

I Will Bring the Light of the Gospel into My Home

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We can bring the light of the gospel into our homes, schools, and workplaces if we look for and share positive things about others.

In response to Sister Linda K. Burton's invitation at April's general conference,¹ many of you have been involved in thoughtful and generous acts of charity focused on meeting the needs of refugees in your local area. From simple, one-on-one efforts to community-wide programs, those acts are the result of love. As you have shared your time, talents, and resources, your—and the refugees'—hearts have been lightened. The building of hope and faith and even greater love between receiver and giver are inevitable results of true charity.

The prophet Moroni tells us that charity is an essential characteristic of those who will live with Heavenly Father in the celestial kingdom. He writes, "Except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God."²

Of course, Jesus Christ is the perfect embodiment of charity. His premortal offering to be our Savior, His interactions throughout His mortal life, His supernal gift of the Atonement, and His continual efforts to bring us back to our Heavenly Father are the ultimate expressions of charity. He operates with a singular focus: love for His Father expressed through His love for each of us. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus answered:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."³

One of the most significant ways we can develop and demonstrate love for our neighbor is through being generous in our thoughts and words. Some years ago a cherished friend noted, "The greatest form of charity may be to withhold judgment."⁴ That is still true today.

Recently, as three-year-old Alyssa watched a movie with her siblings, she remarked with a puzzled expression, "Mom, that chicken is weird!"

Her mother looked at the screen and responded with a smile, "Honey, that is a peacock."

Like that unknowing three-year-old, we sometimes look at others with an incomplete or inaccurate understanding. We may focus on the differences and perceived flaws in those around us whereas our Heavenly Father sees His children, created in His eternal image, with magnificent and glorious potential.

President James E. Faust is remembered to have said, “The older I get, the less judgmental I become.”⁵ That reminds me of the Apostle Paul’s observation:

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became [older], I put away childish things.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”⁶

When we see our own imperfections more clearly, we are less inclined to view others “through a glass, darkly.” We want to use the light of the gospel to see others as the Savior does—with compassion, hope, and charity. The day will come when we will have a complete understanding of others’ hearts and will be grateful to have mercy extended to us—just as we extend charitable thoughts and words to others during this life.

Some years ago, I went canoeing with a group of young women. The deep blue lakes surrounded by green, thickly forested hills and rocky cliffs were breathtakingly beautiful. The water sparkled on our paddles as we dipped them into the clear water, and the sun shone warmly while we moved smoothly across the lake.

However, clouds soon darkened the sky, and a stiff wind began to blow. To make any progress at all, we had to dig deeply into the water, paddling without pausing between strokes. After a few grueling hours of backbreaking work, we finally turned the corner on the large lake and discovered to our amazement and delight that the wind was blowing in the direction we wanted to go.

Quickly, we took advantage of this gift. We pulled out a small tarp and tied two of its corners to paddle handles and the other corners to my husband’s feet, which he stretched out over the gunwales of the canoe. The wind billowed the improvised sail, and we were off!

When the young women in the other canoes saw how we moved along the water with ease, they quickly improvised sails of their own. Our hearts were light with laughter and relief, grateful for the respite from the challenges of the day.

How like that glorious wind can be the sincere compliment of a friend, the cheerful greeting of a parent, the approving nod of a sibling, or the helpful smile of a co-worker or classmate, all supplying fresh “wind in our sails” as we battle the challenges of life! President Thomas S. Monson put it this way: “We can’t direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails. For maximum happiness, peace, and contentment, may we *choose* a positive attitude.”⁷

Words have surprising power, both to build up and to tear down. We can all probably remember negative words that brought us low and other words spoken with love that made our spirits soar. Choosing to say only that which is positive about—and to—others lifts and strengthens those around us and helps others follow in the Savior's way.

