

REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION

THE
VOICE
OF
GOD

HOW TO **HEAR** AND **SPEAK**
WORDS FROM GOD

CINDY JACOBS



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This book is lovingly dedicated
in memory
of my dad
Albert S. Johnson
August 28, 1923–July 5, 1973
a Southern Baptist church planter
who taught me how to love God by the way he lived

And in memory
of my mother
Eleanor Johnson Lindsey
March 27, 1926–February 22, 2016
a Southern Baptist pastor's wife and pioneer
who taught me how to give unconditionally

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Foreword

BY JACK W. HAYFORD

The words “and God said to . . . ,” followed by the name of a human being involved in the biblical record, are so common we are struck with a double wonder.

The first is that the sovereign of the universe not only deigns to stoop so gently to communicate with His frail creatures, but also is always so completely and fully in touch with the details of each of their circumstances.

The second is that, given the grandeur of His being and the grace in His revealed nature, anyone would doubt His willingness and regularity at doing that—*speaking* to each of us, *personally*.

That God talks with His people *today* is so basic to the Bible’s promise and so abounding in the healthy and healing evidence of its fruit among believers, it should never be doubted or rejected. But it is. It is denied by those who fear that an uncontrolled access to or an unpatrolled wall against such a warm, interactive relationship with God might surrender the subject of “divine revelation” to unlimited, hopelessly subjective definition. They fear, in short, that if anyone can say, “God told me,” then anyone can usurp the role of God, either through intentional deception or innocent ignorance of His true Word.

That is not an unjustified fear. The history of mankind is littered with the carcasses of multitudes who have fallen prey to such deception. From the time of the Fall of man until the most recent headlines describing the

destruction of a band of cultists, either emotionally damaged or physically dead by reason of the influence of an erratic “voice,” the danger of deceptive “revelations” has continued.

Still, the Lord Jesus Christ gave pointed instructions encouraging our expectation to know an ongoing personal communion with God. Even more than an “allowance” of this blessedness in intimacy and confidential communication between the Father and His redeemed children, Jesus promised it! And He gave the specific terms upon which such interaction of a human with the Almighty may be founded.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

John 14:21

A love for the Savior and a constancy of obedience in following Him are both the touchstone and the wellspring from which any of us may become candidates for “hearing” the Voice of God. The very meaning of the words “I will manifest Myself” clearly incorporate personal interchange—as the old hymn says, “He walks with me, and He talks with me.”

Thus, the Bible encourages those who *love* and *obey* the living Lord to expect to hear from Him. And further, as the writer of this handbook on biblical prophesying elaborates, God often speaks *to* us that He might speak *through* us. What follows is an effort at helping us, as disciples of Jesus Christ, not only to expect to *hear* God’s voice, but also to recognize those occasions He may want us to speak to others on His behalf. We are also helped to know how to go about that without violating Scripture, sanity or just plain practical good sense.

I see Cindy Jacobs as a trustworthy servant of the Body of Christ. Though we have had few occasions to converse together, my observations of her life and ministry over the years have distilled to a conclusion: This lady *walks* with God and she *hears* from Him.

Besides the fact that her prayer life and intercession have brought her to a place of insight into the *ways* of the Lord’s speaking with His people, I like the way she conducts herself in relating to others the things God speaks to her for sharing or ministry. There is a happy, yet holy, humanness

in her style that defies the notion that a person must be “mystical” to be in intimate touch with God.

My encounters with the writer of this practical guide to hearing God and speaking His heart have evidenced a wisdom that remains childlike, and a spiritual maturity that has remained unaffected—untainted by airs of supernaturalistic pretentiousness or the “slick” sophistication of professionalized piety. She doesn’t hold herself aloof, as though somehow beyond the ken of ordinary people, yet she neither reduces the preciously holy to its becoming the province of casual or glib pretenders.

Prophesying—with the experience of dreams, visions and hearing “words” from God—is not a parlor game nor a marketable skill to be acquired. But it *is* a promised resource the living God has offered each of us who (1) have been born again through the cross of Christ, and (2) have chosen to walk with Him in loving obedience.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.”

Acts 2:17–18

Thus has God spoken in His changeless, eternal Word of absolute and conclusive authority—the holy Scriptures of the Bible. And it is there we always find the guidelines and controls for prophesying, as well as the plumb line and criteria for evaluating the truth or trustworthiness of any “prophecies” or “words from the Lord” in the Church today.

