

## D&C LESSON 15

# “SEEK YE EARNESTLY THE BEST GIFTS”

By Ted L. Gibbons

**INTRODUCTION:** Consider this quote from Brigham Young on the necessity of the gifts of the Spirit in the Church.

I have already said that Christ set in his Church Apostles and Prophets; he also set in his Church evangelists, pastors and teachers; also the gifts of the Spirit, such as diverse tongues, healing the sick discernment of spirits, and various other gifts. Now, I would ask the whole world, who has received revelation that the Lord has discontinued these offices and gifts in his Church? I have not. I have had revelation that they should be in the Church, and that there is no Church without them. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p.136; JD, Vol. 13:p. 144.)

### 1. ALL FAITHFUL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH CAN RECEIVE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

In a world that has turned almost completely from a belief in the powers of heaven and the involvement of a Divine Parent with his earthly children, do you not consider it a wonderful thing that the Father offers *every faithful child* at least one of the gifts—the powers—that comes from the expressions of his Spirit? Joseph Smith taught, “A man must have the discerning of spirits, as we before stated, to understand these things, and how is he to obtain this gift if there are no gifts of the Spirit? And how can these gifts be obtained without revelation?” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Four 1839–42, p.206).

This is one additional way in which the Lord reveals himself and his power to all of his people. “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.” (D&C 46:11)

You might find it worth your study and time to compare the lists of spiritual gifts in D&C 46 with the lists in 1 Corinthians 12-13 and Moroni 10. Which gifts are

mentioned in all three locations? Which ones are unique to one writer or another?

The literature of the Church is filled with records of the expressions of these various gifts. Your own histories will probably have many such accounts as well. All of us who have spent time among the believers have heard accounts of miracles and healings and prophecies and tongues. The realization that every faithful member has the opportunity to experience these divine episodes offers us yet one additional way to increase our testimonies and our love of this work.

Have you learned what your gift is (or what your gifts are)? You should recognize that the Lord may have bestowed a gift upon you that is not as obvious as those mentioned in the scriptures cited above. The scriptures say that "there are many gifts . . ." (D&C 46:11). Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught

"From the writings of Paul (1 Cor. 12; 13; 14), and of Moroni (Moro. 10), and from the revelations received by Joseph Smith (D. & C. 46), we gain a clear knowledge of spiritual gifts and how they operate. Among others, we find the following gifts named either in these three places or elsewhere in the scriptures: the gift of knowing by revelation "that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world" (D. & C. 46:13), and also the gift of believing the testimony of those who have gained this revelation; the gifts of testimony, of knowing that the Book of Mormon is true, and of receiving revelations; the gifts of judgment, knowledge, and wisdom; of teaching, exhortation, and preaching; of teaching the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge; of declaring the gospel and of ministry; the gift of faith, including power both to heal and to be healed; the gifts of healing, working of miracles, and prophesy; the viewing of visions, beholding of angels and ministering spirits, and the discerning of spirits; speaking with tongues, the interpretation of tongues, the interpretation of languages, and the gift of translation; the differences of administration in the Church and the diversities of operation of the Spirit; the gift of seership, "and a gift which is greater can no man have." (Mosiah 8:16; Alma 9:21; D. & C. 5:4; 43:3-4; Rom. 12:6-8.) And these are by no means all of the gifts. In the fullest sense, they are infinite in number and endless in their

manifestations" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p.314 GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT).

The assertion that these gifts are "infinite in number and endless in their manifestations" is an abiding invitation to every faithful child of God to participate in the exercise of these spiritual gifts. A latter-day apostle said:

"Let us review some of these less-conspicuous gifts: the gift of asking; the gift of listening; the gift of hearing and using a still, small voice; the gift of being able to weep; the gift of avoiding contention; the gift of being agreeable; the gift of avoiding vain repetition; the gift of seeking that which is righteous; the gift of not passing judgment; the gift of looking to God for guidance; the gift of being a disciple; the gift of caring for others; the gift of being able to ponder; the gift of offering prayer; the gift of bearing a mighty testimony; and the gift of receiving the Holy Ghost.

"We must remember that to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. It is our right and responsibility to accept our gifts and to share them. God's gifts and powers are available to all of us."  
(Marvin J. Ashton, "There Are Many Gifts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 20)

Joseph Smith said, ". . . all the gifts of the Spirit are not visible to the natural vision, or understanding of man; indeed very few of them are." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p.244)

## 2. GOD GIVES GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS CHILDREN.

Three times in D&C 46 the Lord uses some form of the word "profit" to explain the purpose of these gifts he has imparted to us.

