

follow his family's counsel, and on one of his visits to see her he discovered that all of her family had joined the Church. He refused to listen to the doctrine her family had embraced and forcefully told her that she had to choose between him and the Church. She boldly declared that she would not give up her religion.

With that forceful pronouncement, he decided he should listen to the teachings that were so important to her. Soon after, he was touched by the Spirit and he too became converted to the gospel. But when he informed his parents of his decision to join the Church and marry this young woman, they were angry with him and forced him to decide between his family and their wealth and the Church. He walked away from the comforts he had known all of his life, joined the Church, and married her.

Immediately, they started to prepare to leave Denmark and journey to Zion. Now without the support of his family, he had to work hard at any employment he could find to save for the journey to the new land. After a year of hard labor, he had saved enough for their passage. As soon as they were prepared to leave, their branch president came to them and said there was a family with greater need than he and his wife. He was asked to give up what he had saved so the needy family could go to Zion.

Discipleship requires sacrifice. They gave up their savings to the needy family, and then they began another year of hard labor to save to finance their journey. Eventually they arrived in Zion, but not before they had made many more sacrifices, showing true discipleship.

### **Earnestly do spiritual housecleaning**

A rich young man was given the harshest test of discipleship when he was told, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, . . . come, follow me" (Luke 18:22).

For many of us an equally challenging test is to shed our bad habits and worldly thoughts so that we are unconflicted and uncompromised in our devotion to the Lord's service.

As true disciples of Christ, may our lives reflect His example. May we take upon ourselves His name and stand as witnesses of Him at all times and in all places (see Mosiah 18:9).

Moreover, may God bless us that we will earnestly desire to do our spiritual housecleaning, getting into all the corners, cleaning out all those things that would diminish us as disciples of the Lord, so that we can move forward in our service to Him who is our King and Savior, I humbly pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Sister Virginia U. Jensen**

### **Light of Christ sustains Joshua Dennis**

When he was just 10 years old, Joshua Dennis spent five days trapped in the pitch-black darkness of an abandoned mine. When rescuers finally heard his faint cry for help and pulled him out of the horrible darkness, he was disoriented, cold, and exhausted. But much to their surprise, he wasn't afraid. Josh spent his time sleeping, yelling for help, and pray-

ing. "Someone was protecting me," he explained. "I knew people were going to find me."

Joshua's simple but profound faith had been nurtured by his parents, who taught him that he had a Heavenly Father who knew where he was at all times. They taught him he had been born with the Light of Christ within him. Truly, Josh had been brought up in light and truth (see D&C 93:40) so that when he found

himself huddled on a ledge 2,000 feet deep in a mine, he had drawn upon that light to sustain and comfort him, to give him courage and hope. Josh experienced what Abinadi taught when, speaking of Christ, he said, "He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:9).

### Displays of light at the Savior's birth

How fitting that the Savior's birth in Bethlehem was accompanied by miraculous displays of light in the Western Hemisphere. At the time of His birth, "at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because . . . there was no darkness in all that night" (3 Nephi 1:15, 19). This celebration of light stood in stark contrast to that which occurred at His Crucifixion, when "there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, inasmuch that the inhabitants thereof . . . could feel the vapor of darkness" (3 Nephi 8:20; see also verses 21–23).

### Jesus' light can quench any darkness

There are all kinds of darkness in this world: darkness that comes from sin; darkness that comes from discouragement, disappointment, and despair; darkness that comes from loneliness and feelings of inadequacy. Just as the light that burned in Josh Dennis's heart was stronger than the suffocating darkness that engulfed him, the light of Jesus Christ is stronger than any darkness we face in this life, *if* we have faith in Him, seek after Him, and obey Him. For as the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph, "If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you" (D&C 88:67).

Christ's light and the gospel message of light and salvation can be darkened in our own lives only by our disobedience

and lack of faith. In like manner the Savior's light *increases* in our lives as we keep the commandments and strive continually to be like Him. For "that which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter" (D&C 50:24).

As the light of Jesus Christ and His gospel grows brighter within our countenances and our hearts, it becomes easier for us to discern what is truly valuable from the counterfeits the world offers. Knowledge that Christ loved us enough to willingly bear the weight of our sins removes the need for pride and an unwarranted trust in the arm of flesh. Belief that the Atonement restores to us all we lose to sin and missteps along life's path creates a hope greater than any temporal pleasure or momentary mortal thrill.

Consider the experience of King Lamoni. Though he had unfettered power, great earthly treasures, and servants to wait on him hand and foot, he lived in spiritual darkness. When he was willing to permit Ammon to teach him the gospel, a most remarkable thing occurred: Lamoni "fell unto the earth, as if he were dead" (Alma 18:42). "Ammon . . . knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, . . . was the light of the glory of God, . . . yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul" (Alma 19:6).

Only the glory of God and the light of life everlasting produce a joy profound enough to overwhelm one completely and to eliminate "the dark veil of unbelief."

### "Lead, kindly Light"

Throughout the scriptures, and even in the writings of thoughtful Christians through the centuries, we find examples

of how Christ's message of light and salvation can spiritually and physically sustain us. As a young priest traveling in Italy in 1833, Englishman John Henry Newman encountered emotional and physical darkness when illness detained him there for several weeks. He became deeply discouraged, and a nurse who saw his tears asked what troubled him. All he could reply was that he was sure God had work for him to do in England. Aching to return home, he finally found passage on a small boat.

Not long after the ship set sail, thick fog descended and obscured the hazardous cliffs surrounding them. Trapped for a week in the damp, gray darkness, the ship unable to travel forward or back, Newman pleaded for his Savior's help as he penned the words we now know as the hymn "Lead, Kindly Light."

Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom; . . .  
The night is dark, and I am far from home; . . .  
Keep thou my feet; . . .  
one step enough for me.  
[*Hymns*, no. 97]

This hymn echoes a truth our hearts confirm: though trials may extinguish other sources of light, Christ will illuminate our path, "keep our feet," and show us the way home. For as the Savior has promised, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12).

### Embrace the Savior's light

We can all find ourselves in places of darkness from time to time. We may wander into dark, spiritual caverns when we make foolish choices, admit harmful influences into our lives, or turn away from the light of the gospel to embrace the world just a little longer. It may seem harmless at first—just a little exploring, that's all. Before we know it, we become separated

from the light and left in darkness alone. Why do we remain in darkness when such rescuing light awaits us? Let us bask in the warm and illuminating light provided by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let the Savior's kindly light lead us one step at a time. Let covenants and commandments keep us safe as we follow the gospel pathway to our heavenly home.

Remember little Josh Dennis? He is now Elder Dennis, serving a mission far away from the dark mine which held him captive. Now Elder Dennis finds his way along the narrow, unfamiliar paths of Honduras, sharing a message of hope, salvation, and light. What he teaches every day is the paradox he experienced as a young boy lost in a mine: that amidst encircling gloom, amidst the darkest possible circumstances, it is possible to feel hope, peace, and comfort—all because of the light which is stronger than all darkness, the light of Jesus Christ.

I know from my own experience, just as surely as Josh knows from his, of the reality of that marvelous being of light—our Savior. May we embrace His light and live so that it will illuminate our path and lead us to our heavenly home, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Thank you very much for your inspirational remarks. Elder L. Tom Perry has spoken to us, followed by Sister Virginia U. Jensen of the Relief Society general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now stand and sing "High on the Mountain Top." Following the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

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