



PRAYING WITH YOUR EYES OPEN

A practical model for
prayer ministry

JONATHAN IVES



**'FOR WHERE TWO OR THREE
GATHER IN MY NAME,
THERE AM I WITH THEM.'**

Matthew 18:20



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Jonathan Ives

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Praying With Your Eyes Open website: <http://jonathanivesbooks.com>

What people are saying

"Praying with your eyes open" is biblically based, practical, incredibly user-friendly and written in a warm and accessible style. Jonathan's vision is to equip ordinary believers to move in the power of the Holy Spirit. He does this brilliantly because he writes as someone who has been trying to 'do the stuff' in community for years. I would commend this handbook to you."

MIKE PILAVACHI - Director of Soul Survivor

"I wish there was a book like this around when I started praying for people to be healed! This book brings clarity and practical wisdom to the subject of how to pray for one another. Anyone who reads will have a solid foundation on which to build. The building comes when you go and "do the stuff" that these pages speak of. I highly recommend you read it...and more highly recommend that you go and do it."

Dr. PETER DOWNES - National Director Vineyard churches Australia

"Jonathan writes this book as a journey, moving people from the unknown towards knowing how to minister with the Holy Spirit when praying for people. So this is not just theory. This comes from experience, thought, practice and commitment. I highly recommend taking your people through it."

MATT GELDING - Director Soul Survivor NSW/ACT

"This book is a fantastic resource. If you are passionate about prayer ministry in the local church, this is a must read. If we want to see our churches full of life and vibrance, I believe that prayer ministry is key to seeing this happen. Jonathan has unpacked the practical and spiritual aspect of prayer that will help you and encourage you in your daily prayer life and in praying for others."

BEN CANTELON - Worship Leader at Worship Central & HTB

Dedicated to Mike Pilavachi

Your leadership, teaching and friendship have significantly impacted my life, probably more than you know. Thank you for helping me follow Jesus more closely and for teaching me the value of prayer and ministry in the power of the Spirit.



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Foreword

When we think of prayer, we tend to think of saying our prayers as individuals. Or prayers which are said as part of our church gatherings. We may picture an individual or group expressing a list of concerns to God, heads bowed and eyes closed. Or we may picture a gathering of Christians saying a form of set words or being led in more spontaneous prayer, again with heads bowed and eyes closed. Nothing at all wrong with that sort of prayer.

But it is not the sort of prayer that Jonathan is speaking about in this rather different book on prayer. This is prayer for others while those others are present. This is prayer with eyes open. This is prayer not according to a set formula but prayer very much prompted by the Spirit of God. It is what many of us term “prayer ministry”.

It is a matter of wonder to me that so many churches don’t engage in this sort of prayer. If we place a high value on the power of the preached word, we assume the Spirit is working through that word to comfort or convict the hearers of it. So why not “strike while the iron is hot” and offer prayer for those who have been affected by that message? If we place a high value on encountering God through the many aspects of our corporate worship, we assume this God is present to bless and transform. So why not make the most of that reality by ministering that presence of God to people through prayer?

Jonathan’s book is soundly based in Scripture, informed by personal experience, and offers practical help in doing prayer ministry. I hope this book will encourage church members to see this ministry as very normal rather than exceptional, very natural rather than “weird”. Prayer ministry is not to be something confined to certain church sub cultures. It is for the wider church.

I trust this book finds wide readership in this wider church.

Rev. DAVID REAY - Author of HOPE 1032 LifeWords

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INTRODUCTION

Most of us don't need to read another book on prayer, we just need to start doing it more. In the western world today we are constantly saturated with information. The everyday Christian has access to an unprecedented amount of literature on any number of topics discussing the Christian life. Despite this, I feel we often miss the point. From what I've observed in many churches, both around Australia and internationally, I am unfortunately forced to agree with the sentiments of Francis Chan in his short book, *Forgotten God*.

“The benchmark of success in church services has become more about attendance than the movement of the Holy Spirit... There is a big gap between what we read in scripture about the Holy Spirit and how most believers and churches operate today.”¹

The reason I say 'unfortunately' is because, put simply, I believe this disconnect is not the intended normality for followers of Christ. Like many others, I lament the way that many of us seem to operate entirely in our own strength, rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to actively lead what we do and how we do it, including how we facilitate our times of community. If I were to give a single reason for the purpose of this resource it could perhaps be summarised by that sentiment. There is always a need for a greater understanding of, and cooperation with, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, both in our individual journey with Jesus and when we gather together in community. Exactly what I mean by that statement will be unpacked in the short chapters that follow. The purpose of

this book is not to simply add information to your already inundated mind. My prayer is that the words you read will stir something within your heart and provide you with some practical ways to begin pursuing greater depths of the Spirit's vibrancy in both your own life and the life of your church community, beginning with creating space for prayer ministry.

Prayer ministry is a practical means by which people can meet intimately with the living God through prayer. It's also a means by which we can facilitate ministering the love of Jesus to others; a place where we can support other members of the Body of Christ, bear one another's burdens in love and function in the gifts of the Spirit in order to bring encouragement to one another. Ultimately, however, prayer ministry is about intentionally creating space for the Holy Spirit to bring transformation in people's lives.

The reality is that it's just not enough to be 'open' to having the Holy Spirit lead (and interrupt) both our lives and our church communities. We need to be intentional in providing space and time for Him to work, as well as active in seeking and following His direction. As in all areas of growth, what is required is vision, intention and means.² For example it's not enough for me to be 'open' to getting healthier, or 'open' to the concept of increasing my fitness. Once I have a vision for that goal, an intended change in lifestyle is required, followed through with both healthier meal choices and making space for exercise.

In the same way, if we want the Holy Spirit to be more actively at work in our lives and our communities we need to be active and willing to persevere in our vision of partnering with Him. He can't remain an adjunct to our activity. There needs to be a sense of following Him in all that we do, that is, we need to be praying with our *'eyes open'*. That's when we begin to really see people's lives changed, including our own. We must give Him more freedom to move, which includes waiting on Him and creating space for Him to lead us. We must eagerly desire the spiritual gifts so that the church can be encouraged. The valuable contribution the gifts bring to community life will be lost unless the leadership of the church intentionally learns how to encourage these gifts within the body, developing them together with the fruit of the Spirit. Such an adventure may mean taking risks, but risk-taking is always incredibly exciting and the rewards are very much worth it. The aim of this resource is to help you begin that adventure by putting theology into practice and by learning to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike in times past there is now no shortage of adequate and exciting material discussing 'charismatic' theology and the role of the spiritual gifts in the everyday life of a believer. The validity and purpose of gifts such as healing have been extensively discussed, such were the far reaching effects of the charismatic renewal which climaxed in the 1980s and early 90s.³ A short list of some recommended reading material has been provided in the appendix. Much of this, at least theologically, is acceptable in many congregations. In many cases the disconnect, or 'big gap' that Chan speaks of, is therefore not so much one of theology as it is of *applying* that theology and allowing it to impact how we operate. It might not necessarily be theological insight that we lack, but theological integrity. The continued need today is to practically facilitate an *integration* of this theology into everyday practice. This is a resource primarily designed to help you do just that.

By providing practical 'how to' models for better facilitating ministry of the Holy Spirit, this resource aims to train and equip you to not only begin integrating theology into practice, but also to teach others to do the same. Although targeted towards pastors and church leaders, this resource is by no means limited to those in leadership. Rather it's a resource for anyone seeking to grow a greater understanding of prayer ministry and how the Holy Spirit operates in the life of a believer and within a community. It's a resource for those who are desiring to further partner with God in bringing transformation to their everyday lives both individually and as members of Christ's body, particularly through nurturing greater intimacy with God in prayer.

Where are we going?

In the pages that follow I hope to provide you with a starting point, a practical, tried and tested, 'hit the ground running' methodology to help you create more space for the Spirit to work in your life and church community and to equip you to begin stepping out in prayer ministry. Discussion will begin with a look at what is meant by the term the 'Kingdom of God' and we shall explore how prayer ministry provides a means for cooperating with God in seeing His Kingdom come on earth. We will progress to look at the person of the Holy Spirit and His role in the life of a believer before considering a very practical model for facilitating prayer ministry. Discussion will then turn to the gifts of the Spirit and the role they play in community life, particularly the gifts of healing, prophecy

and tongues. Emphasis will be placed on how these can be personally welcomed and grown in a believer's life, and how they can be practically incorporated in conjunction with prayer ministry into the community structure.

There are many models out there for facilitating cooperation with the Holy Spirit in a prayer ministry context. The models discussed here are simply that; models. Built upon the models provided predominantly by John Wimber and the Vineyard movement, they are not meant to constrict you but to *release* you! I have chosen to include these models in this book because of their utter reliance on the Holy Spirit's leading and, therefore, their transferable simplicity. They are a great starting point to begin stepping out in prayer ministry because they are simple to catch, easy to replicate and they can be used anywhere from a local Sunday morning church service to a youth group, small group, prayer triplet, or even a schoolyard or workplace. They place a high value on allowing everyone to be included in cooperating with God in the works of the Kingdom (Luke 10:1-2; 10:9). Doing the work of the Kingdom is not just for the select few. As children of God and as members of the Body, all believers have been empowered to contribute to seeing the Kingdom come. This includes ministering the hope, mercy and love of Jesus by doing the works of Jesus as well as functioning in the gifts of the Spirit to edify the church. I love the term 'Everyone gets to play' coined by John Wimber in regards to doing the works of the Kingdom.⁴ This light hearted statement summarises the concept so well.

One final note

Although this book predominantly covers some practical points to enable you to start facilitating prayer ministry in your local context, I urge you to focus on Jesus rather than methodologies. Turn your gaze towards the One who gives life and has captured your heart. Ministry should never be about formula. This absolutely applies to prayer ministry. Jesus is alive and ministers in as many different ways as there are people! Kingdom work, therefore, always stems directly from our relationship with Christ. The work of His Spirit within and through us is directly connected to the lordship of Christ in our lives. Seek a deeper relationship with Him first and foremost, because of who He is, and you will find yourself humbly desiring to minister His love and mercy to others.



Chapter 1

A NEW VISION OF THE KINGDOM Everyone Gets to Play

My wife, Jen, and I sat on either side of the couple on our couch. We had spent a few months talking with them about our knowledge of Jesus, our faith flowing from this, and ultimately life lived in the Kingdom of God. We laid hands on their shoulders and asked the Spirit to move. It wasn't dramatic. Our prayers were a little awkward and there was plenty of silence. We are not very practised at this kind of thing. We weren't even sure exactly what we were asking for, but particularly Jen was convicted that this was the best thing to do at that moment.

Jen and I were given the same word at the same time. When I say 'given', I mean a clear and specific idea entered our minds as we were praying. It turned out to be a word filled with meaning and purpose for our friends. Amidst the awkwardness and silence was a moment of change. This, I believe, is what happens when we consciously choose to live life in the Kingdom of God, when we create space for the Spirit of God to move us towards a life of discipleship to Jesus.

Graeme Anderson - Senior Pastor Northside Baptist

My journey in learning to pray for people is rather normal. I quite like it that way. After all, prayer should be 'normal' for disciples of Jesus. The first 9 years of my life I tagged along with my parents to a Pentecostal church in Sydney. It was probably in these early formative years that I developed an expectation that God could be met and experienced in a very personal and sometimes tangible way, although I knew little of what that meant. When I was 9 years old my family moved house and we started going to a local Anglican church which, although having a very different culture from what I had previously seen modeled, had an openness to the Holy Spirit and to His ministry that I came to love and deeply respect over the next 8 years of my life.

At the age of 12 I attended a small conference with my parents, organised primarily by my local Anglican church, in which Mike Pilavachi, an Anglican pastor and Director of Soul Survivor UK, brought over a small team from Watford, England. It seemed like a fairly normal church service to me, just longer. First there was singing - more songs than I was used to - followed by a rather long talk. The speaker (Mike) then, in a very normal and relaxed manner, invited us to stand before he asked the Holy Spirit to, "Come and minister". We waited... and waited... for what seemed like *ages!* "There is no need to hype the Holy Spirit up," he said, "He comes down. Just continue to wait." I didn't exactly know what we were waiting for but there was a profound stillness in the room. As I looked around I noticed some people were beginning to gently shake, some were quietly singing praise under their breath and others were beginning to softly weep. Right next to me, my little brother was starting to tear up. He looked at me and said, "I don't exactly know why I'm crying." I thought it slightly odd but knowing he wasn't the type to make a fuss I knew it must be God doing something in him.

After some time Mike invited those who sensed that the Holy Spirit was, "resting on them," to proceed to the front so that people could pray with them. A number went forward and my brother was among them. Mike then asked if some people might be willing to come forward and pray with those who had responded. At this point a family friend tapped me on the shoulder and encouraged me to join him in praying for people. He was on the prayer team at church and in a stunned response, I agreed. I got to the front and Mike coached us gently in what to do while other members of his team walked around and helped us pray with people. Apparently all I really had to do was lay a hand on someone's shoulder and say something quietly like, "Come Holy Spirit, we bless what you're already doing." I was amazed at the simplicity. Nobody seemed to mind that I'd never done it

before, or that I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. I thought that those two reasons alone disqualified me, not to mention the fact that I was one of the youngest in a room full of seemingly capable adults. Until then I had always assumed it was someone else's job to pray for people but that evening I got to see God meeting with His people in wonderful ways. Some were healed, some were emotionally set free and many were encouraged. I was hooked.

This book is obviously about prayer ministry. Prayer ministry, indeed all forms of prayer, always begins with God and with an understanding of God's character. God is not emotionally distant, unsympathetic or unreliable. Nor is He a God who abandoned His creation when it self imploded due to our sin. Instead, God as love came down to us. He is a kind Father who wants what is best for His children. Prayer is intentionally connecting with this very same God. It is not then hard to see that prayer is deeply rooted in personal intimacy with Jesus. Our personal relationship with God is the driving force which propels us outwards to minister God's love to others. Personal relationship and outward focused 'ministry' (as we often call it) are two sides of the same coin. We are not saved only for our own private benefit or personal relationship with God, we are saved also for what God wants to do through us via the gift of relationship with others.

I do not claim to be an expert on prayer. I do not have a PhD in theology and I haven't pastored the largest or fastest growing church in the country. But that is precisely the point. There is something inherently simple, almost child like about prayer ministry. God leads, we follow. If He doesn't lead, we wait. When I read the New Testament I don't see a God who is looking for professionals to advance His Kingdom, I see a God who is looking for our obedience.

I don't think I've met a Christian, a pastor or an 'expert' that hasn't at one time or another heard that little voice inside whisper something along the lines of, "Who do you think you are? Why don't you leave that to someone who knows what they're doing?" That whisper is not the voice of God. God not only seems to *use* everyday people to advance His Kingdom, He actually seems to *prefer* it; so much so that His Kingdom has been referred to as the 'upside down' Kingdom.¹ Learning how to pray for people in the power of the Holy Spirit is not reserved for the elite but for the willing. It is with this in mind that we continue.

A new vision of the Kingdom

In order to get a firmer grasp on the place and purpose of prayer ministry we must first briefly look at what is meant by the term the 'Kingdom of God'. When many of us hear the term 'Kingdom' we instantly bring to mind some sort of worldly kingdom we learnt about in history class; a physical place with a king, queen, jesters and whose borders are marked with different colours on an old map of the world. The concept seems distant and removed. Alternatively we think of the magazine covers and gossip stories that follow the celebrity status we've projected onto many modern-day royals. However, when the New Testament talks of the 'Kingdom (*basilea*) of God' or the 'Kingdom of heaven' as used in Matthew's gospel, rather than representing a *realm* or physical place, the phrase instead represents the *reign* of God. The Kingdom is not a geographical area marked by lines on a map but is God's sovereign rule, His *kingship*. God's Kingdom (His reign) is constantly breaking into our present scenario.²

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish hope was predominantly for a political or military Messiah, someone in the line of king David who would rise up and establish a political kingdom, uniting Israel and freeing them from the oppression of the Romans. They were mostly thinking of a kingdom that would be established over a geographical area. Jesus as the Messiah did come to establish a kingdom (Is. 9:6-7; Lk. 1:31-33) but not in the expected sense. Through preaching the gospel to the poor and the outcast, healing the sick, driving out demons and bringing wholeness to the broken Jesus was actively expanding God's Kingdom (God's rule and reign) in a literal sense. Every healing or deliverance was a releasing of the stranglehold of sin and death, and therefore an advancement of the Kingdom.

Jesus did not separate 'salvation' from his primary role of launching the Kingdom on earth. Nor did he separate people into a physical body and a spiritual soul, as we often do. He thought of people as whole persons, body and soul united. The works of Jesus, the miracles he did, were therefore very intentional. They were not simply hints or illustrations. What Jesus was doing in his ministry on earth was demonstrating that the future promise of God's *reign* was breaking into the present, *now*. His goal was not simply to save souls for some distant destination called heaven, but to rescue his entire creation, and these were not seen as separate objectives. By rescuing people in the present from the sickness

and the sin that entangled them, he was ushering in the coming Kingdom then and there. He was 'saving' people, and not just their souls but their whole person. When we understand this concept we can see that the works of Jesus, and the works done by the disciples in his name, were more than simply acts - they were the message of the Kingdom; the good news that Jesus has launched the reign of God on earth; that Jesus has come to set people free; that Jesus saves! People were able to experience God's plan, the renewal of creation, in the *now* - the plan that is promised but has *not yet* come in its fullness.

Is all that relevant, practically, to prayer ministry or the aims of this book? The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" It is more than relevant, it is central. We are still part of a groaning creation, but not without hope. We live in a literal time of tension, in an intermediate place, in the *now* and *not yet* of the Kingdom between the two comings of Christ. Being in the *now* we can see the Kingdom break into our present. Being in the *not yet* we are full of active, hopeful and expectant anticipation of what is to come. But this doesn't mean we can be idle. Far from it! God builds His Kingdom, indeed He is still building it, and He has enlisted us to cooperate with Him in the process! We are channels through which His work in the world takes place.

The gospels not only tell the story of the launching of God's Kingdom on earth and the defeat of evil and sin, they also tell the story of how Jesus has commissioned his followers to continue in his work. The body of Christ today is supposed to continue Jesus' ministry of mercy and compassion and he has equipped us to do so, no less by giving us the gift of his Holy Spirit to dwell within, empower and direct us. We are called to build for the Kingdom. This includes cooperating with the Holy Spirit in setting people free in the *present* from what ensnares them, whether that be physical, emotional or spiritual, just as Jesus did while on earth (and is still doing!). This is not trivial, unnecessary or merely 'cultural'. Nor is it just an afterthought, something added to the gospel at the last minute. This is part of building for God's Kingdom. The hope of the Kingdom breaking into the now is central to our understanding of 'mission'. Every time the Kingdom was preached by the disciples they would minister in power and demonstrate this hope. This is what Jesus taught them to do (Lk. 9:1-3; Lk. 10:1,9). He even taught us to pray for God's Kingdom to come on earth (Mt. 6:10; Lk. 11:2). We cannot simply gloss over this line in the 'Lord's Prayer' because of its familiarity.

We can no longer isolate the gospel message (the good news) to preaching with words. Of course it must include that, but Paul mentions in his first letter to the Corinthians that his message was "...not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power..." (1 Cor. 2:4 NIV). Demonstrations of God's mercy, such as healing the sick and setting people free from what ensnares them, all extend God's Kingdom. They are literal acts of good news. Prayer ministry and learning to minister in the power of the Spirit are part of a holistic gospel message. They are to be part of a holistic approach to cooperating with God in seeing the Kingdom break into the present. Of course they shouldn't be an isolated approach, but without them we are only telling part of the good news. After all, it is not difficult to convince someone God loves them when He, Himself, has met them in a personal way, freed them from past hurt, healed their sickness or spoken a direct word of life into their heart. I believe that God, being the personal God that He is, loves to meet with His people and is able to be experienced.

In an attempt to approach the gospel holistically, the phrase '*Word, Spirit, Action*' has become a common theme in some circles.³ All three, the Word of God, the work of His Spirit in people's lives and the Action of social justice are required to preach a holistic message of the Kingdom. All three parts can, and should be, equally valued and 'missionally' focused. They are just different aspects of the kaleidoscope of the gospel. This book obviously fits within the second aspect of the kaleidoscope. It aims to equip you to begin to include this aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in your holistic approach to the gospel.

'Everyone Gets to Play' - Rediscovering Kingdom focus in a performance driven church

When most of us begin following Christ we expect to also 'sign up' for the Kingdom work, that is, we expect God to use us. We are open to going anywhere and doing anything for Him. But often, ever so gradually, a slight shift occurs - we begin to allow performance to upstage grace. Usually being well intentioned and motivated by the desire to be better or more like Christ, the shift is barely perceivable. In with it creeps an expectation of excellence (in a worldly sense of the word) into our churches. Letters after names begin to really matter, doctrinal correctness (which is a good thing) becomes a major requirement for participation. We begin to focus on numbers or 'results' and require

'service' to be mistake free. Now don't get me wrong, excellence in itself is not the issue, but rather what it can so easily breed: performance driven church. When too high an expectation is placed on excellence, in the form of never making a mistake or having to be thoroughly trained before giving anything a go, we run a serious risk of moving away from a vision of the Kingdom (in which God longs to use all of us) towards a consumeristic model of church. When an opportunity to minister arises many politely decline the opportunity for the pass mark is just too high.

Growing in prayer ministry requires establishing an expectation of 'Everyone gets to play' within a church community.⁴ It is not just the pastors or ministers who are chosen people, but all Christians (1 Pet. 2:9). That means it cannot just be the pastor's or minister's role to pray for people. Every believer is called by God to minister His love and mercy to others. All of us have freely received it and can freely give it away. It is the blood of Jesus that qualifies us. His blood puts us all on equal standing with God. One of the themes of the gospels, particularly the gospel of Luke, is that discipleship to Jesus and doing the works of the Kingdom are not reserved for those with apparent qualifications or reputations. In fact, if anything the reverse is true! Jesus spent much of his time with those who were considered unqualified, even including them in his inner twelve.

When it comes to prayer ministry there are only two qualifying criteria that need to be met in order for someone to begin ministering to others. Despite what many think, these criteria do not include a certain level of spiritual maturity, a certain age, the ability to speak in tongues or a degree from a Bible college. All that is required is a personal faith in Jesus and a desire to see His Kingdom come. Ah, but there must be a certain level of faith, right? Not necessarily. Faith doesn't need to be great for God to use someone. He will take what faith is present and grow it over time. When people realise that they are not disqualified but are in fact *needed*, participation increases and performance anxiety decreases. After all, we are simply channels for the grace and mercy of God. Pastors then become more like coaches and less like professional practitioners. The community shifts from resembling a crowd of spectators at a sporting event into a vibrant, living, functioning body which requires the input and contribution of each part.

Three key shifts

In order for a culture of ‘everyone gets to play’ to begin to flourish within a community, particularly when it comes to developing prayer ministry, three major shifts have to take place. These will no doubt be emphasised in various places in the chapters that follow.

Firstly, people must be trained to do the works of Jesus, just as the disciples were themselves trained. Pastors and leaders therefore must shift their role towards one that resembles a coach, towards one who trains people to do the works of Jesus. Professional staff exist, like coaches, not to do all the ministry themselves but to train the people to do the ministry in their *own* contexts. Leadership is a position in order to serve a function. The training model provided to us by Jesus is one of equipping. He demonstrated and taught by example. After showing his followers the works of the Kingdom he then commissioned them and instructed them to try it for themselves (Lk. 9:1-2; Lk. 10:1,9). People today need to be equipped in a similar fashion. This involves direct teaching on the subject of prayer ministry, demonstration and then intentional delegation so that others may learn the ‘how to’ and in turn pass this training on to others.

Unfortunately many people, pastors included, have had little teaching themselves on how to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you’re a pastor and that’s the case, this book will give you some foundations and practical insights so that your exciting journey towards facilitating and teaching prayer ministry can continue. Of course gaining information is only the beginning, the information must then be applied. Theology must have practical implications.

The second shift must be an intentional move towards providing a safe learning environment where people can begin to step out and pray for others, as well as feel comfortable learning to receive prayer themselves. This safe environment is crucial when attempting to make the transition towards *applying* theology. The performance mindset needs to be put to death. People need to feel comfortable in the knowledge that they won’t be penalised for giving something a try. Allowing people to make mistakes in a ministry context is crucial for learning. Obviously this must be accompanied by good pastoral care and some instructive guidelines. When these are in place the dynamic can shift from an

expectation of excellence (in the form of faultlessness) towards a freedom to follow God's leading and honour Him with our best efforts. It's also within this safe place that people learn how to function in the gifts of the Spirit (see chapter 5) - to prophesy, pray for healing, encourage and minister in evangelism.

Small discipleship groups or cell groups are often excellent contexts to step out in faith because they are intimate, safe and are usually more flexible with their focus and their time than a larger church service. Learning can also be facilitated and encouraged by having others come and impart their knowledge. We must not overlook the benefits of having a small team from another church or ministry organisation come and share with the community and help facilitate some prayer ministry training. Of course an existing prior relationship is always helpful here for trust purposes. An ideal opportunity for this is something like a church retreat, where lots of time can be set aside for learning together.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the Holy Spirit and His work must be valued. This has to be more than the statement of a creed - it must have practical implications. Time, space and *control* must be given to Him. These are all demonstrations of trust. Time must be given for the Holy Spirit to meet with His people. This will be discussed in chapter 4. Control must be practically given back to Him. Ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit is inherently simple: God leads, we follow. Following God's leading by waiting for Him and by providing space for Him to meet with people needs to be a priority. Such a foundation clears the way for simplicity and effectiveness in what we do.

