

20160228 DISCOVER series #8 Word of Wisdom & Knowledge

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit.

There are probably some fairly common thoughts among believers regarding the spiritual gifts, and especially the gifts of word of wisdom and knowledge.

We may not be quite sure what they are. What does it mean to have the word of knowledge or the word of wisdom? We see The gift of tongues and prophecy perhaps more often. But the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom? When was the last time you heard a word of knowledge and a word of wisdom? The reason why we may think they are fairly rare is that they could be occurring quite frequently, but we just do not identify what is happening with a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge.

Paul says at the end of chapter 12:31,—Eagerly desire the greater (better) gifts. Don't jump to too quick of a conclusion.

They come to us through a combination of God's sovereignty (He gives the gifts) and our desire. Chapter 12:6 says —but the same God works all of them in all men. (The gifts are given by the Lord). He gives them to whom He will. So there's a combination of —God selects and I elect. God gives and I desire.

Sometimes, the gift has already been given, but we haven't desired it, therefore, it's not being used. Other times God waits. He sees our desire and says, —If that's your desire, then I'll give you that gift.

Corinthians offers us some guidance about the meanings of these gifts. They're called —messages or utterances. The —word is logos in —word of knowledge or —word of wisdom. That means that these gifts require speech to be active. One doesn't have knowledge just secretly in his head. One doesn't have wisdom secretly in his head. It is wisdom spoken. It is knowledge spoken.

We would make a mistake if we assume that the only time the Holy Spirit speaks is when we are in church. Therefore, these spoken gifts of wisdom and knowledge can occur in a counseling context. They can occur in a small group of Christians. They might occur in the course of a casual conversation, as we are energized by the Spirit. They might occur in a family. They might occur in a prayer time in family, or around the dinner table. They can occur anywhere. They're spoken out.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, are given by the Spirit. That is, the Spirit is their source. We are not told what means the Spirit uses to give us the gifts. And we often quickly jump to the conclusion that God speaks only when we are in a state of ecstasy. And most of us have not been in a state of religious ecstasy.

When the gifts are flowing, people are in being. They're not out of being. We don't have to wait for some ecstatic moment to believe that a spiritual gift can flow.

How do wisdom and knowledge occur within the Corinthian letter?

Paul identifies it this way. — We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (see 1 Corinthians 2:6–8)

The gift of wisdom is nothing less than declaring the wisdom of God and in the wisdom of God He has chosen through the foolishness of preaching to save those who would believe. How did wisdom and knowledge function in the life of our Lord? Obviously, the message of wisdom functioned through Him. Isaiah 11:2 had promised, —The Spirit of wisdom and understanding will rest upon Him. When Jesus was a child, before He turned twelve, in Luke 2:40, it says He was filled with wisdom. After his twelve years of age, we are told Jesus grew in wisdom. At the conclusion of the great Sermon on the Mount, the crowds are amazed at His teaching, at the wisdom that applies practically God’s solutions to human living. Mark 6:2 says, —When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in His own synagogue at Nazareth. Many who heard Him were amazed and said, Where did this man get all these things? What is this wisdom that has been given to Him?’ His own people recognized the wisdom.

John, the Gospel writer, says of him, —No one ever spoke like this man. Jesus had wisdom, the ability to take knowledge and apply it to life. That’s what wisdom is all about. And He uttered wisdom by the Spirit. —The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, He said (Luke 4:18).

His utterance of wisdom also caused Him to be good at handling emergency situations. Jesus also functioned in the gift of knowledge; Colossians 2:3 tells us, —In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. When we speak of the word of knowledge, we’re not speaking of a scientific or technical knowledge.

The word of knowledge has to do with the knowledge of God. Jesus possessed that knowledge.

If this is how the gifts are functioning in Christ’s life, how then do these gifts function in the life of the Early Church?

Wisdom functions in the Early Church as a spiritual gift. We see it in Acts. It functions in regard to the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus Christ, even as we saw it in Paul, in 1 Corinthians, about declaring the wisdom of God. It functions with Stephen, for example, —These men began to argue with Stephen but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the spirit by which he spake (Acts 6:9–10). What made Stephen so powerful as a proclaimer of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It was the Spirit of God, the Spirit of wisdom who rested upon him.

Wisdom in the life of the Early Church also came as a gift of the Spirit in moments of emergency. For example, in Luke 21:15, Jesus promises His disciples that, when they get into a jam, when they’re brought before magistrates and governors, He says to them, —I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. Jesus tells them, —Don’t worry what you’re going to say in that hour, for the Spirit will be with you. He promises, in an emergency, a word of wisdom.

Wisdom can also function in the New Testament in dilemmas. Administrative dilemmas. In Acts 6, in the dispute among widows over the daily distribution of the welfare funds, the apostles have a word of wisdom: —It’s not right that we should give up the preaching of the word for the serving of this administrative function. Therefore choose men full of wisdom (Acts 6:3). They will need the gift of wisdom to handle the disputes that come up. And godly counsel may be an expression of wisdom.

In John 14:26, Jesus promises us that —The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name will teach you all things and will bring all things to your remembrance. A certain bank of information will be given to us as Christians.

Definition of the gift of knowledge: —The ability to go through the Word of God and see what is there and to set forth, in a systematic way, the knowledge of what God wants man to know.

—Word of knowledge can also be, in the life of the Early Church, direct knowledge of information that is available only by means of the Spirit.

How do we put the words of wisdom and knowledge into operation in our experience? It may be that these gifts, as Paul says, will not flow to everyone in the congregation. Looking at the gifts, we recognize that these gifts share a common ground. It's hard to distinguish them. When is a person speaking by utterance of knowledge and when are they speaking by utterance of wisdom? You can't always divide them cleanly. So there's a certain amount of overlap.

So the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are not separate circles out there, not having anything to do with one another. There's a certain amount of overlap among them.

Wisdom, more specifically, relates to God's knowledge, to application and direction.

Knowledge, more specifically, has to do with content and information.

These gifts depend upon taking the Word of God into our life. The gifts, the messages of wisdom and knowledge will never flow freely in your life unless you're into the Word of God. They build upon the Word of God.

These gifts are also always subject to the written Word of God and to the judgment of the Spirit filled community.

These gifts finally excel in building up the body of Christ. The gift of wisdom will help us grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of God in Christ Jesus is. The gifts of knowledge will help us to practically apply knowledge to life, whether it's in a church situation where they are used or a family situation. They can provide effective guidance for us in dilemmas and emergencies and incisive counsel in personal and interpersonal and family problems. The gift of knowledge by the Spirit can help us understand and speak forth God's truth, and give us direct knowledge of information accessible only by the Spirit, and special insight into the meaning of an event.