Revelation Gifts Of The Spirit And Prophets

In 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Paul teaches there are some gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Five of these are a Word of wisdom, a Word of knowledge, the simple gift of prophecy, discerning of spirits and tongues and interpretation. These are all gifts by which the Holy Spirit can speak.

Some Evangelical Christian friends say that the spiritual gifts spoken of in 1 Corinthians Chapters 12 and 14 were done away with at the time the New Testament was completed. But the “perfect” spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13:10 refers not to the completed Bible but either to the total manifestation of the perfection in Christ which we will receive at Jesus’ Second Coming and/or to the perfection that will occur when He creates the New Heavens and Earth. Romans 8:18-25, 1 Peter 5:1, Colossians 3:4, Acts 3:21, 2 Peter 3:13 and 1 John 3:2 speak of this glorious future perfection.

1 Corinthians 13:12 refers to this also when it says we shall see Jesus face to face and shall know Him fully. Because we are still in a state of imperfection (Philippians 3:12-13), we especially need spiritual gifts.

A Word of Wisdom Defined

A Word of wisdom can be defined as a specific supernatural revelation of God’s wisdom, given at a specific time in relation to a specific situation. Such Words will always be for the common good – for the upbuilding and strengthening of God’s local and/or universal church. When God gives a Word of wisdom to someone, He gives them only a tiny fragment of His infinite wisdom.

Marvellous Examples of a Word of Wisdom

2 Kings 6:8-10 records that many times, God gave Words of wisdom to Elisha, the prophet so he could warn the King of Israel to avoid the deadly traps the pagan King of Aram had set for him: “Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, ‘My camp will be in such and such a place.’ And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, ‘Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there.’ Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice.”

1 Samuel 16:1-13 reveals God gave a number of Words of wisdom to the prophet Samuel telling him whom he was not and was to appoint as king of Israel. Verses 1 to 3 record God’s personal supernatural guidance wisdom to Samuel about going to the family of Jesse in Bethlehem. Verses 6 to 12 reveal the Words of wisdom God gave Samuel to speak out about each of Jesse’s eight sons.
Samuel was probably wiser and knew God and His written Word better than every or almost every other person living at the time. But despite this, verses 6 to 7 reveal he would have chosen the wrong person as king except for God’s Word of wisdom.

A Word of Knowledge

The spiritual gift or manifestation of a Word of knowledge can be defined as a specific supernatural revelation of God’s knowledge about natural and/or spiritual things given at a specific time in relation to a specific situation. A Word of knowledge is not obtained by natural means.

The Difference Between a Word of Wisdom and a Word of Knowledge

A Word of wisdom differs from a Word of knowledge in that a Word of wisdom contains God-given supernatural revelation of how to apply some natural or God-given supernatural knowledge to some aspect of daily practical living, whereas a Word of knowledge contains supernatural knowledge but no practical application.

One view is that a Word of wisdom always relates to the future and a Word of knowledge to the past or the present. This is not totally true because God can give us knowledge of the future without any practical application.

Words of Knowledge to Nathan, Elisha, Peter and Others

An illustration from the Bible of a Word of knowledge is found in 2 Samuel 12:1-12. Here we see that after King David had sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba, God sent Nathan the prophet to him. Verse 12 reveals David had sinned in secret. But note God showed all this secret sin to Nathan.

Similar examples of Words of knowledge being used to expose secret sin are found in 2 Kings 5:20-27 when Elisha revealed his servant Gehazi’s deceit and in Acts 5:1-11 when God spoke to Peter about Ananias and Sapphira.

Another example of the operation of a Word of knowledge is seen in Acts 11:27-30 when the New Testament prophet Agabus was given supernatural knowledge from God to warn of a famine. This famine later happened in the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius. God gave a Word of knowledge to the prophet Samuel in relation to Saul’s donkeys (see 1 Samuel 9:20).

A dramatic modern example of a Word of Knowledge was given in the mid-1800’s through the Russian Christian, Efim Klubniken to the Armenians who were living under the rule of the Muslim Turks. This Word instructed the Armenians to leave where they were living to avoid being murdered. The Holy Spirit confirmed this guidance to many Armenian Christians. So they left. Of those who remained, over 1.5 million were killed by the Turks in 1914.

Here is an example of a manifestation of the Word of knowledge occurring in relation to my wife: At one time, my wife had a particular problem which she did not want to share with me or anyone else. I knew by outward observation that something was wrong, but could not work out with my mind what was wrong.

Over many months, I prayed asking the Lord what the problem was. I then started having a deep inward spiritual impression that I should look behind a picture that we had bought
in Seoul, Korea many years before. I kept suppressing this impression, until one day, I decided to have a look.

I had no idea that my wife had written a long message behind it, giving the details of the bondage that she had been caught in as a result of following some Biblically imbalanced Christian books. No human could have known what was behind this innocent looking picture. The Holy Spirit knew.

The gifts of the Spirit can work together. For example, many years ago I hurt my left knee while at soccer training. The injury did not make me limp, but I could feel I had damaged it quite badly.

I then went to a prayer meeting later that night. I asked for others to pray with me for one of my relatives. After praying for a while, a mature brother in Christ used much in healing ministry said to me the Holy Spirit had revealed to him I had hurt my knee. Just to test him, I said, "Which knee?" He answered, "Your left knee." He then prayed for my knee. Immediately all of the pain left. In the following days, I was able to run without the slightest effect.

In the above, a gift of healing worked together with a Word of knowledge.

Given as He Wills

1 Corinthians 12:11 stresses that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts or His manifestations "as He wills".

We cannot operate any of His gifts when we want, but only when He determines. Proof of this is in 2 Kings 4:27. Here we see Elisha, the man of God did not have supernatural knowledge unless God chose to give it to him: "Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, ‘Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me.’"

