

Gifts of the Holy Spirit Part 5 “Discerning of Spirits”

First of all, let’s finish discussing the gift of the word of wisdom before we move into the gift of discerning of spirits.

Remember that the gift of the word of wisdom is one of the revelation gifts because it’s a gift that reveals something.

We defined the gift of the word of wisdom as revelation by the Spirit concerning the purpose and plan in the mind and the will of God for someone’s life.

- Word of wisdom in the New Testament
 - Word of wisdom used to warn of a coming draught and famine (Acts 11:27-30)
 - Because of this word of wisdom, they were able to help those that would be affected.
 - Word of wisdom warned of coming persecution for Paul’s ministry (Acts 21:8-11)
 - Notice in the scripture about the four daughters prophesying. Yes, women can operate in the gifts as well.
 - Also notice that Agabus did something that demonstrated what was going to happen in the future. He may have seen himself doing this to Paul and then get revelation of what it was.
 - This has happened to me many times while giving a word to somebody.
 - Most likely this word of wisdom was released through the vehicle of prophecy all though Agabus could’ve just been sharing what the Holy Spirit showed him.
 - After this word was released, we see in verses 12-14 that everyone there that heard that word tried to stop Paul from going. But when he couldn’t be persuaded, they stopped because they realized this was the will of God or the plan of God for Paul’s future.
 - Word of wisdom about coming danger and destruction Acts 27:10-11.
 - Paul was a prisoner on a ship heading for Rome. He appealed to Caesar and was going to stand before him and defend the gospel.
 - Paul received a word of wisdom about the boat being destroyed and the men’s lives being put in danger.
 - Had this word been believed, they wouldn’t have went through the storm they went through.
 - An assuring word of wisdom in the middle of the storm. Acts 27:23-24
 - Paul receives a word of wisdom through an angel about the plan of God to save his life through this storm and the lives of those on the ship.
 - This was administered to Paul through an angel.

- When he spoke it to the men, he wasn't prophesying, he was just sharing with them what the angel had revealed.
- More of the word of wisdom revealed v25-26
 - This lets us know that more was said from that angel about this storm. The angel revealed to Paul exactly how they would be saved and part of it was being cast on a certain Island.
- V30-31 lets us know that the angel probably gave Paul some instructions saying that the men must stay on the ship in order to be saved.
- Conditional words of wisdom
 - Sometimes words of wisdom are conditional based on the person's obedience receiving the word.
 - In 2 Kings 20:1 the prophet Isaiah gives Hezekiah a word of wisdom about dying.
 - Then we see in verses 2-6 that Hezekiah repents and because of his repentant heart God turned Isaiah around before he could get out of the courtyard and sends him back in to give him another word of wisdom about God adding 15 years to his life.
 - So, we see from this that the first word of wisdom didn't come to pass because of Hezekiah's obedience and submission to God.
 - This can also happen in the negative. You can receive a good word of wisdom that doesn't come to pass because you don't continue to walk with God and trust His word.

The gift of discerning of Spirits

- This is the third gift of the revelation gifts.
 - Of course, we've already discussed the gift of the word of knowledge and the gift of the word of wisdom.
- The gift of the discerning of spirits gives supernatural insight into the spirit world.
 - To discern means to perceive by hearing or seeing.
 - So, the discerning of spirits is hearing or seeing in the realm of spirits.
 - It is the ability to not just hear and see spirits but also be able to tell what kind of spirit is behind a supernatural manifestation.
- Let's discuss what the gift of discerning of spirits is not.
 - It is not the gift of discernment.
 - A lot of times what people are calling the gift of discernment is really the gift of the word of knowledge in operation.
 - If you know things about a person place or thing by the Spirit, it's not discernment, it's a word of knowledge.
 - There is no such thing as the gift of discernment. It's the gift of discerning of spirits.

- The gift of discerning of spirits is not the power to discern the character or the faults of others.
 - As a matter of fact, it is forbidden in scripture (Matt 7:1)
 - It's not the gift of discerning of people anyway. It's the gift of discerning of spirits.
 - It's the ability by the Spirit to discern spirits whether they be divine or demonic.
- This gift is not simply the discerning of devils.
 - This gift is not just for discerning evil spirits or demons.
 - This gift is for discerning all the spirits that are included in the spirit world which could mean evil spirits like demons or good spirits like the Holy Spirit, Angels, God the Father or Jesus.
- As far as demons go...
 - I think we need to understand that when the gift of discernment is in operation and revealing demons to us, we will literally see or hear the demon and most likely know what it is.
 - There are other ways the Holy Spirit can reveal to us demons that are in operation.
 - He can reveal them to us through a word of knowledge.
 - He can reveal them to us through an inward witness.
 - But when this is happening, we are most likely not seeing the spirit.
- Demons or flesh?
 - Not everything is a demon but on the flip side of that not everything is natural either.
 - This is why there are gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us discern whether or not something is being caused by a demon or something is just happening by a natural cause.
 - For instance, there can be sickness that is naturally occurring or there can be spirits of infirmities or demons causing the sickness in someone's body. (Luke 13:11)
 - This is important to know because you can't cure a spiritual problem through natural means. A pill won't get rid of demon working in your body. He must be cast out.
 - Also, there are works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. These works of the flesh can also be spirits at work in someone's life. But you need the gifts to discern whether or not it's flesh at work or a spirit because you can't cast out the flesh and you can't crucify a demon.

- Many times, people stay bound because they are trying to cast out envy or hatred when really, it's the flesh that needs to be brought under subjection to the spirit.
 - Now if the flesh isn't brought under subjection, it can open doors to spiritual bondage.
 - But on the other side of that you can't bring a demon under subjection. There are times in order to get delivered you need the demon causing the issue to be driven out.
- Discerning the similitude of God
 - The gift of the discerning of spirits is also used to see the similitude or likeness or resemblance of God.
 - Exodus 33:20-23 Moses was seeing into the spirit world and was able to see the similitude of God. This is the gift of discerning of spirits in operation.
 - Isaiah 6:1 is another example of the prophet Isaiah seeing the similitude of God in a vision.
 - All throughout the Bible men didn't actually see God but they saw a similitude or likeness of Him through a vision by the gift of discerning of spirits.
 - Many people today have claimed to have seen Jesus in a vision come to them. If this has occurred, it is the gift of the discerning of spirits in operation.
- Discerning of spirits behind an operation.
 - Not every supernatural manifestation is from the Holy Spirit.
 - Evil spirits can manifest supernatural power as well and can also imitate the Holy Spirit.
 - For example: tongues and prophecy can be manifested and imitated by a demon.
 - So, it's good to be able to discern the spirits behind supernatural manifestations.
 - Acts 16:16-19 this was most likely the discerning of spirits in operation. This woman gave no indication in the natural that she had a demon by what she was saying. But Paul probably sensed it in his spirit as he was grieved and probably saw the spirit because he spoke directly to the spirit not the woman.
 - We don't necessarily need the gift of the discerning of spirits to know when the wrong spirit is in operation. We can know by one just knowing the word of God and recognizing when things don't line up with scripture. But also by an inward witness of the Holy Spirit.

- The Holy Spirit can warn your spirit that something isn't right, and you just know it down deep inside.
- This is something that every believer can have in their life. (Romans 8:14)
- But not every believer will operate in the gift of the discerning of spirits.
- Word of Knowledge verses the discerning of spirits.
 - You can have a spirit revealed to you through the word of knowledge which is the way that I mostly recognize evil spirits in operation.
 - But the difference is when the word of knowledge reveals them, you won't see a vision of them. You will just know what they are and where they are operating by revelation knowledge.