

WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNMENT
Opening Your Spiritual Gifts
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Our scripture will be taken from 1 Corinthians 12:8 as we continue in a look at spiritual gifts, Opening Spiritual Gifts. We began that two Sunday nights ago. We've already looked at 1 Corinthians 12:1-7. I'd like to review that just a moment the three major things we shared there about the spiritual gifts.

We looked at the visibility of spiritual gifts. We shared the fact that there are two reasons why spiritual gifts may be unopened. Some do not view these gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12 as being for today. Others see them simply as a manifestation of natural talents or abilities. There is in fact circulating in various segments of the charismatic renewal today and in other parts of the body of Christ a kind of a teaching that suggests to you that you identify what your spiritual gift is and then you function in that area. There is a degree of truth to that. There are some persons who more naturally function in the gift of helps and others more naturally function in the gift of leadership to use Romans 12 terminology of the gifts.

But on the other hand there is an extreme that says you have the gift of faith and I don't have the gift of faith so in that situation you're called to faith and I'm not. We have to recognize that if we're called upon in a situation and help is needed whether we have the gift of helps or not we are human beings, we are to have compassion. The story of the Good Samaritan tells that to us. We're to offer help. We're to offer the gift of contribution and not say, We'll leave the contribution up to the people who have the gift of contribution. Or helps up to people who have helps.

There is a certain sense as you look at all the spiritual gifts whether it's the nine that are in 1 Corinthians 12 or the additional twelve other gifts described in Romans 12 and other parts of the New Testament like Ephesians 4, there's a certain sense in which those gifts all have underlined parallel natural abilities except perhaps the gift of miracles and healings. But we must be careful of an over specialization where people go around saying, That's my gift and I don't have to do *that* because that's not my gift.

There is also a sense in which the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 are *charismatically* given in that a person may not always function in a particular area. It may not be that that person has the gift of tongues as their permanent possession but in that particular moment is a gift the Spirit distributes to that person and they exercise it. Therefore we can't go up to someone and say, I understand you have the gift of tongues; let's hear what you have to say. Or, You have the gift of prophecy, let's hear you prophecy. These are not at the will necessarily of the person but at the will of the Spirit who gives them.

We also look at the visibility of the spiritual gifts at how spiritual gifts may be misused by considering them competitive rather than complimentary: I have this gift, you have that gift – I have a better gift than you. But not considering the essential of love, the functioning of love is vital for the operation of the gifts. The gifts may be misused by not regulating them in proper order. Or they may be misused by regarding the gifts as barometer of spirituality. The fruit of the Spirit is the barometer of spirituality. The gifts of the Spirit have to do with ministry and often they're expressed by people whose lives aren't even worthy. But since Romans teaches us

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that the calling or the gifts of God are irrevocable you'll find people exercising gifts that have long ago ceased to express fruit. The gift goes on but the other things – the fruit – perhaps is not where it should be.

The second dimension we talked about in addition to the visibility of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1-7 is the validity. How do we know a gift is truly from God? We indicated gifts may be imitated but we know it's truly from God when it has Jesus as its source and when it gives true honor and glory to Jesus Christ.

The variety of gifts, we noted that there are different *charisms* or *charismata* and thus there are some nine different gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and approximate twelve other gifts spread throughout the New Testament. So there are a variety of gifts.

There's a variety of service. That is the way the gifts and a variety of effects that the gifts have. But all are for the common good.

Someone has divided the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 into three categories. Gifts which relate to the functioning of the mind such as wisdom, knowledge and discernment. Gifts, which relate to the functioning of the tongue such as tongues, interpretation and prophecy. And gifts which relate to action, which are faith, miracles and healings.

That division I guess is ok to help us remember them. Although the gifts of wisdom and knowledge themselves involve speech so they're not simply relegated to the mind. They'd never come out of the mind unless you employ speech. So the distinction is somewhat artificial but perhaps we could follow that for memory purposes.