I think you’ll find personal encouragement and spiritual insight here. You’ll read of people who have learned to trust God’s Voice to them, and remained sound in God’s Word and sensible in serving His people. And, with me, you’ll find helpful pointers intended to prod us to listen for and discern His dealing with us. We can learn how He wants to use us in “prophesying,” not to elevate our egos or establish our notoriety as “prophets,” but to help us serve the Church of our dear Lord Jesus as encouragers, as uplifters to the fallen and broken, and as edifiers to those for whom He gives us a “word in season” to be a “word fitly spoken.”

Foreword

May the Holy Spirit draw your heart nearer to Christ with a hunger to serve Him and His people in this pure way—as one who loves Him, who walks with Him and who hears His tender voice of caring—speaking love and truth to His own.

Jack W. Hayford, chancellor, The King's University;
founding pastor, The Church On The Way

Foreword

BY BILL JOHNSON

Hearing God's voice is central to all of life for every disciple of Jesus. It is not peripheral. Learning to hear more clearly also enables us to operate more fully in the gifts God has given us to use for His glory, especially the prophetic. This gifting is available in measure for all who hunger for God to use them in this manner.

The Voice of God is transparent, authentic and life-giving. It is not a book of formulas or a list of shortcuts to success; it is a deep, personal glimpse into the heart and life of one of God's generals for this hour, a woman who has taken continual risk and who has intimately pursued God to know and be known by Him. She has married her experiences with Scripture and walked it out with radical obedience.

Reading this book is like being mentored into greater maturity and strength by Cindy herself. And who among us wouldn't like that privilege? Cindy's honest and vulnerable invitation to her process of learning to continually take risk is priceless. She shares the breakthroughs and also the failures. And we see God's victories coming through again and again as He proves Himself through Cindy's life and her obedient trust.

What I love most about this book is how Cindy covers so many aspects of how God can speak, yet she never limits the process to a certain way. She leaves us an open discourse, awakening us to pay attention to the signs

and clues by which God invites us into the encounter that leads us to hear, see and know more.

In our Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, the prophetic has become a constant and everyday part of the way we minister and learn to hear the Voice of God. Every year we tell our students that they cannot graduate unless they have taken risk and failed in their efforts to try to learn to operate in their ability to hear God and encourage others with His voice. That may sound strange to someone outside of this culture, but it is a sincere attempt to get people to live with the idea of risk. Sometimes they get it right, and sometimes they get it wrong. But the point is, they try. This would be unfair if we didn't at the same time create a safe place to fail so that they can learn how to recognize the Voice of God for themselves. What they learn to walk in every day as they take risk is territory that has preciously been pioneered by leaders such as Cindy Jacobs. We live in the wake they have created.

The Voice of God is a gift from God to the Church at large, helping each of us to draw near to Him with confidence, knowing it is His will for us to hear His voice. And I can't imagine a more important time for us to strengthen ourselves in this grace than now.

Bill Johnson, senior leader, Bethel Church, Redding, California; author,
When Heaven Invades Earth and *The Power That Changes the World*

Acknowledgments

I want to first thank the Lord for helping me finish this book. It's been tough. Writing a book is just plain hard work, but the end result is extremely rewarding. My family has been just extraordinary. I love you, Mike, Mary and Daniel.

There are some wonderful people who helped when I originally wrote this book back in 1995 and made me look good—people such as Gary Greig, Kim Bangs and Virginia Woodard. God bless them. Kyle Duncan, thanks for your encouragement when I was frustrated. Gary, your knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew was a big addition to the book. John Sandford, your insights were very helpful. Thank you. Your pioneering book, *The Elijah Task*, helped many in our generation find their way.

I also want to thank Peter Wagner for the *many* times I called to get a point clarified and for giving me some great stories he could have used in his own books. Also, thanks to Doris for patiently sending me information when I needed it.

Two of my most faithful intercessors were my mother, Eleanor Lindsey, who went to be with the Lord just before her ninetieth birthday, and her husband, Thomas, who also went to be with the Lord after her.

To all of my prayer partners, I am forever grateful to you for seeing me through these days of rewriting this book.

Introduction

This book has been on my heart for a long time. I didn't exactly know it would take this form, but the message is interwoven throughout my life's fabric. I really believe God wants His children to know His voice and that He still speaks in an intimate, individual way today. Jack Deere writes in his *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* that the most difficult transition in his pilgrimage of believing the gifts of the Spirit are for today was *not* that God heals and does miracles. Rather, the thing he resisted most—was most afraid of and that took the most convincing—was accepting that God still speaks today.¹

As a prophet, part of the calling on my life has been to “demystify” the prophetic. In my early years of prophesying, I did not have someone I could ask the questions that filled my heart. One of my friends read part of the manuscript and commented, “Cindy, you’ve answered those questions we feel too stupid to ask but have always wondered about.”

