

Confirmation and Gifts of the Spirit

Written by Eric Shuster
 Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Christian Studies



Some of the most inspiring stories of the scriptures involve the receiving of the Holy Spirit, or Holy Ghost as it is more formally referred to. Each recorded instance is exciting and powerful resulting in miraculous events.

Confirmation Bestows the Holy Ghost & Membership

During the ordinance of confirmation the gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed and formal membership in the Lord's Church given. While all individuals are able to experience the influence of the Holy Ghost, sometimes referred to as the "Spirit of Christ" (John 1:4-9), only those who are confirmed members of the Lord's Church through proper priesthood authority can have the *continual* Gift of the Holy Ghost, often referred to as the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

There is a distinct difference between the two as explained by James E. Faust of the First Presidency: "The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, 'There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost.' ...administrations of the Holy Ghost are limited without receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. Those who possess the gift of the Holy Ghost after baptism and confirmation can receive more light and testimony. This is because the gift of the Holy Ghost is "a permanent witness and higher endowment than the ordinary manifestation of the Holy Spirit." It is the higher endowment because the gift of the Holy Ghost can act as "a cleansing agent to purify a

person and sanctify him from all sin" (James E. Faust, "Born Again," Ensign, May 2001, 54).

The gift of the Holy Ghost is given as a privilege to those individuals who have exercised faith in Jesus Christ, entered into the waters of baptism, and been confirmed as members of the Lord's Church. With the gift of the Holy Ghost a person can receive continual guidance and inspiration from the Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead.

Performing the Ordinance of Confirmation

Confirmation is performed following baptism through the laying on of hands by those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood. This means that individuals must be at least eight years of age to receive Confirmation. The Lord by revelation has said: "Whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them" (D&C 33:15).

Although the gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed upon a person, there are no guarantees that the person will receive all of the benefits associated with constant guidance from the Holy Ghost. Each individual confirmed must "receive" the Holy Ghost. The apostle Bruce R. McConkie offers the following insight: "The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to have the constant companionship of the Spirit; the actual enjoyment of the gift, the actual receipt of the companionship of the Spirit, is based on personal righteousness, it does not come unless and until the person is worthy to receive it" (Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 313). Such worthiness comes through the sincere pursuit of keeping the commandments of God and keeping our thoughts and actions uncorrupted.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost versus the Sealing of the Holy Ghost

Some Christian sects perform the ordinance of confirmation whereby the individual is "sealed" with the gift of the Holy Ghost. However, there is a monumental difference between being sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit).

Consider the events surrounding the bestowal of the Holy Spirit by the apostles as recording in Acts 8:17: “Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” This scripture is plain and unspectacular, although the event itself was a miracle to those to who received the Holy Ghost—notice they were not merely sealed with the Holy Ghost, but rather *received* the Holy Ghost.

Gifts of the Spirit

In our sincere pursuit of keeping the commandments of God and maintaining clean thoughts and actions, we can have not only the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, but also the gifts of the spirit. These gifts, which are mentioned in several scriptural passages (1 Cor. 12:4-10, Mark 16:16-18, and Isaiah 11:1-3), give to us specific spiritual powers to be able to bless the lives of others and help lead us back to live with our Father in Heaven. The Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants provide detail on these gifts.

Although certain gifts of the Spirit are defined in scripture, there are many others, “endless in number and infinite in variety” (Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 1985, 371). Each such gift is given for the benefit of the receiver and for those whom he serves, directly and indirectly. Gifts of the spirit include, but are not limited to, faith, healing (to heal and be healed), exhortation, preaching, speaking in tongues, the interpretation of tongues, translation, wisdom, knowledge, teaching, knowing Jesus Christ is the son of God, believing the testimony of others, prophecy, and working miracles.

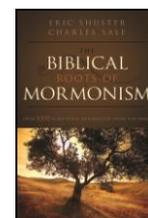
Christian ecclesiastical leaders should encourage members to seek and understand the gifts with which the Lord has endowed them. We develop these gifts through prayer, fasting, and worship. Furthermore, we are urged to seek after the “best gifts” (D&C 46:8). At the same time we are warned that Satan has the power to imitate the gifts of the spirit in an attempt to mislead us. Moses encountered such trickery among the sorcerers and magicians of the Pharaoh as they performed counterfeit miracles (Exodus 7:8-22).

Conclusion

The power of the Holy Ghost and the gifts of the spirit cannot be over emphasized and are critical to the spiritual development of all Christians and the building of the kingdom of God on earth. A strong Christian community should help members to be completely immersed to the Holy Ghost and provide “how to” teachings and encouragement on using the gifts of the spirit. How wonderful it is to understand and be instructed in one of the most powerful spiritual gifts given to us while travailing through the challenges of mortality.

About The Sword Series™

The Sword Series™ is a collection of Christian theological essays that are freely distributed for the education and enjoyment of all. These essays later inspired the book *The Biblical Roots of Mormonism* by Eric Shuster (2010). The views expressed in the Sword Series™ are those of Eric Shuster based upon his study and understanding of the scriptures under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All formatted content in this paper is the property of Eric Shuster and may be distributed freely. Any modification of the content of this paper without the express written consent of Eric Shuster is prohibited. Copyright 2008 ©



About the Foundation for Christian Studies

The Foundation for Christian Studies is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, teaching, and practice of Christianity with an emphasis on the doctrines and principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism).