

The Word of Wisdom



Gifts of the Spirit (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be back with you again today sharing with you about the precious and wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit. In my introductory talk yesterday, I explained four main purposes for which God has made these spiritual gifts available to us:

First, to make room for God's sovereignty.

Second, to lift us above the realm of our natural ability.

Third, to confirm our testimony of Christ.

Fourth, to enable all believers to contribute "for the common good."

I also explained that these nine gifts can logically be divided into three groups, each containing three gifts. The first group, the gifts of revelation: the world of wisdom, the word of knowledge, distinguishing, or discerning, of spirits. Second, the gifts of power: faith, miracles, and healing. Third, the vocal gifts, those which operate through human vocal organs: the gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy.

Today I am going to speak about the first of the three gifts of revelation, the word of wisdom. I'll begin by reading the verse in 1 Corinthians 12:8, where Paul mentions this gift.

> "For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit..." (NAS)

We notice that the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are very close together here. Wisdom and knowledge are indeed close together and yet they are very different. And it is very important to see the difference. I would sum it up in this simple statement: wisdom is directive, knowledge is informative. The purpose of wisdom is to give us right direction. This is brought out in a statement by Solomon in Ecclesiastes 10:10, which says:

> "If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then he must put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct." (KJV)

That's the key statement: "wisdom is profitable to direct." The picture is of a man trying to cut down a tree with an ax and the ax is blunt and he is not hitting the tree in the right place and he is just wasting a lot of time and effort. But wisdom says sharpen the ax, then wisdom shows where to cut the tree and the result is success. So the key words that I want you to bear in mind is there, "wisdom is profitable to direct."

Wisdom and knowledge are often interdependent. They frequently go together. For instance, in Proverbs 15:2 it says, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright…" It's one thing to have knowledge, it's another to have the wisdom to use it aright. I'm sure you've met people who have a lot of knowledge but don't know how to use it. Sometimes they even use knowledge to their own destruction. But with wisdom we make the right use knowledge.

Now each of these gifts is a word, a tiny part of God's total wisdom or God's total knowledge. God has all wisdom and all knowledge, but He doesn't burden us with that. He imparts to us supernaturally by the Holy Spirit a "word of wisdom," "a word of knowledge," that particular word that we need in a given situation.

I want to illustrate this to you from an incident in the book of Acts. In Acts 15, there was a council of all the leaders of the church held in Jerusalem to determine a very thorny problem—what requirements were to be made of the Gentile converts to the Christian faith. All the great leaders were there, Paul and his group, John and his group, James and his followers. Also the Jewish Christians who were firmly convinced that Gentile converts had to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. There was a great deal of discussion and no doubt people's tempers were getting frayed and there was a hard spirit there. And then God gave James a word of wisdom. And he said, "Brothers, listen to me." And he quoted a passage from the prophet Amos about the restoration of the tabernacle of David and about Gentiles seeking the Lord, those Gentiles on whom the name of the Lord had been called. And he applied this passage from Amos to their present situation. And this is what he actually said in Acts 15:19–20:

> "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood." (NAS)

There was a very clear simple definition. All that should be required of these Gentile converts is that they abstain from four things: idols, fornication, food strangled and food with blood in it. Now that has had a profound and vital impact on the subsequent history of the church.

I want you to see the results that were achieved through this word of wisdom. First of all, the mind of God was revealed to God's people. They had been groping, fumbling, arguing, discussing. But through this word of wisdom, given through James, they came to a clear understanding of what God required to them at that vital turning point in church history.

Secondly, the word of wisdom produced complete harmony amongst God's people. We read in the following verses the account of how the council ended and it uses the phrase, "it seemed good" three times. Acts 15:22: "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders that the whole church…" This was a unanimous decision of the entire church. Acts 15:25, they wrote a letter to the Gentile believers and they said, "…it seemed good to us, having become of one mind…" Notice, the word of wisdom brought them together in one mind, the mind of God. And then in Acts 15:28 they said again, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…" They knew now that they were no longer groping or fumbling or just arguing on the human level, but they had received the mind of God imparted to them by the Holy Spirit. and that gave them clear direction and complete unity which was essential for the progress of God's work.

I've given you that example of the word of wisdom from what I might call a large scale context—the meeting of the leaders in the entire church in Jerusalem. But the word of wisdom can also operate on a very intimate and personal level as I have learned in my own experience. So I want to give you an example of the word of wisdom granted to my family at a critical moment in the past when our lives were in danger and we just did not know what to do. The Lord came through with a directive word of wisdom.

