

Gifts of the Spirit

Craig K. Manscill and Derek Mock

Craig K. Manscill is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU. Derek Mock is a graduate student in political science at BYU.

Several doctrines distinguish The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from the other Christian denominations. Perhaps chief among these is the doctrine of continuing revelation—the reality that God still teaches and directs His mortal servants through direct communication as He did in ancient times. We believe in this gift of divine guidance, called revelation, in the lives of the Saints. We also believe in other gifts that come by that same Holy Spirit.¹ The seventh Article of Faith states, “We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.” In addition to believing in these gifts, we believe that the Holy Ghost is the purveyor of these gifts. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “the Holy Ghost is a revelator” and that “no man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations.”² Likewise, the Holy Ghost, being a God, is a healer, a translator, a dispenser of visions, and the active administrator of every spiritual gift (see D&C 46:11).

In *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, the First Presidency writes, “As you learn gospel truths, you will increase in your understanding of Heavenly Father’s eternal plan.”³ Within this valuable reference manual, the Church provides a definition of spiritual gifts as “blessings or abilities that are given by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁴ These abilities given of the Spirit are meant to “strengthen” members of the Church to help them then “bless [and] . . . serve others.”⁵ Although all members do not share an equal number of gifts, to each “faithful member of the Church” is given “at least one of these gifts”⁶—each

member being responsible for some segment of service, great or small, in the Lord's work on the earth.

Many of these gifts are listed in the scriptures:

- Knowledge “that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world” (D&C 46:13).
- The capacity to believe the words of those who testify of Jesus Christ (see D&C 46:14).
- Knowledge of “the differences of administration” (D&C 46:15; see also 1 Corinthians 12:5).
- Knowledge of “the diversities of operations,” which helps us discern whether a teaching influence comes from God or from some other source (D&C 46:16; see also 1 Corinthians 12:6–7).
- The gift of “wisdom,” the ability to use knowledge for righteous purposes (1 Corinthians 12:8; D&C 46:17).
- The gift of “the word of knowledge” (1 Corinthians 12:8; D&C 46:18).
- The ability to teach by the power of the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 10:9–10; see also D&C 46:18).
- The gift of faith (see Moroni 10:11; 1 Corinthians 12:9).
- The gift to “have the faith to be healed” (D&C 46:19) and “to have the faith to heal” (D&C 46:20; see also 1 Corinthians 12:9; Moroni 10:11).
- “The working of miracles” (1 Corinthians 12:10; D&C 46:21; see also Moroni 10:12).
- The gift of prophecy (see 1 Corinthians 12:10; Moroni 10:13; D&C 46:22).
- “The beholding of angels and ministering spirits” (Moroni 10:14).
- “Discerning of spirits” (1 Corinthians 12:10; D&C 46:23).
- The gift to speak in different languages (see 1 Corinthians 12:10; Moroni 10:15; D&C 46:24).
- The gift of “the interpretation of languages” (1 Corinthians 12:10; D&C 46:25; see also Moroni 10:16).

Many more spiritual gifts exist than have been enumerated here. The Apostle Paul specifies three gifts that Elder Neal A. Maxwell and others have termed the “cardinal” gifts: faith, hope, and charity.⁸ He indicates that of all the gifts of the Spirit, these three are abiding.⁹ Paul

points out that faith and hope are secondary in importance, playing a supporting role to charity, which is the greatest of them all (see 1 Corinthians 13:13).¹⁰ Furthermore, the Lord taught Moroni that “faith, hope and charity bringeth [men and women unto Him]—the fountain of all righteousness” (Either 12:28).

Gifts of the Spirit and the Path to Perfection

Through the ages, righteous men and women have desired after the things of the Lord. At times the desired gift was a vision of things to come, a special ability to heal, or even the blanketing gift of wisdom. These, along with all other spiritual gifts, have been precious commodities in the spiritual commissary whenever righteousness has ruled a society.

Men and women who are striving to know Christ seek for an increase in the Spirit of the Lord.¹¹ Accordingly, an increase of spiritual gifts indicates spiritual growth or progress, though it is not an indication of mortal infallibility.

