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From the New Testament writings of Paul we read:

“Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others. . . .

“For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thessalonians 5:5–8).

Several years ago, Sister Christensen and I returned home from our weekly date night to find our teenage children watching a movie they had rented. As we walked into our family room and sat down with our children, Sister Christensen started to feel uncomfortable with what they were watching. It wasn’t necessarily the content; it was the feeling she had while watching.

After a few minutes she asked our children if they saw light in this particular movie. She was not referring to the cinematography or even the elements of the plot but to the feelings she was experiencing when exposed to something rather dark and somewhat eerie.

To become children of light means to reject the power of the adversary and to choose daily to follow the Light of Christ.

BECOMING

Over the years we have adopted, as part of our regular family dialogue, that simple, penetrating question: “Do you see any light in that?” We ask this question frequently as we seek after things that are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13) or as we are bombarded with worldly influences. Simply by being on guard and by using this somewhat obvious filter, we have learned that it is quite easy to differentiate between what is light and what is dark—between things that inspire us and bring us closer to the Spirit and things that do not.



CHILDREN OF LIGHT



The Doctrine of Light

The *doctrine of light* is the very essence of the gospel, which is centered in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. To understand light means to understand the nature and divine character of the Savior Himself. He unequivocally declared, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi explained that Jesus Christ “is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened” (Mosiah 16:9). This light is in each of us, and it helps us discern between good and evil. It is called the Light of Christ, which the prophet Mormon said “is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:16). In section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants (one of the most profound sections in all of scripture on the doctrine of light), the Savior said, “I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; . . . I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one” (verses 2–3). So when we talk about light, we are really talking about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Consider what we learn about light—and darkness—from the experience of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove.

“I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was *seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me*, and had such an astonishing influence over me as *to bind my tongue so that I could not speak*. Thick *darkness* gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were *doomed to sudden destruction*.

“But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of *the power of this enemy which had seized upon me*, . . . *I saw a pillar of light* exactly over my head, above the *brightness of the sun*, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, *whose brightness and glory defy all description*,

standing above me in the air” (Joseph Smith—History 1:15–17; emphasis added).

From Joseph’s experience, we learn that the concept of light is much broader and much deeper than a simple description of luminosity or radiance—and that darkness is more than the mere absence of light. What Joseph witnessed was a battle between two forces—the ongoing conflict between the powers of good and the powers of evil. As Joseph described what he saw, he used terms such as *brightness*, *power*, and *glory*. To understand the doctrine of light, we need to understand the depths of this spiritual power, which comes from the Savior Himself.

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Again from section 93 we read, “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth” (verse 36). Here the Savior equates light and truth with “intelligence” and “the glory of God.” In a similar verse we read, “The word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (D&C 84:45).

If intelligence equals light and truth, and light and truth equal Spirit, then intelligence must equal Spirit. In fact, all of these terms could be considered interchangeable and in many cases can be substituted for one another elsewhere in the scriptures:

“Whatever principle of *intelligence* [substitute one of the other words—*glory, truth, light, Spirit*] we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

“And if a person gains more knowledge and *intelligence* [*glory, truth, light, Spirit*] in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come” (D&C 130:18–19; emphasis added).



Here's another example:

“And the *light [Spirit, glory, intelligence, truth]* which shineth, which giveth you *light [Spirit, glory, intelligence, truth]*, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same *light [Spirit, glory, intelligence, truth]* that quickeneth your understandings;

“Which *light [Spirit, glory, intelligence, truth]* proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space” (D&C 88:11–12; emphasis added).

Because light proceeds from the presence of God and is synonymous with the Spirit of the Lord, it is that same Spirit that enlightens and quickens us. It is the Light of

Christ, or the Spirit of Christ, that “giveth light to every man that cometh into the world” (D&C 84:46). It is the Spirit of Christ that is “the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:13).

As you and I follow the Savior and embrace the light, we become His children, “children of light” (1 Thessalonians 5:5), His sons and His daughters. As we continue on this path, we learn and grow and gain even more light (see D&C 50:24).

“Children of Light”

We have been given the light of the gospel through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We know what God expects from us, His beloved children. We have His Spirit to guide and direct us. To become children of light means to reject the power of the adversary and to choose daily to follow the Light of Christ.

