

UNIT 2.C.: PURPOSE: CALLING & GIFTEDNESS

A DIVERSITY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Following are three fairly long quotes from scripture. In each of these passages God reiterates **a few points about giftedness**:

- There is one Holy Spirit.
- Every believer is given a spiritual gift.
- The gifts granted by the Spirit are diverse (vary by individual, given “severally”).
- We should earnestly seek after these gifts.
- These gifts of the Spirit will never leave the earth (will always be available to us unless there is unbelief)

1 Corinthians 12:4-11:

Now there are **diversities of gifts**, but the same Spirit. And there are **differences of administrations** [avenues of ministry], but the same Lord. And there are **diversities of operations** [different ways the Spirit works], but it is **the same God** which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to 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 . . . healing . . . miracles . . . prophecy . . . discerning** of spirits . . . diverse kinds of **tongues . . . interpretation . . .** But all these worketh **that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will . . .** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

I say unto you, Nay . . . covet earnestly the best gifts.

Moroni 10:8-14:

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. For behold, **to one is given by the Spirit of God**, that he may teach the word of **wisdom**; and to another, that he may teach the word of **knowledge** by the same Spirit; and to another exceeding great **faith**; and to another, the gifts of **healing** by the same Spirit. And again, to another, that he may work mighty **miracles**; and again, to another, that he may **prophesy** concerning all things; and again, to another, the beholding of **angels** and ministering spirits; and again, to another, all kinds of **tongues**; and again, to another, the **interpretation** of languages and of divers kinds of tongues. And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and **they come unto every man severally**, according as he will. And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ. 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 46:4-7:

. . . **seek ye earnestly the best gifts**, always remembering for what they are given. For verily I say unto you, They are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments . . . I would that ye should always remember, and always retain in your minds what those gifts are, that are given unto the church, **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**. To some it is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby. 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. To others it is given to **believe** on their words, that they also might have eternal life, if they continue faithful. And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost **to know the differences of administration** [avenues of ministry], 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. And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some **to know the diversities of operations** [different ways the Spirit works], whether it be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal. And again, verily I say unto you, To some it is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of **wisdom**. To another it is given the word of **knowledge**, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge. And again, to some it is given to have **faith to be healed**, and to others it is given to have **faith to heal**. And again, to some it is given the workings of **miracles**; and to others it is given to **prophecy**, and to others the **discerning** of spirits. And again, it is given to some to speak with **tongues**, and to another it is given the **interpretation** of tongues. And **all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God**.

DISCOVERING GOD’S CALL TO SPECIFIC AVENUES OF SERVICE

It would be nice if God would just tell us our individual calling, as occasionally happens in a patriarchal blessing. But sometimes that doesn’t occur. There are times when God would rather have us wrestle with that issue until we *discover* our individual calling. If you are in that situation here are a few things that might offer a clue regarding what God has called you to do on an individual basis:

1. You’ve Been Asked to Provide Ministry That Uses A Particular Gift

Instead of calling ourselves, it is more often the case that others ask us. If God has gifted you and called you to a particular avenue of service, it is only natural that people will ask you to perform that ministry.

Consider this hypothetical example:

- Do people ask you to help them with their taxes? No
- Do people ask you to design a website for them? No
- Do people ask you to sing? Yes
- Do people ask you to lead a book study? No

The “yes” response above might be one indication that singing is your gift and thus a calling from God. It does not eliminate the others. You might be excellent in preparing taxes, creating a website or leading a book study, but no one has asked you to do those things. When other people are easily able to recognize that you’re good at something, they will often tell you how talented you are at that thing, and they will frequently ask you to use your giftedness on their behalf. That can sometimes indicate a calling from God.

2. It Fits Like A Glove

A second clue something is an individual calling from God is every aspect of that particular skill comes naturally to you. Each step of the process requires very little thought on your part. Everything about that gift makes intuitive sense. Your skills align perfectly with the specific ministry you intend to provide. In the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddel said, "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel his pleasure."

3. You Become Passionate About The Gift

Is there an activity you do for others in which you become so immersed that you lose track of time? You might spend hours and feel physically exhausted. Despite your weariness, you feel an innate sense of deep satisfaction at having completed the task. You become so passionate that you'd happily do it for someone else without being paid. If that's the case, it may be a calling.

4. You Do It In Service To Others

A ministry is not provided for your glory or benefit. As a steward of that gift you are called to render service to God. In Mosiah 1:49-50, King Mosiah said:

. . . when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God. Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then had not ye ought to labor to serve one another?

WHY IS INDIVIDUAL GIFTEDNESS IMPORTANT?

Imagine that you are trying to organize a track team for events like sprints, long-distance running, shot put, pole vault, long jump, high jump, etc. As the new coach for this track team you want participants who can excel in each event.

However, instead of testing their competency, you just ask them to volunteer. You ask, "Who wants to do the pole vault? Who wants to run the 50-meter dash? Who wants to take the 1500-meter run? Who wants to throw the shot put?" Everyone just volunteers. If your goal is participation, then that works. But if your goal is to surpass other teams and win the meet, this approach of volunteering doesn't work very well!

Sometimes people have no understanding of their abilities or limitations. What if the person who volunteered for pole vaulting does it a couple of times and discovers he's afraid of heights? What if the one who wanted to throw the shot put has very little strength in his upper body? What happens if the individual running the 50 can't get out of the blocks? What if the 1500-meter person has no endurance?

Rather than letting people volunteer, wouldn't it make more sense to test their giftedness? You might have each person take a turn at the pole vault and see who can get over the highest bar? Wouldn't you want to test everyone to see who is fastest at the 50-meter run? Wouldn't you want to test them on the shot put before you make them the team's representative for that event?

Why are we using this analogy, and what does it mean? In a race, speed matters. **In ministry, the individual calling and gifts God has given us matter.**

WHEN I FAIL TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S CALLING

There are times we can become very excited about doing something very significant for God's kingdom. We all want to do something that is bigger and more impressive. We sometimes launch projects that we think will be a great blessing to the cause of Zion and then watch as our efforts fall flat.

At this moment, are you suffering from a personal defeat because you failed to properly discern God's calling for your life? Are you wondering why he didn't come to your rescue? It's usually because God has a better way that he wants to use your giftedness. Perhaps the original dream you had arose from your own ego rather than a divine calling. We sometimes get headed in a direction with such force and speed that God frequently has to put roadblocks in our lives to turn us around and send us in the right direction.

When we fail to achieve a goal that we thought was our calling from God, God doesn't want us to be discouraged. Instead, he wants us to believe he is helping us and working for our good. He wants us to view setbacks as part of his plan for our lives. When we experience painful setbacks, we need to realize that God is still there and is calling us in a different direction. He has not abandoned us.

God loves us too much to respond to our grumbling, complaining and self-pity. Much of our suffering comes from our shortsightedness and our inability to realize in every circumstance God is working for our good – always, no exceptions!

God is more interested in our desire to please him and do his will than he is in the greatness of our accomplishments. Think of Stephen in Acts 7. He was a young man with plans for a long life and thoughts that he might accomplish much for God's kingdom. But instead, his life was suddenly cut short in a gruesome way.

God led Stephen in a different direction. His plans changed, but God's plan didn't! Stephen was permitted to be a martyr for Christ, and his final sermon was recorded for many generations of people to read, but that might not have been what Stephen originally set out to do. However, God had a plan and calling for Stephen all along!