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Prophet Jim Smith. December 2004

“The disciplined life of the Prophet.”

For many years I have been teaching about prophecy, under the title "Prophet Jim Smith's prophecy school." These Conferences have been for all Pastors and leaders who have an interest in prophecy.

But I have also worked at a different level, teaching and training prophets. And that is what this material is for—helping prophets become more biblical, more integrated in the local Church, more New Testament based, and able to help and guide the Church, under the authority and guidance of the local leadership.

I know that prophets need teaching and training, and that training needs to be deep and thorough. So the first level of teaching is about the disciplines of prophecy, rather than the practice. If a prophet is not disciplined, then he is of little use to the Church. He will not be able to respect or accept authority; he will not be able to test his word, or have it tested, and to be honest, he will be a waste of God's time. But to obtain these disciplines is hard, and it takes time - and this is the problem. God's men in the twenty first century think that everything can be done quickly. But growth and discipline take time.

This material is designed to be taught by me. It may be useful on its own, but its real strength is that it is material to be taught. Those who attend prophet's schools can expect to be taught, and can expect to have a tough time! Discipline is tough!

The disciplines.

1. Close walk with God
2. Obedience
3. Worship
4. Dependence & provision
5. The body of Christ
6. Being alone
7. Prayer
8. Being human
9. Endure suffering
10. Servant heart
11. The heavenly places
12. True prophecy

A close walk with God

The prophetic ministry falls into these areas:-

- To share the heart of God.
- To hear from God. To test what is heard.
- To speak for God.
- To be in the watchtower, waiting for God's command.
- To be prepared to be ridiculed, abused, ignored, rejected, ejected, silenced, or killed.

To fulfil this, those in the prophetic ministry must have *the discipline of a very close walk with God*. This will enable him to be obedient, willing to act, to listen, to speak or to be silent, to go where he is sent, to speak what he is given, and to accept the judgement of the Church. This close walk is a gift of God by His Holy Spirit. The pressure of staying within this call is great, and it is easily weakened. When people ignore us, fail to understand us, or make us feel small or worthless, the temptation is to give up, and to become like everyone else. Then we are not laughed at anymore, and we can be comfortable. But we have lost our most precious gift - our closeness to God.

Guard this gift carefully. Ask yourself "How does the enemy try to take this gift from me? Study the Bible, and make sure that you are regularly reading the lives and teachings of the prophets. Most importantly, read the story of the passion of Jesus often. (Mark chapters 14-16) This will give the courage to carry on.

Obedience

Obedience is a key part of the Christian experience. Jesus was "obedient even to death" and in this he was crowning the examples which went before him.

Isaiah's commission was born in a discipline of obedience - "Who will go for us...here am I send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

Esther took the risk of obedience - "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

Mary followed the same path - "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." (Lk1:38)

Obedience is one of the essential disciplines of a prophet's life.

It enables him to come and go at God's command.

It enables him to speak what he has received without adding or taking away.

It enables him to be part of the disciplined life of the body.

Test the worship for purity/for vitality/Spirit's power.
Pray in the worship, so that it reflects the presence of God.
Protect the worship.
Encourage the worship.

For the discipline of worship:

Study the Bible passages given above, and meditate on them.
Learn how to reach into heaven through worship.
Learn to recognise the voice of God in worship.

Dependence & Provision

At least three times in his life, the prophet Elijah had to be supported, because he had nothing himself.

He had to be fed by ravens:-

“So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.” (1 Kings 17:5-6)

He had to be fed by a poor widow, with the very last she had:-

“So he went to Zarepath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there, gathering sticks. He called to her and asked “Would you bring me a little water in a jar, so I may have a drink?” As she was going to get it he called “And bring me please a piece of bread.” (1 Kings 17: 10-11)

He had to be fed by the angels:-

“All at once an angel touched him and said “Get up and eat.” He looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and then lay down again.” (1 Kings 19:6)

Elijah depended on God for what he needed. God replied with His provision. This discipline is very necessary for a number of reasons:

Jesus commanded it. “Your heavenly Father knows ..” (Matt 7:32)

It is part of our faith as prophets that we live in this way. We have to be seen to be trusting him for whom we speak. (Habakkuk 3: 17-18)

This keeps us clear of the “deceitfulness of wealth” (Mark 4:19) which destroys ministries.

We are not tempted to use the word of God for personnel gain. (Titus 1:7)

It is very hard to live in this way. We will often be short or have nothing. God provides through the people of God, and they often fail him. When they do we suffer.