Those who say that spiritual gifts no longer exist do not understand the full implications of the Atonement and its power. Moroni, concluding his father’s portion of the plates, declares that “he that denieth these things [the gifts of the Spirit] knoweth not the gospel of Christ,” imagining up unto themselves a changeable god, “a god who is not a God of miracles” (Mormon 9:8–10).

There is a great need for these gifts in the day-to-day lives of the Saints. Indeed, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, both male and female, are commanded to seek after and obtain the gifts that come after they have obtained the initial gift of the Spirit, the gift of the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. Refusing to do so, thereby leaning on the arm of flesh, is considered by some to be a manifestation of a lack of spiritual understanding. President George Q. Cannon observed that the members of the Church often rely on man when they have the right to a much more powerful ally:

I have felt deeply impressed . . . that the members of our Church do not value as they should the means which God has placed within their reach for the relief and healing of the sick. There is too great a disposition, when sickness enters a household, to send for a doctor. . . . Instances are very common among the faithful Saints of the gift of healing being manifested in a very wonderful manner. . . . God has not forgotten His promises, and He has not withdrawn Himself from His people. But the Latter-day Saints should make use of these means more frequently than they do, and put more trust in God and less in man’s skill.¹²

Perhaps some are at a point where they rely so heavily on man's seeming power in technology, medicine, and other conveniences that they no longer feel a need for the things of the Spirit that are a part of receiving the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. Elder Cannon also stressed the need to seek after the blessings of the gifts of the Spirit with pertinent language:

How many of you . . . are seeking for these gifts that God has promised to bestow? How many of you, when you bow before your Heavenly Father in your family circle or in your secret places, contend for these gifts bestowed upon you? . . . Or do you go along day by day . . . without having any feeling upon the subject, without exercising any faith whatever; content to be baptized and be members of the Church, and to rest there, thinking that your salvation is secure?¹³

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has likewise seen a lack among Church members when it comes to actively seeking spiritual gifts. He said, "Faith is a spiritual gift. So is personal revelation. So is a testimony of Jesus Christ. And there are other spiritual gifts. We know too little about spiritual gifts. This is evident in our communications, and it is also evident in our failure to seek after and use spiritual gifts."¹⁴ The general Relief Society presidency chose the theme "Seek ye earnestly the best gifts" for the Visiting Teaching Messages in 1997. To explain the importance of the gifts of the Spirit, they distinguished them from other types of blessings:

Our Father in Heaven offers us access to a special group of blessings often called "spiritual gifts." These particular gifts differ from the many other blessings we may enjoy, such as talents, family associations, or perhaps specialized learning. So important are these spiritual gifts that the Savior urges us to seek them earnestly. Among them are the gifts of testimony, wisdom, knowledge, faith to be healed, and discernment. Our Heavenly Father blesses us with these gifts as we live his commandments and keep our covenants. They are given to help us lead enriched spiritual lives and to serve others, "that all may be profited thereby" (D&C 46:12).¹⁵

Being "in tune with the Infinite" in large measure is a skill that must be learned. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that "the gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead based on faithfulness. It is the right to receive revelation, to see visions, to be in tune with the Infinite."¹⁶ Each Latter-day Saint is commanded to seek after the gifts that help the individual become more like the perfect Exemplar. Not only is the gift itself of great value to the "humble followers of Christ"¹⁷ (2 Nephi 28:14) but also the process of obtaining a gift of the Spirit becomes

invaluable because of the spiritual refinement that occurs along the way. Its constant companionship refines the individual, and then, as the Lord sees fit, we are given the capacity to administer with spiritual or enabling gifts.¹⁸ Living an obedient and worthy life, which involves taking responsibility for our actions, entitles us to the constant companionship of the Spirit and allows us to access the gifts of the Spirit (see D&C 46:9). The Spirit can teach us about the particular gifts we need and then help us to obtain them.

