

How to Receive Spiritual Gifts

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What Are Spiritual Gifts?

Because we are the spiritual offspring of God, and indeed by virtue of our very existence, each of us possesses a portion of that element which is variously identified in the scriptures as intelligence, light, truth, spirit, life, law, power, glory, knowledge, etc.—the light which “proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space ... which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne.” (D&C 88:12, 13.) This light gives life to our physical bodies and enables us to discern between good and evil and to make intelligent choices as we interact with others of our Father’s children and perform our work upon the earth.

In the most basic sense any increase in light that an individual experiences may be regarded as a spiritual gift—or a gift or free offering of the Spirit.

The scriptures list many of the spiritual gifts available to man. (See 1 Cor. 12:4–11; Moro. 10:9–17; D&C 46:11–26.) Some of these, such as the gifts of prophecy or healing or the gift of tongues, are very clearly manifest when given. Others may take the more subtle form of a talent or special skill or ability to discern. For example, in the construction of the tabernacle of the congregation in the days of Moses, Bezaleel the son of Uri was given, through the Spirit, the gift of fine workmanship in metals and wood and stone. (Ex. 31:1–5.) King Solomon was granted Wisdom and understanding according to his righteous desire. (1 Kgs. 3:5–15.) Enoch, who was “but a lad, and ... slow of speech” (Moses 6:31) when called to declare repentance to the people of his day, received the Spirit and was thereafter able to preach mightily and to see things not visible to the natural eye.

Where Do Spiritual Gifts Come From?

God the Father is the ultimate repository of all intelligence, “or, in other words, light and truth” (D&C 93:36); Jesus Christ, the Firstborn, who became a god in the premortal existence, the Father’s steward over his creations, is the one source of light for us as individuals; and the Holy Ghost is the “gatekeeper,” as it were, the dispenser of light to us according to worthiness and ability to receive it.

Gifts of the Spirit come to us in the form of pure intelligence or knowledge, transferred “in the abstract” (that is, spirit to spirit) through the Holy Ghost (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 355), to enlighten our minds, open the eyes

of our understanding, and manifest themselves as special abilities, skills, or capacities for understanding.

Who May Receive Them?

More accurately stated, this question might be “Who *must* receive them?”

The Lord God said, “Behold this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39.) In this work of salvation, Jesus Christ became the example for all to follow, obtaining immortality through the resurrection and, through complete obedience, receiving a fulness of the Father’s glory, including a fulness of truth, knowledge, glory, and power. (D&C 93:16–17, 24–26.) All those who, “quickened by a portion of the celestial glory” (D&C 88:29) through the Spirit in this estate, receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom—who become gods—become joint heirs with Christ in these things.

“He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.” (D&C 93:28.)

In one sense, therefore, salvation may be thought of as a nurturing process by which man is enlarged from a spirit child to a god, from the first whisperings of the Spirit even to a fulness by the power of Christ and through the operations of the Holy Ghost. (See D&C 50:24.)

It seems clear, then, that all who desire exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our Father must receive spiritual gifts. Therefore Paul told the Corinthians, “Covet earnestly the best gifts. ... Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts.” (1 Cor. 12:31; 1 Cor. 14:1.)

Much of the record of the scriptures is the record of holy men and women who have sought and been granted a wide variety of spiritual gifts as they worked to “learn [their] salvation and exaltation.” (*Teachings*, p. 348.) To say that a person is “spiritual” is to say that gifts of the Spirit are manifest in him. Although spiritual gifts are blessings reserved to the faithful—not signs to the unbelieving—each of us, no matter who we are, *may* have access to them. Baptized members of the Church who receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, “which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him” (1 Ne. 11:17; see also D&C 46:9), have a special right to his constant companionship and to spiritual gifts, as do also those who receive and magnify the Melchizedek Priesthood (see D&C 107:18–19). But the conditions for receiving these gifts have always been the same: obedience to the Lord’s commandments and the ordering of one’s life in accordance with the principles of the gospel. Where disobedience and unrighteousness enter in, the Spirit withdraws and spiritual gifts are lost.

How May I Receive Spiritual Gifts?

It would appear from the scriptures that our Father desires to grant these gifts even more ardently than we desire to receive them. And since these gifts are blessings for the faithful, then every such person seeking a spiritual gift has already had experience with at least one gift—the gift of faith in Christ and knows how freely this gift is given and how abundantly it blesses. He has also been blessed because of the very fact that his consciousness has awakened to recognize the need for specific gifts of the Spirit.

Assuming that a person has undergone basic preparation through obedience and faithfulness, receiving spiritual gifts can then be approached intelligently as a process.

First, one must identify needs. Spiritual gifts for specific needs are available “by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them” (Moro. 10:8); but exactly what gifts do you need? Are you a priesthood leader? a Relief Society president? a Primary teacher? a home teacher? What gifts are expedient for you? For a parent, anxious about the spiritual welfare of his children and uncertain about what they need to know and how he can best teach them, it might come as a great blessing to know, for example, that the ability to teach with conviction is something that he can be given. (See Moro. 10:9–10.) If we can identify our areas of need, we can then begin to seek diligently to meet that need.

Having identified specific needs, it simply remains for us to truly express the desires of our hearts to the Lord—to ask that a gift might be granted. We must not ask for gifts as a sign, but as a means of obeying the Lord’s commandments in our earthly stewardships (see 1 Ne. 3:7), for “if ye ask anything that is not expedient for you, it shall turn unto your condemnation” (D&C 88:65).

Is your life in order so that you can properly approach the Lord to ask for spiritual gifts?

“If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.” (D&C 42:61.)