

A JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

MAJOR AND MINOR PROPHETS



SHEPHERDCHURCH

Lesson 11: Major & Minor Prophets

Welcome

Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- **If you could be the voice of a character in any animated movie, who would it be and why?**
- **If your life was a news headline this week, what would it say?**

These two questions are designed to be fun, so have fun with them. If your Life Group is not sure how to answer, here are some ways to get them going...

For the first question:

- Elsa (*Frozen*) – Because her story of learning to stop hiding and embrace who she truly is speaks to so many people. Plus, belting out "Let It Go" would be an incredible bonus!
- Simba (*The Lion King*) – His journey from guilt and running away to courage and redemption is powerful. I'd love to voice a character who learns to face the past and take his rightful place.
- Dory (*Finding Nemo and Finding Dory*) – She's funny, endlessly optimistic, and reminds everyone that mistakes don't define you. I'd love to bring that hopeful energy to life.
- Woody (*Toy Story*) – Because he's loyal to the end. Voicing a character who balances leadership, friendship, and humility would be both meaningful and fun.
- Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*) – She's intelligent, compassionate, and sees beyond appearances. I'd love to voice someone who values both truth and kindness in a world that often overlooks them.

For the second question, they could answer something like:

- "Local Hero Discovers That Coffee and Prayer Can Solve Almost Anything—At Least Before 9 A.M."
- "After a Marathon Week, Ordinary Human Declares Couch a National Monument."
- "Person Learns Patience While Waiting for God's Timing—and Amazon Prime Delivery."
- "Unexpected Grace: Lessons in Gratitude Found Between Deadlines and Detours."
- "Breaking News: Adult Finally Cleans Out Inbox After Three Years of Avoidance."

Worship

This week's worship moment is all about hearing God's voice in a noisy world. Listen together to a song like "Speak to Me" by Koryn Hawthorne or "Available" by Elevation Worship on YouTube, Spotify, or another platform. As you listen, ask God to soften your heart to hear what He wants to say to you. After the song, pray as a group, inviting the Holy Spirit to speak through His Word and through each person in the group tonight.

Budget about 10 minutes for this section of your Life Group time.

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There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

Word

Please watch the video lesson and try to read as much of [Isaiah 6:1-8; 53:1-12; Ezekiel 2:4-7; Amos 5:21-24; and Zechariah 7:11-12; 9:9-12](#) before your group meets.

The Major and Minor Prophets make up the final 17 books of the Old Testament, stretching from Isaiah to Malachi. Though labeled “major” and “minor,” these terms refer to the length of the writings, not their importance.

- The Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah (including Lamentations), Ezekiel, and Daniel, contain longer and more comprehensive messages.
- The Minor Prophets—Hosea to Malachi, are shorter but equally powerful, often addressing specific moments in Israel's history with sharp clarity and deep theological truth.

These prophetic books were written across a span of approximately 400 years, during some of Israel and Judah's most turbulent times—times of idolatry, injustice, exile, and restoration. The earliest prophet with a written book is likely Obadiah or Joel, both possibly around 850–800 B.C., while Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, likely wrote around 430 B.C.

The prophets ministered before, during, and after the exile of God's people, warning of judgment, calling for repentance, upholding God's justice, and pointing forward to the coming Messiah. Collectively, their writings show us that God is not silent—He speaks, warns, comforts, and promises redemption. Through the prophets, we see God's heart for holiness, hatred of injustice, and unwavering desire to restore His people to Himself. Even today, God still speaks to us through the prophets in the pages of Scripture.

1. What words come to mind when you hear the word, *prophet*? How has the video lesson and/or your reading changed or deepened your understanding of that word?

When people hear the word prophet, words like messenger, truth-teller, or God's spokesperson often come to mind.

- In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word נָבִיא (navi) means “one who is called” or “one who speaks for God.”

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Prophets were not primarily predictors of the future but individuals called to proclaim God's truth in the present. They stood before kings, nations, and ordinary people to confront sin, call for repentance, and remind Israel of God's covenant. Their role was both spiritual and social—they spoke against idolatry and injustice while calling the people to live out righteousness and compassion. Throughout passages like Isaiah 7; Micah 5; and Isaiah 53, the prophets also looked ahead to the coming Messiah, offering glimpses of Jesus hundreds of years before His birth. These prophecies reveal that God's plan for salvation was unfolding long before Christ entered the world.

