

LEADER'S GUIDE

# School

OF THE

# PROPHETS

Advanced Training for Prophetic Ministry

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**Chosen**

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# LAUNCHING A *SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS* GROUP

Once you have decided to launch a group study of *School of the Prophets*, you can approach it in a number of ways. Whatever approach you choose, I trust the end result will be the same—a better understanding of how to develop a strong and healthy prophetic community, along with how to engage in more effective prophetic ministry.

The *School of the Prophets Curriculum Kit* contains everything you need to make these end results a reality, with one exception. You and your group members will need that power from on high Jesus talked about when He told His disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). To develop a thriving prophetic community and to lead those with the gift of prophecy or a call to the office of prophet or prophetess, you will need the presence of the Holy Spirit in attendance at your group meetings. Make sure to invite Him in and give Him room to work in you and through you as you lead your group through this *School of the Prophets* study.

Let’s take a look at the different ways you could launch and lead a *School of the Prophets* study. As you choose an approach and formulate a plan, consider your situation, seek the Lord’s direction, take stock of the resources you have available and ask Him for His creativity.

## ■ Church Life Group or Small Group Approach

Many churches offer life groups or small groups that meet regularly outside the church, usually in someone’s home. Such a group provides an ideal setting in which to study *School of the Prophets*. Your church may already have such groups in place. If not, you may want to suggest forming them,

at least temporarily, for the purpose of this study. Each group would meet for eight or nine sessions (usually once a week) specifically to focus on the material presented in *School of the Prophets*.

Each group that forms should include at least four or five people to facilitate discussion, with a maximum of ten or twelve people. Groups larger than a dozen make it difficult for everyone to give input and receive feedback effectively. Larger groups can divide into more numerous, smaller groups or move toward a church class approach (which I will discuss next). Here are the essentials for leading a group study:

- A consistent meeting place, either in the leader’s home, another home or a space the church provides.
- Adequate technology in the form of a DVD player/TV/computer large enough and loud enough for all the group members to see and hear. (A small laptop playing at the far end of a room may make it difficult for a dozen people to get the most out of the teachings.)
- A committed leader/facilitator who is familiar with the material ahead of time and who is willing to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit as the group moves through the teachings. This could be an individual, or it could be a team, perhaps husband/wife hosts or two church leaders working together. The leader(s) will direct the sessions from beginning to end and perhaps call group members or send them online reminders about the meetings.
- A plan or schedule for the group meetings to keep them flowing through the various elements that will occupy the group’s time together—fellowship, worship, prayer, a video teaching, discussion and ministry time. (Two sections ahead, in “Formatting Your Group Sessions,” I provide a sample schedule that I think will work well for group meetings.)

Once you have these leadership essentials in place, you are ready to set a date for your first session and sign people up to take part in your group.

### ■ Church Class/Midweek Meeting/Sunday School Approach

In addition to weekend services, most churches offer some kind of church classes to disciple members and help them grow. These classes often cover a wide variety of topics that change from time to time, and meeting times may range from midweek services to Sunday school classes to some other agreed-upon time like a Saturday morning Bible study. Any of these models could lend itself to a study of *School of the Prophets*.

Since a large number of people are usually involved in such classes, the discussion element of a *School of the Prophets* study (or any other study) may become more of a challenge than it would be in a smaller group, but

leaders can still encourage some dialogue. Also, because of time constraints, it may be necessary to extend the number of weeks to allow sufficient time for the class to work its way through the study. For example, a class could take two weeks to cover each session. One week could be devoted to watching a video segment for a particular session of the *School of the Prophets* study and talking about the principles I present in the video and in the book readings. The following week could be devoted to class discussion of the questions and life applications involved in that session.

Although small groups are an ideal approach to this study and are the model I had in mind as I put together this curriculum kit, you can certainly adapt a class approach as an effective model to get these principles across to a larger group already accustomed to meeting at a regular time. The ability to increase our understanding of prophetic ministry does not change based on the size of the group or the setting. If you will give the Holy Spirit room to work, you can effectively teach *School of the Prophets* in a variety of settings. Do not feel that the effects of this study will be limited if you need to adopt more of a classroom approach.

### ■ Church-wide Group Study Approach

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In this approach, the pastor and senior leadership of a church decide to take the entire church through a study of *School of the Prophets* together. Weekend sermons would focus on the principles presented in the book and video segments (and some video clips might be shown in services). Sunday school/midweek classes/small groups would all focus on some aspect of the study, perhaps watching the video teachings together and discussing the questions and life applications.

