

# The Word of Wisdom

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith discusses the vital role of wisdom imparted by the Holy Spirit in the life of believers and its manifestations for the benefit of the church.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 28:3, Proverbs 3:6, Proverbs 4:7, Daniel 5:11, Acts 6:2-4, Acts 15:19-22, 1 Corinthians 12:7-8, Colossians 2:3, James 1:5

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Wisdom"

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## Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the significance of the Holy Spirit's manifestations in the life of a believer, particularly focusing on the gift of wisdom. He explains the difference between knowledge and wisdom, illustrating that wisdom is the application of knowledge for the benefit of the body of Christ. Smith warns against the misuse of spiritual gifts for personal gain and highlights that true manifestations of the Spirit will always point to Jesus Christ. He encourages believers to seek wisdom from God, as it is essential for making sound decisions and resolving conflicts within the church.

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## Transcript

1 Corinthians 12:7 says,

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

If the Spirit of God is dwelling in your life, it will be manifested in many different ways. We have discussed how having the Holy Spirit in you is distinct and separate from having the Holy Spirit overflow from you. There is that indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, that marvelous indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, which is purely subjunctive. It is that blessed work within my life giving me understanding of the Word, teaching and instructing me in the ways of the Lord, conforming me into the image of Jesus Christ, and empowering me to be what I could not otherwise be. It is the blessed work of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer.

But it is yet quite another thing to have the Holy Spirit flowing forth from your life. Now if the Holy Spirit is indwelling you there will be certain manifestations of that. We know from the love that He has given us, from the work within our hearts, that the Spirit of God abides in us. But that overflowing has different manifestations other than just those that are manifested through the indwelling of the Spirit. And Paul is going to talk about the manifestations that result from the Holy Spirit flowing forth from your life--the blessings of releasing the Spirit, not just bottling Him up inside, but allowing Him to work through you.

Now Paul begins to talk to us about the way that the Holy Spirit might be manifested through your life. He points out the fact that the purpose of His working through your life is for the profit of all--for the profit of the whole body of Christ. You see, there are many things that the Holy Spirit does in us that profit us. There is just a glorious profit in having the Holy Spirit working in us. But with these manifestations of this empowering of the Spirit,--the empowering is that which flows forth from you--the purpose is to profit the whole body of Christ.

There are many people who have great gifts. I think of those composers who had such great gifts at composing inspiring music and how the gift was in them. It was something they could hear, but it was not of benefit until they scored it and then conducted the symphony. It was only then that everyone could profit from what was happening inside of the composer--the gift that was there, which only the composer could hear. Likewise, a gifted artist is the same who has the capacity of seeing the beauties and being able to put them on a canvas so that others can see and enjoy the gift. The Holy Spirit within us is manifested through us, so that all might be blessed and all might profit from that gift of the Spirit that has been imparted.

There is great evil today with men who seek to personally capitalize on the gifts of the Spirit that they possess. People have been touched by God through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and some of them then take advantage of the fact that a person has been so blessed. Maybe they have been healed or maybe a friend of theirs or a child of theirs has been healed. And now they are so thrilled and so excited about how God used the gift in this person to help them that they want to shower upon that person, lavish upon them, gifts in appreciation. And many people have used those gifts to personally enrich themselves.

There are even those ministries that solicit funds. When there has been a gift of God at one time in their lives and people have been touched by it, they will develop a mailing list and send out monthly letters. And the bottom line of the letter is always, "Please use the enclosed envelope to send a generous offering to help us at this particular time of emergency in our ministry." And they try to fleece the flock of God because they have had some gift of the Spirit operating in their lives. Often they give the intimation that if you want an answer to your prayer, if you have an unsaved loved one, if you have a sick child, that surely a generous offering will be blessed by God and they may see the salvation of their loved ones. That is subtly intimated by some of their endeavors to raise the funds. There is sort of a hidden suggestion that you can actually buy the blessings of God, if you are generous enough in supporting their ministry.

The true gifts of the Holy Spirit, when manifested in their scriptural and correct way, will always focus people's hearts upon Jesus Christ. When you see the genuine manifestations of the Spirit, as Jesus said, "He is not going to testify of Himself. He is going to testify of Me" (John 15:26). You are going to get a new vision of Jesus and a fresh vision of His glory. You are going to fall in love with Him and be drawn to Him. Your heart is almost going to explode with your love and appreciation for what Jesus is and what Jesus is able to do.