The video lesson and reading on the Major and Minor Prophets show that prophecy was never meant to be distant or mystical—it was deeply relational. The prophets were God's voice to a wayward people, expressing both His holiness and His mercy. As Pastor Tim Winters explained in his video lesson, they had three key purposes:

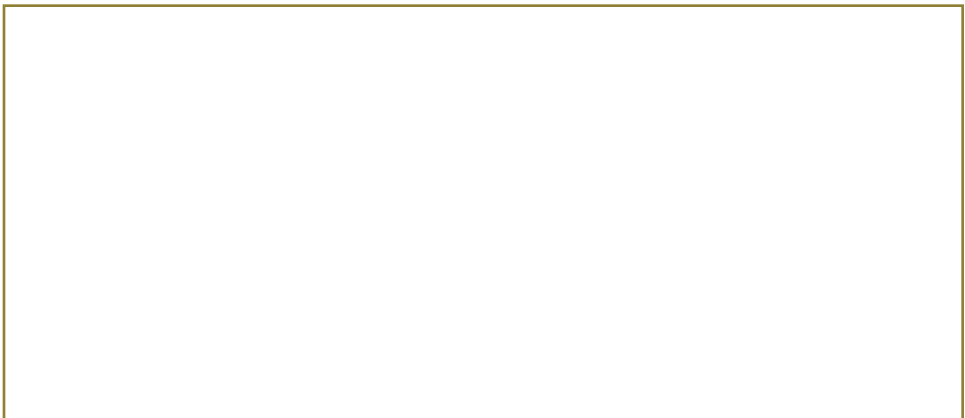
- To call people to repentance
- To uphold justice
- To point forward to the Messiah

Their words still echo today because humanity continues to wrestle with the same patterns of sin, injustice, and spiritual apathy.

Today, Christians might respond to this lesson by recognizing that being "prophetic" doesn't mean predicting the future—it means embodying God's truth and compassion in daily life. As believers, we are invited to be voices of encouragement, conviction, and hope in a culture that often drifts from God. As many biblical scholars have taught, New Testament prophecy differs from Old Testament prophecy. While all prophecy must be Spirit-led, New Testament prophecy must always align with the Old Testament because the Word cannot contradict itself.

To live prophetically today means to listen to God's Word, speak truth in love, and act with integrity and courage—reflecting the same heart of the prophets who once preached to Israel.

2. How is God's holiness described in *Isaiah 6:1-8*? In the box below, draw a quick sketch of the scene in *Isaiah 6:1-8* and share it with your Life Group (it doesn't matter how good or bad your drawing is).



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In Isaiah 6:1-8, the description of God's holiness is overwhelming. It's majestic and completely set apart from anything human. When describing his vision, Isaiah says the Lord is "high and exalted, seated on a throne," and the train of His robe fills the temple—symbolizing glory that cannot be contained. Heavenly beings called seraphim surround Him.

- The word seraphim comes from the Hebrew root שָׂרַף (saraph), which means "to burn." So, the name literally means "burning ones," which likely reflects their fiery devotion and purity in God's presence.

The seraphim cover their faces and feet in reverence, crying out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." The repetition of "holy" three times emphasizes complete and perfect holiness (God's nature in its fullness).

In this moment, Isaiah realizes how unworthy and sinful he is compared to God's purity, saying, "Woe to me! I am ruined!" However, instead of being destroyed, he is cleansed by a burning coal from the altar, representing God's mercy and forgiveness. This encounter captures both the awe of God's holiness and the grace that makes a relationship with Him possible.

If they haven't already done so, give some time for your Life Group to draw in the square. When drawing this scene, your Life Group members will want to highlight the grandeur and awe that Isaiah witnessed. Here are some examples of how this could be accomplished:

- God's throne could be depicted as elevated above everything.
- God's robe might be flowing through the temple to show majesty and authority.
- The seraphim could be drawn with six wings (two covering their faces, two covering their feet, and two for flying) to symbolize reverence and service.
- Smoke might fill the temple, symbolizing God's presence and the mystery surrounding the vision.
- A bright, glowing coal touching Isaiah's lips would visually capture the moment of purification and calling.
- At the center of it all, light—radiant and pure—would represent the holiness of God that changes everything and compels Isaiah to say, "Here am I. Send me."
- As humans, we're unable to see God's face (Exodus 33:20; 1 Timothy 6:16), so perhaps you draw light coming from God with only the faint outline of a person.

3. Micah 6:8 outlines some qualities that God wants reflected in our lives. Which quality stands out the most to you? What do these 3 qualities look like in your daily life?

Micah 6:8 says, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

These three qualities—*justice, mercy, and humility*—capture what God values most in His people. During Micah's time, Israel was full of religious activity but lacking in righteousness. The people brought sacrifices, but their hearts were far from God. So, through Micah, God reminded them that true worship isn't about rituals—it's about living rightly.

