



By Elder  
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Of the Seventy

# Where Am I?

## How to Discover and Develop Your Spiritual Gifts and Talents

*Heavenly Father has given you spiritual gifts and talents to help you become who He would have you become.*

In the scriptures we find many questions that cause us to reflect on our lives. One of the first questions asked in the Bible was directed to Adam after he partook of the forbidden fruit. I invite you to ponder how this question may apply to your life:

“Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, *Where art thou?*” (Genesis 3:8–9; emphasis added).

The Lord is all-knowing, so we can be certain that He knew where Adam and Eve were hiding. If He knew where they were, what was the Lord really asking?

This question most likely prompted Adam and Eve to think about what

was happening in their lives. We could ask ourselves similar questions. For example: Where are we on our journey along the covenant path to eternal life? What gifts and talents did our Heavenly Father give us in the pre-mortal life to help us along this path? What other gifts and talents are we to gain as we strive to become who the Lord would have us become?

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) stated, “Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal [physical] body.”<sup>1</sup> The *Gospel Principles* manual teaches us that “Father in Heaven knows who we are and what we did before we came here. He has chosen the time and place for each of us to be born so we can learn the lessons we personally need and *do the most good with our individual talents and personalities.*”<sup>2</sup>

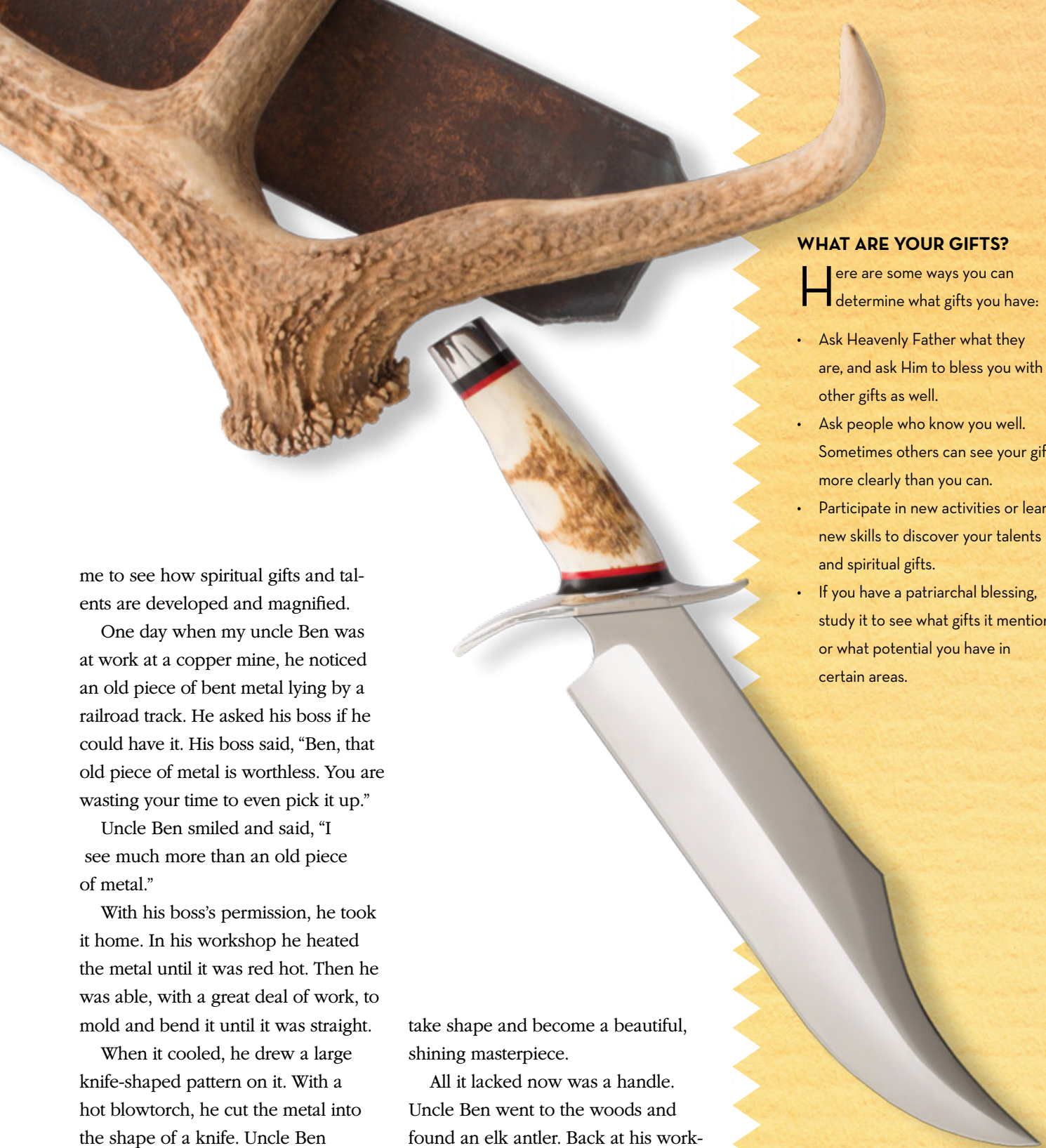
Heavenly Father placed you in the best place to use your spiritual gifts and build your talents. No matter

where you live or what life circumstances you find yourself in, you can make the choice to succeed, regardless of your challenges. Don’t ever give up. Keep going. Don’t quit. Remember, it’s what you do with what you have that makes you who you are.

