

Ministry in the Spirit - 7. Prophetic Guidance

by Michael Flowers

Michael Flowers discusses the significance of an intimate relationship with God's word as a source of prophetic guidance in our lives.

Duration: 26:18

Scripture: Isaiah 42:6, 2 Timothy 2:15

Topics: "Prophetic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not neglecting the spiritual gift within oneself. He refers to the biblical passage in 1 Timothy 4:14, where Timothy is urged to not overlook the gift bestowed upon him through prophetic utterance and the laying on of hands. The speaker also mentions the three streams of Christianity - Charismatic, Catholic, and Evangelical - and highlights the need for them to flow together harmoniously. He shares personal anecdotes about his experiences with music and worship, including moments of fear and panic, and how seeking God and praying helped him overcome those challenges.

Transcript

Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight. Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Some of you may be aware that Liz and I are moving house in a couple of weeks, and we're still waiting on the closing date to be verified. But it's time to start packing up and getting boxes together.

And so, you know, I started that journey yesterday, and I went to one of the bookcases that's in the back of the sunroom of the house, and I found a couple of relics, OK? Old relics that I just kind of wanted to share with you. And when I opened this up, it's my college Bible. It's a coloring book, you know, it's just awesome.

It's well used, but I can remember just being so connected. There was a time where you didn't have digital Bibles, right? And you literally got leather and, well, whatever. And you felt it, you know, and you actually get to write in it and you bond.

At least I still bond with books instead of digital facsimiles. And so this is one of those special Bibles. I just can't throw away because it just has too many notes that probably I'll never read again.

To me, it's a picture of some of my history in God. And on the front, I wrote down some dates, particular times when I felt like the Lord spoke to me and they were like life-changing directive words. And today, I just want to share, if you're just beginning to think about prophecy and prophesying and all of that, where does it begin? I would say it begins with an intimate relationship with God's word.

Psalms 119, 105 says, How is God's word a lamp for our feet? What is that speaking of? A lamp for our feet so that we can actually see when things are dark. It may be dark in your life. You may not know the way to go.

You may be trying to make decisions and they all seem okay. David is saying your word is a lamp. It brings light to the way that I should go.

And a light, a light to my path. How does that happen? It happens with an intimate relationship with Jesus. It happens with a surrender of our lives to Jesus.

And as we draw near to God, James says, God draws near to us. And then when God draws near to us, our hearts begin to melt. And our hearts begin to soften.

And our ears become open. And we begin to hear the voice, the literal voice of God. As we draw near to him, he draws near to us.

And then I can't think of any better system if you're looking for a system than the daily office in the Anglican prayer book. If you just want a systematic way of reading the scriptures, it's a great way to start. But I didn't have that most of my life.

I didn't use the Anglican daily office. And so I just started reading through the Psalms. And I was always like drawn because I'm a musician.

I was always drawn to worship, you know. And worship became just such a life force in my life where I made contact with God. When I went off to college, I had a dorm that was like probably, I don't know, 20 stories high.

And it was round. And in the middle, there was this stairway that goes all the way up and down. I would take my guitar in there.

Man, it sounded so amazing. And I named all of those songs I wrote. And some of them got published by Vineyard years later.

I named some of those songs, kind of like the publishing company, songs from the well. It's songs from the stairwell. That's the history behind that.

Right. But, you know, with that reverb, it's kind of like when you sing in the shower. It sounds better, right? It sounds better.

There's no carpeting. There's nothing eating up the sound. The acoustics are great.

And the tile is bouncing. The audio is bouncing off the tile. And you just sound like, wow, man, I'm a professional.

Yeah. And so anyway. One of the ways is just to begin with a relationship with Jesus.

And it's just raw and it's real. There's no religion. It's just here I am, Lord.

Here I am. Let's begin. Let's begin walking together.

Right. And it's a great adventure. Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

OK, so the word before I went off to college, I was already knew that I was supposed to major right in theology. I already had a prophetic word about that. I was sitting in my bedroom in Destin, Florida.

This was June 15th, 1978. OK, some of you weren't born then. I get that multigenerational church.

Here we are. But and I was wanting to make sure, you know, have you ever known like what you were supposed to do? But you just continue to ask God for confirmation. Right.

You just you just got to have it. Like, please. You know, so this is one of those last times where I was in prayer and I was really wanting to hear from the Lord.