It is hard not to use our gift for personal gain. It hurts to be hurt and to be alone, without resources and without hope. But in this way, we are seen to be depending on God. We hear more clearly from God. We have an edge to our message which comfort and ease would deny us. It is vital that we develop this discipline of dependence. But it is not easy.

We have to make a commitment to it at the beginning of our ministries, and refuse to look back. Then we have to trust to God to hold us to our commitment. Have you done this? Will you?

The body of Christ

Prophets and the body of Christ have never had an easy relationship. There are large areas where misunderstanding can occur. Here are just a few areas of difficulty:-

Prophets find it difficult to be patient, but leaders cannot go forward too fast.

Leaders try too hard to control the prophetic spirit, failing to understand that if a prophet is too controlled, he becomes useless. **Prophets** find it hard to believe that their word is not from God. Leaders have the responsibility to test, and say such things.

Prophets are strong in their ministry, and do not appreciate being corrected.

Leaders don't like having criticism of their work, or of their fellowship.

Prophets often do not receive the support and love they need. But they don't always make it easy for others to give that support and love.

So—do we just abandon each other? Should all prophets go off and start their own Churches? This would leave each side happy but totally lost, and totally outside the will of God for His people. For he appointed Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers to lead us. Leaving is not an option. So how do we move forward? Here are my “belonging principles.”

1. Belonging to the body. (1 Corinthians 12:12)
2. Loving the body. (Ephesians 5:25)
3. Respect the leadership of the body.
(1 Timothy 5:17)
4. Helping the body test prophecy. (1 John 4:1)
5. Knowing how to speak, and when to say it (Habbakuk 2:3)
6. Relationships with other prophets in the body.
(1 Corinthians 12: 29-32)

It is vital to have a discipline of the body. Examine these six points, and see if they are part of your discipline. If not, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the love of Jesus for the body, (Ephesians 5:25) and then pray for a good discipline in your own life.

Being alone

The life of the prophet is a lonely one. He often finds himself in the lonely places, either because the people of God will not listen to him, or because the Spirit of God has sent him out there to be with God. This is a hard and lonely experience. Jesus also had it.

In the wilderness.	(Luke 4: 1-13)
In Gethsemane.	(Mark 14:32)
Before Sanhedrin.	(Mark 14: 53-65)
On Cross.	(John 19:16-27)

How can we survive these desert places?

We have to accept this as a fact of our lives. There is no escape, and we should not seek one.

In being alone, we are closer to depending on Jesus alone. Prophets need to be in this relationship. Otherwise they will not hear clearly from Jesus. The world will be forever intruding into the word.

We must have some friends who we can totally trust, who will not let us drift too far into the desert places.

Do you find yourself in the desert as a prophet, or a prophetic voice? Do you rebel against this, or accept it as part of your calling before God? Study the Temptation stories (Matthew chapter 4: Luke chapter 4) and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the skill of living in the desert places. Commit yourself to stop complaining. It will never get better, and it will probably get worse. So far better to get equipped for these lonely experiences.

Prayer

Prayer is the essence of Christian life:-

“Call to me and I will answer you..” (Jeremiah 33:3)

“Whatever you ask in my name I will do it..”

(John 14:13)

For the prophet it is the essence of his life, but it is also much more than setting aside times of prayer. For the prophet, all of life is prayer, and prayer is all of life. Wherever he is, and whatever he is doing, this is prayer. These things need especially to be in his mind:-

His prayers will be guided by the Bible, by dreams, visions, words from God.

His prayer needs to be private, and he also needs to be part of the praying body of God’s people.

He must have the ability to pray in this way, AND to remember, write, meditate and discern what he is experiencing in prayer.

Do you live the whole of your life as a prayer? Learn to develop the discipline of prayer, until this is so.

Being human

It's really important for the prophet or prophetic voice to recognise his humanity. This means that he:-

- Can make mistakes.
- Can get angry.
- Can speak from his own heart.
- Can mishear and misunderstand.
- Can get tired, frustrated and low in energy.
- Can say the wrong thing at the wrong time and in the wrong place.

We need to be fully human in our ministries. Then God can reflect himself and His word more fully to those who are exposed to our ministry. Denying our humanity means that we have to strive to be perfect and infallible. We cannot hope to achieve this, and consequently, when we fail, we are devastated. But if we can accept our humanity and our frailty, when we fail, which we will –it is part of the human condition—we won't be devastated. We will be able to accept it, and even more, allow that very failure to be our teacher.

