my Beloved, even if it is just a space to kneel. I die if I do not have it. This is where deep can call to deep. All my springs are in Thee, Lord and all my fresh springs. Whether or not I ever mature into being used as a prophetess or to prophesy at all, or in any other way, or, if, which is more likely, I am so used but do not ever know it, yet I must have You, Lord. Hear my prayer O Lord, my God.'

'The Blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; Who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.' 1 Timothy 6:16,17

13.

The Prophet's Prayer

By Dr. A. W. Tozer

O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and was afraid. Thou has called me to an awesome task in a grave and perilous hour.

Thou art about to shake all nations, and the earth also heaven, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

O Lord, our Lord, You have stooped to honour me to be Your servant. No man takes this honour of himself save he that is called of God as was Aaron. You have ordained me Your messenger to them that are stubborn of heart and hard of hearing. They have rejected You, the Master and it is not to be expected they will receive me the servant. My God, I shall not waste time deploring my weakness, nor my unfitness for the work. The responsibility is not mine but Thine. You have said, 'I knew you, I ordained you, I sanctified you.' You have also said, 'You shall go to whosoever I send you and whatever I tell you, you shall speak.' Who am I to argue with Thee, or to call into question Your sovereign choice? The decision is not mine, but Yours. So be it, Lord, Your will, not mine be done.

Well, do I know, Thou God of the prophets and apostles, that so long as I honour You, You will honour me. Help me therefore, to take the solemn vow to honour You in all my future life and labours, whether by gain or by loss, by life or by death - and then to keep that vow unbroken while I live.

It is time, O God, for You to work, for the enemy has entered into Your pastures, and the sheep are torn and scattered and false shepherds abound who deny the danger and laugh at the perils which surround Your flock. The sheep are deceived by these hirelings and follow them with touching loyalty while the wolf closes in to kill and destroy. I beseech You, give me sharp eyes to detect the presence of the enemy. Give me vision to see and courage to report what I see faithfully. Make my voice so like Yours that even the sick sheep will recognise it and follow You.

Lord Jesus, I come to You for spiritual preparation. Lay Your hand upon me, anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should become a religious scribe and thus lose my prophetic calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the face of the modern clergy. The curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity, or the amount of its yearly offering.

Help me to remember I am a prophet, not a promoter. Not a religious manager but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambition and deliver me from the itch for publicity. Save me from bondage to things. Let me not waste my day pottering

about the house. Lay Your terror upon me, O God, and drive me to the place where I may wrestle with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world.

Deliver me from overeating, and late sleeping. Teach me self-discipline that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I accept hard work and small reward in this life. I ask for no easy place. I shall try to be blind to the little ways that make life easier. If others seek the smoother path, I shall try to take the harder way without judging them too harshly. I shall accept opposition and try to take it quietly when it comes. Or, if, as it sometimes falls out to Your servants, I should have grateful gifts thrust upon me by Your kindly people, stand by me then, and save me from the blight that often follows. Teach me to use whatever I receive in such a manner that it will not injure my soul and diminish my spiritual power.

And if, in Your permissive providence, honours should come to me from Your church, let me not forget in that hour, that I am unworthy of the least of Your mercies. That, if men knew me as intimately as I know myself, they would recall their honours, and bestow them on others more worthy to receive them.

And now, O Lord of Heaven and Earth, I consecrate my remaining days to You. Let them be many or few, as You will. Let me stand before the great or minister to the poor; that choice is not mine and I would not influence it if I could. I am Your servant to do Your will and that will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame and I choose it above all things in earth or in heaven.

I have chosen You and honour Your high and holy calling. Let me never forget that I am a man of dust and ashes. A man with all the passions and faults that plague the race of men. I pray Thee, Father, Lord Redeemer, save me from myself, all the injuries I may do to myself while I try to be a blessing to others. Hold me with the power of Your Holy Spirit and I will go in Your strength and tell of Your righteousness, Yours only. I will spread abroad the message of redeeming love while my mortal powers endure.

Then, dear Lord, when I am old and weary and too tired to go on, have a place ready for me in heaven and make me to be numbered with Your saints in glory everlasting. Amen.

Copyright - B.M. Furguson - June 2005