

Be an Example and a Light

By President Thomas S. Monson



As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others.

Brothers and sisters, how good it is to be with you once again. As you know, since we were together in April, we have been saddened by the loss of three of our beloved Apostles: President Boyd K. Packer, Elder L. Tom Perry, and Elder Richard G. Scott. They have returned to their heavenly home. We miss them. How grateful we are for their examples of Christlike love and for the inspired teachings they have left to all of us.

We extend a heartfelt welcome to our newest Apostles, Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Elder Gary E. Stevenson, and Elder Dale G. Renlund. These are men dedicated to the work of the Lord. They are well qualified to fill the important positions to which they have been called.

Recently, as I have been reading and pondering the scriptures, two passages in particular have stayed with me. Both are familiar to us. The first is from the Sermon on the Mount: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”¹ The second scripture is one which came to my mind as I pondered the meaning of the first. It is from the Apostle Paul’s Epistle to Timothy: “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”²

I believe the second scripture explains, in great part, how we can accomplish the first. We become examples of the believers by living the gospel of Jesus Christ in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity. As we do so, our lights will shine for others to see.

Each of us came to earth having been given the Light of Christ. As we follow the example of the Savior and live as He lived and as He taught, that light will burn within us and will light the way for others.

The Apostle Paul lists six attributes of a believer, attributes that will allow our lights to shine. Let us look at each one.

I mention the first two attributes together—being an example in word and in conversation.

The words we use can lift and inspire, or they can harm and demean. In the world today there is a profusion of profanity with which we seem to be surrounded at nearly every turn. It is difficult to avoid hearing the names of Deity being used casually and thoughtlessly. Coarse comments seem to have become a staple of television, movies, books, and music. Bandied about are slanderous remarks and angry rhetoric. Let us speak to others with love and respect, ever keeping our language clean and avoiding words or comments that would wound or offend. May we follow the example of the Savior, who spoke with tolerance and kindness throughout His ministry.

The next attribute mentioned by Paul is charity, which has been defined as “the pure love of Christ.”³ I am confident there are within our sphere of influence those who are lonely, those who are ill, and those who feel discouraged. Ours is the opportunity to help them and to lift their spirits. The Savior brought hope to the hopeless and strength to the weak. He healed the sick; He caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear. He even raised the dead to life. Throughout His ministry He reached out in charity to any in need. As we emulate His example, we will bless lives, including our own.

Next, we are to be an example in spirit. To me that means we strive to have in our lives kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, and goodwill. These qualities will provide for us a spirit which will touch the lives of those around us. It has been my opportunity through the years to associate with countless individuals who possess such a spirit. We experience a special feeling when we are with them, a feeling that makes us want to associate with them and to follow their example. They radiate the Light of Christ and help us feel His love for us.

To illustrate that the light which comes from a pure and loving spirit is recognized by others, I share with you an experience of many years ago.

At that time, leaders of the Church met with officials in Jerusalem to work out a lease agreement for land on which the Church’s Jerusalem Center would be built. In order to obtain the permissions needed, the Church had to agree that no proselyting would be undertaken by our members who would occupy the center. After that agreement had been made, one of the Israeli officials, who was well acquainted with the Church and its members, remarked that he knew the Church would honor the no-proselyting agreement. “But,” he said, referring to the students who would attend there, “what are we going to do about the light that is in their eyes?”⁴ May that special light ever shine within us, that it might be recognized and appreciated by others.

To be an example of faith means that we trust in the Lord and in His word. It means that we possess and that we nourish the beliefs that will guide our thoughts and our actions. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in our Heavenly Father will influence all that we do. Amidst the confusion of our age, the conflicts of conscience, and the turmoil of daily living, an abiding faith becomes an anchor to our lives. Remember that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other. I reiterate what we have been told repeatedly—that in order to gain and to keep the faith we need, it is essential that we read and study and ponder the scriptures. Communication with our Heavenly

Father through prayer is vital. We cannot afford to neglect these things, for the adversary and his hosts are relentlessly seeking for a chink in our armor, a lapse in our faithfulness. Said the Lord, “Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good.”⁵

Finally, we are to be pure, which means that we are clean in body, mind, and spirit. We know that our body is a temple, to be treated with reverence and respect. Our minds should be filled with uplifting and ennobling thoughts and kept free from those things which will pollute. In order to have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion, we must be worthy. Brothers and sisters, purity will bring us peace of mind and will qualify us to receive the Savior’s promises. Said He, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”⁶

As we prove to be examples in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity, we will qualify to be lights to the world.

May I say to all of you, and particularly to you young people, that as the world moves further and further away from the principles and guidelines given to us by a loving Heavenly Father, we will stand out from the crowd because we are different. We will stand out because we dress modestly. We will be different because we do not use profanity and because we do not partake of substances which are harmful to our bodies. We will be different because we avoid off-color humor and degrading remarks. We will be different as we decide not to fill our minds with media choices that are base and demeaning and that will remove the Spirit from our homes and our lives. We will certainly stand out as we make choices regarding morality—choices which adhere to gospel principles and standards. Those things which make us different from most of the world also provide us with that light and that spirit which will shine in an increasingly dark world.

It is often difficult to be different and to stand alone in a crowd. It is natural to fear what others might think or say. Comforting are the words of the psalm: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”⁷ As we make Christ the center of our lives, our fears will be replaced by the courage of our convictions.

Life is perfect for none of us, and at times the challenges and difficulties we face may become overwhelming, causing our light to dim. However, with help from our Heavenly Father, coupled with support from others, we can regain that light which will illuminate our own path once again and provide the light others may need.

To illustrate, I share with you the touching words of a favorite poem I first read many years ago:

I met a stranger in the night
Whose lamp had ceased to shine.
I paused and let him light
His lamp from mine.

A tempest sprang up later on

And shook the world about.
And when the wind was gone
My lamp was out!

But back to me the stranger came—
His lamp was glowing fine!
He held the precious flame
And lighted mine!⁸

My brothers and sisters, our opportunities to shine surround us each day, in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. As we follow the example of the Savior, ours will be the opportunity to be a light in the lives of others, whether they be our own family members and friends, our co-workers, mere acquaintances, or total strangers.

To each of you, I say that you are a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father. You have come from His presence to live on this earth for a season, to reflect the Savior's love and teachings, and to bravely let your light shine for all to see. When that season on earth has ended, if you have done your part, yours will be the glorious blessing of returning to live with Him forever.

How reassuring are the Savior's words: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁹ Of Him I testify. He is our Savior and Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father. He is our Exemplar and our strength. He is "the light which shineth in darkness."¹⁰ That each of us within the sound of my voice may pledge to follow Him, thus becoming a shining light to the world, is my prayer in His holy name, even Jesus Christ the Lord, amen.

1. Matthew 5:16.

2. 1 Timothy 4:12.

3. Moroni 7:47.

4. See James E. Faust, "The Light in Their Eyes," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 20.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.

6. Matthew 5:8.

7. Psalm 27:1.

8. Lon Woodrum, "Lamps," *The Lighted Pathway*, Oct. 1940, 17.

9. John 8:12.

10. Doctrine and Covenants 6:21.

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