

Word of Wisdom

The spiritual gift of a 'Word of Wisdom' is one of the three gifts known as the Revelation Gifts. Many times God gives a 'Word of Wisdom' alongside a 'Word of Knowledge.' A 'Word of Knowledge' gives facts that have or are taking place and a 'Word of Wisdom' is a future event that tells what to do with those facts. Although we refer to them as two separate gifts, they often work or merge together and are so closely related that there are times when it is not possible to say which of the gifts is in operation.

In a similar way to a 'Word of Knowledge', a 'Word of Wisdom' is given to us supernaturally by God. It is God who decides when to give this gift to us and is not something that we can gain by education or any other means. It is given to us by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the wisdom that we can acquire as we mature as adults, is quite different from a 'Word of Wisdom' that God gives to us and is something that we can gain through our life experiences.

In the Growing Strong 11, we looked at the time when Ananias was sent to Paul in Damascus. **(Acts 9: 1 – 22)** Ananias was given facts about Paul through a 'Word of Knowledge'. He was told the exact street and house where Paul was staying – which was amazing considering that Damascus had a population of at least 20,000 at that time. He was told too that Paul was praying. In addition, Ananias was also given a 'Word of Wisdom', telling him what to do about the facts that had been given to him. He was to go to Paul and lay hands on him and Paul's sight would be restored. The facts on their own would have been useless without any further instructions from God. Being told to go and lay hands on Paul would have also been impossible without the knowledge of his exact location. The two spiritual gifts worked together to achieve what God wanted to do.

We can read in **Acts 6: 1- 4** how a division in the church was beginning to take place because of a dispute concerning the daily food distribution to widows. The apostles felt that their main purpose was to concentrate on preaching and prayer rather than to be involved in the more practical matters such as giving out food. God gave them a 'Word of Wisdom' that directed them to choose a team to be responsible for the practical side of the distributions. This solved the practical problem, leaving the apostles to do what they felt was their priority. A 'Word of Wisdom' brings a unity and helps to solve disputes. We read that the reaction to the apostles' suggestion was, ***'What they said pleased the whole multitude.'*** **(Acts 6: 5)** The result of this was a great increase in the number of believers, which would probably not have happened without that 'Word of Wisdom' from God.

Further on in **Acts 15**, we can read of another dispute that was arising. Gentiles who had become Christians were being told by the Pharisees that their salvation was dependant on their being circumcised. Paul and Barnabas then went to Jerusalem to meet with the church there and discuss the matter because it was causing such a serious problem. They explained how God had met with the Gentiles in such a wonderful way. This was followed by God giving a 'Word of Wisdom' to James, who was leading the meeting. James quotes from the Scriptures how Gentiles would become believers

and he then gives some simple requirements for those Gentile Christians, that did not include circumcision. When God gives a 'Word of Wisdom' it often goes along with and is based on a knowledge of God's written Word. Once again the result was that there was complete unity in the church in Jerusalem because of the decision that had been made due to God giving a fraction of His wisdom.

With regard to a 'Word of Wisdom, timing is also important and the direction of the Holy Spirit is essential in knowing when the time is right for an undertaking. In **Acts 16: 6 – 10**, we can read how Paul twice intended to preach in a certain country but how he was stopped by the Holy Spirit. He then received a 'Word of Wisdom' sending him in another direction altogether, telling him to go to Macedonia. God knew that the hearts of the people of Macedonia were open and ready to receive, that the timing was right and used a 'Word of Wisdom' to send Paul to the right place at the right time.

Sometimes a 'Word of Wisdom' given to someone can be very challenging. Paul would have felt thrilled to receive such a definite directive from God when he had a vision of a man asking him to go over to the Roman colony of Macedonia, but, I wonder if he guessed what might happen to him once he was there. We are told that he was beaten with rods and thrown into prison. In prison he and Silas were praying and singing hymns when there was a great earthquake and the prison doors were opened. Paul's actions resulted in the jailer washing his wounds and he and his family being baptized. I can't help but wonder about his injuries. Surely, such severe beating with rods would result in damaged muscles and even broken bones that would take months to heal, yet, Paul could still be in prison singing hymns. What an amazing person! No wonder God changed his life around as he travelled along that Damascus road. God knew his potential and how he would be used for many years, through his preaching and writing, to bring thousands of people to Jesus.

God's instructions by a 'Word of Wisdom' may sometimes appear to be rather odd. I suppose that one of the weirdest that we can read about in God's Word, is when the Lord spoke to Philip. Philip was in the midst of a great revival in Samaria when an angel of the Lord told him to go to a desert road about fifty miles away. What a seemingly pointless instruction. Notice that Philip was immediately obedient to what he was asked to do. When he saw the Ethiopian in the chariot he then received a further 'Word of Wisdom' telling him to go to the chariot. Philip was able to explain the way of salvation to the eunuch, who then halted the chariot in order to be baptized.

God was interested in the crowds accepting Jesus in Samaria, but was also interested in the one individual on the desert road. He is always interested in individuals. No-one is unimportant to Him and His desire is for everyone to come to know Him and have a deeper relationship with Him.

Words of Wisdom are used by God to bring unity and stability into situations. Not only this, but also, a few words of God's wisdom can impact the lives of both individuals or great crowds. He always sees the overall pictures in the lives of the people whom He has created and is a wise God who gives us special gifts in order to fulfil His purposes.