

Spiritual Gifts Series

Key verse:
1 Corinthians 12:8

21st May 2006

Session 2: Word of Wisdom and
Word of Knowledge

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1. There are limitations to understanding these gifts:

Principles of: **Hermeneutics** (the art and science of interpreting scripture)

Genre = What sort of book are you reading? I.e. prophetic, a letter or a historical record. Different literature needs differing ways of reading. Bear this in mind in the following.....

Exegesis = Taking out of the scripture what it says (rather than putting into scripture what you think which is 'isogesis') so we ask 'what does it actually say?' What does it mean to the writer and readers of that time?'

Imagine a circle, we move out from the centre - which is the starting text:

- Context of passage
- Context of chapter
- Context of Book
- Context of Author
- Context of N.T.
- Context of O.T.
- Context of other literature around that time
- Context of any other literature at all
- Context of experience

Contextualization = Applying it's meaning into our context today. What then does it mean for us here in 2006?

Wayne Grudem 'it must be understood that these two gifts are mentioned nowhere else in scripture, and no other early Christian literature outside the Bible has been found to use these phrases of any spiritual gift either. This means that the only information we have about these gifts is contained in this verse: we have the words used to describe these two gifts, and we have the context in which the phrases occur. No interpreter anywhere has any more information than this to work with. This warns us that our conclusions will probably be somewhat tentative in any case'

2. There are similarities between these gifts

Word of Wisdom: Greek = '*logos sophias*'. Logos = Message or utterance. Sophia = a divine wisdom

Word of Knowledge: Greek = '*logos gnoseos*'. Logos = Message or utterance. Gnoseos/Gnosis = knowledge

The Spirit: Greek = '*Pneuma*' or '*Pneumatosis*'.

Both refer to gifts that involve both hearing from God and then speaking out what is heard. Both are given and inspired by the spirit, not learnt by human study and intellect.

3. There is both a theological and practical side to these gifts

a. Theological:

Are wisdom and knowledge mentioned elsewhere?

Within 1 Corinthians:

Chapter 2:6-7 speaks of the wisdom of God being his secret plans in history. Which have their climax at Calvary.

Chapter 1:4-8 – speaks of enrichment in knowledge because of grace given in Christ; therefore you don't lack any spiritual gift.

Chapter 2:10-14 speaks of knowledge of what God has given us and of his mind.

Within Paul's letters and the New Testament:

Where Paul and other writers in the N.T. refer to wisdom & knowledge, the emphasis is on God himself in Christ:

Col 2:3 'that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'

2 Peter 3:18 'but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'

Rev 5:12 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and *wisdom* and strength and honour and glory and praise'

Within the Old Testament:

Prov 1:7 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge'

Ps 111:10 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'

So primarily it is theological wisdom that rests on God, his purposes and his grace in Christ.

James Dunn: the gift of knowledge 'would denote some charismatic insight into the things given us by God....that is, some understanding of the relationship of God to the believer(s), some recognition of the charismatic dimension.....to the believers life individually and as a community'

Mark Stibbe: 'Wisdom seems to be connected with the ability to understand God's secret purposes, which Paul describes as a mystery. Knowledge seems to be related to the things which God has freely given us, which Paul relates to grace. If Paul knows of a stark distinction between these two kinds of revelation he is not explicit about it.'

b. Practical

Within Paul's letters and the New Testament:

Where did Paul get that knowledge and wisdom from?

Practical knowledge is demonstrated as Paul explains what the gifts actually are and God's purposes in giving them (i.e. Ch 12:4-6 or 14:2)

Practical wisdom is demonstrated as Paul directs the church is responsible use of them. (i.e. Ch 14:26-33)

Jesus wise response to various people in pressurised situations:

Mark 2:13-17 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick'

Mark 12:13-17 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's'

Matt 13:54 'Where does he get such wisdom from'

John 8:1-11 – Story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. Jesus speaks with divinely given wisdom to the Pharisees and then the woman afterwards

Old Testament: Particularly Proverbs & Solomon.

3. Knowledge and Prophecy

There is clear teaching on what prophecy is, and as we have seen there is hardly any on word of knowledge. Prophecy seems to cover a spectrum of things including what we often understand as words of knowledge or wisdom.

John 4:19 'Sir, I can see that you are a prophet' – the response by the woman at the well after Jesus discloses the fact that she is not living with her husband.

1 Cor 14:24-25 'If an unbeliever of someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you''

Wayne Grudem: *'What many people today call 'word of wisdom' and 'word of knowledge' in charismatic circles, it would seem better simply to refer to as 'prophecy'.*

4. Outworking of these gifts today

Examples from other literature

Gift is linked to teaching and much needed there

Primarily these gifts are for outworking in the church

Expect more than just learned wisdom and knowledge

Evaluation of wisdom and knowledge

-Content and character – focus and promotion of Jesus not an individual

-Form and function – public message not secret, for edifying body

-Belief and behaviour – strengthen belief in Bible and right living

Pray and ask for these gifts – James 1:5-6 speaks of asking for wisdom

Examples for today:

-Needing wisdom at work when asked questions about faith

-Having a verse of scripture and then sharing your insight into it on a Sunday

-Explaining succinctly a particular passage in cell group discussion

-A preacher giving an insightful explanation followed by application, perhaps moving away from notes.

-In your own prayer and Bible Study you receive a depth of knowledge about Christ that deeply moves you;

-you then share this with others.

-In a prayer meeting, you share a word of wisdom about the way forward for the building project.