

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit—part 2

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In continuing our look at the often-debated issue of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life today, we will consider two specific gifts and their uses.

Word of Wisdom

This gift is the impartation of divine wisdom by the immediate intervention of the Holy Spirit. I have experienced this gift many times in pastoral counselling. A good way to define this gift is "God's solution to a seemingly impossible problem."

We see this gift manifested in Acts 6 when a sensitive dispute had arisen between two groups: the Hebraic Jews and the Hellenistic Jews. The Hellenists felt that they were being discriminated against, so they complained to the apostles. The apostles came up with a plan so brilliant that it was obvious that God had intervened and had given them the wisdom to resolve the problem.

In Acts 15, another conflict arose concerning the Gentiles and the Law of Moses. Once again, God gave the apostles wisdom to settle the differences in the church. In fact, verse 31 says that the believers rejoiced and were encouraged. This is the result of divine wisdom!

Just as those in the early church, we also face problems beyond our ability today—in our churches, families, health, jobs, or finances. We also can depend on God to give us wisdom.

One may receive a word of wisdom in many ways: by reading the Scriptures, by God speaking through another Christian, or by the Holy Spirit bringing to mind a specific solution. Quite often, the word of wisdom comes from the pulpit as the pastor teaches the Word. Here's an example: You have a problem without an obvious answer. You pray about it and search the Scriptures, but you still cannot resolve it. Then you go to a meeting where the Scriptures are being taught. As you listen, suddenly the message becomes relevant to your situation until you

realize clearly how the Lord wants you to handle the problem.

I have been on both the giving and the receiving end of this gift. Sometimes the one on the giving end has no idea what is taking place, but the one on the receiving end certainly does! At other times the persons extending this gift may sense the Holy Spirit is moving them as they are speaking. Not only does this happen with pastors from the pulpit, it also happens with individual believers as they fellowship, admonish, and pray for one another.

The Word of Knowledge

This gift is not accumulated knowledge, but rather knowledge previously unknown that is supernaturally and instantly imparted to the believer by the Holy Spirit. Jesus often

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manifested this gift. In John 1, Jesus said of Nathanael, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael responded, "How do You know me?" Jesus said, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you" (47-48). Though Jesus had not actually seen Nathanael, He had knowledge of him. It was information that could not have been known naturally.

Jesus also manifested the word of knowledge when He sent Peter to catch a fish that would have a coin in its mouth to pay the taxes for both of them (Matthew 17:27).

In Old Testament times, Elisha the prophet was able to tell his servant the very things that he had done, although he had no natural knowledge of them (2 Kings 5:1-27). He

was also able to foil the plans of the king of Syria to such an extent that the king was convinced that he had a spy in his midst. A man in the service of the king said that his men were not spies but that Elisha, the prophet in Israel, knew what the king said in his bedroom (2 Kings 6:12).

Believers today can experience this gift. I have received the gift of knowledge on several occasions while teaching the Word of God as the Holy Spirit suddenly illuminated to me the exact meaning of a difficult text.

I also received a word of knowledge concerning a strange illness with one of my children. The moment I looked at him, I knew what was wrong—Lyme disease, of which I had very little personal knowledge—and I phoned the doctor and told him.

Needless to say, the doctor was very skeptical. Nevertheless, he wanted to run some tests. Sure enough, the diagnosis the Lord gave to me was accurate, and it saved my son from what could have become a chronic condition.

My wife Cheryl also has experienced the word of knowledge many times for the benefit of others. While praying at a women's conference, Cheryl suddenly had an image in her mind of a small, black bag in which someone was storing bitterness. After describing what she had seen, a woman approached her in tears, saying, "I am the one you were referring to. My mother died recently, and I have been bitter towards God. I have been keeping her ashes in a small black bag!" God used this word of knowledge to assure the woman that He was aware of her pain. The knowledge of His concern for her set her free.

I encourage you, as Paul did, to desire spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1), because our Lord wants to impart them to us that we might glorify Him and minister to others. 🙌

In the next issue, we will look at the specific gifts of Faith and Healing.