Giving God control also means getting out of the way and not hindering His work. Service run sheets which schedule (and fill) every minute may need to become more flexible. When God meets with people sometimes the process is not as clean or structured as we might like (or feel totally comfortable with). We see this many times when Jesus ministered to people in the gospels and when the early church ministered to people in Acts. Many people at this point get nervous about 'hype' or uncontrolled emotionalism. Uncontrolled emotionalism is out of order and there is simply no need for it. We can allow the Holy Spirit to minister powerfully in a very natural way. Some call this being 'naturally supernatural'. Getting all worked up and super 'spiritual' is simply unnecessary. There is no need for such hype. God does not require any working up or convincing before He will meet with His people. As a personal God He loves to meet with us, He just likes it if we give Him some space to do so.

That said, 'mess' in the form of tears or other physical responses as a result of God meeting His people is not 'hype'. We need not be afraid of our emotions. We can all learn to relax a little on this point. Cuthbert Bardsley, former bishop of Coventry, when discussing this idea once said, "The chief danger of the Anglican church is not delirious emotionalism."⁵ One could well suggest this is also true for much of the wider church. Although people responding to God in a physical way is no where near delirious emotionalism, I think he's probably right. In order to develop in prayer ministry we must learn to value and welcome the person of the Holy Spirit and the work He does, even if this is a little 'messy' at times. It is precisely to this discussion on the person of the Holy Spirit and His role in the life of a believer that we now turn.

The main pointers:

- The Kingdom refers to the reign and rule of God.
- The works of Jesus were the message of the Kingdom.
- God loves to use ordinary people to advance the Kingdom.
- Prayer ministry is one part of a holistic gospel message.
- Everyone gets to play, to participate, in seeing God's Kingdom come on earth.
- Church community must be a safe learning environment where people can learn to do the works of the Kingdom.
- We must value the person and work of the Holy Spirit.



Chapter 2

PNEUMA WHAT? Introducing the Holy Spirit

I remember the first time I ever prayed for someone else in the way that this book teaches. I was at a festival for young people in England and I had come across an American pastor who spent time teaching me how to pray for people. The big difference between what he was teaching me and everything I'd been doing before was that this was prayer which depended on listening to a person - the Holy Spirit - and then passing on the message, rather than showing up with a pre-prepared monologue. I just needed to learn to hear the Spirit's promptings, which was an exciting new adventure, and then follow His leading. Once I saw what He was capable of doing - freeing people, healing them, encouraging, inspiring and strengthening - I realised that I was much better off letting Him do His thing. His work was much more effective than mine!

In other words, it worked! That week I saw people healed physically and emotionally, and I also saw people connect with God in a new way, all because they felt God was speaking to them through our prayers. All we were doing was listening to Him and humbly sharing what we thought he was saying. I was convinced, and I remain convinced, that praying for people in the way that Jonathan is describing is an essential tool in the health and growth of disciples in our time. It's for that reason I've continued to practice it over the last 15 or more years, and have now taught it to others wherever I've been.

Jonny Hughes - HTB Students, Holy Trinity Brompton

Prayer ministry is about following a person, not a procedure. That person is the Holy Spirit. Of course, it's both necessary and helpful to discuss the practical aspects of prayer ministry for training and equipping purposes. However, if we simply reduce prayer down to practicals then we have entirely missed the point. The Holy Spirit is the agent who does the work. As the third person of the Trinity He is God, present in our midst - in us, on us and around us. The whole purpose of prayer ministry is that He meets with His people to bring about the transformation only He can bring. To discuss the practicals of prayer ministry without first grasping *who* it is that meets us, changes us and empowers us to pray would be impractical indeed.

The Holy Spirit is a person. He is not an inanimate vapour, or even an inanimate concept. Some of us have reduced the Holy Spirit to a line in a creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," and therefore assume He must be somehow important, but exactly how or why remains uncertain. Somewhere along the line some of us have even been warned about discussing Him too much, for fear of "losing focus on Jesus" or on sound doctrine, or perhaps for fear of being associated with certain groups of Christians with whom our theology and doctrine don't exactly align. This chapter will touch on some of these barriers. In the process I hope to unravel some misrepresented or misunderstood concepts of God we unknowingly carry with us which effect, well, everything. The aim is to introduce you afresh to the person of the Holy Spirit before looking at the role He plays in a believer's life, regardless of theological 'preference', and highlight the practical implications these truths offer us.

If you're already well acquainted with the Holy Spirit and His role, or mix in circles where He is often mentioned, this chapter is by no means redundant. There is always more to learn about the nature of God, even in the truths we have already grasped. The early church, without the completed Bible and thousands of years of New Testament biblical study available to them, possibly knew less about the Holy Spirit (in an intellectual sense) than some of us today. The New Testament shows us, however, that the early church was intimately acquainted with the work of the Holy Spirit and they welcomed His presence in their lives as they spread the good news of the Kingdom. I hope a fresh understanding of these truths will help us begin to walk in them increasingly in our daily lives.

Getting to know Him better

Even if you've never thought about the Holy Spirit specifically, or been taught about Him, if you've accepted Jesus as your saviour you've already experienced the Spirit's primary work in your life to a major degree. First Corinthians says, "...no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:3 ESV). The Spirit, the agent of the Trinity at work in the world, has already revealed the ultimate divine truth to you and as a result you've personally witnessed the greatest miracle, the miracle of your salvation. Even if we may not necessarily have an intellectual grasp on who the Spirit is or the work that He does, by accepting Christ we have all experienced His work in our lives. However, the work of the Spirit does not end there.

Part of the struggle in our understanding of the Spirit is that there is a lack of obvious concrete imagery surrounding Him for us to grasp mentally. When it comes to the Father, most of us can relate in one way or another to what a father is like, or at least what a father should be like. When it comes to the Son, we can study four detailed accounts of his time on earth, which in turn also informs our perception of God the Father (Jn. 14:9-11). Jesus also described himself in several metaphors such as the true vine (Jn. 15:1) and the good shepherd (Jn. 10:11) so that people could further understand him and his mission on earth. The imagery surrounding the Spirit, though, is a little harder to grasp. Wind, water, fire and a dove make it difficult for us to perceive His personhood. In addition to this the term 'Holy Ghost' has been in common use in the recent past, sometimes further adding to confusion. When most of us attempt to visualise a 'ghost', thoughts of someone under a white sheet, or worse, come to mind. Where then shall we begin in our fresh introduction to the Spirit? We shall begin as we would in any coffee shop scenario: with a latte and an exchange of names.

Names

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word translated to 'Spirit' in English is 'Ruach' (*rûah*). Ruach is also translated to mean wind or the breath which brings life.¹ It is applied to God many times and has the connotation of the very breath of God, as well as His power in motion and action (Ezek 37:1-10). The word is sometimes associated with the power of God set loose and is usually seen when God is at work in the Old Testament. In a

similar metaphor to the way we can see the wind moving the trees, we can see the effects of the Spirit (Ruach) in action, the movement and motion of God.

Once we get to the New Testament the Spirit is referred to as 'Pneuma', which is the Greek word for breath or wind.² It is a dynamic word and describes the very wind associated with life, breath inhaled and exhaled. Pneuma is identified with the Old Testament view of the Spirit (Ruach), in terms of the action of God. However the greek word takes on an extended implication. After Jesus ascended, the Spirit became the primary manifestation of the presence of the Trinity among us. After Pentecost, Pneuma is associated with the very presence of God dwelling *within* a person. In the way that God breathed life into Adam before sin entered the world (Gen. 2:7), He does so again, but this time He puts His own Spirit in us allowing us to enter into personal relationship with Him, adopting us as sons and daughters of God and making us a new creation (Rom. 8:14-16).

You see, there is a very personal aspect of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Paul refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit as a 'seal' in the believer's life (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30). A friend of mine came home from traveling in Europe with a small metal seal as a souvenir, a stamp inscribing her initials. When pressed into hot wax on the back of an envelope this stamp can personally 'seal' the envelope, indicating to everyone the letter is from her. The tradition has largely been lost in our modern world of email but is still seen occasionally on hand written notes. Of course the tradition was much more common practice in times past, particularly on official documents. A personal family ring carrying the family initials was often pressed into hot wax, signifying that the letter came directly from that person's own hand. We see this in Esther 8:8 when the king of Persia had the decree sealed with his ring. When such a document was sealed it became identified with the king. This metaphor is used to describe the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit given to the believer is like the personal seal of our King. We have been personally stamped and in doing so He is identifying Himself with us, and us with Him. We are marked as God's own and can be assured of our wonderful inheritance to come. But we aren't just sealed for a future inheritance, we have been sealed for personal relationship in the present.

The Gift of relationship and experience

God is Trinity, three in one. The Father, Son and Spirit are in constant relationship with each other. God values relationship. Created in the image of God, we are created for relationship - relationship with God and relationship with other people. In Acts 2:38 the Holy Spirit is referred to as a gift. He is the gift of personal *relationship* with God. The coming of the Spirit was dependent on the going of the Son (Jn. 7:37-39, 16:7). After Christ ascended the promised gift of the Holy Spirit came and indwelt believers. The Spirit is the means by which each of us can personally know the Father and the Son. We have not met the risen Jesus in the flesh for He has risen to be with the Father. But we can know both the Father and the Son for the Spirit dwells within us. When Christians talk about having a personal relationship with Jesus, they have this relationship via the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the third member of the Trinity, given to us as a gift, who reveals the Father and the Son. This has several implications.

Firstly, we can see now that there is no way that discussing the Spirit can take our minds off Jesus. Not only do we experience personal relationship with Jesus via the Spirit, the Spirit's very role is to glorify Jesus, not 'distract' us from worshipping Him. In John 16, Jesus is seen explaining to the disciples about the coming Holy Spirit and says, "He [the Spirit of truth] will *glorify me*, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." (Jn 16:14 ESV emphasis mine). To suggest that by rediscovering and reemphasising the crucial role the Spirit plays in the life of a Christian will somehow distract us from the Son is simply incorrect. The second implication is that, thanks to what Jesus achieved on the cross, the pouring out of the Spirit means that relationship with God is not reserved for a select few but is accessible to all people (Acts 2:39). All people can enter into personal relationship with God and can receive the gift of the Spirit.

The third implication is that the gift of the Spirit indwelling believers is also the gift of *experience*. I use that word very intentionally but also very carefully. Relationships are meant to be experienced. Think for a moment of a very close friendship you value, perhaps even a healthy marriage, formed over years of time spent together. No doubt there is a lot of shared history. Now think for a moment how absurd it would be if you never felt *anything* the entire time you've known each other. Over all the years of shared experience and relationship your heart has been stone cold in every instance. The entire

time you've been nothing but calmly and rationally reasonable, simply ticking off the required objectives necessary to make the relationship continue. If that's the case I don't think many would have a problem with me suggesting that there is something deficient, something drastically missing, in your relationship.

Throughout Scripture God has revealed Himself as a God who can be *experienced*, who makes Himself available to us. Christianity is not supposed to be just a rational and intellectual subscription or assent. It is not just a checking off of beliefs, a ticking of the boxes. Of course it must include a subscription to certain beliefs, but it does not end there. When we turn to Christ we are promised two things: the forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the gift of personal relationship with God. Of course this personal relationship with God is not built upon a *foundation* of experience. However, if we *never* experience God then we're living sub-biblical lives. A personal relationship with God without some sort of experience of His love and mercy is missing something.

There are many ways we can meet personally with God as we walk with Him daily. Prayer ministry is just one way we can open ourselves up to the truth and freedom that God offers us. It is also a way of ministering God's love and mercy to others in community. When we facilitate prayer ministry we aim to intentionally cooperate with the Spirit, asking Him to reveal more of God to us and to bring His healing and transformation.

At this point an objection sometimes arises. It goes along the lines of, "Aren't we supposed to experience God through His word, the Bible?" We are absolutely supposed to experience God through reading His word. It is the revelation of God for all generations and He makes Himself known to us through it. To emphasise walking with the Spirit is not in contradiction to this and does not nullify our need for Scripture. If we wish to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25), walk with Him daily and experience God, then we must have a firm grip on the word.

The Spirit of God and the word of God are in complete harmony, not competition. The word agrees with the Spirit and the Spirit agrees with the word. The word reveals how God operates and the Holy Spirit makes the word come alive to us. He helps us *apply* Scripture to our lives and to *live out* the word of God. The Spirit invites us to see where He is working in the world, to follow His leading and to participate with Him in doing the things

of His word. This usually means stepping out in obedience and in faith. I want to explore further the practical application of being led by the Spirit but before we do, we must continue to look at exactly who the Holy Spirit is.

The Holy Spirit is God

Despite seeming like an obvious point to most of us today, this apparently simple statement is still worth clarifying for it carries with it practical implications. Prayer ministry welcomes the work and presence of the Holy Spirit. When we welcome Him, we are asking that God Himself will come and reveal more of Himself to us. The Holy Spirit is God's own Spirit. He is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. St Augustine once described Him as the very 'bond' of the Father and the Son.³ The divinity of the Spirit is demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19. Here Paul discusses the outworkings of being a temple of God, of having the Holy Spirit dwell within. He uses the terms 'God' and the 'Holy Spirit' interchangeably here. Similarly in Acts 5:3-5 when Peter confronts Ananias about lying "...to the Holy Spirit..." he continues to state that Ananias had "...not lied to men but to God." (ESV). The Holy Spirit is God. When we encounter the Holy Spirit we encounter God. When we welcome the presence of God we are welcoming the presence of the Spirit. The reverse is also true. When we ignore or suppress the work of the Holy Spirit we are ignoring and suppressing the work of God.

Scripture also gives the Holy Spirit characteristics we attribute to God alone. For example Hebrews speaks of the 'eternal Spirit' (Heb. 9:14) and 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 alludes to His omniscience. The Holy Spirit also performs works attributed to God. He was involved in creation (Gen. 1:2) and raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11). Jesus himself attributed his ability to perform miracles not to himself but to the Spirit (Mt. 12:28). We can start to see now how important it is that the divine Holy Spirit is properly acknowledged in our lives and our churches.

The Holy Spirit is an equal member of the Trinity

The Trinity is not a hierarchy, although at times we might unknowingly suggest that it is. Quite often this suggestion is unintentional and simply the result of misunderstanding. However, when we realise the Holy Spirit is not just an add on, an after thought, it changes

the way we view Him, respond to Him and welcome His work in our lives. Growing up my McDonalds meal of choice was the Happy Meal. When I was quite young I was unable to finish the entire meal, so I was forced to prioritise. The cheeseburger was my favourite item so I opted to devour this first (to this day the cheeseburger remains, in my humble opinion, the best burger on the menu). After that I would turn to the fries. If any space was left, which it usually wasn't, the coke was last in line. I always kept the coke for last fearing that if I filled up on the drink there would be precious little stomach space left for the main parts of the meal. A lot of Christians I meet today place the Holy Spirit in the same category as the coke - the fear being that 'too much' of the Holy Spirit means there won't be enough space to give the 'key players' of the Trinity their due. And so a balancing act follows. The main problem with this 'balancing' is that we cannot 'balance' out God. The Holy Spirit is not the coke in the Happy Meal. He is an equal part of the Trinity and He deserves to be worshipped and reverently regarded as such.

God being Trinity means that God is *one* essence but exists simultaneously in three modes of being. This is obviously confusing for our minds. The practical implications of this, though, are numerous. In terms of prayer ministry three practicals are obvious. Firstly, God is, and always has been, living in perfect community. The communal element to everything we do, including prayer ministry, is therefore founded in the very nature of God. Secondly, the Spirit's (God's) indwelling within us actually means He can pray on our behalf, interceding for us to the Father when we don't know how or what to pray (Rom. 8:26). Prayer ministry therefore becomes less about what we do or say and more about creating space for the Spirit to work. Finally, since the Holy Spirit is an equal member of the trinity we must value Him and the work He does. As God among us He is welcome to do what He likes.

The Holy Spirit is a Person

I've mentioned a few times now that the Holy Spirit is a person and have been referring to Him as such. This is a very important point. When we talk of the Holy Spirit we do not talk of an impersonal force or vapour, but of a personal God. This understanding is crucial for grasping His role in the life of a believer. Of course personhood refers not to physical arms and legs but to the state of being - the exercise of intelligence, will and emotion. Scripture ascribes all of these to the Spirit. We saw earlier that 1 Corinthians 2:11

shows His omniscience and therefore intelligence. He knows the things of God and reveals them to us. The Spirit also has a will, for the letter to the church in Antioch quotes that “...it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.” (Acts 15:28 ESV). Similarly when Paul discusses the gifts of the Spirit he notes that the Spirit distributes the gifts “...to each one individually as he wills.” (1 Cor. 12:11 ESV). Paul also warns against grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). This is an emotion. It is difficult to grieve an impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is a person, not an ‘it’!

As with the other points of note above, the personhood of the Holy Spirit has practical implications. Firstly, in regards to prayer ministry, we are following the leadership of a personal God, not an impersonal vapour. The Spirit reveals to us the will of God and our role is simply to follow that. If He doesn’t lead in any particular direction, then we wait for Him to do so. He initiates and we respond. There are many ways He communicates this with us. These are discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

Secondly, as a person, He likes to meet with His people. We are allowed to respond accordingly. Emotions may be involved in that response. That is to be expected for we are responding to a personal God, and He is clearly not scared of emotions. Finally, the Holy Spirit engages in moral actions that can only be performed by a person. Like a coach, He works with us to bring about our transformation. He is better than a coach, however, for He dwells inside us. This internality is crucial for the various roles He plays in the life of a believer. It is at this point that we arrive at the pivotal part of the conversation and, like any good introduction, move into sipping our second latte. It is to the work of the Holy Spirit that we now turn.

Your Body is a Temple

I never quite believed Jesus’ teaching about the Spirit until I began to understand the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When I read in John 16:7 that Jesus said, “... it is to your advantage that I go away...” my initial response was, “how could that possibly be?” I would have preferred to have the *physical* Jesus around to guide and teach me, and always thought that the Spirit was a rather poor exchange for this direct access to Jesus. That is, until I began to realise that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit not only means I have ‘direct access’ to Jesus, but so much more.

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth.” (Jn. 14:16-17 NIV). This is an amazing verse which helps us understand the role of the Spirit. The word ‘advocate’ is just as accurately translated ‘helper’, ‘counselor’ or ‘advisor’, indeed a very useful thing to have in the Christian life! The word ‘another’ in the Greek is the word ‘allos’, which means another of the *same* kind. Why is that relevant? In a cricket side, when a fast bowler cannot play the test match they are replaced not by a batsmen but by another fast bowler. Or similarly in a rugby team, the full back is never substituted for a prop forward. The roles are specialised so they are substituted by another of the same kind. When Jesus went to be with the Father He did not send another counselor of a different kind, he sent His very own Spirit to us! The Spirit took on Jesus’ role on earth. More than that, He dwells within us. This means that not only do we now have direct access to Christ, but Christ also has direct access to the very core of who we are.

In the Old Testament the presence of God mostly dwelt in the temple and only a select few were allowed to enter. Today, because God sent His Spirit to indwell believers, our *bodies* are the temple of God. Access to God is not just for the select few. We carry inside us the very presence of God - everywhere! When we allow this truth to penetrate our hearts the gift of the Spirit starts to make sense. Not only do we have Jesus guiding, teaching and convicting us everywhere we go, we now have a far deeper relationship with the Lord than we could ever have had. Now that Christ has access to the very core of our being, He can now work transformation from the inside out, heal our brokenness from within and form us into an image of Himself. This is amazing news! The indwelling of the Holy Spirit means relationship with God is no longer an abstract concept but an intimate reality. It’s also a reality that effects more than just ourselves.

The empowering Holy Spirit

There is always an outworking to personal relationship. By the Holy Spirit we have the very presence of God dwelling within us. When we walk into any and every situation, we carry with us His hope, compassion and mercy, and we are called to minister that very same hope to others. The indwelling Holy Spirit is not meant to be hidden. Our relationship with God is supposed to overflow. Think of someone trying to hide a grin. It’s almost impossible for them to do. You can see it in their eyes, on their cheeks, their muscles

straining to keep a straight face. And in turn often you ‘catch’ that grin and begin smiling yourself. That is a picture of what the internal Holy Spirit should be like in our lives. He is not meant to be hidden inside. Our relationship with Him should be bursting out of our very being. By having the Spirit in us, He helps us produce good fruit (Jn. 15:4-5; Gal. 5:22). The Spirit grows this fruit in the believer’s life, which, in many circumstances, is a louder statement of the gospel than the words we speak.

The Holy Spirit doesn’t just indwell believers, He comes upon them and *empowers* them to be God’s witnesses (Acts 1:8). A longer discussion on this is provided in chapter 4. Of course, as discussed in the previous chapter, this witnessing goes beyond simply proclaiming the gospel with words. Witnessing must also include doing the works of Jesus - the works of the Kingdom.

Luke clearly links the ministry of Jesus with the empowering of the Spirit. After Jesus was baptised and then led into the wilderness, Luke 4:14 says he “...returned in the power of the Spirit...” The very next verse (4:15) we see Jesus teaching in the synagogues. Luke goes on to describe that Jesus’ teaching was with ‘authority’ (4:32). But Jesus didn’t just teach, he also performed works of the Kingdom. He healed the sick and cast out demons (4:33-36; 4:40). Luke is indicating by these narratives that the works of Jesus were a result of the Holy Spirit’s power. Hence when Jesus tells his disciples that they too will also receive ‘power’ (Acts 1:8) as a result of the Holy Spirit coming upon them, they understood that this power didn’t just apply to the words they would proclaim but also to the works of the Kingdom they would do, or rather the works the Spirit of God would do through them.

In John 14:12 (ESV) Jesus says that “...whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do....” Is that something we truly believe? If so, we must begin to breach this disconnect between the words we read and the lives we lead. Before we start thinking about doing ‘greater’ works than Jesus did, let’s start by doing the works of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has empowered believers to effectively pray for people’s healing and deliverance, to learn to hear His voice and follow His leading in any situation. Doing the works of the Kingdom is for all Christians. We do not do these in our own strength, God’s power is the source. Our role is to welcome the work of the Spirit in our lives and to be obedient to His leading. It’s tempting at this point to simply ask God to bless what *we* are already doing. However, beginning to step out in the power of the

Spirit requires a change of perspective. Rather than asking God to bless what we're doing, our role is to follow His leading and partner in what *He* is doing.

The main pointers:

- The Holy Spirit is referred to as Ruach (Hebrew) in the Old Testament and Pneuma (Greek) in the New Testament. They mean Spirit, wind or breath of God. The words are often seen when God is active.
- There is a very personal element to the Spirit. He is a 'seal' showing we belong to God.
- The Holy Spirit is also a gift; the gift of personal relationship with God and the gift of experiencing God.
- The Holy Spirit is God, He is an equal member of the Trinity and He is a person.
- His indwelling means we have Christ living within us.
- He is our Counselor and transforms us into Christlikeness.
- He empowers us to be God's witnesses and to do the works of the Kingdom.



Chapter 3

PLAY NICELY & SHARE THE TOYS

The prayer ministry model

For four consecutive hours of the children's ministry session I had jumped up and down pretending to have springs on my legs as God's little 'Glories' do. And then one of the nine year old boys ventured out of the pack and dared to ask me to pray for his swollen neck. I was tired, physically hurting and just wanted to go to bed... plus I had never seen anybody I had prayed for healed. The way I was feeling I couldn't be sure of what I might do once I laid my hands around his neck! The good news is that despite my mumbling, bumbling and grumbling prayer the boy was totally healed and the swelling disappeared within minutes.

From then on I didn't need need to be encouraged to pray for healing, but what I did need was help on how to pray. The model you are about to read of in this chapter has been the single most helpful tool I have come across in equipping people to pray for those in need. Read on diligently... this could open the door for you to see God's Kingdom come in wonderful and powerful new ways as you reach out to others with God's healing love.

Dr. Peter Downes - National Director of Vineyard Australia

There is no secret formula for prayer ministry. When we look at Scripture we see Jesus ministered in numerous ways. He was motivated by his compassion (Mt. 9:36; Mk 1:41), he responded to faith (Mk. 10:52), rebuked conditions (Lk. 4:39), spoke a simple declaration of healing (Jn. 4:46-53) and even spat in the mud (Jn. 9:1-7). There certainly is no formula for the countless ways in which the Holy Spirit works. He is God and He can do what He likes, when He likes. The easy and sometimes tempting thing to do is to attempt to construct a formula or fool-proof method for getting results, and then put our confidence in it. That is not relationship. Our confidence rests not in a formula but in Jesus. Christianity is a relationship with a personal God, a God who is actively at work all around us and invites us to partner with Him. We must never replace following Him with a formula. As soon as we look to construct a formula we stray from our place of humble dependence on God's leading and fall into a false sense of self dependency. Jesus said that he "...can only do what he sees his father doing." (Jn. 5:19 NIV). This should be true of us also. He is the One whom we follow.

The model presented in this chapter should not be made into a formula. Models are starting points for training and for ministering. Unlike a formula, models release rather than constrict. They are fluid, open to change and lay a foundation from which we can safely launch when God gives direction to do so. Models also exist to guard against abuses and provide guidelines to ensure value is placed on the dignity of everyone involved.

