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Have you ever met a prophet? I've met some claiming that status.

If you did meet one, how would you know if they were from God or from somewhere else?

This is actually an important question. Jesus, speaking of end-time events, said:

"For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones." (Matthew 24:24, NLT)

We're going to look at this in three parts.

1. First, we'll examine the Bible to see what we can learn about true prophets. How can we recognize one or discern a false one.
2. Second, in two weeks we'll look at how we can best understand a prophet's message.
3. Then, in three weeks, we'll apply what we've learned to the life and writings of Ellen White.

Biblical Prophets

Who has the distinction of being the first identified prophet in Scripture?

That honor would go to Abraham, and it is mentioned in interesting circumstances. Because of a famine, Abraham moved his family into an area controlled by King Abimelech.

Apparently his wife, Sarah, was a beautiful woman. So, thinking of his own safety, Abraham told Abimelech that Sarah was his sister.

Which incidentally she was. They had the same father but a different mother.

He failed to mention she was also his wife.

So, Abimelech, assuming she was available, took her to his palace intending to make her his wife. The story continues to unfold in [Genesis 20](#):

... That night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!"

But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean."

In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live ..." ([Genesis 20:3-7](#), NLT)

This all happened because Abraham failed to trust God and tell the truth. Yet, God identified him as a prophet, then told Abimelech (who was innocent) that Abraham would pray for him so he could live.

This does leave some questions in my mind. There is probably a whole sermon here along with a deeper story. But, for today we'll only make note of the fact that just because someone is God's prophet doesn't mean they're perfect. They're still human with struggles and failures just like any of us.

The next prophets mentioned in the Bible are Aaron and Miriam – Moses' brother and sister (see [Exodus 7:1](#) & [15:20](#)). They weren't perfect either.

Aaron led out in making the Golden Calf that caused many of the Israelites to lose their lives (see [Exodus 32](#)). And together, Aaron and Miriam were so critical of Moses over his marriage to a non-Israelite that God called them out for it (see [Numbers 12:1-8](#)).

Like every other human, they made some bad choices and were not perfect – yet, they were used to advance God's cause.

King David is also identified as a prophet. And while we know he was a man after God's own heart, we also know he was far from perfect (see [Acts 2:29-31](#) & [Acts 13:21-23](#)).

If you study the lives of God's prophets and other leaders who accomplished great things for God, you will find they were very human with the baggage and struggles common to all of us.

We tend to lift prophets up on a pedestal – we expect them to be superhumans. The fact is, there are no superhumans – not even Jesus. While He did live a perfect life and died to save us, it wasn't because He was a superhuman, it was because He lived as a human completely submitted to and dependent on God the Father (see [John 5:19-30](#), [6:35-40](#), [7:14-19](#), [8:28-29](#), [10:34-38](#), [12:44-50](#), and [14:9-11](#)).

He then tells us we can do the same things He did – and even more – if we’ll be connected to Him the way He was connected to His Father (see [John 14:9-14](#)). This was fulfilled in the lives of His followers His ascension as the Holy Spirit worked through them to change the world.

Prophets are people just like us. They have the same type of challenges, problems, struggles, and heartaches. What sets them apart is their willingness to say yes to God and then follow Him regardless of the personal consequences.

Characteristics of True Prophets

Their Lives

The Bible does share several things we should see in a true prophet.

In the [Sermon on the Mount \(Matthew 5 – 7\)](#), Jesus said:

“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act ... Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.” ([Matthew 7:15-20](#), NLT)

He’s not saying a true prophet will be perfect and will never make bad choices. He’s saying a prophet’s life will indicate a growing closeness to God and will reflect His character – the lifestyle will support the message.

Jesus’ use of *fruit* as an illustration in this passage points us to the *Fruit of the Spirit* described in [Galatians 5](#):

... Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control ... ([Galatians 5:22-23](#), NLT)

If these characteristics are largely absent in a person’s life who claims to be a *prophet*, we can legitimately question the source of their inspiration and be suspicious of their message.

But Jesus then muddies the water a bit. He continues:

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’” ([Matthew 7:21-23](#), NLT)

Saying the right things, or even casting out demons and performing miracles are not a guarantee that a person belongs to God and is serving Him. This complicates things from our perspective.

The issue is: Who has their heart? Do they know, love, and follow Jesus?

