



By President
Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Second Counselor in
the First Presidency

Finish

WITH YOUR TORCH STILL LIT

In ancient Greece, runners competed in a relay race called a *lampadedromia*.¹ In the race, runners held a torch in their hand and passed it on to the next runner until the final member of the team crossed the finish line.

The prize wasn't awarded to the team that ran fastest—it was awarded to the first team to reach the finish line with its torch still lit.

There is a profound lesson here, one taught by prophets ancient and modern: while it is important to start the race, it is even more important that we finish with our torch still lit.

Solomon Started Strong

The great King Solomon is an example of someone who started strong. When he was young, he “loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father” (1 Kings 3:3). God was pleased with him and said, “Ask what I shall give thee” (1 Kings 3:5).

Instead of asking for riches or a long life, Solomon asked for “an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad” (1 Kings 3:9).

This pleased the Lord so much that He blessed Solomon not only with wisdom but also with wealth beyond measure and a long life.

Though Solomon was indeed very wise and did many great things, he did not finish strong. Sadly, later in his

life, “Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord” (1 Kings 11:6).

Finishing Our Own Race

How many times have we started something and not finished? Diets? Exercise programs? Commitments to read the scriptures daily? Decisions to be better disciples of Jesus Christ?

How often do we make resolutions in January and pursue them with red-hot determination for a few days, a few weeks, or even a few months only to find that by October, the flame of our commitment is little more than cold ash?

One day I ran across a funny picture of a dog lying next to a piece of paper he had shredded. It read, “Certificate of Dog-Obedience Training.”

We are like that sometimes.

We have good intentions; we start strong; we want to be our best self. But in the end we leave our resolutions shredded, discarded, and forgotten.

It's human nature to stumble, fail, and sometimes want to drop out of the race. But as disciples of Jesus Christ, we have committed not only to begin the race but also to finish it—and finish it with our torch still burning brightly. The Savior promised His disciples, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).





As long as we continue to rise up and move toward our Savior, we win the race with our torches burning brightly.

For the torch is not about us or about what we do.

It is about the Savior of the world. And that is a Light that can never be dimmed. It is a Light that swallows the darkness, heals our wounds, and blazes even in the midst of the deepest sorrow and unfathomable darkness.

It is a Light that surpasses understanding.

May each of us finish the path we have begun. And with the help of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we

will finish joyfully and with our torches still lit. ■

NOTE

1. *Harpers Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* (1898), "Lampadedromia," www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper. Pausanias describes a different torch race in which torchbearers, possibly one from each tribe, did not hand off their torch. But as in the *lampadedromia*, the winner was the first to reach the race's end with his torch still lit.

Let me paraphrase what the Savior has promised in our day: If we keep His commandments and finish with our torch still lit, we will have eternal life, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 14:7; see also 2 Nephi 31:20).

The Light That Never Dies

Sometimes after stumbling, failing, or even giving up, we get discouraged and believe our light has gone out and our race is lost. But I testify that the Light of Christ cannot be extinguished. It shines in the darkest night and will relight our hearts if only we incline our hearts to Him (see 1 Kings 8:58).

No matter how often or how far we fall, the Light of Christ ever burns brightly. And even in the deepest night, if we but step toward Him, His light will consume the shadows and reignite our souls.

This race of discipleship is not a sprint; it's a marathon. And it makes little difference how fast we go. In fact, the only way we can lose the race is by finally giving in or giving up.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Consider encouraging those you teach to reflect on where they are in their "races" of life. Are their torches burning brightly? You could read the phrase that says the Light of Christ is "a Light that swallows the darkness, heals our wounds, and blazes even in the midst of the deepest sorrow and unfathomable darkness." Then consider discussing with those you teach how the Light of Christ has influenced their lives in the past and how it influences their lives now.

Fuel Your Torch: The 30-Day Trial

For youth in the Church with busy lives, it can be easy to get stuck in a rut of routine, especially with spiritual things. We read our scriptures, pray, and worship the same way almost every day and then wonder why we seem to be in a spiritual slump.

One of the best ways to keep your spiritual torch burning brightly is to make sure you're having meaningful spiritual experiences. But that is easier said than done, so here is a suggestion to help you continue to spiritually progress: Think of a gospel-related activity you've never done before (or hardly ever do) and commit to doing it every day for a month. You can start small because you'll find that it's easier to turn small



changes into lasting ones. Doing things that take us out of our spiritual comfort zone might require more faith and effort on our part, but when we do them, we are inviting the Holy Ghost to be with us, and we are showing greater faith in Heavenly Father and a desire to draw nearer to Him. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Make a goal to say your prayers morning and night. Try praying out loud.
- Wake up 15 minutes early and read your scriptures before school.
- Read past general conference talks.
- Post a scripture from the Book of Mormon on social media.
- Listen to hymns or Church music instead of your regular music.

CHILDREN

Make Your Torch Brighter

A long time ago in Greece, there was a race where the runners held lit torches. Whoever ran the whole race with the torch still lit was the winner. President Uchtdorf says

life is like that race. The torch we hold is the Light of Christ. When we try to be like Jesus Christ, we make our torches burn brighter.

Smile or say hi to someone who looks lonely

Stay angry at someone

Take care of your body

Make fun of your brother or sister

Obey the prophet

Give up when you make a mistake

Help someone



Color in the circles of things this boy can do to be like Jesus and make his torch brighter.