

Do's and Don'ts of Personal Prophetic Ministry

Do NOT:

1. Say "Thus says the Lord." This language does not give the receiver any way out of what you are saying. They are given no opportunity to test or weigh what you say (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:21). Rather say: "I think the Lord is saying/feel as though . . ." Sometimes we get things wrong, just like Bible teachers do when they sometimes misinterpret God's written word or make an application that does not do justice to the text (cf. 1 Cor 13:9-12). This is especially true when we're just starting out and learning to hear the Lord. The same thing happens with those who first learn how to interpret and apply the Bible. Be sensitive to all walks of faith, and release freedom to discern and encouragement at the same time.
2. Prophecy out of the natural realm. Don't size people up—"Hmm, very stylish dress and haircut"—and try to discern what the Lord *might* say about them based on your observations. God doesn't really like it when we say things that "we think" and then add his name on the end of it. Don't speak over someone something you know based on gossip or common knowledge, when in reality the Lord did not impress you with anything. This is not a good way to build trust with God. Just like we have to learn to trust Him, He wants us to be trustworthy (1 Cor 4:2). If you don't get anything, then just admit that—"I didn't get anything." (If you are with others who are receiving things, there's really no need to say anything.) There's no pressure, especially when we're learning.
3. Reveal peoples' sins to all who can hear and call them to repentance. The Lord is great at doing that in his own timing. Rom 2:4b says: "God's kindness is meant to lead [us] to repentance." So shower people with encouragement! (Sometimes people feel more judged by the church or Christian groups than encouraged.)
4. Take credit for a word from the Lord. If you don't say, "I feel this is from the Lord," people can begin to idolize your skills, which can lead to pride (cf. Prov 29:23; 2 Cor 12:7). Don't use prophetic giftings like a psychic would. This should be obvious.
5. Spend all your time looking/waiting for something incredibly amazing to hit you; God's Spirit speaks softly and simply (1 Kings 19:11-13). Often when you're looking for these types of encounters, you're missing words that could really minister to other people and/or to you. The Holy Spirit already lives in you; He's not a "new" foreign element that will sound like a freight train when He speaks to you.
6. Walk away without speaking all of the things the Lord has said to you, or at least what you "think" He said, namely the things which are GOOD and edifying for the building up of the body of Christ.
7. Release directional words! *NO* dates, mates, or babies, e.g., "Thus sayeth the Lord! 'You're moving to Africa, having a kid, and getting married to Billy Bob THIS WEEKEND!!'" This is actually very controlling and causes horrible problems. This is one of the greatest reasons mainline evangelical churches are terrified of prophecy. (This kind of thing *did* take place in the 1960s.) So none of this!
8. Teach or give a sermon in the middle of a prophetic word! Some people try to give a word from God, then share a teaching all at once. Both teaching and prophetic words are good, but make sure you mention which is which! "This is what I feel is from God" and then switch and say, "This isn't from the Lord per-say, but I want to encourage you to . . . etc."

Dos:

1. Release encouragement, consolation, and comfort (1 Cor 14:3) and Scripture the Lord brings to mind.
2. Do ask the Lord for His word for that person. This is the progressive way to grow. We should seek to enter like a child! Children don't get punished for trying to learn, or for trying to learn how something works. There's actually more grace to learn in this ministry and to practice it than to *not* learn and delay until you have the ability to move and operate in this gift "100% without error." *No* gift operates like that. Most people who are waiting for that to happen are far more concerned with their own image than the relationship they should be developing with the Father.
3. GET BACK UP! If you miss a word or two, don't sweat it! How many of us hear things perfectly in Spanish class and immediately speak it perfectly? Not many! The people we see growing the fastest in the prophetic don't slow down. They keep running, even if they trip or fall down, but never at the expense of someone else's well being. If we want to do better and hear God's voice more accurately, we will probably make mistakes along the way—that's common sense. Don't let the enemy speak lies to you like "You can't hear." Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know they and they follow me" (John 10:27; cf. 15:15; 16:12-15).
4. Give partial revelation—sometimes a picture or something that doesn't make sense *is* ALL that God is saying. "We know in part, and we prophecy in part" (1 Cor 13:9). You could ask: "Does [give the word, name, or picture of something you received] mean anything to you?" If not, just say, "OK, I just wanted to check."
5. Don't walk away without speaking everything you feel the Lord has impressed upon you. It may be that someone misses out on a blessing or an encounter with God.