And that is one way by which you can tell whether or not it is a true manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Is there a great deal of attention drawn to the person who is exercising the gift? In their magazines that they send out, is their picture on every other page? Who are they drawing attention to? Who are they promoting? Who are they seeking to raise up in the eyes of the people? A true manifestation of the Holy Spirit will always exalt the person of Jesus Christ. That is what the Holy Spirit has come to do.

So as Paul introduces these various manifestations of the out-flowing of the Holy Spirit from a believer's life that benefits the church, he begins with this introduction. And then he tells us:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom. (1 Corinthians 12:8)

It is important to note that there is a definite and distinct difference between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. They are not similar kinds of gifts. There is a definite difference between the two, just as there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge is the accumulation of facts. Wisdom is the proper use of the facts. Knowledge will tell you that little black animal with a white stripe going down its back is a skunk. Knowledge will tell you that that skunk can excrete a pungent odor. Wisdom will tell you get out of there before he hits you with it. Wisdom will tell you do not go up and try to pet that little animal. Knowledge will tell you that the snake that is coiled and rattling is a poisonous snake. And wisdom will tell you to keep clear from it.

So there is a vast difference between knowledge and wisdom. And some of the smartest people, as far as knowledge is concerned, are really some of the most stupid people in the world. They do the most stupid things. I think of Timothy Leary, a very brilliant man: he had much knowledge. But I think of his folly in destroying himself with the use of LSD and leading so many others down that path. So you see it is knowledge without wisdom. And knowledge without wisdom can be an extremely dangerous thing.

Through knowledge we have been able to create superweapons that have the capacity of destroying mankind. However, if we do not have wisdom, we will destroy mankind with the superweapons. So knowledge without wisdom can be extremely dangerous.

I have often said that I marvel at the stupid things brilliant people believe and do once they have rejected the truth of Jesus Christ--because, you see, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And when a person rejects the Lord, when he rejects the idea of God, then he is prone to do the most ridiculous things. And he is prone to believe the most ridiculous things.

Over in India, some of the most educated people in the whole world live almost like animals in filthy and unhealthy conditions in order that they might spend time at the compound of Sai Baba. They want to be near this man and to hear him speak. And they--these brilliant people--believe that one of the greatest honors is to be able to eat his excrement. Brilliant people do stupid things.

I am amazed that when people are given over by God to reprobate minds and are in rebellion against the truth of God, that Satan seems to always reduce them to the worst kind of filth. Have you ever noticed this process? It is interesting that in the homosexual community, they call it scatting, but it is the same thing that these people who are over worshipping Sai Baba do. Satan seems to reduce people to the filthiest, lowest level and it is shocking. Your mind just cannot conceive of something like this. But this is what Satan reduces brilliant people to, who reject the truth of God.

Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians since the unbelievers did not want to have the truth of God, He gave them over to a strong delusion because they did not have the love of the truth. So God allowed them to believe a lie rather than the truth. And of course Paul follows the whole downward progression in Romans 1: "Who when they did not want to retain God in their mind, God gave them over to reprobate minds"--doing things that are just unspeakable, unthinkable. And so, it is when a person rejects the truth of Jesus Christ and gives his mind over to the impurities of darkness and Satan. As Satan leads them down the path, he will

lead them down to the very bottom. If you do not have the fear of the Lord, you do not have true wisdom. You have not even begun in the path of wisdom.

Solomon, in talking to his sons said,

Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore, get wisdom. (Proverbs 4:7)

A lot of people are seeking knowledge. You should also seek wisdom, for knowledge without wisdom is dangerous.

Now this gift of the word of wisdom is not just a reservoir of wisdom that I have so that I can become this guru with a reservoir of wisdom. "Anything you want to know just come to me and I will open up to you these treasures of wisdom that I possess." No, it does not work like that. It is not just a reservoir of wisdom that I can tap into at will. But the word of wisdom is that anointing of the Holy Spirit which is exercised when issues arise and when there are important decisions that must be made. It is that imparting of the word of wisdom that just is so right that it brings divided factions together. People say, "Oh yes, that is good." And it is just that word of wisdom.

Now many times I believe that this gift is exercised without even our knowledge that it is the exercise of the gift of the word of wisdom. I think that many times when an issue comes up we just go ahead and express our opinion--how we feel. But in reality it is a word of wisdom from the Spirit on that particular issue and we are not even aware. You see, you do not get some kind of a buzz. Or you do not get some kind of a ringing or hear bells go off. And "Oh, hearken! Listen now, words of wisdom are going to flow from my lips." It does not work that way. It works in a very natural way.

