

Prophecy, Discernment, Wisdom, and Knowledge

Series: Gifts of the Spirit

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Key Scriptures

- 1 Corinthians 1:7
- 1 Corinthians 12:8–10
- 1 Corinthians 13
- 1 Corinthians 14:3, 26, 29, 32–33, 40
- James 3:17

God does not simply want a gifted Church. He wants a gifted and healthy Church. Spiritual gifts are meant to operate under the authority of Scripture, guided by discernment, expressed through love, and used in an orderly way that strengthens the Body of Christ.

Gifts Are Tools, Not Trophies

- Spiritual gifts are not given to make us appear more spiritual. They are tools God uses to work through His people and build His Church.
- The Corinthian church was not lacking spiritual gifts. They experienced prophecy, tongues, knowledge, wisdom, faith, and miraculous gifts—but they were also struggling with disorder and dysfunction.
- A gift can genuinely come from God and still be handled incorrectly by people. That is why Scripture teaches us not only to desire and use spiritual gifts, but also how to use them well.

Prophecy

- Biblical prophecy is not primarily about predicting the future. It is speaking what God gives for the benefit of others.

“The one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.” — 1 Corinthians 14:3

- Prophecy should never be about proving how spiritual someone is. Its purpose is to strengthen, encourage, and comfort others.
- Scripture also tells the Church to carefully weigh what is spoken. We should not blindly accept something simply because a person begins with, “God told me.”
- A prophetic message should be tested:
 - Does it agree with Scripture?
 - Does it point people toward Jesus?
 - Does it strengthen the Church?
 - Does it produce godly fruit?
- A spiritual experience never outranks Scripture.

Discernment

- Discernment is the Holy Spirit-given ability to recognize what is truly from God and what is not.
- Not everything that appears spiritual comes from God. Not every open door is His door. Not every opportunity is His assignment. Not every voice is His voice, and not every emotional experience is the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Discernment asks where something is coming from. Is it God, human emotion, personal desire, cultural pressure, or deception?
- Prophecy and discernment are meant to work together. One person may speak, but the Church is instructed to weigh what is said. No one becomes an unquestioned authority simply because they claim to possess a spiritual gift.

A Word of Wisdom

- Wisdom is more than knowing facts.
- Knowledge says, “Here is what I know.” Wisdom says, “Here is what we should do with what we know.”
- Godly wisdom brings clarity rather than confusion. James 3:17 describes wisdom from heaven as pure, peace-loving, considerate, and submissive.
- If something presented as wisdom produces arrogance, manipulation, division, or disorder, we should question whether it truly reflects the wisdom of God.

A Word of Knowledge

- A word of knowledge occurs when the Holy Spirit gives someone insight they could not have gained naturally.

- As with every spiritual gift, its purpose matters. God does not reveal something about another person so they can be embarrassed, exposed, or controlled. He gives insight so people can be helped, encouraged, and led toward truth.

The Holy Spirit Brings Power and Order

“God is not a God of disorder but of peace.” — 1 Corinthians 14:33

- Paul did not tell the Corinthian believers to stop using spiritual gifts. He told them to use the gifts correctly and in an orderly way.
- Some churches become afraid of anything supernatural. Others become so focused on supernatural manifestations that they lose sight of their purpose. Scripture gives us a healthier way: welcome the gifts while remaining grounded in truth, wisdom, discernment, and order.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit does not require the absence of order. He does not take away our ability to exercise wisdom or self-control. He empowers, leads, prompts, and speaks through us.
- The same Spirit who gives supernatural gifts also develops supernatural character.
- Gift without character can become dangerous.

The Standard Is Whether It Builds the Church

“Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.” — 1 Corinthians 14:26

- This is the standard for every spiritual gift.
- The question is not:
 - Did people notice me?
 - Did everyone see how spiritual I am?
 - Did I get an opportunity to demonstrate my gift?
- The question is: **Did it build up the Body of Christ?**
- Our gifts are not primarily for us. They are given for the good of others.

Gifts, Love, and Order

- First Corinthians 13 sits between Paul’s teaching on gifts in chapters 12 and 14 for a reason.
 - Chapter 12: Gifts
 - Chapter 13: Love
 - Chapter 14: Order

- This gives us a clear framework:
 - Gifts without love become self-centered.
 - Gifts without order become chaotic.
 - Gifts expressed through love and order build the Church.
- That is the goal.

Key Statements

- Spiritual gifts aren't trophies. They're tools.
- God doesn't just want a gifted Church. God wants a gifted and healthy Church.
- A spiritual experience never outranks Scripture.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit does not mean the absence of order.
- The same Holy Spirit who gives supernatural gifts also develops supernatural character.
- Gift without character can become dangerous.
- Gifts with love and order build the Church.

Reflection and Application

Consider these questions this week:

- Am I more interested in spiritual gifts themselves or in the people those gifts are meant to serve?
- Do I test spiritual claims against Scripture, or accept them simply because they sound spiritual?
- Does the way I use my gifts reflect love, humility, wisdom, and self-control?
- Is my gift strengthening the Church or drawing attention to me?
- Where might God want to use me to encourage, comfort, guide, or help someone this week?

Ask the Holy Spirit to develop both His gifts and His character within you. Then look for an opportunity to use what He has given you in a way that lovingly strengthens someone else.