

to see you and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white
to exceed all the white things that I had ever seen and as
I partook of the fruit thereof it put my soul with
doing great joy wherefore I began to be desirous that I might
show partake of it also for I knew that it was desirable
above all other fruit and as I cast my eyes around
me that perhaps I might discover my journey also
and I beheld a river of water and it ran along and it was
near the tree of which I was pursuing the fruit and
I looked to behold from whence it came and I saw the
head thereof a little way off and at the head thereof I
beheld your Mother Sarah and your uncles and they
stood as if they knew not whether they should go and
it came to pass that I beckoned unto them and I also
did say unto them with a loud voice that they should
come unto me and partake of the fruit which was
desirable above all other fruit and it came to pass that
at they did come unto me and partake of the fruit
Also all it came to pass that I saw a river that I saw
my brethren should come and partake of the fruit also
therefore I cast mine eyes toward the head of the river
that perhaps I might see them and it came to pass
that I saw them but they would not come unto
me and partake of the fruit and I beheld a rod of
iron and it extended along the bank of the river
and led to the tree in which I stood and I also saw
a straight and narrow path which came along
by the rod of iron unto the tree in which I stood
and it also led by the head of the fountain unto a
large and spacious field as if it had been a world
and I saw numberless companies of people many of
whom are precious persons that they may obtain
the path which led unto the tree in which I stood
and it came to pass that they did come forth and com-
menced in the path which led to the tree and it came
to pass that there were many that did

A portion of a page from the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon.
The words shown are part of Lehi's account of his vision of the tree of life,
as found in 1 Nephi 8:11-23.



Gifts of the Spirit

“If you will obey the Gospel with honest hearts, I promise you in the name of the Lord, that the gifts as promised by our Saviour will follow you.”

From the Life of Joseph Smith

The title page of the Book of Mormon explains how this remarkable book of scripture would be made available to the world. In ancient times, the gold plates were “written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed.” In the latter days, they were “to come forth by the gift and power of God” and be interpreted “by the gift of God.” In fulfillment of these prophecies, God chose Joseph Smith to translate the sacred records. Clearly, Joseph’s ability to translate the ancient characters did not come through education: he had only a grammar school knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. His ability to translate records written centuries before in a language of which he had no knowledge came as a gift from God Himself.

Emma Smith, an early scribe in her husband’s work, testified of this divine gift: “No man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when [I was] acting as his scribe, [Joseph] would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him.”¹

The Lord gave the Prophet vital temporal help that allowed him to go forward with the work of translation. Joseph Knight Sr., a friend of the Prophet, gave Joseph money and food on several occasions. At a particularly desperate time, Brother Knight traveled to the Prophet’s home to give Joseph and Oliver “a barrel of mackerel and some lined paper for writing,” along with “nine or ten bushels of grain and five or six bushels of taters [potatoes].”

Brother Knight recalled, “Joseph and Oliver . . . returned home and found me there with provisions, and they were glad, for they were out.”²

During April and May 1829, persecution increasingly interrupted the Prophet’s work of translating at his home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Oliver Cowdery wrote to a friend, David Whitmer, telling him about the sacred work and asking him to allow the work to continue in the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York. In late May or early June 1829, the Prophet and Oliver traveled with David Whitmer in his one-horse wagon to the farm home of David’s father, Peter Whitmer Sr. During the month of June, in an upstairs room of the Whitmer home, the translation was completed by the gift and power of God.

Oliver Cowdery described the marvelous experience of serving as the Prophet’s scribe: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim . . . the history or record called ‘The Book of Mormon.’”³

During this time, Joseph Smith learned that the divine gift was with him only when he was worthy to be guided by the Spirit. David Whitmer recounted: “One morning when [Joseph Smith] was getting ready to continue the translation, something went wrong about the house and he was put out about it. Something that Emma, his wife, had done. Oliver and I went up stairs, and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation, but he could not do anything. He could not translate a single syllable. He went down stairs, out into the orchard and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour—came back to the house, asked Emma’s forgiveness and then came up stairs where we were and the translation went on all right. He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful.”⁴

Humbly and faithfully using the gift God gave him, the young Prophet accomplished the seemingly impossible task of translating almost the entire Book of Mormon between early April and the end of June 1829.

Teachings of Joseph Smith

We are each given gifts of the Spirit; each person's gifts are necessary in the Church.

Articles of Faith 1:7: “We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.”⁵

“We . . . believe in prophecy, in tongues, in visions, and in revelations, in gifts, and in healings; and that these things cannot be enjoyed without the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁶

Amasa Potter recalled: “I remember the Prophet arising to preach to a large congregation in the grove west of the Temple in Nauvoo. He stated that he would preach on spiritual gifts. . . . Joseph stated that every Latter-day Saint had a gift, and by living a righteous life, and asking for it, the Holy Spirit would reveal it to him or her.”⁷

“Paul says, ‘To one is given the gift of tongues, to another the gift of prophecy, and to another the gift of healing;’ and again: ‘Do all prophesy? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?’ evidently showing that all did not possess these several gifts; but that one received one gift, and another received another gift—all did not prophesy, all did not speak in tongues, all did not work miracles; but all did receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; sometimes they spake in tongues and prophesied in the Apostles’ days, and sometimes they did not. . . .