At that time, which was in 1948, my first wife Lydia and I were living in Jewish Jerusalem with our four youngest adopted daughters, two of whom were Jewish, one was Arab and one was English. Jerusalem had been besieged for some considerable time by Arab armies, was under shell fire, all food supplies were cut off, it was entirely a besieged city. And then the United Nations imposed a brief cease fire. And we just had to find the mind of the Lord as to what God would have us to do during that cease fire interval. So just before the end of this cease fire, we called our four little girls together and said, "Now we are going to pray and ask God to show us what to do." So we knelt down in our living room and I can remember seeing all the window panes that had been blown out by explosions and by rifle fire. It was a very grim and bleak situation. And we began to pray together and after we finished praying, our little Arab daughter, who my wife

had called Kirsten, stood up and she said to my wife very simply, just like she was describing something that she had just eaten for supper—she said, "Mama, while we were praying I saw a road and it was very narrow and there was a barricade across it. But while I was watching an angel came and removed the barricade and after that the road was open and I saw that though it was very narrow at first, it began to get wider and wider." I want to say that Kirsten, though she was only eleven years old, was a very spiritual little girl who had a very close and personal walk with the Lord.

That vision that the Lord gave to Kirsten answered our problem. From that moment onward we knew that it was the will of God for us to leave Jerusalem at that time, although there was no human way to get out of the city. It imparted to us faith and we began to act in faith knowing that God had shown us that He would open the way.

Now, it would take a long, long time for me to describe all that happened in the next 48 hours. Endless frustrations and difficulties and problems and needs, but all the time because of that word of wisdom, I knew that God was going to open the way. And sure enough, He did. And remarkably and dramatically on the last convoy that went out of Jerusalem before the fighting began again, in the last vehicle of the convoy, my wife and I and our four daughters made our way out of Jerusalem. The Lord had done what He had showed us through Kirsten that He would do. He had removed the barricade and opened the door. And very possibly, that saved our lives. Who knows what the alternatives would have been. But I never fail to thank God when I look back and see His faithfulness and see how He made provisions for us through that little Arab girl.

And then I thank God that that little girl was so close to the Lord and so open to the Holy Spirit that God could speak to us through her.

So that's just a personal example of how the word of wisdom worked in our family and actually solved our problem and perhaps saved our lives. So as I close this talk today, I just want to encourage you. Don't imagine that these gifts of the Spirit are something unreal or remote or far off in the distant past, but they're near and they're available if we will just open our hearts to God and walk close to Him.

Now our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll be speaking about the second gift of revelation, the word of knowledge.

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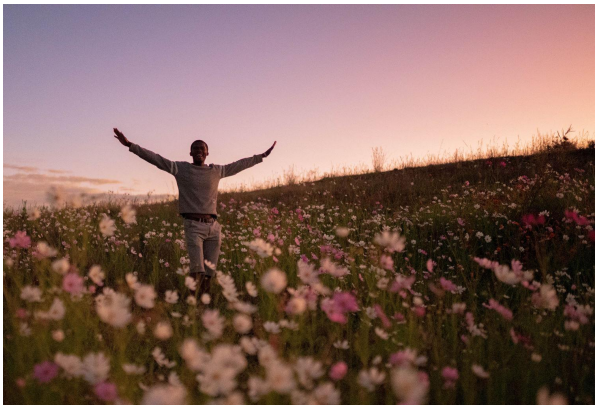

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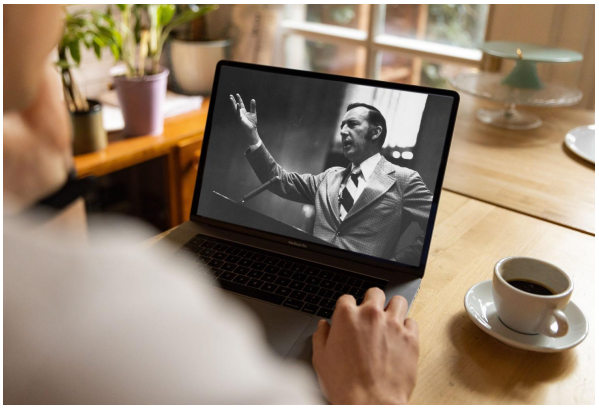

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