

#### **W04 — 4.6 Lost in the Data**

I have pondered on spiritual gifts, individual abilities, and talents many times as I have found myself standing in varying sized struggles. Much time has been spent contemplating how uniqueness appears less prominent because we fail to understand how similar gifts, abilities, and talents are often experienced and shared differently. The key to understanding how talents impact daily life is recognizing which gifts Heavenly Father has bestowed upon us. Without recognition, how can we ever possibly grow them? It reminds me of the story told in Matthew 25 where the one servant “hid the talent in the earth.” How often do we find ourselves like this slothful servant, missing opportunities for growth and reaping the rewards the master has set aside for us? God knows us and the refining fires we must endure to reach our fullest potential. I like to think of the blessings as high fives from Heavenly Father. Just like with my sons, sometimes they happen for no reason, but there is always something to celebrate.

It was hard for me to recognize my own individual gifts and abilities. The more I pondered these scriptures, it became harder to name just a couple in brevity because of how blessed I am. My most prominent gifts are those of discernment, hearing the spirit and responding to its promptings, and endurance. I am not perfect at any of them, a lot of work is still needed, but when exercised, I see God blessing others through me and how enriched my life is as a result. Frequently I can sense trouble. It is not a protection from it, but I can discern when something is not quite right or true. Many wish they could “act more freely on promptings.” Discernment is a part hearing the spirit, recognizing a prompting (or what is not), and acting in faith rather than with full understanding. Sometimes promptings are for comfort and no action is required of us. However, when action is required, we often fail because we lack understanding on the why. I

would be remiss if I failed to mention that my gifts frequently come in groups, one dependent upon other gifts. As we grow one gift, we increase our capacity in others. My endurance comes because of discernment, hearing promptings, and acting. I have many struggles with my health. Today, my husband admitted he cannot muscle through a migraine like I do. The gift of endurance was listed in my patriarchal blessing, that illness would be “short in duration” and I would “endure them well.” I need my own interpreter stones to understand Heavenly Father’s definition of “short in duration,” but I do endure the best I can in all things, not just in health. Physical, emotional, and spiritual struggles happen. I trust that Heavenly Father knows when to still my migraines or when to let them rage on.

I have been blessed with many talents. Many influence my daily life. Some were developed out of necessity and often after a lot of hard work and endurance such as keeping my 108 square foot garden alive after killing every plant I have ever had. Other talents are more natural such as my ability to research. Education is one commandment that I hold dear to my heart and my research skills combined with discernment help me dig deep quickly. Some watch in awe as I can discover general information in just a few minutes and then quickly turn out pages upon pages to report on my findings. Lifelong learning is not about a diploma or certificate, to me it is about searching, finding, pondering, devouring it, and finding ways to apply it in my daily life regardless of the topic. I am blessed that my innate academic ability has become more developed and refined over time because I trust there is a reason that I can seek and find so quickly. To counter this, I was blessed with the talent of creativity without boundaries or limitations to medium. I was not given the creative talents of music or dance as much as I would love to play the piano or cello someday. I was not even granted the creative logic required to become the

computer scientist I wanted to be almost 30 years ago. I was given the talent of art and craft – drawing, doodling, graphic design, web design, painting, sewing, quilting, dress making, cake decorating, baking, cooking from scratch, photography, etc. I am not afraid to try because I was told in my patriarchal blessing that my talents would bless my family and those around me if I used them, developed them, and shared them. It is one area where failure has never prevented me from trying again. It took me many years to realize that I did not have to be famous at any of them, but I needed to display them so others could partake. Now the quilts cover the beds, the crochet sits under the crystal, the paintings and photographs are framed on the wall, bread and cakes are baked, and vegetables are grown.

Heavenly Father made each of us unique and there is no one size fits all package for gifts, abilities, or talents. How blessed we are that He knows us individually and we don't get lost in the statistics and all the details of the group at large. There is a time and a season for everything and sometimes we shine brighter than the noon day sun and sometimes we simply flicker in the wind trying desperately to stay lit. Our growth and acceptance of gifts, abilities, and talents is like our learning of the gospel or anything else "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have" (2 Nephi 28:30). May we always be seeking, finding, and learning.