This is not always evident at first glance and will often be difficult for you and me to determine. As much as we may hate to admit it, we're not smart enough to read people's hearts.

This tells me that unless I have given my life to Jesus and am learning to listen to His voice through the Holy Spirit, I'll be easier to fool than I realize!

Their Inspiration

Another characteristic is that all true prophets have received their ability as a gift from God to help advance His Kingdom. We find this in the list Paul shares as the Gifts of the Spirit – different parts of the Body of Christ, His Church, to grow and strengthen it (see [1 Corinthians 12](#)).

This means pointing people to Jesus and teaching them how to grow closer to Him through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

When you allowed the Holy Spirit to live in you and guide your life, you will be drawn to those who have made the same choice. The Holy Spirit will give you the wisdom and understanding to correctly evaluate a prophet's life and message.

Their Predictions

Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy, gives us another characteristic of a true prophet:

“You may wonder, ‘How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the LORD?’ If the prophet speaks in the LORD’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the LORD did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared.” ([Deuteronomy 18:21-22](#), NLT)

If a person is truly connected to God, Who knows the end from the beginning, it makes sense that what they predict will happen.

We must keep in mind, though, that many times things will look different as they happen than we thought they would. And then there are those conditional prophecies. So, being connected to God through the Holy Spirit is still critical.

We'll spend a bit more time with this in two weeks.

Their Teachings About Jesus

The Apostle John gives us another piece of this puzzle in his first letter. He wrote:

Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world.
([1 John 4:1](#), NLT)

Even then, just 50 years after Jesus was here there were many voices claiming to be from God that were not. He admonishes us to test them – or prayerfully examine their message and their life. He goes on:

This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God ... (1 John 4:2-3, NLT)

In this specific case, he was correcting a current false teaching. But, in a broader sense, a true prophet will tell the truth about who Jesus is and what He accomplished for each of us.

Any teaching that diminishes the impact and importance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is not from God.

Most Were Unpopular

One other thing we can notice about most of God's prophets down through the ages – they were often unpopular and mistreated.

Their focus was always on getting God's people back on track, which meant submitting to His law and authority in their lives.

They were opposed, ridiculed, and persecuted by people who wanted to do their own thing, who valued their own power and comfort over following Him, and who didn't want to give up sinful practices.

It's a message that, if you're on the outside looking in, seems severe, limiting, and difficult. You often don't see the benefits of being connected with God – the love, security, and peace – until you have given up on yourself and turned to Him in desperation.

Their messages were never designed to please people, but to tell them the truth to bring them to God.

If a prophet's message makes you a bit uncomfortable, it may be an indication that you should pay attention.

The Last Days

Peter, in his first sermon following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Jesus's followers at Pentecost (see [Acts 2](#)), quoted a passage from [Joel 2](#) as an explanation of what was going on. He said:

“In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants – men and women alike – and they will prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18, NLT – quoting Joel 2:28-30)

This is a message for us today as well. God speaking through prophets didn't end with the Old Testament.

There are several people referred to as prophets through out the book of Acts (see [Acts 11:27](#), [13:1](#), [15:32](#), & [21:10](#)). It is reasonable to assume that God will continue to use prophets to communicate to His people right up until the end of this earth.

Their messages will not be sent to make us comfortable, but to bring us back to God. It will point us towards a deep, life-changing connection with Jesus. It will push us to give up our own agendas and submit to His plan.

It will lead you and me to put into practice the message we find in Proverbs 3, which says:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV)

And when you have done that, God's Spirit will assure you of the truth of this passage:

He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13, NLT)

This kind of security is only found in God. If you place your trust anyplace else, you will lose eternity.

Don't take that risk!

Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Previous Messages in this Series (click on the title to download it)

- May 9, 2020 – *Dead or Alive?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 16, 2020 – *Symptom or Disease?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 30, 2020 – *Out or In?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 6, 2020 – *Starve or Eat?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 13, 2020 – *Atrophy or Exercise?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 20, 2020 – *Just Love?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 4, 2020 – *Am I a Hypocrite?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 11, 2020 – *Burn Out or Rest? – Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 18, 2020 – *Burn Out or Rest? – Part 2* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 1, 2020 – *A Look Back* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 15, 2020 – *Love Like Jesus!* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 22, 2020 – *Distracted or Focused?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 29, 2020 – *Mortal or Immortal?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 5, 2020 – *Tortured or Destroyed?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 12, 2020 – *Now Or Later?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

Scripture References

Genesis 20:1-18 (NLT): Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, ²Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, “She is my sister.” So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

³But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, “You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!”