I'd intended tonight to speak on the three "mind" gifts – wisdom, knowledge and discernment. However, I reached a point in my preparation when I realized I had more than enough there to say on wisdom and knowledge than to go on to a lengthy segment on discernment would perhaps dilute what the Spirit would want us to focus in on gifts of wisdom and knowledge. So we'll confine ourselves to those two this evening.

I'd like to share with you some common misconceptions about the gifts of wisdom and knowledge.

The one common misconception is that we simply do not recognize these gifts because we don't know what they are. So they may be happening around us but we do not know what they are. What does the gift of utterance of wisdom and the gift of utterance of knowledge mean? Is this relegated to people that are simply wise and smart? Do you have to have a 4.0 in school to exercise the gift of knowledge? Do you have to be old and gray headed or bald headed to have the gift of wisdom? What are these gifts?

In fact, sometimes we may even have an idea of what the gift is and perhaps our idea of the gift doesn't square with total scriptural teaching on that. For example if you'd asked me several years ago what's the gift of knowledge I would have thought of the unique manifestation of the gift of knowledge under Katherine Kuhlman's ministry. She had this marvelous ability in the Spirit to perceive who was being healed in the audience. We almost in the charismatic realm have exclusively relegated the gift of knowledge to that particular functioning of the gift of

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knowledge. Yet as you look at scripture you'll discover that that is only one dimension of the gift of knowledge. That is not the full package.

So we may not recognize the gifts and not know that they're operating.

A second misconception about the mind gifts is that we perhaps have settled into the idea that these gifts are rather rare and we don't see them very much. We maybe see tongues more in operation in the body but we don't see the gifts of wisdom and knowledge as much in operation. In fact, I would assert that these gifts occur rather frequently in the body of Christ and we simply use other definitions to describe them. Or we do not recognize them as happening when they happen. I hope when this evening is done that you will have a more sharp sense in your life of when the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are in operation.

Frequently the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are not operating on a large group level such as this. But they're operating as a more small group one to one encounter.

A third misconception of the gifts is that we may not have the expectancy that we will exercise one of these gifts. Therefore we have not sufficiently opened our life to the Holy Spirit to be a candidate for the expression of an utterance of wisdom or the utterance of knowledge.

I think because these gifts especially talk to us about the things they do, young people might consider them as the older folks kinds of gifts. I'll say tonight to you in here who are young that if there is ever a time in your life that you need the gift of wisdom and knowledge, the utterance of wisdom and knowledge functioning, it is now. As we will see there are decisions you are making now that are way over your head. It would be nice to have a forty-year-old mind in a sixteen-year-old body. I could make a lot of decisions so much better. Young people need the exercise of these gifts.

Let's look first at the gift of wisdom.

Both the gifts of wisdom and knowledge we're going to first of all look at what the scripture has to say about that gift. I'll do it for four subpoints for each one. Talking about how the gift is first of all used in Corinthians, in the Corinthian letter. That's the immediate context for this. Secondly, we'll look at how that or was employed in the Old Testament. Third, we'll look at how it may have operated in the life of Jesus upon whom the Spirit rested. And fourth, we will look at the book of Acts and see how that gift may have functioned in the early church. And by looking at that gift from four different sides we can gain a fairly good idea of what is involved in the gift.

First of all the gift of wisdom how it's used in 1 Corinthians itself.

The word "wisdom" in the Greek is *sophea*. *Sophos* and its cognate words occur twenty-four times in the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians. The root for "philosophy" – *sophea* – lover of wisdom. It comes right out of this Greek word *sophea* or *sophos*. It's an important word in the Corinthian letter. It's not common for Paul to take a word like that and use it twenty four times in the first three chapters but he does. He identifies a broad meaning for the utterance of wisdom when he says, "We speak a word of wisdom." Notice the gift is the word of wisdom. He says, "We speak a word of wisdom." So if we want to know what the word of wisdom is as Paul

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would use it, there it is right at the beginning of Corinthians. “We speak a word of wisdom among the mature but not the wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age or the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom. They have crucified the Lord of glory, that God has revealed how much he has prepared for those who love him to us by the Spirit. What is this word of wisdom hidden from the unwise? The word of wisdom is that God’s power and nature have been revealed in something so awful and weak and vulnerable as the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. The true wisdom of God, the true word of wisdom is to not look at the things that are seen but the things that are unseen, the realities of Christ.”