There are many models for prayer ministry. One commonly encountered model involves one 'minister' who carries the 'anointing' and does the 'ministry' while everyone else sits back and watches on. I present an alternative model in this chapter. It's preferred because it is easy to use, easily accessible and easily transferrable to almost any situation. Being able to minister is not reliant on 'skill' or 'anointing' but on the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Anointed One and hence this model aims to provide space for His sovereign will to be done. Everyone gets to be involved in partnering with Him. As discussed in chapter 1, this is what I believe is demonstrated in Scripture. Ministry in the power of the Spirit is not just for the select few but, as children of God and as members of the Body, we are all to contribute to seeing the Kingdom come. This model aims to facilitate this Kingdom principle. To quote the words of John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement and to which the basis of this model is owed, "Everyone gets to play. Just play nicely and share the toys."¹

The goal of this chapter is fundamentally practical: to equip you to start praying with people in your context. By explaining the how and the why of this model, I hope that you will also be able to begin training others to start praying for people in this way. As mentioned, this model is not meant to constrict you but to enable you to look for God's sovereign will when praying with someone. It's emphasis is on providing space for the Holy Spirit to do His work in the person receiving prayer - the work that only He can do. This means that, for much of it, the pressure is off so to speak. We never need to hype anything up; the Holy Spirit wants to meet His people. Therefore we should not feel responsible for 'making things happen'. That is God's role. We are just the vessels. Our role is to be obedient to His leadership and to help the person respond to what God is doing.

Some foundations

Before we explore the model some initial key pointers are worth noting. These apply to every single occasion in which we do prayer ministry. Firstly, our motivation is always love. This is paramount and cannot be emphasised enough. Regardless of what happens in the prayer ministry time, each person who receives prayer must leave knowing *two* things: That God loves them and that you love them. The second point relates to this. We must always value the dignity of the person being prayed for. Prayer ministry is not a show. We must never let it become one. Prayer ministry should be a positive experience for all involved and this means people should leave with their dignity intact. Part of valuing people's dignity is ensuring that we never force anything on anyone. It's always good to ask permission before we do anything, including laying hands on someone. Some further discussion on this is provided below. Also potentially helpful on this point is facilitating the gender rule, i.e. boys pray with boys and girls pray with girls. While this doesn't have to be a blanket rule, it might be helpful, particularly in a youth group context.

Thirdly, it's important to align prayer ministry with pastoral care. Not everything can or should be dealt with during a prayer ministry time. Often post prayer direction is required. This should be easily available and encouraged. People's experiences vary greatly when they encounter the Holy Spirit. Leaders and elders should therefore be available and willing to explain or discuss these with people if required. Fourthly, as an extension to this point, it should be noted that the goal of prayer ministry is that people meet with Jesus. When Jesus has more Lordship in people's lives we see chains being

broken, gifts poured out and healing come, both inner and physical. All are signs of the Kingdom. We should never be chasing an experience for experience sake. People have spiritual experiences regularly in today's spiritual climate. What we are after is change. It's not what specifically happens to the person during a ministry time that is the focus (whether or not they shake, laugh, cry or fall over is essentially irrelevant), but rather the fruit that is seen in the person's life as a result. Finally, it's worth remembering that prayer ministry is about Jesus ministering to His people. He does the work and He is the leader. When it comes to prayer ministry, what's often required is both space for Jesus to work and sometimes silence for us to discern His leading. Too often we are uncomfortable with space or silence. Make a point of allowing them. Help people respond to God by not being a distraction.

THE 5 STEP MODEL

The prayer ministry model provided here has 5 major steps. These allow the person praying to follow a guideline. As mentioned we must be careful not to institute this model as a formula which guarantees 'results'. Instead we must understand that the model sits upon the foundational base of values and priorities discussed in chapters 1 and 2, i.e. our focus on building for the Kingdom and the value we place on the work of the Holy Spirit. The model is inherently simple. Starting with a brief interview of the person, we then simply invite the Holy Spirit, wait for Him to move, respond to His leading and provide some post prayer direction.²

Interview > Invite > Wait > Respond > Direction

Step 1: The INTERVIEW > Invite > Wait > Respond > Direction

Very simply, this is to introduce yourself and to determine why the person is seeking prayer. Be listening to the answer both on the natural level and on the supernatural level. Sometimes God will reveal to you the root cause of a problem and it may be different to what they assume. More on this shortly. Try and make the person feel comfortable at this point, especially if they are not used to having someone pray with them. Encourage them to relax. There is no need to get all religious, serious or overly excited. Getting all worked

up sometimes actually stops the process and constructs a protective barrier around our hearts, which in turn makes it difficult for us to open ourselves fully to the work of the Spirit. Explain that you are not going to say or do very much but will instead wait for the Spirit's leading.

Encourage them to close their eyes and focus on Jesus. A lot of people want to 'do' something at this point. Encourage them that their job during this time is not to do anything at all except open themselves up to God and receive. Part of this includes choosing an open body posture. Closed body postures, such as folded arms or interlocked hands, are subconscious modes of self protection. Most people do not even realise they are doing it. Encourage them to open their body posture and remove these barriers. A good posture for receiving is just to open the palms, in the same way people receive things with an open hand. This is simply an outward physical demonstration of what they are doing internally in the spiritual. Encourage them to do this but remember do not force anything on anyone.

Once the person has opened their posture, gently lay hand on their shoulder. As mentioned, it's wise to ask the person's permission to do so. While I have had a few questioning eyebrow raises from people who have not seen prayer like this before, I have never had someone refuse this request. Practically speaking the shoulder is the best location as it's not an intrusive or sensitive area. Sometimes a hand can gently be placed on the head or forehead of the person. Be mindful, though, not to keep it there too long at any one time. People do not like to feel smothered and certainly do not like to feel as if they're being 'pushed'. The chest or heart is another option but, for obvious reasons, this is off limits for 50% of our population. Enough said.

The laying on of hands is not just a cultural thing. There are several reasons why physical contact is important in prayer ministry and we see many examples in Scripture. The laying on of hands is used to impart blessing (Mt. 19:13-15; Mk. 10:16) or spiritual gifts (Acts 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). It's also observed when ordaining or commissioning for ministry (Acts 6:6; 13:3). Of particular importance, the laying on of hands is used when healing the sick (Mk. 1:41; 6:5; 16:18; Lk. 4:40; Acts 28:8). Many accounts show Jesus using touch in conjunction with healing conditions (Mt. 8:3; Lk. 7:12-15). Practically speaking it is also very helpful in providing reassurance to the person receiving prayer that someone is praying with them. This allows them to relax. Sometimes people become overwhelmed when the Spirit meets them powerfully. As a result they may

lose their balance. This will be discussed shortly but if this occurs it's comforting for the person to know that someone will be there to catch them. This is why standing slightly to the side and placing a hand on the shoulder is best, as it practically allows you to move quickly if required.

Excessive back rubbing, hair stroking, hugging and the like are not encouraged. While this may be intended as a comfort, it is often a hinderance and a distraction. In some circumstances it also crosses boundaries that exist for a reason. Once again it's a good idea when youth are praying for each other that a gender rule is put in place, or at least have members of the same gender present.

Occasionally at large church services or events such as conferences, lots of people respond to a specific call to receive prayer and by the time you get to each one they are already engaging with God on their own. This is a fantastic scenario. When this is the case there is no need to interrupt the person in order to interview them. Simply lay a hand on the shoulder, move onto step 2 and bless what the Lord is already doing.

Step 2: Interview > **INVITE the Holy Spirit** > Wait > Respond > Direction

The Holy Spirit is the agent who does the work. Invite His presence to come with a simple prayer such as, "Holy Spirit come and meet (insert name)," or simply, "Come Holy Spirit." When we do this we are essentially asking Him to move in whatever way He wishes within the person we're praying for. The important thing to note is that we do not need to make long-winded and 'wordy' prayers. In fact, this often slows down the process and becomes a distraction to the person receiving. Many of us in our church traditions have been taught that prayer requires many words and long sentences. These types of prayers may be appropriate on certain occasions, but prayer ministry is not one of those occasions. Do your best to refrain from filling the space with words. The Holy Spirit does the work. Simply invite Him to do so and trust He will act. The Holy Spirit doesn't need us to convince Him with articulate rhetoric. We don't have to hype anything up.

Some people are perplexed by a prayer such as, "Come Holy Spirit," suggesting it implies that the Holy Spirit wasn't present to begin with or wasn't previously working. Of course this is not actually what the prayer implies. We like to think of things in spatial

terms. God, however, is Spirit and in one sense does not occupy any space in the spatial and temporal way we automatically assume. He is omnipresent, everywhere, always. Indeed He is already present and working. The fact that the person responded for prayer ministry in the first place is a good indication the Spirit was already working, sometimes quite powerfully, within the person. However, by inviting Him to come we're actively welcoming His presence and in doing so demonstrating trust and surrender to His authority. It is a way of asking that He will continue what He has already started and move more powerfully.

While this concept will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, in short Scripture uses two words, *in* and *on*, to describe the two distinct aspects of how the Spirit interacts with His people. He comes *on* or *upon* us to equip us and empower us. Although confusing, this may at times be referred to as being 'filled' with the Spirit. This 'filling' differs from His indwelling in believers as a result of salvation (see chapter 2). While He is always present dwelling *in* us as a result of our salvation, we are also asking that He come *upon* us. "Come Holy Spirit," is a way of intentionally lowering our barriers and opening ourselves up to His leading and His working. It's an invitation for Him to have His way amongst us. In prayer ministry, the prayer is just as much an invitation for Him to come *upon* the person praying in order to lead, show the will of the Father and give specific gifts required at the occasion, as it is for Him to come *upon* the person who is receiving prayer.

Step 3: Interview > Invite > **WAIT and watch** > Respond > Direction

This is a crucial step in the process and often the hardest section for many people. While simply watching and waiting is theoretically very easy, many people find themselves uncomfortable with space or silence and therefore rush this very important step. It's so important that we give the Holy Spirit the space and time to work in the person without us getting in the way. All we have to do is bless what the Lord is doing. Refrain from filling the space with words and allow the Spirit to minister to the person.

How long do we wait? The answer: until it feels awkward... and then some more. There are several reasons for this. Waiting is a demonstration of trust and faith. By waiting we are expressing our trust in God's authority. We are submitting to His direction and

leading and explicitly giving Him space to work in whatever way He so desires. Waiting expresses our faith in God's desire to meet with His people. He alone has the intimate knowledge of each persons' needs and the power to bring transformation and healing. Waiting is also practical. It takes people time to settle themselves, intentionally lay aside their worries and agendas and open themselves up to receiving from God. It's also a chance for us to wait for direction and leading from God. We should wait until the Lord directs us otherwise. Once again, John 5:19 shows Jesus responding to the will of the Father. If it's good enough for Jesus then it's good enough for us. Waiting is a time for us to be actively listening and watching, constantly asking the Lord what He wants to do and what He would like us to pray into.

This model encourages praying with our eyes open, or at the least a combination of eyes open and eyes closed. The reasons for this are mostly practical. By watching the person we can often see physical evidence of the Holy Spirit working in them. In a similar way that the presence of the wind can be seen by the movement in the trees, the Spirit's presence on the person often becomes visible by a physical response. These physical reactions are common and can be expected. If we have our eyes closed we will miss them.

As humans, we are created with a body and with emotions. God is well aware of this for He designed it that way. The physical is part of who we are, we must not be afraid of it. Without thinking, we physically respond when our favourite footballer scores a goal or when our favourite band takes to the stage. When the Spirit comes to bring change and healing, it's not unreasonable to also expect a physical reaction to accompany that change. A physical response to the Holy Spirit is nothing to be concerned about, nor is it something we should be particularly fixated upon.

The ways people may physically respond to the Spirit are numerous. Many physical responses are merely bodily reactions to an encounter with His holiness. Some common examples include looking peaceful, curling over, swaying gently or gently fluttering the eyelids. These are simply muscular responses to the power of God, many of which can actually be stopped if the person wished. Generally speaking physical responses are not indications that the person has lost control of their body. Rather, on most occasions the person is so engaged with Jesus at the time that they are actually unaware of the way their body is reacting. In almost every case they actually don't wish to stop.

Shaking or trembling is another muscular response commonly seen. This reaction is described regularly throughout Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. Trembling is recorded in both Isaiah and Jeremiah (Is. 66:5; Jer. 5:22; 23:9). Shaking was a common physical response when entering the Lord's presence and was often symbolic of fearing God (Ps. 2:11; 119:120; Ex. 19:16; Ezr. 9:4). The New Testament shows several cases where people responded to God in this way for a variety of reasons (Mk. 5:33; 16:8; Lk. 8:47; Acts 16:29; 1 Cor. 2:3; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 12:21).

Tears and verbal cries are common. Sometimes such responses are quite confronting when first observed or experienced. Sometimes tears or verbal cries indicate that the Lord is doing some inner healing of deep hurt. I have seen people respond quite loudly in this manner. This may be a response to pain or grief that has been buried for a long time. As the Holy Spirit releases and heals that pain, the physical reaction is associated. Such a response is both logical and expected. Tears may also indicate that God is softening someone's heart or growing a deeper heart of compassion within. At other times tears may be tears of joy. Jesus himself responded at times with tears (Jn. 11:35; Lk. 19:41; Heb. 5:7) and was described as being moved by compassion (Mt. 9:36). We are not meant to be fearful of tears.

As I was growing up I struggled with anxiety. Sometimes this crippled me emotionally and as a result, at times my emotions were so locked up I became almost numb. I found it very difficult to cry and it was very rare that my emotions were expressed in this way. In recent years, through many times of prayer, the Lord has worked within me and healed many of the root causes of my anxiety. These prayer times were often accompanied with a lot of tears as the Holy Spirit released and healed years of bottled up tension I was carrying. Although perplexed at the time, my inhibition towards tears during prayer was put to rest when a friend said, "Well, if you can't cry in a church where can you cry?" His simple statement makes a lot of logical sense. Praying our tears, furthermore even sowing them (Ps. 126:5) is perhaps the healthiest thing we can do with them.

As mentioned earlier, when a person encounters the Holy Spirit in a powerful way it's not uncommon for them to appear to lose their balance and sometimes fall over. Scripture has numerous examples of such a response (Dan. 8:17; 10:8-9; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; Jn. 18:6; Acts 9:4). Some term this response being 'slain in the Spirit.' While it's a common or even expected response in some circles, there is often no actual benefit to the

falling over itself. The benefit is the change brought about by the powerful encounter with Jesus. Jesus is our focus. It's not the spiritual experience or any specific reaction that we value but, rather, the internal change that results from that experience. For this reason we must never try to elicit any specific response from the person. When it comes to falling over, I have prayed with several people who have specifically expressed their desire not to fall over. In these instances I simply advise they sit on a chair or on the floor and we pray from there. This action entirely removes the barrier of fear or self-consciousness that might get in the way of them opening up to God. Occasionally people will sway back and forth while being prayed for. If this occurs I similarly advise them to sit down or perhaps lie down on the floor themselves, particularly if the area where we are praying is crowded. The aim is not that the person falls over but, rather, that they encounter Jesus.

Watching is important because gauging all this is only possible if our eyes are open. On one occasion I was praying with a man at a conference. After standing and watching for a while I noticed he looked particularly engaged with Jesus and was not even aware of my presence next to him. The Spirit was very gently but very powerfully ministering to him. There were lots of people responding for prayer so I figured that, since he was quite content, I'd go and pray with someone else and come back to him. Just as I was about to walk away I noticed he began to sway. I was not even touching him and suddenly he fell directly forward, like a plank, towards the stairs leading up to the stage. Thankfully I was able to catch him. Potential disaster avoided... just! He lay prostrate for the good part of an hour. I had not said a single word. Had I been praying for him with my eyes closed I'd have missed the whole thing. I was reminded once again of watching to see what God is doing by praying with my eyes open.

I have also prayed with people who elicit no particular physical response and yet have met Jesus profoundly. This once again reminds us that physical responses, or 'manifestations' are never the goal. The goal is that people meet Jesus and feel free to respond to Him. Although a physical response may be a regular indication of the work of the Spirit, it is not a *necessary* accompaniment.

Step 4: Interview > Invite > Wait > **RESPOND to the Spirit** > Direction

The reason for watching and waiting is to allow space for the Spirit to work and to lead us. While watching and waiting it's important to listen to God's still small voice as He may direct us what and how to pray. Chapters 7 and 8 provide some helpful practical discussion on discerning God's voice. It's important to be asking Jesus to give us more information about the person or the condition so that we can pray as the Spirit leads. The Spirit may direct you to share a prophetic or encouraging word, or perhaps give you an insight into something He may want to heal, either physically or emotionally. An accurate prophetic word can bring much encouragement to a person. Often this will come with some form of Scripture associated. This step in the model is the time to start delivering those prophetic words and start praying into them accordingly. As will be discussed in chapter 8, deliver a prophetic word with humility. Do not make a grandiose claim like, "Thus sayeth the Lord." Just relax and be yourself.

The Holy Spirit may give an insight or word of knowledge which helps direct us how to pray. For example someone may have requested prayer for healing of a physical condition, but is actually unaware of the root cause of the ailment. As I was growing up I regularly experienced severe stomach cramps. At the time I was unaware that the root cause of the physical pain was actually grounded in emotional and psychological stress associated with anxiety. When I received prayer for the physical condition I was actually unaware that God really wanted to free me from the root cause of the pain, my anxiety. When praying for people, always be asking God for further prayer direction.

On some occasions the Holy Spirit may direct us to pray into something separate from the person's initial, specific request. For example someone may be requesting prayer for a swollen ankle but the Holy Spirit may also want to heal the unforgiveness they carry towards a family member, or bring freedom to their mind trapped by fear. Of course pray for the ankle, but do not neglect to pray for that which the Spirit is prompting! Follow where God is leading.

Practically there are numerous ways to follow the promptings of the Spirit. If the Holy Spirit has revealed something and you would prefer not to stop whatever is already happening, the insight can be worked into a prayer without really interrupting the person.

Generally speaking, the person will respond in some way if the insight is accurate, perhaps with a simple nodding of the head or a physical response as listed above. An alternative approach is to briefly pause and ask the person whether they would like further prayer into that certain issue. This is a very practical option and won't 'stop' what the Holy Spirit is doing. It's also a good opportunity to ask the person where they think the Holy Spirit is working and whether or not they would like prayer into anything else specifically. This may help you in selecting what to pray. Briefly explain to the person why you are praying as you are and perhaps why they might be experiencing certain physical reactions. This reassures them that God is indeed working and helps build both their faith and yours.

Step 5: Interview > Invite > Wait > Respond > Post Prayer DIRECTION

Once the prayer session has come to a logical close, usually by the person opening their eyes and letting you know they're done, it is helpful to quickly debrief with the person about what went on, what the Holy Spirit did and how best to respond to that. Encourage them to personally pray through and test any prophetic words that were given. Also encourage them towards some sort of post prayer pastoral care, particularly if the Spirit was working quite obviously or highlighted some specific areas. This allows them to debrief with others and put their experience in the context of their wider walk with God and their faith community. Not everything can be dealt with in one prayer session and sometimes these times only scrape the surface of areas where God wants to bring transformation. In certain circumstances directing them towards people who can help with further, regular times of prayer and counseling might be required. Finally, we must ensure that the person leaves feeling loved and valued.

Growing in prayer ministry

Like most things we learn by doing, particularly when the 'doing' involves stepping out of our comfort zones. There is only so much that reading theory can teach us. Once we have grasped an understanding of the reasons for why and how, we really need to put the theory into practice to properly grow. This is where providing a safe environment for

growth is beneficial, supported by pastoral care and supervision. A surgeon does not learn how to perform an operation just from reading a medical text book. At some stage they must actually step out and perform the operation, usually under the guidance of someone more experienced. Jesus taught his disciples to minister using this exact method. After calling them he taught them the theory, let them watch the practical and then commissioned them to go and try it for themselves (Matt 10:1, 5-8). These disciples then later went on to train a second generation of disciples in Acts.

Surrounding oneself with others who know how to pray effectively is also helpful. Tagging along with them as they pray for others is a great way to learn by observation. Watching how they pray with people and then talking with them later over a coffee about why they decided to pray in that manner, or how they discerned God's leading, can provide a lot of helpful guidance. I have learnt much simply by picking the brains and the experience of older Christians who have seen God work miracles in many peoples' lives. By being a constant learner and having a teachable attitude we can learn a great deal from the experiences of those who have gone before us.

The 'skills' of prayer ministry are more easily developed in an environment where prayer ministry is both expected and encouraged. This expectation needs to be modeled from the front. Developing a culture of expectation requires perseverance, repetition, time and teaching. Even when prayer ministry is a regular part of meeting together, regular teaching is still required. This might take the form of optional training sessions or teaching from the front as prayer ministry takes place. In one way or another it needs to be prioritised in order for people to continually feel comfortable responding and for people to grow in their experience. Without this intention it can, unfortunately, so easily drop down the priority list behind lengthy church announcements. Celebrating the 'wins' is helpful here. Consistently providing opportunities for people to share their stories and their testimonies in a public setting not only helps in building faith and expectation, it also reminds everybody that God loves to meet with His people to bring healing and transformation. Share these personal experiences and celebrate the goodness of God together.

Other alternatives for growth exist if your community is not supportive of this model for prayer ministry. For example gathering together a prayer group of like minded people to meet and pray for each other regularly is a fantastic way to learn and grow. I have even

heard of such groups existing in high schools, started by friends who wished to gather once a week before school and pray for each other and for their high school. Encouraging prayer ministry in a small group scenario grows expectation organically from a grassroots level while also providing a safe learning environment which encourages feedback and relationship. Small groups also encourage a high level of community engagement and, as there are often no strict time schedules to adhere to, provide the practical requirements of space and time.

Finally, I'd encourage you to pray with people at every opportunity. Not only will you grow in prayer ministry quickly, you will also have the absolute privilege of seeing God change peoples' lives first hand and no doubt be greatly encouraged as He uses you to minister His love to others.

The main pointers:

- There is no formula for ministering. We follow God's leading. Jesus said that he, "...can only do what he sees his father doing." (Jn 5:19)
- Love is our motivation for ministry.
- The dignity of the person must always be valued.
- When we minister we can use a 5 step model. We can Interview (the person), Invite (the Spirit), Wait (for Him to work) and watch (what He's doing), Respond (to His leading) and provide post prayer direction.

Interview > Invite > Wait > Respond > Post Prayer Direction.

- We must learn to become comfortable with space. We follow God's direction and bless what He is doing.



Chapter 4

CLINIC TIME

How to lead prayer ministry

I have often found leading a time of prayer ministry quite hard. Before I'd had any experience in leading a prayer ministry time I was always thankful that I was never "guy up the front". Fortunately (though often it has felt like an unfortunate opportunity), God has brought me to a place where I have had to put my money where my mouth is. God currently has me in a leadership capacity with His community and my theological convictions need to be practically worked out. I wholeheartedly believe that God is present, able, and willing to engage with all facets of our every day lives. I fully affirm that as we wait on Him and ask for His will to be done that he'll actually bring it to bear. Therefore, we wait and we pray. Together.

But it's an internally terrifying, awkward, and exposing experience.

Here are some things that God has taught me along the way to help calm down the anxieties over leading prayer ministry times:

- It's not about you.
- No, no, It's *actually* not about you: The "guy or gal up the front" focus is very unhelpful. We don't make anything happen. We've just put our hand up to intentionally notice what God might be doing at that moment and help others to engage with Him through that.
- We do this together. God is interested in working through His whole body. The prerogative is not on you. It's on Him through us, so invite those who you are journeying with to help you facilitate what God is doing. God will not just dispense all His words of knowledge through you!

- Get over being silent. This one is hard. In my experience, Silence seems to be directly proportional to awkwardness. However, if we are going to listen then that just might mean that we have to be quiet longer than we would like.
- Explain and demystify: I've always found it an uncomfortable, sometimes unnerving experience, when I haven't quite understood what was going on in a communal setting. I suspect i'm not the only one. Helping to explain why we are being silent, why we are inviting God to come and work amongst us, why some people are responding, can really help people keep engaging with God and take the whole prayer ministry moment out of the land of "super-mystical" and take it to the land of humble dependance.
- Pray for people when you are not leading a ministry time: Becoming familiar with praying for people will help you to recognise more of what God is like and how He works within and amongst us.
- Trust Him: He is interested in building up and strengthening His body as well as helping people come to know Him. Trust that He will do that.
- It's not about you. So do everything you can to keep making it actually about Him.

I still find it hard. But it has been extremely helpful to try and do all I can to put my eyes back on Him and take them off myself in times of leading ministry.

Dan Lecordier - Pastor of Hope Community Vineyard

Today's world is run by the clock. Our lives and our church services reflect this. We constantly look to fit more into one 24 hour period and as a result, for many of us, finding space is becoming increasingly difficult. Modern church services are sometimes run more like a check list to be completed to the minute than an opportunity to encounter the living God together. Thankfully God is not like us. He is never late or in a hurry and He works outside the small time allocations we designate for Him. Too often, though, we are so concerned with our own agenda and the running of a schedule that we miss the still small voice of the Lord. In doing so we miss divine opportunities to partner with Him in seeing His Kingdom come, seeing people set free and seeing the world changed by the *whole* gospel. Such a realisation is confronting. How do we prevent this? We must intentionally create more space both in our lives and in our church services for the work of the Holy Spirit.

