

Speaking to the soul



Prophecies

**Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good.
1 Thessalonians 5:19-21**

It has been estimated that as many as 20 per cent of the paintings held by Britain's major museums may be forgeries. It is apparently extremely difficult to be certain of the precise

origin of paintings and it takes a great deal of forensic work to gain any degree of certainty. The apostle Paul is greatly concerned about an even more serious kind of fake, and that is when someone claims to be speaking a word of prophecy but is not.

This was clearly a matter of great concern for the early Church. There were undoubtedly many people who enjoyed the influence that they acquired by stating “thus saith the Lord” and were delighted by the ease with which they could deceive people.

Paul was eager to encourage the Church to know how to approach prophecy. He certainly didn't want them to dismiss all prophetic utterances just because there were some irresponsible people who deliberately made stuff up. He wanted people to be eagerly listening for the voice of God, knowing that God had graciously given prophets as a gift to the Church. But Paul didn't want them to be gullible and simply accept everything that anyone claimed to be from God. They needed to test everything.

The same applies to us today. We should welcome prophecies. Sometimes they will speak of things that will happen in the future, but most will declare a word from God about the present. We should listen with great attention but, just like an art expert, we must be alert to the fact that there are fakes around. We should test prophecies by looking at the character of the person who is speaking. We must also ensure that what they are saying is in line with the Bible. God would never say something that contradicts what he has declared in the scriptures. Having tested everything, God calls us to hold on to what is good. Those things will

nourish and strengthen us, and surely we wouldn't want to let them go.

QUESTION

In what ways would you test a word of prophecy?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you that you I speak to us. Help me to be eager to hear your voice. Amen

