

its special representative had been achieved; hence, in 1990, Kennedy was released from that calling, and no replacement was named. The responsibilities of the special representative were assumed by the AREA presidencies and mission presidents.

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MARTIN B. HICKMAN

DISCERNMENT, GIFT OF

The gift of discernment consists of the spiritual quality or skill of being able to see or understand, especially that which is hidden or obscure. This ability is shared in a general way by all of God's children, but "discerning of spirits" is one of the GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT that comes, under certain circumstances, specially from God (1 Cor. 12:10; D&C 46:23). The fuller gift of discerning in all spiritual matters—to know whether their occurrence is of God or not—is given by the Lord to "such as God shall appoint and ordain to watch over the church" (D&C 46:27). To possess this gift is to receive divinely revealed understanding of opposing spirits—the spirit of God and the spirit of the DEVIL. Persons possessing such a gift also correctly perceive the right course of action (D&C 63:41).

Not only can the power of discernment distinguish good from evil (Moro. 7:12–18), the righteous from the wicked (D&C 101:95), and false spirits from divine (D&C 46:23), but its more sensitive operation can also make known even "the thoughts and intents of the heart" of other persons (Heb. 4:12; D&C 33:1). "The gift of discernment [embodies] the power to discriminate . . . between right and wrong . . . [and] arises largely out of an acute sensitivity to . . . spiritual impressions . . . to detect hidden evil, and more importantly to find the good that may be concealed. The highest type of discernment . . . uncovers [in others] . . . their better natures, the good inherent within them" (Richards, p. 371).

Every Latter-day Saint has spiritual leaders who, by virtue of their CALLINGS, are entitled to the gift of discernment to enable them to lead and counsel correctly. "The gift of discernment is essential to the leadership of the Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]. I never ordain a bishop or set apart a president of a stake without invoking upon him this divine blessing, that he may read the lives and hearts of his people and call forth the best within them. The gift and power of discernment . . . [are] essential equipment for every son and daughter of God. . . . The true gift of discernment is often premonitory. A sense of danger should be heeded to be of value" (Richards, p. 371).

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DISCIPLESHIP

Like many other Christians, Latter-day Saints believe that only the transformational discipleship of those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ leads to a fulness of joy and peace in this life and ETERNAL LIFE in the world to come. Hence, true disciples are those who make the resurrected, revealing Christ the center of their lives, as did the faithful referred to in the New Testament who sat at the feet, followed in the footsteps, mourned the death, and rejoiced in the resurrection of Christ.

"Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ"—the first principle of the GOSPEL as stated in the fourth ARTICLE OF FAITH—is the explicit foundation of discipleship. From this principle all other principles and ORDINANCES of the gospel derive their efficacy, power, and harmony.

Through his perfect earthly life and infinite atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ became not only the model and mentor but also the Savior and Redeemer and mankind's advocate with the Father. The atonement, meaning "at-one-ment," empowered the plan whereby all men and women can eventually become like FATHER IN HEAVEN and MOTHER IN HEAVEN. Through the atonement, Christ took upon himself not only the original transgression of Adam and Eve but also the per-