

Spiritual Gifts 101

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. .. such gifts come by the power of the Holy Ghost. -Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Womens Conference March 28, 1986

Spiritual gifts come to those who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, the gifts of the Spirit “are obtained through that medium” [the Holy Ghost] and “cannot be enjoyed without the gift of the Holy Ghost. ...” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, pp. 243, 245.)

God gives at least one of these gifts to every faithful member of the Church who has received the gift of the Holy Ghost (D&C 46:8, 11.)

The gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred on both men and women. So are spiritual gifts. He is no respecter of persons nor of sexes, and he blesses those men and those women who seek him and serve him and keep his commandments.” (Ensign, Jan. 1979, p. 61.)

Spiritual gifts do not come visibly, automatically, and immediately to all who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost... it “require[s] time and circumstances to call these gifts into operation.” (Teachings, pp. 244, 246.)

In every case, the receipt of spiritual gifts is predicated upon faith, obedience, and personal righteousness. (See Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985, p. 367.)

Spiritual gifts are distributed among the members of the Church, according to their faithfulness, circumstances, natural abilities, duties, and callings; that the whole may be properly instructed, confirmed, perfected, and saved” (Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt, comp. N. B. Lundwall [1953], 571).

Why are we given Gifts of the Spirit?

- So you are not deceived (D&C 46:8)
- "those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me, that ask and not for a sign" (D&C 46:9)
- That all may be profited thereby (D&C 46:12)
- To lead us to Charity (perfect the saints) (1 Cor 13)
- To teach uniformly in the church (JD 7:118. John Taylor, JD 21:137. Charles Penrose)

What are the Gifts of the Spirit? – While Bruce R.

McConkie states that gifts of the spirit are “infinite in variety”, the ones called out often in scripture include: Testimony of Jesus Christ, Differences of Administrations, diversities of operations, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, Exceeding great faith, gifts of healing, miracles, prophesy, beholding of angels and ministering spirits, and the gift of tongues.

How do we ask for these gifts?

- D&C 46:7, 30. (Ask of God and follow the Spirit’s guidance)
- D&C 46:9. (Seek gifts for the benefit of others, not for selfish reasons.)
- D&C 46:31. (Do all things in the name of Christ.)
- D&C 46:32. (Thank God for the gifts He has given us.)
- D&C 46:33. (Practice virtue and holiness continually.)

We should seek after spiritual gifts. They can lead us to God. They can shield us from the power of the adversary. They can compensate for our inadequacies and repair our imperfections. President George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency taught the Saints: “If any of us are imperfect, it is our duty to pray for the gift that will make us perfect. ... 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. (Millennial Star, Apr. 1894, p. 260.)

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While many scripture verses discuss gifts of the spirit, four main areas where gifts of the spirit are listed include D&C 46, 1 Cor 12, Mor 10, and the 7th Article of Faith.

Elder Orson Pratt taught that “whenever the Holy Ghost takes up its residence in a person, it not only cleanses, sanctifies, and purifies him, in proportion as he yields himself to its influence, but also imparts to him some gift, intended for the benefit of himself and others. No one who has been born of the Spirit, and who remains sufficiently faithful, is left destitute of a spiritual gift. A person who is without a spiritual gift has not the Spirit of God dwelling in him, in a sufficient degree, to save him; he cannot be called a Saint, or a child of God; for all Saints who constitute the Church of Christ, are baptized into the same Spirit; and each one, without any exception, is made a partaker of some spiritual gift. (*Masterful Discourses*, pp. 539–41.)

But the gifts of the Holy Ghost are his property to bestow as he sees fit. To one is given the spirit of prophecy, to another a tongue, to another the interpretation of tongues and to another the gift of healing. All these gifts are by the same Spirit, but all are the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to bestow as he sees fit, as the messenger of the Father and the Son to the children of men. - JD 13:156. Woford woodruf

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that many gifts of the Spirit, such as wisdom or the gift to heal, are not evident until they are needed. He said that “it would require time and circumstances to call these gifts into operation” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 246).

