

STRANG REPORT: Gifts of the Spirit Series: How the Word of Knowledge Works

A word of knowledge gives the facts about a situation, whereas a word of wisdom tells how God wants to deal with it. I remember seeing this in action when I attended one of Kathryn Kuhlman's crusades in Lakeland, Florida, in 1975. I wrote about the experience in *Florida Magazine*, the Sunday magazine of the *Sentinel Star* (now called *Orlando Sentinel*), where I worked at the time.

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Kathryn Kuhlman was well known for "calling out" miracles with a word of knowledge, but I'd never personally seen her do it before attending that crusade. My article described what I saw: "Then, suddenly, she pointed toward the back of the arena. 'Someone with varicose veins has just been healed.' Before that person can respond she says an ear has been healed, then that bursitis has been healed. Christians call this a 'Word of Knowledge,' one of seven New Testament gifts given by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul said this gift gives knowledge to a person about something that has just happened. The announcements of healing in this manner continue off and on for an hour."

At the time, I considered the newspaper to be very liberal and secular. But in today's climate, I doubt an editor would even assign the story, let alone let me describe gifts of the Spirit. (A few months after I wrote about Kuhlman, I started *Charisma* and published a revised version of the article as the

cover story of our second issue.)

One of the most incredible accounts I've heard came from Reinhard Bonnke, the German evangelist who declared, "Africa shall be saved," and whose ministry reached an estimated 79 million before his death in late 2019. I had the privilege of getting to know Bonnke well after he moved his ministry to Orlando in the early 2000s. In his book *Evangelism by Fire*, he explains that we don't always have to know what God is doing when we're given a word of knowledge, we are simply to deliver the message and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

To illustrate the point, Bonnke told an amazing story. He and his brother had grown up in the same household with godly parents, but while Bonnke had chosen to follow Jesus, his brother had not. Instead, his brother had chosen the path of financial success and had an amazing career.

Many years passed, and there was little communication between the brothers. Unknown to Reinhard Bonnke, his brother's wife had left him and his best friend had died of cancer. His life had become meaningless to him. Then he had a vivid dream one night that he was walking on a bridge high in the air. He slipped and started falling.

Bonnke's brother woke up drenched in sweat. Shaken by the dream, he got down on his knees and said, "Lord, You know that I do not even know that You exist, but my brother Reinhard is Your servant. Give me a sign through him that You are alive."

Meanwhile, Bonnke was 6,000 miles away in South Africa. He didn't know anything about his brother's problems or, as he would later learn, that he was considering taking his own life. But early one morning he too had a terrible dream. He saw his brother walking on a bridge high in the air. It was foggy and the bridge had no railings, so Bonnke feared his brother might slip and fall off. His brother continued walking into the fog. In the dream, Bonnke desperately called out his

brother's name. Then he heard his brother's voice crying out from the bottomless depths below the bridge.

Bonnke woke up and asked the Lord the meaning of the dream and sensed God telling him that his brother was on the bridge to eternity and he was to warn him. Bonnke put his reservations aside and immediately wrote his brother a letter, telling him of the dream. He pleaded with his brother to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

A few days before Christmas that year, Bonnke received a letter from his brother in reply. He had accepted Christ and knew that his sins were forgiven. Bonnke said: "When I received that letter, I could not control my emotions, and I just wept for joy. How wonderful the Holy Spirit is! How effective are His gifts! They are God's powerful weapons."

The gifts of the Spirit aren't reserved for a select few who are "super anointed." If we are filled with the Holy Spirit and being led by Him, the gifts should manifest in our lives. God wants His gifts flowing through you; all He needs is your availability. If you will surrender to Him, He will jump-start His power in your life.

Stephen Strang *has seen major changes in the church, the culture and technology since he founded Charisma magazine in 1975. In addition to being CEO of Charisma Media, he hosts a Strang Report podcast live on YouTube and Rumble at 4 p.m. EST every Tuesday and Thursday. His important recent book Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-World is available wherever fine Christian books are sold. You can get a copy signed by the author online at .*