As a young Primary girl, I worked diligently to cross-stitch a simple saying which read, "I will bring the light of the gospel into my home." One weekday afternoon as we girls pulled our needles up and down through the fabric, our teacher told us the story of a girl who lived on a hill on one side of a valley. Each late afternoon she noticed on the hill on the opposite side of the valley a house that had shining, golden windows. Her own home was small and somewhat shabby, and the girl dreamed of living in that beautiful house with windows of gold.

One day the girl was given permission to ride her bike across the valley. She eagerly rode until she reached the house with the golden windows that she had admired for so long. But when she dismounted from her bike, she saw that the house was abandoned and dilapidated, with tall weeds in the yard and windows that were plain and dirty. Sadly, the girl turned her face toward home. To her surprise, she saw a house with shining, golden windows on the hill across the valley and soon realized it was her very own home!⁸

Sometimes, like this young girl, we look at what others might have or be and feel we are less in comparison. We become focused on the Pinterest or Instagram versions of life or caught up in our school's or workplace's preoccupation with competition. However, when we take a moment to "count [our] many blessings,"⁹ we see with a truer perspective and recognize the goodness of God to *all* of His children.

Whether we are 8 or 108, we can bring the light of the gospel into our own environment, be it a high-rise apartment in Manhattan, a stilt house in Malaysia, or a yurt in Mongolia. We can determine to look for the good in others and in the circumstances around us. Young and not-so-young women everywhere can demonstrate charity as they choose to use words that build confidence and faith in others.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland told of a young man who was the brunt of his peers' teasing during his school years. Some years later he moved away, joined the military, received an education, and became active in the Church. This period of his life was marked with wonderfully successful experiences.

After several years he returned to his hometown. However, the people refused to acknowledge his growth and improvement. To them, he was still just old "so-and-so," and they treated him that way. Eventually, this good man faded away to a shadow of his former successful self without being able to use his marvelously developed talents to bless those who derided and rejected him once again.¹⁰ What a loss, both for him and the community!

The Apostle Peter taught, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."¹¹ *Fervent* charity, meaning "wholehearted," is demonstrated by forgetting the mistakes and stumblings of another rather than harboring grudges or reminding ourselves and others of imperfections in the past.

Our obligation and privilege is to embrace improvement in *everyone* as we strive to become more like our Savior, Jesus Christ. What a thrill it is to see light in the eyes of someone who has come to understand the Atonement of Jesus Christ and is making real changes in his or her life! Missionaries who have experienced the joy of seeing a convert enter the waters of baptism and then enter the doors of the temple are witnesses of the blessing of allowing—and encouraging—others to change. Members who welcome converts who might have been considered unlikely candidates for the kingdom find great satisfaction in helping them feel the love of the Lord. The great beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the reality of eternal progression—we are not only *allowed* to change for the better but also encouraged, and even *commanded*, to continue in the pursuit of improvement and, ultimately, perfection.

President Thomas S. Monson counseled: "In a hundred small ways, all of you wear the mantle of charity. ... Rather than being judgmental [or] critical of [one] another, may we have the pure love of Christ for our fellow travelers in this journey through life. May we recognize that each one is doing her [or his] best to deal with the challenges which come [her or his] way, and may we strive to do *our* best to help out."¹²

Charity, in positive terms, is patient, kind, and content. Charity puts others first, is humble, exercises self-control, looks for good in others, and rejoices when someone does well.¹³

As sisters (and brothers) in Zion, will we commit to "*all* work together ... to do whatsoever is gentle and human, to cheer and to bless in [the Savior's] name"?¹⁴ Can we, with love and high hopes, look for and embrace the beauties in others, allowing and encouraging progress? Can we rejoice in the accomplishments of others while continuing to work toward our own improvement?

Yes, we *can* bring the light of the gospel into our homes, schools, and workplaces if we look for and share positive things about others and let the less-than-perfect fade away. What gratitude fills my heart when I think of the repentance that our Savior, Jesus Christ, has made possible for all of us who have inevitably sinned in this imperfect and sometimes difficult world!

I bear my witness that as we follow His perfect example, we can receive the gift of charity, which will bring us great joy in this life and the promised blessing of eternal life with our Father in Heaven. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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