

# The Word of Knowledge

by Chuck Smith

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*Chuck Smith's sermon explores the concept of the word of knowledge as a supernatural gift from the Holy Spirit, emphasizing its biblical examples and practical applications in believers' lives.*

**Scripture:** 2 Kings 5:20-27, 2 Kings 6:9-12, Job 11:7, Matthew 16:13-17, John 1:47-50, Acts 5:3-4, Acts 8:19-23, 1 Corinthians 12:8, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Ephesians 1:17-18

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Gifts"

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## Description

Chuck Smith discusses the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, particularly focusing on the 'word of knowledge' as described in 1 Corinthians 12:8. He emphasizes that this gift is a supernatural insight given by the Holy Spirit, distinct from mere knowledge acquired through study. Through biblical examples, such as Elisha and Peter, Smith illustrates how the word of knowledge reveals hidden truths and thoughts, often leading to significant spiritual outcomes. He encourages believers to remain open to the Holy Spirit's guidance and to seek a deeper relationship with God, while also stressing the importance of love in exercising spiritual gifts.

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## Transcript

We would like to continue our study on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Presently we are dealing with the manifestations of the Holy Spirit as they are recorded in the first section in 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul gives us a partial listing. We will go over to Romans and Ephesians to look at further listings of the gifts of the Spirit. But first in verse 8,

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

Now we talked about the word of wisdom in our last Thursday session that we had with you. And we pointed out that wisdom was the proper application of knowledge. Wisdom is probably preferable to knowledge. Like someone said, "When you ain't got no education, you just gotta use your brains." Wisdom is the proper application of knowledge. Knowledge in and of itself without wisdom can be extremely dangerous. I think this is being demonstrated to us more all the time as we see a lot of knowledge in the world today. They have the knowledge to create superweapons and the knowledge to do all kinds of things, but not much wisdom. And unfortunately they do not have enough wisdom not to use some of these weapons that are being created.

But then following the word of wisdom, there is that word of knowledge. I believe that the word of knowledge is knowledge that is given to us supernaturally. It is a knowledge of things that you would not know through a natural acquisition or study.

I believe that in 2 Kings 5, in the Old Testament this gift was manifested in the life of Elisha, as God would give to him supernatural knowledge of various things. You remember Naaman, who was a captain of the Syrian army, had heard that there was a prophet in Israel through whom he could have a cure of his leprosy. So the king of Syria who loved this captain very much, sent him with a message to the king of Samaria basically saying, "Heal my servant, my captain whom I love." And when the king of Samaria got that message he ripped his clothes. He said, "Look at how this guy is trying to pick a fight. I am not God. How can I heal this leper?" So Elisha sent and said, "Send him over here. He will know that there is a prophet of God in Israel."

So Naaman came. You remember the story. And Elisha sent the servant out with a message, "Just go down to the Jordan River and dip in it seven times and you will be cleansed of your leprosy." And Naaman was extremely upset. The prophet did not even come out to greet him. He was an important man. Did the prophet know how important a man he was? And he was just fuming on his way back--just fuming. "Dip in that muddy Jordan River, are you kidding? We have good, pure, clean rivers up in Damascus. Why should I dip in the Jordan?"

And finally one of Naaman's little handmaidens said, "Well look, what is it going to hurt? You have come this far. We are coming to the Jordan River. It cannot hurt anything and who knows, maybe something will happen." So he was convinced to dip seven times in the Jordan River. And when he came up the seventh time, the leprosy was gone. His skin was normal and cured.

Naaman came back to the prophet and sought to reward the prophet of God, Elisha, with great gifts. And the prophet said, "I will not take anything from you." And just told him to go on his way and rejoice. He made his vow. Naaman said, "I will serve the God of Israel. He will be the God that I will serve. When I go into the house of Rimmon with my king and I bow my head, I will be bowing my head to the true God. I will fulfill my obligation." So Naaman made a real commitment of his life to God.

