



The Gifts of the Spirit

Lesson Five

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom;
to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
to another discerning of spirits; 1Co 12:8.....10

THE GIFT OF THE WORD OF WISDOM, WORD OF KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

A WORD OF WISDOM

Throughout scripture the words **wisdom**, **knowledge** and **understanding** are often used in one verse and sometimes even interchangeable. Scripture often uses them in a general or humanly way. However, all three have a distinct meaning of their own, especially **knowledge** and **wisdom**, when it comes to the Gifts of the Spirit. Notice these are not the *gift of knowledge* or the *gift of wisdom* but rather “the gift of receiving a **word of knowledge** or the gift of receiving a **word of wisdom**.” In the original, the article (the) does not appear. As will be discussed later, a **word of knowledge** is specific information revealed by God to a person for a specific situation. A **word of wisdom** is a divine revelation of how to apply spiritual *revelation* to certain situations. As with knowledge there is general wisdom and there is divine wisdom.

1. Natural wisdom. This is a wisdom that flows from one’s inherited intellectual capacity which, coupled with their life’s experiences, enables them to capably analyze various problems. This is not “worldly” in that it does not oppose God. It is rather the fruit of the intellectual reasoning process that doctors, lawyers, successful business persons, technicians, and others use to provide the best solution to certain situations.

2. Worldly wisdom. This is wisdom God has declared war against in **I Cor 1:19-21**. This wisdom, of the natural man, is in direct opposition to God's wisdom. It causes men to conclude that God did not create the universe. It proclaims there are many ways to God. It is this worldly wisdom that keeps man from placing his trust in God. **James 3:15** describes it as "...*earthly, natural, and demonic.*"

3. General "spiritual" wisdom. This wisdom is available to every believer who asks God for His wisdom in a given area. This is taken from **MEMORY VERSE #18**. Pastors constantly ask for this wisdom in preparing to feed the flock. We ask for this wisdom in seeking a marriage partner. Parents ask for this wisdom in rearing their children. The Christian business persons seek this wisdom on their jobs. In fact every Christian at some time or other has situations come in their lives where they seek for Godly wisdom.

4. A Word of Wisdom. This is the *logos* (word) of wisdom. It applies God's direct Word to a particular situation. It is a directive telling you what God would have you do. It never contradicts God's will or His Word.

The person who has this **gift of receiving spiritual revelation** will consistently make wise decisions and provide godly insights for decisions, judgments and circumstantial problems. The results will be pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering and without hypocrisy. However, this does not mean everyone will agree with you.

There is a spiritual fad going around. You see the letters on pens, head bands, key chains, leather straps, tee shirts and bumper stickers. **WWJD? What would Jesus do?** Although the principle of this growing phenomenon is wonderful, some have carried it into fanaticism. I know a lady who proudly flaunted what she called the *Gift of Wisdom*. She started out with good intentions in asking **WWJD** in certain situations, but it became an obsession. She asked **WWJD** about every thing she wore each morning. What color of dress? What shoes? About which pack of cookies Jesus would buy at the grocery store. Or which way He would want her to fix her hair? Up or down? Although God is certainly concerned about every facet of our lives, we do not need a **divine revelation** to tell us what dress to wear each morning. What tie goes best with which suit? God created us with minds to be able to intelligently decide these kinds of things for ourselves.

Sometimes people think they have a word of God's wisdom, when they only have a good imagination, a peculiar feeling or an emotional leading. They often become super spiritual or mystical to a degree that isn't healthy. A fleshly pride often accompanies this attitude.

A WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

A word of knowledge is the supernatural *revelation* by the Holy Spirit of certain facts in the mind of God. Knowing the meaning of the word *revelation* is important. It means *an uncovering; the veil is lifted; the mind is supernaturally enlightened; things become seen, or manifest.*

A Word of Knowledge...

- ✓ ...is not to be confused with natural ability, natural learning, or natural enlightenment. There are many who have the natural ability to search and remember facts which enable them to talk intelligently on any subject.
- ✓ ...is not to be confused with one's IQ. It is not knowledge that may be acquired either by study, consecration or experience.
- ✓ ...is not to be confused with those who have profound insights of the knowledge of scripture and theology, who have a special gift of spending hours in searching the Truth and researching theology.
- ✓ ...is not to be confused with a gradual discovery or accumulation of facts about God and what His characteristics are.
- ✓ ...is not to be confused with the personal knowledge of God one experiences in spending hours at His feet or in His Word. The young and inexperienced may receive a miraculous revelation from God such as the boy Samuel.