⁴ But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵ Didn’t Abraham tell me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘Yes, he is my brother.’ I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean.”

⁶ In the dream God responded, “Yes, I know you are innocent. That’s why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don’t return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die.”

⁸ Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. ⁹ Then Abimelech called for Abraham. “What have you done to us?” he demanded. “What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! ¹⁰ Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?”

¹¹ Abraham replied, “I thought, ‘This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.’ ¹² And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. ¹³ When God called me to leave my father’s home and to travel from place to place, I told her, ‘Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.’”

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. ¹⁵ Then Abimelech said, “Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live.” ¹⁶ And he said to Sarah, “Look, I am giving your ‘brother’ 1,000 pieces of silver in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared.”

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. ¹⁸ For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham’s wife, Sarah. (**Genesis 20:1-18**, NLT)

Numbers 12:1-8 (NLT): While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. ² They said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Hasn’t he spoken through us, too?”

But the LORD heard them. ³ (Now Moses was very humble – more humble than any other person on earth.) ⁴ So immediately the LORD called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and said, “Go out to the Tabernacle, all three of you!”

So the three of them went to the Tabernacle.

⁵ Then the LORD descended in the pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle. “Aaron and Miriam!” he called, and they stepped forward. ⁶ And the LORD said to them, “Now listen to what I say:

“If there were prophets among you, I, the LORD, would reveal myself in visions. I would speak to them in dreams. ⁷ But not with my servant Moses. Of all my house, he is the one I trust. ⁸ I speak to him face to face, clearly, and not in riddles! He sees the LORD as he is. So why were you not afraid to criticize my servant Moses?” (Numbers 12:1-8, NLT)

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (NLT): *“Suppose there are prophets among you or those who dream dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, ² and the predicted signs or miracles occur. If they then say, ‘Come, let us worship other gods’ – gods you have not known before – ³ do not listen to them. The LORD your God is testing you to see if you truly love him with all your heart and soul. ⁴ Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him. ⁵ The false prophets or visionaries who try to lead you astray must be put to death, for they encourage rebellion against the LORD your God, who redeemed you from slavery and brought you out of the land of Egypt. Since they try to lead you astray from the way the LORD your God commanded you to live, you must put them to death. In this way you will purge the evil from among you.” (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, NLT)*

Deuteronomy 18:17-22 (NLT): *“Then the LORD said to me, ‘What they have said is right. ¹⁸ I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. ¹⁹ I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. ²⁰ But any prophet who falsely claims to speak in my name or who speaks in the name of another god must die.’*

²¹ “But you may wonder, ‘How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the LORD?’ ²² If the prophet speaks in the LORD’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the LORD did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared.” (Deuteronomy 18:17-22, NLT)

1 Samuel 10:1-16 (NLT): *Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it over Saul’s head. He kissed Saul and said, “I am doing this because the LORD has appointed you to be the ruler over Israel, his special possession. ² When you leave me today, you will see two men beside Rachel’s tomb at Zelzah, on the border of Benjamin. They will tell you that the donkeys have been found and that your father has stopped worrying about them and is now worried about you. He is asking, ‘Have you seen my son?’*

³ “When you get to the oak of Tabor, you will see three men coming toward you who are on their way to worship God at Bethel. One will be bringing three young goats, another will have three loaves of bread, and the third will be carrying a wineskin full of wine. ⁴ They will greet you and offer you two of the loaves, which you are to accept.

⁵ “When you arrive at Gibeah of God, where the garrison of the Philistines is located, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the place of worship. They will be playing a harp, a tambourine, a flute, and a lyre, and they will be prophesying. ⁶ At that time the Spirit of the LORD will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them. You will be changed

into a different person. ⁷ After these signs take place, do what must be done, for God is with you. ⁸ Then go down to Gilgal ahead of me. I will join you there to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. You must wait for seven days until I arrive and give you further instructions.”