Being human is not a discipline! But it does need to be so for the prophet. He has to have a firm understanding of his humanity, because of the intense spiritual nature of his life and work. *Ask God to show you yourself more and more. Ask Him to show you your strengths and your weaknesses. Ask Him to allow you to be fully "you" in your service of Him.*

Endurance

The Christian life is a joyful and satisfying experience. But its also a tough one. There are periods of intense loneliness; (Mark 14: 32-41) times of misunderstanding; (Matthew 11: 18-19) times when the enemy presses hard. (Luke 22:3) We have no option in these hard times but to tough it out, looking to Jesus who endured the same. We need the determination of Habbakuk, (Hab 3:17) and Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:6)

How can we survive in the struggle to endure?

- We must** understand it is part of the cost of faith. (Philippians 1:21)
- We must** discipline our lives in prayer and Bible study. (2 Tim 3:16)
- We must** keep our armour bright. (Ephesians 6: 10-18)
- We must** never give up. (Daniel 3:16-17)

Discipline yourself to endure the struggle to the end. Ask the Holy Spirit daily to give you the courage to face the struggle, and to endure to the end. (Ephesians 6:13)

The servant heart

Jesus had the servant heart nature, and of all who are part of God's Kingdom, he was the one who least needed to have it. He was King of Kings, from everlasting to everlasting. All authority rested in his hands, and surely on visiting his own creation, he was entitled to be seen for who he was? Yet, the Bible teaches us that the marks of his nature were:

“Did not grasp equality”—he had dealt with self.

(Mark 8:34)

“Emptied himself”—taking the lower place.

(Luke 14:8-10)

“Was obedient” – completely dedicated to God

(1 Kings 3:7-9)

“even to death on a cross.”

The true prophet must have the servant heart. A willingness to give away, to be considered nothing, to think nothing of personal gain, position, respect or honour. A prophet must work hard to guard this discipline in himself. Others will honour him for what he has done, or what he hears. They will hold him in awe, and try to elevate him to a position to which he does not belong. It's so easy to be swept along by all this adulation, respect, and emotion. It appeals to that which is human in us.

How can I keep my servant heart?

By knowing the servant heart of Jesus.

By spending time at the cross.

By knowing your own heart.

By the work of the Holy Spirit in you.

By the act of your own will.

Ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart, to root out all self, and to keep you humble. Read John 13: 1-5.

The heavenly places.

A prophet has to know how to enter the heavenly places, and how to receive from God there. This is a long discipline to learn. First, there is some things we have to know:-

God wants us there

Looking at just a few of the Bible verses will establish these truths:-

*** God wants to speak to us:-**

“When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.” (Numbers 12:6)

*** We are welcome into his presence to communicate with him:-**

“Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs.” (Psalm 100:v1)

“Seek his face always.” (1 Chron 16:11)

*** It takes commitment and effort on our part:-**

Jesus said: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness “ (Matt 6:33)

*** It takes commitment and effort on God’s part.**

Preparing the heart

A man who goes into the presence of God must not do so casually. This will only bring disaster on him. God is pure and holy, and those who seek his face must prepare themselves for being in his presence. But what must we do?

*** Confession and repentance**

The Bible says “Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart..” (Psalm 24:4)

Before we come into the presence, and as we do, we must be aware of our sinfulness, and be ready to confess and repent. God does not judge our sinfulness, and is ready to forgive. (1 John 1:7-9) But we must be aware of our need for forgiveness, and be quick to ask for it. For it is an awesome thing to come into the presence of God. Isaiah was devastated by it, and cried out “I am ruined.” To feel and see the holiness of God is a very challenging experience. Even when I have confessed, I have always been aware of my sinfulness in presence of God, and of his mercy in letting me stay. It is only by the blood of Jesus that I can remain there, but even then I am so aware of my own inadequacy.

*** Opening the eyes**

To stand in the presence of God is a spiritual experience, not a physical one. It takes place as we are praying, worshipping, meditating on the Bible, listening to a preaching or even during our daily lives. Suddenly we find ourselves in the heavenly places, standing before the throne of grace. For so many, however, this experience is denied them, because they cannot allow their spiritual eyes to be open.