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- The Hebrew word for “justice” is **מִשְׁפָּט** (*mishpat*), which means “doing what is right and fair according to God’s standards,” especially toward the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized. Rather than being just about fairness, *mishpat* is justice in action—righting wrongs and restoring what is broken in the world around us.

The quality that often stands out most is to love mercy.

- The Hebrew word for “mercy” is **חֶסֶד** (*chesed*), a rich word that means “steadfast love, kindness, or loyal faithfulness.” It’s the same kind of love God continually shows His people—a love that endures, forgives, and pursues.

To “love *chesed*” means to delight in compassion, not just to perform it when convenient. It calls people to extend grace even when it’s undeserved, reflecting God’s covenant love toward humanity. When someone chooses *chesed*—mercy over judgment—they mirror the heart of God Himself.

In everyday life, these three qualities—acting justly (*mishpat*), loving mercy (*chesed*), and walking humbly with God—form a pattern for living faithfully.

- Acting justly may look like standing up for someone being mistreated or making ethical choices when no one else notices.
- Loving mercy shows up in forgiveness, generosity, and kindness in relationships.
- Walking humbly with God means staying teachable, prayerful, and aware of His presence in every situation.

Micah 6:8 reminds believers that true spirituality isn’t measured by outward performance but by a life that reflects God’s justice, compassion, and humility each day.

4. Why does God reject certain acts of worship in [Amos 5:21-24](#)? How can we guard against God’s rejection of our worship?

In Amos 5:21, God says something shocking to His people: “I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.” Even though Israel was offering sacrifices, singing songs, and holding festivals, God rejected their worship. Their outward acts of devotion didn’t match their inward hearts. They were going through the motions of religion while ignoring justice, truth, and compassion. This message came during a time when Israel was prosperous under King Jeroboam II, yet deeply corrupt. The wealthy oppressed the poor, bribes were common, and people worshiped idols alongside the Lord. Amos was a shepherd and farmer turned prophet. He delivered God’s warning:

Worship without righteousness is empty

God was not impressed by ceremonies. He wanted integrity, mercy, and obedience.

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In verse 24, God declares what He truly desires: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”

- The Hebrew word for “justice” here is **מִשְׁפָּט** (*mishpat*), meaning “moral fairness and restorative action”—aka, doing what is right in your personal relationships and in society.
- The word for “righteousness” is **צְדָקָה** (*tsedaqah*), which refers to “right living according to God’s standards.”

Together, *mishpat* and *tsedaqah* describe the kind of life that flows naturally from a heart transformed by God. Instead of worship being an event, God wanted it to be a lifestyle where justice and righteousness continually flow, like a river that never runs dry.

This passage reminds believers that God is not looking for performances; He’s looking for hearts aligned with His will. People can sing songs, pray, and attend church, but if they mistreat others and/or ignore those in need, their worship rings hollow. To guard against God’s rejection of worship today, Christians should make sure that what happens on Sunday reflects what happens on Monday. True worship includes:

- Honesty
- Compassion
- Humility
- How we treat our coworkers, neighbors, strangers, etc.

Guarding against empty worship means:

- Keeping our hearts soft and responsive to God’s correction
- Confessing sin
- Making things right with others
- Seeking to live with integrity

When believers pursue *mishpat* (justice) and *tsedaqah* (righteousness), their worship becomes a sweet fragrance to God—a genuine reflection of His heart rather than a hollow ritual. God doesn’t just want our songs—He wants our lives to sing of His goodness every day.

5. How did people react to the prophets’ teaching in [Ezekiel 2:4-7](#) and [Zechariah 7:11-12](#)? What are some reactions that our modern society has toward those who preach truth?

In Ezekiel 2:4-7, God sends the prophet Ezekiel to speak to the people of Israel, describing them as “obstinate and stubborn.”

- The Hebrew word for “stubborn” is **מִצְחֵי-פָנִים** (*qeshei-panim*), which literally means “hard of face.” It paints a picture of people who are unyielding, defiant, and unwilling to listen.

God tells Ezekiel to speak His words “whether they listen or fail to listen,” because rebellion had become their way of life. God spoke these words while Israel was in exile in Babylon, a time when many had turned away from God and were suffering the consequences of their disobedience. Even so, God continued to send His prophet—not because the people were receptive, but because His love and justice compelled Him to call them back. Ezekiel’s courage to preach the truth to a resistant, even hostile, audience shows that obedience to God matters more than people’s approval.

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Similarly, Zechariah 7:11–12 describes the people's reaction to God's messages in the years following the exile: "They refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. They made their hearts as hard as flint."