⁹ As Saul turned and started to leave, God gave him a new heart, and all Samuel’s signs were fulfilled that day. ¹⁰ When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw a group of prophets coming toward them. Then the Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul, and he, too, began to prophesy. ¹¹ When those who knew Saul heard about it, they exclaimed, “What? Is even Saul a prophet? How did the son of Kish become a prophet?”

¹² And one of those standing there said, “Can anyone become a prophet, no matter who his father is?” So that is the origin of the saying “Is even Saul a prophet?”

¹³ When Saul had finished prophesying, he went up to the place of worship. ¹⁴ “Where have you been?” Saul’s uncle asked him and his servant.

“We were looking for the donkeys,” Saul replied, “but we couldn’t find them. So we went to Samuel to ask him where they were.”

¹⁵ “Oh? And what did he say?” his uncle asked.

¹⁶ “He told us that the donkeys had already been found,” Saul replied. But Saul didn’t tell his uncle what Samuel said about the kingdom. (**1 Samuel 10:1-16**, NLT)

1 Kings 13:1-30 (NLT): At the LORD’s command, a man of God from Judah went to Bethel, arriving there just as Jeroboam was approaching the altar to burn incense. ² Then at the LORD’s command, he shouted, “O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: A child named Josiah will be born into the dynasty of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests from the pagan shrines who come here to burn incense, and human bones will be burned on you.” ³ That same day the man of God gave a sign to prove his message. He said, “The LORD has promised to give this sign: This altar will split apart, and its ashes will be poured out on the ground.”

⁴ When King Jeroboam heard the man of God speaking against the altar at Bethel, he pointed at him and shouted, “Seize that man!” But instantly the king’s hand became paralyzed in that position, and he couldn’t pull it back. ⁵ At the same time a wide crack appeared in the altar, and the ashes poured out, just as the man of God had predicted in his message from the LORD.

⁶ The king cried out to the man of God, “Please ask the LORD your God to restore my hand again!” So the man of God prayed to the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored and he could move it again.

⁷ Then the king said to the man of God, “Come to the palace with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift.”

⁸ But the man of God said to the king, “Even if you gave me half of everything you own, I would not go with you. I would not eat or drink anything in this place. ⁹ For the LORD gave me this

command: ‘You must not eat or drink anything while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.’” ¹⁰ So he left Bethel and went home another way.

¹¹ As it happened, there was an old prophet living in Bethel, and his sons came home and told him what the man of God had done in Bethel that day. They also told their father what the man had said to the king. ¹² The old prophet asked them, “Which way did he go?” So they showed their father which road the man of God had taken. ¹³ “Quick, saddle the donkey,” the old man said. So they saddled the donkey for him, and he mounted it.

¹⁴ Then he rode after the man of God and found him sitting under a great tree. The old prophet asked him, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?”

“Yes, I am,” he replied.

¹⁵ Then he said to the man of God, “Come home with me and eat some food.”

¹⁶ “No, I cannot,” he replied. “I am not allowed to eat or drink anything here in this place. ¹⁷ For the LORD gave me this command: ‘You must not eat or drink anything while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.’”

¹⁸ But the old prophet answered, “I am a prophet, too, just as you are. And an angel gave me this command from the LORD: ‘Bring him home with you so he can have something to eat and drink.’” But the old man was lying to him. ¹⁹ So they went back together, and the man of God ate and drank at the prophet’s home.

²⁰ Then while they were sitting at the table, a command from the LORD came to the old prophet. ²¹ He cried out to the man of God from Judah, “This is what the LORD says: You have defied the word of the LORD and have disobeyed the command the LORD your God gave you. ²² You came back to this place and ate and drank where he told you not to eat or drink. Because of this, your body will not be buried in the grave of your ancestors.”

²³ After the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the old prophet saddled his own donkey for him, ²⁴ and the man of God started off again. But as he was traveling along, a lion came out and killed him. His body lay there on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. ²⁵ People who passed by saw the body lying in the road and the lion standing beside it, and they went and reported it in Bethel, where the old prophet lived.

²⁶ When the prophet heard the report, he said, “It is the man of God who disobeyed the LORD’s command. The LORD has fulfilled his word by causing the lion to attack and kill him.”

