

Discipleship Groups — Level 4

WEEK 2

The Words of Knowledge and Wisdom

Welcome to week two of this round of discipleship groups, where we are studying the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Last week I introduced the topic of the gifts of the Spirit and how we can begin to function in them through the empowerment of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This week, we are going to look at the first two gifts on the list of nine in First Corinthians 12:8-10, which says,

“...for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”

Today, we are going to look at the gifts of the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom.

For years I viewed the Word of Knowledge as the supernatural ability to know things that, without the help of the Holy Spirit, we could not otherwise know. This is true, and there certainly is biblical evidence for it. For example: Jesus with the woman at the well, in John chapter four, had a “word of knowledge” where He told her her—her life’s story. He had certainly never met this woman before, so how could He have known this without God revealing it to Him? We also see this “word of knowledge” functioning in the book of Acts when a man named Ananias came to the Apostle Peter lying about the proceeds of a property he had sold. The Holy Spirit gave supernatural knowledge to Peter in that moment about the lie that was being told.

There are other examples of this supernatural knowledge in the Bible, and this kind of divine revelation certainly continues to this day, and is available to us in the circumstances in which it is necessary. However, there needs to be a correction in our understanding of what we perceive as “supernatural.”

Many times, we see these nine gifts of the Holy Spirit as supernatural, and they are, but what we really mean by this is “spectacular.” We want to see a spectacularly miraculous display of God’s unmatched power, and anything less is simply “ordinary,” and that somehow, if we don’t see a miracle, or some outward demonstration of showy power, anything less than the opening of the Red Sea is somehow viewed as something less than the Holy Spirit moving.

This is not the definition of supernatural or miraculous.

However, just speaking the knowledge and wisdom of God is nothing less than supernatural.

The Bible shows God as the sole possessor of all knowledge and the founder of all wisdom. Proverbs 3:19 says, “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens.” In other words, in wisdom, God didn’t just make the earth, but He made the way we should live in it. Proverbs continues to say of Wisdom in chapter eight:

“I am Wisdom—Common Sense is my closest friend; I possess knowledge and sound judgment... From the beginning, I was with the Lord. I was there before he began to create the earth. At the very first, the Lord gave life to me. When I was born, there were no oceans or springs of water. My birth was before mountains were formed or hills were put in place... I was right beside the Lord, helping him plan and build. I made him happy each day, and I was happy at his side. I was pleased with his world and pleased with its people. Pay attention, my children! Follow my advice, and you will be happy. Listen carefully to my instructions, and you will be wise.” (Proverbs 8:12, 22-25, 30-33)

Amos 3:7 shows the God who reveals knowledge, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the **prophets**.”

In the book of Daniel, we see God as the possessor of all knowledge, the mover of world history, and the revealer of secrets and mysteries.

The book of Job reveals God’s wisdom and knowledge as far beyond human capability, and more powerful than anything people can fully grasp. We must approach God with much humility in what we perceive to be our great knowledge and wisdom. As the Lord says in Isaiah 55:9, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

It is by God’s Word that His wisdom and knowledge are revealed to humanity. As a matter of fact, Jesus Himself is the Word of God, and we are given the mind of Christ AND the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 2:10 says that the Holy Spirit “searches the deep things of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:23 - 25 says, “we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

How, then, is speaking God’s knowledge and wisdom not supernatural? It all comes from Him, and we likewise enter into His knowledge and wisdom when we seek Him and His ways. When the knowledge of God, the truth of God, and the wisdom of God comes through our lips, we are speaking what is more than merely human—it is “supernatural.”

The supernatural power that comes from the Word of God, is that it causes faith. Romans 10:17 says that Faith comes by HEARING, and hearing comes by the WORD

OF GOD. There is divine grace upon the lips of those who speak the word of God with knowledge and wisdom.