But you remember the story, as he was heading back to Syria, Elisha's servant, Gehazi, saw all of the rewards that the prophet had turned down. So Gehazi decided that he would go and collect the rewards. And so he went pursuing after Naaman and he made up a story. "After you left a couple of young prophets came along. They needed some help--a little bit of silver and a few changes of clothes and so forth." And Naaman gladly gave it to Gehazi, the servant of Elisha.

We read in 2 Kings 5:20, the man of God said,

Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat [just a little bit] of him.

But notice, the spiritual jargon. Here he is out on a nefarious journey saying, "As the Lord liveth I will go." Watch out for those who are just always saying, "Praise the Lord." It does not always indicate a real commitment.

We read in 2 Kings 5:21-27,

So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?" And he said, "All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, 'Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.'" And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" And he said, "Thy servant went no whither." And he said unto him, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever." And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Now Gehazi did not receive the olive orchards. He did not receive the sheep and the oxen, the vineyards, or the men servants and maid servants. But this was what was in his mind, he thought, "If I just had a couple of talents of silver I could buy me an orchard. I could buy me a vineyard. I could..." And the prophet Isaiah, receiving the Word of knowledge, is just telling him exactly what was going on in his mind--what he was thinking about what he could do with that money. Thus, we have an Old Testament example of the word of knowledge.

Again in 2 Kings 6, when the king of Syria was warring against Samaria and Israel, the king took counsel with his servants saying, in such and such a place we will set up our camp. And so the man of God, Elisha, sent to the king of Israel saying,

Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. [They were setting up an ambush.] And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down." And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, "Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." (2 Kings 6:9-12)

And so, here is an example of the word of knowledge. There is no way that Elisha could know this except by the Holy Spirit revealing it to him--knowledge imparted to him by God. But the word of knowledge, or this gift, is not a reservoir of knowledge that you can just tap into at any time that you desire it. It is a gift of God. It often comes at unexpected times and many times without your even realizing that what you are saying is indeed a word of knowledge from God.

I do not think that Peter had any idea at all when Jesus was asking His disciples,

Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 16:13-17)

Now I do not believe that Peter received any kind of a buzz or sensation or--bzzzz--"Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God." I do not think there was an elevation of the level of the voice, or a tremor in the voice, or anything that would indicate that there was some kind of a supernatural activity that was going on at that moment. And I do not think that even Peter was aware. I mean, he just said, "Well, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." But Jesus acknowledges, "This did not come to you from flesh or blood, but a revelation of the Father."

Now as I was pointing out, the word of knowledge is not a reservoir that we can just tap into at any time. Now it does seem that quite often with Elisha this word of knowledge was demonstrated when God would give him knowledge of things, knowledge of events--a supernatural knowledge. But you remember in 2 Kings 4, when the Shunamite son had passed out in the field and he was brought to his mother and he died. She laid him in the bed and then she headed off for the prophet of God. She told the servants not to slow down but to get to the prophet as fast as they could. "Do not slow down! Do not spare for me! Do not worry about me!"

As the Shunamite woman was coming to the prophet, Elisha looked up and he saw her coming and he sent his servant out to inquire if everything was all right. She said to the servant, "Yes, everything is all right. Get out of the way," and she kept driving towards Elisha. When she came to Elisha, we read that she grabbed him there at Mount Carmel.

And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. (2 Kings 4:25-27)

Now Elisha was sort of surprised at the fact that there was something desperately wrong. "Her spirit is vexed within her, but God has not shown me. God has not told me what it was." So it is not just knowledge that you tap at will. It is something that is given to you by God--a divine revelation or knowledge. It is just there. Though in the moment, it is not something where I just now have all of this knowledge and I can just speak to you about anything.