The church-wide approach could be presented as *40 Days of Advanced Training for Prophetic Ministry* (reflecting the eight sessions of five daily studies each in the workbook). Each congregant could be encouraged to make the most of the church-wide focus by reading the *School of the Prophets* book, going through the workbook and participating in group sessions.

This approach is a great way to get everyone in a church body moving in the same direction, toward acknowledging the importance of both the gift of prophecy and of those called to the office (who are gifts themselves) within the Church. It is especially effective if a small group component is added to the overall church focus.

### ■ Individual Study Approach

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As I said, I had group studies in mind when I designed this kit. Where there is no group study or church focus available to take part in, however,

individuals can use the *School of the Prophets* book, workbook and video segments on their own to explore with me some ways to develop a healthy prophetic community and ministry in today's Church.

With the Holy Spirit as teacher and guide in an individual study of these materials, a person can learn from the Scriptures how prophets of the past played a different role from modern-day prophets and how the crossroads of the cross changed everything we knew about prophetic ministry. Again, the Holy Spirit's effectiveness is not limited to a certain size group or a certain setting. But if there is a group study to join, I do recommend that approach because of the fellowship, encouragement and discussion opportunities such a group can provide.

## PREPARING TO LEAD

**W**hile format should never replace flexibility when it comes to following the lead of the Holy Spirit, in a group setting the presence of the Lord is stewarded best in the midst of organization. Someone has to oversee the practical preparations for a group study, watch over the time schedule, facilitate the flow of the meeting and the ministry and pray for the group ahead of time. That someone will be you as the group leader or class facilitator. Let me give you some guidelines that will help you prepare to lead this study and minister to the participants.

### Prepare with Prayer

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I am sure it goes without saying that your first step in preparing to lead a *School of the Prophets* group is prayer. You have already prayed for the Lord's direction and determined that you are supposed to lead a group through this study. Continue to pray for increased insight on your part into the ability to develop and lead prophetic people and communities, and pray for a deeper understanding of the spiritual principles you will be covering as you lead the group. Spend some time with the Holy Spirit, asking Him to give you vision for what this study can accomplish in your life and the lives of the participants.

Session by session, pray for your group or class meetings ahead of time, and pray for the individuals who will attend. Be ready and willing to entertain questions, and be patient and persistent as you guide the group through these materials. For many, the idea of the prophetic *office* being different from the *gift* of prophecy will become clear to them for the first time. Beyond that, the thought of being proactive in developing healthy prophetic communities may be a new concept altogether. There is much to learn, and the Lord is about to do a marvelous work in the life of each person in your group as you walk through these sessions together.

## Prepare with Study

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Prepare to lead your *School of the Prophets* group by studying the material ahead of time yourself. Your first exposure to the principles contained in *School of the Prophets* should not take place in the middle of leading your group. By the time you meet for a session, you should have already read the assigned Scripture and book readings, watched the video segment, tackled the “Questions to Consider” yourself and made some life application in your daily walk.

In fact, I think it is a wise idea to work through the entire curriculum in this kit before taking on a leadership role, so that you are familiar with what is coming in each of the sessions. That will better prepare you to answer questions that may arise or direct the group to put a certain topic on hold until you reach the particular session that covers it. You will gain confidence and assurance to lead when you study ahead of time so that you will know where you are going with the group and how you will get there.

You do not need to be a brilliant academic scholar or hermeneutical expert to understand the material I present in *School of the Prophets*. While I was extremely careful with the scriptural scholarship required to put these truths on the printed page, they are truths understood more with the spirit than with the mind. Nonetheless, a little diligent scholarship can go a long way toward increasing the net spiritual effect of a study like this. As Jesus told us in Luke 6:39–40, “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.” If you will be diligent in your study to search out the truths contained in *School of the Prophets*, your group participants will see your familiarity with the material and the skill with which you handle it, and it will motivate them to be like you.

## Prepare on a Practical Level

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You have probably heard the saying that some Christians are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. It is true that you cannot wage war or take much territory for the Kingdom of God if you are so focused on heaven that you cannot walk out your faith powerfully while you are here on earth.

In other words, in addition to your preparation time in prayer and study, you need to prepare to lead on a practical level. If you will attend to the practical details, things will go much more smoothly in your group.

After you know which approach you are using, determine a meeting location that has sufficient space for your group and appropriate audiovisual equipment to play the video segments. The more comfortable you can make the setting, the more people will look forward to the meetings, without being distracted by issues like not enough seating or inadequate, uncooperative

equipment. When you take care of the practical things ahead of time, you minimize distractions and give yourself credibility as a leader.

Once the place is all ready, set a schedule for your meetings. Pick a time period when your church calendar is not already filled with special events that will require large amounts of people's time. They will be more apt to commit to your group when they are not overcommitted in other areas. Check with other church leadership and the pastor(s) to make sure your proposed study does not conflict with anything major on the agenda, and then set a starting date. You should plan to follow the eight-session curriculum (or nine) consistently and consecutively to make the best use of your group's time together.

Once you establish a time period for your study, pick a day of the week and a time to meet (unless those are already determined in a church class or the like). It can be hard to accommodate everyone's work and home life schedules, but choose a day and time that will work best for the majority. Perhaps you can consider offering an alternate study at a future date for those unable to attend your current group.

Decide ahead of time about other practical matters such as whether your group will include refreshments or will make provision for childcare. Again, planning ahead in these areas can eliminate a host of distractions once your group begins. (I talk more about the specifics of planning your group time together in the section just ahead.)

## Prepare to Get the Word Out \_\_\_\_\_

For a church-connected group study to succeed, church leadership must endorse it. Make sure your pastor and church leaders are aware of your proposed *School of the Prophets* study and are behind it. They can position themselves to help you with the launch by getting the word out.

Use multiple means, if possible, to let people at your church know a study group is forming and that they are invited to participate. See if an announcement can be made from the pulpit. Advertise the group on your church's website. Post a sign-up sheet and print flyers. Send out emails and post the event on your church's social media outlets. Make personal phone calls to individuals you sense should be involved in your group.

## Prepare Potential Co-leaders or Assistants \_\_\_\_\_

Often, there will be people right in your group who are good candidates for co-leaders or assistants, and you may need them. Once you have a list of participant names, prayerfully consider whether there is someone on the list who is spiritually solid and mature, who could back you up during

group ministry time or take your place leading the group in the event that you must miss a session.

Also think about names on the list who could assist with the practical side of things. Is there someone who enjoys working in the kitchen? Could that person oversee refreshments session to session or circulate a sign-up sheet so that you would not have to? Is there someone who enjoys children? Would that person be willing to plan activities for the group's children or make sure to enlist teens or other helpers to come in and do childcare for the couple hours that you meet? Is there someone on the list who enjoys showing hospitality? Might that person open his or her home to the group meetings and take care of the physical environment for you so that you can attend to the spiritual atmosphere?

You do not need to do everything yourself to lead a successful group. In fact, it might be better if you did not! Let the participants invest in the group by contributing to its welfare. There may be some who simply want to come, listen and learn, and go home, but others will be more than willing to help out if asked. They may even offer before you ask. Take them up on it!

## Prepare Your Participants

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As participants sign up for your group, let them know what they are getting into, so to speak. It might be a good idea to print out an information sheet that participants can take home as soon as they sign up. Listed on that sheet should be the time, place and dates of your sessions, along with the materials everyone involved in the group will need. Participants should each have a copy of *School of the Prophets* and the *School of the Prophets Workbook*. They will not need the leader's guide or the video segments/DVDs unless they plan to lead a group in the future. You, however, will need both to lead the group. You can purchase all the necessary materials together in one place in the *School of the Prophets Curriculum Kit*.

If your church has a bookstore, inquire about whether it can stock the *School of the Prophets* materials during the course of your group study (and beyond). You could also make the materials available for purchase at your sign-up table, or at least have copies on hand for participants to look at so they can find and order the book and workbook online. If you are able, it might also be good to have a few extra copies of both the book and workbook available for purchase at your first meeting, in case any latecomers join in and still need the materials. Your group will get off to a good start if you let everyone know how to obtain the *School of the Prophets* book and workbook quickly and easily so that they can get started with the study.

As they sign up, also let the participants know that *before* the group starts, they should work through Session 1 in the workbook, which includes readings from the book and from Scripture. That way, everyone will be on the

same page and you can jump right in at that first meeting. The participants would then continue to work through one session per meeting, studying the material *prior* to each meeting. You could even consider including a syllabus on the information sheet that you hand out so that everyone can easily stay on schedule.