²⁷ Then the prophet said to his sons, “Saddle a donkey for me.” So they saddled a donkey, ²⁸ and he went out and found the body lying in the road. The donkey and lion were still standing there beside it, for the lion had not eaten the body nor attacked the donkey. ²⁹ So the prophet laid the body of the man of God on the donkey and took it back to the town to mourn over him and bury him. ³⁰ He laid the body in his own grave, crying out in grief, “Oh, my brother!”

(1 Kings 13:1-30, NLT)

1 Kings 22:1-28 (NLT): For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. ² Then during the third year, King Jehoshaphat of Judah went to visit King Ahab of Israel. ³ During the visit, the king of Israel said to his officials, “Do you realize that the town of Ramoth-gilead belongs to us? And yet we’ve done nothing to recapture it from the king of Aram!”

⁴ Then he turned to Jehoshaphat and asked, “Will you join me in battle to recover Ramoth-gilead?”

Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, “Why, of course! You and I are as one. My troops are your troops, and my horses are your horses.” ⁵ Then Jehoshaphat added, “But first let’s find out what the LORD says.”

⁶ So the king of Israel summoned the prophets, about 400 of them, and asked them, “Should I go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should I hold back?”

They all replied, “Yes, go right ahead! The Lord will give the king victory.”

⁷ But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not also a prophet of the LORD here? We should ask him the same question.”

⁸ The king of Israel replied to Jehoshaphat, “There is one more man who could consult the LORD for us, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but trouble for me! His name is Micaiah son of Imlah.”

Jehoshaphat replied, “That’s not the way a king should talk! Let’s hear what he has to say.”

⁹ So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, “Quick! Bring Micaiah son of Imlah.”

¹⁰ King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, dressed in their royal robes, were sitting on thrones at the threshing floor near the gate of Samaria. All of Ahab’s prophets were prophesying there in front of them. ¹¹ One of them, Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, made some iron horns and proclaimed, “This is what the LORD says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans to death!”

¹² All the other prophets agreed. “Yes,” they said, “go up to Ramoth-gilead and be victorious, for the LORD will give the king victory!”

¹³ Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah said to him, “Look, all the prophets are promising victory for the king. Be sure that you agree with them and promise success.”

¹⁴ But Micaiah replied, “As surely as the LORD lives, I will say only what the LORD tells me to say.”

¹⁵ When Micaiah arrived before the king, Ahab asked him, “Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead, or should we hold back?”

Micaiah replied sarcastically, “Yes, go up and be victorious, for the LORD will give the king victory!”

¹⁶ But the king replied sharply, “How many times must I demand that you speak only the truth to me when you speak for the LORD?”

¹⁷ Then Micaiah told him, “In a vision I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘Their master has been killed. Send them home in peace.’”

¹⁸ “Didn’t I tell you?” the king of Israel exclaimed to Jehoshaphat. “He never prophesies anything but trouble for me.”

¹⁹ Then Micaiah continued, “Listen to what the LORD says! I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven around him, on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, ‘Who can entice Ahab to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so he can be killed?’

“There were many suggestions, ²¹ and finally a spirit approached the LORD and said, ‘I can do it!’

²² “How will you do this?’ the LORD asked.

“And the spirit replied, ‘I will go out and inspire all of Ahab’s prophets to speak lies.’

“You will succeed,’ said the LORD. ‘Go ahead and do it.’

²³ “So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all your prophets. For the LORD has pronounced your doom.”

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah walked up to Micaiah and slapped him across the face. “Since when did the Spirit of the LORD leave me to speak to you?” he demanded.

²⁵ And Micaiah replied, “You will find out soon enough when you are trying to hide in some secret room!”

²⁶ “Arrest him!” the king of Israel ordered. “Take him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to my son Joash. ²⁷ Give them this order from the king: ‘Put this man in prison, and feed him nothing but bread and water until I return safely from the battle!’”

²⁸ But Micaiah replied, “If you return safely, it will mean that the LORD has not spoken through me!” Then he added to those standing around, “Everyone mark my words!”

(1 Kings 22:1-28, NLT)

Proverbs 3:5-12 (NIV): *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*

⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (Proverbs 3:5-12, NIV)

Jeremiah 14:11-15 (NLT): *Then the LORD said to me, “Do not pray for these people anymore. ¹² When they fast, I will pay no attention. When they present their burnt offerings and grain offerings to me, I will not accept them. Instead, I will devour them with war, famine, and disease.”*

¹³ *Then I said, “O Sovereign LORD, their prophets are telling them, ‘All is well – no war or famine will come. The LORD will surely send you peace.’”*

¹⁴ *Then the LORD said, “These prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or tell them to speak. I did not give them any messages. They prophesy of visions and revelations they have never seen or heard. They speak foolishness made up in their own lying hearts. ¹⁵ Therefore, this is what the LORD says: I will punish these lying prophets, for they have spoken in my name even though I never sent them. They say that no war or famine will come, but they themselves will die by war and famine! (Jeremiah 14:11-15, NLT)*

Jeremiah 23:1-40 (NLT): *“What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people – the shepherds of my sheep – for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for,” says the LORD.*

² *Therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: “Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. ³ But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the LORD, have spoken!*

⁵ *“For the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. ⁶ And this will be his name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’ In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.*

⁷ *“In that day,” says the LORD, “when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ ⁸ Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”*

⁹ *“My heart is broken because of the false prophets, and my bones tremble. I stagger like a drunkard, like someone overcome by wine, because of the holy words the LORD has spoken against them. ¹⁰ For the land is full of adultery, and it lies under a curse. The land itself is in mourning – its wilderness pastures are dried up. For they all do evil and abuse what power they have.*

¹¹ *“Even the priests and prophets are ungodly, wicked men. I have seen their despicable acts right here in my own Temple,” says the LORD.* ² *“Therefore, the paths they take will become slippery. They will be chased through the dark, and there they will fall. For I will bring disaster upon them at the time fixed for their punishment. I, the LORD, have spoken!*

¹³ *“I saw that the prophets of Samaria were terribly evil, for they prophesied in the name of Baal and led my people of Israel into sin.* ¹⁴ *But now I see that the prophets of Jerusalem are even worse! They commit adultery and love dishonesty. They encourage those who are doing evil so that no one turns away from their sins. These prophets are as wicked as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah once were.”*

¹⁵ *Therefore, this is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says concerning the prophets:*

“I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. For it is because of Jerusalem’s prophets that wickedness has filled this land.”

¹⁶ *This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says to his people:*

“Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you, filling you with futile hopes. They are making up everything they say. They do not speak for the LORD!” ¹⁷ *They keep saying to those who despise my word, ‘Don’t worry! The LORD says you will have peace!’ And to those who stubbornly follow their own desires, they say, ‘No harm will come your way!’*

¹⁸ *“Have any of these prophets been in the LORD’s presence to hear what he is really saying? Has even one of them cared enough to listen?”* ¹⁹ *Look! The LORD’s anger bursts out like a storm, a whirlwind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked.* ²⁰ *The anger of the LORD will not diminish until it has finished all he has planned. In the days to come you will understand all this very clearly.*

²¹ *“I have not sent these prophets, yet they run around claiming to speak for me. I have given them no message, yet they go on prophesying.* ²² *If they had stood before me and listened to me, they would have spoken my words, and they would have turned my people from their evil ways and deeds.* ²³ *Am I a God who is only close at hand?”* says the LORD. *“No, I am far away at the same time.* ²⁴ *Can anyone hide from me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?”* says the LORD.

²⁵ *“I have heard these prophets say, ‘Listen to the dream I had from God last night.’ And then they proceed to tell lies in my name.* ²⁶ *How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say.* ²⁷ *By telling these false dreams, they are trying to get my people to forget me, just as their ancestors did by worshiping the idols of Baal.*

²⁸ *“Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between straw and grain!”* ²⁹ *Does not my word burn like fire?”* says the LORD. *“Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes a rock to pieces?”*

³⁰ “Therefore,” says the LORD, “I am against these prophets who steal messages from each other and claim they are from me. ³¹ I am against these smooth-tongued prophets who say, ‘This prophecy is from the LORD!’ ³² I am against these false prophets. Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!

³³ “Suppose one of the people or one of the prophets or priests asks you, ‘What prophecy has the LORD burdened you with now?’ You must reply, ‘You are the burden! The LORD says he will abandon you!’