Paul’s preaching is therefore not in man’s wisdom but in the Spirit’s power. So the word of wisdom in that occasion is something very broad. It represents the total content. Of the Christian faith. It’s essence, which is the word of wisdom to the wise. But a word of foolishness to those that are on the outside.

In the Old Testament a second way we will look at wisdom is in the Old Testament wisdom had a very well defined usage. We can summarize it into two parts. Wisdom had to do with practical application of knowledge to life. You look at the proverbs for example and they give you continually practical relationship of knowledge to every day living. The sayings of the wise, we’re told to treasure those up in our heart.

For example, “A beautiful woman without discretion is like a gold ring in a swine’s snout.” There is truth. Isn’t that true? Your greatest strength is always your greatest weakness simultaneously. I have taught college long enough to realize that when a student is excessively bright that’s their great strength. But it’s also their great weakness. Because they can put their mind in idle and they have enough facility of learning that right before the exam they can cram and cram and beat everybody. But that doesn’t mean they’ve really learned anything. Their great strength has become their weakness because they’re not employing it.

On the other hand, some girls may be very outwardly and physically attractive and beautiful but they so concentrate on the exterior that the interior goes undeveloped. So their great strength has become their great weakness.

Proverbs bring us the practical application of knowledge to life.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6 – a word of wisdom. Practical knowledge.

Another way that wisdom is used though in the Old Testament is for decision making ability. Especially when you’re confronted with life situations for which there does not seem an ability to give an answer. Solomon was confronted with such a decision like that. 1 Kings 3:16-28. Two prostitutes came to him with a complaint. One saying, “We both gave birth at the same time and after three days her baby died. She rolled over at night and squashed the baby. She came while I was sleeping took my life baby and took her dead baby at my side. When I awoke in the morning I found the dead baby and I want the live baby back.”

Solomon had to make a decision. Had to use some kind of wisdom. I don’t know what I would have said. I’ve faced some problems but I’ve never faced that problem. But a person operating

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with wisdom is really able to kind of read what is happening. Solomon knew motherhood sufficiently, insight into motherhood, so that he knew that if he said, Let's slice the baby in half and give half to one and a half to the other, that the real mother would care. He banked on that. Sure enough that's exactly what happened.

1 Kings 16:28 says that when all Israel heard the verdict the king had given they held the king in awe because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

A third function of wisdom is in the ministry of Jesus. Isaiah 11:2 prophecies that the spirit of wisdom would rest upon Him. Luke 2:40 "He was filled with wisdom" then when he was twelve years of age. He grew in wisdom, Luke 2:52. Matthew 7:28 "The crowds were amazed at his teaching. Mark 6:2 "His hometown was saying where was this wisdom that has been given him." John's gospel said, "No one ever spoke like this."

Jesus exercised a continual application of knowledge to practical everyday things. He also exercised wisdom in emergency situations. A woman is brought to Him taken in adultery. He is expected to either release her in mercy or uphold the law of God. How could He do both? Yet He exercises wisdom. He gives an utterance of wisdom when he says, "Let him who is among you who is without sin cast the first stone." Clear exercise of the utterance of wisdom.

When he is questioned as to the authority by which he teaches he responds with a word of wisdom. Knowing that it is only an entrapment question He says "the baptism of John, was it from God or was it from men?" When he is question, "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?" an utterance of wisdom: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

When you find wisdom in the book of Acts in the experience of the early church you find wisdom occurring also in these ways which I have described in the Old Testament and in the life of Jesus. Plus you find wisdom in these additional kinds of contexts.