You'll also note I've been vulnerable in my writing. I've made many mistakes as I've been learning to know and hear the Voice of God throughout the years. Many of the mistakes have also been painful. It is my earnest desire that those of you reading these pages won't suffer some of the things I have, because you will understand many things about which I didn't have a clue.

I hope you will sense the love of God as you read *The Voice of God*. That has been my goal and genuine heart's desire. You are valuable and special. The Lord and I want you to feel that way as you read. I want you

Introduction

to be encouraged, to laugh with me and to feel uplifted. This has been my prayer for you, my brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you have ever been confused by a prophecy someone gave you, this book is for you. Maybe you didn't have any idea what to do with a prophetic word that was given to you. You'll find some answers between these covers. Some of you have longed for confirmation to things you've thought about, or wondered if anyone else like you exists on God's planet. I hope you will chuckle and remark to a friend, "Hey, remember when I told you so and so? Look at this!"

You don't have to be prophetic to read this book, because it is for the whole Body of Christ. Even if you are a brand-new Christian, you will find something for yourself here. The book (in terms of stories, illustrations, the prophetic and the area of spiritual warfare), however, begins with simple addition, proceeds to multiplication, then division and ends with some calculus for those who are more mature.

I hope this is one of those books you'll want to underline, mark up and use as a manual. I pray it is a blessing to you and that you will take it, use what you've learned and be a blessing to others.

In Christ's love,
Cindy Jacobs



1

The Voice of God

In 1955, a little four-year-old girl crept up into her mother's lap. "Mama," she said, "I want a baby sister." The young mother smiled, amused by the child's request. "Sweetheart." She chuckled. "We're not having any more children. You are the last one!" However, the four-year-old was insistent. She just knew Mama was going to have a baby girl. And she was right!

I was that four-year-old child, and the next year my baby sister, Lucy, was born as a present for my daddy's seminary graduation.

Of course, at the young age of four, I had no idea that this "knowing" I sensed about my little sister's birth was a prophetic word (i.e., spontaneous, divinely given understanding or foreknowledge about a person or an event). It would be a long time before I would learn anything remotely connected with prophecy.

Does the Bible have anything to say about children prophesying? The powerful passage in Acts 2:17 refers to sons and daughters (boys and girls) giving prophetic words: "And it shall come to pass in the last days," says God, "that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."

The fact that I had foreknowledge of my sister's birth would be "slim pickin's" (as we say in Texas) or small substantiation of a prophetic call on my life if this were the only such occurrence I had ever had. I remember other times, however, when the phone would ring and someone had a serious

message, such as concerning a death, and I would know before the phone rang what had happened. I now realize this was part of my being used of the Lord in the area of prophecy and prophetic intercession. At that time, however, I did not understand why those things happened or what to do with the knowledge I received.

What the Bible Says about Prophecy

While you may not have experienced such prophetic insight at a young age, the Holy Spirit is vitally interested in your hearing His voice. Believers of all ages should understand the various ways that God speaks to His people. This is why it is very important to have a biblical understanding of prophecy and the prophetic gift, whether or not God will use you to prophesy on a regular basis!

I hope this book will help others understand what to do with such “knowing” when it is received and how to know whether or not it is from the Lord. Much of what I describe in this chapter—and this book, for that matter—has to deal with my own introduction to what is called personal (or private) prophecy and corporate (or public) prophecy, as well as prophetic intercession. But what exactly do these terms *really* mean? Before we get too far into our examination of the prophetic gifts, let’s take a look at what God’s Word has to say.

Personal and Corporate Prophecy

First Corinthians 12–14 lays out much of the biblical basis for both personal and corporate prophecy. Personal prophecy is delivering a prophetic word from God to an individual. Corporate prophecy is delivering a prophetic word to a body or congregation of believers. (I will explore these definitions further in chapter 4.) Some believe that 1 Corinthians 12–14 only has in view corporate prophecy and not personal one-to-one prophecy. However, 1 Corinthians 14:24–25 clearly speaks of prophecy for an individual revealing the secrets of the heart so that the individual confesses, “God is really among you!” (v. 25 NIV).

