

“I Am the Light Which Ye Shall Hold Up”

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Each of our [Christlike] deeds may share only a pinpoint of light, but added together they begin to make a significant difference.

I remember a simple sampler that I cross-stitched as a young Primary girl. It said, “I will bring the light of the gospel into my home.” I wondered, “What is that light?” Jesus Christ Himself explained it best when He was teaching the Nephites. He said, “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world.” Then He explained, “I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Ne. 18:24; emphasis added).

What had the Nephites seen Him do, and could I possibly do those things in my home? When the people desired for Him to tarry with them a little longer, He had compassion upon them and lingered with them. Then He healed them, prayed with them, taught them, wept with them, blessed their little children one by one, fed them, and administered and shared the sacrament that they might covenant to always remember Him. His ministry among them was about teaching and caring for each individual, and about completing the work His Father had commanded Him to do. There was no thought for Himself. As I learned this, there began for me a lifelong quest to bring His light into my home through selfless, Christlike acts.

This is not an easy task. Good home life often goes unrecognized. It might be easier to “arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the *nations*” (D&C 115:5; emphasis added) rather than that your light may be a standard for *your own families*. Sometimes others don’t see us doing good, sharing our light in our individual homes. It is basic human nature to desire and seek praise and attention. Helaman taught his sons Nephi and Lehi to do the good works of their forefathers for whom they were named, “that ye may not do these things that ye may boast, but that ye may do these things to lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven” (Hel. 5:8). Good works should not be done for the purpose of receiving recognition.

Charles Dickens has a character in the book *Bleak House*, a Mrs. Jellyby, whose flaw he labels as “telescopic philanthropy.” She is so consumed with helping a suffering tribe in a distant land that she dismisses her own bruised and dirty child who comes to her in need of comfort. Mrs. Jellyby wants to make sure her good works are grandiose and visible to all. (See Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* [1985], 82–87.) Maybe some of us would rather help with hurricane relief than home relief. Now both are important, but home relief is our primary and eternal responsibility. “Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

Another literary figure comes to my mind who is quite the opposite of Dickens’s character. Dorothea is the

heroine in one of my favorite novels, *Middlemarch*. She is remembered at the end of the book for her quiet, selfless deeds to family and friends. It says: “Her full nature ... spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs” (George Eliot, *Middlemarch* [1986], 682).

In these preparatory years, you young women spend much of your time in schools or jobs where you receive accolades, honors, awards, ribbons, or trophies. When you move from that stage to young motherhood, there is a dramatic drop-off in outside commendation. Yet in no other capacity is there more opportunity to serve selflessly as Christ would do by taking care of hundreds of daily physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. You will bring the light of the gospel into your homes—not to be seen of others, but to build others—men and women of strength and light.

Homes are also private places, so unfortunately, we often let down. In our homes and with our families we sometimes become our worst selves with the people who matter the most in our lives. I distinctly remember one morning when I was 14 years old. Before I left for school, I was cross and unkind with my parents and my brothers. After I left the house, I was polite with the bus driver and friendly to my peers. I felt the discrepancy of my actions, and a huge feeling of remorse came over me. I asked the teacher if I could be excused for a few minutes to call home. I apologized to my mother for my behavior and told her how much I loved and appreciated her and promised to do better at showing it.

It is difficult for most of us to live even one day in our homes with no contention. The Nephite nation had a perfect society for 200 years with “no contention in the land. ... And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God” (4 Ne. 1:15–16).

Some of us are born into families with very difficult problems. And even good families have many challenges. We must try to do in our homes what Christ did with the Nephites. As the proclamation on the family teaches, “Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). We must be the light to help our families overcome sin, anger, envy, and fighting. We can pray together, weep for each other, heal each other’s wounds, and selflessly love and serve one another.

You young women are preparing now to strengthen your *future* homes and families by bringing the light of the gospel into your *current* homes and families. Small, seemingly insignificant things you do can make a big difference. I read about some small glowworms found in caves in New Zealand. Each one by itself produces only an insignificant pinpoint of light. But when millions of them light up a cave one by one, they produce enough light by which one can actually read. Likewise, each of our little deeds may share only a pinpoint of light, but added together they begin to make a significant difference. Tonight the choir will remind us of the importance of sharing our little lights as they sing “Shine On”:

*My light is but a little one,
My light of faith and prayer;
But lo! it glows like God’s great sun,
For it was lighted there.*

*I may not hide my little light;
The Lord has told me so.
'Tis given me to keep in sight,
That all may see it glow.
Shine on, shine on, shine on bright and clear;
Shine on, shine on now the day is here.*

We can shine on by tending a baby brother, eating lunch with a sister in the school cafeteria, doing household tasks, resisting the urge to quarrel, rejoicing in each other's successes, sharing a treat, giving care when someone is sick, placing on a pillow at night a thank-you note to a parent, forgiving an offense, bearing our testimonies.

In Romania I met Raluca, a 17-year-old young woman who had recently joined the Church. Her baptism was a happy event because, among other things, her whole family attended. Her mother and sister felt the Spirit there and wanted to have the missionary discussions too. This concerned the father, for he felt he was losing all of his family to this unfamiliar church. So he did not allow it, and for a time there was a feeling of discord in their family. However, Raluca remembered that she had made a baptismal covenant to take upon her the name of Jesus Christ. She tried to hold up His light by doing in her home the things He would do. She was a peacemaker. She was an example. She was a teacher. She was a healer.

Eventually her father's heart softened, and he allowed the others to learn more about the Church. Then they too were baptized. And finally, much to everyone's joy, the father of the family also joined the Church. At his baptism he spoke and said that for a time their family had been as two hearts beating at a different rhythm in the same household. But now they were of one faith and one baptism, with their hearts knit together in unity and love. He gave thanks to the missionaries and members who had helped them. Then he paid a special tribute to his daughter Raluca for being so Christlike in their home during that difficult period, for being the peacemaker, the healer, the teacher, the example, and the light that eventually brought their entire family to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Each of you has light. As I look into your faces here tonight and as I remember your faces that I have seen as I have traveled throughout the world, I see light glowing in your countenances, "even as the faces of angels" (Hel. 5:36). In a world overshadowed with the darkness of sin, the faces of Nephi and Lehi, Helaman's sons, "did shine exceedingly" (Hel. 5:36). Those surrounding them wanted that same light and inquired, "What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us?" (Hel. 5:40). They were taught to repent and have faith in Jesus Christ. As they did this, the cloud of darkness dispersed and they were encircled with light, a pillar of fire, and filled with unspeakable joy from the Holy Spirit (see Hel. 5:43-45).

As you share your light, others will find greater light too. Is there anyone who needs your light as much as your families? I see you remarkable young women with your glowing countenances as the strength of the present and the hope of the future in your homes and in the Church.

Jesus Christ is the light that we must hold up. "He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2-3). May we each shine on with His light, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