Wisdom is used in the proclamation of the gospel. Acts 6:3 "These men began to argue with Stephen but they could not stand up against his wisdom or by the spirit by which he spoke." When you read Stephen's preaching you see a person filled with wisdom. Here he is surrounded by a throng that is ready to do him in and not even listening to him. If Stephen is going to die as a martyr he wants to be heard before they kill him. So he begins very graciously. He doesn't say to them, "You murderers! You awful people. I shouldn't even be talking to you." But he exercises wisdom and in this long historical discourse which in a few Sunday mornings we're going to look at he takes them through the history of God's dealings with his people. Then he wraps it all up together with words that produce the response. But first he gives wisdom. He has the opportunity to respond.

Wisdom is also used for emergencies where Jesus says in Luke 21:15, "I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict." And again and again we see in Acts, the apostles brought before magistrates and governors we see them exercising this word of wisdom that Luke 21:15 talks about. In fact King Agrippa says to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," and Paul immediately snaps back, "Would that you were only without these chains." Very wise and excellent word to the king.

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Wisdom is also used in the early church in dilemmas. Acts 6 at the beginning there is the dilemma of the trouble between two groups in the church – the first church fight. Pentecost hasn't even cooled off. The church hasn't even learned to do missionary work yet but they'd already learned to fight. You need wisdom when people are at odds with one another. Sure enough there was the exercise of wisdom.

“We should give ourselves,” the apostle says, “to the ministry of the word and to prayer. You should select other people to do this work of administration so that none are neglected.”

I've seen leadership models that would not have done well in that situations. I've seen leadership models that would have said, “How dare you complain! There's a gossip ring going on in this church and God's going to deal with you for that. Shame! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! We've been preaching and healing the sick and we haven't had time to get everything done and you ought to just wait your turn. Shame on you!” When you don't have a word of wisdom what happens is you dump guilt on people, you make people angry, you stir up wrath and you don't solve the problem.

Then didn't take the complaint personally. “Here's the Exodus all over again. You need a sermon on murmuring in the wilderness. Get the saints in the right place. You should know better.” None of that. A word of wisdom spares the church all that conflict.

Wisdom can spare us a lot of conflicts. It can spare us a lot of conflicts in the church, it can spare us a lot of conflicts in small group and in personal relationships. It can spare us a lot of conflicts in family. A word of wisdom.

A fourth usage of wisdom in the early church is simply godly counsel. Peter writing in 2 Peter 3:15 says “Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation. Just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom God gave him.” We continue to see Paul exercising a word of wisdom.

When you read for example the letter of Paul to the Philippians, something that maybe is overlooked a lot of times. But I think one of the real reasons for the writing of the Philippian letter is that two of the leading women in the Philippian church were at odds with one another. Euodias and Syntyche. Paul doesn't back into that situation by saying, you women ought to get together. He kind of approaches it discretely and delicately. Starting all the way back in chapter 2. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God thought not equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a servant and being found in the likeness of human flesh he humbled himself and became obedient to the death on the cross.” Let this mind be in you, Euodias. You can almost hear him saying without naming their names.

Again, some people not exercising the gift of wisdom would have said “And Euodias and Syntyche, you troublemakers in the church!” Instead he says to them, “My fellow workers. My yoke fellows in the gospel. I appeal to you to be in agreement with one another.” The word of wisdom solves the problem rather than makes it worse. Godly counsel.

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We'll attempt to apply that utterance of words of wisdom to our own lives and see how it operates but we'll leave it for a moment as information and pick up the gift of knowledge and look at it.

Someone has said that knowledge is knowing the content of things and wisdom is knowing how they are applied. That's probably a fairly good way of isolating the two.

The gift of knowledge in the Corinthian setting first of all. We're looking at four parts – a part drawn from each segment of scripture. In the Corinthian setting knowledge is what the Corinthians feel they have. In fact we know that the word *gnosis* which is the Greek word for knowledge became a very important word throughout the early church. There was a whole group of heretics known as the gnostic Christians. They were the “knowledge” party of the church. They went around saying, we have more knowledge than anybody else. You serve an earthly Jesus that you call the Christ but we know that the real Christ did not have an earthly body like Jesus. They had all kinds of funny views about the nature of Christ. They ran off with a kind of idea of super spirituality.

