**WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE, AND DISCERNING OF SPIRITS**

For the sake of study we will identify them as the **­­­­**gifts of ­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, because they involve a direct impartation of insight or understanding from the mind of God to us.

**WORD OF WISDOM**

The **Greek** word for **“wisdom”** here is the standard one, *Sophia* – which means: “understanding of what is true, right, or lasting; insight; . . . common sense; good judgment.”

Knowledge is an understanding of facts, but wisdom is an understanding of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_facts to make good decisions. Wisdom involves insight, judgment, and guidance.

Based on the words of I Corinthians 12:8 as well as the entire context of I Corinthians 12-14, we can define the word of wisdom as:

“the supernatural gift of a portion of divine \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, judgment, or guidance for a particular need.”

**Acts 27:9-10** “Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, ‘Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives’”

**WORD OF KNOWLEDGE**

The second gift in I Corinthians 12 is “the word of knowledge.” The ***Greek*** word for “knowledge” here is the standard one, ***gnosis*** - which means: “familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study; . . . the sum or range of what has been perceived, discovered, or learned.”

This gift involves a ***revelation of divine information*** to someone who does not know it by ***natural*** means (these are the *supernatural* gifts). While another person may know it, the recipient ***obtains it from the Spirit***.

Like the word of wisdom, the “word” of knowledge is ***not all the knowledge of God***, but a portion of God’s knowledge. From the text and context of I Corinthians 12-14, we can define the word of knowledge as:

“the supernatural gift of a portion of divine \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for a particular need.”

Sometimes this happens during a sermon. People think the preacher is ***“picking on them.”*** Or their spouse has been ***“telling on them”*** and the preacher is getting after them. When in reality, the preacher has no natural knowledge of what has been happening in that person’s life, they are just following the Holy Spirit’s direction and God is imparting ***divine information*** to them.

**DISCERNING OF SPIRITS**

The word **“discernment”** means “keenness of insight and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” It refers to the ability to make a proper distinction or determination, such as to know truth from error. The discerning of spirits, then, involves keen insight and judgment with regard to spirits - the ability to make a proper distinction or determination of whether the spirits are of God or not.

There are three possible ***sources*** of a spiritual activity:

1. God and His \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

2. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and his demons,

3. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ spirit.

Through discerning of spirits, we are able to understand which one of these three sources has ­­*motivated* a certain action. This gift can also provide information about the *type* of spirit that underlies certain actions, such as a spirit of lust, envy, or greed.

This knowledge can be invaluable in dealing with or responding to certain situations. In summary, a good definition for the discerning of spirits is:

“the supernatural gift of perceiving the spiritual \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for an action, or what type of spirit is at work.”

**Acts 16:16-18** “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour.”

**Acts 13:9-11** “Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.”

**Summary**

Like all the supernatural gifts, the gifts of revelation are potentially available to every Spirit-filled ***believer.*** In times of decision, urgent need, or crisis, each of us should call on the Lord to grant us supernatural wisdom, knowledge, or discerning of spirits as the occasion requires.

The three gifts we have discussed are closely related, and there can be some overlapping of them. One person may interpret a certain instance as the manifestation of one of the gifts while another person may consider it to be a different gift. Regardless of our precise classification, we can all recognize it as the work of the Holy Spirit.

As we discussed, the gifts of revelation are supernatural, but they have counterparts in everyday natural and spiritual life. Everyone, even sinners, can have earthly wisdom, knowledge, and discernment. Moreover, every Christian can and should attain spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and discernment. In addition to these two levels, however, there are the supernatural gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and discerning of spirits that operate at special times of need. To function as God intends us to, and to prevent the devices of Satan, the church needs these gifts at work today.