

Spiritual Gifts #2

WORDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Read: 1 Cor. 12:4-11

A fundamental principle

- All spiritual gifts are subject to assessment and evaluation
- By the Church (1 Thess 5:19-21; 1 Cor 14:29)
- By the Word (Ps 119:105)
- No matter how dramatic a manifestation may seem to be, it must be both godly and biblical.
- When we operate gifts without love we are nothing (1 Corinthians 13).

What is a word of knowledge?

- It is not a permanent gift. There is no definite article
- It is spoken. *Logos* = word, message, statement
- It is informative. *Gnosis* = knowledge, insight, enlightenment
- It is knowledge, not guesswork or a hunch
- A word of knowledge is an utterance enabled by the Holy Spirit that supernaturally reveals facts that would otherwise remain unknown.

Our need of knowledge

- We are frequently encouraged in Scripture to be knowledgeable
- 'Disciple' means 'learner'
- Jesus frequently taught.
- Jesus is called 'Teacher' 42 times in the Gospels
- See Isaiah 5:13; Hosea 4:6; Philippians 1:9

Knowledge is prized by the writer of the Proverbs –

- Proverbs 1:7 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- Proverbs 1:22 – How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?
- Proverbs 1:29 – Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord...
- Proverbs 2:5-6 – Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
- Proverbs 2:10 – For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
- Proverbs 5:2 – That you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.
- Proverbs 8:9-10 – They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold,
- Proverbs 8:12 – I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.
- Proverbs 9:10 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

- Proverbs 10:14 – The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.
- Proverbs 11:9 – With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbour, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.
- Proverbs 12:1 – Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.
- Proverbs 12:23 – A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.
- Proverbs 13:16 – In everything the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.
- Proverbs 14:6-7 – Knowledge is easy for a man of understanding. Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge.
- Proverbs 14:18 – The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
- Proverbs 15:2 – The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.
- Proverbs 15:14 – The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.
- Proverbs 17:27 -- Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
- Proverbs 18:15 – An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
- Proverbs 19:2 – Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.
- Proverbs 19:25 – Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge.
- Proverbs 19:27 – Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.
- Proverbs 20:15 – There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.
- Proverbs 21:11 – When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.
- Proverbs 22:12 – The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge, but he overthrows the words of the traitor.
- Proverbs 22:17 – Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge.

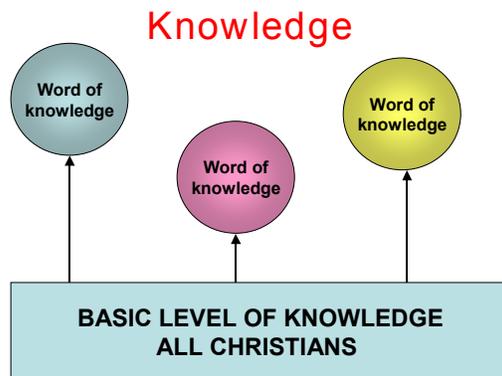
Things we know...

- The grace of Christ (2 Cor 8:9)
- The love of Christ (Eph 3:19)
- The power of his resurrection (Phil 3:10)
- In whom we have believed (2 Tim 1:12)
- In everything God works for good (Romans 8:28)
- We have died to sin (Romans 6:6)
- The hope to which we are called (Eph 1:18)
- We shall be like Him (1 John 3:2)
- He hears us (1 John 5:14)

- Above all, *Jesus Christ and him crucified* (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Words of knowledge

- All Christians are expected to know the things mentioned above.
- But there are times when we need to know things that are outside, above or beyond our normal realm.
- For example, words of knowledge from the Holy Spirit



1/Prophetic usage of words of knowledge

Biblical examples

- Nathanael (John 1:47-51)
- Samaritan woman (John 4:4-30)

Contemporary examples

- Evangelist who told an audience there was someone among them who had been involved in an accident with a tractor and he could no longer work. The man concerned responded, was prayed for, was healed and became a minister of the gospel for the next 20 years.
- A man in Malaysia was told by a visiting preacher that no matter what had happened in the past, and no matter how much he felt a failure God had new beginnings for him (Isaiah 43:18-19). This man had been a backslidden Christian, whose marriage to a Muslim woman had broken up. He felt a failure as a Christian, as a husband and a father. This 'word of knowledge' gave him new hope.
- A discouraged minister was told to throw his net in again (Luke 5:4). He was about to resign from the ministry but encouraged by this word he continued for many years with good success.
- Words of knowledge may occur in conversation, in counselling, in public speaking.

2/Teaching usage of words of knowledge

Teachers normally draw from...

- Learning
- Experience

But for Christians there is a third dimension

- The Holy Spirit through words of knowledge

Biblical example

- Jesus (Luke 24:13-35). The disciples' hearts 'burned within them' as Jesus taught them.

Contemporary examples

- Teachers who have profound insight given by the Holy Spirit
- C S Lewis
- Bob Mumford
- David Pawson

The big question

- Not, ‘What gifts do I have?’ but, ‘What needs can I meet?’
- The former is inward-looking; the latter is outward-looking.
- When we know what needs we are to meet, we know what gifts to seek
- See 1 Cor. 12:7; 14:12

Two Warnings

- Words of knowledge are not a substitute for learning!
- They are never to be used to manipulate or control people

What to do

Study

- The Bible
- The writings of great saints

Spiritual experience

- Walk in the Spirit
- Pray in the Spirit
- Eagerly desire spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1)
- Step out in courage and faith (eg story of Nathan)

When we step out (in faith), God steps in (with power).

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

Biblical

1. Read the story in John 4:3-30. At what point did the woman realize that Jesus was actually talking about spiritual things? What was it that brought her to this realization? (Clue: v.29)
2. What was the value of the ‘word of knowledge’ Jesus used on this occasion? What does this tell us about relying just on reason and persuasion in evangelism? (Acts 8:4-8 may be relevant here.)
3. Read the story of Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-15). Assuming that Nathan used a prophetic ‘word of knowledge’ on this occasion, what can you learn about the process of how the word came to him, how he delivered it and how it accomplished its effect? Why do you think he used a story to convey his message? How much courage did it take for Nathan to do what he did? Why?
4. Do you think there would have been any differences in this story had it happened in New Testament times? Why?

Personal and practical

5. Thinking of knowledge of Christ, what is the greatest thing you know about Jesus? Why?
6. What experience have you had of words of knowledge, either in your own life or the lives of others?
7. The apostle tells us to desire spiritual gifts and to pray for them (1 Cor 14:1,13). What spiritual gifts do you desire? How can you increase the possibility of such gifts in your life?
8. Go through the verses from Proverbs quoted above and make a list of all the things they say about the value of knowledge.

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