I've titled this chapter 'Clinic Time'. The term once again originated with John Wimber and the Vineyard movement who used the term 'clinic' to describe training sessions and ministry times. Having looked at the prayer ministry model in the previous chapter, the goal of this chapter is to provide a written 'clinic' to help train you to better

facilitate times of prayer ministry in your own context and, in turn, train others to lead times of prayer ministry. I hope to provide you once again with a very flexible model that may serve as a foundational starting point when leading prayer ministry.

Learning how to facilitate a prayer ministry time, within any context, firstly requires that we learn how to put aside the clock and create space. The more comfortable we become with silence and with space the more freedom we give the Spirit to work in our lives and our churches. Moreover, to disregard the clock for a few minutes and give God the freedom to work among His people in whatever way He desires is actually a demonstration of trust. It's an opportunity to submit the clock, which has become an invisible idol in our culture, to the feet of Jesus and declare that He actually does have Lordship in our lives and our churches. Of course this model may seem risky, for it requires the submission of control. But we have not submitted our control to one who will abuse it, but rather to the One who is ultimately in control: our helper, our rock, our friend. There is no safer place to be.

The importance of leadership and team

As we've established in previous chapters, 'ministry' is not limited to a select few but rather everyone gets to be involved in partnering with God in doing the 'stuff' of the Kingdom. That said, in order for this to occur, ministry must be facilitated in an orderly fashion. People must be made to feel safe and free to respond. This is best done by one or two people leading the ministry time. Such an arrangement helps maintain order and provides intentional direction to the time. This person does not necessarily have to be on staff or be the person running the meeting in general, although this may well be the case. When we were originally pursuing prayer ministry in our church service, for the sake of consistency we decided it best to have the same one person lead the time every week. This time was often after the sermon, although there was freedom given to this person to work alongside the pastor in leading a ministry time at any point in the service, in response to the Spirit's prompting. This consistent arrangement allowed the congregation to feel safe and become expectant that ministry was to occur at some point. It also allowed the ministry leader to grow in their role. As this expectancy grew we trained several other people to run ministry times and they would take it in turns. More recently we have trained

the service leaders to facilitate a time of prayer ministry, thus combining those two 'roles' we have in our service.

There is no hard and fast rule for who should lead the time. The important point is that the times are led. This helps maintain order and establishes a point of consistency. This person should obviously have a passion for Jesus and for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They should be humble, open to the Holy Spirit, willing to step out and follow His promptings and confident enough to lead the people to respond in this direction. Although not essential, it certainly helps if this person has shown to be consistently gifted in the area of the prophetic. It also helps if this person has a team around them who share a similar passion and can support the leader by helping to discern a particular focus for the ministry time or by praying with the people who respond. This prayer ministry team can also train others in how to pray by encouraging them to get involved in praying with different people as they respond.

A model for leading a ministry time

The first time I led a time of prayer ministry was right after I'd delivered a sermon at a church I was visiting. Having not given many visiting sermons, or really many sermons full stop, I was particularly nervous and everybody listening knew it. I was not disheartened though and plowed through, finally landing somewhere which resembled a conclusion. Now it came to prayer ministry time. I'd been looking forward to running a ministry time at this church all week for I knew they were open to the work of the Holy Spirit and to creating space for Him to move, an exciting combination indeed. I envisioned a scene similar to Acts 2 or 4 occurring, or at least something similar to stories I had read in revival books. Thankfully the building was brick and well constructed, just in case any shaking of the foundations occurred. I ran through the model and asked people to respond. Nobody moved. I gave some further options to encourage people to respond. Nothing. Then someone got up... and walked out the back to the bathrooms. My pastor was there with me and I glanced at him with a look of "help!" He got up, gave a completely different call and almost half the congregation stepped forward for prayer. It was a rather humbling experience. In hindsight I have to say that my expectations were possibly a little high and were in actual fact not in line with what *God* wanted to do at that particular time and place.

What this model emphasises is our dependence on the Spirit. God is in control and we follow His leading. The model simply provides an opportunity for us to lay aside our agendas and for Him to meet with us. In that sense it is an extension of the model given in chapter 3. You will start to see momentum as you learn to discern the Spirit's leading and work with Him in helping people respond to His promptings. Do not be discouraged if running ministry times seems more like hard work at first. It takes time for a community to develop a culture of expectation, waiting on God and responding to Him.

As we've noted, Jesus would only do what he saw his Father doing (Jn. 5:19). That is a key to understanding how Jesus ministered. He was always under the leading of the Father. That means he did things not only in the Father's name but specifically as the Father was directing him. The model presented here follows this same principle, as does the model explained in chapter 3. We never try and make something happen. We need not hype anything up, we merely respond to where we sense God is already working. Since we can do nothing without Him, all that's required is an emptying of our hands and a willingness to act in obedience and faith. The model has four main elements: *Invite, Wait, Watch, Respond*. These are also the main elements seen in the prayer model provided in chapter 3. The model is definitely helpful as a starting point but should not be constrictive. It's important to be willing to step away from it at any point if the Spirit leads us to do so. Leaders must remain open to the Spirit who moves in infinite ways and suggests an amazing variety of alternatives.

Before starting a ministry time it's usually a good idea to make people feel relaxed and comfortable. There is no need to get all serious or 'religious', in fact most of the time this makes it harder for people to engage. Humour or a relaxed and confident demeanor usually helps people to relax. One friend of mine will often crack a joke. Its main purpose is to kill the religiosity present in the room. Laughter also has a fantastic way of building trust and community. Be practical but don't take yourself too seriously. Ministry often naturally falls after the sermon in a service. If the sermon was particularly long (or particularly boring!) there is no harm in taking a moment to stand everyone up and let them stretch. Help people personally engage with God by removing as many inhibitors or distractions as possible and then proceed in helping them focus on Jesus.

It matters little at this point whether the congregation stands or sits. Each has their different benefits but unless the Spirit has directed something specifically, simply choose

an option that is practical and instruct the congregation accordingly. It is helpful to encourage them to open their posture and, if they feel comfortable, to open their palms. As seen in the previous chapter this is a non-defensive posture which is helpful in receiving. The temptation may exist to set an 'atmosphere' or mood with music. Personally I prefer no music as this eliminates any sense of hype or manipulation. Music can quite easily be added in time, if desired. Begin the ministry time by inviting the Holy Spirit to come and minister.

INVITE the Holy Spirit... What? Where was He before?

There is no need for a wordy prayer at this point, just a concise prayer which welcomes the Holy Spirit and asks Him to minister and meet with His people. Personally I prefer the simple prayer, "Come Holy Spirit." Of course this doesn't mean that God was absent from the service (or our lives) up until this point. It's simply a way of inviting Him to do whatever He likes amongst His people. It's a way of laying aside our agendas, releasing control and intentionally creating an open space for Him to work. He is the leader and we follow His direction. By praying such a prayer we are requesting that He makes His presence with us more obvious. It is also a way of ensuring that, as a congregation gathered, we are united in seeking His face.

While this was explained briefly in the previous chapter the concept of inviting the Holy Spirit to come and move is worth discussing further.¹ We saw in chapter 2 that the Holy Spirit (Ruach/Pneuma) is the agent of the Trinity who is present when God is *doing* something. Indeed now that Jesus has risen to be with the Father, the Spirit is the part of the Trinity who is at work in the world and in our lives. He is our access point through whom we can know Jesus and the Father. Put very simply, He introduces us to the Father and the Son and dwells *inside* us when we give our lives to Jesus.

It is the action of the Spirit both within us, and around us, which can sometimes be confusing to understand. As humans we have physical bodies with a certain volume and therefore like to view everything spatially, in a three dimensional manner. If something is in one place, for example, it cannot be simultaneously in another. God, on the other hand, is Spirit and inhabits eternity. In that sense He does not occupy space in the way that we understand. He can't be measured and His spatial location cannot be marked on a GPS.

As a Christian, the non-spatial Holy Spirit dwells within you. He also dwells in every other Christian and dwells everywhere else in His omnipresence. Thus if we think of everything spatially things quickly become quite confusing! Scripture also talks of being ‘filled’ with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). If we already have the Spirit in us, how can we then be ‘filled’? How does an infinite being squish inside our bodies?

The two words, *in* and *on*, mentioned in chapter 3, help us in our understanding. These two words describe two distinct actions of the Holy Spirit with His people. On the one hand He dwells within us at all times. Indeed, as a seal (1 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14), this indwelling defines the status of believers and gives us an assurance of our inheritance in Christ. At the same time the Spirit comes *on* us at particular times for specific purposes. This is what is regularly referred to as being ‘filled’ with the Spirit, although various terms exist which describe the same action. This action is often quite noticeable to an observer as the Spirit’s presence on a person is often accompanied by a physical response, the fruit of which is also usually quite apparent after the event. The physical responses are simply that, responses to power affecting our physical bodies. It’s the fruit of this experience which is of ultimate value. Such an experience is commonly associated with healing, both physical and emotional. Typically people also see dramatic change in their lives as a result of having the Spirit come upon them. Common responses are a hunger for Scripture, a turning away from sin, greater expressions of love towards God and others, increased generosity and a greater honouring of Christ.

To partially comprehend the work of the Holy Spirit we must come to terms with our inability to think of things outside our spatial mindset, or simply surrender to the fact that we cannot fully fathom the concept of an infinite omnipresent being. What is important to understand, though, is that we not only have the Spirit dwelling within us but we can expect to be ‘filled’ with the Spirit, i.e. have Him come *upon* us. This can occur once or many times. As the agent of the Trinity who is present to do the work and will of the Father and the Son, He comes upon us in order to equip us. The Spirit comes on His people to enable them to do all the works of the Kingdom. It is not limited to a once off event. While not pressing the issue too far, it might be said that indwelling is constant and never changes while the action of the Spirit coming upon someone for healing or empowering or the like may occur many times. Following Pentecost there were subsequent outpourings on the believers (Acts 4:8, 29-31). Furthermore, Paul encourages us to be “...filled with the Spirit....” (Eph. 5:18). Since we already have the Spirit dwelling inside us, this being ‘filled’

is not getting more of the Spirit in a spatial or volume sense, but can be thought of as part of the process of the Spirit getting more of us and in turn equipping us to live a more godly life.

How then does this relate to ‘inviting’ the Holy Spirit? The concept is derived from the doctrine of the ‘manifest presence’ of God. As above, God is omnipresent but in addition to this, not in contradiction to it, He also chooses to reveal His presence in specifically powerful ways at specific times and places. It might be said that the infinite Spirit ‘descends’ or ‘comes down’ and interacts with finite humanity. God’s manifest presence is seen in numerous examples, both Old Testament and New Testament. In the Old Testament obvious examples include God’s presence in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2), His presence on Mt Sinai (Ex. 19:16), His enveloping of the tent of meeting and filling it with glory (Ex. 40:34), priests being unable to stand because of God’s obvious glory (1 Kg. 8:10-11; 2 Chr. 7:1-3) and the fire of God consuming sacrifices (Lev. 9:24; 1 Kg. 18:38; 1 Chr. 21:26). Some New Testament examples include the Holy Spirit descending like a dove (Jn. 1:32), the Spirit filling believers (Acts 2:4; Acts 4:31) and John falling as though dead in the presence of the Lord (Rev. 1:17).

By praying something similar to, “Come Holy Spirit,” we are asking that the Spirit move in a powerful way to equip, heal and empower His church. The point is not the words of the prayer but the sentiment. It is an invitation for His *manifest* presence to come. Indeed it’s also a declaration of *our* intent. Not only are we asking the Spirit to make Himself more obvious, we are also laying aside our agendas (and our watches), heightening our awareness of His presence with us and putting our trust in His desire to meet with us and bring about transformation. The prayer is also a request for Him to pour out His gifts so that the church may be encouraged. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the gifts are allocated according to His will. They are not a badge to wear and are not kept in one’s pocket. When the Spirit moves He distributes a variety of gifts among His people for use in that particular context, time and place.

WAIT and watch

This is a crucial element in the ministry time. We must wait for the Lord to minister and be watching with both physical and spiritual eyes so that we can discern where He is

leading. God is always the initiator, we simply respond to what we see He's already doing. Throughout the ministry time it's necessary to continue to explain everything to the congregation. This helps people learn and understand what's going on. It also helps everyone feel relaxed and included. Before waiting, explain that there is no constrictive time limit to this and that silence is welcomed. Encourage people to focus on the Lord and ask Him to meet with them personally.

There are three main reasons why a time of waiting is so crucial. Firstly we do not know what God wants to do in any given ministry time or how He wants to do it. The only way to find out is to take the time to wait on His leading. Secondly, it takes quite some time for people to settle themselves, lay aside their distractions and to-do lists and begin to engage with God. Waiting gives everybody the time and space to focus on Jesus. Thirdly, waiting is a demonstration of trust. Today's culture is not known for being patient. When we wait on God we demonstrate our desire to really meet with Him. It is a decision to swap our agendas for His, to give Him control of the clock and to trust that He will initiate, as indeed He has done throughout history.

Those of us who are very time oriented will no doubt ask at this point, "How long do we wait for?" The answer is the same as when we are praying with somebody. Since waiting is ultimately a demonstration of trust, we should wait until it feels awkward... and then continue to wait some more. There is no specific figure for this process but very generally somewhere in the ball park of 5 minutes is common, although I have been in meetings where the congregation has waited earnestly for 15 minutes or more before the Spirit began to move obviously and powerfully. Be practical and pastoral, though. Do not initially introduce your congregation to the concept of waiting with a 15 minute time of silence. As mentioned, it takes time to develop a culture of trust and expectation within a community.

Whilst waiting, it's important to be watching to see where the Spirit is working. This watching is in both the physical sense and the spiritual sense. We need to be viewing things with spiritual eyes, constantly asking God to show us where and how He's working. Often in these moments one can sense, or even feel, the manifest presence of God in the room. I sometimes get a feeling of excitement like butterflies in my stomach. Others I know feel a strange warmth, perhaps on their hands, or a pleasant heaviness as if someone is gently leaning on them. Commonly a strange yet positive 'thickness' in the air is sensed by

everyone present and often accompanies a holy silence, where no one moves or even coughs! After only a short time it becomes quite obvious to the observer who in the congregation is particularly engaged with God and who the Spirit is said to be 'resting' on. Some physical signs of this were discussed in the previous chapter but include things such as a look of peacefulness on the face, tears, slight trembling, fluttering of the eyelids or sensations such as a feeling of heat or heaviness on the hands. Sometimes the Spirit will begin to release pain from people's lives and this is often expressed in crying out. It's important to continue to explain everything and encourage the congregation to remain engaged with God. Saying something quite simple such as, "It's alright, the Lord is here and He is working," is usually sufficient.

Often the Spirit works in 'waves', that is some people may initially start to display signs of the Spirit coming upon them and then shortly afterwards a second and third 'wave' might follow in which others will also begin to be obviously touched by the Spirit. This is simply how it often appears when watching from the front but is not always the case. God is free to work in whichever way He pleases. Once it becomes apparent that the Lord is meeting with His people it is time to move from waiting and watching to responding.

RESPOND

It's important that anyone who wants prayer has the opportunity to receive it. The role of the leader here is to enable this to occur. Since we do what we see the Father doing the best place to start is with those who are already being touched by the Spirit. God often has a different order to our own. Those that He is obviously meeting with should have someone pray with them. Since God is already meeting with these people, the role of the person praying is to simply bless what the Lord is already doing. They don't need to say too many words or try and make something happen. A gentle hand on the shoulder is sufficient. It's helpful if the leader reminds people of that.

In order for this to occur people need to be given an opportunity to respond to God and make it known that they would like to receive prayer. Inviting people to come forward to the front for prayer is a simple method which enables this. Other methods include inviting people to raise their hand if everyone is standing, or to stand up if the congregation has been seated for the time of waiting. For other communities, coming forward to the

communion rail may be a desirable method, or moving to the side where a prayer ministry team is willing and able to pray with people. It's important that the prayer ministry team can also be directed to pray with people who are meeting with God but have not necessarily identified themselves. Sometimes people engage so deeply with God that they do not even register the invitation to respond.

The Lord may well give specific discernment or specific words of knowledge that help us follow what He is doing in the community and identify those that He wishes to particularly meet. Part of learning to lead prayer ministry is developing a system or dialect with God so that He can communicate where He is working and we can respond. A friend of mine has developed a system whereby he asks God to show him what He's doing in one person. It's then assumed that what the Lord is doing in one He is doing in many. Such a system is by no means flawless but has been developed in relationship with God over time and is consistently accurate. Personally I find God will bring a random word or thought to my mind. This thought is usually an area where He would like to bring healing to people, or is a gut sense that there are several people in the congregation struggling with a certain theme, such as anxiety, and would require prayer for it. Alternatively it could be a random thought like 'leadership' and the sense that God wants to equip people for roles of leadership. The possibilities are infinite. By asking God to provide me with more information I am then able to explain this to the congregation and provide an opportunity for people to respond accordingly. Be careful not to add too much to a word given by God. Simply sharing it and allowing room for people to respond is sufficient. See chapter 8 for a more in depth discussion about discerning God's voice and sharing words.

The Lord may also give someone in the congregation that discernment, prophetic word or word of knowledge. Space should be created so such gifts to function. Some healthy guidelines are beneficial here to maintain order and ensure everyone is edified. A simple safeguard, for example, might be that sharing is reserved for members of the congregation. The gifts should be used unemotionally and silence may well play a part here. People can be invited to respond for further prayer after these words are shared. Opportunity should also be given for anyone who would like prayer to receive it, regardless of whether or not their needs were called out from the front. This particularly applies to healing. Just because a word of knowledge about a specific condition hasn't been given from the front does not mean that God does not want to heal that condition!

A couple of things regarding facilitating a time of response are worth noting. Firstly, there is nothing spiritual about the physical space at the front. The omnipresent Holy Spirit doesn't stop being omnipresent at the first row of chairs. There are certainly benefits, though, to having people come forward for prayer. For one it demonstrates to the community that prayer ministry is an important and valued element of the service, as much as the worship and the sermon are valued elements. Also, generally speaking there is physical space at the front which means people feel less cramped or claustrophobic when being prayed for. The space allows others to gather around and lay a hand on the person's shoulder.

These elements can be incorporated in alternative ways if inviting people to receive prayer at the front is not a desirable option. It's more the response of faith on behalf of the person that matters rather than where or how they respond. Some communities prefer the sides, others prefer to do prayer ministry in the seats or pews. The church I'm a part of regularly alternates depending on the situation. Asking people to respond by standing where they are and then encouraging those around them to pray is a good option, provided that space allows. This is also sometimes less daunting for people than moving to the front. Find a way that is comfortable and normal for your community. A separate room out the back is probably not an ideal option under most circumstances as this removes the element of "everyone gets to play", which should be a fundamental value, and may also make responding more difficult. This leads me to the second point of note.

As a rule of thumb the leader should do their best to make it easy for people to respond. When I was starting out leading prayer ministry I intentionally, and unwisely, made it difficult for people to respond hoping that a response would mean someone was making a real step of faith. Indeed people would have been making a big step of faith, had they actually responded! However most people were left discouraged, myself included. Make it easier for people to respond by explaining everything clearly and giving practical instructions to the congregation like encouraging everyone have their eyes closed. Perhaps give a few topics for response all at once (particularly if you're encouraging people to receive prayer for specific struggles) so people don't feel like their private struggles are all of a sudden public knowledge. This particularly goes for more delicate issues. Also be aware that there is no substitute for building up a strong relationship of trust over time.

Closing the ministry time

We must be pastoral and practical. After some time it will become obvious who is involved and engaged in the ministry time. At this point, others in the congregation who are not praying with people or receiving prayer themselves might begin to feel restless or partially removed from what's going on. If prayer ministry is facilitated at the end of a meeting, be aware that some people may have to leave. In a youth group setting parents may be waiting to pick up their children. It's important that people are given permission to withdraw themselves from what's happening. It's also important that those who are receiving prayer do not feel rushed or hurried. A good option for concluding the ministry time is to sing a song together, after which people can be given permission to do as they wish. The worship leader may then choose to continue softly singing some more songs. This provides a sort of communal end to the meeting, whilst also giving the option for those who are receiving to continue doing so. The church I attend meets on a Sunday morning. Often the service leader will simply say a closing prayer and then give people permission to go and have morning tea out the back or leave if they wish, keeping the space where people are receiving prayer open and uninterrupted.

Growing in leading prayer ministry

Growth in outward ministry is always rooted in personal relationship with Christ. Invest in a deeper personal relationship and the rest will naturally follow. Learning to recognise what the presence of God feels like and what the voice of God sounds like is only possible through time spent with Him. Praying for people then comes from that personal place.

Leading a time of prayer ministry is also simply an extension of praying for people. To grow in leading prayer ministry it's therefore helpful to pray for others at any opportunity. Things like patience in prayer, hearing God's voice for others and recognising the signs of the Spirit working on people are learnt over time and through experience. At any opportunity tag along with people who are more experienced in prayer ministry and quietly observe and join in. Ask them to explain what they are doing and why. Ask them to help you identify the signs of the Spirit meeting with people by explaining what they are

seeing. The same goes for leading a ministry time. I learnt a lot simply by sitting on the edge of a stage and observing how the leader facilitated the session.

Ultimately though, there is no substitute for giving it a go. The first few times will feel vulnerable and confronting, but if you persevere with a humble heart and a learning attitude your confidence in leading people will soon grow, as will your confidence in discerning the leading of the Spirit. It's also very helpful to remind yourself that it's not about you. God leads the time and He doesn't always need an agent! He is more than capable of meeting with His people regardless of whether or not the time is led well. The leader simply helps provide space for Him to do so, and helps explain things so people can better engage with Him.

The main pointers:

- Ministry times are kept ordered and intentional when they are led confidently.
- Ministry is always best done in team.
- The model here emphasises dependence on the Spirit.
- When facilitating ministry simply Invite, Wait, Watch and Respond.
- We must learn to put away the clock and become comfortable *waiting* on God.
- How long should we wait? Until it gets awkward... and then some more.



Chapter 5

ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

1 Cor. 14:26

A girl in my youth group was excited when the Holy Spirit prompted her to start going for prayer walks in her local area, and to take others from our church along with her. A group of teenagers were encouraged when they each received the same word for a friend they were praying for. Another makes a bee-line for the washing up at the end of each youth night without fail.

All people, young and old, have an important role to play in the Kingdom. God has given spiritual gifts to each of us, in order that the church may be built up and bare much fruit for His Name's sake. For this reason, we encourage our youth to step out and serve one another at every opportunity, and to grow in the particular gifts they have been given.

Whenever our youth group gathers on a Friday night, we make sure we allow time to pray for one another using the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is always a special time where God speaks truth, strengthens, increases faith and inspires hope.

Some of my favourite moments of youth ministry are watching the young people of my church actively participate in God's kingdom, using the gifts He has given them, having the time of their lives, enriching the church and glorifying God all at the same time.

Tanya Deane - Youth Pastor, Ruach Ministries

A discussion on spiritual gifts from 1 Corinthians

“Now about spiritual gifts... I do not want you to be ignorant.” (1 Cor. 12:1 NIV). The words of Paul here are as pertinent today as they were to the young church in Corinth. The gifts of the Spirit have been very much on the agenda for study in recent decades, particularly in response to their increased focus during the charismatic renewal. The unfortunate reality is that, broadly speaking, there remains today both within and outside the charismatic tradition a great deal of confusion about spiritual gifts. This short chapter will attempt to dispel at least some of this confusion, particularly in regards to their intended role within the church and therefore the reasons they are to be valued and sought after.

Spiritual gifts are listed several times in the New Testament and discussed by Paul on several occasions (1 Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11-16). The most extensive of these discussions is in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Although these different passages show an overlapping of listings, what should be noted is that the gifts of the Spirit were clearly not just confined to one location but instead appear to be an expected aspect of Christian community throughout the early church. It should also be noted that never far behind a discussion regarding the gifts comes an exhortation about loving one another (Rom. 12:9; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 13). This is also true for another brief passage in 1 Peter 4:9-11. Love is the common denominator in all of these texts.

The crucible of love

When I was in high school I was a pretty unashamed science geek; either that or science class simply fueled my pyromaniac tendencies. My favourite experiments almost always involved lighting bunsen burners. For whatever reason, the unspoken goal amongst my lab group was to try and make every experiment go wrong, hopefully by causing a small explosion to take place. One experiment involved a crucible. I remember it well, not because I managed to blow it up (although we did try that!) but rather because, from that day on, I never forgot the role a crucible plays. Nestled on top of the hottest part of the flame, the crucible – a small white, heat-resistant container with a removable lid – holds inside it whatever substance the scientist wants to purify. The temperature inside the

crucible reaches such great heights that the substance cannot but be altered. As a result, the substance is refined to a purer form.

My point is this: the crucible through which the substance (or, in our discussion, our use of the spiritual gifts) must always pass is that of *love*. It saddens me that so many have turned away from pursuing the gifts because of witnessing past misuses. It should here be noted though, that Paul's discussion regarding the gifts in Corinth is in fact a corrective letter. It addressed the various ways individuals within the Corinthian church were misusing the gifts. Due to such abuses one might expect Paul would instruct the Corinthian church to stop using the gifts. This is far from the reality. Paul's response to their misunderstanding was not to *forbid* their usage but rather to ground their usage in *love* (1 Cor. 13:1-3). It is with this in mind that we now proceed.