First Corinthians 14 (especially vv. 30, 32–33) indicates that New Testament prophecy is due to the specific revelatory activity of the Holy Spirit

prompting a New Testament prophet to prophesy. New Testament prophecy is to be tested to discern whether a given prophecy is from God or not (see 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21). New Testament prophets only prophesy “in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9).

Although New Testament prophecy never has authority equal to Scripture in our lives, it can carry with it revelation for the hour about which the Holy Spirit wants the Church to know.¹

Prophetic Intercession

Scripture also gives us some specific models and examples of what I will call “prophetic intercession”—the ability to pray and intercede with prophetic insight and empowering from God’s Spirit for specific issues God brings to mind at specific times.

Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:16–21 clearly say that in the Messianic Age the Lord will pour out His Spirit with a prophetic anointing on His people, the Church.

Zechariah 12:10 (NIV) mentions that a “spirit of . . . supplication” will also be poured out on Jerusalem and the people of God in the Messianic Age (compare Zechariah 12:10 with John 19:37; Revelation 1:7). In this sense, a spirit of supplication is an anointing of intercession, denoted by the Hebrew word *takhanunim*, which means “supplication, petition.” Interestingly, this word *takhanunim* is the same Hebrew word used for “intercession” in 2 Chronicles 6:21 (see also Daniel 9:3, 17–18, 23).

God’s Word is full of examples of prophetic intercession when His servants prayed with prophetic insight from Him. Examples include Abraham (see Genesis 18:20–23), Moses (see Exodus 32:7–14), Asaph (see Psalm 50, 73–83; and 2 Chronicles 29:30, which mentions “Asaph the seer”), Daniel (see Daniel 9:1–4, 20–22), Anna the prophetess (see Luke 2:36–38), Jesus (see Luke 22:31; John 17), Ananias (see Acts 9:10–17) and Paul (see Acts 22:17–21). All these biblical figures prayed with insight, direction and empowering from God’s Spirit for issues that God revealed to them when they prayed.

This gives us just a taste of personal prophecy, corporate prophecy and prophetic intercession. My goal in the following chapters is to explore with you the way God uses the prophetic gifts to build, edify and expand His Church—and the role you play in His plan.

As you will see, the first few chapters stress preparation for the prophetic person, including a person's prayer life and personal walk with God. In these chapters, you will notice an emphasis on the role of prophetic intercession. The later chapters shift focus to the application of the prophetic gifts, and the place of personal and corporate prophecy in today's Church.

And as I mentioned earlier, an understanding of God's ways in regard to prophecy was a slow process for me. However, even as a young girl, He gently guided me—never abandoning me along the way.

Inklings of the Prophetic Call

As years passed, the Lord began to make it clear to me in various ways that He was calling me to “something”—such as the time when I was at junior church camp in Prescott, Arizona, at nine years of age. One day our counselor encouraged each of us to find a quiet place to “talk with God.” I remember crawling up on a huge rock outside the chapel. As I was lying back on that rough granite rock, surrounded by the visible manifestations of God's artistry of blue sky and towering trees, I began to pray, “Lord, what do You want from my life?” At first, all I heard was the sound of the wind and trees harmonizing with the birds in the woods. Then I quietly heard another sound—it was the voice of God saying, *Cindy, I have something I want you to do for Me*. At the sound of His voice spoken so sweetly in my soul, I responded with my heart beating a staccato along with the wind and trees, “Here am I, Lord; send me.” I can still hear the words as strongly as the day He spoke them to me.

A couple of years ago, I went back to renew that experience with God. Although that “huge rock” seemed much smaller than it had when I was nine years old, I felt a renewal of the call of God. The Lord met me there again during a time of deep discouragement. That rock became an altar of remembrance in my life of God's call and the affirmation of His presence and anointing. I promised the Lord there that I would never turn back from His call. He planted His covenant within my heart that He would never leave me nor forsake me in the call. The mark of the Voice of God was once again planted deeply within my soul. I pray that God will give each of you who are reading this book and are discouraged a place such as my “huge rock” so you will be affirmed by and touched with the comfort of your Maker.

Why didn't God let me know what "the call" meant when He spoke to me in Prescott? I have a theory. Absolutely nothing in my worldview could have remotely given me an idea of what a prophetic call on my life would mean. Maybe some of you can relate to this in your life. It seems God is opening up many new vistas for us in the Body of Christ. There is a hunger across denominational lines to understand personal prophecy. The revelation that God sometimes uses a prophetic word to speak to us is becoming increasingly accepted and understood.

