

# Gifts of the Spirit for Hard Times



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**D**espite our uniqueness, we all have some things in common. We are all in the probationary test of mortality. And, wherever we live, that test will become increasingly difficult. We are in the last dispensation of time. God's prophets have seen these times for millennia. They saw that wonderful things were to happen. There was to be a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The true Church was to be brought back with prophets and apostles.

The gospel was to be taken to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Most marvelous of all, the true Church and its members were to become worthy for the coming of the Savior to His Church and to His purified disciples.

But the true prophets also saw that in the last days Satan would rage. There would be wars and rumors of wars, which would inspire fear. The courage of many would fail. There would be great wickedness. Satan would deceive many.

Yet, happily, many would not be overcome. And many would not be deceived. My purpose is to teach you how you can reach that happy and glorious goal.

## **The Holy Ghost Is the Key**

The key for each of us will be to accept and hold the gift we have been promised by God. As a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ, you will remember that after you were baptized, authorized servants of God promised you that you could receive the Holy Ghost. Some of you may have felt something happen when that ordinance was performed. Most of you have felt the effects of that promise being fulfilled in your lives. I will tell you how to recognize that gift, how to receive it every day, and how it will bless you in the days ahead.

You have felt the quiet confirmation in your heart and mind that something was true. And you knew that it was inspiration from God. For some of you it may have come as the missionaries taught you before your baptism. It may have come during a talk, lesson, or hymn in church. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth. You feel peace, hope, and joy when He speaks to your heart and mind that something is true. Almost always I have also felt a sensation of light. Any feeling I may have had of darkness is dispelled, and my desire to do right grows.

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The Lord promised that having those experiences would be true for you. He said:

“And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy” (D&C 11:12–13).

The Lord also promised that those who have accepted the gift of the Holy Ghost in their lives would not be deceived. He spoke reassuringly to you and to me, who live in the times when the Church is being made ready for when He comes again. Here is the promise from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

“For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day” (D&C 45:56–57).

### Manifestations of the Spirit

These words paint a picture of the day when we might be with the Savior and have His glory upon us. Of all the things to which the Holy Ghost testifies, none is more precious than that Jesus is the Christ, the living Son of God. And nothing is so likely to make us feel light, hope, and joy. It is not surprising that when we feel the influence of the Holy Ghost, we also can feel that our natures are being changed because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We feel an increased desire to keep His commandments, to do good, and to deal justly.

Many of you have felt that effect from your frequent

experiences with the Holy Ghost. For instance, in the mission field you were given words by the Holy Ghost when you surrendered your heart to the Lord’s service. If you will think back on those times and ponder, you will also remember that the increase in your desire to obey the commandments came over you gradually. You felt less and less the tug of temptation. You felt more and more the desire to be obedient and to serve others. You felt a greater love for the people.

From that faithful service to the Master, you not only had the witness of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, but you also saw evidence in your own life that the Atonement is real. Such faithful service, which brings the influence of the Holy Ghost, is an example of planting a seed, as described in Alma 32:33–37.

### Receiving Revelations Daily

You have felt some of the things I have described, and the Holy Ghost has touched your heart and mind from time to time. But you will need that influence consistently if you are not to be overcome or deceived. Is that possible, and what will it take to receive that blessing?

Yes, it is possible. Whenever I need that reassurance—and I need it from time to time too—I remember two brothers. Nephi and Lehi faced fierce opposition. They were serving in an increasingly wicked world. They had to deal with terrible deceptions. So I take courage—and so can you—from a verse in Helaman:

“And in the seventy and ninth year there began to be much strife. But it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi, and many of their brethren

who knew concerning the true points of doctrine, having many revelations daily, therefore they did preach unto the people, insomuch that they did put an end to their strife



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in that same year” (Helaman 11:23).

They had “many revelations daily.” So, yes, it is possible to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost sufficiently to have many revelations daily. It is not easy, but it is possible. What it will require will be different for each person because we start from where we are in our unique set of experiences in life. For all of us there will be at least three requirements. None of them can be gained and retained from a single experience. All of them must be constantly renewed.

#### Have Faith in God

First, receiving the Holy Ghost takes faith in our Heavenly Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ. The memory of a great spiritual experience in which that truth was confirmed to you won’t be sufficient. You will need to be sure of your faith in the moment of crisis, which may come at any time, day or night,

when you plead for the influence of the Spirit. You must then be unshaken in your confidence that God lives, that He hears your cry for help, and that the resurrected Savior will do for you what He promised to do for His servants in His mortal ministry:

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).

The record shows that Nephi and Lehi knew concerning the true points of doctrine. Of all the true doctrine, nothing is more important to you and me than the true nature of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. For that, I return again and again to the scriptures. For that, I return again and again to prayer. For that, I return again and again to partaking of the sacrament. And, above all, I come to know God and Jesus Christ best by keeping the commandments

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and serving in the Church. By diligent service in the Church we come not only to know the character of God but also to love Him. If we follow His commands, our faith in Him will grow and we may qualify to have His Spirit to be with us.

Vibrant faith in God comes best from serving Him regularly. Every member has a multitude of opportunities to serve God. For instance, for years we have heard the phrase, "Every member a missionary." Similarly, each member is to care for the poor among us and around us. That is why we have fast offerings and service projects. Our choice is to decide whether to join with the Lord and His disciples in our day as He and His disciples did during His mortal ministry.

