Charismatic Gifts in a Home Group

There is diversity in the body of Christ, and some believers and denominations emphasize the expression of charismatic "gifts of the Spirit" in their worship and spiritual practice.



However, there seems to be a "spiritual pandemic" of "YouTube prophets", "supernatural ministry" schools, and a charismatic trend to believe that "everyone can be a prophet".

Our observation is that nothing seems to throw a home group (or church) off course faster than a move to having members "prophecy" to one another, or focus on "spiritual dreams / visions".

Our recommendation is that home groups focus on scripture (which we know is inspired by the Spirit), and the practices that have been a foundation for believers since the time of the early church to now – worship, prayer, communion, fellowship, outreach, and living out our faith in practical ways.

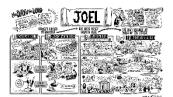
However, we recognize that some home groups (and churches) will have a more charismatic expression, and so we offer the following practical suggestions to help a group remain grounded:

1. Accountability

In speaking of prophecy, scripture clearly states that we are to "*Test everything, hold fast what is good*" (1 Thess 5:21). Most of us have vivid dreams at night (though we may not remember them), which re-present our desires / struggles to us in an intense emotional and visual form.

It is easy for us to interpret an intense dream (or a vision or an internal impression) as "from the Lord" when in fact it is simply a reworking of our own thoughts, feeling and imagination.

Scripture warns us of "prophets" who have "visions of their own minds" (Jer 23:16)



To ensure accountability, home groups should keep a **detailed** record of the "prophetic word" and a follow-up account of whether it was accurate or not. *In scripture,* <u>every single</u> <u>prophetic word from the Lord is 100% accurate</u>.

<u>Any</u> inaccurate word from a person should trigger a transition to the second recommendation.

2. "Own the word' rather than claim it as "from the Lord"

The apostle Paul defines the purpose of prophecy as being to "speak(s) to others for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3).

It is perfectly legitimate to tell another person, "As I was praying for you, I had the following impression (or thought or image) ..." IF this is from the

Lord, it will be upbuilding / encouraging / consoling. Even if it is simply from your personal concern (and imagination), it is still perfectly OK to offer encouragement.

3. Avoid fearful predictions and grandiose illusions

The most common false imaginations / delusions tend to be



(a) fearful or paranoid thoughts about the future (such as conspiracies / persecutory themes), or



(b) grandiose illusions about someone's "amazing" destiny / future ministry (or their gifts / abilities).

Fear and pride are deadly enemies of the soul – and they are not from the Lord.

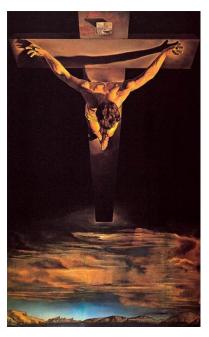
"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7)

False prophecies (or hallucinations / delusions) are often rooted in intense emotional (or neurochemical) stimuli and impulsive reactivity – without reflective analysis or self-control.

Individuals with an "imaginative" or "emotive" neurological profile are particularly vulnerable to this, but it can also draw in a "neurotypical" person who struggles with social-emotional issues.

4. Stay focused on Christ.

Christ described the role of the Spirit as "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14). True prophecy points to – and exalts – Christ, not people.



"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10). Although there are several legitimate interpretations of this verse, one clear interpretation is that the prophecies in scripture point to – and find their fulfillment - in Christ (John 1:45; 5:39).

"God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Heb 1:1,2)

Christ Himself is the true prophet, speaking (and living) accurately the word and will of the LORD – He is the Word of God (John 1:1)

All prophecy finds its fulfillment in pointing to Christ, the Son of the Most High – and prophetic words that (a) glorify the person of Christ, and (b) are consistent with revealed written scripture – will fulfill the Biblically-defined purpose of prophecy.