Other inklings of the prophetic call occurred from time to time as I was growing up. At times during conversations, people would stop and say, "How did you know that?" To this day my friends say, "Cindy, it's kind of different traveling with you; you often answer my questions before I ask them." Of course, I cannot read people's minds, nor do I have knowledge of everything. At times, I would like to know something specific from the Lord for a person, but He is silent. There are various possible reasons for this. Perhaps the Lord has chosen to use someone else to speak His word to that person, or perhaps He wants the person to personally seek Him for an answer. I realize this sounds strange—even downright weird to some people. How do I know it isn't ESP or some occult counterfeit gift in operation? This is a legitimate question and one I will touch on in chapters 3 and 4.

A Call to Prophetic Intercession

This book will not give you a specific formula describing the prophetic call and the way to hear the voice of God. God's methods are unique. However, I hope to give you some signposts to follow. One thing I have learned through the years is that not all prophetic calls are alike. Each person is unique in his or her gifts and abilities. The ways of God, kneaded into our lives through Holy Spirit-appointed visitations and circumstances, have molded each of us in a different fashion.

Many of these special *kairos* times (a Greek word meaning "time, season," used to refer to strategic times of visitation) reveal the gift-mix of the person. By this I mean some are psalmists or singing prophets, seers and so forth. (I will explain these terms later.) The types of prophetic people in the Bible were widely varied, as were the ways by which God called and appointed them for service. I will amplify this theme in chapter 9.

An experience that marked me for life and revealed part of the gift-mix in which God has me function came one hot summer when I was twelve years old. Just as God spoke to Joseph in a dream, He used a series of dreams or night visions, as they are sometimes called, to indelibly etch the call to evangelism along with the prophetic call in my life. We were living in Phoenix, Arizona, when I began having a remarkable series of dreams. They were similar and dramatic. I dreamed about hell. For about a week in the middle of each night, I began to “see” people being tormented in eternal judgment. Hearing their anguished screams was terrifying, and I had a sensation of total hopelessness, loneliness and despair. No more chances to change or repent! I watched as their flesh was burned and seared with a fire that was never quenched.

You can imagine the effect of such dreams. Night after night I would awaken, weep and walk back and forth across the floor, crying out to God to use me to win the lost for His Kingdom. Dear readers, hell is a very real place. One such experience marks you with a passion to stop people from going there eternally. Little did I understand the call of the prophetic that stirs revival praying—the kind that pours from your spirit and says, “Lord, give me direction and lead me today to some person who does not know You. Lord, give me the harvest for Your Kingdom.”

The coming worldwide revival is causing more and more people to pray in this manner to see salvation come to their neighbors, cities and the unreached people groups of the earth. Many are being called into prophetic intercession who have never been used in that way before.

The specific call to prophetic intercession was made clear to me when I was twenty years old. (I will write more about this in the next chapter.) At the time, I did not fully understand what had happened to me, but the gift of prophecy was definitely stirred up, amplified and poured out in a greater measure during a deep time of seeking the Lord.

The only glimpse of the future assignment the Lord had for me to travel and prophesy in the nations came one day when my husband, Mike, and I were newlyweds and living in California. The Lord didn’t speak to me because I was feeling super-spiritual or because I was attending church. I was sitting in our car, waiting for Mike to pick up some of the best Mexican food in the world. While I waited, I pulled my little red Bible out of my purse and flipped it open to read. My eyes fell on the passage in Psalm

2:8: “Ask of Me, . . . the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.”

I remember thinking, *Well, it says to ask and so I will! Lord, I am asking You for the nations for my inheritance.* Something stirred within my heart. Tears sprang into my eyes. *The nations, Lord? Would You ever send me to the nations?* The possibility seemed as remote as the moon.

It would be many years before I understood that the stirring in my heart that day was a small indicator of the ministry the Lord would someday give to me. Every time I ventured to question what the Lord had meant when He said to me as a nine-year-old girl, “I have something I want you to do,” I ended up with the same four-letter word, *Wait*. Nothing else, just *w-a-i-t*. Finally, in time, I stopped asking.

Have you ever noticed how God sometimes seems to take forever to answer? You pray and pray, and the heavens seem like brass—He is simply not talking to you about that certain subject. Of course, it took me years to understand that I needed to focus on what I was to be doing at that particular point in time. When I finished that specific step, He would then tell me what the next step was to be. I know He is always on time and never late, but He sure seems to miss a lot of wonderful opportunities to be early!