The purpose of the spiritual gifts

The primary reason God gives spiritual gifts is for the strengthening and edification of the body of Christ. Paul states clearly in 1 Corinthians 12:7 that they are for the "common good" and goes on to reiterate in 14:26 that they should be used for "building up" (ESV). This vital role within the church meant that the gifts were not simply confined to the apostles or a select few in the early church but were, as alluded to above, widely distributed. Moreover, their crucial role of edifying and encouraging is as important today as it was historically, and will remain so until Christ returns.¹

Since the gifts primarily exist for the *common* good, it is logical for their setting to be primarily in community. Paul emphasises this by repeating, "When you come together..." (1 Cor. 11:18, 20, 33, 14:26). This does not necessarily just restrict their usage to within the normal confines of a Sunday morning gathering but rather shows that, at their heart, the gifts are given to us to use for others! One could definitely argue though, particularly from 14:26, that Paul expects their usage to be a normal part of meeting together. The emphasis on 'common good' should also inhibit individualism and arrogance. Rather than being trophies or prizes that Christians parade about like some sort of show, the gifts are tools, given by God's grace (12:11), to enable an individual believer to better serve the body (14:12).

Christianity should have an outward focus. This focus should infiltrate all aspects of life. Spiritual gifts are no exception. In one way or another they should drive us towards mission and partnering with Jesus in bringing in the Kingdom. Whilst Paul discussed the use of the gifts in the context of the local church, it must be noted that the emphasis of the early church was the spreading of the good news. What we do today needs to consistently retain this emphasis. That is one reason why Paul puts an emphasis on order within the service (1 Cor. 14:40).

Practicing the gifts does not negate the use of common sense. Explanation must be provided for people who may be seeking Jesus but are not yet believers. However, this certainly doesn't negate the use of the gifts. In fact, Paul encourages their usage because they draw people into the worship of God (1 Cor. 14:25). We must not underestimate the role spiritual gifts can play in helping people to personally encounter the living God.

The gifts of the Spirit are not confined to operating within the walls of the church! In fact we often see that the opposite is true. There are many biblical examples where the gifts of the Spirit were given for a missional purpose and brought people to salvation. In Acts 9:35 (NIV) we see this as a response to Aeneas' healing. The text says that, "All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord." (Emphasis mine). What a response! Earlier in Acts (8:6) we see that Philip's proclamation of the Messiah in Samaria was accompanied with signs and, as a response, "...they all paid close attention to what he said." Paul himself, regarding his own preaching to the church in Corinth, says this: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power..." (1 Cor. 2:4). With these examples in mind we see that part of the role of the local church is therefore to train and equip the saints to expect God to use them in a similar fashion. We should not be relying upon people entering the church in order to experience God but instead expecting God to use us powerfully to change the lives of people around us in our everyday contexts.

Am I allowed to desire the gifts?

This is a question that gets asked a lot. I want to answer it in two parts. Firstly by once again looking at the role of the gifts, and then by looking at what Paul's stance is on the matter.

As seen in 1 Corinthians 12:6-11 and verse 28, it is the Spirit of God who gives the gifts according to His will. Therefore, there is no room for boasting, jealousy or inferiority. It is clear that God's wise distribution is His choice and that not all will receive the same manifestations of the Spirit. In a similar fashion to how a person's physical body is made up of many different parts with each part bringing something unique to contribute, the Church is made up of many parts with each person bringing something to contribute. While it is God in His sovereignty who distributes the gifts, the receiver also inherits a responsibility to use them in an orderly fashion to build up the body.

I've heard it said many times that we are to "*seek the Giver and not the gifts.*" Although I understand the idea behind such a phrase and basically agree, in many cases it carries with it negative connotations that stem from a misunderstanding regarding God's precious gifts. It can connote the idea that pursuing a deeper relationship with God and pursuing His gifts are in competition with each other, that the pursuit of one automatically nullifies a pursuit of the other. Sometimes the statement is motivated by the fear of having our relationship with Christ clouded by, or worse founded on, emotionalism or experience. Of course our focus must be placed on seeking to further our relationship with Christ and this relationship should not be built only upon an 'experience'. However, as we seek Christ we should also be driven towards community. As we are driven towards community we are therefore also driven towards seeking the gifts, not simply for experience sake but in order to bless others and to build for the Kingdom.

The gifts are not given to increase individuality, they are given to build up the body! There is a plurality in Christianity that our Western, individualistic mindset often misses. In seeking the Giver we therefore find ourselves thrust into community where the gifts are to flourish. A mature relationship with Christ is not demonstrated through never seeking the gifts or never using them but through using them in great humility, never for self-promotion but for the benefit of others. Seeking the Giver and seeking His gifts are not in contradiction or isolation. It is more a case of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or'. We are to seek the Giver *and* seek the gifts.

The concept can be likened to a party. When invited to a party, it's generally considered a social faux pas to simply attend and consume all the food and drink without at least offering to contribute to the gathering in some way. After all, the party isn't about you. In the same way, to be a Christian is to be in community. To exist in this capacity

means to be outwardly focused and exist for others. “When you come together, each of you...” (1 Cor. 14:26) emphasises the expectation of contribution, of each person bringing something to give away. Christianity is an all-in buffet, not a sit-down meal, and each person is to bring a share plate to the party. We should all be continually asking the Lord to equip us for His service, not in order that our different giftings might be paraded around like some sort of show but so that the body is built up, people’s lives are changed and Christ is glorified.

I can’t say it too many times: the gifts exist for building each other up! The Lord longs to equip you – yes you – with special gifts to bring and contribute to the party. It saddens me that instead of humbly receiving those gifts we sometimes feel it’s more ‘spiritual’ to say to Jesus, “Actually, thanks but no thanks. I just desire you.” Can you see the individualistic selfishness hidden in that sentiment? Biblical Christianity is more than just an individual relationship with God. Of course it is that, but it is also meant to be so much more. The gifts are not meant for you. The gifts allow us to partner with the Spirit in seeing the church encouraged. Moreover, the few gifts that *can* be exercised personally, such as tongues (see chapter 9), are meant to *enrich* your personal relationship with Christ, enabling you to better seek Him, the Giver, and better serve others.

Paul’s stance

Since spiritual gifts build up the body, it’s not surprising Paul says clearly, more than once, to desire the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1). The Greek word Paul uses here is *zēloun*, which means to seek with zeal, to eagerly desire or strive after.² In 14:1 he makes special note of prophecy and is evidently commending it. It appears that God’s sovereign distribution of the gifts is not independent of the believer’s humble prayerful seeking. Such a stance has been overlooked by much of the church and needs to be re-emphasised. We are allowed to seek the gifts; in fact, we are instructed to do so.

Can I have more than one? And do I get to keep it?

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 could be read to give the impression that each member of the body receives just one type of gift. Such a reading misunderstands Paul’s message. Paul’s expectation is that the church should be characterised by a diversity of gifts. When coming

together, these gifts are distributed in such a way that they complement each other. This, however, should not be understood as suggesting that each person is to become a specialist in just one gift. Paul's point is that, when meeting together, everyone should be expectant and ready to contribute in whatever way God leads. Church is not meant to be a spectator sport.

Phanerosis is the Greek word in 12:7 often translated into the English as 'manifestation'. The reason I highlight this is that this word is crucial to understanding how the spiritual gifts function in community.³ Allow me to explain.

One of my all time favourite things to do is to take photographs. I love the way that a camera forces me to see the world through a different lens or perspective. Not too long ago I was given an amazing opportunity to take a flight in a light aircraft over an African savanna and take aerial photos of the landscape. As we climbed upwards I was amazed at how different the world looked from above. What caught my attention was how dramatically different the river looked from the air. Starting from the same major source, the river split into numerous different channels, carving its way through the dry savanna. On either side of the branching streams, green vegetation followed the life-giving water.

Many of us need to shift our perspective on how the spiritual gifts function. The word *phanerosis* connotes a similar image to the one described above. It means to exhibit, shine or render apparent. It's this idea that the source of life, the Spirit, sends out streams amongst the people, touching different people at different times according to His sovereign will. Another way of describing this concept is like the dancing hand of God. At any given time, when the people are gathered, the Spirit gives good gifts to people individually as He wills. The dancing hand of God touches one person, then dances and touches another, giving each person something to contribute which helps to edify the church.

The gifts reside in the source and the source is always the Holy Spirit. As followers of Jesus we have the Spirit living inside us. This means that we have the life source, the Giver of the gifts, within us and therefore have access, through relationship, to all of the gifts. At any given time, for a specific moment or task, God's hand may touch us on the shoulder and impart a gift. This, for example, may be a prophetic word for an individual or for the community. Or it may be a prompting to give a tongue, an interpretation of a tongue, or a word of wisdom. Alternatively it could be the ability to administrate effectively

at a specific time. It may be any number of gifts. My point is that our role is to be aware of the Spirit's prompting and then to share this gift with the community. This concept, however, should not be understood as playing out practically like a constant game of roulette. Instead it merely highlights that each member of the body should be constantly expecting God to use them in new ways, and perhaps in ways that they aren't 'naturally' gifted.

Most certainly the gifts, when given, are not to be paraded around like some sort of badge. In fact, except for the private use of the gift of tongues (the reasons for which are discussed in chapter 9), the individual believer does not even 'retain' the spiritual gift. Someone who regularly receives the gift of prophecy, for example, doesn't retain the ability to dispense prophetic words at will, whenever they please. The Spirit is always the source of the gifts. Instead, in the gathering, the believer receives gifts for the common good when God requires that they be used.

Why, then, does it seem that some people frequently exercise the same gift? It appears that over time, as individuals faithfully and repeatedly exercise the gift when God chooses to give it, it pleases God to continue dispensing that gift to that individual.⁴ This may well be a demonstration of the principle seen in Matthew 25:21, where a servant who is faithful with a little is trusted with more. Does this then mean that the person who frequently receives the gift of prophecy, for example, should not pray for the sick or vice versa? Or that the person who is often used by God for healing should never evangelise because that is not 'their gift'? Of course it doesn't! Paul demonstrates this notion when he expresses his expectation that the one who gives a tongue in a communal setting is also to *pray* for the gift of interpretation (1 Cor. 14:13). Furthermore he urges *all* to eagerly desire prophecy (14:1).

Getting started

Many people get bogged down at this point, feeling that, despite their desire to contribute and serve the body, they are unable to do so because their specific gifting has not yet been identified. It's important to remember that, as believers, we all have the Spirit of God within us and have access to all the gifts. It's less a matter of 'discovering' or 'identifying' the gifts we have been given than ensuring that we are actively opening

ourselves up to receive His gifts and then choosing to step out in them. If you desire to grow in the gift of healing, for example, then a good place to start is getting involved with others in praying for the sick. Believe me, you will see more people healed if you pray for them than if you don't! If you wish to grow in prophecy then start asking God for a prophetic word to give to someone while you are praying for them. This approach goes for all the gifts, including those spiritual gifts that are sometimes viewed as less 'miraculous' but are equally important in edifying the body of Christ. Over time you will begin to see which gifts God tends to give you more regularly. However, it is so important that we don't talk possessively about our giftings. The danger is that we might narrow our focus and fail to see where God might be gifting us elsewhere.

If identifying your gifts is still a major hindrance to getting started, then a useful exercise may be to read the various passages of Scripture discussing the gifts and then ask God to illuminate which of these He wishes to particularly grow in you. Then ask God to grow your desire to see these flourish in your life. Most of us find ourselves naturally drawn towards a certain gifting. Personally, as a young lad, I had always been drawn towards growing in the prophetic. To this day I cannot explain exactly why. There was just a pull within me which longed for God to use me in this way to serve others. My desire growing up was to hear God's voice more clearly, and that desire still remains. So I began to ask God to use me in this fashion. As mentioned earlier, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to pray for the gifts (1 Cor. 14:13). Through persistent prayer and a decision to attempt to use this gift on a regular basis (despite some pretty foolish looking moments) I began to see growth in this area.

I also found it particularly helpful to have others pray with me to grow in this gifting. There is no doubt in my mind these prayers were invaluable and I still ask other Christians to pray for me in this. Discipleship is about growth. We can all grow in every spiritual exercise and every spiritual gift. I still pray regularly for the gifts that I want to see operate more regularly in my life. It then becomes a matter of giving things a go. Like me, you will no doubt have some embarrassing moments where you end up looking pretty foolish. These can make for some great stories. We must embrace these as opportunities to learn and remain humble.

Studying the different gifts was also very helpful in growing my understanding about their nature and usage. There are many books out there on the topic of spiritual gifts (see

the Appendix), both general and specific. Spending time with someone more experienced in the certain gifting in which you desire to grow is also beneficial for gaining understanding. Personally I have had several mentors who have shared their experiences and insights with me and encouraged me to continue to pursue God's gifts in my life. Such a person may help point you to some good reading material too. Finally, it's always important to study the Scriptures. These allow the Spirit to teach us and grow us. Scripture lays the foundation for our pursuit of the gifts and provides insights into their historical and current function within the Christian community.

Facilitating their use in community

With all that said, I'd like to finish this chapter with some practical pointers for starting out and growing in the gifts together, in the setting of community. Whilst many people are not theologically closed to the use of the gifts of the Spirit, many do get stuck, at least initially, on how they may actually be used. Of course much of this is context-based and will look different in each community. However, there are key principles that can be used as starting points and then adapted to suit individual contexts.

Firstly, as mentioned previously, it's not enough to be 'open' to the gifts. The valuable contribution the gifts bring to community life will be lost unless the leadership of the church intentionally learns how to cultivate these gifts within the body. Without a clear vision as to why they are to be valued we will remain satisfied with where we currently stand. So the first point of call is to be open to learning and active in seeking. This includes asking the Holy Spirit to pour out His gifts upon us both individually and communally, and then stepping out and using them. It also includes training others to expect to serve the community in a variety of ways. Since there is much confusion surrounding this topic, training may initially take the form of teaching about the gifts before moving on towards modeling their use.

The intentional creation of *space* for the Spirit to move is of paramount importance. This space, often in the form of silence, is usually both scary and awkward. It is, however, a unique display of trust and faith, both of which provide a solid platform for the Spirit to work. Practically speaking, this space may look like an intentional time of 'waiting' on the Spirit *during* a gathering. Often this is most fluid directly after a time of worship where

people's hearts are more open to Him and the focus is placed on Him and not on ourselves.

For example, after a time of waiting on the Lord and asking Him to pour out His gifts, the pastor, worship leader or service leader could encourage everyone to ask the Lord for prophetic words or pictures and to then share these with the community. Alternatively, space could be provided for anyone who may have a word of knowledge. Such a word may illuminate where God might be leading at that particular time. Words of knowledge are often, although not exclusively, about a physical ailment in another member of the community. If appropriate, people can then gather and pray for the person who responds. Of course, such a time must remain ordered (1 Cor. 14:40) and therefore usually requires someone to 'lead' it. The practicalities of leading such a time have already been discussed in the previous chapter.

Each person must be encouraged to seek and expect God to use *them* in some way to edify the body. This may include the gifts that are not necessarily made evident in the gathering, such as generosity or administration. Part of the leader's role is encouraging this expectation. An important part of facilitating this is to make people feel relaxed and safe. This is where trust is so important. Trust builds safety and safety helps people to give things a try. It also helps people respond for prayer to something like a word of knowledge. Sometimes it may take several of these ministry times before people begin to feel comfortable with the space. It's therefore crucial that there is an intention to persevere. This intention should always be accompanied by teaching and explanation which further enhances trust.

Learning and growth are catalysed by grace. Establishing an unwavering policy of grace is such an important aspect of encouraging people to feel comfortable and to grow in the gifts of the Spirit. Everyone must understand that they won't be told off or kicked out for giving something a try. Even Jesus' disciples consistently slipped up despite having the ultimate hands-on crash course by the ultimate teacher. We too will inevitably miss the mark at times, particularly when we first start stepping out and having a go. That is more than okay. In fact, it keeps us humble and reliant while also constantly driving us towards greater intimacy with Jesus, our teacher. The important element here is that the emphasis be removed from performance-driven church and instead placed on everyone getting to be

involved. After all, the gifts are for the whole church and every member of the body gets a chance to partner with Jesus in ministering His love to others.

The main pointers:

- Gifts are given for the common good.
- Their purpose is to strengthen the church.
- They are given by God at His choosing and by His grace.
- Their usage must always be grounded in love.
- Each person should be expectant and eager to contribute to encouraging the body of Christ.
- People are not limited to just one gift. We should desire to receive and grow in the gifts, even if they lie outside our natural preference or skill set.



Chapter 6

PRAYING FOR DIVINE HEALING

We were in a seminar at the Soul Survivor NSW/ACT conference learning about how God heals today and someone had a word of knowledge that there was someone present who had a stomach ache. A young girl stood up and said that she had suffered from stomach aches for a long period of time and, in fact, it was hurting right then. A group of about ten teenagers all stood around the girl and began to pray and command the pain in her stomach to go away in Jesus' name. We asked her how the pain was and she said it had reduced a little.

The thought then came to mind that we should pray a particular phrase over her - "this healing belongs to you because of what Jesus has done on the cross." After we'd prayed that prayer the pain in her stomach again went down. She said that the phrase was one that her youth group had used, we had no idea but just felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to pray that. While we were waiting for direction from the Holy Spirit, the thought then came to mind that each of the ten of us praying for her should command the pain to go away however we felt led (we were all from different church traditions). One by one, each prayed a simple prayer and when the final person in the group prayed for the sickness to go in Jesus' name, the girl looked up and said, "All the pain is completely gone." Praise Jesus! We were certainly not experienced in praying for healing - but were happy to pray multiple times and follow the Lord's promptings.

Deb Stanley - Leader of Soul Survivor ACT/Regions

Does God heal people? Overwhelming evidence from Scripture, along with my own experiences and the experiences of others, have convinced me not only that God does heal people, but that He does so *frequently*. If one were to explain the healings seen in the gospels and in Acts, the least complicated explanation would be that they happened as described. Having witnessed God perform similar miracles in people's lives today, personal experience supports that explanation. Unfortunately much of the Church has turned away from this ministry and has suffered a great loss as a result. For many of us the struggle is not in believing that God *can* heal - after all God can theoretically do anything He likes - but rather that He *does* or *will* heal, and will do so through '*me*' and '*my*' prayers. I firmly believe, though, that praying for divine healing should be a normative experience for disciples of Jesus. And I don't mean just the *twelve* disciples. I mean disciples like you and me; every day followers of Jesus. The aim of this chapter is to explore why that can and should be the case before looking at how praying for divine healing can be practically incorporated into the prayer ministry model described in chapters 3 and 4. Indeed when we look at the ministry of Jesus we see that divine healing was a significant part of his mission. Therefore it too should become a significant aspect of prayer ministry.

'Divine healing' is the preferred term used when discussing this topic. This is to intentionally separate it from other forms of healing claimed and sought after in other practices - New Age movements, psychic healing and the like. It also differentiates it from the natural healing that occurs in our bodies as a result of our natural immune system and cellular responses, in the way that a wound heals over time for example. I also differentiate it from medical or scientific approaches. When we discuss healing here I am referring to it from a distinctly Christian perspective, that is, to cases in which Jesus intervenes *directly* through supernatural means to bring about healing, often in response to prayer.

Divine healing comes from God and is a demonstration of his grace available thanks only to the atoning work of Jesus (Is. 53:4-5; Mt. 8:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:24). In today's context it is also a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9) and God often, although not exclusively, uses human vessels to channel His healing. Jesus gave authority to his followers to pray for the sick (Mk. 16:17-18; Mt. 28:18-20; Lk. 9:1-2; Lk. 10:1,9,19) and as followers of Christ we should follow his example and do so. God, though, is always the one who heals the person! He gets the credit! Divine healing is not limited merely to physical healing but also includes mental, emotional and spiritual healing. In some cases these are tied together

and the healing of inner hurt for example can also bring physical healing. Divine healing contributes towards the process of wholeness, as will be discussed.

Why pray for healing?

There are many reasons why we should pray for healing. Of course it is a powerful demonstration of God's love and kindness, His personal nature, His constant redemption of His creation and His desire to include us in the advancement of the Kingdom. These reasons are more than enough. But I want to answer this question more fully by focusing on the ministry of Jesus and the message he brought. Central to the synoptic gospels is Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Indeed his arrival announced the coming Kingdom. His name 'Jesus', or 'Yeshua' in Aramaic, means "Yahweh is salvation." It was probably not an uncommon name in the first Century BC but in this case it represented the message brought by the one who bore the name. Yeshua saw his mission on earth as being a mission of salvation. This mission was not only meant in the spiritual sense. The Anointed One came to announce the year of the Lord's favour. This included freedom from diseases and from evil spirits and sight for the blind (Lk. 4:18-19; Lk. 7:20-23).

We must understand that, unlike us in the Western world, the Hebrews thought of people as whole persons, body and soul together. They were not separated or divided into two separate parts. Personhood included the body, the emotions and the spirit united as one. When they spoke of healing they did not simply think of healing the soul or healing the physical body, but of saving the whole person. When we understand this concept we can see that the healing acts of Jesus, and his disciples, were more than simply acts - they were a demonstration of a message! More than that, they *were* the message; the message that Jesus sets people free, that Jesus saves! Not only did they help provide evidence that what Jesus was saying was truth, the acts were themselves the sign that Jesus saves and restores. The concept of healing and the concept of salvation overlap. Healing the body is never *just* physical, saving the soul is never *just* spiritual. Deliverance for the whole person combines these concepts. Healings are therefore signs of the presence of God's Kingdom ushered in through Christ.

Once we understand that the message of salvation brought by Jesus included the healing of spirit, emotions and physical body, it's easy to see why he sent his disciples out

to both preach and heal the sick. Divine healing is a gospel advancer. It proclaims the Kingdom of God. We see this in Luke 9 and Luke 10, where Jesus sends out not only his selected group of twelve but also seventy-two others. Luke then demonstrates this concept through the basic theme of Acts. The book of Acts shows that the early Church, not only the apostles, had the same power to preach, heal and cast out demons as Jesus had! The church in Jerusalem along with the gentile churches started by Paul all carry on in this fashion, linking preaching with healing just as Jesus did. The reason: because Jesus was *still* the one doing the healing and the world still needed to hear the good news of the gospel! The world today still needs to hear (and see) that Jesus saves. It needs to see that the Kingdom of God is at hand, that the salvation Jesus offers is not a theological construct but a personal reality. Francis MacNutt phrases it wonderfully,

“I believe that the ministry of healing is what lifts the central doctrine of redemption and salvation from the realm of the abstract into the reality of men’s lives.”¹

With all this in mind it can therefore be said that we pray for the sick out of obedience to Christ, who is our model for ministry in faith and practice, and obedience to God’s word. That is a fundamental reason, regardless of whether or not we see healing take place.

Our issues with divine healing

What is perhaps the most difficult to believe is that healing can be an ordinary, common activity of Christian life. As mentioned most of us do not have an issue with the concept of healing. God being all powerful could theoretically heal if He so desired. The issue often lies in the false belief that God no longer desires to heal and even if He did, He would not use regular ‘you and me’ in the process. Growing up I probably fell into that latter category. I never had a theological issue with the concept of God healing people, I simply felt that praying for people was someone else’s job and He wouldn’t use me. I mean, that’s why the church employs pastors and ministers, right? Best to leave it to the professionals who know what they’re doing. The problem here is that this view has a positive feedback loop. We do not step out so we do not see much healing. We do not see much healing so we don’t step out. We then conclude that we’re not ‘qualified’ enough to minister and thus leave it to those that are, whoever they may be.

By focusing on our unworthiness to pray for the sick, the ‘Who do you think you are?’ view, we have taken a seat on the bench and removed ourselves from the action on the field, from the joy of seeing Jesus’ extend his Kingdom through us. On the whole, the Church has lost the normative nature of divine healing and in doing so we’ve tragically lost a critical aspect of our identity. By New Testament standards Christians are to pray for the removal of sickness. It is supposed to be one of the signs that, “...accompany those who believe.” (Mk. 16:17 ESV). Instead of focusing on our unworthiness we must focus on God’s abundant *goodness*. He desires to heal his people and longs to use you and me to do so.

One of the difficulties that may make this so hard to grasp is a common misinterpretation of suffering. Slowly but surely many of us have lost sight of the God of love demonstrated in the kind of healings Jesus exercised, and instead replaced it with the view of God as one who allows us to suffer and wrestle with sickness for the goodness of our souls. This idea is what we call a ‘redemptive’ view of suffering. The road of the cross was suffering, therefore suffering due to sickness is not evil but a blessing in disguise, a cross we are to bear. Even if God’s healing was accessible He would prefer we take the higher road, the road of suffering. If that is the case, though, how then are we supposed to regard sickness? Are we merely passive in our approach, accepting it as God’s will?

While we can’t entirely disregard a redemptive role of suffering - God can use illness as a means of purifying our faith and turning our attention toward Him - it’s safe to say that Jesus certainly didn’t hold this view in regards to sickness. *Every* time Jesus met evil he confronted it as an enemy. This goes for both the spiritual and the physical. As we’ve discussed he did not just come to save souls and leave physical bodies in suffering. He viewed people holistically. He came to save the whole person, body and soul (Mt. 8:1-3). Indeed God can, and does, work through suffering, working all things for eventual good. At times, though, we’ve over emphasised the redemptive value of suffering and lost sight of the goodness, love and character of God. When we do this we warp the good news of the Gospel. Redemptive sickness is the exception, not the rule. Simply because God *can* work through suffering, including sickness, does not mean we are to react passively to it. Jesus understood sickness as an enemy and was certainly not passive in confronting it. He is our model of faith and practice and we must not ignore his approach to sickness. Jesus did not see benefits in sickness for the person. Instead he healed people everywhere he went and equipped his followers to do the same (Mt. 9:35-38; 12:15).