Obtaining spiritual gifts is a key to spiritual progression. President George Q. Cannon stressed the need to seek after the blessings of the gifts of the Spirit in order to perfect us. He states:

If any of us are imperfect, it is our duty to pray for the gift that will make us perfect. Have I imperfections? I am full of them. What is my duty? To pray to God to give me the gifts that will correct these imperfections. If I am an angry man, it is my duty to pray for charity, which suffereth long and is kind. Am I an envious man? It is my duty to seek for charity, which envieth not. So with all the gifts of the gospel. They are intended for this purpose. No man ought to say, "Oh, I cannot help this; it is my nature." He is not justified in it, for the reason that God has promised to give strength to correct these things, and to give gifts that will eradicate them. If a man lack wisdom, it is his duty to ask God for wisdom. The same with everything else. That is the design of God concerning His Church. He wants His Saints to be perfected in the truth. For this purpose He gives these gifts, and bestows them upon those who seek after them, in order that they may be a perfect people upon the face of the earth, notwithstanding their many weaknesses, because God has promised to give the gifts that are necessary for their perfection.¹⁹

The attainment of spiritual gifts and the gifts themselves teach individuals how to be like God. The scriptures teach us that there are greater and lesser gifts. Both Moroni and the Apostle Paul indicate that the gift of charity is foremost among the spiritual gifts in both its enduring qualities and importance. Moroni discusses the inseparability of charity from the other two cardinal or enduring gifts of the Spirit, faith and hope. Of all the gifts, these three are the most important in the progression from natural man to disciple of Jesus Christ. They are gifts that help bridge the gap between imperfection and perfection.²⁰ Given their great importance, spiritual gifts require more than the work of the seeker to be obtained. This must be a process directed by heaven.

Key components of receiving gifts of the Spirit are prayer and the Holy Ghost. The more guidance we have from the Holy Ghost, the more likely we are to seek after and receive the gifts of the Spirit. If we have the Spirit with us, we will feel a desire to increase the number of

gifts that we have and to increase our efficiency in the Lord's work; the Spirit will, accordingly, guide us in the things for which we should ask the Lord. In two sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, one dealing with the law and the other with salvation, the Lord gives the same instructions to the early Church about how to receive outpourings of the Spirit: "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith" (D&C 42:14); and "ye receive the Spirit through prayer" (D&C 63:64). Further, the Lord gives a commandment to Martin Harris that he is not only to pray but to pray always, that the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon him (see D&C 19:38). It should be remembered that what the Lord says to one, He says to all (see D&C 92:1). Therefore, we follow the counsel outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants, which says, "He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh" (D&C 46:30). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith taught that we "should pray earnestly . . . to know the will of the Lord."²¹ In the Lord's sermon to the Nephite-Lamanite nation, He teaches that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled with the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 12:6).

Members of the Church who follow the Lord's guidelines faithfully have a special endowment of power that sets them apart from their peers: a member of the Godhead who will always be with them (see Moroni 4:3). This privilege is available to each individual who is willing and worthy to take upon himself or herself the covenants that are prerequisite to the receipt of the Holy Ghost. Elder McConkie stated that the gift of the Holy Ghost opens the door to auxiliary spiritual gifts that allow us to transcend the baseness of the world to higher planes: "We have received the gift of the Holy Ghost and we are entitled to receive the gifts of the Spirit—those wondrous spiritual endowments which set us apart from the rest of the world and raise us above carnal things."²²

Priesthood and Prophets: Magnifiers of the Gifts of God

Gifts of the Spirit are an inseparable part of the Lord's kingdom upon the earth. Throughout His ministry, the Lord worked many miracles, in part because of the faith of those who surrounded Him.²³ Surely the Lord had a fulness of the gifts of the Spirit. Even as the Savior had a fulness, so His servants on the earth have a wide variety of these gifts to help them do as He directs. A manifestation of these gifts took place in the lives of the Apostles and disciples on the day of Pentecost. Faithful bearers of the Melchizedek Priesthood have worked and still do work mighty miracles by virtue of the priesthood, which allows the righteous holder to administer in the gifts of the Spirit (see D&C 107:18–19).

Regardless of the dispensation, when the priesthood of God has been present on the earth, the gifts of the Spirit flow as a regular product of the relationship between God and those worthy members in His kingdom.²⁴ We not only believe in but also depend on the gifts of the Spirit, especially in the leadership of the Church. Guidance from the Holy Ghost helps mold us into sons and daughters of Christ (see Moroni 7:19). That is, the Holy Ghost helps us take on the attributes of the Savior to the point that we become more like Him. It is the Spirit that teaches, inspires, and lifts up men and women to do the work of the Lord. Thus, through meekly submitting to His gentle voice, we are enabled to change into true disciples of Christ—those with the attributes of the Master. President Gordon B. Hinckley serves as a clear example of this principle. He is a man who has developed his spiritual capacities: he is a man of enthusiasm, patience, virtue, compassion, diligence, and love.²⁵ We should look to and learn from his example to understand better these attributes of the Spirit, attributes that are ultimately held in totality by the Savior, who set the standard we need to follow. As we consistently do so, we become like Him. The Savior, who possesses all gifts, can help us develop these requisite celestial qualities.