Elisha’s servant was in this position. All he saw was the Arameans, (2 Kings6:15) and he was filled with fear. But the prophet Elisha, seeing with spiritual eyes,

encourages him: “Don’t be afraid,” he said “those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Still the servant was fearful, unable to open his spiritual eyes, so Elisha prays “O Lord, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire, all around Elisha.

(2 Kings 6: 16 & 17) Prophets should not need to be told to open their spiritual eyes, but sometimes they need to be told. Why can they not see?

They are too concerned with earthly things. The battle, the Lord and our home is in the heavenly places, not here on earth. Here we have no lasting or permanent place.

They listen too much to their brain, which says “you are imagining things. What you think you see is not real.” This is a lie. The spiritual realm is the real one – the place which will endure for ever. Earthly things will pass away, but the heavenly Kingdom will endure forever.

They are undisciplined. Time is not laid aside for prayer, for mediation, and for the lifting up of the mind by the Holy Spirit into the heavenly places. It takes discipline and determination to be in the presence of God. It requires much prayer, study, and years of patient endurance to be able to understand what is happening, what is being seen and what God is wanting. It cannot just “happen”, although many would like it that way. If it just happened, there would be no need for discipline. An undisciplined prophet is a disaster, bringing false things to the people of God, seeking after self, fame, wealth and security. These men are no use to us. (See my book "The disciplined life of the Prophet.")

We who are called to seek the face of God must be expectant – expecting to see and hear. We must seize the moment when it happens, and hold on to what we see, feel and hear, so that we can bless and help God’s people.

Willing to wait

It’s not possible for a prophet to force his way into the presence of God, although, to our joy, we are always welcome. Nor is it possible to force God to reveal his will, or give us a commission. We have to be willing to wait. Why?

This is part of our love for God. We love him so much, that we are unwilling to force him into any action. We prefer to wait his time, because this pleases him, and we long to please him. It’s part of our discipline that we wait. God knows better than us how much we need the blessing of a disciplined life. Sometimes He lets us wait in his presence, so that we can learn the discipline of waiting.

God’s plan involves many people and many actions. We are part of his plan, but only part of it. Sometimes we have to wait because he is waiting – waiting for other events to unfold and develop. It’s part of our humanity to get frustrated by being kept waiting, but we have to learn that waiting is prophecy. If we can’t wait, then we only make it harder for God to work his plan out. I like to think that God says of me “I know my prophet Jim. He will wait until I speak. So I don’t have to worry about him.” I don’t want him saying “Oh my prophet Jim! He’ll come into my presence and start getting frustrated and irritated. He’s as much a problem to me as the situations I

want to speak to him about!" I don't want God saying this of me, so I must learn to wait.

I used to get very frustrated with God, because he made me wait. But as I have learned more about his ways, and about my position, I just wait. To wait in his presence is such a blessing, that I no longer worry. I believe that the heart of my calling as a prophet is to be available to God - to wait for Him to speak, or share his heart with me. If I never shared a single word here on earth, but just waited and listened, I could be complete as a prophet. I enjoy sharing the words of course, because this allows me to help and direct the Church. But most of all, I enjoy waiting, hearing and being one of God's men in his presence.

Knowing our calling.

It can be frightening, bewildering and perplexing to be in the presence of God. Isaiah and Jeremiah were both greatly troubled, while Daniel and Ezekial were very fearful at some of the things they saw. Even the Apostle John knew disturbance in his spirit at the visions he saw. This is a right feeling. After all, we are only ordinary men, and God is God. His holiness, his power and his greatness can easily frighten us, and his message can lead to great trouble for us. Jonah, Micaiah ben Imlah and Jeremiah suffered much for the message which they heard, and would have to deliver.

So it is very necessary that we know that we are truly called to this ministry. We seek the face of God because he has called us to it, not because we have appointed ourselves to our calling. Again and again I have had to say, in the presence of God "You Lord called me to this position. I did not seek it for myself. I am only here because you have asked me to be here. I know that I can remain, not because of my own works, but because of what you have done, and because of your call in my life." Men who do not have a sense of their call worry me. Men who are confident and bold as they seek the face of God worry me. I have had a wide experience of prophets and prophecy, and I have noticed that the true prophet is humble, aware of his call and the responsibility of that call. He is confident to seek the face of God, but humble enough to know that it is only by God's grace that he can do so. If the people of God would look more for these characteristics, we would then see less of false prophesy, and be better equipped to deal with the false, and encourage the true men of God.³

Conquering the strong man

Binding the strong man

Jesus taught us:- "No one can enter a strong man's house, and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man." (Mark 3:27) If we are going to seek the face of God in the heavenly places, we will have to learn how to bind Satan, the "strong man."