Learning how to pray for healing

Praying for someone's healing, whether that be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual healing, can follow the same model as the general prayer ministry model explained in chapter 3. Once again we can not extrapolate a formula for praying for healing anymore than we can for any other form of ministry. Jesus ministered healing in a diverse number of ways. God is always the healer and it's impossible to confine Him to a formula. All that this model does is provide a good starting point for prayer ministry which may be replicated in almost any setting. When praying for healing there are simply some additions which are helpful in tailoring the model for this specific type of prayer ministry. This discussion will apply most directly to a ministry time in a local church context, but obviously this model can be used anywhere from the street to the workplace, and I encourage you to do so! After all, the context matters little and the heart and practice remain consistent.

The gift of healing is often poured out when gathered together in a communal context and is regularly, although not exclusively, given in partnership with other gifts, particularly words of knowledge (see chapters 7 and 8). Words of knowledge are often given by God to help us follow where He is working. God also gives us words of knowledge in order to increase our faith: the faith of the person with the condition, the faith of those who will pray with them and the general level of faith in the room. When a specific word of knowledge is given and someone responds, the general sense of the presence of God working in the room is increased in the community, along with the expectation that He will work powerfully. Together they lay a good foundation for healing to occur. That's not to say that words of knowledge are a *necessary* prerequisite for healing. God can (and often does) heal even when someone's condition has not been announced by a word of knowledge. I have been in gatherings where several people have been healed and not one word of knowledge was given. Often the setting for healing is simply whenever the need arises. Praying for healing during or directly following a worship time is potentially an ideal setting as people's hearts are naturally prepared to receive from God and are open to His Spirit.

Interview > Invite > Wait > Respond > Direction

When it comes to actually praying for the person, follow the same model as previously discussed, starting with the interview. This is not a medical examination, it simply helps us find out what to pray for. While a medical examination aims to find the right diagnosis, when it comes to prayer ministry we are looking for right discernment. We don't need to spend a long time discussing symptoms or convoluted personal case history. A simple question such as, "Where does it hurt?" is usually sufficient. Listen to the answer in two ears. Give one ear to the person and the other to God. We should be asking the Spirit to give us information, particularly about the root cause of the disease, and also for direction in how to pray specifically in this situation. Even if the ailment is physical we ought to be aware of the possibility that some other form of inner healing may also be needed. This knowledge comes in a natural way, very similar to intuition, except while intuition has its origins in human emotions, this knowledge comes from God. It may also be a mental image, or a word may come to mind. More often than not, this is God guiding us in how to pray.

The interview should also include some way of rating the symptom being prayed for. For example ask the person to give a pain rating, out of ten, where zero is no pain and ten is unbearable. Depending on the symptom, a movement rating might be helpful. For example how far the injured knee can stretch out. The purpose of this is simply so all involved can have a vague measurement in which to gauge whether the prayer has resulted in improvement. Not every symptom can be assessed in this way and this step is not critical in the process.

Interview > **Invite** > Wait > Respond > Direction

The next step is of course to invite the Holy Spirit to come and minister with a simple yet specific prayer related to the healing need. We are inviting both His manifest presence to fall on the person being prayed for as well as those who are praying. Lay hands on the person and ensure that their posture is open to receiving. Of course on this point we must always ask permission out of respect for their personhood. Laying on of hands is traditional Christian practice when praying for healing in particular (Mk. 16:18). For whatever reason there does seem to be some sort of 'current' of healing power that

often flows through the person praying and into the sick person. Jesus was aware of this when a woman suffering from bleeding touched the edge of his cloak (Lk. 8:43-46). It seems that this is a transfer of God's power and is often felt by people when praying for healing. If appropriate, it is useful to lay hands on the specific area that needs healing. Alternatively, get the sick person to put their hand on the area and then lay a hand on top of theirs. Again, ask permission to do so.

This is also the time where we can verbally articulate a prayer for healing. Be specific, short and positive in the prayer. Jesus rarely spoke long prayers when ministering healing. Articulate what it is that we are asking God to heal. Being specific tends to increase our faith and helps us to visualise what we are requesting, the muscles relaxing for example or the swelling decreasing. Ensure that this prayer is positive. Don't focus on how horrible the condition is but emphasise the goodness of God and His desire to make us whole. Personally I do not like the phrase, "If it is your will." This seems to weaken the prayer somewhat and conveys that we don't believe God *ordinarily* wills wholeness and healing for His children. The 'if' seems to bring more doubt than faith. We believe it is indeed God's will to heal and this should be emphasised! It's important to be listening to God and following His leading.

After some time a positive 'word of command' can be given. This is an actual speaking to the condition and, with the authority given to us by Jesus, commanding it to leave in Jesus' name. There is power and authority in the name of Jesus (Lk. 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16:18) and speaking a confident word of command with the authority of the Kingdom often releases healing. An example of a word of command might be something along the lines of, "We say to this infection, 'leave now' in the name of Jesus." In Luke 4:38-39 we see Jesus rebuke the fever and it left. He also commanded deaf ears to be opened (Mk. 7:32-35). At this point it may be helpful to encourage the person to use their mind's eye to 'see' Jesus removing their condition. Matthew 8:17, quoting Isaiah, says, "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases." (ESV). This exercise helps build faith and reminds them of the victory Jesus has already won. It can also be helpful to have the person themselves ask Jesus to heal them. This reminds them of who it is that offers them healing. We see Jesus ask Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mk. 10:51). I believe He still asks similar questions to us today.

Interview > Invite > **Wait** > Respond > Direction

The next step is simply to wait and watch. While doing so it is helpful to pray quietly in the spirit, i.e. pray in tongues. This is very useful when not knowing what to pray as the Spirit himself intercedes on our behalf (Rom. 8:26-27). See chapter 9 for further discussion on this point. Ask Jesus for more information, particularly regarding the root cause of a condition. Physical symptoms are sometimes the result of spiritual or emotional issues which require healing. Sometimes the power of these need to be broken in order for physical healing to be released.

Interview > Invite > Wait > **Respond** > Direction

After waiting and watching we can respond appropriately to where the Spirit is leading. If the Lord has given more direction or information, act on this. For example the Holy Spirit may have informed you that an ailment is the physical manifestation resulting from an inner fear. In a similar positive way as before, break the power of this over the person with a word of command such as, “We break the hold that fear has over this person’s life in the name of Jesus and we command fear to leave.”

Now is also a good time to ask the person if they notice any change to their condition. For example if the pain was previously rated at a 7, has it decreased at all? Sometimes pain may have partially decreased but some still remains. This is an indication God is definitely working but more time or further prayer might be required. Mark 8:23-25 shows Jesus healing a man suffering from blindness in two stages. Only after Jesus placed his hands on the man’s eyes for a second time were his eyes fully open. If there is no evidence of healing, continue praying and asking the Lord for direction, following which post prayer direction is advised.

Interview > Invite > Wait > Respond > **Direction**

Post prayer direction is advised both when the person is healed and when they are not. Directing people towards post prayer pastoral care is hugely beneficial, even if it is simply to help them process their experience with others. When someone has been healed, advise them to go back and see their doctor or psychologist if they have been

seeing one previously, particularly if the healing is partial. They may yet require further medical treatment and even if they do not, which is wonderful, it's always beneficial to have a medical professional confirm the change to their condition. Also, some conditions are a complex interaction of spiritual, psychological and physical elements. Further prayer counseling may be useful or required, particularly if there are strong emotional elements associated. This is especially important for cases of inner healing.

The reality is that not everyone is healed as a result of prayer. There is no one reason why this is the case. In part it is due to the realm in which we live, being part of the Kingdom that is breaking into the now but has not yet come in its fullness. The new covenant never promises healing for all now. What it does promise is forgiveness of sins. While our sins are forgiven without delay, divine healing does not necessarily work in the same way. There will be a time when we are given whole bodies, but that is not a guarantee in this age. We live in a time between the two comings of Christ. Indeed Christ has secured wholeness as part of the atonement but we still live in a time that longs for the fullness of the Kingdom to come.²

There may be numerous other reasons in addition to this as to why the person was not healed. False beliefs or false value attached to suffering, habitual and unrepentant sin, a lack of faith on behalf of the person or the person praying and a failure to identify root causes and pray accordingly are all possible inhibitors to healing. However, if the person has not been healed, do not go through and label them with all the possible reasons as to why. Instead remind them of God's unceasing love for them displayed on the cross. This alone, not their healing, is the greatest demonstration of love in all history. Encourage them to respond for prayer again in the future. Praying for divine healing is concerned about the person and not just with whether or not they are healed of their condition. They must know that you love them and that God loves them. Offer the person words of compassion and comfort for they may be feeling frustrated. Encourage them to continue to seek God in prayer themselves. In many instances healing takes place over time.

While divine healing isn't guaranteed to us in this life, what is certain is the part we are to play. When it comes to divine healing we are to pray, "Your Kingdom come," and then put our trust and faith in Jesus' grace, sovereignty and lordship. Regardless of whether or not healing comes to someone in the now does not change the status of that person's position in the Kingdom as a son or daughter, loved by God. Nor does it change

the hope of guaranteed wholeness that will eventuate in the coming age. We do not have a right to label any reason why, or why not, someone is healed, nor to presume that unless healing comes there is something wrong with the person's faith. Healing is always thanks only to God's grace and goodness.

The truth is we do not know why some are healed while others are not. That is not for us to decide. Our role is to be obedient. After all it's obedience to the word of God that is our primary reason for praying for divine healing. I still go on praying for God's Kingdom to come in the lives of my non-believing friends, for their hearts to be drawn closer to Jesus and for them to enter into a personal relationship with Him, even though I may not necessarily see evidence of much change from day to day. It is the same with healing. Even if I see no one healed as a direct result of my prayers, I will continue to step out and pray, for I believe that is what Jesus modelled for us. I can guarantee though, more people will experience the grace of God in the form of divine healing if we pray for them than if we choose not to. If one person's life in one hundred is changed as a result of our prayer, then God's Kingdom has broken into our present and it will have been so worth it. That person will experience greater wholeness and have an amazing testimony of God's grace. In my experience, though, if we faithfully pray for healing we will see the Kingdom advanced far more regularly than that! I encourage you to step out and pursue God's leading in this way as part of a holistic approach to ministry.

The main pointers:

- Divine healing comes from God and is a demonstration of his grace available thanks only to the atoning work of Jesus. It is also a gift of the Spirit.
- We have authority to pray for the sick.
- It can be normative for followers of Jesus to pray for healing. Jesus qualifies us to do so.
- Divine healing contributes to the process of making us whole and demonstrates God's loving kindness.
- Praying for healing fits into the same prayer ministry model discussed in chapter 3.

Interview > Invite > Wait > Respond > Direction.

- Providing post prayer direction is especially important when praying for healing.
- We pray for the sick out of obedience to Christ, motivated by love and mercy.



Chapter 7

HEARING GOD (part 1)

The gift of prophecy and the local church

In 1998 I was a staff member of a large church that had been my spiritual home since I'd first come to faith in Christ. My wife Julie's Father had been one of three men who started it over 40 years before and she'd grown up as part of the church. I'd been sensing things were changing and God was calling us out of the church. Like Abram, I had no clear sense of what this meant or where we would go, simply that we should. Having prayed about it and sought counsel from others, Julie and I agreed it was time for us to leave and I met with our pastor, resigning from my position, and from our church.

Just a few weeks later in prayer it seemed to me that God was speaking, I believed I was hearing God calling us to pioneer a new church. I knew little of the challenges and skills required to plant a church – which paradoxically led to the conclusion this was not just my own idea, “it must be from God”. Julie and I always discuss significant decisions; we check it out biblically, seek counsel and pray together and individually. When things line up biblically, counsel is consistent and we separately arrive at the same conclusion, it is confirmation to us that it is God's direction for us as a family. Excitedly I shared this fresh revelation with Julie, confident she would be excited and hearing the same things from God... I was wrong! She had no sense of God speaking and no desire to go down this path. I was surprised – in some ways relieved – perhaps I was mistaken, maybe this was not God or the timing was wrong but, as Jonathan Ives advises, I “shelved” this word.

Almost a year passed, the idea was never discussed, and in fact it was forgotten. Then one evening, as we prayed together, Julie said “I'm not against the idea of planting a church anymore.” It came like a bolt from the blue, Julie and I were on the same page. We began to pray and discuss the idea of church planting more seriously. We decided to approach the

leaders of a local church a couple of suburbs away. The leaders were ministers we had a relationship with, pioneers who had planted their church several years before. They invited me to attend their elders meeting to share with their eldership.

I arrived early and was invited to grab a coffee and take a seat in the room we'd meet in. One by one the leaders arrived and an odd pattern emerged; the arriving leader would look in on me sat in the chair, smile oddly, say "good evening Mike," and go off to get a coffee. One by one several people arrived and each followed an almost exact pattern – I felt like I was the butt of a joke that they were in on and I hadn't been told about. Eventually everyone had arrived and joined me in the room. The Pastor of the church said, "Before we begin Mike we have something we need to share with you. Eighteen months ago (I was still a staff member of our previous church then) God spoke to us in our leadership meeting that you and Julie would come to minister with us. This word from God came as a prophecy and was very clear, we were agreed it was from the Lord and we made a commitment not to speak to anyone beyond this group about this. On a number of occasions some of us have had opportunity to minister alongside you, but no one has said anything to you, we have simply been praying for you and Julie. Since receiving that prophetic word we have always had an empty chair in this room where we meet. Every month when we arrive we look at the empty chair and say 'Good evening Mike,' and move on with our meeting. Tonight you are sitting in that very chair." It is difficult to explain in words the environment in that room... the sense of God confirming His prophetic word to them and to me. In the next year – Feb 2000 – we planted a church with two other families, with the encouragement and prayer support of our friend's church.

Mike McGarrity - Leader of Engadine Community Church

Comedian Lily Tomlin famously asked, "Why is it that when we speak to God we are praying - but when God speaks to us we are said to be schizophrenic?"¹ This question sums up the sense of confusion many people associate with the prophetic. I don't think it's too far fetched to say that this is among one of the most misunderstood topics for Christians today. Seminars that are held on hearing the voice of God consistently fill up, even in those circles where hearing the voice of God is an expected aspect of walking with Jesus. We read throughout Scripture that God communicates with His people through one divine encounter after another. What was it those people were hearing? What does God's voice sound like? What does that mean for today and how do I begin to hear the voice of God for myself?

I believe that hearing from God is of paramount importance for both our personal walk with Jesus and our contribution to the Body of Christ, particularly in a prayer ministry context. Prophecy is a gift of the Spirit and should be used to edify the community. Hearing God's voice is also a crucial element in running a ministry time as it allows us to follow

where God is leading. Therefore I have decided to allocate two chapters to discussing this topic. This first chapter will explore the 'what' and 'why' of the prophetic and dispel some confusion as to its nature and its practice in a local church context. The following chapter will discuss the practical 'how' of hearing God's voice, what it sounds like, how to test it and how to grow in it both personally and in community.

Prophecy comes from personal relationship

In the recent past, prophecy in the church has largely been modeled in the form of a gift given selectively to a few. Sometimes people would attend churches or conferences in the hope of receiving a personal word from God via one of these prophets. While this model has positives, one being the role it has played in putting the gifts of the Spirit back on the agenda, it also has the potential to once again reinforce the spectator mentality in church, whereby the everyday believer leaves the 'ministry' to a professional and observes but doesn't particularly participate. In many ways this model fails to train everyday believers that hearing God is supposed to be a normal aspect of walking as a disciple of Jesus.

I am writing the majority of this resource whilst doing biology fieldwork in the desert of Central Australia. Daily I am struck with the sense of remoteness out here. Back at home in Sydney the maintenance and growth of relationships seems organic. Out here I've begun to understand that an underlying factor driving this organic growth must be the ease of communication that proximity brings. When communication is made more difficult by distance, friendships can so easily plateau or even decline. A key to building a friendship with someone is learning how to communicate on a personal level. The same goes for our relationship with God. How can we have a truly personal walk with the Lord without personal communication?

Central to the practical life of a Christian is the confidence in God's individual dealings with each person. This includes two-way communication with our Heavenly Father. We must not abandon faith in God's desire to communicate with us, to develop this two-way communication in our relationship and to teach us to hear Him speak. Nor must we abandon our role of cooperating with Him in learning to hear His voice. Two-way

communication is supposed to be a normal element in our relationship with Him. If we abandon this faith we cut our relationship off at the knees.²

What is prophecy and why value it?

Prophecy plays a different role today from what it did in the Old Testament. It also plays a slightly different role today from what it played in the period of the early church before the canon of Scripture was closed. Most people understand the Old Testament prophets as foretellers of the future. Although this was certainly an aspect, prophets in the Old Testament linked their message directly to the historical conditions of their day. They preached to the people and the Kings of their time, urging them to conform their lives to the Covenantal Law which God had given Israel. They served to return people's attention to what God had already said. Many times they expressed God's holy anger toward a people who had walked away from their covenantal relationship with God and had turned towards corruption and rebellion. While God is still grieved by rebellion and His Spirit convicts us of our sin, the function of prophecy in today's context looks very different from the way prophecy operated in the Old Testament. Instead of fault finding, prophecy today functions to build up, exhort and encourage the Body of Christ.

In the period of the early church, when Scripture as we know it today was still being written, prophecy served to help reinterpret what is now Old Testament Scripture in light of the coming of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It also served the early church as encouragement and guidance. Today our foundation rests in the authority of the now closed canon of Scripture. Prophecy can still function to help illuminate Scripture but it will never contradict it and is now mostly given for strengthening and encouragement, as well as serving to guide us in following God's leading.

The prophetic today can be defined as a revelatory gift God sovereignly gives to members of the Body of Christ in order to bring encouragement and strengthening to the church.³ One or more members receive a message from God and communicate this message so that the Body may be encouraged (1 Cor. 14:3-5). Once again, although some members of the Body may function in this gifting more than others, it is not a special ability reserved exclusively to a select few. The message given may be for the gathered community or for an individual. As with all the gifts, prophecy is given for the common

good. Paul therefore emphasises in 1 Corinthians his desire for prophecy to be a prominent aspect of gathering together (14:31, 39). Paul also mentions the role prophecy can play in helping people to know the reality of a living God, particularly that God sees and cares for everyone and knows the depths of the human heart (14:25).

The prophetic today, which can include things like dreams and inner promptings, comes under the 'subjective' banner in regards to God's revelation. The 'objective' revelation we have today is of course the written word. The two can exist in harmony and, as we shall see, subjective revelation can play an invaluable role in the life of a believer and in the life of the church. In regards to prayer ministry, it is often the means by which we can follow God's leading in a situation. However subjective and objective revelation should be clearly distinguished. God can and does speak outside of Scripture but He will never speak in contradiction to it. Objective revelation is to remain the primary filter through which subjective revelation is viewed.

Not too long ago I came to a time of transition in my life and was in the process of making a decision about which direction I was supposed to take, particularly in regards to work. Transition is never my preferred state and I was particularly anxious about making a wrong call. I was at a small gathering consisting of people from a number of different churches. At one point we broke off into smaller groups of three or four to pray for each other. While I was receiving prayer, one person in my group "got a sense" of what I was feeling. He went on to describe my current anxiety in regards to my decision making, even naming a specific concern I was carrying, before encouraging me and reminding me that God is in control and capable of leading me. It was clear that this knowledge of my situation could only have been revealed to him by God, and the impact it had on me was instant. I was reminded once again that God sees me, knows me and has everything under control. I was greatly comforted and began to weep as the Lord began to deal with some of the specific stress I was feeling.

I've seen countless examples since, both in my own life and in the lives of others, where a similarly simple word has brought about so much strengthening and encouragement. That is the role of the prophetic. Like all the gifts it serves to edify the Body of Christ as it draws us back to God's love for us and guides our focus towards Jesus. That is why we need to teach it and encourage it.

The different forms of prophetic revelation

The term 'prophetic' is often used as a broader, umbrella term which may describe several different types of revelation given by God. The prophetic can be understood as a 'word' ministry where people pass on divine revelation to others for encouragement and strengthening. It sometimes encompasses several of the spiritual gifts listed separately by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 because of their similarity in nature, i.e. they are all based on God's direct and personal communication with His people. While a longer list of the common ways that God communicates with His people is given in the following chapter, I here want to dispel potential confusion and briefly explain five revelatory gifts which are sometimes lumped together under the 'prophetic' banner.

It should be remembered that each of these gifts is given to serve and build up the Body of Christ. Generally speaking each gift builds up the body in a specifically unique way and hence, while often lumped together, can be described separately. Also, because each of these are reliant on God communicating specifically, it's not uncommon that someone who learns to hear God accurately will regularly function in most or all of these. In fact often a 'prophetic word' given to an individual will include a combination of several of these together, particularly the first three. In my personal example given above, the word given actually consisted of a word of knowledge about my situation, a word of encouragement and a word of prophecy reminding me that God is in control and the situation is in His capable hands.

1) Words of Prophecy: Strictly speaking, there is a foretelling element involved in prophecy. On rare occasions this may be as specific as knowing details of events in the future (Acts 21:10-11). This is not fortune telling for the knowledge only comes from the Spirit of God. Such specific gifts of prophecy, however, are generally only given to those who are very discerning and experienced in such things. More commonly, especially for the everyday believer, prophecy is a calling out of something which can't be seen in the physical. For example knowing the direction God may want to take an organisation, or 'seeing' a trait such as leadership in an individual that God wants to develop. In this way it often functions in unison with a word of encouragement. As will be discussed in the next chapter, such words act like yellow highlighter to an individual, confirming

something in their heart that has often already been stirred by God. Such an experience is incredibly uplifting.

- 2) Words of Knowledge: This is when God reveals certain facts about an individual or a situation. These facts are not known previously nor were they learned. This knowledge is given for a specific purpose and demonstrates God's love for each person. For example Jesus' knew of the Samaritan woman's secret sin (Jn. 4:17-29). Often the specific knowledge is given to help us identify where the Spirit is wanting to work and to allow us to better cooperate with Him. Practically this gift is often used in conjunction with healing. A word of knowledge is given about a person's physical ailment in order that this person is identified and prayed for.
- 3) Words of Encouragement: These function in a similar way to prophecy in that a person, prompted by God, 'sees' a characteristic in another person that God wants to highlight and encourage. In some cases this characteristic may not otherwise be known or obvious and is sometimes a hidden passion in the persons heart. This type of word is also applicable to groups of people who may be encouraged as a body.
- 4) Words of Wisdom: Different from the general pursuit of spiritual wisdom described throughout the book of Proverbs, this is a specific revelation given by God for a specific situation. Practically it might look like a 'light bulb' moment that the person would never have had on their own. It is often given for someone else's benefit.
- 5) Tongue Interpretation: This type of word is specific to the context when someone delivers a tongue in a public setting under the prompting of the Holy Spirit. In accordance with 1 Corinthians 14:27, when a tongue is given in public an interpretation should follow so that everyone may be built up. The interpretation is given by the Spirit and allows all to understand in English the equivalent of what was said in tongues. This is discussed in more depth in chapter 9.

Uniting the prophetic with pastoral care

Paul's instructions to the church in Thessalonica was, "Do not despise prophecies, but test everything..." (1 Thes. 5:20-21 ESV). For Paul to write such an instruction implies two things. Firstly, that there must have been some reason for the people to despise prophecy and secondly, that Paul so valued the role of the gift in the church that he encouraged its inclusion (see also 1 Cor. 14:39). The human heart, though, is imperfect and this imperfection has the potential to sour all of what we do, including our pursuit of the gifts. Unfortunately that is the cold reality. What then should be our response? Do we run away from the gifts of the Spirit, or even run from the church? Absolutely not! The answer is to run towards *love*. This must remain the crucible through which we operate. The gifts of the Spirit should always be partnered with intentional pastoral care, not only as a protective or testing mechanism, but as a platform from which growth can flourish. Pastoral care must actively seek to teach and train people to continue developing in their relationship with Christ, including their ability to discern His voice. Part of pastoral care is also being aware of some common difficulties related to pursuing prophetic ministry and helping to guide people away from these. Undoubtably this includes teaching people how to humbly give prophetic words in a way that encourages their fellow brother or sister in Christ, as well as how to receive prophetic words given to them by others.

In every aspect of meeting together there is always the potential risk of impure motives. This is no different when considering the prophetic. It's possible to have wrong motives for seeking to hear from God. We may be familiar with individuals who attempt to claim religious authority by highlighting some special sign or word from the Lord, usually passed on with no sense of humility or open discernment. Or those that justify foolish actions and unwise decisions based on the authority that, "God told me." I'm amazed when 'God' seems to instruct one of his followers with such absolute clarity one week, only to interestingly change 'His' mind the following week and give instructions in a completely different direction. At times of personal confusion in life we can sometimes be more driven by our own anxiety to hear God's voice than by the desire to edify the body.

