



FUTURE TELLING • Prophecies, Predictions, and Psychics

What Do I Need to Know?

As the leader, you join us in trying to rightly handle a very delicate issue. Through Psychic Hotlines, Card Readings, and Horoscopes, our culture has been consumed with the idea that someone might possess knowledge of the future. Though we are quite skeptical, and even suspect demonic involvement, if certain people did have such knowledge, outside of the biblical prophets, then it in fact forms a strong argument for the existence of a soul. Flesh and blood cannot see future events. The tricky thing is to make use of people's interest in the subject as a vehicle to talk about eternal things, as well as biblical prophecy, without encouraging people to dabble in practices that God has forbidden. This is the balance we try to walk in the study, and you, as the leader, must do so as well. Good luck.

Michel Nostradamus was a 16th century French physician and astrologer. The study begins with the predictions of Nostradamus because his predictions continue to hold a fascination for people. We want people to engage and enjoy figuring out his prophecies. Without ever stating it, we also hope people will see how vague they are, and that they could apply to just about anything. Then we move to some creepier examples to arouse discussion. The posture you want to take is one who is open but cautious. If these stories are true, and sometimes people are able to tap into the future, all this does is prove we have a soul: an aspect of ourselves not bound to physical time/space. If they're not true, we know God does see the future, and therefore the prophecy found in the Bible is completely trustworthy. Either trail should lead to God.

When evaluating claims of future knowledge there are four possibilities to consider. One, God could be giving an individual knowledge of future events. There is even an instance of God giving an unbeliever the limited ability to make accurate prophetic statements. You can read about this in Genesis 22-24. Two, there is the possibility that someone is receiving supernatural knowledge from demonic sources. See Acts 16:16-18. Third, is the belief that the human soul might have some, extremely limited, capacity to see outlines of future events. Last, and most commonly, is the likelihood of fraud. This would describe nearly every "commercial" fortune teller with a "900" number.

None of these beliefs is contrary to a Christian world-view. What is contrary to a Christian viewpoint is seeking, or listening to, future knowledge from these ungodly sources. God has placed such involvement squarely out of bounds. All that to say, you're safe in allowing people to discuss these ideas without feeling a need to close down the conversation.

What's the Big Idea?

In this study, you want to tap into the cultural interest in future telling, and use it as a vehicle to point to the existence of a soul and God, as well as to provide evidence for Jesus as the Messiah.



The study then introduces the idea of *deja vu*. As stated in the study, psychologists feel this experience is generated when a perception (mental transmission) detours to our memory before being cognitively processed. This gives the illusion that you've had the thought before. This may be right. Some believe that we have seen the experience previously, in a dream, and therefore have some capacity to see the future, if only in vague shadows. This may be true. Because many feel this way, we are simply raising the issue and allowing them to discuss their view.

In dealing with the capacity to foresee the future, it's important for people to realize some of the implications of their belief, namely that it suggests the existence of a soul. You want to help them to "connect-the-dots."

The next part of the study is an attempt to arouse conversation, but at the same time provide some warnings. That's done in two ways. The first is to expose the trickery used by today's psychics. The second is to bring people to the Bible and show them that true prophets always lead people to God, and what they say always comes true. No psychic is always right, and so this is a gentle way to call into question the credibility and truthfulness of these psychics.

Now, we've gone through all this to get to somewhere that we wanted to go – the truth about Jesus. What better way to get into a discussion on biblical prophecy from the path we've just been on? Our hope is, that given the context of the discussion, the students will see the power and accuracy of these prophecies in a new way, and be moved by the evidence to see Jesus as the Messiah.

Last, we want to connect people's anxieties about the future to their proper resting place: God. You are going to show them how to pray, and how to present these things to God. We're going to trust that wherever they are spiritually, God will meet them right where they are, and lead them to Him.

What if There's a Problem?

If your group contains both Christians and non-Christians, you will probably have some sharp contrast of opinions. Try to set the ground rules at the beginning of the study – that everyone is entitled to their thoughts and opinions and that you are pursuing an open dialogue on the issue, not trying to simply teach.

What Are the Answers?

1. Have the group share. The answers are: the bombing at the Olympic Games, the death of Mother Teresa, the death of Princess Diana, and the attack on the World Trade Center.
2. Allow the group to share. No wrong answers.
3. Either from God, an angel, or an evil spirit. It is also possible that our souls may have a limited capacity to see future events. No one knows the exact capabilities of our spiritual dimension.
4. Go around the group and see if anyone has a story to share.
5. The question explains the current theory about *deja vu*. Simply allow people to share their viewpoint.
6. Have the members share what they wrote and why they think this to be so. It would be good to point out that souls do not evolve. Immaterial would not evolve from the material. If we have a soul, it's pretty solid evidence for God.
7. Allow the group to share any stories they've heard. Then have them try their hand at the example of subliminal messaging. Be aware of time, so the Study doesn't go too long.
8. The test of a true prophet is if everything they say comes true. In the Daniel passage it's important to note that the magicians wanted to hear the dream first so they could just make up a meaning.
9. A couple thoughts might be: that popular psychics do not have God's endorsement, because they are not always accurate, and they can be fooling people into believing that they see the future. They also tend to lead people away from God and not to Him.
10. Let the group share their thoughts.
11. Allow for group sharing. The first prophecy tells that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. The second predicts His mother will be a virgin, which suggests He is divine. The third predicts that He will be God incarnate. And the fourth prophecy describes His crucifixion.
12. Go around the group and have each person share.

What's Our Response?

The main idea we want the group to leave with is the accuracy of the prophecy found in the Bible, as well as its clear testimony to Jesus being the Messiah. Because the Study centers around our desire to know the future, we encourage you to follow the study in having people make an attempt at praying, specifically about the things that they are anxious about. They will do this silently, on their own. For the sake of non-Christians, you also want to pray that God would in some way make Himself known to each member of the group during the week. Additionally, we have suggested they read through the gospel of Matthew and look for other mentions of fulfilled prophecy.