When men and women are under the influence of the Spirit, they have the attributes of the Savior. Elder Parley P. Pratt explained the enhancements that the Spirit can and does make in the lives of the faithful:

The gift of the Holy Ghost adapts itself to all these organs and attributes. It quickens all the intellectual facilities, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.²⁶

Not only is a change seen in their outward presentation and behavior but also the astute observer will sense an inward transformation in these individuals. There will be light where there was darkness, kindness where there was apathy, and peace where there was discontent. Instead of merely talking about the conditions and requirements of gospel life, recipients of the Spirit become doers. Those who live close to the Spirit allow the Spirit to bring out the latent good that is part of their birthright as sons or daughters of God.²⁷ Thus, it may be said

that the Spirit helps us to develop the very best within us, adding to our own abilities, gifts, and talents. Through its heeded guidance and resulting constant companionship, we develop ennobling attributes—the attributes of godliness.²⁸

Obtaining Gifts of the Spirit

After a need for the Spirit and accompanying gifts is seen, we can seek ways to multiply these gifts. Several simple steps can help us to receive such gifts. It should be noted that spiritual gifts are just that—gifts. Even though we may put great individual effort into obtaining a spiritual gift through prayerful supplication or other means, the comparatively slight effort that we put into obtaining the gift will never equal the immeasurable help of the Holy Ghost. The Father, knowing this, designed a plan that allows us to petition Him for spiritual blessings that we do not merit on our own. Just as the process of obtaining forgiveness of sin through the infinite Atonement requires us to fulfill a requisite law, even so it is with all blessings that come from the heavenly realms. At times, this can be as simple as sincerely asking, but more may be required. In a given instance, the reception of a precious gift of the Spirit may require a long period of pleading coupled with sincere desire (see Moroni 7:48).

Spiritual gifts from God are bestowed by God upon those “who are true followers of his Son” (Moroni 7:48). The following five points emphasize actions that members can do to increase the Spirit and accompanying spiritual gifts in their lives: Be believing. Be worthy. Be obedient. Serve diligently and selflessly. Be a wise steward.

Be believing. The applicable power of belief is often underestimated, and the debilitating consequences of unbelief are similarly overlooked and, therefore, left unchecked. Also, the Savior realizes the power that belief in Him evokes in His followers. In the moment of a father’s desperation over the condition of his son possessed with a foul spirit, Jesus took the time to teach a powerful lesson to the disheartened and unbelieving, saying, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). As the cornered faithful often do, the father humbly implored the Master to reinforce his road-wearied belief.

Belief is the driving element behind faith, which is a composite of belief and action. When we develop a propensity toward actively applying belief, we unlock the doors through which the blessings of heaven pour. Having belief also encompasses another element: steadfastness (see 2 Nephi 31:20). True belief remains steady regardless of the circumstances that life presents; there is no flight risk with true belief. Though belief may be shaken, it will not break if its foundation is truly secured in

the Lord Jesus Christ (see Helaman 5:12).

In the final chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni warns that unbelief is the primary hindrance to obtaining gifts of the Spirit (see Moroni 10:24). These gifts will not come by unbelief; rather, the inverse is true: it is by belief that gifts of the Spirit come. John teaches us that we should “believe in the light, that [we] may be the *children of light*” (John 12:36; emphasis added). In other words, as we believe in Him, who is the administrator and source of light, we come to be like Him, having the qualities of light that the gifts of the Spirit bring.

The next four segments are ways to help in our readiness to obtain gifts of the Spirit, and they are principal points that, if applied, will reinforce our belief in, and understanding of, the Christ.

