

THEME: The Prophetic

LOOKING BACK

- What was the most important thing you did or heard from the last session?

CONNECT

The Role of Prophecy

Resources

Bibles, paper, pen

Icebreaker Activity - Prophecy: True or False?

Things to Prepare: Prepare an activity packet for each pair of people. It should include the following statements written on pieces of paper, along with two sheets of paper, one with “TRUE” and one with “FALSE” written on them:

1. The purpose of prophecy is to tell the future.
2. Prophecy is a gift from God that we should eagerly desire.
3. Only some people are meant to prophesy in the coming days and years.
4. Prophecy causes believers in Jesus to feel encouraged.
5. The role of the prophetic is to strengthen and build up the body of Christ.
6. Prophets are the only people who can hear the voice of Jesus.
7. When people prophesy, they should do so with love as their motivation.

Activity – True or False?

Have the group split into pairs. Ask the pairs to go through statements 1-7 together and decide if they are true or false. Then, place them under the TRUE or FALSE categories. Answers: 1=F, 2=T, 3=F, 4=T, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T. In our discussion below, we will look at some New Testament scriptures about prophecy.

Discuss

- According to **1 Corinthians 14:3**, what is the purpose of prophecy? It is for strengthening, encouraging, and comforting believers in Jesus.
- Prophecy is for building up the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 14:1** tells us that prophecy is a gift and that we should eagerly desire it. What else does this verse tell us about prophecy? We should pursue love. This means that love should always be our motivation when we prophesy.
- Let’s look at **Joel 2:28**. This is an Old Testament prophecy - about prophecy in the last days! According to this scripture, who will be able to prophesy? All people will be able to prophesy. God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh; some will have dreams, and some will see visions.
- The prophetic is for all people. Some may be especially gifted in prophecy, and some people may be called prophets. Do you know the difference between a prophet and a person who has a gift of prophecy? A prophet is someone whose primary role is to prophesy, called “the office of prophet.”
- Raise your hand if you are one of Jesus’ sheep. Do you know what Jesus said about you in **John 10:27**? Jesus said that His sheep can hear His voice and follow Him.

We’ll see how important it is to hear the voice of our Shepherd, Jesus, in today’s session.

TRUTH TO KNOW

Faith Focus: The Prophetic

Introduction

We want to help you know the Truth and will do our best to tell you what is true, but you don't just need to take our word. You need to read it in the Bible for yourself. So we will open the Bible and read the Truth each time we meet. This week's "Truth to Know" is found in **1 Thessalonians 5:20-22**.

Did you know the Bible tells us to test prophecies before we believe and receive them?

Background to This Bible Passage

The book of 1 Thessalonians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a Christian community he had formed in the city of Thessalonica. Paul wanted to give them godly advice on living out Jesus's teachings. In **1 Thessalonians 5:20-22**, Paul advised them on dealing with prophecy.

The Unfolding Story - Your Interactive Teaching

Read **1 Thessalonians 5:20-22** (NIV).

Paul's advice to the Thessalonians can be applied to all followers of Jesus – in those days *and* today.

- What does Paul tell us to avoid doing (v20)? Firstly, he said we should not treat prophecies with contempt (or despise them). This means that we should be open to prophecies. We ought to consider them and not just discard them immediately.
- The reason that we should be open to prophecies is that prophecy is not evil. Recall in our icebreaker activity that prophecy is a gift we should eagerly desire, according to the apostle Paul. Prophecy is a way to hear from God and then share it with other believers in Jesus so that they may be encouraged and have their faith built up.
- What should we do with all prophecies (v21)? We should test them.
- Why do we have to test all prophecies? Not all prophecies are true prophecies.
- How do we "test" a prophecy? Listen to it, pray about it, and see if it lines up with God's Word and heart. To do this, we need to know God's Word well so we may compare the prophecies with what is written in the Bible. We also need to hear the Holy Spirit telling us if something is right or not.
- What should we do if a prophecy is from God? Paul tells us we should hold on to it.
- How do we hold onto a prophecy? Use the prophecy in prayer - asking God if He wants us to do anything in response to the prophecy and believing that God will do what He said He would do. As we wait on God for the prophecy to unfold, we will know whether it is truly from Him.
- What does Paul tell us about false prophecies? They are evil, and we must reject them.
- This is very important so that we will not be deceived and caused to go down a path that God has not prepared for us.

Activity Suggestion - Testing Prophetic Words

Aim: To practice testing prophecies to know whether to receive or reject them.

