
Talents

D&C 55:4

William W. Phelps was a gifted writer and a respected newspaperman in Ontario, New York. After reading the Book of Mormon in May 1831, William wrote a valedictory editorial in the *Ontario Phoenix* and moved on to Kirtland, hoping to share his talents with the Church.

In Independence, Missouri, William printed the first newspaper of the Church, *The Evening and Morning Star*. He helped prepare the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants and the first Church hymnbook. In addition, he served as a scribe to Joseph Smith as he dictated the writings of Abraham. At the Kirtland Temple dedication in March 1836, his hymns were sung, including his hymn “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning.” Following the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith, William wrote the words to “Praise to the Man.”

Is it any wonder that the Lord wanted William “to assist my servant Oliver Cowdery, to do the work of printing, and of selecting and writing books for schools in this church” (D&C 55:4)? His talents were needed to accomplish much good.

Talents have always been needed to further the work of the Lord. Elder Ronald A. Rasband wrote, “The Lord made it clear that it is not good enough for us simply to return to Him the talents He has given us. We are to improve upon and add to our talents. He has promised that if we multiply our talents we will receive eternal joy.”¹ Elder Rasband then advised,

Seek earnestly to discover the talents the Lord has given you. The talents God has given us first become apparent in the interests we pursue. If you are wondering about your talents, make a list of the things you like

¹ Ronald A. Rasband, “Parables of Jesus,” *Ensign*, August 2003.

to do. Include all the activities you enjoy from different dimensions of your life—spiritual, musical, dramatic, academic, athletic, and so on. Study and ponder your patriarchal blessing for insights and inspiration. Consult family members, trusted friends, teachers, and leaders; others often can see in us what we find difficult to see in ourselves.²

Elder Rasband then admonished, “Use your talents to build up the kingdom of God. ... The successes in life of those we assist, sponsor, mentor, and lift as they pursue their own talents can bring us great joy and satisfaction.”³

William W. Phelps used his talents to build up the kingdom of God. From his first days in the Church, his talents were needed. His talent in poetry is still praised, as fifteen of his hymns are printed in the current hymnbook. On his tombstone are etched words from his hymn “If You Could Hie to Kolob”:

There is no end to matter;
There is no end to space;
There is no end to spirit;
There is no end to race.

There is no end to glory;
There is no end to love;
There is no end to being;
There is no death above.⁴

² Rasband, “Parables of Jesus.”

³ Rasband, “Parables of Jesus.”

⁴ W. W. Phelps, “If You Could Hie to Kolob,” *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), #284.