The Corinthians tended toward this *gnosis* saying we have knowledge. Paul has to correct them. We know that all possess knowledge but knowledge without true humility (1 Corinthians 8) or knowledge without true love for God is nothing. Knowledge, he said, puffs up. Love builds up.

And in 1 Corinthians 12 he actually gives them a word of knowledge: “Now, about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be *agnosis* [without knowledge].” So what does he do? He gives them a word of knowledge on how spiritual gifts function. You could in effect say that what 1 Corinthians 12 is all about is apostolic word of knowledge to a church that doesn't know what the spiritual gifts are and what they're for and how they work or how they're regulated. A word of knowledge.

When we look at knowledge in the Old Testament we find that Hosea 4:6 complains “My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge.”

The Old Testament really dealt with knowledge from two perspectives. A greater understanding of God's truth is the first perspective. And the second perspective of knowledge was the access information that could only be known by the spirit, could not be known by natural means.

First of all knowledge functioned as greater understanding of God's truth. Let me illustrate this. In the prophet's time the sacrificial system was in full practice. I'm sure many of the seminaries for priests gave courses on how to properly kill a lamb and skin it and divide the fat from the entrails and part the meat and which part you can keep and which to burn and the difference between the whole burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering and the meal offering, etc. And what you do on this day and what you do on that day. Somebody taught them all this stuff. So they were probably experts in knowledge.

But look at the knowledge that the prophets have. Amos thunders against all the priests and says to them on behalf of God, “I despise your religious feasts. I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you offer me burnt offerings and grain offerings I will not accept them.” Samuel says in 1 Samuel 15:22 “To obey is better than to sacrifice. To harken is better than the fat of rams.”

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What was happening? These prophets were exercising knowledge. They were telling the people going through the ritual, God's not in the ritual. If your heart is not there God is not in it at all. They had knowledge by the spirit into the inner meaning of an act where other people were just going through the motions.

When the gift of knowledge is functioning it is powerful communication of the truth of God to our heart. Somebody made the word of God get up off the page and get into our hearts. It could be in preaching, it could be on one to one level. That person speaking by the spirit brings God's word into our life in a dramatic a powerful way. They're not just going through the motions of getting the points across.

The second aspect of the gift of knowledge in the Old Testament was direct knowledge made accessible by the Spirit. The classic example of this is 2 Samuel 12. Nathan comes before David who has sinned with Bathsheba and kills Uriah. He tells David the delightful little story that gets David's dander up.

There was a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had all kinds of sheep. The poor man had one little sheep that he fed at his table, slept in his arms. The rich man has a guest and instead of killing one of his own sheep, he reaches into the poor man's house and pulls out his sheep and kills it. David says that man ought to be killed for doing a thing like that! I'll make him pay back the poor man four times what that lamb was worth. Nathan, a gift of knowledge. He knew what David had done. How did he know that? Nobody else knew. I doubt even Bathsheba knew. Only David and Joab knew that he had been responsible for killing Uriah. But the prophet knew. He had access to information and he laid his finger right on David's life.

By that gift of knowledge he shows that the gift of knowledge not only operated in regard to the knowledge of a past deed, but Nathan goes on to read David's future and says the consequences of that in your life are such that the sword is never going to depart out of your house and your wives are going to be given to others. Drastic word. The gift of knowledge in operation in the Old Testament setting.

Knowledge in the ministry of Jesus. Colossians 2:3 tells us that "In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." By the way, the Lord did not give us knowledge that is scientific or technical in nature. He could have told us how to make a computer 2000 years ago but he chose not to impart that kind of knowledge. What does it mean then "in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The Lord came to give us knowledge of God. That's where we're most efficient. He possessed knowledge of the scripture. He possessed knowledge of God. And he possessed knowledge of the human life. He himself knew what was in man.

