

GD15 - "Seek Ye Earnestly the Best Gifts"
Goose Creek Ward, Warrenton, VA Stake
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1. Seek After Spiritual Gifts, WHY?

Historical Context of Quote

We learn from D&C 46:1-6 and from the history that some early Church members were being exclusive in who they permitted to attend Church meetings. Unfortunately, we are not explicitly told why. But, given the history, it is not difficult to discern. Obviously, given the persecution the Church faced they would be eager to exclude those who would be hostile or disruptive to their meetings. For example, John Whitmer included details of such a disrupted meeting immediately before his discussion of why the text of D&C 46 was revealed, suggesting a connection.

John Murdock and others held a meeting in the city of Cleveland, Ohio, in the Masonic Hall by the request of some of the citizens of said city. An opportunity which some sought to bring out their evil designs. Elder Murdock addressed the congregation on the subject of the gospel; and warned the inhabitants of that place to flee the wrath to come. Others followed him, and while they were yet speaking one of the congregation came toward the stand and kneeled down and began to pray, a sign to the banditti to begin their abuse. At this time they began to blow out the candles and throw ink stands and books, etc. at the speaker and one of the brethren prayed that the Lord would stop the utterance of the fellow that came and kneeled at the stand, he became silent and could not rise from his knees for sometime, because of the prayer of faith.

In the beginning of the Church, while yet in her infancy, the disciples used to exclude unbelievers, which caused some to marvel, and converse of this matter because of the things that are written in the Book of Mormon [e.g., 2 Ne. 26:25-33, 3 Ne. 18:22-34]. Therefore the Lord deigned to speak on this subject, that his people might come to understanding and said that he had always given to his elders to conduct all meetings as they were led by the Spirit. [See D&C 46.] (John Whitmer, The Book of John Whitmer, Chapter 4, paragraphs 1-2)

But, in addition to this, one recurring theme surrounding the above historical statement is that of false spirits among the early Saints. Which subject is treated at length in D&C 46, suggesting that was indeed a factor contributing to the early Saints being exclusive in their meetings. Namely, to exclude those who were behaving in the unusual manners described in the excerpts from Whitmer's history below.

After Joseph and Sidney returned from Colesville to Fayette. The Lord manifested himself to Joseph the Revelator and gave commandment for me to go to Ohio, and carry the commandments and revelations, with me,

to comfort and strengthen my brethren in that land. The disciples had increased in numbers about three hundred. But the enemy of all righteousness had got hold of some of those who professed to be his followers, because they had not sufficient knowledge to detect him in all of his devices. He took a notion to blind the minds of some of the weaker ones, and made them think that an angel of the Lord appeared to them and showed them writings on the outside cover of the Bible, and on parchment, which flew through the air, and on the back of their hands, and many such foolish and vain things--others lost their strength, and some slid on the floor, and such like maneuvers, which proved greatly to the injury of the cause. (John Whitmer, The Book of John Whitmer, Chapter 1, paragraph 11)

About this time some were sick of various diseases, and were healed by the power which was in them through Jesus Christ. There was a tradition among some of the disciples, that those who obeyed the covenant in the last days, would never die: but by experience, they have learned to the contrary. (John Whitmer, The Book of John Whitmer, Chapter 3, paragraph 7)

For a perpetual memory, to the shame and confusion of the devil--permit me, to say a few things, respecting the proceedings of some of those who were disciples, and some remain among us, and will, and have come from under the error and enthusiasm, which they had fallen.

Some had visions and could not tell what they saw. Some would fancy to themselves that they had the sword of Laban, and would wield it as expert as a light dragoon, some would act like an Indian in the act of scalping, some would slide or scoot on the floor, with the rapidity of a serpent, which termed sailing in the boat to the Lamanites, preaching the gospel. And many other vain and foolish maneuvers, that are unmeaning, and unprofitable to mention. Thus the devil blinded the eyes of some good and honest disciples. I write these things to show how ignorant and undiscerning children are and how easy mankind is led astray notwithstanding the things of God that are written, concerning his kingdom.