These impure motives may grip our hearts from time to time. One of the hardest things for our flesh to do is get out of the way. This is why pastoral care is so important. When pastoral care is aligned with good, biblical teaching and careful discernment and

testing, most of these potential issues are easily accounted for. It's simply helpful to be aware of them. Of course most of these issues are present within churches regardless of whether or not they are seeking the prophetic. For example it's often possible to justify whatever 'I' want to do based on some poor interpretation of Scripture or a collection of ambiguous passages pulled out of context. We unfortunately see this all too commonly. But that is no reason to stop seeking to grow in our understanding and teaching of the word. In fact, if anything, it is further motivation to do so. The same goes for the spiritual gifts. We are not to despise prophecy. Instead we are to ensure that all the gifts are used to build up the church. That is why we are to constantly test what is said (1 Thes. 5:20; 1 Cor. 14:29). Some helpful hints about how to do that will be discussed shortly. Seeking the spiritual gifts does not nullify our need for discernment.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.” (Is. 55:8 ESV). Occasionally God will communicate something to us that may seem in conflict to our human way of doing things - perhaps a direction He would like the church to take for example. This is where faith is involved. Any time we are being led by God into new things, there will be a need to rely on His guidance, timing and resources. However, before we jump right in and follow every whim no matter how crazy, we must spend time in discernment. It is good to remember that in the examples we have in Scripture, where people have been specifically instructed by God to do something against their common sense, the issue was not whether or not they were discerning the voice of God. Abraham's instruction to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22), Moses' instruction to approach Pharaoh (Ex. 3), Ananias' instruction to pray for Saul (Acts 9) and Peter's visiting of Cornelius who was a Gentile (Acts 10) spring to mind here. These people all heard the voice of God *clearly*. The issue being highlighted in these passages was not the clarity or the source of the revelation but the person's obedience to God. Before following a prompting to do something drastic or strange, we should also expect to discern God's voice clearly. This discernment or clarity may be a process but the confidence and clarity should nonetheless be present. Pastoral care is often required in this discernment process, as is seeking the counsel of others.⁴

What about getting it wrong?

When I was a young lad my soccer coach at training one day decided we needed to start practicing our headers. This was no doubt due to his repeated frustration with us the previous weekend as cross after cross was clipped over from the sideline by our winger, only for us to continue squandering these scoring chances because of our fear of heading the soccer ball. He called us together and said, “All right boys, how many of you have had a bleeding nose from copping a soccer ball right in the face?” We looked around nervously as several boys sheepishly raised their hands, each expecting to be instructed to run laps around the park as some sort of punishment for letting down the team. The coach’s response was unexpected. Instead of sending us on a fitness drill, he said, “Why do only half of you have your hands up? Have the rest of you never gone for a header in your life?” I learnt a life lesson that day. The question is never, ‘will I cop a soccer ball in my face?’ That much is inevitable. The question is rather, ‘will I learn from that experience?’ The same is true for growing in the spiritual gifts. No one has a 100% shooting record. Not every person you pray for will get healed. Not every prophetic word you give will be entirely accurate. Over time, however, if you step out in obedience and with abundant humility, your shooting percentage, so to speak, will increase. It begins with believing that, as a follower of Christ, it’s possible to learn over time, through experience, how to understand and distinguish the voice of God.

Even with experience couldn’t I still be mistaken? The answer is yes, you could still be wrong. It’s also entirely possible to misunderstand someone we’re having coffee with face to face. I’ve misunderstood and misheard my closest friends many times. Such is human life. The possibility of being wrong simply emphasises the need for conversation to be always grounded in relationship. God does not intend to make us infallible by conversing personally with us. Our walk with Him does not mean we no longer make mistakes. Humbly growing in our relationship with Him and learning as a result of these mistakes is how we grow in Christlikeness. As long as we ensure that the words we are giving are encouraging, motivated by love, presented with great humility and overseen by good pastoral care, even an incorrect prophetic word should not cause any problem. At the worst it will be a blessed thought.

Since the chance of getting it wrong is something that never entirely leaves, a good rule of thumb is to put some boundaries on topics which should not usually be shared. This is sometimes called the 'mates, dates and babies' rule. We should be extremely careful about sharing prophetic words regarding 'mates' i.e. matching people together romantically; 'dates' i.e. giving words with detailed timing predictions; and, of course, 'babies' i.e. prophesying child birth. These delicate topics can be potentially damaging if handled poorly and should therefore be reserved almost exclusively for people who are very experienced in the prophetic. Even then they should be handled with absolute care! The same goes for other topics such as secret sin. Learning to hear God's voice is always a process. There is plenty of room for growth without flirting with such delicate topics. Additionally, not every word is given so that it can be shared. Some guidelines are provided in the next chapter regarding application of prophetic words.

The main pointers:

- The Bible is the objective revelation of God. Any subjective revelation must sit under the authority of Scripture.
- Prophecy functions differently today from how it did in the Old Testament or before the canon of Scripture was closed.
- Prophecy is a gift that all may function in from time to time.
- It is an extension of hearing God's voice as part of one's personal relationship with Jesus.
- Like the other gifts it is used to strengthen and encourage the Body of Christ.
- Partnering the prophetic with pastoral care is important as this promotes growth and minimises potential abuses.



Chapter 8

HEARING GOD (part 2) Learning to hear the voice of God

About 10 years ago we had a visiting speaker come to a small gathering of people in my parents' living room. It also happened to be the first time I had ever led other people in worship. I knew a few chords on guitar and could hold a tune but that's about it. After I led he stood up to speak then walked over to me and spoke a word of prophecy to me, speaking into what he saw for my future. I'd never met this man before, but what he said was greatly encouraging and resonated with desires God was stirring within me. At the end of the night I asked him what that was all about and he said something very memorable and freeing. He said, "you don't need to worry what it's all about, you don't need to try to make it happen because you can't, you don't need to feel any pressure because of it. All you must do is stay close to God - maintain that relationship - and he will do the rest."

Prophecy shouldn't make our decisions for us. Prophecy shouldn't weigh us down with fixed expectations of how God will work. Prophecy's purpose is to encourage and affirm what God is doing in and amongst His people. The validity of a word of prophecy rests not on the one prophesying, or the one being spoken to, but on whether or not it comes to pass. And if it is God's word, it is up to Him to make it happen (with our cooperation along the way!). Over the following weeks, months and years God has reaffirmed that word spoken to me over 10 years ago through different means as I've walked with Him. The word itself has not been completely fulfilled, and it may not be while I am alive, but I have seen glimpses of its validity. It has encouraged me and increased my desire to pursue God with my whole life. I have not dismissed that prophetic word, but neither have I clung onto it as if it determines the direction and purpose of my life. If the word is from God, He will make it happen.

Steve Bernard - Worship Pastor

It has already been suggested that we grow in the prophetic by developing our personal relationship with Christ into the sort of relationship suited to mature friends. In this sort of relationship the Lord intends for us to learn to recognise His voice speaking into our hearts as the occasion demands. Friendship is about trust. As we develop two way trust with Jesus by sharing our hearts with Him, He will share His heart with us. "The Lord confides in those who fear Him," (Ps. 25:14 NIV).

The first point, and it may seem an obvious one, is therefore to realise that God speaking to you in the form of the 'prophetic' to encourage another will sound the same as when God speaks to you in private. When I realised this for myself I began to relax significantly when it came to sharing a prophetic word with the community or an individual. It was almost like the pressure was removed when I realised, at least for me personally, on almost all occasions a 'prophetic' word is not shrouded in heavenly fanfare but comes in the same still, small voice (1 Kg. 19:11-13) I'd grown accustomed to listening for in my quiet times.

Secondly, if we want to grow in hearing God's voice we must value it. This is demonstrated when we intentionally take time to listen and when we obey His leading. I found journalling to be a very helpful process in learning to discern God's still small voice. It helped to intentionally raise my awareness of God's desire to speak to me in the everyday. By writing down and remembering what God had spoken to me, I was able to observe the accuracy of these words over time and learn to distinguish the 'sound' of God's voice. I also found it helpful to ask God specific questions, as I would do if I were having coffee with a close friend. Although not all of these questions were answered in the way I desired or expected, by waiting to hear God's thoughts about situations in my life or remind me of Scriptures to dwell upon, I slowly became accustomed to expecting Him to speak to me. This expectation extended to times of community when I would pray for others. Over time I began to expect God would use me to communicate His thoughts to another person for their encouragement. Our growth in the public use of the gifts of the Spirit are always deeply rooted in our intimate walk with Jesus. Since hearing God's voice in our personal walks is so important, the prophetic in a public setting is simply an extension, like extra branches of the same tree.

We should remember that it's important to relax and be yourself when ministering in any form. The Creator God is not interested in making clones. He doesn't want you to be

someone else. He wants to walk with you and shape you into the image of His son that only you can be. When it comes to ministering in the Power of the Holy Spirit this knowledge frees us and humbles us. Since we can do nothing apart from Him, we act in obedience to His leading. In regards to prophecy, God sends the messages, we just deliver them. He always initiates the gifts, we just give them away. It's such an exciting partnership.

Getting a word and what it sounds like

We learn from the Bible and from those that have gone before us that God's communications with His people come in many forms. This is unsurprising when we consider the diversity of human personality and the fact that God is a personal God. Some common examples are as follows:

- The Bible: The Spirit helps to remind us of Scripture (Jn. 14:26) or illuminates new insights and deeper truths to us as we read Scripture. The Bible is central when it comes to hearing God's voice.
- Natural means: God may speak to us when we observe something in His creation which speaks of a divine truth. Proverbs 6:6-8 is one example.
- Audible voice: Acts 9:4-7 is one of many examples.
- Internal voice: This may not be physically audible but is a thought so clear that its impact on the 'hearer' is as if something audible was said. Peter in Acts 10:19 is an example.
- Angels: Scripture is full of such examples. See Luke 1:11, 26; Acts 10:3.
- Dreams, visions or trances: Joseph in Matthew 1:20; Ananias in Acts 9:10; Peter in Acts 10:10; Paul in Acts 16:9.
- Impressions: Similar to what we might call intuition, but differs because an impression comes from the Holy Spirit rather than from ourselves. By His internality, the Holy Spirit can influence our feelings, emotions or physical senses. Often takes the form of a 'gut' feeling or knowing about something. May accompany other modes of communication and therefore may help to confirm these. Nehemiah 7:5 and Mark 2:8.
- A Picture: These come into the 'minds eye' and normally metaphorically represent something that God is communicating. See Jeremiah 1:13-14.

- Internal dialogue: These often come into the mind in the form of words, sentences or sentence fragments. They sound very much like one's own thoughts but have characteristics which are typical to a prophetic word, as described shortly.

When it comes to hearing God, most people are listening for something that sounds entirely different from their own thoughts. In my experience, most of the time this is not the case. The Spirit is internal and therefore, the majority of the time, speaks to us from within. This means that learning to hear God involves learning to discern how these thoughts differ from our normal head voice. Part of this discernment often involves discovering one's own personal system or dialect with Jesus. This idea is easy to observe when watching old friends interact. Good friends, over time, develop a personal way of communicating together that is slightly different from when those two individuals communicate with others. This is based on their history together and their depth of understanding about each other. The same is true in communicating with Christ. We learn, over time, to differentiate the sound of the Spirit communicating with us from our own head voice. This dialect looks slightly different to each person and is developed and refined as we grow in our experience of listening to God.

For me personally, being an avid nature lover, I have come to recognise that God communicates regularly with me through pictures of things in creation. He then reminds me of how the particular image in my mind relates to a divine truth. For example He once communicated to me about His perfect timing and my need for patience by bringing to mind a picture of a particular orchid which only flowers for a short time when conditions are absolutely right. I've also found that when I ask God to give me a specific word for another person, normally the first thought that comes into my mind is from Him. This trend has shown to be consistent over time. Normally associated with this thought is a gut feeling, similar to stomach butterflies, or a strange 'knowing' in my gut. The thought then is often difficult to push from my mind and may be recurring. This won't apply to everybody but is simply a personal method I've developed with Jesus over time in order to recognise His voice, as opposed to my own thinking, and which has proved to be consistently accurate when acted upon. Of course this initial thought is not *always* Him and doesn't nullify my need to test it using the pointers given below.

What about words of knowledge?

A word of knowledge is generally specific to a person or situation and is regularly associated with healing. There are therefore some additional ways in which they may come to the listener.

- A Picture: Particularly when the word of knowledge is about a condition God would like to heal, the condition may come to the hearer in the form of an image. For example the picture of a shoulder or knee may enter the mind. It could also be something like an X-ray or a picture of an internal organ such as the lungs.
- Read it: Some people 'see' in their minds eye a word written almost like a banner over a specific person.
- An inner knowing: Without any previous knowledge or investigation, information is simply known about someone. Often comes from within, like a gut knowing.
- Physical sensation: Again, particularly for words of knowledge associated with a physical condition, a physical sensation such as heat, tingling or pain may be felt in an area of the body where there was no previous physical sensation. This was not there previously and generally represents a condition God would like to heal in someone else.
- A random thought: Similar to an inner knowing, information comes in the form of a thought entering the mind. Normally this thought seems to arrive from 'left field' and the person had no logical reason to have thought it.

Testing a word

Words must always be tested. This applies when someone gives a word for the community in a public setting as well as when we are listening to God privately. It also applies when someone has shared a prophetic word with us specifically. Practically speaking there are four tests which have helped many people accurately discern and test a word. A more thorough explanation of these can be found in *Surprised by the Voice of God*.¹

- 1) The Bible: I cannot emphasise enough the centrality of the Bible in hearing God speak. It is the first test through which any subjective experience must pass. If an impression or prophetic word contradicts Scripture it should be disregarded immediately. A revelation from God will always be in line with His written word.

- 2) God's Character: A word God speaks will always be in line with His character. His words will bring hope and encouragement, not despair and hopelessness. God does not accuse or condemn but encourages and supports, even when convicting us of sin. The words He speaks to His children will also have this character.
- 3) Its Fruit: Observing the fruit that is produced when we follow the word is helpful. We can expect the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26) to be more evident within us and others as a result. This can only really be tested with time and with obedience. This is where journaling is beneficial.
- 4) Its Content: Not even the greatest human intellect can fathom the mind of God. Often when a divine revelation comes to us it goes beyond our normal level of wisdom. It is perhaps something we would not have thought of ourselves or could not have known by any obvious cue. Practically the revelation may be recurring or difficult to push from the mind and was not in our current line of thinking.

A fifth guide which may also prove helpful is the counsel of others (Prov. 1:5; 11:14). Once again stepping out and giving or following a word should be coupled with pastoral care. Generally speaking, particularly when the word given is instructional in nature, the word is confirmed by others in the community and by an internal witness that it rings true. It is also usually in line with what God is already doing. It should be noted here, though, that in accordance with point number 4, God may speak something that makes no logical sense to our limited human minds. Ensure that the people who provide counsel are people of spiritual discernment. When we are trying to discern the voice of God we do not simply want the worldly opinions of others.

Revelation, Interpretation and Application

There are generally three stages associated with the receiving and delivery of a word.² Discernment is crucial at each of these stages for the word to achieve its purpose of edifying and encouraging the Body. The first stage is the *Revelation*, i.e. what is said. Personally this often comes to me in the form of a picture in my mind's eye, as in the example of the orchid I gave earlier. At other times, particularly when praying for someone else, it takes the form of a single word which enters my mind from left of field. For example the word 'fear' might enter my mind. That revelation alone is not yet particularly helpful. Let's proceed then, continuing with this example.

The next stage is the *Interpretation* of that revelation, i.e. what that image or word means. Many make the mistake of receiving the revelation and stopping there, jumping straight to sharing the revelation. More often than not the revelation is not the complete story, particularly if the revelation is a picture. By jumping the gun we can potentially lose a lot of the encouragement that God intended or, worse, entirely miss what God intended. It's crucial that we wait for this interpretation. For example the interpretation to the single word 'fear' that entered my mind could be that the person I'm praying for has overwhelming amounts of fear in their life and the Holy Spirit wants to comfort them, replacing their fear with His perfect peace and a new understanding of His love.

At this point it's now time to run the 4 test model on the revelation and interpretation. Let's continue with the hypothetical example of the revelation of 'fear'. Is the interpretation biblical? In this case, yes it is. The Holy Spirit is our comforter (Jn. 14:26) and Scripture says that God's love drives out fear (1 Jn. 4:18). Is it in line with God's character? Yes. Whilst the fear itself is not comforting, God does want to free us from what binds us and He helps us in our weakness (Rom. 8:26). In the past has stepping out and following such a prompting produced good fruit? Over time I have learned through experience that the answer has generally been, yes. Is the content of the word from myself or from a divine source? By just looking at the person I'm praying for, I can see no indication in my human wisdom that fear is particularly present in that person's life. And under normal circumstances I do not usually think 'fear' when I meet someone or pray with them. Whilst it's still possible I have made an error here, it's more likely that this is something revealed to me by the Spirit.

Stage three now is the *application* of that insight, i.e. what do I do with this word God has given me? It is possible to have both a revelation and an interpretation correct, but *apply* it incorrectly. I have had to learn this lesson the hard way. Not every word is given so that it can be shared. Sometimes God may give someone information in order that they pray into a situation or intercede on behalf of another. Perhaps the word is to be shared at a later date. Even if it is to be shared at the time, there are different ways of doing so. There is no set rule for the application of a word. In a prayer ministry context, however, more often than not information is given by God to highlight areas which should be prayed into then and there. Application is a case by case scenario and it's the responsibility of the hearer to ask the Lord what is the appropriate application for the word. If God has given us the revelation and interpretation, He will also instruct us in what to do

with that information. Godly wisdom is important at this stage in knowing the correct way to deliver the word.

There are some occasions when a revelation can be shared without the interpretation. One such occasion could be when gathered in community and the Lord intends to give another member of the congregation the interpretation to share. When this occurs the sense of the Spirit moving amongst the people is powerful. As a general rule, though, when it comes to the prophetic we should always be mindful of these three stages and ask for God's leading in each.

When the application is to deliver a word

The same prophetic word can be applied in different ways. If it's right that we deliver the word, as is usually the case, some key principles apply. First and foremost *always* deliver a word with the intention to build up and encourage the person. We must not deliver the word if our motives stray from this purpose. Prophetic words do not tear down or discourage. This is why we must constantly examine the motives of our own hearts and couple the gifts of the Spirit with pastoral care and accountability.

Secondly, we must deliver the word with the utmost humility. Even a correct revelation, interpretation and application can be soured and poorly received if we deliver it from a height of arrogance. We are always learning how to hear God's voice better. Let your delivery reflect that. By this I mean use language that removes pressure rather than builds it. A simple, "Forgive me if I'm wrong..." to begin with allows the person to take the word or to leave it, rather than forcing it to fit into their life. Do not make grandiose claims like, "Thus sayeth the Lord..." Just relax and be yourself. There is no need to get all 'spiritual' or start speaking in Shakespearian English just because God has given us something to share. We are just the messengers. Our job is to deliver the message with humility and minimal fuss.

In a prayer ministry context there are some alternative methods to deliver a word which may help to remove some pressure both for the person praying and the person receiving prayer. Rather than simply stating the insight which God has given, it can be helpful to combine the insight into a prayer. An application of the 'fear' example above

might be to pray something along the lines of, “Lord, we ask now that your Holy Spirit would bring comfort and remove any sense of fear that might be overwhelming.” By then watching and waiting we may see how the Holy Spirit is working and how the person is responding. Often their body language is a good indication of whether or not to continue more intentionally with that prayer.

A lot of people feel awkward about temporarily pausing the ministry time and interviewing the person. There is no need to be. Temporarily pausing does not stop the work of the Holy Spirit. He is more than capable of dealing with our humanity. This approach is helpful in clarifying whether the prompting was correct and allows us to simply ask the person if they would like further prayer into that particular issue. For example, “I get the sense that the Lord might want to remove some fear today. Would you like me to pray into that for you?” This gives the person the option of saying ‘no’ if the word doesn’t particularly apply, and makes it easy to transition into praying for something else at the person’s request.

Finally, when giving a word we should resist the temptation to add to the revelation given to us by God. When we add our own words, no matter how eloquent, we are actually detracting from the impact that typically accompanies a word from God. I find it very encouraging to remember that a general word from the Lord can be just as meaningful and carry just as much weight as a specific word. Our role is to be faithful and obedient with what God’s given us and allow the Holy Spirit to minister. We should also remember that prayer ministry is not a counseling session. Allow Him to do the work and resist the urge to deliver your own friendly advice or opinions. Although shared with good intentions, personal opinions can often distract from what God is doing. Besides, most of the time we don’t have even half of the information necessary about a situation to be at all qualified to share our opinions.

What to do when someone gives *you* a prophetic word - Use it, shelve it or discard it?

The Holy Spirit is active in the world so don’t be surprised if He chooses to use another person to speak to you. When accurate and correctly delivered, prophetic words have the potential to be a great blessing to us. When delivered badly, this may not be the

case. It's easy to despise prophecy (1 Thes 5:20) when you receive a string of bad prophetic words from others. We need to learn how to recognise which is which and what to do with them.

The prophetic works by way of confirmation. As we develop our personal relationship with God we will find that He communicates specific things to us individually through our inner longings, desires, wisdom and so on. When a good prophetic word comes along via another person it acts like a giant yellow highlighter to us. It's God's way of communicating, "This is me! It's not just your own desires!" When this is the case the prophetic is incredibly encouraging and our response is almost always, "Thank you, God!" We can use it as a source of strength and encouragement. A good prophetic word confirms that we are following where God is leading us and gives us both the comfort of knowing He is guiding us and the faith to risk stepping out and following His prompting. The prophetic word should always lead us back to our relationship with Jesus. When we are given an accurate prophetic word we should 'use it' as a source of encouragement and continue to pray into it, asking Jesus to continue speaking to us about it.

Sometimes a prophetic word given to us seems less like the big yellow confirmation highlighter and more like a pencil underline. In these circumstances a good idea is not to disregard the word completely but remain open handed with it. If it's from the Lord He will bring it to pass. We shouldn't try and make a prophetic word squeeze into our lives or try and make things happen for ourselves. God is more than capable of pulling the required strings if and when He desires. A good idea is to write it down, pray through it with Jesus and then 'shelve it'. By shelving it, if later confirmation comes along it may well prove to be a great source of strength, encouragement and confirmation in the future. I was recently given a word which, at the time, seemed to give some direction to a decision I was processing. However, as I processed this word with God through prayer I got the sense that, although the word was from Him, the timing for me to follow its direction was not quite right. I therefore 'shelved' it, continuing to remain aware of it but not forcing it to apply to my life right now.

Occasionally someone, usually very well meaning, will give us a word they believe is from the Lord for us specifically, or for the church specifically, which seems more like white-out than a yellow highlighter. Internally we have no sense whatsoever that God's communicating with us through it. If there is no sense of confirmation or conviction by the

Spirit of God within then we should 'discard it'. Sometimes words also fail at least one of the 4 tests given previously. There is no point in shelving an incorrect word, particularly if it contradicts Scripture or is not in line with God's character! In this case we should humbly and gently thank the person for their word but explain we do not sense it is the Lord. Ensure that they are left feeling loved and valued.

How do I grow my church in the prophetic?

I once again want to finish this chapter with some very brief, practical pointers which may help the gift of prophecy to become a regular and healthy source of encouragement to your community. Good leadership is crucial when taking any group of people on a journey of growth. This includes teaching on the how and why as well as modeling safe and regular use from the front. Once again a foundation of grace and humility should be established, allowing people to relax and learn without fear of having their mistakes punished.

Pastoral care should always be prominent, helping people to learn how to deliver a word with humility and how to receive a word from someone else and apply it if appropriate. Space should be provided for prayer ministry so that people have time and opportunity to learn how to use the gift. Encouraging people to pray in small groups of three or so, with people who are more experienced, is useful in helping people learn and also ensures words are tested and delivered in a safe manner. In these circumstances God will often give others in the group a similar thought or prompting, which encourages people by way of confirmation. Finally, encourage people to step out by reminding them that it is always God who initiates the gifts, all we have to do is be obedient and give them away.

The main pointers:

- Hearing God's voice develops from intimacy with Him. It grows from personal relationship.
- If we wish to grow in hearing God then we must value His voice.
- God's revelation comes to His people in many forms.
- Subjective words must be tested. It should be in line with Scripture and God's character and its content should come from God. Over time it should bear good fruit. Counsel of others is also helpful for discernment.
- Receiving and delivering a word involves the three stages of revelation, interpretation and application.
- When given a word from somebody else it should be tested. The prophetic works by way of confirmation. Either use it, shelve it or discard it.



Chapter 9

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

The gift of tongues is such an encouragement to people as is it gives the recipient the opportunity to express to God their deep feelings and emotions that words can't express. I remember one particular time in our church we had a time for people to receive the gift. A lady in our church had never spoken in tongues before and, after praying, she received it almost immediately. Then, for the longest time, she almost didn't stop speaking in tongues - it was mixed with tears and joy. I asked her about it later. She said it was the first time in her life that she felt able to express to God the deep hurt that she has been carrying, her spirit reaching out to God.

I will often personally use tongues to align myself with what God is doing in a ministry session. Our heart when praying for people is to hear God for them, or hear what God is doing at that particular time. When I pray in tongues quietly and below my breath (so I don't distract the person - they may not even know that I am doing it), I find that I have a clearer mind for prayer and feel I can hear God with greater clarity in the moment. I believe what's happening is that my prayer is aligning my spirit with the Spirit of God for the time of ministry.

I find to be able to worship God and not need to find words to express the overflow of my heart towards Him is a wonderful gift from God. What a joy to be gifted by God to worship more, pray with increased clarity, and know that God can know us beyond what we can accurately express. Thank you God!