Be worthy. The gift of the Holy Ghost grows with worthiness. President Spencer W. Kimball said that the “Holy Ghost comes to you as you grow and learn and make yourselves worthy. It comes a little at a time as you merit it. And as your life is in harmony, you gradually receive the Holy Ghost in a greater measure.”²⁹ The Lord wants to bless us. Remember also that God operates according to law, and thus “it is the privilege and the right of every member of the Church to . . . enjoy the gifts of the Spirit. . . . [But] the actual enjoyment of this gift depends upon personal worthiness.”³⁰ This worthiness comes by constant effort on the part of the individual to follow more closely the commandments of the Lord, as specified in the scriptures and by the current leadership of the Church.

Be obedient. Constant obedience to the commandments of God allows for constant interaction with the Spirit of the Lord and the resulting gifts and abilities. Sometimes we make the mistake of assuming that we are entitled to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost without practicing steady obedience. In these cases, we have misinterpreted our confirmation into the Church, which does not command the Holy Ghost hither or thither but instructs us to actively *receive* the Holy Ghost.³¹

Even with the Holy Ghost as a companion, we are not commanded to reach the stature of perfection in an instant; we are commanded to listen to that member of the Godhead who will tell us all the things that we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). Step-by-step changes can be made, and lives can be purified and refined to the point that obedience becomes a symbol of devotion. Yes, this progress may come about to the point at which the natural man is willing to “submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him” (Mosiah 3:19). Thereby, even the seemingly common man or woman, through a lifetime of

faithfully heeding the promptings of the Spirit, will have a clear sense of spiritual understanding and a life that is highlighted with the enabling gifts of the Spirit.

Serve diligently and selflessly. “Blessings . . . are never discovered in the path of selfishness.”³² However, when men and women serve diligently and selflessly, they are rewarded with an increased endowment of the Spirit and spiritual gifts. Furthermore, the fact remains that when we serve, we receive back more than that which we originally sent out. Therefore, as King Benjamin taught, we stay eternally indebted to Him who is the giver of all good gifts (see Mosiah 2:24).

At times, when we are in the service of God, we reap the praise of men. In these moments of sometimes subtle temptation, it is requisite that we give all glory to the Master, realizing that there is One who is the source of all good (see Omni 1:25). Accordingly, the penitent disciple accepts praise while humbly acknowledging that “we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

Be a wise steward. Those who are obedient to the enumerated requirements of the gospel are expected to procure good works outside of these specific commandments (see D&C 58:27). In contrast, Satan and his hosts put heavy emphasis on several points that tend to distract us from the often specific, guiding promptings and feelings given by the Holy Spirit. Dress, care of our bodies, and financial debt are important points that can either become a help or a hindrance to our spiritual receptiveness. Emphasis has been and is being given by Church leaders on these two important points.

Latter-day Saints who understand the sacred nature of the body and its potential to be a temple or receptacle of the Holy Spirit seek to keep their appearance within the guidelines of the Spirit. No one would ask a high-ranking dignitary to stay in a home that was not in good order and repair. This concept also applies with the Spirit. Those who do not appropriately clothe themselves grieve the Spirit. Under the pretense of agency without responsibility, they wear coarse and vulgar styles. As they focus on the crass things of the world, they lose the ability to feel the subtle things of the Spirit. Dress is an outward manifestation of an inward focus.

The things we put on our bodies and also what we take into our bodies are very important in our obtaining the Spirit. What we take into and how we take care of our bodies are both important considerations in seeking the Spirit and spiritual gifts. Those who understand the needs of their bodies and meet those needs within the Lord’s guidelines allow for perception of and sensitivity toward the gentle and

refined whisperings of the Spirit.

Financial debt is a burden that can cause us to focus on the things of the world to the point that we lose contact with the things of the Spirit. Indeed, debt is a type of bondage because it can consume the energies of the mind and body. Substantial debt inherently requires attention and considerable resources of time and strength for either repaying the debtor or for avoiding the debt. Those who follow a legally viable but ethically irresponsible course to erase their debts are likely to distance themselves, in some measure, from the still, small voice.