These things grieved the servants of the Lord, and some conversed together on this subject, and others came in and we were at Joseph Smith Jr. the Seers, and made it a matter of consultation, for many would not turn from their folly, unless God would give a revelation, therefore, the Lord spoke to Joseph saying: [See D&C 50.] (John Whitmer, The Book of John Whitmer, Chapter 6, paragraphs 7-9)

Thus, it would appear the early Saints were being somewhat exclusive in holding their meetings to reduce the likelihood of having their meetings disrupted by both hostile persons and false spirits.

The early church, note the Church was only 11 months old when this revelation was received, was having growing pains and their manner of dealing with these problems was running somewhat contrary to Lord's commands.

Doctrinal Context of Quote

D&C 46:7 But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils. 8 Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived **seek ye earnestly the best gifts**, always remembering for what they are given; 9 For verily I say unto you, they are given for the benefit of 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 that they may consume it upon their lusts.

The Lord instructs the Saints to seek after the best spiritual gifts, and in doing so they will not be deceived by the false spirits.

The Lord's point is they won't have to generally exclude non-members as a policy if they are capable of spiritually discerning situations based upon individuals or specific events.

Note the condition given by the Lord in v. 9. He states flatly that a person must be keeping the commandments and seeking after these spiritual gifts. He also flatly rejects sign-seekers.

2. Seek After Spiritual Gifts, HOW?

It is plain from the passages above that the Lord wants to bless us with spiritual gifts, and will give them to us if we ask for them, but is that it? We just ask for them? No, that clearly isn't the case. What then? How do we obtain these spiritual gifts?

Now, obviously, we aren't talking about those gifts we are born with. Those are gifts that are simply there by the grace of God. We aren't discussing those as there isn't any point in discussing them, you either have them or you don't. What we are discussing is those gifts you don't have and want to get.

First off, as stated in D&C 46:9, you have to keep the commandments and not just a sign-seeker. So, that is the first requirement, that you're sincere.

The second requirement is given in D&C 46:28-30.

D&C 46:28 And it shall come to pass that he that asketh in Spirit shall receive in Spirit; 29 That unto some it may be given to have all those gifts, that there may be a head, in order that every member may be

profited thereby. 30 **He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God;** wherefore it is done even as he asketh.

Those who ask "in Spirit" have reconciled their will to the Lord's. When they ask for spiritual gifts, it is to accomplish the Lord's will, so the Lord grants those spiritual gifts. This is the purpose of the elect.

Purpose of the Elect

Mosiah 8:16 And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God. 17 But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known. 18 **Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.**

Moroni 7:27 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men?... 29 ... Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. 30 For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. 31 And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, **to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him.** 32 **And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts,** according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.

D&C 29:4 Verily, I say unto you that ye are **chosen out of the world to declare my gospel** with the sound of rejoicing, as with the voice of a trump.

D&C 46:8 Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given; 9 For verily I say unto you, **they are given for the benefit of 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 that they may consume it upon their lusts. 9 For verily I say unto you, **they are given for the benefit of 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 that they may consume it upon their lusts. 10 And again, verily I say unto you, I would that ye should always remember, and always retain in your minds what those gifts are, that are given unto

the church. 11 For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. 12 **To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby....** 26 **And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God.**

D&C 84:46 And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. 47 And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father. 48 And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is **confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world.**

D&C 93:45 ... I will call you friends, for you are my friends, and ye shall have an inheritance with me-- 46 **I called you servants for the world's sake, and ye are their servants for my sake--**

It is plain that the Lord's purpose for the elect, those chosen out of the world, is to preach the gospel and be of service to all men so they will repent and come to the Lord. This is the Lord's will, and if we are pursuing His will then we will be granted spiritual gifts when we ask for them.

This is the third requirement for obtaining spiritual gifts, that we are engaged in the service of the Lord for the benefit of all men.

Remember, these are gifts, not bonuses, not something we earn by merit. They are gifts the Lord gives out as He sees fit. He has set the requirements, and if we observe those requirements, He will give them to us. That is how we obtain spiritual gifts, at least the ones we weren't born with.