³⁴ “If any prophet, priest, or anyone else says, ‘I have a prophecy from the LORD,’ I will punish that person along with his entire family. ³⁵ You should keep asking each other, ‘What is the LORD’s answer?’ or ‘What is the LORD saying?’ ³⁶ But stop using this phrase, ‘prophecy from the LORD.’ For people are using it to give authority to their own ideas, turning upside down the words of our God, the living God, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

³⁷ “This is what you should say to the prophets: ‘What is the LORD’s answer?’ or ‘What is the LORD saying?’ ³⁸ But suppose they respond, ‘This is a prophecy from the LORD!’ Then you should say, ‘This is what the LORD says: Because you have used this phrase, “prophecy from the LORD,” even though I warned you not to use it, ³⁹ I will forget you completely. I will expel you from my presence, along with this city that I gave to you and your ancestors. ⁴⁰ And I will make you an object of ridicule, and your name will be infamous throughout the ages.’”

(Jeremiah 23:1-40, NLT)

Jeremiah 28:5-9 (NLT): Jeremiah responded to Hananiah as they stood in front of all the priests and people at the Temple. ⁶ He said, “Amen! May your prophecies come true! I hope the LORD does everything you say. I hope he does bring back from Babylon the treasures of this Temple and all the captives. ⁷ But listen now to the solemn words I speak to you in the presence of all these people. ⁸ The ancient prophets who preceded you and me spoke against many nations, always warning of war, disaster, and disease. ⁹ So a prophet who predicts peace must show he is right. Only when his predictions come true can we know that he is really from the LORD.”

(Jeremiah 28:5-9, NLT – see also Amos 3)

Matthew 7:15-23 (NLT): “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed

many miracles in your name.’²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’” (Matthew 7:15-23, NLT)

Matthew 24:4-14 (NLT): Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you,⁵ for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many.⁶ And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately.⁷ Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world.⁸ But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

⁹ “Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers.¹⁰ And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other.¹¹ And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people.¹² Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold.¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved.¹⁴ And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:4-14, NLT)

Matthew 24:21-28 (NLT): “For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again.²² In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones.

²³ “Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t believe it.²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones.²⁵ See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.

²⁶ “So if someone tells you, ‘Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,’ don’t bother to go and look. Or, ‘Look, he is hiding here,’ don’t believe it!²⁷ For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes.²⁸ Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.”

(Matthew 24:21-28, NLT – see also Mark 13:14-27)

Luke 14:31-35 (NLT): At that time some Pharisees said to him, “Get away from here if you want to live! Herod Antipas wants to kill you!”

³² Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox that I will keep on casting out demons and healing people today and tomorrow; and the third day I will accomplish my purpose.³³ Yes, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must proceed on my way. For it wouldn’t do for a prophet of God to be killed except in Jerusalem!

³⁴ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me.³⁵ And now, look, your house is abandoned. And you will never see me again until you say, ‘Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

(Luke 14:31-35, NLT)

John 14:1-14 (NLT): “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”

⁵ “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”

⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”

⁹ Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹ Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

¹² “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. ¹³ You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴ Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!” (John 14:1-14, NLT)

Acts 2:14-21 (NLT): Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶ No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants – men and women alike – and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below – blood and fire and clouds of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives. ²¹ But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.’” (Acts 2:14-21, NLT – quoting Joel 2:28-30)

Acts 2:29-31 (NLT): “Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn’t referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. ³⁰ But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David’s own descendants would sit on his throne. ³¹ David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah’s

resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.” (Acts 2:29-31, NLT)

Acts 13:1-3 (NLT): *Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul.* ² *One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.”* ³ *So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.* (Acts 13:1-3, NLT)

Acts 21:10-12 (NLT): *Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea.* ¹¹ *He came over, took Paul’s belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, “The Holy Spirit declares, ‘So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.’”* ¹² *When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.* (Acts 21:10-12, NLT)

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (NLT): *All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.* ²⁸ *Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:*

*first are apostles,
second are prophets,
third are teachers,
then those who do miracles,
those who have the gift of healing,
those who can help others,
those who have the gift of leadership,
those who speak in unknown languages.*

²⁹ *Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles?* ³⁰ *Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not!* ³¹ *So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.*

But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all. (1 Corinthians 12:27-31, NLT)

1 Corinthians 13 (NLT): *If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* ² *If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing.* ³ *If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.*

⁴ *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud* ⁵ *or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.* ⁶ *It does not rejoice*

about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

⁸ Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! ⁹ Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! ¹⁰ But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. ¹² Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

¹³ Three things will last forever – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love.

