

Elder José A. Teixeira

Gifts to help us navigate our life

Our Heavenly Father has a plan for us, a plan of happiness. His plan is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Following the teachings and example of Jesus Christ will enable us to understand more fully our part in that plan.

In the first chapter of the book of Moses, we find a short but precious statement that simply outlines God's work—namely, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹

In our life's journey to return to and become more like our Father, we are not left alone. God has given us the necessary gifts to help us in our mortal experience.

“Spiritual gifts are blessings or abilities given by God to His children.”² These gifts help us navigate our lives toward eternal goals.

What a comfort it is to know that there is a plan providing us with a Savior, Jesus Christ.³ His sacrifice makes it possible for all people who comply with His gospel teachings to be forgiven through repentance. What a comfort it is to know that help is available for us to succeed in our endeavors to return to live with our Father in Heaven. What a comfort it is to know that we are not alone sailing uncharted waters as we go through life's experiences.

The power to choose

One gift that will help us navigate our lives is the gift He has given to all, *the ability and power to choose*.

Our choices have the undeniable power of transforming our lives. This gift is an extraordinary sign of trust in us and simultaneously a cherished personal responsibility to use wisely. Our Father in Heaven respects our freedom to choose and will never force us to do what is right, nor will He impede us from making mediocre

choices.⁴ His invitation, however, concerning this important and vital gift is clearly expressed in the scriptures: “But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.”⁵

The words “to do good continually” depict well the standard we need to apply as we use our agency.

Choices have consequences attached, which may or may not be manifested immediately after our decisions. Using the spiritual gifts we have been given is paramount in order to remain on the right course.

GPS receivers and our consciences

Recently I used a pocket-size GPS receiver; this is an incredible device which consists of an antenna tuned to the frequencies transmitted by satellites high above the earth, along with a screen indicating my current position on earth.

In the last few decades these kinds of devices have become widely used for scientific purposes, mapmaking, land surveying, and more recently to keep people from getting lost when driving!

Throughout history, mankind has tried to keep itself from being lost. In my home country of Portugal, for instance, during the period of the discoveries in the 15th century, navigators “from Lisbon's shore, thro' seas where sail was never spread before”⁶ used the best possible maps and reading of the stars in the night sky, along with advanced sailing vessels for that time, to find their destination. In spite of all of this, it was not an easy task for those navigators to sail against adverse winds, and many times they wandered endlessly before finding their way in the vast sea.

In contrast, today with this GPS receiver, I can always have simultaneous answers to questions such as:

- Where am I?
- Where am I going?
- What's the best way to get there?
- When will I get there?

With this small device, I feel a great sense of security when driving, and I trust that it will take me with extraordinary precision and accuracy where I want to go.

I remember one day, however, as I drove into an underground parking lot, I was introduced to a new feature of this device—a warning voice struck me: “Lost satellite reception.” The concrete structures that surrounded me had interrupted the satellite signal and caused the device to lose connection.

As I came back again into the open air, I also realized that extra time was required while the device recaptured the needed signal.

We too have within us a “GPS” allowing us to know at all times what is right and what is wrong, as well as assisting us in making correct choices.

“We are born with a natural capacity to distinguish between right and wrong because of the Light of Christ that is given to every person (D&C 84:46). This faculty is called conscience. The possession of it makes us responsible beings.”⁷

Additionally, as members of the Church we have been given *the gift of the Holy Ghost to comfort, protect, and guide us*.⁸

However, like other faculties, our consciences may become inert through sin or misuse.⁹ If we become desensitized to the things of God in our lives, we too lose reception of the signal needed to guide us. Keeping the commandments is our best assurance to maintain a strong signal with the Divine.

President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet, said, “Our lives will depend upon the decisions which we make—for decisions determine destiny.”¹⁰

I bear my witness that choosing good eventually leads to happiness, while wrong choices drag us down to unhappiness.¹¹ Learning to choose that which is good and keeping the commandments will create a pattern that will help us to:

- Attain fulfillment in life;
- Become more like our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ; and
- Qualify to inherit all the blessings promised to the faithful.

Belief in the words of the prophets

Another gift that will help us navigate our lives is *the capacity to believe the words of those who testify of Jesus Christ*.¹²

Through prophets in every age, including our own, God has revealed His plan of happiness for individuals and families. Those who follow the prophets receive the blessings God has promised.

We can always trust the living prophets; their teachings reflect the word and will of the Lord. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”¹³

The lyrics of a Primary song admonish us to:

Follow the prophet,
Follow the prophet; don't go astray.
Follow the prophet, . . .
Follow the prophet; he knows the way.
. . . We can get direction all along our way,
If we heed the prophets—follow what they say.¹⁴

I testify that our Father in Heaven is mindful of each one of us, that He listens to and answers our prayers, and that He communicates with His prophets to guide us. As we develop our faith to believe and live the words of prophets, we will strengthen our testimony of the plan of

happiness and the central role of Jesus Christ in it.

Through the power to choose and the inherent capacity to believe the words of those who testify of Jesus Christ, we will be able to cross the great waters of life and reach our eternal destiny.

We have been taught this weekend by prophets, seers, and revelators. I am grateful for the guidance our Father in Heaven has extended to us and for His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that They live and love us, and as we abide by the teachings we have received, we will make good choices, we will not be lost, and we will reach our eternal home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. "Spiritual Gifts," at gospeltopics.lds.org.

3. See "God has a plan for your life," at www.mormon.org/mormonorg/eng/basic-beliefs/heavenly-father-s-plan-of-happiness/god-has-a-plan-for-your-life.
4. See "God has a plan for your life," at www.mormon.org.
5. Moroni 7:13.
6. Luis de Camões, *The Lusiad*, book I, stanza 1, trans. William Julius Mickle (1776).
7. "Conscience," in Guide to the Scriptures, at scriptures.lds.org.
8. See Acts 2:38.
9. See "Conscience," in Guide to the Scriptures, at scriptures.lds.org.
10. Thomas S. Monson, "Decisions Determine Destiny," *New Era*, Nov. 1979, 4.
11. See "God has a plan for your life," at www.mormon.org.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:14.
13. Amos 3:7.
14. "Follow the Prophet," *Children's Songbook*, 110–11.

Elder F. Michael Watson

Guided by the wisdom of others

During my growing-up years in the small farming community of Spring City, Utah, an opportunity afforded itself each summer to be with my father alone for two weeks herding sheep in the mountain range of the Manti-La Sal. On one occasion the fog rested heavily in the area to the extent that you could not see your outstretched hand in front of you, and the evening was drawing nigh.

My father suggested that I return to camp, and he would soon follow. I remember questioning how I would be able to find the camp amidst the fog. My father simply said to me, "Give the horse the reins, and he will get you to camp." Following this counsel, I loosened my grip on the reins, and with encouragement to the horse, the journey began. At times I would be struck in the face by a low-hanging limb

I couldn't see or have my leg brush close to a tree. Eventually, the horse came to a complete stop, and the silhouette of the camp was in view.

Sometimes we may not always be able to immediately find the desired way before us, but the wisdom of those who have gone before, coupled with the wisdom of those who are with us still, will be our guide if we let them have the reins.

The voice of His servants

"Understandest thou what thou readest?" was the question asked by Philip of one who was diligently searching the scriptures.

The response came in the form of a question: "How can I, except some man should guide me?"¹

The answer to these searching questions comes from the prophets throughout