“The Church is a compact body composed of different members, and is strictly analogous to the human system, and Paul, after speaking of the different gifts, says, ‘Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular; and God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all Teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?’ It is evident that they do not; yet are they all members of one body. All members of the natural body are not the eye, the ear, the head or the hand—yet the eye cannot say to the ear I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee; they are all so

many component parts in the perfect machine—the one body; and if one member suffer, the whole of the members suffer with it: and if one member rejoice, all the rest are honored with it. [See 1 Corinthians 12:9–10, 18–21, 26–30.]

“These, then, are all gifts; they come from God; they are of God; they are all the gifts of the Holy Ghost.”⁸

We receive gifts of the Spirit through obedience and faith.

“Because faith is wanting, the fruits are. No man since the world was had faith without having something along with it. The ancients quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, women received their dead, etc. By faith the worlds were made. [See Hebrews 11:3, 34–35.] A man who has none of the gifts has no faith; and he deceives himself, if he supposes he has. Faith has been wanting, not only among the heathen, but in professed Christendom also, so that tongues, healings, prophecy, and prophets and apostles, and all the gifts and blessings have been wanting.”⁹

“This winter [1832–33] was spent in translating the Scriptures; in the School of the Prophets; and sitting in conferences. I had many glorious seasons of refreshing. The gifts which follow them that believe and obey the Gospel, as tokens that the Lord is ever the same in His dealings with the humble lovers and followers of truth, began to be poured out among us, as in ancient days.”¹⁰

*Edward Stevenson was present when Joseph Smith preached in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1834. He recalled these words of the Prophet: “If you will obey the Gospel with honest hearts, I promise you in the name of the Lord, that the gifts as promised by our Saviour will follow you, and by this you may prove me to be a true servant of God.”*¹¹

Gifts of the Spirit are usually received quietly and privately, without outward manifestations.

“Various and conflicting are the opinions of men in regard to the gift of the Holy Ghost. Some people have been in the habit

of calling every supernatural manifestation the effects of the Spirit of God, whilst there are others that think there is no manifestation connected with it at all; and that it is nothing but a mere impulse of the mind, or an inward feeling, impression, or secret testimony or evidence, which men possess, and that there is no such a thing as an outward manifestation.

“It is not to be wondered at that men should be ignorant, in a great measure, of the principles of salvation, and more especially of the nature, office, power, influence, gifts, and blessings of the gift of the Holy Ghost; when we consider that the human family have been enveloped in gross darkness and ignorance for many centuries past, without revelation, or any just criterion [by which] to arrive at a knowledge of the things of God, which can only be known by the Spirit of God. Hence it not infrequently occurs, that when the Elders of this Church preach to the inhabitants of the world, that if they obey the Gospel they shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, that the people expect to see some wonderful manifestation, some great display of power, or some extraordinary miracle performed. . . .

“The human family are very apt to run to extremes, especially in religious matters, and hence people in general either want some miraculous display, or they will not believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost at all. If an Elder lays his hands upon a person, it is thought by many that the person must immediately rise and speak in tongues and prophesy; this idea is gathered from the circumstance of Paul laying his hands upon certain individuals who had been previously (as they stated) baptized unto John’s baptism; which when he had done, they ‘spake in tongues and prophesied.’ [See Acts 19:1–6.] . . .

“We believe that the Holy Ghost is imparted by the laying on of hands of those in authority, and that the gift of tongues, and also the gift of prophecy are gifts of the Spirit, and are obtained through that medium; but then to say that men always prophesied and spoke in tongues when they had the imposition of hands, would be to state that which is untrue, contrary to the practice of the Apostles, and at variance with holy writ. . . .

“. . . All the gifts of the Spirit are not visible to the natural vision, or understanding of man; indeed very few of them are. . . . Few of them could be known by the generality of men. Peter and John were Apostles, yet the Jewish court scourged them as impostors. Paul was both an Apostle and Prophet, yet they stoned him and put him into prison. The people knew nothing about it, although he had in his possession the gift of the Holy Ghost. Our Savior was ‘anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows’ [Hebrews 1:9], yet so far from the people knowing Him, they said He was Beelzebub, and crucified Him as an impostor. Who could point out a Pastor, a Teacher, or an Evangelist by their appearance, yet had they the gift of the Holy Ghost?

“But to come to the other members of the Church, and examine the gifts as spoken of by Paul, we shall find that the world can in general know nothing about them, and that there are but one or two that could be immediately known, if they were all poured out immediately upon the imposition of hands. In [1 Corinthians 12:4–11], Paul says, ‘There are diversities of gifts yet the same spirit, and there are differences of administrations but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every man to profit withal. For to one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self same spirit, dividing to each man severally as he will.’