(1 Corinthians 13, NLT)

1 Corinthians 14:1-40 (NLT): *Let love be your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives – especially the ability to prophesy. ² For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. ³ But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. ⁴ A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church.*

⁵ I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.

⁶ Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful. ⁷ Even lifeless instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly, or no one will recognize the melody. ⁸ And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle?

⁹ It's the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don't understand, how will they know what you are saying? You might as well be talking into empty space.

¹⁰ There are many different languages in the world, and every language has meaning. ¹¹ But if I don't understand a language, I will be a foreigner to someone who speaks it, and the one who speaks it will be a foreigner to me. ¹² And the same is true for you. Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.

¹³ So anyone who speaks in tongues should pray also for the ability to interpret what has been said. ¹⁴ For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying.

¹⁵ Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand. ¹⁶ For if you praise God only in the

spirit, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? ¹⁷ You will be giving thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you.

¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. ¹⁹ But in a church meeting I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.

²⁰ Dear brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind. ²¹ It is written in the Scriptures:

"I will speak to my own people through strange languages and through the lips of foreigners. But even then, they will not listen to me," says the LORD. (Isaiah 28:11-12)

²² So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. *Prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers.* ²³ Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy. ²⁴ But if all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. ²⁵ As they listen, their secret thoughts will be exposed, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is truly here among you."

²⁶ Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you.

²⁷ No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. ²⁸ But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

²⁹ Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. ³⁰ But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. ³¹ In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. ³² Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. ³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people ...

³⁹ So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.

(1 Corinthians 14:1-40, NLT)

Galatians 5:16-26 (NLT): So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what

the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another. ([Galatians 5:16-26](#), NLT)

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NLT): Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: *the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.* ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. ([Ephesians 4:11-16](#), NLT)

1 John 2:18-29 (NLT): Dear children, *the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared.* From this we know that the last hour has come. ¹⁹ These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us.

²⁰ But you are not like that, for the Holy One has given you his Spirit, and all of you know the truth. ²¹ So I am writing to you not because you don't know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies. ²² And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. ²³ Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

²⁴ So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. ²⁵ And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.

²⁶ I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. ²⁷ But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true – It is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.

²⁸ And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame.

²⁹ Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children. (1 John 2:18-29, NLT)

1 John 4:1-6 (NLT): Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. ² This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. ³ But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.

⁴ But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. ⁵ Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world's viewpoint, and the world listens to them. ⁶ But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception. (1 John 4:1-6, NLT)

1 John 5:11-15 (NLT): And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

¹³ I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. ¹⁴ And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. ¹⁵ And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for. (1 John 5:11-15, NLT)

E.G. White References

Steps to Christ, page 35: Study God's word prayerfully. That word presents before you, in the law of God and the life of Christ, the great principles of holiness, without which "no man shall see the Lord." **Hebrews 12:14.** It convicts of sin; it plainly reveals the way of salvation. Give heed to it as the voice of God speaking to your soul.

*As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up to despair. It was sinners that Christ came to save. We have not to reconcile God to us, but – O wondrous love! – God in Christ is “reconciling the world unto Himself.” **2 Corinthians 5:19**. He is wooing by His tender love the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaties to the wanderer than does He. All His promises, His warnings, are but the breathing of unutterable love.*

*When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” and that you may be saved by His matchless love. **1 Timothy 1:15**. Jesus asked Simon a question in regard to two debtors. One owed his Lord a small sum, and the other owed him a very large sum; but he forgave them both, and Christ asked Simon which debtor would love his Lord most. Simon answered, “He to whom he forgave most.” **Luke 7:43**. We have been great sinners, but Christ died that we might be forgiven. The merits of His sacrifice are sufficient to present to the Father in our behalf. Those to whom He has forgiven most will love Him most, and will stand nearest to His throne to praise Him for His great love and infinite sacrifice. It is when we most fully comprehend the love of God that we best realize the sinfulness of sin. When we see the length of the chain that was let down for us, when we understand something of the infinite sacrifice that Christ has made in our behalf, the heart is melted with tenderness and contrition. **(Steps to Christ, page 35)***

Steps to Christ, pages 62-63: *The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been – just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents – perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.*

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may

say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” [Galatians 2:20](#). So Jesus said to His disciples, “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” [Matthew 10:20](#). Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works – works of righteousness, obedience.

So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us. ([Steps to Christ, pages 62-63](#))