Ten more years passed in my life; I was then thirty years old. Mike and I had two children, Mary and Daniel, and lived in El Paso, Texas. I began to study intercession—what I would call Abraham-type prayer, when a person “stands in the gap” for another person or group of people (such as a city or nation). At this point in time, I started regularly waking up in the middle of the night to intercede, as I describe in my book *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* (Chosen Books).

One night, when Mike was out of town on business, I took the children and went to our midweek church service. As I slipped into the back of the church and sat down, I noticed a tender presence of the Holy Spirit. After a short time, the power of the Holy Spirit enveloped me, and I quietly put my head down. Something was happening to me, but I wasn’t sure what it was. After a few minutes, one of the leaders asked if we would pray for the people who were attending the meeting. When it was my turn to pray, the prayer became a prophecy! The person I prayed for started to weep and weep. “You don’t know what a confirmation your prayer was to me!” he exclaimed. Confirmation? Why, I had just prayed a simple prayer. Later, after

I picked up my children, people stopped to give me their prayer requests, and when we prayed together, the same thing happened. I now understand that the Lord was releasing the gift of prophecy in me.

The prophetic gift had actually been there all along, but the touch of the Holy Spirit upon me stirred it up and loosed it. Dr. Bill Hamon, a respected prophet in the United States, calls this “activating the gift.” Even after this incident happened, I still did not have a clue that God would use me to prophesy. I certainly never thought I would eventually travel around the world and teach about prophecy!

“Here Am I, Lord. Send Someone Else!”

The next year, our family moved to Weatherford, Texas. Suddenly, God decided it was time to let me know what He had meant when He said, “I have something I want you to do for Me.” Frankly, His plan came as a big shock in my life. I thought I had my life’s calling all figured out. By this time, I had done my undergraduate and graduate studies in music, had led church choirs, played the piano, led worship, taught Bible studies and was happy being a mom. Surely this was enough, right? I was spending two or three hours a day in prayer and was feeling fulfilled. Right in the middle of my wonderful fulfillment, however, the Lord interrupted my peaceful life.

It happened late one night when I was up praying and everyone else was asleep. By this time, the word was getting around that I had a gift of intercession. Many people were asking me to pray for their needs, so I would stay up late some nights to finish my intercession. This night started the same as many others, and I cannot tell you why the Lord chose it rather than others, but it was simply His timing and choice.

Suddenly, in the middle of my prayers, I began to sense a heavy presence of the Spirit of God. It was so deep that I began weeping. Having tears rolling down my face, I said to the Lord, “Father, what do You want?”

I was not at all prepared for what the Voice of God spoke to me. The Bible says, “My sheep hear My voice” (John 10:27), and there was no mistaking it. It was the same voice I had heard in my heart when I was sitting on that rock in Prescott, Arizona, at nine years old. *Cindy*, He said, *I want you to take up your cross and follow Me. I am calling you to take the Gospel to the nations of the world.*

Truthfully, I cannot tell you I was thrilled. Surely, I must have misunderstood. He must have meant that Mike should go. I tried negotiating. You know the old “Here am I, Lord. Send somebody else.” Well, I offered to send Mike in my place and I would be his best intercessor. No deal. Have you ever noticed how persistent God can be? Again He spoke to me, *Cindy, I am not asking Mike. I am asking you. I am calling you, like I called Jeremiah, to the nations.* Talk about dropping a bomb on a person’s worldview!

I struggled for nearly two years as I walked the floor, weeping night after night. The Scripture from Matthew 10:37–39 kept ringing in my head.

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

During these times of struggle, I found it was one thing to say yes to the call of God but quite another to embrace it. At last, one dark night I cried out, “Lord, why me?” The answer came as I opened to the passage in Joel 2:28–29. I gave the fulfillment of the passage in Acts 2:17 earlier, but didn’t complete it. The next part reads as follows, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. . . . And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28–29).

The quiet voice of God gently said, *Cindy, if that prophecy is going to be fulfilled, I need some women* [or “handmaidens,” as some translations say] *and I have chosen you.* Somehow the Lord has the ability to brush away all of our fears and doubts. That night, I knelt and said what I had said as a nine-year-old child: “Here am I, Lord; send me. I will be Your handmaiden to the nations.”

Answering the Call

I shared this episode with Mike, and we did a lot of praying together. Mike sought the Lord for Scriptures, studied and blessed me. In a short period of time, the doors flung open for me to minister. Since then, I have had the privilege of traveling to many countries, teaching and prophesying to the nations. Mike and I have learned many great lessons through the years.