Daniel overcome the strong man. We read "Do not be afraid Daniel. Since the first day to set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian Kingdom resisted me twenty one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes

came to help me, because I was detained there with the King of Persia." (Daniel 10:12-13)

Many who seek the face of God fail to bind the strong man, and then find it difficult to gain access to God, or to hear clearly in his presence. The experienced Christian worker should bind the strong man.

We bind the strong man in this way:-

1. We confess our sins and repent.
2. We claim the victory of the blood, using the Bible. For example:- "He forgave our sins, having cancelled the written code with its regulations that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross."(Col.2:14-15)
3. We take the armour of God (Ephesians 6:13 – 18) and then we go forward in strength to the heavenly places, to seek the face of God.

The heavenly places

It's no good seeking the face of God if we do not know our way around heaven. This may look strange in print, and you may be asking "Where can I buy a map of heaven, so that I can find my way around?" I thought like this at first, but slowly God has taught me many things about heaven, and they have greatly helped me as a prophet. Here is a brief outline of some of the things I have learnt. I want to stress that this has been a great help to me, but has taken considerable time to understand. It may take anyone reading this some years to get a full understanding.

The absolute authority and rule of God & Jesus

"The throne of God and of the lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him."(Rev 22:3)

In the heavenly places, God rules. Many who come to seek God's face are surprised by this feeling. That's simply because here on earth we are constantly bombarded with the voices of other gods and other philosophies. We have to work hard to exclude them from our hearing, so that we can concentrate on God. In heaven, there are no other voices. Spend some time in the heavenly places enjoying the kingly rule of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. They reign and rule here, and that's what we long for here on earth. In a way, as we feel this unusual feeling, we are experiencing the heart's desire of every child of God – that Jesus shall reign.

The worship.

"Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise." Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and on the sea, and all that is in them singing "To him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be praise and honour and glory and power for

ever and ever.” The four living creatures said “A-men” and the elders fell down and worshipped.” (Rev 5:12-14)

Heaven is full of worship, and part of our privilege is to be caught up in that worship. If we are not caught up in it, how can we ever come into the presence of God? Worship is the very background in which God exists. Sometimes I find myself singing songs and choruses I know, out loud. Sometimes I find myself singing in my spirit, and sometimes I hardly know what I am experiencing. I feel like the man Paul spoke about, who was caught up to the third heaven.

(2 Corinthians 12:2) I hardly know what I am experiencing, yet I am conscious of the presence of God, and of myself. This isn't a trance state, but a genuine journey to the heavenly places. We must let the worship flow into us, and let that worship which is in us flow into the worship of heaven. In this process, we are made powerfully aware of where we are, who we are, and into whose presence we are coming.

The battle.

“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies...He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.” (Rev13:5-6)

There is a very real sense of the spiritual battle in heaven. In some ways, this may seem strange, because God's rule is absolute in heaven. But the enemy, defeated though he is, never ceases to try and regain his place in heaven, (Revelation 13) and he does this primarily by disrupting God's work here on earth. Heaven is involved in the struggle, and those who dwell in the heavenly places are very aware of this struggle.

The prayers of the saints.

“After this I looked and there as a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and in front of the lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb.” (Rev 7: 9-10)

Heaven is full of prayer, and those who go there are aware of the prayers of the saints, which day and night are offered to the Father. Prayer also rises up to the Father from earth, so there is a constant dialogue, both in heaven towards the Father, and from earth to the Father, and from the Father to the earth. It's easy to think that we who dwell there by faith would also be caught up in the prayer. But I have often found myself so caught up with the power and wonder of this prayer, that I have not been able to take part, only to watch and wonder.

The triumph of the cross.

“See the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” Then I saw a lamb, looking like he had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne.” (Rev.5:5-6)

In heaven, there is a great triumphal arch. It is the victory of the cross of Jesus. This great cross stands in heaven, reminding sinners of their salvation, and Satan of his defeat. In my prayers, I am often drawn to this cross again and again. Under its shadow, I feel the peace and consolation which heaven brings to the human spirit.

The angels.

“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.” (Hebrews 12:22-23)

Everywhere in the heavenly places, we meet angels – those messengers of God, which live only to serve his purposes. They are beautiful beyond description, a blessing to us, and a sign of the beauty and wonder of their Creator.