The general content of his utterance of knowledge is seen in things like the Beatitudes where he knows what it is that will make a life productive and happy and useful and joyful. He ticks off the eight integral qualities of human personality without which no one can function successfully in the kingdom of God or in life. The exercise of knowledge.

But he also has special knowledge and insight such as when he puts his finger on the problem of the rich young ruler and identifies his problem as loving the things that he had rather than the relationship with God he could enjoy. There are times when the gift of knowledge functions and like Jesus a person will put his finger on a problem.

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Jesus exercises his unusual knowledge of something that was not known. He sees Nathaniel under the fig tree. John 1. He foretells Peter that Peter is going to deny him. Another exercise of the gift of knowledge.

Knowledge by the way is always for producing some kind of result. The gift of knowledge, the utterance of knowledge is never so that we can just have information for information sake. It's not idle knowledge. It's knowledge that has consequences on our moral and spiritual activity.

The fourth dimension of the gift of knowledge is knowledge in the early church. In the early church it can have three different context again paralleling it's use in the Corinthians, the Old Testament ministry of Jesus. Knowledge can be simply speaking forth the truth of God. Knowing God well enough to speak forth his truth. Being in on knowing God's truth. John 14:26. "But the counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance."

Ray Steadman, a non charismatic, lays his hand I think on the fundamental use of the gift of knowledge when he says that the gift of knowledge is primarily the ability to go through the word of God and see what is there and to set forth in a systematic way the knowledge of what God wants man to know. That's the primary use of the gift of knowledge.

Donald Gee, the classical Pentecostal writer, speaking of the gift of knowledge says that it is necessary for the office of teaching to function. It is intolerable that the gift of teaching should be relegated to natural ability. It must function with the insight of the spirit and to divorce a teacher from the gift of knowledge is to leave the knowledge without a commensurate spiritual gift. Therefore many times the gift of knowledge may be actually in operation through anointed exposition and proclamation of the word of God where we will go away perhaps saying, "Were any gifts of the Spirit in operation in the church today?" And because there was no gift of tongues we might assume there were no gifts in operation today. When in fact the gift of knowledge might have been very much in operation in the body.

The gift of knowledge can also bring a special insight into the meaning of an event. Acts 10:47-48 shows us such a moment. Peter is left astounded that the Gentile Cornelius and his family have been baptized in the Spirit. On the basis of what has happened he says in a word of knowledge "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." Nobody had ever been initiated into the religious community of Israel of which Christianity was the first to depart without having been circumcised, without having made a pledge to keep dietary laws and the like. Yet here's Peter speaking by a word of knowledge. Special insight into the meaning of an event.

A third function of knowledge in the book of Acts is direct knowledge of information available only through the Spirit. Acts 5. Ananias and Sappira. "You've not lied to me. You've lied to the Holy Spirit." Direct functioning of the gift of knowledge.

I might say that the popular use of the gift of knowledge which identifies people in the body as being ill, while I do not question as a legitimate gift of the Spirit and a legitimate exercise of the gift of knowledge, nevertheless does not have precedent within the New Testament.

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We've looked at the gift of knowledge and the gift of wisdom. How do we exercise these gifts? It is just not sufficient to have information on them. Let's look at their exercise. I'd like to give 7 insights into the exercise of these spiritual gifts.

1. The utterance of wisdom and the utterance of knowledge are not necessarily given to all. Paul says to one comes this gift, to another comes this gift. In any given situation not all will have the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge to speak. However all of us are called to grow in wisdom and knowledge. Just because we don't have a particular utterance of wisdom or utterance of knowledge for an occasion does not mean that we can be unlearned and unwise in the scriptures for the rest of time and settle back and let other people be more knowledgeable and learned in the Lord. It simply means that the particular functioning of this gift, the utterance of the Spirit.