“There are several gifts mentioned here, yet which of them all could be known by an observer at the imposition of hands? The word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge, are as much gifts as any other, yet if a person possessed both of these gifts, or received them by the imposition of hands, who would know it? Another might receive the gift of faith, and they would be as ignorant of it. Or suppose a man had the gift of healing or power to work miracles, that would not then be known; it would

require time and circumstances to call these gifts into operation. Suppose a man had the discerning of spirits, who would be the wiser for it? Or if he had the interpretation of tongues, unless someone spoke in an unknown tongue, he of course would have to be silent; there are only two gifts that could be made visible—the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy. These are things that are the most talked about, and yet if a person spoke in an unknown tongue, according to Paul’s testimony, he would be a barbarian to those present [see 1 Corinthians 14:11]. They would say that it was gibberish; and if he prophesied they would call it nonsense. The gift of tongues is the smallest gift perhaps of the whole, and yet it is one that is the most sought after.

“So that according to the testimony of Scripture and the manifestations of the Spirit in ancient days, very little could be known about it by the surrounding multitude, except on some extraordinary occasion, as on the day of Pentecost. The greatest, the best, and the most useful gifts would be known nothing about by an observer. . . .

“The manifestations of the gift of the Holy Ghost, the ministering of angels, or the development of the power, majesty or glory of God were very seldom manifested publicly, and that generally to the people of God, as to the Israelites; but most generally when angels have come, or God has revealed Himself, it has been to individuals in private, in their chamber; in the wilderness or fields, and that generally without noise or tumult. The angel delivered Peter out of prison in the dead of night; came to Paul unobserved by the rest of the crew; appeared to Mary and Elizabeth without the knowledge of others; spoke to John the Baptist whilst the people around were ignorant of it.

“When Elisha saw the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, it was unknown to others. When the Lord appeared to Abraham it was at his tent door; when the angels went to Lot, no person knew them but himself, which was the case probably with Abraham and his wife; when the Lord appeared to Moses, it was in the burning bush, in the tabernacle, or in the mountain top; when Elijah was taken in a chariot of fire, it was unobserved by the world; and when he was in a cleft of a rock, there was



“The power, majesty or glory of God [are] very seldom manifested publicly. . . . When the Lord appeared to Abraham it was at his tent door [see Genesis 18:1].”

loud thunder, but the Lord was not in the thunder; there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and then there was a still small voice, which was the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’ [See 1 Kings 19:11–13.]

“The Lord cannot always be known by the thunder of His voice, by the display of His glory or by the manifestation of His power; and those that are the most anxious to see these things, are the least prepared to meet them, and were the Lord to manifest His power as He did to the children of Israel, such characters would be the first to say, ‘Let not the Lord speak any more, lest we His people die.’ [See Exodus 20:19.]”¹²

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages vii–xii.

- The Lord gave the Prophet Joseph Smith a gift to be able to translate the gold plates (pages 115–16). When has the Lord given you gifts to help you participate in His work?
- What can we learn from the story told by David Whitmer on page 116? What experiences in your own life have taught you that you must be worthy in order to use your spiritual gifts?
- Review the section that begins on page 117. In what ways does the Church benefit from having members with different gifts of the Spirit? How have you benefited from the spiritual gifts of others? When have you seen people with different gifts work together to help one another?
- Study the section on page 118. Think about some spiritual gifts that would strengthen you personally or help you serve the Lord and others. Determine what you will do to “seek . . . earnestly the best gifts” (D&C 46:8).
- Review the section that begins at the bottom of page 118. Think about or discuss the specific counsel you find about how spiritual gifts are manifested. Why is it important to remember that spiritual gifts are “very seldom manifested publicly”? (page 121). Why do you think that many spiritual gifts come quietly and privately? Why is it important to remember that many gifts require “time and circumstances to call [them] into operation”? (page 121).
- After reading this chapter, what would you say are some of the purposes of spiritual gifts?

Related Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:1–31; 3 Nephi 29:6; Moroni 10:6–23; D&C 46:8–33

Notes

1. Emma Smith, interview by Joseph Smith III, Feb. 1879, *Saints' Herald* (periodical published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now called Community of Christ), Oct. 1, 1879, p. 290.
2. Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences*, p. 6, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
3. Oliver Cowdery, quoted in Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote; from a letter from Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, Sept. 7, 1834, Norton, Ohio, published in *Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, p. 14.
4. David Whitmer, interview by William H. Kelley and George A. Blakeslee, Sept. 15, 1881, *Saints' Herald*, Mar. 1, 1882, p. 68.
5. Articles of Faith 1:7.
6. *History of the Church*, 5:27; from “Gift of the Holy Ghost,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842, p. 823; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
7. Amasa Potter, “A Reminiscence of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor*, Feb. 15, 1894, p. 132.
8. *History of the Church*, 5:28–29; from “Gift of the Holy Ghost,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842, pp. 823–24; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.
9. *History of the Church*, 5:218; from instructions given by Joseph Smith on Jan. 2, 1843, in Springfield, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards.
10. *History of the Church*, 1:322; bracketed dates in original; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book A-1, p. 270, Church Archives.
11. Quoted by Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Propbet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (1893), p. 4.
12. *History of the Church*, 5:26–31; bracketed words in second paragraph in original; punctuation and grammar modernized; paragraph divisions altered; from “Gift of the Holy Ghost,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842, pp. 823–25; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.