



Developing Our Talents

Chapter 34

We All Have Different Talents and Abilities

We all have special gifts, talents, and abilities given to us by our Heavenly Father. When we were born, we brought these gifts, talents, and abilities with us (see chapter 2 in this book).

The prophet Moses was a great leader, but he needed Aaron, his brother, to help as a spokesman (see Exodus 4:14–16). Some of us are leaders like Moses or good speakers like Aaron. Some of us can sing well or play an instrument. Others of us may be good in sports or able to work well with our hands. Other talents we might have are understanding others, patience, cheerfulness, or the ability to teach others.

- How have you benefited from the talents of others?

We Should Use and Improve Our Talents

- How can we develop our talents?

We have a responsibility to develop the talents we have been given. Sometimes we think we do not have many talents or that other people have been blessed with more abilities than we possess. Sometimes we do not use our talents because we are afraid that we might fail or be criticized by others. We should not hide our talents. We should use them. Then others can see our good works and glorify our Heavenly Father (see Matthew 5:16).

There are certain things we must do to develop our talents. First, we must discover our talents. We should evaluate ourselves to find our strengths and abilities. Our family and friends can help us do this.

For teachers: One way to show class members that you care about them individually is to call them by name. Learn their names. When new class members attend the class, introduce them to the others.

We should also ask our Heavenly Father to help us learn about our talents.

Second, we must be willing to spend the time and effort to develop the talent we are seeking.

Third, we must have faith that our Heavenly Father will help us, and we must have faith in ourselves.

Fourth, we must learn the skills necessary for us to develop our talents. We might do this by taking a class, asking a friend to teach us, or reading a book.

Fifth, we must practice using our talent. Every talent takes effort and work to develop. The mastery of a talent must be earned.

Sixth, we must share our talent with others. It is by our using our talents that they grow (see Matthew 25:29).

All of these steps are easier if we pray and seek the Lord's help. He wants us to develop our talents, and He will help us.

We Can Develop Our Talents in Spite of Our Weaknesses

- How can we develop our talents in spite of our weaknesses?

Because we are mortal and fallen, we have weaknesses. With the Lord's help, our weakness and fallen nature can be overcome (see Ether 12:27, 37). Beethoven composed his greatest music after he was deaf. Enoch overcame his slowness of speech to become a powerful teacher (see Moses 6:26–47).

Some great athletes have had to overcome handicaps before they have succeeded in developing their talents. Shelly Mann was such an example. "At the age of five she had polio. . . . Her parents took her daily to a swimming pool where they hoped the water would help hold her arms up as she tried to use them again. When she could lift her arm out of the water with her own power, she cried for joy. Then her goal was to swim the width of the pool, then the length, then several lengths. She kept on trying, swimming, enduring, day after day after day, until she won the [Olympic] gold medal for the butterfly stroke—one of the most difficult of all swimming strokes" (Marvin J. Ashton, in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 127; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 86).

Heber J. Grant overcame many of his weaknesses and turned them into talents. He had as a motto these words: “That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing is changed, but that our power to do is increased” (in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* [2002], 35).

The Lord Will Bless Us If We Use Our Talents Wisely

President Joseph F. Smith said, “Every son and every daughter of God has received some talent, and each will be held to strict account for the use or misuse to which it is put” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 370). A talent is one kind of stewardship (responsibility in the kingdom of God). The parable of the talents tells us that when we serve well in our stewardship, we will be given greater responsibilities. If we do not serve well, our stewardship will eventually be taken from us. (See Matthew 25:14–30.)

We are also told in the scriptures that we will be judged according to our works (see Matthew 16:27). By developing and using our talents for other people, we perform good works.

The Lord is pleased when we use our talents wisely. He will bless us if we use our talents to benefit other people and to build up His kingdom here on earth. Some of the blessings we gain are joy and love from serving our brothers and sisters here on earth. We also learn self-control. All these things are necessary if we are going to be worthy to live with our Heavenly Father again.

- What are some examples of people whose talents have been magnified because they used them wisely? (Consider people you know or people in the scriptures or Church history.)

Additional Scriptures

- James 1:17 (gifts come from God)
 - D&C 46:8–11; 1 Timothy 4:14 (seek and develop gifts)
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9 (weak things made strong)
 - Revelation 20:13; 1 Nephi 15:33; D&C 19:3 (judged by our works)
 - Hebrews 13:21 (show good works)
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