3. What are the Available Spiritual Gifts?

There are three similar lists of spiritual gifts appearing in the Scriptures.

1 Cor. 12:1 NOW concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant. 2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. 3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and [that] no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. 4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit **the word of wisdom;** to another **the word of knowledge** by the same Spirit; 9 To another **faith** by the same Spirit; to another

the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another
the working of miracles; to another
prophecy; to another
discerning of spirits; to another
[divers] kinds of tongues; to another
the interpretation of tongues:

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Moro. 10:8 And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.⁹ For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may

teach the word of wisdom; 10 ...
teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 11 ...
exceedingly great faith; ...
the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 12 ...
may work mighty miracles; 13 ...
may prophesy concerning all things; 14 ...
the beholding of angels and ministering spirits; 15 ...
all kinds of tongues; 16 ...
the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues.

17 And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will. 18 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ. 19 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

D&C 46:11 For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. 12 To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby. 13 To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to

know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and
that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

14 To others it is given to

believe on their words,

that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful. 15 And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to

know the differences of administration,

as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men.

16 And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to

know the diversities of operations,

whether they be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal. 17 And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God,

the word of wisdom. 18 To another is given

the word of knowledge,

that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge. 19 And again, to some it is given to

have faith to be healed; 20 And to others it is given to

have faith to heal. 21 And again, to some is given the

working of miracles; 22 And to others it is given to
prophecy; 23 And to others the
discerning of spirits. 24 And again, it is given to some to
speak with tongues; 25 And to another is given the
interpretation of tongues.

26 And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God. 27 And unto the bishop of the church, and unto such as God shall appoint and ordain to watch over the church and to be elders unto the church, are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts lest there shall be any among you professing and yet be not of God.

Regarding some of the unique gifts in the D&C 46 version:

"differences of administration", a paraphrase 1 Cor. 12:5, also commented on in Moroni 10:8. There are different ways the gifts of the Spirit are brought into use or applied, how they are made useful. In modern vernacular, how callings are extended and why certain people should be called.

"diversities of operations (GR:energeia)", a paraphrase of 1 Cor. 12:6. A better translation would be "different apportionments of God's strength". See also Ps. 28:5.

Paul cites both of these not as gifts but to indicate not everyone gets every gift and they are doled out differently. The D&C version makes the ability to discern these things a gift.

Some of us have these gifts and other gifts as well. Why were we given them? Some of us don't have these gifts and would like them. What do we have to do to get them?

For those of you who have served full-time missions, was that time the most spiritual time of your life? Was that the time you had spiritual experiences most frequently, and of the greatest variety?

4. Examples of Those Who Have Received Gifts

Nephi#3

Hela. 10:4 Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for **I have beheld how thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word,** which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast **sought my will, and to keep my commandments.** 5 And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, **for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.** 6 Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am

God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people. 7 Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people.

Ammon, son of Mosiah

Alma 17:28 Now the servants of the king began to murmur, saying: Now the king will slay us, as he has our brethren because their flocks were scattered by the wickedness of these men. And they began to weep exceedingly, saying: Behold, our flocks are scattered already. 29 Now they wept because of the fear of being slain. Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy; for, said he, **I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants, or the power which is in me, in restoring these flocks unto the king, that I may win the hearts of these my fellow-servants, that I may lead them to believe in my words.**

Alma 26:1 AND now, these are the words of Ammon to his brethren, which say thus: My brothers and my brethren, behold I say unto you, how great reason have we to rejoice; for could we have supposed when we started from the land of Zarahemla that God would have granted unto us such great blessings? 2 And now, I ask, what great blessings has he bestowed upon us? Can ye tell? 3 Behold, I answer for you; for our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! **And this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work.**

5. Conclusion

It is easy to see why the Lord wants us to seek after the best gifts. If we are then we are in the process of reconciling ourselves to His will and are of benefit to our fellow man. Naturally, we are also sanctifying ourselves in the process of doing this. And if we are in this path, then we will not be deceived by false spirits.