And I think many times we make a real mistake in not seeing, or not discerning the supernatural in the natural. I think that so many times we are expecting the supernatural things to only happen in supernatural ways. But so often they happen in such natural ways we do not recognize the supernatural in it.

As I look back on my life and how God has led me, I see how He supernaturally led me in very natural ways. Ways in which I had no idea it was God leading me. But as I look back on it now, I can see that the hand of God was on me. "Oh Lord, You are so good because You have led me without my even knowing I was being led at the time!"

When I first began in the ministry, I began as a hopeful evangelist. And all of my messages were evangelistic even though I was pastoring a church. And all of my messages were topical, evangelistic messages. And always there at the end of the message was the appeal for people to accept the Lord. And of course if there were no sinners there, which was often the case, then I appealed for people to dedicate their lives, or to repent for not bringing sinners to church. I mean, I went down the list until I hit them somewhere. I thought they had to get down to the altar and repent. And the success of the sermon was always measured by how many people came forward and how hard they cried. And so I was always trying to motivate people to repent for anything. Just come forward and repent.

And I had prepared two years of topical sermons and when I would finish my two years in a church, I would request for a change of church. And then I would go to a new church and preach my two years of messages at the new church. That happened until we landed in Huntington Beach, back when Huntington Beach was just a lazy little beach community of 6,000 people. It had the lowest tax base in Orange County because all the oil wells that were there provided tax money. The city had the finest library and the finest

schools and it was a sleeper of a town.

People did not know about Huntington Beach--how great it was to live there, but I discovered it by living there. And after the two years, when I preached all my sermons and it was time to request a change, the problem was that I did not want a change. I liked living in Huntington Beach. Our daughter had started to go to school and it was such a tremendous school system, that we wanted her to have the advantage of the school system there in Huntington Beach. And in those days there were not a lot of surfers out in the ocean. The publisher of the newspaper, George Farquardt and the fellow who had the pharmacy in town, Sam Terry, and I used to meet down at the beach and go surfing in the morning. And it was wonderful, because we would be the only three people out surfing in the morning. We would go down and watch the break to see if it was breaking best on the north or the south side and we would go out and have it all to ourselves. And we could be through by ten in the morning and we could go to our various tasks and it was just--it was paradise.

I did not want to leave Huntington Beach. This was nice but I had run out of sermons. I was reading a book called *The Apostle John* by Griffith Thomas. And in about the seventh chapter of the book he had outline studies on 1 John. And I started reading those outline studies in 1 John and they were marvelous. I thought, "This is tremendous sermon material. These are great sermon outlines. My, I can get a sermon from every one of these outlines!" And I counted them and there were 43. And I thought, "Wonderful! I can stay in Huntington Beach another year." So the following Sunday I announced to the people that we were going to do something different. We were going to start a study of a book of the Bible. We were going to study 1 John and so we started the study of 1 John.

By the end of the year, and of course I used Griffith Thomas heavily, and I also got other commentaries and I was able to stretch the 43 into 52. And I spent a whole year in 1 John. But the amazing thing is that in that year's time the church doubled. And I had baptized more people in that year than I had in any year in my ministry. And yet I was not preaching evangelistic sermons. I was just teaching the saints the Word of God, and evangelism was happening.

And so I still enjoyed living in Huntington Beach and still did not want to move. So I remembered the words of one of my college profs who said that the Book of Romans would revolutionize any church. And I had heard so many people talk about how wonderful Romans was. I had read it, but it really did not do much for me. But I decided if it would cause a revolution, I would teach it. I was not ready for the revolution it caused because it revolutionized me! I discovered the grace of God. I discovered a new relationship with God. I spent two years in Romans. I still did not want to leave Huntington Beach.

So I came across a new edition of Haley's Bible Pocket Handbook. And on the little cover it said the most important page in this book is 748. So I turned to page 748 to discover what he figured was the most important page in that little book of great Bible helps. And I discovered that he proposed that every church have a systematic way of reading the Bible all the way through as a congregation. And ideally the pastor's sermon would come out of the portion that the people had read the previous week. And I realized, "Hey, I have the whole Bible. I can spend the rest of my life here!"

