

ICEBREAKER

Rob started the sermon by sharing Oxford's 2025 Word of the Year finalists: rage bait (online content designed to elicit anger), aura farming (doing something to look cool without trying too hard), and biohack (optimizing physical/mental performance). The winner? Rage bait.

Which of these three words best describes something you've encountered online or in culture recently?

IDEA 1

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Paul told the Corinthian church to "pursue love" and "desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy." He emphasizes that prophecy strengthens, encourages, and comforts the entire church.

Rob explained prophecy simply as: revelation and encouragement that reveal the heart of God. **How does this definition differ from what you previously thought prophecy was? What misconceptions about prophecy have you encountered?**

Paul said prophecy is rooted in love (v. 1) and is primarily pastoral (v. 3), with the purpose of strengthening, encouraging, and comforting others. **Why do you think prophecy has sometimes been twisted into a tool for manipulation, criticism, or judgment instead? How does keeping love as the foundation protect against misuse?**

Rob shared that prophecy is more about heart, identity and character than it is about circumstantial decisions, dates and judgment. **How does this pastoral focus change the way you might approach giving or receiving a prophetic word? Can you think of a time when someone spoke an encouraging word over you that felt like it revealed God's heart?**

Prophecy often feels like random thoughts or impressions that we tend to justify away or hesitate to share. **What holds you back from sharing Spirit-inspired encouragement with others? Is it fear of being wrong? Fear of looking "too spiritual"? Something else?**

IDEA 2

Paul emphasized that prophecy should be communal, orderly, and evaluated by others. He also highlighted its missional dimension—when unbelievers witness prophecy in action, they may declare, "God is truly here among you."

In the Old Testament, prophets were often soloists with high authority, but after Pentecost, both the giver and receiver of prophecy now possess authority and are called to weigh what's been heard in community. **How does this communal discernment provide safety and accountability? Have you experienced this kind of evaluation in your own community?**

Paul instructed: "Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said" (14:29). **What does healthy evaluation of prophecy look like in practice? What could it look like for us to create space for this kind of discernment without quenching the Spirit or creating fear?**

Rob noted that our culture is shifting from asking "Is it true?" to asking "Does it have power and transcendence?" People are turning to tarot cards, astrology, and "haunted" experiences seeking the supernatural. **How does the gift of prophecy—when practiced in love and community—offer a compelling witness to God's presence? How might prophecy be missional in your context?**

Rob reminded us that what we hear and share might not always be constructive, but it won't be destructive. This reflects a posture of humility in learning to prophesy. **How does this perspective free you to step out and practice this gift without fear of getting it "perfectly right"? What's the difference between being humble and being paralyzed by fear?**

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

Rob had us practice Prophecy in the service. Let's take some time together as a group to give this practice a little more time and space.

Begin by creating space to listen.

Leader: "Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Holy Spirit, we invite You to speak. Bring to each of our minds the face or name of someone You want to encourage today. Don't overthink it—just notice who comes to mind."

Pause for 30 seconds.

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

Invite everyone to open a note on their phone, start an email to themselves, or grab paper and pen.

Leader: "Now write this prompt at the top: '[Name], you came to mind today and I sensed God might have a word for you. I don't know if this will connect, but I felt prompted to share it with you."

Play soft instrumental music or just give silent space for listening prayer.

Leader: "Now ask the Holy Spirit: 'What word of encouragement, comfort, or strength do You have for this person?' Maybe a verse comes to mind. Maybe a lyric from a song. Maybe an image or a phrase. Write down whatever comes—even if it feels small or unclear. If you get an image but don't know what it means, that's okay—just write it down and share it humbly."

Give 3-4 minutes of silence for writing.

Lead the group through the ABC evaluation.

Leader: "Now run what you wrote through the ABC test:

- A - Affirming: Does it strengthen, encourage, or comfort?
- B - Biblical: Does it align with Scripture and God's character?
- C - Christlike: Can you imagine Jesus saying this?

If it passes the test, hold onto it. Pray about whether and how to share it with the person who came to mind."

To end your time, split into pairs or groups of three. Share with your partner: Who came to mind for you? What did you sense God saying? Then pray for each other—that God would give you courage and wisdom to share these words humbly and in love.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Here are two ideas that you could put into practice this week:

1. This week, prayerfully consider sending or sharing the word you wrote during the service.

Remember: speak with humility, never with "Thus saith the Lord!" You are a human vessel capable of error, but also capable of being used by God to encourage others. If you're nervous, run it by a trusted friend or mentor first for discernment.

2. Pay attention to the different voices competing for your attention this week (social media, news, internal anxieties, etc.). Practice discerning which voice is God's by asking: "Does this strengthen, encourage, or comfort? Does it sound like Jesus?"