- The Hebrew phrase for "hard as flint" is **רִימָשׁ** (shamir), referring to an extremely hard stone used for cutting or engraving. It symbolizes spiritual hardness—a refusal to be shaped or moved by God's truth.

Despite clear warnings from prophets like Zechariah, the people resisted, preferring comfort and self-interest over repentance. This spiritual deafness wasn't just ignorance; it was deliberate rejection. Their hearts had become calloused from repeatedly saying "no" to God.

In modern society, similar reactions can be seen toward those who speak truth grounded in Scripture. Many respond with indifference, mockery, or even hostility when confronted with moral or spiritual truths that challenge their personal beliefs. Our modern culture often values self-expression and individual freedom over accountability to God's standards. This is why God's messages about sin, repentance, and holiness are dismissed as outdated or judgmental. However, just as in Ezekiel's day, God still calls His people to speak truth in love, even when it's unpopular.

The lesson from both passages is timeless:

*Even though our sin nature causes us to
resist God's discipline, His Word still
stands as the unchanging measure of truth*

Believers today are called to remain faithful messengers like Ezekiel—bold yet compassionate, firm yet gracious. When society covers its ears, the call is not to shout louder, but to live in such a way that truth is seen as much as it is heard—through integrity, humility, and genuine love.

6. Where do you see Jesus in **Isaiah 53**?

*****HINT: He can be found more than once in Isaiah 53.**

Isaiah 53 is one of the clearest Old Testament prophecies pointing to Jesus Christ, even though it was written around 700 years before His birth. Allow your Life Group members to answer this question, and only refer to these notes if it helps. Obviously, your Life Group members' answers don't have to be as detailed as the answers below:

- Isaiah 53:1, "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"
 - The "arm of the Lord" symbolizes God's saving power through Christ. Both John 12:37–38 and Romans 10:16 quote Isaiah 53:1 to explain why many did not believe in Jesus despite His miracles.
- Isaiah 53:2, "He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him."
 - This verse points to Jesus' humble beginnings in Nazareth and His lack of worldly status (John 1:45–46). Philippians 2:6–8 also describes Jesus' humility in taking on human form.

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- Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain."
 - This verse reflects Jesus' rejection by His own people (John 1:11) and the suffering He endured throughout His ministry. Matthew 26:67-68; Mark 14:64-65; and Luke 23:18 describe His rejection and abuse before crucifixion.
- Isaiah 53:4, "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted."
 - Verse 4 points to Jesus' atoning work and how others misunderstood His suffering as divine punishment. Matthew 8:16-17 directly quotes this verse to describe Jesus healing the sick.
- Isaiah 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."
 - Jesus' crucifixion is clearly prophesied in Isaiah 53:5—He was pierced (by nails and a spear) for human sin. Romans 4:25; 1 Peter 2:24; and 1 Corinthians 15:3 all echo this truth of substitutionary atonement.
- Isaiah 53:6, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."
 - This verse shows universal sin and Jesus' role as the sin-bearer. We see this truth taught in John the Baptist's words in John 1:29 when he declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter."
 - Jesus is compared to a silent sacrificial lamb in Isaiah 53:7. Later in the New Testament, Matthew 27:12-14 and Acts 8:32-35 quote this verse directly, showing Jesus' quiet submission before Pilate.
- Isaiah 53:8, "By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished."
 - This verse refers to Jesus' arrest, unfair trial, and death for humanity's sins. Acts 8:33 (Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch) uses this verse to identify Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecy.
- Isaiah 53:9, "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."
 - Jesus' death is foreshadowed in this verse, alongside criminals, but burial in the rich man Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. Matthew 27:57-60 precisely records this fulfillment.
- Isaiah 53:10, "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days."
 - According to verse 10, Jesus' suffering was part of God's redemptive plan, not an accident. Hebrews 10:10-14 explains Jesus' death as the once-for-all offering for sin.

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- Isaiah 53:11, "After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."
 - This verse refers to Jesus' resurrection and His role in justifying believers through His sacrifice on the cross. Both Romans 5:18-19 and Hebrews 9:28 link justification directly to Jesus' atoning work.
- Isaiah 53:12, "Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors."
 - Verse 12 describes both Jesus' death among sinners and His exaltation afterward. Luke 22:37, Mark 15:28, and Philippians 2:9-11 reflect this perfectly—Jesus died among criminals but was later exalted and intercedes for sinners.

7. What do *Psalm 118:25-27*; *Zechariah 9:9-12*; and *John 12:12-16* teach us about how Jesus fulfilled prophecy and the reliability of Old Testament prophecies?