- T "To some is given one, and to some is given another, **that all may be profited thereby.**" (D&C 46:12)
- T "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.**" (D&C 46:16)
- T "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.***" (D&C 46:29)  
T In D&C 46:9 the Lord uses a different word: He says that the gifts are given that "***all may be benefitted . . .***"

Thus we learn that the gifts are given to profit us individually but also that "all may be profited" by them. While the worthy receipt of these gifts blesses us in our relationship with heaven, their expression blesses the whole household of God. The Church needs miracle workers and the gift of tongues and teachers and prophets and those with a heritage of exceptional knowledge.

I am greatly pleased by the clarifying language of D&C 46:9. This verse not only describes a way in which these gifts bless us, but also offers wonderful encouragement for those of us who are less than perfect.

"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 benefitted that seek or that ask of me, that ask and not for a sign that they may consume it upon their lusts."

The gifts of the Spirit are not only for those who "keep all [of God's] commandments," but also for "him that seeketh so to do." As one of the latter category, I express my gratitude to a God who blesses those who comply perfectly but also those who don't; those who are imperfect but trying to be better. It may be in fact that these gifts are more for the struggling, imperfect members than anyone else. The following account is a bit long for this lesson, but it is a favorite story of the use of God-given gifts to bless another. Consider the gifts that made the following experience possible:

## **Fresh Crab and French Bread**

By Garnee Faulkner

It was a typical winter day in San Francisco, cool and damp. We had lived there a few years before and were back renewing memories. Seeing the large, steaming crab vats as we walked along Fisherman's Wharf, I exclaimed, "Oh, let's take some crab home to Emma."

"Crab?" asked my husband. "Why crab?"

"I don't know. Maybe she would enjoy it."

Sensing my ever-present desire to bring cheer to a grieving widow in our ward, Ron counseled me to find a more easily transported gift. He suggested that we find something more suitable in one of the souvenir shops beckoning us.

In and out of the shops we went, searching in vain for just the right memento. Empty-handed and tired, we started for our car, only to pass the crab vats once more.

"Ron, I still want to take some crab to Emma," I pleaded.

He was still resistant to hauling crab 150 miles, especially when I wasn't even sure Emma liked it. Nevertheless, we asked the vendor about transporting un-refrigerated crab that distance.

Soon we were crossing the Bay Bridge with the crab carefully wrapped in many thicknesses of paper; a long loaf of the Wharf's famous french bread was tucked in the side of the sack.

On the trip home my thoughts turned to Emma. I remembered the sacrament meeting ten months before when Emma, her husband, Ed, and their oldest son, David, had spoken just before David left to serve a mission. That was the last time we saw Ed. After accompanying David to the Missionary Training Center, Ed suffered a fatal heart attack while still in Utah. He never returned to California.

Ed was a gifted surgeon, highly respected in our community. His passing was felt deeply. In addition to Emma, he left six children, the youngest just a toddler.

Though many grieved with the family, it was difficult to express their sympathy because Emma was extremely reserved and quiet. Few knew her

well. As the months went on, her sorrow did not seem to lessen. Grief and poor health found her withdrawing from activity outside her home.

I was determined to be her friend, her sister in the gospel, and not let fear or personal rejection dilute my concern. Each week I went to her home, sometimes to be invited in while she shared her heartache. Other times she met me at the door but quickly terminated the visit with, "Thank you for coming."

As I rang the doorbell that day I could hear many feet running to answer. The door opened. Emma, surrounded by her children, stood there puzzled at my brown sack and protruding loaf of bread.

"Yes?" she inquired.

My spirits were dampened by her coolness, but I faked enthusiasm over our trip to the city and the gift we had brought.

As she took the fresh crab and french bread, Emma asked, "Is this for any special occasion?"

"No," I replied, "I just thought you might enjoy some crab from the Wharf."

"Thank you very much," she said, expressionless, and closed the door.

I returned to the car and slumped down into the seat, deflated. All I could say to Ron was, "I'm not sure Emma likes crab." We finished the drive home in silence.

Two days later came the following letter:

My dear friends:

I was very touched by your kind gesture last night and feel compelled to share a few thoughts with you.

Yesterday morning began with the usual daily tasks. I was out sweeping the walks when I looked up to the heavens and, noting the vast,

billowing, white clouds, asked, "Ed, do you know what day this is? Do dates have a meaning in heaven? Can you possibly know how much I love you and how desperately you are missed; how I long to be taken into your strong arms and held again just for a minute?"

With tear-stained cheeks I wanted to know if he remembered twenty-three years ago, or even two years ago this day.

All day long memories came rushing back. I remembered our first trip to San Francisco and how cold it was as we walked by the steaming crab pots at the Wharf. Ed was so handsome in his Navy uniform. He always took my hand in his, and holding it tight placed both in his overcoat pocket. How comforting the warmth was. I could see him sitting in the cable car, with his boyish grin, a loaf of bread and a crab under each arm. So many times he repeated this procedure.