Now that is the way God naturally did a supernatural work in my own life and in my own ministry--leading me into expositional Bible studies. From topical, evangelistic messages to just going through the Bible. I was going through a book in the Bible and becoming a teacher rather than a preacher. And it seemed so natural. He took my natural love for the beach, my natural love for surfing, and He used it to guide me in

His path to become a Bible expositor. God works His supernatural work in our lives in very natural ways.

And these gifts of the Spirit, such as word of wisdom, so often happen so naturally that we are not even aware that that gift is being exercised at that moment. And many times it is not until later, when we have more information that we suddenly discover that we were speaking words of wisdom that were beyond us. I did not have all the facts and yet the wisdom was right on.

Now the gift of the Spirit in words of wisdom or in wisdom itself is not a gift that is unique to the New Testament. It is something that is found throughout the Old Testament. Daniel was known for the wisdom that God had given to him. It was testified of Daniel, "There is a man in the kingdom in whom is the wisdom of the holy gods" (Daniel 5:11).

The first mention of wisdom in the Bible is associated with the Spirit of God. Exodus 28:3 is the first time the word "wisdom" is mentioned in the Bible. And many times in looking at a subject, it is interesting to look at what they call the "first mention." Where was it first mentioned in the Bible? What were the surrounding events and the context in which it was mentioned?

Exodus 28:3 says,

And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom.

Now God is talking to Moses, as He is ready to build the tabernacle. And God speaks of having filled men with the spirit of wisdom.

Exodus 31:3

And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.

God gifted Moses in wisdom, knowledge, understanding, the capacity to make things, to develop, and to put things together.

Exodus 35:31 says,

And He hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.

Again this is the same as Exodus 31:3.

Deuteronomy 34:9 says,

And Joshua [who was the successor of Moses] the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Now here Joshua was filled with wisdom through the laying on of the hands of Moses. Even as in the New Testament, the gifts of the Spirit were often imparted by the laying on of hands and prayer and many times prophecy.

You remember that Paul writing in 2 Timothy said,

Stir up the gift that is in you that was given unto you by the laying on of hands of the elders. [And then again he told him] Do not neglect the gift that was given to you by the laying on of my hands and the word of prophecy.

So the gifts of the Spirit were imparted in the Old Testament through the laying on of hands. As Moses laid his hands on Joshua and God gave to him the spirit of wisdom, he was full of the spirit of wisdom.

Proverbs 2:6 declares,

For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Ecclesiastes 2:26 says,

For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

In the prophecy concerning Jesus Christ, that righteous branch that shall arise out of the stem of Jesse, Isaiah 11:2 says,

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

So on Jesus there would rest that spirit of wisdom.

Now how was this word of wisdom manifested in the life of Christ? I think probably the most classic manifestation of this gift of the word of wisdom is when the Pharisees were seeking to trap Him and turn the people against Him. And they were sitting around trying to figure out ways by which they could catch Him in His speech. They were always asking leading questions by which they were hoping to trap Him and to turn the people against Him. But Jesus was always wise enough to give answers so that they could not really pin any charges against Him. But they finally came up with what they thought was a Catch-22 situation.

"Let's ask Him in front of the people if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar." Knowing that every Jew hated paying taxes to Caesar, it was a sore spot--it was an irritant. "And if He answers 'Yes, it is lawful,' then He will lose His popular appeal among the people. They will all shun Him. If He says 'No,' then we can report Him to the Roman government because He is leading a tax revolt and He will be charged by Rome for the crime." They thought they had the perfect question.

So they came to Jesus and they said, "We know you are a straight shooter. You always tell the truth. You are not a respecter of persons. I mean, if it is true, it is true. We want to know, is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar?" Jesus said, "Got a coin?" They gave Him a coin and He held it up and He said, "Whose image is that on the coin?" They said, "It is Caesar's." He flipped it back to them and said, "Alright, give to Caesar what is Caesar's. And give to God what things are God's." With a word of wisdom Jesus just answered the situation so righteously. It is just the gift of the word of wisdom.

In Solomon the word of wisdom was manifested when there were two women who came to him both claiming that a baby was theirs. And so here they were arguing with each other and the one was saying, "You are lying." And the other was saying, "You are lying. It is my baby." "No, it is my baby." So Solomon

said to his guard there, "Take your sword and cut the baby in half and give each one half of it." And the one who was not the true mother said, "Fair enough." The other one said, "Oh no, give the baby to her." Solomon said, "No, give the baby to her. She is the true mother. She was not willing to sacrifice the baby to settle the argument." This was the word of wisdom and the wisdom of Solomon was spoken of abroad.