Mike is a protection and a covering for me. Sometimes we tease that we will write a book together about our journey. Throughout this book, I will share more details about my ups and downs, my mistakes and the blessings of learning to prophesy.

When I started to write this chapter, I wondered how others were led into—or called into—prophetic ministry. Did they all have prophetic beginnings as a child? As I interviewed several prophetic voices, I found their stories to be as varied as the stories about the prophets in the Bible.

Bill Hamon's Conversion Experience

One of the prophetic voices at the forefront today is Dr. Bill Hamon. When I interviewed him, I could hear a chuckle in his voice when I asked whether or not he had prophesied at an early age. Later, as I read the preface for his first book, I knew why. His earliest religious background can best be described as “American heathen.” This dramatically changed when he met the Lord as a sixteen-year-old. Bill earnestly sought God regarding his destiny as a Christian. In some of his early writings, he expressed his seeking like this:

When I pray, I feel that the Lord Jesus has called me to the ministry, but again, I don't know for sure. I want to know some certain way whether He has called me or not.

There is something within that makes me want to go out in the ministry and work for God; then comes that uncertainty about whether it is the Lord's will or not. But even if it were revealed to be His will, how would I ever become a minister? I didn't know how you get into the ministry.²

Interestingly enough, this young man, who was destined to be a pioneer of personal prophecy, had his first affirmation of the call to the ministry through a prophetic word. He was attending Bible school in Portland, Oregon. He had been fasting for nine days—seeking direction from the Lord—when he was given a “word” (a prophecy) by a prophetic presbytery (I'll write about presbytery ministry later) of five faculty members who spoke the following message over him:

Yes, My son, even as the Spirit of the Lord burned in the heart, yea, even in the bones of My servant, Jeremiah, even so doth the fire kindle and burn within thy heart.

Fear not, My son, the hand of the Lord hath rested upon thee and the mantle of His power has come upon thee. Yea, and thy mouth shall be quick to speak the word of the Lord, and even as thou shalt speak shall the prophetic utterance come forth.³

It has now been more than sixty years since Bill began prophesying. During these four decades, he has laid hands on and personally prophesied over multiple thousands of people. These range from small infants to international church leaders, from farmers to politicians and professional people of all types.⁴

In thinking about the prophetic call, it is interesting to note the role of godly instruction for the person who will someday prophesy on a large scale. Bill Hamon's gift only came into manifestation after his conversion experience. Another prophetic voice I interviewed had experiences similar to mine. She would occasionally have a "foreknowing" of events (i.e., she would receive prophetic knowledge about events that had not yet taken place).

I don't know if something about the age of twelve is significant, but it is interesting to note that Jesus was twelve when He publicly stated in the Temple, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49). This was also the age at which I had the series of dreams about hell. Perhaps age twelve is when children become especially sensitive to the Holy Spirit and at this age we should watch and pray for them in a special way.

John Maxwell's Calling

Years ago, a godly pastor named Reverend Maxwell would call his grandsons aside to pray over them. He would do this quietly, and none of them knew he was praying for each of them in a similar way. One day, Grandpa Maxwell, as they called him, prayed for his twelve-year-old grandson, John. The prayer was actually a prophecy because the Holy Spirit spoke through this patriarch of the family that one day this young boy on the brink of manhood would preach the Gospel. This was confirmation to the young man. He knew in his heart it was true.

The Lord, however, wasn't finished with His confirmation of young John's call. John had a junior-high Sunday school teacher named Glenn Leatherwood, who took seriously his call to raise up young boys to be men

of God. Each Saturday night, he would intercede for those on his class roster. After class one Sunday morning, he asked four of the boys if they would stay behind so he could pray for them. Brother Leatherwood told each boy that as he prayed, he believed that boy would preach the Gospel.

Young John Maxwell did, indeed, grow up to be a preacher of the Gospel. He did, indeed, go on to pastor and is a noted communicator, mentoring countless thousands of young leaders around the world through his teachings on leadership.

Reminiscing over the phone, Pastor Maxwell shared how he has always considered Brother Leatherwood's prayer his ordination into the ministry. He also went on to say, "You know, my grandpa didn't just prophesy over me. He also called my brother aside and shared with him that God would use him as a Christian businessman and make him very prosperous and that he was to use what God gave him to feed the poor, and that's just what he has done."

James Goll's Calling

In the fall of 1972, James Goll was a twenty-year-old student at Missouri State University, studying biological research. As he'd received four scholarship offers from different universities, this seemed like a bright future for him.