A Word of Knowledge...

- ✓ ...is given to someone who is rooted in knowing God.
- ✓ ...is a God-given revelation of facts which cannot be known by any natural means.
- ✓ ...is a revelation given to certain members of the body who can accumulate, analyze and clarify the information.
- ✓ ...is a divinely granted flash of revelation concerning things which were hidden from the mind of man.

There are times when an individual or the church body has all the facts and information concerning a certain situation but does not know what to do with that information. In such cases God may release a **word of knowledge** for that individual or church body to again examine the facts, unify in thought and move forward for implementation, correction, clarification, direction, or edification. Again, it is as if the veil is lifted and the situation is made clear.

God may also use a **word of knowledge** by revealing specific information about another individual to be given at that moment, for a specific reason.

I have seen ministers call different ones from the audience they had never seen before and God gave them a **word of knowledge** concerning that person. My dad was in a prayer line and the minister told him to go home and throw away all his medicine. No one except my dad knew he threw away all but one bottle. The next night in the prayer line, the minister said, "I'm not going to pray for you because you saved one bottle. Go home

and throw it away and you will be healed.” This was a **word of knowledge**, and my dad obeyed and was healed.

Another example of a **word of knowledge** is previous to President Kennedy’s trip to Dallas. Billy Graham called the White House and told them God impressed on him something dreadful was going to happen to the President and strongly urged President Kennedy to postpone his trip. The White House thanked the evangelist for his concern, but the trip was not cancelled. This was not ESP nor a psychic phenomena but a **word of knowledge**. Other biblical examples are in the **DBR**.

THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT

1. Natural Discernment

Kenneth O. Gangel writes, “Natural discernment is possible for every man, Christian or not. Sometimes we call it “good judgment” or “horse sense.” It is the ability to make wise decisions by observing and understanding inputs and potential outcomes. Some people seem to have more of this than others, but it is also a skill which can be learned. *1

2. Spiritual Discernment

Gangel continues, “Spiritual discernment comes to a believer as he grows in Christ (Eph 4:14-15). It is inseparably connected with knowledge of the Bible and the process of spiritual maturing carried out in our lives by the Holy Spirit.”

3. The Gift of Discernment

Again Gangel writes, “By gifted discernment I mean to suggest that the Holy Spirit gives to some believers a special gift, enabling them to serve the Church as watchmen, able to identify spiritual untruth by supernatural insight.”

The **gift of discernment** is often referred to as the “**gift on gifts**.” A.T. Robertson says that the **gift of discernment** is given “to tell whether the gifts were really of the Holy Spirit and supernatural...or merely strange though natural, or even diabolical.” The noun form used in 1 Cor 12:10 is *diakrisis*-from *diakrino*, meaning to *judge or evaluate*.

The apostles warned the early church there were false apostles, deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. But God has provided a way to deal with the problem. The apostles did not always call for the “**gift of discernment**” but also used other phrases or words that gave a clear indication that the early church was to judge, evaluate, “try or prove the spirits” (**1 Thess 5:21; 1 Jn4:1**). They set up several general guidelines that could apply to any prophecy, teaching or miracles they heard and saw. They knew those who were false teachers if they taught:

- ✓ Jesus was a mere spirit and not a man with a human body
- ✓ Jesus did not die for the sins of the world
- ✓ There was more than one way to get to God

- ✓ Jesus did not bodily raise from the dead
- ✓ and to compare what was taught against what the apostles had already taught them. If there was a difference, they were false.

Today we have a tremendous advantage over the early believers for we have the completed Scriptures. We aren't limited to general guidelines. God has given some believers a special gift known as the **gift of discerning spirits**:" ...and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**" (**1 Cor 12:10**) which is a supernatural revelation of the things which cannot be seen with the natural eye, good and evil. The writer of Hebrews stated that any Christian can develop discernment if they know and use the Scriptures in their life (**Heb 5:12-14**), but if they do not study the Word of God, they will be a prime prospect for the cultist. The New Testament gives us the basic ingredients to discern between truth and error. The Holy Spirit (**1Jn 2:26-28**) and the Word of God (**Heb 5:14**) become mighty weapons in the hands of a believing Christian.

So, if you want greater discernment:

- ✓ Study the Bible.
- ✓ Place yourself under competent Christian teachers.
- ✓ Compare Scripture with Scripture.
- ✓ Follow the pattern of the Bereans in **Acts 17:11**.
- ✓ Have a humble spirit

*1. Gangel, Kenneth O., *You and Your Spiritual Gifts* (Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1975), p.23.