And so I was praying and I remember I was sitting on my bed and not this Bible, but another Bible was over on my dresser. And so when I was praying, I heard this unaudible voice. It's hard to describe because it's like a voice in my mind, my thoughts.

And it said Second Timothy to 15. Well, you know, if you've ever done this before, maybe you've tried it where you turn and there's no there isn't a 15th verse, right? It's called Bible roulette. And sometimes that does happen.

Yeah. But I turned to Second Timothy to 15. I didn't know what it was.

And it said in the King James Version, it says study in the New American Standard. It says be diligent, too. And so I went to it and said, study to show yourself approved unto God as a workman that does not need to be ashamed.

Accurately handling the word of truth. And it was just like that, just that was just like Jesus himself in the room speaking that word to me. It was that real and it was that specific and it was that confirming.

Right. And how many have had just experiences like that where you've just. Yeah.

Yeah. Some of you, you just. Yeah.

I mean, where the word becomes a lamp to your feet. That's when the word became a lamp to my feet. And I'm not saying that you always have to get these words.

I don't. I wish I would get them more. You know, I a lot of times I pray and I don't get anything.

So, I mean, that was in 1978. OK, this is an old this is an old example. But I just brought out my relic and I thought, wow, these were just really nice markers in my youth.

And we've got some young people here this morning. I was 20 years old. Right.

When that happened. So I go off and actually I, I go to Tulsa and I'm at a charismatic university called Oral Roberts University. Right.

After I was there, I started hanging out with one of the campus worship leaders who led worship the first year for what was called Vespers. Vespers was a Sunday night service of about, I don't know, 800 people in the cafeteria. And we would worship in the round.

The campus chaplain, Bob Stamps, is just an amazing. He's like an Anglican, but he was a Methodist, you know. And so he's this Methodist who uses the Book of Common Prayer, does Eucharist on campus every day.

And so I was coming from a charismatic Episcopal church. And so we really hit it off. Right.

And so we called him Brother Bob. Everybody called him Brother Bob. And and so he's still hanging out as sort of a chaplain emeritus at Asbury Seminary.

So Jeff Wing was leading that and he found out that I was a worship leader and I play guitar. And we started hanging out and and I played for Vespers with him. And so the next year it came where he asked me to actually lead, just take his place.

So I said, sure. And so I can remember like the first three times stepping up to lead worship. And we had like cellos and violins and, you know, percussion and everything is just amazing.

It was so much fun. But I would step up to sing and I had like this professional music background. Right.

I would step up to sing and I would go blank. It was just like my my voice would quiver and I felt this just panic and fear come all over me. And so I thought, oh, I'm so glad that's over, you know.

And so the next week, the second week, the same thing happened. And I'm walking around the university through the week, you know, going to my classes, my head down, feeling like I'm just making a total fool of myself. You ever felt like that? And and then the third week, same thing happened.

I got up and I was just like stuttering and just felt this amazing fear all over me. So what does that drive you to do? It drives you to God and it drives you to pray. And, you know, you're humble.

You're completely humiliated is what you are. And so I remember reading through the Psalms and and one day I was reading this passage in Psalm three. And this was September 11, 1979.

And David is saying in the Psalm, he's saying, Be thou, O Lord, a shield about me. And I'm thinking of the shield of faith right in the battle. My glory and the one who lifts my head.

I was crying to the Lord in my voice. I was. And he answered me from his holy mountain.

Verse five, I laid down and slept. I awoke for the Lord sustains me. And then he says in verse six, and this is what broke whatever it was off of me.

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me roundabout. And there was nobody against me. So these were more spiritual forces, probably.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, right? But a spirit of power, love and of a disciplined mind. And so when I read that, that again, it's almost like Jesus entered the room. And that became just like a shout from heaven into my heart.

My heart, it just became alive. And then I stood up the fourth Sunday and it was all gone. It was all gone and I never experienced it again.

But again, it's desperation, it's seeking, it's drawing near to God. God drawing near to me right in that moment of desperation. And then all of a sudden I'm in his word, which is inspired.

Right. This is the inspired word. But we need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes so that it can become a lamp to our feet, not just a book on the shelf.

Right. It must become a burning, bright lamp that really opens things up for you. Right.

Opens up your mind and takes the fog away. Right. Well, the word by itself doesn't do that.

You need the author of it interacting with it. Right. So the living word is Jesus Christ is the logos.