Wisdom was born of God. The Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God. The Holy Spirit, then, dwells within us and empowers us to know God, hear God's voice, and understand God's Word. As we seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we do well to remember the book of Proverbs that constantly admonishes us "get wisdom, knowledge, and understanding." Even as when Jesus was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, the Bible says that "the heavens were opened." This does not mean that the clouds were parted and a shaft of light came down on Jesus, it means that the greater revelation of God was opened to Jesus. Likewise, seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit opens up to us another level of God's revelation that is not otherwise available.

Wisdom and knowledge are separate but overlapping gifts. There is a distinction, but not much. Knowledge is growth in understanding, and wisdom is the reasonable application of the knowledge gained. To put it simply, knowledge is the raw material that wisdom works with. The more you know, the more wisdom can be applied to your life and situation.

Proverbs 1:7 tells us the beginning point: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

Job 28:27-28 also says, "Then he saw wisdom and evaluated it. He set it in place and examined it thoroughly. And this is what he says to all humanity: 'The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding.'"

Wisdom and knowledge can be grown in and developed. Growing in knowledge does, in part, have to do with exercising the mental faculties that God has given to us. Also, Proverbs 13:20 says that if we walk with wise people, we will also become wise. But there is another dimension of knowledge and wisdom that the power of the Holy Spirit gives to us.

These are combined with "revelation" and set aglow by the Holy Spirit in ways that give insight into God's person, revelation, truth, and Kingdom. Depending on the Lord and experiencing the supernatural by no means calls for us to abandon the intellect that God has given us! But as we study, as we learn from wise people, and as we speak God's truth, there is another dynamic at play that goes beyond human ability.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, "And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths."

KNOWLEDGE does come from study, but the Word of Knowledge is special revelation and understanding and declaration of God's truth. When Jesus asked His disciples who they believed Him to be, Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus then said, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father in Heaven.” Revelation is the unveiling of truth; it is the uncovering of one’s eyes to understand the knowledge of God. This is divine intervention in both the human spirit and intellect.

Paul, in Ephesians 1:17 prays for the Church that they would grow in the knowledge of Jesus and in wisdom with the “spirit of revelation.”

Psalms 25:14 says that the secret friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will give them revelation of His covenant. This knowledge and its subsequent wisdom come to those who seek; they come to those who maintain a close relationship with God and a listening ear.

When I was in seminary, I had one professor who changed my life and understanding of the Bible. After every class, on my way home, I would cry out for the Lord to give me the ability to understand and teach His Word the same way. I desired it and called out to God for it, and He has given me that, and He helps me. I know that the Holy Spirit empowers me to understand beyond my own human capabilities. Every time I preach, I ask God to give me insight, and a special “word” from Him—and He does. Every time I teach and preach, it is a manifestation of the “words of knowledge and wisdom.”

THE WORD OF WISDOM is likewise a gift of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom is the sound and reasonable application of knowledge; it is knowing what to do and how to do it. Proverbs 16:3 says, “commit your ways to the Lord and your thoughts will be established.” Often times God will establish our thoughts and give us insight in ways we didn’t think of before. There are many times we don’t know what to do, but the Holy Spirit gives the gift of the word of wisdom so we will make the right decisions. Many times, as I listen to people in counselling appointments, I ask the Lord to give a word of wisdom, because I do not always know what to do—and even when I do know what to do, it is only because of the knowledge and wisdom gained from God’s Word and the Holy Spirit working through me!

Sometimes there are big decisions to make and the correct one is not clear, but God gives the word of wisdom to make the right choices. Or maybe you need a creative solution to a hard problem—God gives us the wisdom we need. James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”

You might be asking, “So, I can’t have wisdom if I don’t have the empowerment of the Holy Spirit?” No. The Bible does not say that at all. But one of the empowering gifts of the Holy Spirit is a word of wisdom—it is the Holy Spirit alive in you at another dimension. It is amazing how much more wisdom and knowledge is in operation when we experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

God bless you, and we will see you next week!