

## Elder Franklin D. Richards

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve*

President McKay, my beloved brothers and sisters: I stand before you with a humble heart and seek divine guidance in the things I say.

### A divine spark

It is not unusual to hear a religious leader, a philosopher, or a poet refer to man as having a divine spark within him. Such characterizations infer that man possesses great abilities and potentials. We are frequently admonished to develop our capabilities, reach out, and set high goals for ourselves.

What does it mean to have a divine spark within you? Presumably that man has a certain relationship with God.

From time to time throughout the history of the world God has made known to man what this relationship is.

The scriptures teach that God is a personal being in whose image man was created, and that God the Father is the literal Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Father of the spirits of all men. Because of this, we inherit divine attributes. This was beautifully stated when Job of old explained that "there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." (Job 32:8.)

This simple doctrine as taught by Christ gave way to the theories and dogmas of men through the hundreds of years of apostasy.

### The gospel restored

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims to the world that the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness and simplicity has been restored through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

We assert that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that Christ's Church has been reestablished on the earth.

Thus, through modern revelation, God's relationship to man has again

been clarified. I ask you to seriously consider the fact that the life of your earthly body is your spirit and that God the Eternal Father is the Father of your spirit.

### The light of Christ

The apostle John testified that Jesus "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:9.)

And in this dispensation President Joseph F. Smith bore witness to this same truth, that the light of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, lighteth every man who is born into the world. (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 61.)

What a tremendous effect this has in the lives of those who accept this doctrine. Our Father in heaven loves each and every one of us and is interested in our welfare and growth and development. In fact, it is his work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

Again, let me say we know that not only do we have a spark of divinity within us, but that we are actually spirit children of our Heavenly Father and that "every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God." (D&C 46:11.)

With this relationship, we are thus blessed with many talents and possess great possibilities. The Savior set our greatest goal for us when he said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.)

To become perfect requires growth and development, and as we contemplate perfection, we recognize that growth is the greatest phenomenon of this existence.

This Church teaches the value and necessity of eternal progression. We progressed in the preexistence, and it is our responsibility and opportunity to progress in this estate and throughout all eternity.

### Parables on developing talents

During his earthly ministry the

Savior gave two parables dealing with the requirement that we develop the talents with which we are endowed. These parables are the parable of the entrusted talents and the parable of the pounds.

The talent was an ancient weight and money unit. The dictionary defines talent as "the abilities, powers and gifts bestowed upon a man; natural endowments; thought of as a divine trust. A natural capacity or gift."

The parable of the entrusted talents was given to his apostles, and in it the Savior told of a man who was about to leave on a long trip and who therefore called his servants together and gave them his goods. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. To each man he gave according to his ability.

While the master was away, the one that received five talents put them to use and made five more talents. The one that received two talents put them to use and made two more talents, but the one that received the one talent hid it in the ground.

After a period the master returned and asked for an accounting.

Unto the servants that had doubled their talents the master said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt. 25:23.)

The master called the servant that hid his talent and did not multiply it a slothful servant and said that he would take the one talent from him and give it to the servant that had ten talents.

Whereas the parable of the entrusted talents was given to his apostles, the parable of the pounds was given to a mixed multitude on the Savior's last journey from Jerico to Jerusalem; and although there are some differences in the two parables, in essence they teach the same truths and principles.

From the men endowed with many talents, more was expected than from the men with lesser talents, yet all were expected to multiply such talents as they were given. However, in each parable, although relatively little was expected of the men given one talent,

each failed to use his talent. Good use of the talent on the part of the men given one talent was just as important and necessary as on the part of the men given two and five talents.

### The Lord's charge today

In this dispensation the Lord has been equally direct in his charge to his children. He has told us that he has given us many things "for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold. . . ." (D&C 82:18.)

He has admonished us that "of him unto whom much is given much is required. . . ." (D&C 82:3.)

He also says, "But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them.

"And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have." (D&C 60:2-3.)

And then we are charged: "Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known." (D&C 60:13.)

The Savior evidenced little regard for the slothful servant. He expects us to work and use our initiative.

### Obligation to develop talents

These scriptures clearly emphasize our obligations to use and develop the gifts and talents we have been blessed with—shall we say, develop the spark of divinity within us. Human experience confirms the soundness of this doctrine.

All of us then should be concerned about *how* to best develop our gifts and talents. First, we should recognize our talents and make up our minds to pay the price necessary to develop them. The price to be paid in developing talents includes, among other things, faith, study, and persistence.

In developing faith, we must never overlook the fact that we are spirit children of God the Eternal Father,

and that our Father in heaven will assist us in developing our talents as we do our part.