Phil Henry - Pastor of Northridge Vineyard Christian Fellowship

Of all the spiritual gifts, the gift of tongues (*glossolalia*) is associated with the most stigma, confusion and baggage. Some believe that the gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of tongues, have ceased to be available today. At the other end of the spectrum are those who believe that the gift of tongues is a necessary sign of having the Spirit indwell a believer. Parties on both sides of the discussion hold firmly to their particular standpoints and many of us are left floundering somewhere in the middle, not knowing what to think about the gift or where to even begin to look for answers to our questions. Or, worse still, our disillusionment with this one gift leads us to shy away from all of the gifts, throwing them all in the 'too hard basket'. Still more of us see our relationship with Jesus as more 'mature' than all of that 'nonsense', preferring instead to rely upon our reasoning and intellect when approaching Jesus; after all, doesn't the Bible stress 'orderly' worship? In chapter 5 I discussed the role and purpose of the gifts of the Spirit and why they are so important. In this chapter I hope to address some of those issues in regards specifically to the gift of tongues and in doing so provide a starting point to understanding the purpose and biblical application of this precious gift.

1 Corinthians 12-14 will once again provide the basis for this discussion. When reading any text we must always remember the context. Paul here is writing to the Corinthian church because their usage of the spiritual gifts was becoming inappropriate. Competition and comparison was arising, with some people claiming to be more spiritual than others because of their receipt and use of the gift of tongues. Paul provides correction and instruction to the church and explains why there is need for orderly worship and how best to achieve this order *without* losing sight of the importance of the spiritual gifts. Many of us today have pursued strictly ordered worship services but in doing so have lost sight of Paul's encouragement to allow the gifts to flourish within this framework. This response is a tragedy.

In regards to tongues, this passage can sometimes appear confusing if we do not realise that Paul is speaking here primarily about the use of the gift in a *public* setting. As we shall see, the gift is just as edifying when used as part of a holistic *private* prayer life. But firstly, what is the gift of tongues?

What is the gift of tongues?

David Pytches in his book *Come Holy Spirit* provides a wonderfully succinct definition. I have included it here and will explain some of its elements.

“This is spontaneous inspired utterance by the Holy Spirit, where the normal voice organs are used, but the conscious mind plays no part. The languages spoken or sung are entirely unlearned by the speaker ... ‘Speaking in tongues’ or ‘praying in the Spirit’ is what happens when a Christian believer allows the indwelling Spirit to guide the form of words he utters. It is not an act of divine ventriloquism, but an act of collaboration.”¹

The gift of tongues is a supernatural language given to the believer by the Holy Spirit. It is not a learnt language in the same sense that someone may learn to speak French or German but is a divinely given language. Occasionally, though, the utterances are of another earthly language not otherwise spoken by the person. This is by no means always the case and is given the term ‘xenoglossolalia’ by theologians.

Receiving the gift often requires the believer to cooperate with God. Usually, the believer needs to begin to speak something – usually praise in their own language – and then shift from English by choosing to use an alternative ‘phrase’ to represent the same heartfelt praise. Rarely does God ‘take over’ your mouth. In that sense it is not ‘divine ventriloquism’. The conscious mind plays no part in that the believer does not have to mentally construct sentences and paragraphs in the way they would if speaking English or some other learnt language. This does not mean, though, that the believer is in an unconscious state. Tongues is not the product of an ‘ecstatic’ state nor is it a product of a trance. The believer is in full conscious control of the act and can start or stop whenever they choose. There is no loss of awareness of surroundings, or even loss of concentration when speaking in tongues whilst participating in some other activity such as reading a book or driving a car.²

1 Corinthians 14:2 states that anyone using the gift “does not speak to men but to God.” In verse 14 Paul says, “my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.” It can therefore be concluded that tongues is a *prayer language* in which your spirit prays, enabled and inspired by God. This differs from regular prayer, with which we are all familiar, which is uttered in English and usually processed in the mind.

What is it for?

The gift of tongues is perhaps the only spiritual gift which has a genuine role outside of gathered community. We can reach this conclusion because of its function. As already established, the primary role of the gifts is for the building up and encouragement of the church. Tongues is included in this function. Tongues, though, can still fulfill its role on a personal level and in a private setting.

An illustration may help here. On a simplistic level you could view it like a pack of cards. My extended family is quite large and every year as I was growing up we would all go on a holiday together. The evenings were often taken up with long and very large card games in which everyone was involved. During the day, though, this same deck of cards would often be used by just one person to play solitaire. The pack of cards remained exactly that: a pack of cards. But when used slightly differently under different circumstances, the same pack of cards achieved the same result – enjoyment – for the individual as it did when it was being used in a group. Obviously this analogy has its limitations but the point remains: tongues can be used by God’s people when they are gathered together or when they are alone. What Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians is simply putting some guidelines in place for when the gift is used corporately.

PRIVATE USE OF THE GIFT

“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...” (1 Cor. 14:4). Jude 20 also links praying in the Spirit with building yourself up. Tongues, then, is a gift given by God which encourages us in our personal relationship with Him. That is why it’s such a precious gift and partly why Paul valued the gift so highly. Paul continues in 1 Cor. 14:18, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.” Paul’s statement here is saying a lot. From what we know of the situation in Corinth, it seemed they spent much of their time together speaking in tongues. Paul’s statement shows us he obviously used and valued the gift. It becomes clear that Paul is referring to his personal prayer life because, come verse 19, he makes the distinction between using the gift privately and in a church service. Privately, tongues express verbal intimacy with God and can bring a whole new dimension to one’s prayer life.

This new dimension of prayer may be in the form of praise or intercession. Romans 8:26 says that the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. In a similar way, the gift of tongues allows one to pray without requiring English words to be formed. Sometimes English words just won't cut it. Sometimes a situation is just too overwhelming. In the moment when we are lost for words, tongues can be used for intercession. At other times the revelation of God is just so beautiful that words cannot express the inner cries of the heart. After all, English only provides a handful of phrases that can express "Jesus, I love you," and English certainly can't begin to describe His majesty. It's in these times that tongues allows one's heart to overflow with praise and in doing so we are encouraged. This is what Paul means when he says, "...the mind is unfruitful." (1 Cor. 14:14). This bypassing of the mind means that we can use tongues to pray even when there is loss of concentration or when we are doing something else. I know some who use the gift to pray as they are driving to work or washing the dishes. Obviously, though, this is not the only method of prayer that should be used, for Paul continues in verse 15 to encourage us to use the mind also.

Is it for everyone?

"I would like everyone of you to speak in tongues..." (1 Cor. 14:5). What does Paul mean by that? When we look at the personal benefits of the gift discussed above, and at Paul's reasoning behind them, his statement starts to make logical sense. The gift has the purpose of edification and the potential to revolutionise your prayer life and intimacy with Jesus. That said, there must have been people in Corinth who did not speak in tongues, otherwise Paul would not express this desire. And yet, I can see no reason why Paul would say this if the gift were only available to a handful of select people. Nor do I think God would withhold from some of His children a gift that would enable them to be encouraged and to worship Him in greater intimacy. Therefore, it is my conclusion that, although not everyone *does* speak in tongues, the offer is extended to all believers. At the very least, Paul instructs us not to forbid it (14:39).

Wait a minute! Are you saying I have to speak in tongues?

Not at all! God's grace is totally free. We do not *have* to do anything. The gospel is about freedom! But my response to this question would be this: wouldn't you like to? After

all, don't you want to be built up? Is that not why you read your Bible and pray, or take communion? Don't you want to experience greater intimacies in prayer, intercession and praise?

PUBLIC USE OF THE GIFT

While most discussion revolves around individual speakers' experience of tongues it's important to note that the early church valued the gift as much, if not more, for its congregational contribution. Two uses are common:

First: the practice during worship where the congregation responds to God by worshipping together in the form of harmonic singing in a mixture of tongues and English. This is, in actual fact, the *private* use of the gift in a public setting and does not require waiting for an interpretation. Instead, it's understood to be free, inspired doxology.³ Although some argue this practice is in breach of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:23, 27, 28, it's here suggested that Paul's instructions relate to the second type of use: the public use of the gift.

This second type of use is when an individual feels prompted to publicly address God in a tongue. This is usually appropriate when the congregation is 'waiting' on God or within the worship time. The understanding is that this is a divine prompting and the resulting utterance is to then be interpreted in English in accordance with 1 Cor. 14:13, 27-28. In this instance, tongues functions very similarly to prophecy within the community. The difference of course is that a tongue, and therefore its interpretation, is directed to *God* in the form of prayer or praise (1 Cor. 14:2), whereas prophecy is a revelation from God directed to the *community* or the individual. Often, though not always, God gives the interpretation to a different member of the congregation. This further enhances the sense of unity within the body. Paul's emphasis in 1 Corinthians 14 regarding this is that it be done in an orderly fashion (14:40). This is easily achieved by ensuring the prompted tongues are given one at a time and an interpretation is given for each in turn. If no interpretation is given, then there is no point in continuing the process in that particular meeting (14:27, 28).

In both uses above, the tongues function to encourage the community and enable the congregation to function as a body. The second usage in particular increases expectation and dependence on both God and other members of the congregation for the interpretive phase of the partnership. In both cases, the gift serves as a powerful symbol of freedom and joy in praise as well as God's presence with us.

HOW TO RECEIVE THE GIFT

We've already established in chapter 5 that we are allowed to eagerly desire (seek) the spiritual gifts. It therefore seems appropriate that we are able to pray to receive the gift of tongues, just as the person who has the gift may pray for an interpretation when giving a tongue in a public setting (1 Cor. 14:13). Matthew 7:7, 11 also suggest we can ask our Father for good gifts. Sometimes a person receives the gift at the same time as their conversion. Often it is received subsequently, as was the case for me personally.

Many people find it helpful to ask for the gift while worshipping in song. This sometimes makes the transition from using English words a little easier and helps keep one's focus on Jesus rather than the words or phrases being said. Let's be honest, the whole thing sounds a little odd. Feeling self-conscious is sometimes a key inhibitor to a believer beginning to use the gift. Any method to help remove this feeling of awkwardness is beneficial. Praying with someone who already speaks in tongues can also be helpful. Having that person speak in tongues audibly (the private use of the gift) yet within earshot sometimes helps remove that initial 'awkward silence'. The laying on of hands is also recommended as demonstrated in Acts 19:6 and mentioned by Paul in 2 Timothy 1:6.

After praying for the gift, either alone or with someone else, the important thing is making a conscious decision to start. As mentioned, the gift of tongues is not divine ventriloquism but requires an act of the will and cooperation on behalf of the believer. As simply a starting point I often encourage the person I'm praying with to pick a phrase and let that sound represent all that their heart longs to say to God. When the person feels comfortable with this they may begin to add more phrases as the Spirit enables them.

Personally I received the gift after having been prayed for. I did not think anything had 'happened'. I had no profound spiritual experience and thought I was just making up noises. It wasn't until I was relaxed and alone, lying on my bed praying late at night, that I began to feel the freedom associated with these phrases. Since the mind is unfruitful when praying in tongues, the initial worrying about *what* to say often needs to be removed.

Some instances take longer than others, however I have not yet met someone who wanted the gift and has not been able to receive it. For some, their previous theological bias against the gift had to first be removed before they felt free enough to receive the gift, and this has taken time. For others a strong need to always feel in total control acts as the inhibitor. One should note once again that once received, the gift is always under personal control and one can choose to start or stop at any time, just as one can choose to pray audibly in English or not. If you are reading this and desire to pray in tongues, I'd encourage you to ask God for the gift and have someone pray with you. If you used to pray in tongues but have for some reason or another stopped doing so, I'd encourage you to try again! It's such a precious gift which will edify you in your Christian walk with Jesus.

The main pointers:

- The gift of tongues is a supernatural language given to the believer by the Holy Spirit.
- It is not divine ventriloquism but an act of collaboration with the Holy Spirit.
- Like the other gifts it is for edification.
- The believer has control over the use of the gift.
- Tongues can be used personally in private. Its public use is as a response to the Spirit's prompting and requires interpretation so that others can be encouraged.
- It can be used for intercession and praise.
- When speaking in tongues the mind is unfruitful.
- The apostle Paul spoke in tongues and did not forbid its use.
- I suggest that while we do not have to speak in tongues, it is a gift available for all believers.



Chapter 10

WHAT NOW?

The aim of this resource was to help us begin to breach the disconnect between what we read in Scripture and what we see in our lives and our churches in regards to the movement of the Holy Spirit. With an emphasis on the practical, it was designed to help train and equip you to begin stepping out and following the Spirit's leading when ministering to people through prayer ministry. There is a very corporate dimension to Christianity and therefore also to prayer. God's Kingdom is one in which everyone gets to play. The gifts of the Spirit are included in this corporate dimension and so discussion was designed to help provide some practical ways that these can begin to function in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Where we've been

Starting at a discussion of the Kingdom we noted how Jesus is our model for ministry in both faith and practice. Jesus' mission of launching the Kingdom (the rule and reign of God) was not undertaken in isolation. The works Jesus performed and the message he proclaimed were interconnected. They were a declaration of God's reality and salvation breaking into the present. We currently live in between two ages, between the

two comings of Christ, in the 'now' and 'not yet' of the Kingdom. Jesus has enlisted us - all of us - and empowered us by His Holy Spirit to continue doing the works of the Kingdom. By doing so we can see the future promise of the Kingdom break into the present. That's what prayer ministry is ultimately about. People's lives are changed as a result. Doing the works of the Kingdom aren't reserved for a select few. Everyone has a part to play in this mission. Church then needs to provide opportunities for individuals to learn how to pray for people in the power of the Holy Spirit and train others to do the same. With this in mind we need to become less performance driven and more Spirit led, giving control back to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the one who does the work. In regards to prayer ministry we do not rely on our own strength but on the Holy Spirit. He is the person who leads us and empowers us to do the works of Jesus, that is the works of the Kingdom. His indwelling is a gift given to believers, the gift of personal relationship with God. We can *experience* God intimately and prayer ministry provides an opportunity to do so. We don't value experience for experience sake, we value the opportunity for transformation that occurs as a result of encountering God in a fresh way. Personal relationship must also have outward implications and we are called to minister the hope, love and mercy of Jesus. The Holy Spirit empowers us to do so. Prayer ministry then, simply involves being obedient to His leading. There is something very simple about prayer ministry; He leads, we follow. If He isn't leading, then we wait. There is no secret formula. Jesus did nothing on his own accord. He could "...only do what he sees the Father doing." (Jn 5:19). We minister with the same approach.

This approach means when praying for people we invite the Holy Spirit and then wait for Him to show us what the Father is doing. We watch to see where God is working, listen to His promptings, and respond accordingly. The same is true when it comes to leading a prayer ministry time. Invite the Spirit, wait, watch and then invite people to respond. The aim is that people meet with Jesus, so we simply need to facilitate this in a practical and orderly manner. Part of this is having systems or teams in place which make people feel safe when responding and allow others to learn how to pray. Love and obedience should be our motivations. Prayer ministry is not a show but an opportunity to partner with God in seeing people set free. This means we always value people's dignity. It's also wise to partner prayer ministry with good pastoral care. Prayer ministry should not be isolated from holistic church life.

The spiritual gifts should function and flourish in community. Motivated once again by love, we are told to eagerly desire them because their function is to edify the body. They are not separate from prayer ministry for they help us pray effectively and follow God's leading. Prayer ministry is an opportunity to grow and use the gifts of the Spirit. If we value the work of the Spirit we do not restrict Him. That means we welcome His precious gifts. When we meet together each person should come expectant and ready to contribute to the encouraging and building up of others.

Praying for healing fits quite easily into the prayer ministry model. Jesus spent a lot of time ministering healing, as did the early church. Therefore, as follower's of Christ, praying for healing should be a regular occurrence in our lives. Hearing God's voice should also be normative for followers of Christ. The prophetic is a word ministry and hearing God's voice allows us to follow Him as well as minister His hope and truth to others. The prophetic is both incredibly powerful and encouraging when done properly. Prophecy has a role to play both when everyone is gathered together and when we pray for individuals in a prayer ministry context. In a prayer ministry context we should be listening to the voice of God, ready to speak words of life into people's situations. People must therefore be taught how to hear the voice of God for both themselves and others.

The gift of tongues is a precious gift which can bring so much personal edification when used privately as well as great encouragement to the community when used publicly and an interpretation is given. The discussion in chapter 9 was included because the gift of tongues, rather unfairly in my opinion, tends to get a bad wrap, generally more so than any of the other gifts. The gift can be used to help us worship and can also be used as a tool for intercession, especially when English words fail us and we know not what or how to pray. It's therefore also very useful in prayer ministry. While waiting and watching we can be quietly interceding on behalf of the person, especially when we are at a loss as to how to pray.

With all that covered, no doubt we come to the "what do I do now?" question. I want to leave you with a handful of ideas to help you begin to grow in prayer ministry and the gifts of the Spirit.

Start doing it

Don't be passive! What we value we make time for. We can't say that we value the work of the Holy Spirit and then go about living our lives the same way we've always done. Make yourself available to be used by God to minister His love and mercy in this way. There is much to learn from reading, hence the existence of this book and the list of books provided in the appendix, but really we learn the most when we're obedient - when step out and follow Jesus. The people I observe being regularly used by God to minister to people in powerful ways are the same people who are always ready and willing to step out and pray for people, even if it means they are inconvenienced by getting home slightly later or feel foolish because people are staring at them. Although I do not think this is merely statistical correlation, the truth remains - you will see more people healed, set free and radically changed if you pray for them! God honours faithfulness and obedience. I believe that as you begin to step out, you will witness Him change people's lives. That is such a privilege and in my opinion is worth missing the occasional morning tea after the service.

Consider finding a mentor. It's hugely beneficial to have someone who is willing to walk alongside you, who can show you how to minister as well as answer any questions you have. If you're a pastor, or minister, make an effort to connect with other churches and other church leaders. Consider inviting them to come and teach about prayer ministry in your local community. All of us have room for growth. Mentoring is an excellent place to start.

Be eager to learn and participate. When it comes to prayer ministry we learn the most by doing. Consider beginning to pray for people in your home group or cell group. It might be helpful to begin with a non-threatening study on the spiritual gifts and then allocate a little bit of time and space each week to use them. It's much easier to attempt to hear and share prophetic words in a small, safe gathering where everyone knows and loves each other, than in a large room of people who you may not know particularly well.

Be practical and considerate. If your church feels uneasy about the gifts of the Spirit then Sunday morning is perhaps not the best setting to start loudly speaking in tongues. Start instead by gently ministering to people in a less confronting manner. For example as

you go to church ask the Lord to give you a word for someone in the community and then quietly share that with the person and offer to pray with them. Or simply ask God to show you who He would like you to pray for and then approach the person and ask permission to do so. Use common sense - the key to ministering is to be naturally supernatural not super spiritual.

Invest in your relationship with Jesus

It may seem like an obvious statement but intentionally investing in our relationship with God really is the most practical thing we can do. All the practical ideas in this book pale in comparison. The easy and sometimes tempting thing to do is put our confidence in models and try to construct formulas, but that is not relationship. Our confidence rests not in methods but in Jesus. We must never replace following a person for following a formula. Christianity is a relationship with a personal God, a God who is still working all around us and invites us to partner with Him.

Effectiveness in prayer ministry hinges on following the leading of the Spirit, something that can only be developed in intimate relationship over time. From this relationship our outward ministry flows. Cultivate a dynamic and vibrant spiritual life and that vibrancy will overflow. When we fall more in love with Jesus we will be propelled to minister His love to others. For this we need to create *space* in our lives to spend time with Jesus. We need to study Scripture, *wait* on Him and listen to His voice. We must ask the Spirit to change our hearts to reflect His own. When this occurs, the gap between what we read in Scripture and how we operate today will well and truly shrink, and we will witness God's Kingdom breaking into the present in powerful ways.



Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is **powerful and effective.**'

James 5:16



Appendix

KEEPING YOUR EYES OPEN 10 Books to take you further

Chan, Francis. *Forgotten God: Reversing the tragic neglect of the Holy Spirit.*

Deere, Jack - *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*

Deere, Jack - *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God speaks today through prophecies, dreams and visions.*

MacNutt, Francis - *Healing*

Nathan, Rich and Wilson, Ken - *Empowered Evangelicals: Bringing together the best of the Evangelical and Charismatic worlds.*

Pytches, David - *Come Holy Spirit: Learning how to minister in power*

White, John - *When the Spirit Comes With Power*

Willard, Dallas - *Hearing God*

Wimber, John - *Power Evangelism: Signs and wonders today*

Wimber, John - *Power Healing*



Notes

Introduction:

1. Chan, F. (2009). *Forgotten God - Reversing the tragic neglect of the Holy Spirit*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook. pp. 15-16
2. For a discussion on VIM (Vision, Intention and Means) for growth, see, Willard, D. (2002). *Renovation of the Heart - Putting on the character of Christ*. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press. pp. 59-63.
3. Healing, along with the other spiritual gifts in general, are discussed extensively in Deere, J. (1993). *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
4. 'Everyone gets to play' was a phrase coined by John Wimber. The phrase was also used to title a collection of his writings on various topics. Wimber, J. (2008). *Everyone Gets to Play - John Wimber's writings and teachings on the life together in Christ*. Boise: Ampelon Publishing.

Chapter 1:

1. The phrase 'the upside down Kingdom' sums up the way Jesus approached the Kingdom and how it continues to challenge our human logic. See Kraybill, D. (2003). *The Upside-Down Kingdom (Revised Edition)*. Ontario: Herald Press.
2. For a more extensive discussion on the Kingdom, see chapters 12 and 13 in, Wright, N.T. (1996). *Surprised by Hope*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. pp. 201-224.
3. 'Word, Spirit, Action' is the vision statement for Soul Survivor NSW/ACT. The phrase refers to the uniting of all three elements in a holistic approach to mission. See <http://www.soulsurvivornsw.org.au>
4. Wimber, J. (2008). *Everyone Gets to Play - John Wimber's writings and teachings on the life together in Christ*. Boise: Ampelon Publishing.
5. This quote comes from a discussion on the topic found in Gumbel, N. (1993). *Alpha - Questions of Life*. Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications Ltd. pp. 148.

Chapter 2:

1. Packer, J. "Holy Spirit", *New Dictionary of Theology* (Ferguson, S. & Wright, D. eds). Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press. pp. 316-319.
2. Ibid.
3. The Spirit described as the 'bond of love' between the Father and the Son, the relation of love and fellowship. Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate*, XV.xvii.27-xviii.32. A good

summary discussion can be found in McGrath, A. (2007). *Christian Theology (4th Edition)*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. pp. 239 and 270.

Chapter 3:

1. Wimber, J. (2008). *Everyone Gets to Play - John Wimber's writings and teachings on the life together in Christ*. Boise: Ampelon Publishing.
2. The model, although slightly adapted in this book, can be seen practically demonstrated by watching the 'clinics' in the Vineyard DVD collection *Signs and Wonders*. It's also outlined briefly, in regards to praying for healing, in the appendix of, Nathan, R. & Wilson, K. (2009). *Empowered Evangelicals (Revised Edition)*. Boise: Ampelon Publishing.

Chapter 4:

1. These concepts are explained in more depth, particularly in chapter 16, in, White, J. (1988). *When the Spirit Comes With Power*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. pp. 225-240.

Chapter 5:

1. Deere, J. (1993). *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. See particularly pp. 135 for his discussion on the role of the spiritual gifts.
2. Turner, M. (1996). *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts - Then and Now*. Cumbria: Paternoster Press. pp. 270-271.
3. Maloney, J. (2011). *The Dancing Hand of God*. Bloomington: WestBow Press. pp. 11-12.
4. Pytches, D. (1995). *Come Holy Spirit - Learning how to minister in power (Revised Edition)*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. pp. 47-52.

Chapter 6:

1. MacNutt, F. (1974). *Healing*. New York: Bantam Books. pp. 30.
2. A theology of the Kingdom now and not yet can be found in, Ladd, G. (1964). *Jesus and the Kingdom*. London: Harper & Row. A summarised discussion can be found in chapter 1 of, Wimber, J. (1985). *Power Evangelism - Signs and Wonders Today*. London: Hodder and Stoughton. pp. 13-27.

Chapter 7:

1. Lily Tomlin's quote was taken from a similar discussion by Willard, D. (1999). *Hearing God: Developing a conversational relationship with God*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press. pp. 19.
2. Willard, D. (1999). *Hearing God: Developing a conversational relationship with God*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press. pp. 26.
3. Pytches, D. (1995). *Come Holy Spirit - Learning how to minister in power (Revised Edition)*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. pp. 71.
4. Deere, J. (2001). *The Beginner's Guide to the Gift of Prophecy*. Michigan: Servant Publications. pp. 106.

Chapter 8:

1. Deere, J. (1996). *Surprised by the Voice of God - How God speaks today through prophecies, dreams and visions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. pp. 321-339.
2. Deere, J. (2001). *The Beginner's Guide to the Gift of Prophecy*. Michigan: Servant Publications. pp. 83.

Chapter 9:

1. Pytches, D. (1995). *Come Holy Spirit - Learning how to minister in power (Revised Edition)*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. pp. 53.

2. A longer discussion on this point is given by, Turner, M. (1996). *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts - Then and Now*. Cumbria: Paternoster Press. pp. 296. In regards to the conscious state, Turner here quotes McDonnell, K. (1976). *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*. New York: Seabury. pp. 82.
3. The two uses of the gift, particularly the differences between the private use in a public setting and the public use requiring an interpretation are explained briefly by, Turner, M. (1996). *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts - Then and Now*. Cumbria: Paternoster Press. pp. 302-303. See also, Pytches, D. (1995). *Come Holy Spirit - Learning how to minister in power (Revised Edition)*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. pp. 63.