His prophetic gift was sparked when he attended Explo '72, a Campus Crusade for Christ event held at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas. Billy Graham spoke on the fifth night of the meetings, and he asked people to stand to commit their lives to full-time Christian service. James stood, feeling no emotion, but prayed with him.

The next day was the Jesus People rally and concert. The Jesus People—wild, passionate and all about God—started witnessing to James about the Holy Spirit and His gifts. During the following Thanksgiving break, James started prophesying. After receiving the empowering of the Holy Spirit, he started seeing visions, although he didn't understand what he was seeing. He would see people before he met them, and the next day he would see the person and lead them to the Lord. This happened on a regular basis.

For the next ten years, James prayed that God would raise up schools of the prophets, or training schools that would cultivate the prophetic gift.

Then, in May of 1983, he met the people who were later known as the Kansas City Prophets, including Mike Bickle. This group caused many to

be familiar with the role of the prophets in the Church. Eventually, James started prophesying on a regular basis, but his strongest gift is that of a prophetic intercessor. Since then, he has mobilized prayer around the world and written extensively on both prayer and the prophetic gift.

The Effect of Prophecy

I have to tell a little anecdote about how the gift of prophecy touched my life as well as the life of Peter Wagner, a leader in the worldwide prayer movement. Several years ago, I was visiting Peter Wagner and his wife, Doris. My visit to them took place right after I had taught the 120 Fellowship Retreat (a class Peter taught at the time each week at Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena, California).

I was sitting in Peter's study. He was telling me that John Wimber, leader of the Vineyard Movement, had called and said that someone named Dick Mills was going to contact Peter with a personal prophecy. At the time, Peter didn't know who Dick was and was just beginning to learn about the prophetic ministry. I said, "Oh, Peter, if Dick Mills calls, you need to talk with him. He's one of the major hitters as far as prophets go."

Peter said, "Fine," and went on to talk with me about something that was on his heart. He wanted me to amplify a little book I was working on to include all aspects of intercessory prayer. I have to tell you, I was struggling.

Inside, I was having a conversation with the Lord. *Lord*, I said, *I don't have a clue how to write a book. Please, Lord, can't we negotiate on this? You know I've never taken a writer's class before. Peter has written more than thirty books, and besides, Lord, he's a seminary professor with a Ph.D.!* I think I was suffering from basic intimidation, fear and inadequacy.

At that moment, the phone rang. It was Dick Mills, one of the pioneer prophets of the day. Peter quickly started writing as Dick began to give him Scripture verses and tell him how God would use him to bring three strands of the Body of Christ together for an end-time work. At the end of the conversation, Peter said, "Oh, by the way, Cindy Jacobs is here." (I had first met Dick in the 1980s when he prophesied that I would one day have an international ministry.) All of a sudden, I began to have a strange feeling in the pit of my stomach. I *knew* Dick was going to share a prophecy with me, too!

When Peter got off the phone, he said to me, “Oh, by the way, Dick had a Scripture and a prophecy for you, too, Cindy. He said that you are here by the Lord’s design, and he gave you the Scripture from the wedding of Cana when Mary said, ‘Anything he says, do it!’” (see John 2:5).

The Lord caught two people with one phone call that day. I was certain the Lord was referring to Peter’s advice to write the manuscript that became my first book, *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy*. God certainly has unique ways to get a point across! By that time, I would have had to be downright disobedient not to take Peter’s counsel—and I’m glad I did.

God is calling many people to prophetic action today. Some common threads seem to run through the testimonies of those I’ve talked to. They will say something like, “One day I was reading the first chapter of Jeremiah, and it kind of jumped out at me. The Holy Spirit began to speak to my heart that He would make me a prophet to the nations.”

Frequently, people will say, “The call came when I read Jeremiah 1:5: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’”

Just as God calls those who have a prophetic gift in a variety of ways, so the Lord uniquely trains each vessel to be used for His glory. In the next chapter, we will learn about the role of intercession and obedience in training those who have a prophetic call.

Prophecy in Practice

1. Do you know someone who has a prophetic call?
2. Have you surrendered your life to be used of God in any way He may see fit for you?
3. Do you think it is possible for a person to hear the Voice of God today?
4. Have you ever thought about how the gift of prophecy might be used to help you draw closer to God?
5. Think back, if possible, to a time when you either received a prophecy or you had some kind of supernatural “foreknowledge” that helped you or a friend. Discuss it with someone to whom you are spiritually accountable.