Things to Prepare: Write out several “prophetic word” cards, as follows:

1. I have a word for you! God says that your family will get rich next year.
2. I have a word for you! You will meet your life partner, and although he/she is married now, he/she will get divorced and marry you.
3. I have a word for you! God is pleased with your heart for the nations and wants to bring you to one particular place to meet the people you have been praying for.
4. I have a word for you! Your child will grow up to be a blessing to many through serving and sharing the good news about Jesus.

Activity – “I Have a Word for You!”

Assign one person to pretend to give the prophetic words to others in the group using the “prophetic word” cards. When finished, give the card to those with whom the word was shared. Have them discuss and then write on the back of the card if they think this is a reasonable prophetic word that could be true and why. Discuss their answers as a group.

Discuss - How Do We Test a Prophetic Word?

True prophetic words are from God. We saw in **1 Thessalonians 5:20-22** that we need to test all prophetic words to be sure they *are* true.

- How did you test the prophetic words given to you in the activity? We compared what was said with what the Bible says so that we can be sure there are no contradictions with God’s Word.
- Does anyone have an example of a “prophetic word” that does not line up with God’s Word? Prophecies that encourage people to sin or dishonor God. These are not from God and should be rejected immediately.
- What if someone doesn’t know the Bible very well? How will they test prophecies? They won’t be able to test prophetic words on their own accurately. They will need help from other believers.

After lining up prophecies alongside the Bible, what is the next step in testing a word? It would be wise to check who the person is that is giving the word if that is possible. People giving prophecies should have a track record of accuracy. If not, the word given should be held in question.

- In our activity, the person giving the prophecies did not have a track record, so what might be the next step if you received a word? We would pray and ask God to confirm or reject the word.
- What if we don’t hear any confirmation from God? What do we do with the words we are given? We can submit them to God and wait upon Him to see if they come true. But in the meantime, we should not make any important life decisions based on those words. In time, we will know whether those words are true or not.
- This is especially true for prophecies about world events. Remember, God gives prophecies to strengthen and encourage believers (**1 Corinthians 14:3**). Satan wants to bring fear and deception.

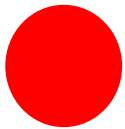
It’s important to hear any prophetic words God gives to us. As followers of Jesus, we know He speaks to us, and we can hear from Him. Two ways to hear God better are to give Him time to speak and then listen. Prophecy isn’t just about hearing words but about getting to know God. The better we know Him, the easier it will be to test and discern if a prophetic word is true.

READY TO GO

Thinking about how this affects our lives and our response to the signs we see.

Think about what you will do to test any prophetic words given to you.

TIME FOR ACTION



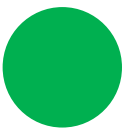
1. **“STOP & THINK” Action Point**

Take two minutes to think about your own life. Are you spending enough time in God’s Word so that you’ll be able to test a prophecy that comes to you in the future?



2. **“PAUSE TO PRAY” Action Point**

Have a conversation with God about today’s lesson. Ask Him to show you how to spend more time listening and getting to know His voice better.



3. **“GO & DO” Action Point**

Practice listening to God for prophetic words for other people. Ask God to give you a specific word for someone in the group today. Share it with that person if you feel comfortable, but ask them to test it.

SPRINGBOARD

Discuss what topic you would like to do together next time. After this session, you may wish to follow up next time with one of the following sessions:

- Don’t Believe People Claiming to Bring Peace
- Guard Against Deception
- Don’t Conform

DEEPER STUDY

For those who would like to study further the themes raised in this session.

For Study

1. Look into **2 Timothy 3:16** (ESV): “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Why is the Bible the standard against which we must test all prophetic words?
2. Read **Hebrews 4:12** (ESV): “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” How does this link with the session?

For Memorizing

1. **1 Corinthians 14:3** (NIV): “But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.”
2. **1 Thessalonians 5:20-22** (NIV): “Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.”

For Observation

Watch [this video](https://youtu.be/4pJWKGDqrSA) about testing prophetic words (<https://youtu.be/4pJWKGDqrSA>). What is one new idea that you learned?

For Action

Ask your parents or another adult family member what they have learned about prophecy in their own lives. Ask if they have ever received a prophetic word. Was it accurate and true? Or did it end up being rejected?

Before the Next IN:Tribe

There are many prophecies in the Bible. These are different from prophetic words being spoken in our day. Bring one example of a prophecy from the Old Testament that has only been fulfilled in the last 100 years. Share this with others.