In the parable of the talents, the Lord awarded those servants who had wisely used what He had given them with a double portion. To the steward who jealously hoarded his gift, his stewardship, the master took it away from him and gave it to another. Along with sloth and selfishness, fear has a deadening effect on our quest for righteousness (see D&C 60:2, 13). The unwise steward states that he was “afraid, and went and hid [the Lord’s] talent in the earth” (Matthew 25:25). As we jealously guard our talents or slothfully observe the commandments, we receive the lesser portion; as we generously give of ourselves and diligently heed the Lord’s counsel, we are given back what we gave out, with an increase.³³

The Misuse of Spiritual Gifts

The constant companionship of the Holy Ghost allows members of the Church to be guided in their *use* of spiritual gifts. Elder Oaks warned against the temptation to misuse spiritual gifts:

Satan will also attempt to cause our spiritual downfall through tempting us to misapply our spiritual gifts. The revelations tell us that “there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. . . . All these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God” (D&C 46:11, 26). Most of us have seen persons whom the adversary has led astray through a corruption of their spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is given to benefit the children of God, not to magnify the prominence or to gratify the ego of the person who receives it. [A] professional healer who forgot that lesson gradually lost the companionship of the Spirit and was eventually excommunicated from the Church.³⁴

In relation to the gifts of the Spirit, two potentially debilitating mistakes may occur. First, we may not seek the best gifts of the Spirit (see D&C 46:8). Second, we may misuse the gifts of the Spirit. We become stewards over any gift we receive. Those who have received spiritual gifts may determine how they wish to use such, but they cannot determine the consequences of a gift’s appropriate or inappropriate

use. The Prophet Joseph Smith said it this way: “The gifts of God are all useful in their place, but when they are applied to that which God does not intend, they prove an injury, a snare and a curse instead of a blessing.”³⁵ The recipients of spiritual gifts need to be sensitive to promptings that will guide them when and when not to use the gifts they have received.

The use of a spiritual gift contrary to the promptings of the Spirit constitutes a violation of divine directive. Elder Russell M. Nelson teaches that “it is possible to disregard or even misuse spiritual power.”³⁶ Similarly, it is an error not to use a gift of the Spirit when instructed to do so by the Giver of the gift. If we ignore successive or sometimes singular promptings to act, the result is the eventual withdrawal of the Spirit of the Lord (see, for example, 2 Nephi 28:30). With this withdrawal comes a diminishment of the gift. If someone has a lesser portion of the Spirit, then that person also has less of the individual gift.³⁷ The greatest concern in such a case is not the outward loss of the gift, which others see, but the inward-felt withdrawal of the Spirit, which God sees (see 1 Samuel 16:7). The Spirit cannot be separated from the gifts of the Spirit; they are witnessed as one and the same. It is this Spirit that refines, purifies, sanctifies, and eventually seals us up to eternal life (see Helaman 3:35).

Summary

President Ezra Taft Benson repeatedly taught that the Spirit is fundamental to the work of the Church. On one occasion, he said to mission presidents, “The Spirit is the most important matter in this glorious work.”³⁸ It is the key to this work as a whole, as it also is principally necessary to the temporal and eternal progression of each soul. Those who follow the Spirit become truly individual by becoming more like the Savior through diligent obedience. Particular among the characteristics that set these disciples apart from the corpus of humanity are the gifts of the Spirit. Though distinguished, these disciples remember the purpose of the gifts they have received, ultimately seeking to love all humankind.

The guidelines and warnings discussed above are meant to help the honest seekers of truth to find a greater fulness of the Spirit, inviting Him into their lives through consistent righteous living and by the grace of the Father and the Son. These points are significant in the development of gospel perspective. They emphasize some of the necessary elements in the building of a righteous framework in life, which will ultimately result in great outpourings of spiritual gifts. With these

spiritual gifts necessarily comes an increase of the Spirit itself, which purifies and refines. These two elements, the Spirit and spiritual gifts, can act as a gauge for anyone's personal standing before the Lord. The presence of the Spirit in our lives indicates a life of righteousness, and if the Spirit is continually fostered, it will bring about peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. **■**

Notes

1. Elder Loren C. Dunn stated, "When we speak of the Spirit, we refer to the gift of the Holy Ghost. While the light of Christ enlightens all who come into the world, the spirit of the Holy Ghost is something more. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead; a personage of spirit, he speaks not for himself, but testifies to all that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and conveys to man the mind and will of the Lord (see John 16:13–15). He has a sanctifying and cleansing influence upon the souls of men and is the source of spiritual gifts" ("The Spirit Giveth Life," *Ensign*, May 1979, 70); Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed that "spiritual gifts are endless in number and infinite in variety. Those listed in the revealed word are simply illustrations of the boundless outpouring of divine grace that a gracious God gives those who love and serve him" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985], 371; see also 1 Corinthians 12:4).

2. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 328.

3. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 1.

4. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, 165.

5. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, 165.

6. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, 165.

7. This list is adapted from *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* because it is one of the few officially published lists given by the Church. We recommend it for everyone's considerate review. Though this list is thorough, it is by no means exhaustive. We publish it here because of its endorsement by the Church as an official guide to the gifts of the Spirit.

8. See Arthur R. Bassett, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, March 1994, 53; see also Neal A. Maxwell, *Men and Women of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 53.

9. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. gives the definition of *abide* as follows: "to wait for; to endure without yielding."

10. See also Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Cultivating Divine Attributes," *Ensign*, November 1998, 25–28.

11. John 10:14: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

12. George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truths*, comp. Jerreld L. Newquist (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 425–26.

13. George Q. Cannon, *Millennial Star*, April 23, 1894.

14. Dallin H. Oaks, "Spiritual Gifts," *Ensign*, September 1986, 68.

15. Relief Society General Presidency, "Seeking the Best Gifts," *Ensign*, Janu-

ary 1997, 55.

16. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Ten Blessings of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, November 1977, 33.

17. See James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 197–213.

18. Cannon, *Millennial Star*, April 23, 1894.

19. "If our lives are devoid of the vital gifts of faith, hope, and charity, we should earnestly examine ourselves and our relationship with our Father in Heaven. We should pray for those essential gifts earnestly, because acquiring them is crucial to our eternal salvation. Indeed, to have charity is to have acquired a quality vital to salvation, the Apostle Paul implies, while to lack it is to have nothing of eternal significance (see 1 Corinthians 13:1–8). Although our acquiring other spiritual gifts is certainly less urgent than obtaining the cardinal gifts of faith, hope, and charity, we do well to prayerfully and patiently seek any gifts that stand to help us magnify our callings and serve the Lord more effectively" (Arthur R. Bassett, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, March 1994, 52–53).

20. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953), 1:371.

21. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Ten Blessings of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, November 1977, 33; emphasis in original.

22. See Mark 10:52: "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

23. "Among the sure signs of the true church of Christ are the accompanying spiritual gifts. This has always been from the beginning. When the authority of the priesthood has been found on the earth, it is accompanied by the manifestations of spiritual gifts" (James A. Cullimore, "Gifts of the Spirit," *Ensign*, November 1974, 27). "I will repeat again, priesthood is the power and authority delegated to man by our Heavenly Father. The authority and majesty of it are beyond our comprehension" (David B. Haight, *Ensign*, May 2003, 45).

24. Russell M. Nelson, "Spiritual Capacity," *Ensign*, November 1997, 16n18: "The word *enthusiasm* comes from Greek roots *en*, meaning 'in,' and *theos*, meaning 'God'—'God within us.'"

25. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 10th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 101.

26. Though the task seems daunting at times, we are commanded to be perfect like unto the Master. This perfection is required to reenter the presence of our Heavenly Father: "We are destined and foreordained to become like God, and unless we do become like him we will never be permitted to dwell with him" (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986], 276). This perfection comes bit by bit, little by little, through diligent application of the enlightening principles found in the gospel, obedient heed to the subtle promptings of the Spirit, and continuing patience on life's road that leads to the tree of life.

27. Nelson, "Spiritual Capacity," 14–16.

28. Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 114.

29. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Lord's People Receive Revelation," *Ensign*, June 1971, 78.

30. See Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 16–17.

31. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 352.

32. Though the definition of *heed* found in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., is "to give consideration or attention to," the definition of *heed* as found in the 1828 edition of the *Noah Webster's First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language* is slightly different: "to mind; to regard with care; to take notice of; to attend to; to observe." There is more a connotation of action in the original definition.

33. Dallin H. Oaks, "Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall," *Ensign*, October 1994, 12–13.

34. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 248.

35. Russell M. Nelson, *The Power within Us* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 43.

36. "For whosoever receiveth, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever continueth not to receive, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 13:10–11, see also D&C 60:3; Alma 12:9–11).

37. Ardeth Greene Kapp, *Rejoice! His Promises Are Sure* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 75.