Adam and Eve’s example can give us a lot of hope. After they transgressed the commandment not to partake of the forbidden fruit, they were cast out of a beautiful garden, the ground was cursed, thorns and thistles appeared, and they had to work and till the earth to provide for themselves. They did not give up. They went to work, as the Lord had commanded them (see Moses 5:1). Their son Cain made a very bad choice, but they continued to live righteously and kept teaching their children.

### Uncle Ben’s Discovery

I have an uncle who was continually seeking to improve and increase the gifts and talents he had received from Heavenly Father. Let me share one story from his life that has helped



me to see how spiritual gifts and talents are developed and magnified.

One day when my uncle Ben was at work at a copper mine, he noticed an old piece of bent metal lying by a railroad track. He asked his boss if he could have it. His boss said, "Ben, that old piece of metal is worthless. You are wasting your time to even pick it up."

Uncle Ben smiled and said, "I see much more than an old piece of metal."

With his boss's permission, he took it home. In his workshop he heated the metal until it was red hot. Then he was able, with a great deal of work, to mold and bend it until it was straight.

When it cooled, he drew a large knife-shaped pattern on it. With a hot blowtorch, he cut the metal into the shape of a knife. Uncle Ben then began knocking off the rough edges, working hour after hour to cut, grind, polish, and refine that old piece of metal.

Day after day he worked on what his boss had called a worthless piece of metal. Slowly the blade began to

take shape and become a beautiful, shining masterpiece.

All it lacked now was a handle. Uncle Ben went to the woods and found an elk antler. Back at his workshop he cleaned, cut, and polished the antler. When he was done, it was smooth and beautiful. Carefully he attached the handle to the knife. What was once an old, rusty, bent piece of metal became a beautiful knife that won several awards.

## WHAT ARE YOUR GIFTS?

Here are some ways you can determine what gifts you have:

- Ask Heavenly Father what they are, and ask Him to bless you with other gifts as well.
- Ask people who know you well. Sometimes others can see your gifts more clearly than you can.
- Participate in new activities or learn new skills to discover your talents and spiritual gifts.
- If you have a patriarchal blessing, study it to see what gifts it mentions or what potential you have in certain areas.





## DO YOU HAVE ONE OF THESE GIFTS?

“Let me mention a few gifts that are not always evident or noteworthy but that are very important. Among these may be your gifts—gifts not so

evident but nevertheless real and valuable.

“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.”

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “There Are Many Gifts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 20.

You and I are like that old piece of metal. We also need molding, refining, and polishing to reach our full potential. Part of that process is discovering, strengthening, and multiplying our talents and gifts.

Uncle Ben understood that much of our potential is not visible on the surface and must be discovered and developed. The Lord teaches us to “seek ye earnestly the best gifts” (D&C 46:8) and “that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold” (D&C 82:18). And why must we do this? We can use our talents and gifts to serve others, as the next verse explains: “Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all



things with an eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 82:19). Giving service molds us into living a more Christlike life.

### Finding Our Talents

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught how trials can shape us: “Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see Proverbs 3:11–12). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, *understanding, and compassion* [two very important gifts] which *polish you for your everlasting benefit*. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain.”<sup>3</sup>

### Improving Our Talents

Increasing our talents requires work. Not long ago, Elder Scott said to my wife, “Devonna, you should paint.”

Sister Arnold had never painted in her life. She had to work at it. She took some lessons, painted day after day, and after a great deal of time and effort learned to paint beautifully. I have one of her gorgeous paintings of a river scene hanging on my office wall.

Yes, obtaining talents requires work, but how great shall be our joy

when we hear the Lord tell us, “Well done. Thy gifts and talents shall be multiplied because of thy diligence” (see Matthew 25:14–30).

### Your Spiritual Gifts

My wife discovered a talent for painting. What are your gifts and talents? I know our Heavenly Father has given you some. How do I know? “There are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God” (D&C 46:11). God’s gifts and powers are available to all of us. It is our right and responsibility to accept our spiritual gifts, multiply our talents, and share them.

The scriptures list a few gifts we can seek (see, for example, D&C 46), but there are actually hundreds of gifts and talents. Search the Book of Mormon, particularly 3 Nephi 11–26, and you will discover many gifts and talents that are available to each of us. For example, in 3 Nephi 11 we read about the people hearing Heavenly Father’s voice but not understanding it at first:

“The third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof . . .

“And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man [Jesus Christ] descending out of heaven” (verses 5, 8).

To hear clearly and to see clearly are just two examples of spiritual gifts and talents that you can obtain and

multiply if you are willing to *seek after and work for* them.

I invite each of us to do as Uncle Ben did: see the best in everything as we seek spiritual gifts and talents and use them to bless those around us. I know our Heavenly Father has many gifts and talents that He wishes to bestow upon us, but they “are made conditional on our asking for them. Blessings require some work or effort on our part” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer”). May we discover, work for, and multiply the God-given gifts and talents we were born with, and may we acquire other gifts is my humble prayer. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 335.
2. *Gospel Principles* (2009), 10; emphasis added.
3. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16–17; emphasis added.