San Francisco was our playground. I cannot begin to count the number of seminars and scientific meetings we attended there. To learn more was almost a disease with Ed. After each session we always ended our stay by going to the Wharf. A loaf of bread and a fresh crab became symbolic of a wonderful time together. Now that he's gone, I wonder what mysteries of heaven he is exploring, what avenues are being opened to him. So many unanswered questions ... so impatient I am.

Yesterday was a difficult day to get through. In late afternoon a beautiful floral arrangement arrived with a card from the children declaring their love for me. It was heartwarming. As I looked at the two little ones, then at Eddie and Janet and Miriam—then remembered David—I could see a part of Ed in each and realized that my cup runneth over.

Then at the close of day when I opened the door and saw you standing there with a loaf of bread and a package of fresh crab, it was like a direct message. You denied knowing it was a special day. Therefore I felt it was Ed's way of saying, "Happy anniversary. I do remember."

As ever,

Emma

(Garnee Faulkner, "Fresh Crab and French Bread," *Ensign*, June 1985, 38)

But these gifts are not for blessing ourselves and others alone. D&C 46:8

encourages us to “seek . . . earnestly the best gifts” so that we won’t be deceived. The history of the Church has many accounts of those who experienced what they believed were manifestations of the Spirit: people who were in fact deceived. Can you think of ways in which the such gifts as discernment or knowledge of wisdom might be a protection to you? Have you ever been blessed in this way? Have the manifestations of the Spirit kept you from a serious injury or a massive mistake?

### **3. WE SHOULD SEEK AND CULTIVATE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.**

I have 12 children, 9 of whom have received their patriarchal blessings. With their consent, I have placed copies of their blessings with copies of those received by my wife and myself, in a common folder. From time to time I read them all together. I have been amazed at the gifts that the Lord has given to my family. I feel at times as though the Lord has given to this family the power to deal with every conceivable difficulty that might arise. I have come by this means to understand in a new and more powerful way what these gifts can do for us if we make them active in our lives and in our ministries.

I have found gifts mentioned in every one of my family’s blessings. Patriarchs under the influence of the Spirit have given members of my family (and probably of yours as well) prophetic indications of divine attributes. But I know that the gifts mentioned so clearly in these blessings are not the only gifts my wife and my children possess. I have been astonished many times at unexpected aptitudes in my loved ones. I have from time to time watched one or the other of them labor and pray and plead for a gift not immediately available to manage a critical need.

We have been commanded by the Lord to “seek . . . earnestly the best gifts” while never losing sight of their purposes. Read D&C 46 carefully and mark (list?) the efforts mentioned that are necessary to obtain and exercise gifts of the Spirit.

The Presidency of the Relief Society wrote:

#### **How Do We Seek and Receive Spiritual Gifts?**

Many of us already have spiritual gifts, but we sometimes fail to recognize them. We may think they are reserved for people with special needs or

callings. For the same reason, we may neglect to earnestly seek spiritual gifts, even though they have been promised to us. The Savior tells us, "Ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally ... that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me" (D&C 46:7, 9).

In section 46, the Lord lists six qualifications to receive spiritual gifts: (1) They are not to be sought as signs (see D&C 46:9); (2) they are to be used in the service of others (see D&C 46:12, 26); (3) we should ask "in the Spirit" (D&C 46:30); (4) they are to be used "in the name of Christ" (D&C 46:31); (5) we must thank God "for whatsoever blessing [we] are blessed with" (D&C 46:32); and (6) we "must practise virtue and holiness before [the Lord] continually" (D&C 46:33).

The third qualification, to ask "in the Spirit," is especially important. President Brigham Young once received a message from the Prophet Joseph Smith after the Prophet's Martyrdom that illustrates the importance of having the Holy Ghost with us: "Tell the brethren to be humble and faithful and be sure to keep the Spirit of the Lord, and it will lead them aright. Be careful and not turn away the small, still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their heart open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them their hearts will be ready to receive it. They can tell the Spirit of the Lord from all other spirits—it will whisper peace and joy to their souls; it will take malice, hatred, strife and all evil from their hearts, and their whole desire will be to do good" (quoted in *Juvenile Instructor*, 19 July 1873, 114). [Relief Society General Presidency, "Seeking the Best Gifts," *Ensign*, Jan. 1997, p. 55]

**CONCLUSION:** You have a gift. Perhaps you have several. You have been commanded to seek others. They come by revelation and by the power of the Holy Ghost, which gift I think you all have. Take a moment now to ask yourself some questions: perhaps questions like these:

1. Have I identified my gift(s)?
2. Have I employed them to bless myself and others?
3. Have I sought the best gifts earnestly?

4. Are their gifts in my life which I have not acknowledged and for which I ought to give thanks?

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