It is interesting that he was surprised that God had not told him. Now I believe that in my life, on different occasions and at different times, God has spoken to my heart and shown me different things. And when that happens, it is such an exciting experience that I get a real high over the realization that the Lord has shown me something. Now a lot of times, I am not really aware that the Lord is showing me something until after it happens. I get this strong impression that something is going to happen and then it happens. I say, "Wow! The Lord showed me. Oooh, this is glorious! I knew it!" And I get that excitement that the Lord actually showed me something.

Here in 2 Kings, Elisha was surprised when the Lord did not show him something. I am always surprised when He does. But he was surprised that something was going on and the Lord had not told him what it was.

Surely in the life of Jesus we see this knowledge manifested. Of course He was the Son of God, yet in coming to earth, He did lay aside some of the aspects of deity, being limited in a body. And He does speak of the fact that the time of His return was knowledge that was not privy to even the angels of heaven or

even to Him at that point in His limited state, but that it was something that was only known of the Father.

We do see, when Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus,

Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. (John 1:47-50)

We read that Jesus did not commit Himself to men because He knew all men. And He did not need for people to testify to Him of people. He knew what was in men. In John 16:30 they said,

Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

But this is the gift of the word of knowledge and we see its manifestations in the lives of the apostles. One manifestation we already mentioned was with Peter there at Caesarea Philippi. But then in Acts 5, when Ananias and his wife Sapphira had sold their property and brought the money to lay at the apostles' feet, they made a pretense of giving the whole amount. In reality they had decided together to hold back a part of the price that they received for their property.

Now the sin, as is definitely pointed out by the Scripture, was not in the fact that they did not bring in all the profits. Peter takes special care to note that while the property was theirs, they were under no obligation to sell it. And when they sold it they were under no obligation to bring the money in. But it was the hypocrisy--it was the pretense of giving everything to God, when in reality they were holding some back from God. This is the same kind of a pretense that we see many times today where people are making a pretense of giving everything to God, when in reality they are holding back much from God.

So Peter said, "Why have you decided in your heart that you were going to lie to the Holy Spirit? You have not lied unto man, but you have lied unto God" (Acts 5:3-4). And so this is the word of knowledge, whereby Peter knew that they were in a conspiracy to hold back a portion of the money.

I think, perhaps, in the manifestations of the Spirit, we try to classify the gifts. And I think that often there is sort of a crossover between the gift of discernment and the word of knowledge and also between the gift of prophecy and the word of knowledge. And we find when Philip had gone to Samaria and was preaching Christ, many believed and were baptized seeing the miracles that were wrought. When Peter and John came up to Samaria that the believers might receive the Holy Spirit, Simon, a man who had been baptized--formerly a man who was noted for his powers and abilities to perform magical feats--now seeing Philip and the power of God, he believed was baptized. Now as Simon observes Peter and John laying their hands on the people, and as these people are receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, he came and said,

Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness. (Acts 8:19-23)

There was this resentment for the fact that Simon had lost this power over the people that he once had, hoping to regain it perhaps through the powers of the Spirit, and thinking that perhaps he could purchase

this power. So Peter was reading what was in the heart of the man. This is the word of knowledge, the understanding or knowledge of what was going on in his heart. Though there was an outward, visible kind of profession, yet within the heart this stuff was churning and by word of knowledge Peter exposes what is going on in the fellow's heart.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he records two prayers for the church in Ephesus. In chapter 1 he prays for them,

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. (Ephesians 1:17)

Now you cannot really know God apart from the Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of God. One of Job's friends asked,

Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? (Job 11:7)

And the answer is: you cannot find God by an intellectual quest. The knowledge of God comes as the result of a revelation of the Holy Spirit. And so that is what Paul is praying for, that they might have this spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. (Ephesians 1:18-19)