He is the word made flesh. Right. And so we need to be in relationship with the living word.

Yay. OK, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby. Precious.

Oh, I'm just done with babies. I love them since my granddaughter. OK, and so there is this relationship that you can have with the word where this is not bibliology.

Right. And this is not fundamentalism or any of that. This is Catholic spirituality.

And when I say Catholic, not Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, I mean Catholic, you hear right. What I'm trying to say is that the Lord wants to give us an enhanced relationship between the written word. Desperation, prayer and all of that coming together so that the word all of a sudden in those times when we need it becomes a lamp to our feet, a light to our path, and it just comes out of a love relationship with Jesus.

We're the bride, he's the bridegroom and he wants to marry us and that marriage will happen, the marriage supper of the lamb. We want to spend time with the people we love, don't we really do? And so we have to cultivate a love for Jesus because we don't see him. You know, I mean, we're turned on by what we see, especially guys.

And so we need a different way of being drawn in and wooed into the presence of the Holy Spirit. Right. It's not what we see.

But as we draw near, the scripture says in James, he draws near because we believe in things seen and unseen and the unseen is more real than the seen. Scripture gives priority over the unseen. More than the seen, and that's what we're celebrating today, we're celebrating the marriage of heaven and earth with the saints and the angels and the archangels, we don't see that, but they're in this room, they're in this room because heaven is not up there.

Heaven is just another realm, the kingdom of God is just another realm, right? And we're praying that it manifest on earth as it is in heaven. But heaven is here. And then there was another word after I graduated and this was written in that book, I had met Liz, we were planning on getting married.

And so this was before our marriage, actually, that this this word took place. We were asked at the end of the semester when I was graduating to come back to Destin, Florida, and interview for a position at St.

Andrew's Episcopal Church. Right.

And it was my home church and they felt like they wanted me to come back and interview with the vestry about coming on. So Liz and I, when we got married, 7-11 in July of that year, we would actually come back and move back to Destin and go on staff. And so, OK, so they fly us in and we're together and we're in the morning's Eucharist service, just like this morning.

And I'm sitting there knowing that I'm going to be interviewed, even though these guys know me and I love them and I'm, you know, I just really wanted to hear from the Lord just again. I heard you should turn to Isaiah 42. And so if you want to turn to Isaiah 42, it's right there.

And I started reading because this is kind of like, OK, I just graduated. This is my first job that I could potentially get. And it's a ministry job and it's in my home church.

It's just like how easy could that be? Right. It'd be great. And so I turned to Isaiah 42 6 and my eyes fell to now this is speaking about Jesus.

OK, so we we're good with that. Right. I realize I'm not Jesus.

You get that right. OK, so this is speaking about Jesus, but it really just again, Jesus was speaking to me and it says, I am the Lord. I have called you, man, I just I needed to hear that.

I have called you in righteousness and I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you. And I won't read the whole passage. It says in verse 10, sing to the Lord a new song.

I was a worship leader. Right. Sing to the Lord a new song.

Sing his praise from the ends of the earth. You who go down to the sea, the name of the church is St. Andrews by the sea. It's right in front of the Gulf Coast.

You know who wouldn't want to go there? Right. But you will go down to the sea. Right.

It's just like, wow, you islands and all you dwell on them. Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices. Let them give glory to the Lord and declare his praise in the coast lands.

It just goes on and on and on. And then we go into the interview and I said, you know, I've got something I want to share. I got this scripture this morning out of Isaiah 42 and they started grinning and I'm going like, oh, man, come on, you know, don't don't laugh at me.

And they said, no, Michael, that's what we studied this morning in the men's Bible study before service. That was confirmation for them that we're all hearing from the Lord. We don't have to make decisions in complete darkness all the time.

Sometimes we do. It seems that the light is not there. There is no prophetic word.

There's no scripture jumping off the page. I don't want to paint this like this always happens every time I need it to happen. It happens every time it needs to happen.

But that's not always when I want it to happen, but it's so good. Why? When it happens. Right.

And so I've noticed, too, and maybe you can tell me, Steve, and some of you who have walked with the Lord a long time. I have found that the Lord, the older I get, relates to me differently than when I was a youngster in the Lord. I got more words and more scriptures in my 20s and 30s that I get now.