A lot of people make a great deal of difference between *logos* and *rahma* and says *rahma* is the short word of God and *logos* is kind of the longer thing. Yet here it's not the *rahma* of the Spirit. It's the *logos* of wisdom and the *logos* of knowledge that are being employed. There's been an over emphasis on the differences between these two words when many times in the Greek are simply synonyms for one another.

2. The gifts of wisdom and knowledge share common ground. That is to say a person who functions in one area like the gift of wisdom may also be functioning with the gift of knowledge. Just like when you deal with faith, miracles, and healings these kind of seem to run together. If a person is having healing, faith is associated with that. And isn't healing a miracle? So it can be some overlap among them. Like overlap between tongues and interpretation. Paul says if you give an utterance of tongues in public and no one is there to interpret, pray that you'll get the interpretation. So those gifts can function simultaneously in a person. They share common ground.

3. These gifts frequently function with offices. Especially wisdom and knowledge appear to function with the calling to be a teacher, an elder, a pastor or a counselor. If you're in those functions in the body where you have spiritual oversight of people or you operate as the head of the household or a person who exercises spiritual care over other people. These gifts can be integral and vital to exercising proper spiritual care.

4. In exercising these gifts they are subject to several things. These gifts when exercised are always subject to the written word of God. No one can have an utterance of wisdom or knowledge, which contradicts God's truth. Secondly, they are subject to the judgment of the church. One must sense that the saints are in agreement. And third, the utterance of wisdom and knowledge are to correspond to reality. When there is an exercise of knowledge and God has given someone insight where we're meeting as a body about some need that that always be confirmed at least on a personal basis so that I have the certainty that I am exercising the gift properly. If I start exercising one of the manifestations of the gift such as insight into things that are not known except by the Spirit then I won't know whether I'm off in fantasy world or if I'm expressing reality.

5. These gifts depend upon taking the word of God into our lives. You will more effectively function in the utterance of wisdom and knowledge if you keep taking God's word into your life. Psalm 103 has a devastating phrase "He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the

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children of Israel.” The people at large only saw what God did. But Moses understood who God was and why he was acting the way he was. The person whose pursuing true knowledge and true wisdom will want to get past what God is doing into an insight into God himself.

6. We should be prayerfully open to others around us where the exercise of these gifts are really needed. Who do you know that needs wisdom and that needs knowledge? Using the book of Acts function of wisdom we can identify people that need wisdom. Those without the Lord need the wisdom of the gospel. And therefore the gift of wisdom can to them proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. How wide and long and high and deep is Christ’s love for us.

In knowing how to strike up a conversation with someone who doesn’t know the Lord, one of the things that is high on the priority list can be “Lord, give me an utterance of wisdom that can be used by your Spirit to open the door in their life.”

Wisdom is also practical application of knowledge to life. There are people who need practical applications of knowledge to life.

God can help us bring helping words to other people as we pray about them and think about them. God can show us how to get insight into some of the rough edges of one another’s personality to help one another be a more full person in the Lord.

The gift of wisdom can also be used as we look at people who are in dilemmas and emergencies. What possibly can we say in a situation like that? When there’s been a loss or tragedy really ask the Lord to help you not to say stupid things. God can help give us real guidance in dilemmas and emergencies.

Also, we can look at persons who need counsel for personal and interpersonal problems.

Exercising the gift of knowledge, there are people who need to understand God’s truth in their life. We can help them. There may be other situations where God by the Spirit gives us access to information we would not humanly know. Sometimes he will give us special insight into the meaning of an event. Joseph had that in his life where he said to his brothers, “You meant it for evil but God meant it for good.” I think that wasn’t the first time Joseph thought that. I would suspect that that kept him through all the tough times. He knew that god s going to bring it for good.

7. A seventh step in exercising the spiritual gifts if you don’t know somebody else that has the need of the utterance of wisdom and knowledge, why not start on yourself? Where do you need wisdom? What practical situations are you wrestling with? Could you spend time in prayer and the word of God and listen? We do wrong if we think of prayer as always talking to God. There is a moment of being silent and listening to what God is telling us in our heart when we are praying, when we are absorbing God’s word. When we are meditating our heart and mind are in the right place and if we’ll be quiet and still, God will begin to create a sense of direction and wholeness in our life.