In writing to the Galatians, Paul declared that the gospel that he was preaching unto them did not come to him by men, and neither did he learn it of men. But it came to him as a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit. This knowledge of the gospel that Paul obtained came by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Now this gift of the word of knowledge often times happens during the ministry of the teaching of the Word of God. Quite often while I am teaching, the Holy Spirit will suddenly give me an understanding of a passage of Scripture that I have never really seen before. While I am just sharing, there comes this understanding--this knowledge of what God has declared or said--this insight and knowledge. And I often just share that knowledge or that insight that God gives me. I personally get as excited over the truth, perhaps even more so than you, because I know that it came as an inspiration from God at that moment. You might think, "Well he found that in some book somewhere." But I know that this is something that the Holy Spirit has just opened up my understanding to and so I get really excited. I get excited over the truth that the Holy Spirit is revealing knowledge to my heart.

Quite often when I am seeking to illustrate a particular point, I will sort of make up a hypothetical case to illustrate a particular point. But as I am making up this hypothetical case, quite often it is hitting someone right between the eyes. They are saying, "That is me! Who told him about me? How did he find out?" We have actually had people who have brought their friends to church who have called us later and said, "You know, our friends will not speak to us anymore. We brought them to church Sunday and they are certain that we called you up before the service and notified you all about what they were doing because you so nailed them Sunday. And what you said just hit exactly where they were and we tried to convince them that we did not call you, but they will not believe it. They are sure that we called you."

We were studying 2nd Peter one Sunday night, examining false prophets and I was talking about paper ministries. There are fellows who just have a mailing list and a computer and they mail out letters to their

mailing list across the country. In fact you can buy these mailing lists. And they are sending out these mailing lists across the country with these computerized letters telling about their ministry. They are soliciting funds and telling how they are going into the inner city, or they are doing this, or they are doing that. They are telling all about the ministry, which only exists on paper.

And I said these fellows live down on Lido Isle in these big homes. They have fancy yachts in front of their places. They drive Cadillac convertibles and wear white shoes. And they are just living high off of the proceeds of this mailing list. They really do not have any ministry at all. It is just all soliciting funds. And they do not have a true ministry at all.

And that was on a Sunday night that I was talking about it. We were going through 2nd Peter and on Monday morning I got a call.

The secretary said, "This guy sounds awfully mad. He wants to talk to you."

I said, "Well put him on."

And so he said, "I want you to know that I have a legitimate ministry."

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "You know what I am talking about. Last night you were telling the people that my ministry was not legitimate." He said, "You know I live down on Lido Island. I drive that Cadillac convertible." He said, "But I have a ministry. It is a legitimate ministry. I want you to know that."

I said, "Wait a minute. I have never heard of you. I do not know you." I said, "I was just making up a hypothetical case." But I said, "If I were you I would ask the Lord how legitimate your ministry really is."

So this was a manifestation of the word of knowledge. I was not aware I was nailing some guy. He was listening on the radio and I was not aware that I was nailing him.

And so often, as the gift is operating, the person through whom the gift is operating is not really aware at that moment that indeed it is the gift of the word of knowledge that is being exercised. Again I think that there is a tie sometimes with prophecy, when you might be warning someone by saying, "I think what you are doing is dangerous and if you continue this may happen." This can turn out to be sort of a word of knowledge when you find out that this does happen. In other words, you sort of have said or given them a warning about what could take place and then it does take place.

And so it is sort of tied in a sense with a prophecy in the sense of predicting what will happen. Yet at the time you are not really saying, "This is going to happen to you," but you are just saying this is what could happen. And often in time it does happen. But that is a little difficult because the supernatural works in such a natural way. And I think where we so often make a mistake is when we think that it is supernatural--we think then it is going to operate in some kind of a supernatural way. And so many times it happens just so naturally that we do not recognize the supernatural in it.

Sometimes the Lord will reveal what is going on in a person's life, as with Peter, in his interaction with Ananias and Simon. The question is: Why would the Lord give you an insight into what is happening in their lives? The word of knowledge sometimes is difficult because you do not know what to do with the knowledge. And many times I think that the Lord gives you that word of knowledge or knowledge of a

situation just so that you will be praying for the situation.

