



Resourcing for Prayer Network
Guidelines
SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE (5)
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This month we will look at two more 'Manifestations of the Spirit' which have importance for the church and especially for small groups. They start the list found in 1 Corinthians 12 - the 'Message of Wisdom' and the 'Message of Knowledge'. When they operate correctly, they are invariably linked together in the same way as 'Prophecy and Distinguishing between Spirits', and 'Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues'.

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

From the beginning of time everyone has desired Knowledge. Eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16) brought about death and the downfall of humanity. This led to Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden which was the epitome of the perfect existence in union with God. But knowledge sought and gained without understanding and wisdom is useless and can be destructive in the same way as can wisdom in isolation which has no basis in facts. **Knowledge is knowing the facts - wisdom is knowing what to do with these facts.** We can see them as two parts of fulfilling God's vision - the information and the strategy.

God's Desires

God is omnificent, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and he is eager to help us to understand more and more of the wonderful world that he has created and in which he has placed us for a period of time. But knowledge and wisdom are revealed to us in the best way as we give ourselves to understanding more and more of his purposes. They are often given by a continuing revelation as we mature and align our thinking more and more with his. We are only able to grasp a small portion of all that there is to know at any one time and our God knows this and is patient but he is longing for us to keep on growing in understanding - and with this comes wisdom. God longs for us to come closer to him and to deepen our relationship.

As we read and study God's word we see that throughout history Israel's leaders prayed to God for Wisdom and Knowledge in order that they could lead their people in the right ways. Solomon is the usual example that springs to mind (2 Chronicles 1.10) but many others demonstrated this in their leadership too. Today prayer (and even believing in God at all) is often regarded as a sign of weakness as men and women forget the origin of all their knowledge and begin to rely on their own strength. In the modern secular world human-beings strive after knowledge and wisdom often with motives that no longer recognise the giver of all good gifts. But we are reminded that *'the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom'* (1 Corinthians 1.25),

Looking Back

I remember a time when 'Religious Knowledge' was an important part of every child's education and I can still remember the Authorised Version of significant passages that we had to commit to memory for highly regarded Scripture examinations! My understanding was limited then but it has

grown over time with God's help and the shared understanding coming from other versions of the Bible. Many of today's generation do not have that advantage as RK changed to RI (Religious Instruction) and then to RE (Religious Education) and then to an understanding of multi-faith with no need to believe anything. Now in many areas and with many people it is no longer given pride of place in the schoolroom or in the home and it is up to the meetings of God's people in the church and in small groups to recapture any sense of God's presence and pass it on to the next generation.

The Significance of Knowledge

The book of Proverbs starts by giving us a purpose for life and helps us to understand that *'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and it is only fools who despise wisdom and discipline'* - 9.10 adds *'the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding'*. 2.10 even says that *'Knowledge will be pleasant to your soul'*. 19.2 reminds us that *'it is not good to have zeal without knowledge'*. A discerning heart seeks it (15.14), wise men store it up (10.14), every prudent man acts out of it (13.16), discretion is linked with it (8.12), and we are advised to seek it rather than choice gold (8.10) and the recommendations go on..... Ecclesiastes reminds us that *'the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom fills the life of the possessor'* (6.12).

.... And Wisdom

Wisdom is supreme (Proverbs 4.7) and more precious than rubies (Proverbs 8.11). It is *'proved right by her actions'* (Matthew 11.19) when disputes arise over whose ways are best. There is a healthy reminder that humility comes **with** wisdom (Proverbs 11.2) and **from** wisdom (James 3.13) and a further entreaty that *'if any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God'* (James 1.5). Paul reminds us (1 Corinthians 1.17) that using human wisdom can destroy the power of the cross and in the New Testament Jesus tells his disciples that the knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom have been given to them in a way that he cannot communicate with others and he rebukes the Pharisaic experts in the Jewish law for taking away the key to knowledge and not using it themselves (Luke 11.52).

Specific Manifestations

The acquisition of Knowledge and Wisdom should always be an essential part for all of us in our walk with God - *'a man who loves wisdom brings joy'*. But what about the use of Spiritual Gifts in general and the Spiritual Manifestations mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12?

We are told that *'in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'* (Colossians 2.3) and **specific messages of Knowledge and Wisdom** come to us at times when we most need them. One without the other can cause confusion if we run ahead without waiting for the unity they bring. **A specific word of knowledge requires a word of wisdom to know how to react: a word of wisdom needs a focal point in fact or knowledge.**

Finding Examples

It should be noted that these specific messages are always given to individuals for furthering the common good (1 Corinthians 12.7) and not for raising anyone's ego. There are numerous illustrations of when these manifestations have been effective in the Bible. The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5.1-9) emphasises the need for adherence to the right values, whereas Acts 9.11 records Paul having a word confirmed by the action of another Ananias in Damascus. Read again the stories of the taking of Jericho (Joshua 6), Jehoshaphat defeating Ammon and Moab (2 Chronicles 20) or Paul being sent from Asia to the Gentiles (Acts 16) and find more for yourselves as you study the word. Share with each other the stories of the experience of believing communities down the centuries. In your small groups ensure that you are open to receiving both wisdom and knowledge in all its dimensions and deepening your walk with the Lord.

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