

Spiritual Gifts

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Welcome to winter semester 2019. We hope you had a wonderful Christmas and that you have a prosperous year.

A Christmas Gift

On Christmas Eve several years ago, the Kim family, who were members of our ward, stopped by our home to give us a gift. They are from Korea, and they are incredibly talented. Sister Kim is a pianist, Brother Kim plays the flute, and each of their children play a stringed instrument. They are all accomplished musicians.

That Christmas Eve they entered our home with their instruments in tow—with the exception of Sister Kim, who used our piano. Their gift to us was a musical performance of Christmas carols in our living room. Words cannot adequately express how beautiful and heavenly it was. I have to admit that I was a little sad when they concluded their performance. Imagine my joy when the following Christmas Eve, the Kim family stopped by our home to perform again!

This time, however, when they were packing up their instruments to leave, Brother Kim informed us that they would return the following Christmas Eve to perform, but they expected us to be prepared to perform something for them. Of course we wanted them to return, so we agreed.

After they left our home, Kevin and I quickly assessed our situation. We had one year to come up with something very special that we could perform for the Kim family, and we knew that, in reality, we really needed much longer than a year! After some thought, however, Kevin and I decided that we could sing a Christmas carol for them in Korean. We chose “Silent Night” because it was one song I thought I could play on the piano while everyone else sang. Then we asked a friend who had served his mission in Korea to write out the Korean words for “Silent Night” phonetically so that we would at least have a chance of pronouncing the Korean words correctly.

When the next Christmas Eve arrived, our little choir—which consisted of our family and friends who were at our home that night—practiced the song a few times before the Kims arrived. We were as prepared as we could be for our performance. The Kims arrived, and after we had waited a whole year, it was finally time for us to perform for them.

Peggy S. Worthen, wife of BYU president Kevin J Worthen, delivered this devotional address on January 8, 2019.

I sat down nervously at the piano and began playing, and our choir began singing “Silent Night” in Korean. We managed to get through the first line of the song just fine. The Kims sat and listened politely. Then we made it through the second line just fine too. The Kims sat with pleasant looks on their faces. I knew that we were on the home stretch, and I was feeling pretty good about our performance. And that is when it happened—the part of “Silent Night” that goes “sleep in heavenly peace” (*Hymns*, 2002, no. 204). Well, as soon as the choir sang the word *sleep*, every member of the Kim family—who had been sitting there watching and listening to us very quietly, respectfully, and graciously—burst out in delightful glee. It was at that moment the Kim family realized we were singing in Korean. Evidently, prior to that moment they had had no idea what language we were attempting to sing.

There are people we know who have gifts and talents that are very obvious—like the Kim family—and others, like us, whose gifts and talents may not be so obvious. For example, we obviously had neither the gift of music nor the gift of tongues, but we still had the gift to appreciate the music and the talents of others.

Seek to Discover and Develop Your Gifts

Whether they are obvious or not, however, we have all been given gifts and talents. As stated in section 46 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

There are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby. [D&C 46:11–12]

Note that no one is excluded. “Every man [and woman] is given” at least one gift—and likely many more.

One of the things I would urge you to do this semester is to seek to discover and develop previously undiscovered gifts you may possess. Section 46 of the Doctrine and Covenants lists a number of specific gifts that God’s children may be given:

To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. . . .

*To others it is given to believe on their words. . . .
. . . To some it is given . . . to know the differences of administration. . . .*

And again, it is given . . . to some to know the diversities of operations. . . .

And again, . . . to some is given . . . the word of wisdom.

To another is given the word of 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 is given the working of miracles;

And to others it is given to prophesy;

And to others the discerning of spirits.

And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues;

And to another is given the interpretation of tongues. [D&C 46:13–25]

The list is quite extensive—long enough to give us hope that we might have at least one of those gifts. But it is clear that as long as that list is, it is not exhaustive. Elder Marvin J. Ashton taught that there are other gifts that are “not so evident but nevertheless real and valuable.” Among the “less-conspicuous gifts” Elder Ashton identified were

*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; [and] the gift of bearing a mighty testimony. [“There Are Many Gifts,” *Ensign*, November 1987]*

I am confident that there are even more of these kinds of overlooked and underappreciated gifts given to each of us. As Bruce R. McConkie once stated, “Spiritual gifts are endless in number and infinite in variety” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985], 371). So the question is, How do we find and develop our

particular talents, especially those we may not be currently aware of?

Pray and Ask for God's Help

The Doctrine and Covenants provides two keys to this endeavor. First, we are to “seek . . . earnestly the best gifts” (D&C 46:8). We can pray and ask God to help us discover and develop our gifts. One way to do that is by being more aware of the things in which we need to progress and by asking God directly for help in recognizing and responding to that need.

President George Q. Cannon admonished:

*If any of us are imperfect, it is our duty to pray for the gift that will make us perfect. . . . No man ought to say, “Oh, I cannot help this; it is my nature.” He is not justified in it, for the reason that God has promised to give strength to correct these things, and to give gifts that will eradicate them. If a man lack wisdom, it is his duty to ask God for wisdom. [“Discourse by President George Q. Cannon,” *Millennial Star* 56, no. 17 (23 April 1894): 260]*

We were fortunate to have our family with us during the Christmas holiday. Our six-year-old granddaughter Ainsley was always willing to bless the food when asked. I noticed that each time she prayed, she would include in her prayer, “Please bless me with the gift of honesty.” When I asked for her permission to use her example in my talk, I inquired why she was asking for this particular gift. She told me that she was having a problem with telling the truth and that her father had told her that she could pray for help. She excitedly told me that since she has been praying for the gift of honesty, she is doing much better at telling the truth. Not only is she gaining the gift of honesty through her earnest plea for help, she is gaining the gift of faith in knowing that her prayers will be answered as she puts her trust in Heavenly Father.

Earnestly seeking to know what gifts we need by asking God will often help us discover and develop previously unknown gifts that God is willing to bless us with.

Look for Opportunities to Uplift and Bless Others

The scriptures indicate that in addition to seeking earnestly after our unique gifts, we need to “always [remember] for what they are given,” which the Lord says is “for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; . . . that all may be profited thereby” (D&C 46:8, 9, 12).

Our gifts are given to benefit others. If we want to discover and develop our gifts, we have to be willing to share them with others. The Kim family was blessed with the gift of music in such great measure in part because they were willing to share it with others, including those, like us, who lacked that particular gift. As we look for opportunities to uplift and bless others, we will likely find new gifts and talents that are lying dormant and just waiting to be discovered through service.

Do Not Unfairly Compare Your Gifts with Those of Others

Finally, one of the things that may keep us from discovering and developing our gifts is that we sometimes unfairly compare our seemingly inadequate talents to the refined gifts of others. Elder Ashton made this observation:

One of the great tragedies of life . . . is when a person classifies himself as someone who has no talents or gifts. . . . For us to conclude that we have no gifts when we judge ourselves by stature, intelligence, grade point average, wealth, power, position, or external appearance is not only unfair but unreasonable. [“Many Gifts”]

Our experience with the Kims made it clear that we did not have the same gift of music that they had developed so well. However, we could still appreciate and be uplifted by the beautiful music that the Kims shared, and that was its own gift that edified both us and the Kims.

May we all experience the joy of discovering and developing the many gifts God has granted us individually is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.