We were pastoring out in Los Serranos at the community church there. And one Sunday my wife said to me, "Honey as I looked at"--and she named a man in the church who was a highly respected man. He had a very important position out there in Pomona Valley and was a great family man with a tremendous personality. And she said, "When I looked at him this morning," she said, "I just felt I knew by the Spirit, as I looked at him--I just saw him in an affair with his secretary." And she said, "It just came to me so strongly." And she said, "I thought, Oh, that is terrible to think that and I should put that out of my mind." But she said, "The thought just keeps coming back to me. He is in an affair with his secretary."

And so a few months later, I received a call and both he and his wife were on the phone. They were on extension phones in their house and all they got out was, "Pastor Chuck," and their voices broke up and they started crying and they could not continue. And so I said, "That is all right. I know what the call is all about." I said, "You have been in an affair with your secretary for the last six months. Come on out. Let's talk about it and pray about it." They were shocked that I knew exactly what was happening. And the Lord had just shown it to my wife. So watch out, the Lord shows her lots of things. It is not easy living with a prophetess!

Personally, I do have some difficulty with what we often see passed off as the word of knowledge. When there is a large group of people and someone says, "I believe that there is someone here tonight who has been very discouraged, and very despondent, and even considering suicide." Well now I dare say, that there probably is someone tonight who is discouraged and despondent in a crowd this large. Now that was not a word of knowledge. But so often we see broad generalizations--someone has a knee that is bothering them. That is me! And to pass that off as word of knowledge, I have a little difficulty with that.

Now let me say that I know that I am as open-minded as I can be. I want to be open-minded but not so open-minded that I am gullible. I want to be open to all that the Spirit is doing and wants to do. And I think that sometimes when people are passing off as spiritual gifts what is not necessarily of the Spirit, it sometimes takes away from the genuine gift. And it closes people to the genuine work of the Spirit because they have seen things that have been done in untoward ways and fashions that have, more or less, closed their minds. And I will frankly confess I have seen a lot of things that have been passed off as spiritual manifestations or spiritual gifts that I am certain were not of the Holy Spirit. He is not the author of confusion and what was going on was thoroughly confused and confusing.

But I have always sought to keep an open mind to the Spirit and not close the door on an area of possible blessing and power from God just because there has been a misuse or abuse in these areas. And I pray that I might always maintain an openness to God, so that He can do whatever He wants to do in me, whenever He wants to do it, and however He wants to do it. I want to be open. And I pray that I am always open unto the Holy Spirit.

I thank God for those experiences that I have with the Holy Spirit and for the relationship that I have with the Holy Spirit. I am grateful for all that the Spirit has done and is doing in my life. But I will frankly confess that I believe that there is much more He would like to do and wants to do--and I want Him to. I want to be fully open to be led by the Spirit, to be used by the Spirit, that the Spirit of God might be manifested through my life in whatever way God desires. So I covet earnestly the best gifts. And yet I seek the more excellent way of walking always in His love. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, though I may have tongues of men and angels, if I do not have love it is meaningless. Though I have all knowledge and can

understand all mysteries, if I do not have love it really does not profit. And so we will go on and we will explore these things. But then we will explore the more excellent way. Now that does not put down the others, you see. It does not negate the other gifts. I still want the others too. I want all that God has. I need all that He has.

Shall we pray.

Father, give to us wisdom and understanding in Your ways. Help us, Lord, to always be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Not only open, Lord, but sensitive and obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Thank You, Lord, for Your faithfulness. Thank You, Lord, that You do speak to our hearts, even though at times we do not respond. Yet Lord, You were there and You were faithful. And for that we give thanks. Now Lord, fill us with the fullness of Your Spirit, until Your Spirit flows forth like a gusher of living water from our lives, touching those around us with Your love. In Jesus' name, Lord. Amen.

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