When we believe and seek spiritual gifts to benefit others “and not for a sign” (D&C 46:9), we are told that signs will follow. The Holy Ghost “maketh manifest unto the children of men, according to their faith.” (Jarom 1:4.)

If we exercise upon the gifts we possess in simplicity as little children, striving to do good to one another, and to build up the kingdom of God upon the earth, then we shall be entitled to greater gifts and greater blessings. - JD 11:208. Heber C Kimball

The gifts of the Spirit are available to all who pay the price, which includes entering into a covenant relationship with the Lord, obeying the commandments, and seeking perfection with all one’s heart. The gifts will be the greatest to those who seek most earnestly, but they are available to all... How many of you ask the Father, in the name of Jesus, to manifest Himself to you through these powers and these gifts? Or do you go along day by day like a door turning on its hinges, 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 because you have done this? - *Millennial Star*, Apr. 1894, pp. 260–61

Commonly Misunderstood Gifts of the Spirit

- Differences of administration - “used in administering and regulating the church” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*[1985], 278).
- Diversities of operations -This gift helps us discern whether a teaching or influence comes from God or from some other source. “I do place one limitation on those who exercise such powers—that they be very sure the inspiration is from the right source.” - Stephen L Richards, *Conference Report*, April 1950, pp. 161-166
- Gift of tongues - This is one of the most misunderstood gifts. The Lord may grant the gift of speaking in tongues to give an unusual message or communicate with those who speak a different language.... But newly-called missionaries who quickly grasp a foreign language may...be experiencing the gift of tongues. - *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual*, (2002), 98–102

Are gifts of the spirit ubiquitous in power, strength and efficacy to everyone? “Perhaps, to some it is given more fully than it is to others.” (Elder Orson Pratt JD 16:287-291)

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Gifts of the Spirit are also known as Gifts of the Gospel

The Mission of the Holy Ghost is to testify of Jesus Christ. Review each gift of the spirit and think about how each might help the Holy Ghost with his mission.

"The manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Cor 12.7) That is why the Lord gave the parable of the talents....And remember the Lord will return and expect an accounting according to the talents given. - April 1943 Legrand Richard's

Read the parable of the talents in Matt 25. Ponder the meaning of various elements in the context of spiritual gifts including:

- "to every man according to his several ability" (v15)
- "traded with the same" (v16)
- "lord's money" (v18)
- "After a long time" (v19)
- Going from "faithful" to a "ruler" (v21)
- "reaping where thou hast not sown" (v24)
- The difference between giving His money to His servants vs. "the exchangers" (v27)
- The meaning of "hath" in v29. Hath what?

And it shall come to pass that he that asketh in Spirit shall receive in Spirit; (D&C 46:28) He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God.

What does it mean to "asketh in spirit"?

- I should like to testify to the power of prayer, and to say that it is a wise man who knows what to pray for. One of the things that we should seek in going before the Lord and in going upon our knees, is his inspiration and his wisdom to tell us what to ask for - J Reuben Clark 1944 October
- Imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit to teach them how to pray and what to ask for acceptably in His sight - 1967 Richard L Evans
- For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. - Rom 8:2

Seek Ye Earnestly the Best Gifts (1 Cor 12:28-31)

Which are the best gifts? Not much is random in the scriptures as it relates to the order of things. Review the order of the gifts listed in section 46. Then review Paul's comparison of gifts of the spirit to the body in 1 Cor 12.

Review the list of gifts again in Section 46. Do any other patterns emerge? Are the gifts listed in pairs? Is there a lesser and greater gift in each pair? Is this pattern seen anywhere else in the gospel?

What is the difference between angels and ministering spirits?

As used in section 129, the term *angel* is limited to resurrected personages with bodies of flesh and bones. "Spirits of just men made perfect" are individuals who have not yet been born and are thus *unembodied*, or whose spirits are separated from their bodies in death and are thus *disembodied*. Joseph Smith earlier explained that an *angel* is "a resurrected or translated body, with its spirit ministering to embodied spirits." – D&C Student Manual Sections 122-131