Psalm 118:25-27, Zechariah 9:9-12, and John 12:12-16 together paint a powerful picture of how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy with remarkable precision. In Psalm 118:25-27, the psalmist cries, "Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!"

- In Hebrew, that phrase is **אֲנִי הָעִשָׂה** (hoshi'ah na), and it becomes "Hosanna" in the New Testament.

This psalm was sung during Israel's worship celebrations, and it points to the coming Messiah who would bring salvation. Verse 26 says, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," the exact phrase shouted by the crowds as Jesus entered Jerusalem (John 12:13). The image of branches and festal procession in verse 27 foreshadows Palm Sunday, showing that centuries earlier, God had already woven Jesus' triumphal entry into His redemptive plan.

Zechariah 9:9-12 adds vivid detail to that same prophetic picture. Written after Israel's return from Babylonian exile, this passage promises a humble yet victorious king: "See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey."

- The Hebrew word for "lowly" is **אֲנִי** ('ani), which means "humble, gentle, or afflicted." This contrasts sharply with earthly kings who rode war horses.

Jesus entered Jerusalem exactly this way: a King marked by humility and peace, not power or violence. The prophecy continues with a promise of freedom and restoration for "prisoners of hope," symbolizing the spiritual liberation that Jesus would bring through His death and resurrection.

Finally, John 12:12-16 shows these prophecies coming to life. John points out that the disciples didn't fully understand the significance of what was happening until after Jesus was glorified. The crowd's shouts of "Hosanna!" and their waving of palm branches directly fulfilled Psalm 118 and Zechariah 9, demonstrating that Jesus' actions were not random but divinely orchestrated.

These passages remind us that biblical prophecy is both reliable and specific. The fulfillment of such ancient words (down to the choice of animal that Jesus rode) reveals the trustworthiness of Scripture and the sovereignty of God's plan. Every detail underscores that Jesus truly is the promised Messiah.

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8. The prophets often spoke out against injustice. Where do you see injustice today? How can Christians respond in ways that reflect God's heart?

While this is a very subjective question, it's designed to tie together many of the concepts discussed in this lesson. Try not to skip over it, and allow some time for your Life Group members to respond. This question/prompt will help them process the lesson thus far.

9. In the video lesson, Abe talked about how prophecy in the New Testament encourages, strengthens, and builds up the Church. When have you received a word of encouragement that felt Spirit-led? How did it make a difference in your life?

Like the previous prompt/question, this one is subjective and continues to help your Life Group members get to know each other.

10. Read [1 Thessalonians 5:19-22](#). How can we be open to the Spirit speaking through others, while still discerning what is true and biblical?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, Paul writes, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil." This was written to a young church eager to experience God's power but also vulnerable to confusion or deception.

- The phrase "do not quench the Spirit" uses the Greek verb σβέννυμι (sbennymi), which literally means "to extinguish" or "to put out a fire."

Paul is urging believers not to stifle the Holy Spirit's work—whether through cynicism, fear, or rigid control. God's Spirit often speaks through people, prompting encouragement, conviction, or insight. To "quench" the Spirit would be to suppress those promptings or to dismiss Spirit-led words simply because they make us uncomfortable.

However, Paul balances this openness with a call to discernment: "test them all."

- The Greek word for "test" is δοκιμάζω (dokimazō), meaning "to examine, prove, or evaluate" something for authenticity.

In other words, Christians are not to believe every message that claims to come from God but to evaluate each one against the truth of Scripture and the character of Christ. During the first century, prophetic words were a vital part of the early church's worship and encouragement. Still, Paul wanted believers to guard against false teachings that could distort the gospel. That's why he says, "Hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil." The good should be embraced; the false should be discarded.

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This passage shows that mature faith involves both openness and wisdom. Being open to the Spirit means listening carefully when someone speaks truth, encouragement, or correction that aligns with Scripture.

- *Discernment* means “measuring those words against God’s revealed Word so that emotion or personality doesn’t override truth.”

When believers practice dokimazō—careful spiritual testing—they remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit without being misled. The goal isn’t to silence prophetic voices but to cultivate hearts that are both receptive and discerning, allowing the fire of the Spirit to burn brightly while staying rooted in God’s unchanging truth.

Witness

The prophets weren’t just messengers—they were witnesses to God’s character. This week, ask God to use your voice to encourage, challenge, or uplift someone around you. Practice being a “prophetic voice” by sending a personal, Spirit-led message of encouragement to someone outside your Life Group whom God places on your heart.

Give about 5-10 minutes for your Life Group to discuss the WITNESS section. Ask your Life Group members to report back next week and share about the note they sent.