But it may be that we need some practical application of knowledge to life. That we need some effective guidance, that we need some incisive counsel, that we need some special insight into the meaning of event. And God can help us have those things as we open our own lives to

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experience these gifts being blessing ourselves. As we pray for God to give us insight through an utterance of wisdom or an utterance of knowledge.

I mentioned at the beginning that youth especially needed these gifts of wisdom and knowledge. Why? Because you young people are making far more important decisions than us older folk. Basically what I'm going to do tomorrow is pretty much decided unless there is an emergency. I'm living in the after effect of all the major decisions that were made sometime between the ages of ten and twenty. That's why I said wouldn't it be wonderful if you had the wisdom of a forty year old in the mind of a sixteen year old.

What are youth deciding? You're deciding your values. What's important to you. Where your emphasis is going to be. Who you're going to give your life to. Whether you're going to really serve the Lord with your whole heart or whether you're going to opt out for a materialistic kind of culture. Whether you're going to be a really fervent Christian or whether you're going to be half hearted or whether you can't wait to get out of the church when you're grown up and do your own thing and get away from your parents' faith. A lot of values are being decided. You need wisdom and knowledge in making those kind of value decisions.

You, as young people, are developing disciplines in your life. What kind of spiritual disciplines? What kind of personal disciplines will you have? What kind of disciplines even in terms of your conduct? The way you handle your immediate life space. Whether you're going to live in sloppy environment or an orderly environment. Whether you're going to make your bed in the morning or leave it unmade. These decisions are going to dog you for the rest of your life. The implications of them. If you live sloppy now then three kids later you're going to live that decision out. What kind of disciplines are you going to have? Can you be open to asking the Holy Spirit to give you a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge and insight into what disciplines you can build your life firmly on?

What sort of friends will you have? That's another critical decision of youth. What kind of people will I go with? There are some people that can help you develop as a person and other people will pull you down. There are other people who can give you counsel on friends.

Where will you go to college, if you go to college? Or what will your vocation be? Why should a person decide what their vocation is going to be by the time they're a freshman in college? That's an awfully young age to get locked into a rut.

Who are you going to marry? Or are you going to get married?

If you make errors in building your values, your disciplines, your friends, your vocation and your marriage you're going to live with a lot of painful things in your life that God would like to spare you from.

And too, if you've made some of those painful errors God has the wisdom and knowledge for you now to help you become whole. But don't think of wisdom and knowledge as something all of us gray heads are supposed to have and young people get the action gifts of faith and miracles and the like. Ask God to give you insight and give you wisdom.

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Our Father, thank you for this evening we can share together. Thank you for your love. Lord, all of us face dilemmas and moments in life when we don't know what to do. There are a lot of young people here that face the future and do not know exactly what is really ahead of them. Do not know which direction to turn, what to emphasize. The beautiful thing about knowing you is that if we lack wisdom we can come to you and you give liberally and don't chew us out for asking. I pray for the young people here that are really asking, Lord, what do you want in my life. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to marry? Who do you want me to marry? I pray that to all of their hearts you'll impart utterances of wisdom and knowledge. Not that someone else will come up to them and say, you're supposed to marry so and so. But that you will settle in their hearts the values, the understanding, the perceptions, the attitudes, the goals that come from your heart right to theirs. Lead them in your way Lord. Give them real wisdom and give them knowledge and insight into your word and your name and your nature in their own life. We thank you, Lord. We thank you that the Spirit is active in our lives. The Spirit is active in this church body. And your gifts are actively functioning and we seek and desire these gifts. We realize that Paul tells us that we are to earnestly desire spiritual gifts. He commends us for earnestly desiring them. Lord, you often give the gifts on the basis of our desire. We make our desire wide open to you. We humbly ask this, Lord, in your name. Amen.