DAILY BIBLE READING

(Part Two)

R-read scripture U-underline scripture
Yellow-God Red-Jesus Purple-Holy Spirit
Blue-praise Green-myself Black-Satan
Brown-Sin, temptation, sinners
W-write in your journal () is cross references
Scriptures are King James Version

Day

(Biblical examples of a word of wisdom)

1. **MEMORY VERSE #18 – James 1:5**
2. R the conversation between the Lord and Solomon in **2 Chron 1:1-12**. Can you make this your prayer for your life?
3. R the account recorded in **I Kings 3:16-28**. From **v:28** what way was the spirit of wisdom used by Solomon? Have you ever had to use this aspect of wisdom?
4. Paul needed wisdom in making the right decision about what difficult situation in **Acts 25:9-11**?
5. To whom and for what reason did God give the spirit of wisdom in **Ex 31:1-6**? In what way could you make this your prayer?
6. How and to who was God's wisdom revealed in **Matt 2:12-14**? Have you ever received God's wisdom in this way?
7. How did Jesus display God's wisdom in **Matt 22:15-22**? God's wisdom confounds the world.
8. **MEMORY VERSE #19 – Psalm 90:12**
9. What was Paul's prayer for the Colossians in **Col 1:9**? Who could you pray this prayer for today?
10. What are all believers commanded to do in **1 Pet 3:15-17**?
11. R **Gen 41:25-44** for how Joseph, through God's wisdom, was made second in command to Pharaoh. U **vs 38,39**. W in your journal a prayer that asks God to make you wise on your job, that those in authority will see a special wisdom in you.
12. In **Acts 9:10-18** what word did Ananias receive from God? Did he obey? What was the result? Has God ever strongly spoken to you to go to someone and share encouragement, send a card or perhaps ask you to give someone some money and you obeyed? Then the person tells you how you are an answer to their prayer? May we all listen more closely to God so we can be that answer to someone's prayer.
13. What was Daniel giving thanks for in **Dan 2:23**?
14. What did Jesus promise his disciples in **Matt 10:16-20**? Can we stand upon that promise today?

(Biblical examples of a word of knowledge)

- 15 **MEMORY VERSE #20 – Proverbs 1:7**

16. How did Nathan know about David's sin in **2 Sam 12:1-14**? Was it through the palace grapevine?
17. **R** the account of Naaman the leper in **2 Kings 5:1-27**. Take note of the revelation Elisha had concerning Gehazi in **vs 25-27**.
18. What words of knowledge did God give Elisha when the king of Syria was at war with Israel in **2 Kings 6:8-14**? **W** what you think **v:12** is saying?

(A word of knowledge)

19. How does Paul address intellectualism in **I Cor 8:1-3**?
20. If we have the gift of understanding the deepest mysteries of God and lack love, what do we have according to **I Cor 13:2**?
21. How does Paul identify a level of understanding which is beyond the natural man in **1 Cor 2:6-16**?
22. **R** Paul's prayer in **Phil 1:9**. Make this your prayer today.
23. What word of knowledge came to Peter in **Acts 5:1-11**? Do we need more Christians within the body to be able to detect sin within the church? What would be the positive effects of this gift? How could this gift be misused?
24. List the anointing of the Spirit upon the Messiah from **Isaiah 11:2, 3**. Can we have this same anointing according to **John 14:12**?

(Discerning the spirits)

25. **MEMORY VERSE #21 - I John 4:1**
26. **R Acts 17:10-12**. What were the Bereans noted for doing with scripture? How can you incorporate this into your life?
27. In **1 Tim 4:1-3** what warning does Paul give Timothy concerning false teachings? In **vs 4-11** what was Timothy admonished to do? What four things does Jesus say that false prophets are able to do in **Mk 13:22**?
28. List 14 things Christians are admonished to do in **1 Thess 5:14-22**. Note **v:21**.
29. In **I Jn 3:7-11** how does John tell the Christians they can discern who is true? **R** the last part of **v:10**. How is this tied into **Mk 11:25-26**? Is it possible we deceive ourselves in thinking we are righteous when we are not, if we have ought against someone?
30. **R** Paul's heart wrenching farewell address to the elders of Ephesus in **Acts 20:17-38**. How do you think he felt in **vs:29,30**? How do you feel when you hear someone has been deceived by the enemy? Do you say, "I knew it was going to happen!" or is your heart grieved? What did he admonish his beloved friends to do in **v:31**?
31. Let's close this month with a praise concerning God's wisdom by reading **Ps 136**. Note **v:5**.