A Mixture of Divine and Human Elements

When God gives a Word of wisdom, Word of knowledge, a gift of discerning of spirits, a simple gift of prophecy or of tongues and interpretation, the receiver can add their own ideas or pet religious theories to God’s gift. This is why Paul commanded we weigh carefully any supposed revelations from God (see 1 Corinthians 14:29).

We are fools if we gullibly accept every revelation we hear as being from God just because the words “Gospel”, “Jesus” and “Holy Spirit” are attached to them.

No spiritual gift, such as a Word of wisdom or Word of knowledge, can ever take the place of the Scriptures. The Bible is our only infallible guide. Spiritual gifts are only to be accepted if they do not suggest or involve things contrary to verses of Scripture interpreted in context and in agreement with other verses and passages on the same topic. The Bible is a completed book. No revelation or spiritual gift today can add a new verse or passage to the Scriptures.

One view of spiritual gifts suggests they can only be operated in church meetings. But note in Luke 21:12-15, Jesus said Christians would be given Words of wisdom to speak to non-Christian leaders in non-church contexts.
The Gift of Discerning of Spirits

1 Corinthians 12:10 refers to the gift or manifestation of discerning of spirits. This manifestation involves being given Holy Spirit-revelation about spirits. A Word of wisdom and a Word of knowledge involve revelations about places, people and more other things than just spirits. Discerning of spirits is not occult, E.S.P. or mind reading. Nor is it the natural ability to see other people’s faults.

The discerning of spirits is a supernatural manifestation given by the Holy Spirit which reveals whether a miracle, healing, revelation, prophecy, tongue, interpretation, spiritual manifestation or some other miraculous event is directly from God’s Spirit or indirectly through one of His angels, or from a demonic spirit. Acts 16:16-18 records the Holy Spirit revealing to Paul the presence of the demonic spirit who was prophesying through a slave girl’s mouth.

This demon spoke in agreement with the Word of God. Some people may have been fooled by this cunning deception. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul a manifestation of the discerning of spirits which revealed the real source of the girl’s words and miracles.

The discerning of spirits also can reveal what type of spirit is motivating the preaching or conduct of a particular ministry.

The manifestation of the discerning of spirits can involve seeing Jesus Christ in His resurrected body (see Revelation 1:9-17) or God’s back parts like Moses did (see Exodus 33:18-23).

One type of manifestation of the gift of discerning of spirits involves actually seeing different types of spirits – angels, archangels, Satan or demons. The Apostle John had the gift of discerning of spirits operating when he saw angels (see Revelation 4:1-11 and 5:11-14) and demons (see Revelation 16:12).

The Combined Gift of Tongues and Interpretation

Another way God speaks is through the gift of tongues and interpretation. When speaking of praying in tongues here, I am not referring to the private individual use of praying in tongues spoken of in 1 Corinthians 14:2. This verse speaks of a usage of tongues that does not relate to other people, but is just between you and God. This is different from the public use of tongues in a church meeting or for the benefit of other believers spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:10, 12:28-30 and 14:26-28.

The Holy Spirit does not give the public use of tongues to every believer (see 1 Corinthians 12:30), but only gives this when and to whom He wills (see 1 Corinthians 12:11). Also, the public use of tongues must be accompanied by an interpretation (see 1 Corinthians 14:28), must be limited to at maximum three manifestations per church meeting and must be spoken out one by one (see 1 Corinthians 14:27).

The Simple Gift of Prophecy

The simple spiritual gift of prophecy is another means by which the Lord can speak to His people (see 1 Corinthians 12:9 and 14:4). In 1 Corinthians 14:1, Paul says believers should desire spiritual gifts, especially the simple gift of prophecy. Read also 1 Corinthians 14:39. 1 Thessalonians 5:20 commands us, “Do not despise prophecies.”
The simple gift of prophecy can be given by the Holy Spirit to any believer (see 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 12:10-11). This gift is for the “edification and exhortation and comfort” of others (see 1 Corinthians 14:3). This gift can operate separate from or through preaching.

**God Speaking Through New Testament Prophets**

God can give the simple gift of prophecy to all believers. But this simple gift is different from the ascension ministry of a New Testament prophet which is only given to a *limited number of leaders* (see 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 and Ephesians 4:11). This is just as all believers can teach on occasion, but not all are called to the ascension leadership gift of teaching.

The ascension ministry gift of a prophet involves leadership, can involve predicting the future (see Acts 11:27-28 and 21:9-10), lays foundations in relation to true doctrine and associated godly right practical living (see Ephesians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 and Acts 13:1 taken together) and calls the world, the church in general, a local church or individuals to repent and turn from their sins to God. Jesus Christ was the perfect prophet and did all the things listed in the previous sentence.

We must continually test the words of those claiming to be prophets (see 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and 1 Corinthians 14:29). We test the preaching and teaching of prophets by the written Word of God (see 1 Corinthians 14:37-38). But this testing must involve the Word being interpreted in context and in agreement with other verses in the Scriptures on the same relevant topic (see Matthew 4:5-7). This is because many people twist the Word of God (see Jeremiah 8:8 and 2 Peter 3:16).

New Testament prophets living after the time of the Apostles are not called to write extra Books of the Bible. Also, those with “new revelations” which are contrary to the Scriptures are false prophets. This applies even if they are operating as church leaders.

**Bible Study Questions**

1. What is a Word of wisdom? Look for examples in the Bible!
2. What is a Word of knowledge? Look for examples in the Bible!
3. What is the discerning of spirits?
4. Discuss what tongues and interpretation is!
5. What are the differences between manifesting a simple gift of prophecy and being a New Testament prophet?