

THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF WORDS OF WISDOM/KNOWLEDGE

Wisdom is the power to apply knowledge for the right purpose. It means not only knowing something, but being aware of how and when to use that knowledge. The Bible tells us that everyone should seek wisdom, and should ask God for it. The Letter of James (1:5) says: "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you." This wisdom helps us live well and empowers us to help others do the same.

While wisdom is available to all Christians, the Bible also talks about a special spiritual gift called Words of Wisdom. St. Paul puts it this way (1 Cor. 12:8): "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit". This points to something more than a quality that a person possesses, but to a gift God gives for a certain time or occasion. It may come only occasionally, and only in response to a specific need.

St. Stephen shows this kind of wisdom when he is dragged in front of people who accuse him of blasphemy: "But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke." (Acts 6:10). St. Peter shows it when he preaches to people on Pentecost, convincing them that the person they had crucified was actually the Messiah. St. John tells us that people require it to understand the prophecies in the Book of Revelation.

God continues to use this gift in His people, both in ways that seem miraculous and in ways that seem ordinary. The gift is given for the building up of God's church and for the advancement of God's kingdom. It is not a gift limited to those with a reputation for great learning, but simply to those who love God and who want His kingdom to flourish.

People with this gift...

- Often find the right thing to say when challenged about faith and spiritual matters
- Have insights into difficult problems which others miss
- Are sensitive to God's work around them, and often sense clearly where God is leading them
- Understand how Scripture applies to specific situations in life
- Are open to God doing miraculous and out-of-the-ordinary things

"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy."

- James 3:17

Putting your gift into action...

If you are gifted with words of wisdom or knowledge, this may only come occasionally and in specific circumstances. But using it requires preparation and receptivity to God's leading. This includes cultivating virtues like discipline, openness, courage, and humility. You can do this by...

- Fostering a regular practice of openness to God's Spirit, telling God that you are ready to listen when He speaks
- Making a habit of asking God for the wisdom to know when to speak and when to remain silent
- Familiarizing yourself with the Bible and applying its wisdom in your life
- Learning from wise teachers and mature Christians
- Asking God to shape your desires so that your words and actions advance His kingdom and not just your own wants or perspective
- Giving your time and energy to Christian service, working with God's Spirit to love and serve His world