And I'm in the word more now than ever. But he's calling me to trust him on the same level, except I'm not getting all these amazing confirmations all the time because I needed them then. So I just want to paint both of those sides of the of the coin that we should always ask for this like little children.

Right. And sometimes we may get it. And if we really need it, he'll get it to us.

He'll give us those words. He'll he'll speak to someone else to come and speak prophetically to us and and just confirm something for us. That's happened many times where it's not just come out of the scriptures, but it's come from another person beginning to discern the Lord's voice like we heard from Samuel this morning.

Right. The Lord was saying and he thought it was Eli. Go to your happened three times.

Yeah, I'm here. I didn't say anything. And so Samuel was learning to hear the difference between the voice of Eli and the voice of the Lord.

Samuel became a prophet. Right. But it happened where they were laying out before the Lord and ministering to the Lord.

And he was in that chamber where they were in that place of where God's presence was acting to beautiful thing. And all of this happens more, I would say, in the context of prayer, desperation and worship than it does when you're not seeking him. It's that time where seek and you will find knocking.

It will be open. Ask and it will be given. And, you know, as we've said in the past, those are in the present tense, all seek, knock and ask where it means keep on doing it.

It's not a one time. Well, I asked the Lord and he didn't answer that. Father, this is really what I'm asking.

You know, it's beautiful. He answers those prayers in one way or another. There's ways I feel like we can stir up the gift of God within us.

OK. And remember what Paul told Timothy, who is a massive leader in Ephesus, that apparently Timothy had some timidity. He had some issues with fear and insecurity in his ministry.

And Paul would always have to say. And for this reason, I remind you, kindle afresh the stir up the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God didn't give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power and love and discipline.

We need voices like that at times to where we're frozen and I've throughout my life, I've had to have this many times where, you know, I let my emotions dictate too much how I'm feeling and I start buying in to those feelings, those emotions more than what is really true. And sometimes it takes a person from the outside to see that and just break that off of us like Paul is doing with Timothy. I remind you, stir up the gift of God.

Says in first Timothy one, 18, this command, I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, there were personal prophecies given to Timothy that by

them you may fight the good fight by those prophetic words. Paul is saying, I want you to hang on to those words that have been spoken over you because you're going to need them for the battle. You use those words when, you know, the enemy comes and says, has God said, are you really called? Are you really supposed to be stay married to your spouse? Things like that happens.

You don't really need a prophetic word to speak the real word that, you know, the scripture back to things like that. It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. First Timothy four, 14, do not neglect the spiritual gift within you.

It's talking to Timothy again, a major leader. Don't neglect it, Timothy. Don't neglect the gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through the prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

There's just so much that could be taught on this and said, but I'm just giving little introductions to all of this and we'll we'll continue to explore these things throughout the year. Basically, this is feeding into what we believe to be the three streams, the charismatic stream, the Catholic stream and the evangelical stream. We need them all flowing together like one river.

Right. One river. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.

And so I just want us to get into that flow and that river and start praying about these things and start listening to the Lord, start drawing near to him. That's all it takes is a people who are close to him. Then they begin to speak his words.

You know, it's one thing to have God speak to you. It's another thing to have God speak through you. And so God wants to speak to you and he is he's speaking all the time.

But then also he wants to speak through you because that's the gift of prophecy. That's not for me to keep. It's to give to another person who needs it.

See, it's a tool and sometimes it breaks. It'll change a person's life. The simplest word, just like Martin Luther says, the spirit and the gifts are ours.

We just sing that a mighty fortress is our God, the spirit and the gifts are ours. Amen. Let's claim that.

And one little word shall fail him that he's talking about the enemy, like one little word of God can just completely cut down the forest of the enemy in a person's life when you can't see the forest for the trees. And I've had many occasions where I couldn't see and others have come and laid hands on me and ministered to me or visited me and stayed with me and changed my life because of their visits. And so, yeah, it's just we want to be a prophetic people, that is a people in deep devotion to Jesus, where Jesus just oozes out and speaks.

That's all that is. It doesn't have to be intentional if we just continually are listening. Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

That's the posture, right? Just speak. Your servant is listening. Amen.

And so, Lord, we thank you. We ask that you help us to listen in an age where there's so many voices competing for our attention. And we pray, Lord, that we would be a people who could hear your voice and then speak that word to others.

It's all about the gospel going forth, transferring through our lips. And so, Jesus, speak a living word of God, speak through us in the name of the Father and the Son.

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