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I received a phone call from a distraught mother who told me that her unmarried daughter had moved to another city far from home. She sensed from the little contact she had had with her daughter that something was terribly wrong. The mother feared for the moral safety of her daughter. She pleaded for help.

I found out who the daughter's home teacher was. I called him. He was young, yet he and his companion had awakened in the night with not only concern for the girl but also with inspiration that she was about to make choices that would bring sadness and misery. With only the inspiration of the Spirit, they went to see her. They pleaded with her to repent and to choose to follow the path the Lord had set out for her and that her mother and father had taught her to follow. She realized as she listened that the only way they

could have known what they knew about her life was from God. A mother's prayer had gone to Heavenly Father, and the Holy Ghost had been sent to home teachers with an errand.

Your faith will grow as you serve the Lord in caring for Heavenly Father's children as the Lord's teacher to their home. You will have your prayers answered. You will come to know for yourself that He lives, that He loves us, and that He sends inspiration to those with even the beginnings of faith in Him and with the desire to serve Him in His Church. Stay close to the Church if you want your faith in God to grow. And as it grows, so will your ability to claim the promise you were given that you can receive the gifts of the Spirit.

### Be Clean

A second requirement for frequent companionship and direction from the Holy Ghost is to be clean. The Spirit must withdraw from those who are not clean. You remember the sad illustration of that in the Book of Mormon:

"And because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face.

"And they saw that they had become weak, like unto their brethren, the Lamanites, and that the Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them; yea, it had withdrawn from them because the Spirit of the Lord doth not dwell in unholy temples" (Helaman 4:23–24).

The path to receiving the Holy Ghost is to exercise faith in Christ unto repentance. We can become clean through qualifying for the effects of the Savior's Atonement. The covenants offered in baptism by authorized servants of God

bring that cleansing. We renew our pledge to keep those covenants each time we partake of the sacrament. The peace we all seek is the assurance that we have received forgiveness for our sins of omission or commission.

The Savior has been given the right to grant that forgiveness and to give that assurance. I have learned that the Lord gives that assurance at the time He chooses, and He does it in His own way. And I have learned to ask for it in prayer. One way He grants that assurance is through the Holy Ghost. If you have difficulty in feeling the Holy Ghost, you might wisely ponder whether there is anything for which you need to repent and receive forgiveness.

If you have felt the influence of the Holy Ghost today, you may take it as evidence that the Atonement is working in your life. For that reason and many others, you would do well to put yourself in places and in tasks that invite the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost works both ways: the Holy Ghost only dwells

in a clean temple, and the reception of the Holy Ghost cleanses us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. You can pray with faith to know what to do to be cleansed and thus qualified for the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the service of the Lord. And with that companionship you will be strengthened against temptation and empowered to detect deception.



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### Have a Pure Motive

A third requirement for the companionship of the Holy Ghost is pure motive. If you want to receive the gifts of the Spirit, you have to want them for the right reasons.

Your purposes must be the Lord's purposes. To the degree your motives are selfish, you will find it difficult to receive those gifts of the Spirit that have been promised to you.

That fact serves both as a warning and as helpful

instruction. First, the warning: God is offended when we seek the gifts of the Spirit for our own purposes rather than for His. Our selfish motives may not be obvious to us. But few of us would be so blind as Simon, who sought to purchase the right to the gifts of the Spirit:

“But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. . . .

“Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me” (Acts 8:20–21, 24).

Apparently Simon recognized his own corrupt motives. It may not be so easy for each of us. We almost always have more than one motive at a time. And some motives may be mixtures of what God wants as well as what we want. It is not easy to pull them apart.

Consider yourself on the eve of a school examination or an interview for a new job. You know that the direction of the Holy Ghost could be of great help. I know from my own experience, for example, that the Holy Ghost knows the mathematical equations used to solve problems in thermodynamics. I was a struggling physics student studying in a book that I still own. Halfway down a page, in the middle of some mathematics, I had a clear confirmation that what I was reading was true. It was exactly the feeling that had come to me before as I had pondered the Lord’s scriptures and that I have had many times since. So I knew that the Holy Ghost understood whatever was true in what I might be asked on an examination in thermodynamics.

You can imagine that I was tempted to ask God to send me the Holy Ghost during the examination so I wouldn’t

need to study further. I knew that He could do it, but I did not ask Him. I felt that He would rather have me learn to pay a price in effort. Always there is the possibility that we may have a selfish purpose that is less important to the Lord.

For instance, I may want a good grade in a course, when He prefers that I learn how to work hard in the service of others. I may want a job because of the salary or the prestige, when He wants me to work somewhere else to bless the life of someone I don’t even know yet. I may desire to entertain or impress a congregation, but I try to suppress my desire and surrender to His.

#### **Pure Love of Christ**

I surely don’t understand all the meaning of the scriptural words “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). But one meaning I do know is this: It is a gift we are promised

when the Atonement of Jesus Christ has worked in us. The gift is to want what He wants. When our love is the love He feels, it is pure because He is pure. And when we feel our desire for people is moving toward being in line with His, that is one of the ways that we can know that we are being purified. When we pray for the gifts of the Spirit—and we should—one for which I pray is that I might have pure motives, to want what our Father wants for His children and for me, and to feel, as well as to say, that what I want is His will to be done.

I pray with all the energy of my heart that you will have your prayers answered to meet the requirements to receive the Holy Ghost. And I

pray that you will endure faithful to the end and that, for you, it will be glorious. ■

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