In the New Testament in Acts 15, certain Judaizers had gone to the Gentile church in Antioch and had created a ruckus. They were trying to tell the Gentile believers that unless they converted to Judaism, unless they accepted and followed the law of Moses and were circumcised, they could not be saved. And so Paul and Barnabas went to these fellows who were creating division there in Antioch and they came back to Jerusalem and the first church council was called in order to determine what relationship the Gentile believers should have to the Mosaic law. Peter gave his testimony of how God led him to the Gentiles and how they received the Holy Spirit. Paul and Barnabas testified of their ministry among the Gentiles and the marvelous miracles that God had wrought among the Gentiles. And finally James spoke up and he said,

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. (Acts 15:19-22)

These were men who came with a message from the church. But you see the solution that James gave was the word of wisdom and the result was this division was cured. And everyone was satisfied with the way that James proposed the solution to a divisive issue.

Earlier in Acts 6 a dispute arose concerning the welfare program of the church. The Jewish widows who were living by the Greek or Hellenistic culture, felt that their widows were not getting the same kind of treatment as those other widows who were living by the Hebrew culture. And they came to the apostles and they complained, "There is not a fairness in the distribution of the church's welfare program. There is a favoritism that is being shown."

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, the whole church. They said,

It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. (Acts 6:2-4)

You see it is the exercise of the gift of the word of wisdom. And what it does is remove the divisiveness. It removes the rancor between the people and settles it. It is a peaceful solution. Everybody is happy with it--the word of wisdom.

Often times within the church there are divisions that arise. And how necessary it is when these divisions do arise, that there is someone with the word of wisdom, the gift of the Spirit, to offer a solution that will be acceptable or amenable to both sides, so that both sides are happy and division does not take place. Many congregations of God's people have been severely divided because of the lack of the gift of the word of wisdom.

Now later in Acts 6, we read of the word of wisdom as it was manifested in the life of Stephen who was one of those who was appointed to oversee the distribution of the church's welfare.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and the Cyrenians, and the Alexandrians, and them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. (Acts 6:8-10)

This is the gift of the word of wisdom. They could not handle it. They were not able to handle that spirit of the word of wisdom by which Stephen spoke to them.

When Paul was praying for the churches, often his prayer was that God might grant to them wisdom. In praying for the Ephesians in 1:17 he prayed,

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

In Colossians 1:9 Paul prayed for the church at Colossi,

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

James wrote:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)

James also told us,

Yet ye have not, because you ask not. (James 4:2)

To me it is hard to understand why, when God has made available to us His wisdom, that we would rely upon our own and that we would make decisions without seeking His guidance and His wisdom. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). And I would like to suggest that that is the wisest thing you could ever do.

Have you ever made decisions that afterwards you rued the decision that you made? You thought, "Oh no. How could I have decided that? Look how it has turned out." And you usually say, "God, why did You let me get into this mess?" It is because you did not ask for wisdom-- "Ask and it shall be given. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7). Men like Daniel asked God to give him wisdom and understanding in the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar. Ask for wisdom. You will discover that the Holy Spirit can speak through you and give to you a word of wisdom whereby you can be guided by the counsels of God.

It is yours. God will do it. It is a marvelous gift that God will give to you, that word of wisdom when you have been challenged by an unbeliever. God will give you that word of wisdom if you will just look to Him and seek His wisdom

Have you ever had an occasion where a person asked you a question and while they asked the question you were thoroughly stumped? You did not know the answer. And you sort of started off by saying, "Well, I

will tell you, that is an issue that a lot of people have been troubled by and I think that..." And as you are sort of stalling, suddenly an answer comes in your mind. And as you are explaining it, you marvel. You think, "Well, that is right! My, that is wonderful! Yeah, that is the way it is." It happens to me all the time. The word of wisdom, how that the Lord gives it to you and it is just the right answer.

God is willing to impart to you His wisdom. The Bible tells us that "in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). And they are available to you for your asking.

Father, we thank You for the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and for this gift of the word of wisdom. And how, Lord, You have given to us so many, many times, in that hour of need, Your word of wisdom that settled the controversy, that answered the question, that satisfied. Lord, we need Your wisdom and we look to You, Lord, to guide us with Your wisdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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