### The fear of men

One way in which he will assist us is to open up opportunities for us to use our talents. Some recognize their talents, but we are told they do not use them because of the fear of men.

Fear destroys faith and deprives us of many blessings. This is clearly brought out in a revelation when the Lord said, "Ye endeavored to believe that ye should receive the blessing which was offered unto you; but behold, verily I say unto you there were fears in your hearts, and verily this is the reason that ye did not receive." (D&C 67:3.)

We must, therefore, overcome fear. The Lord has told us that if we are prepared, we "shall not fear." (D&C 38:30.)

### Progress involves study

Preparation involves study, and we are also counseled to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith." (D&C 88:118.)

Eternal progress involves continual study. Increased learning gives us confidence, and confidence engenders faith, and faith banishes fear. I therefore encourage you to never cease to study, this being an important part of developing your talents.

Likewise, persistence plays a vital part. President Heber J. Grant used to frequently quote from Emerson: "That which we persist in doing becomes easy to do, not that the nature of the thing has changed but that our power to do has increased." President Grant exemplified this throughout his entire life, and his persistence no doubt played a great part in many of his accomplishments.

### Talents developed by use

We should appreciate that talents are developed by use, and they will not grow and multiply unless they are used. This principle was clearly taught in the Savior's parables.

As we develop our talents, we should develop the spirit of sharing or giving, not only with those who are closest

to us, but with all of God's children. Remember the words of King Benjamin: "... when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God." (Mosiah 2:17.)

The Lord wants us to enjoy our talents, but he also expects us to use them for the enjoyment and benefit of others and to build the kingdom of God.

### The need for challenges

Today we hear much about the need of challenges for the youth as well as for our senior citizens. Despite the fact that we are living in a troublesome period, we are living in the dispensation of the fullness of times, a most wonderful period in the history of the world. Yes, in a new era of growth and development. Opportunities today, for young and old, exceed those of any other age.

We should be grateful to live at this particular time, when the spirit of the Lord is being poured out upon the people of the earth so abundantly.

One of the important and distinguishing features of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that its affairs are administered by the lay members of the Church rather than by paid clergy.

I have been told by some of my non-member friends that the thing that has impressed them most about the Church is that it gives every person a chance to serve, regardless of his age. How true this is.

### A vehicle for growth

The Church in reality is a vehicle for the growth and development of God's children. The priesthood quorums, Primary, Mutuals, Sunday School, Relief Society, and other Church organizations, in their various activities and programs, all contribute to the development of their members' talents and provide opportunities for them to be shared with others.

Thus, as stated, exciting and challenging leadership opportunities are afforded men, women, and children of all ages to become involved in interesting and worthwhile projects. This

is not only a great opportunity but likewise a responsibility for Church members, because the future growth of the Church is dependent upon the development of leaders—leaders for the general Church administration as well as missions, stakes, wards, priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, and other Church organizations and activities.

#### **Talents developed in many areas**

Talents may be developed in many areas of teaching, speaking, missionary work, music, drama, dancing, athletics of many kinds, Scout work, genealogical and temple work, welfare programs, compassionate service, and many other fields that might be mentioned; all contribute to the development of talents and leadership.

Sometimes we may think that we have too many opportunities to serve and develop our talents, and feel it requires too much of a sacrifice. Let me suggest, however, that we not consider it as a sacrifice but as a great blessing.

Never forget the Savior's great challenge to each of us to become perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven.

Each activity that we participate in provides experiences wherein we may improve our talents, thus contributing to our goal of perfection.

As we develop the spirit of giving and sharing, we find great peace, happiness, joy, and contentment, as well as growth and development.

#### **Accept every opportunity**

May I encourage you, therefore, to accept every opportunity presented to you to serve with enthusiasm, not as a burden but as a great blessing. Organize your time by putting first things first, and perform each assignment well. By so doing, the divine spark within you will be magnified and your talents will be increased, "yea, even an hundred fold."

As you follow this admonition I can hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

I bear you my testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ; that the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness has been restored in this latter day through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that there is a prophet of God with us today, our beloved President David O. McKay. May the Lord bless and sustain him. I bear this witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **President N. Eldon Tanner**

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Twelve.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing, "How Firm a Foundation," following which we shall have a brief organ interlude by Alexander Schreiner.

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The congregation and choir joined in singing the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation," following which there was an organ interlude played by Alexander Schreiner.

#### **President N. Eldon Tanner**

For the benefit of the television and radio audience who have just joined us, we again announce that we are gathered in the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the sixth session of the 138th Semi-Annual Conference of the Church.

We shall now hear from Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Twelve, and he will be followed by Elder Victor L. Brown, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.