The phrase “children of light” describes a people in whom the light of the gospel shines brightly. It describes a people who seek the light and are drawn to that

which is virtuous, clean, and pure. There is an expectation that children of light are alert and watchful—not sleeping, in a spiritual sense, when they should be awake (see 2 Nephi 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:5–8). Children of light do not sit passively in darkness; they have the courage to stand up and stand out. When the adversary comes looming, children of light know when to fight back, when to say no, and when to simply walk away.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught:

“Jesus cautioned that Satan desires to sift us like wheat (see Luke 22:31; 3 Nephi 18:18), which means to make us

common like all those around us. But Jesus taught that we who follow Him should be precious and unique, ‘the salt of the earth’ (Matthew 5:13) and ‘the light of the world,’ to shine forth to all men (Matthew 5:14, 16; see also 3 Nephi 18:24).

“We do not serve our Savior well if we fear man more than God. . . . We are called to establish the Lord’s standards, not to follow the world’s. Elder John A. Widtsoe declared, ‘We cannot walk as other men, or talk as other men, or do as other men, for we have a different destiny, obligation, and responsibility placed upon us, and we must fit ourselves [to it]’ [in Conference Report, Apr. 1940, 36].”¹

Children of light let their light shine so that others may see their good works and glorify our Father in Heaven (see Matthew 5:16). They “arise and shine forth, that [their] light may be a standard for the nations” (D&C 115:5). What does it mean to be a standard to the nations? A standard is a model used in comparative analyses. If we let our light shine, our friends in the world (who have the Light of Christ) will measure their light against what they see in us.

The Savior said to Nicodemus:

“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:19–21).

As you let your light shine, others who are sensitive to the light will be inspired by you to seek greater light.

To be filled with light means more than simply obeying the commandments; it means to “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:44), including following the teachings of His chosen prophets. This is a defining characteristic of those whom Abinadi called Christ’s “seed.” As he bore powerful testimony of the Savior’s Atonement in the court of the wicked king Noah, Abinadi declared, “Whosoever has

heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, . . . these are his seed” (Mosiah 15:11). Children of light exercise great faith as they listen to and follow the words of the prophets.

Counsel from President Monson

And what is our living prophet saying to us today? In the past few sessions of general conference, President Thomas S. Monson has given several powerful and closely related messages on topics such as “Stand in Holy Places,”² “Dare to Stand Alone,”³ and “See Others as They May Become.”⁴

In these messages he invites us to strengthen our commitment to live the gospel and to reach out to, rescue, and strengthen those around us. He has taught that in order to be strong “in a world which has moved so far from that which is spiritual,” we must develop strong testimonies.⁵ He has promised that “absolutely nothing in this world . . . will provide more comfort and happiness than a testimony of the truth.” And he has pleaded with us to consider the “countless individuals who have little or no testimony right now, those who could and would receive such a testimony if we would be willing to make the effort to share ours and to help them change.”⁶

Children of light exercise great faith as they listen to and follow the words of the prophets.

As children of light, we heed this counsel from a prophet of God and share our light with those around us.

At times we may consider all that is expected of children of light to be beyond our reach and abilities. Painfully aware of our own shortcomings, we may wonder why anyone would look to us for light and inspiration—particularly when we are in need of such help ourselves. If you ever feel this way, remember that your



Heavenly Father knows all about you—your strengths and your weaknesses. He knows perfectly who you are, but He also knows who you can become. And with that knowledge, He has placed you here, now—at the exact place and time in which you can do the most good with the talents and gifts He has given you.

You don't have to wait until you are perfect before you can be a light to the world. Becoming children of light is a process, much like the process of conversion, which Elder Oaks described as "a profound change of nature." He explained that we have the gospel of Jesus Christ to help us "become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of . . . right choices, and from continuing repentance."⁷

As children of light, we have the obligation of making this world a holier and happier place for our having lived in it. Heavenly Father relies on our influence to help bring all of His children home to Him. We should become an influence for good wherever we go (see 1 Timothy 4:12).

As we cultivate the Lord's light by following the promptings of His Spirit, He will use us as instruments to bring about much righteousness. Continually ask yourselves the question our family asks, "Do you see any light in that?" Be vigilant in seeking for and following the true light of the gospel, which is the Savior Himself, and you will receive more light, becoming brighter and brighter every day.

Yes, the powers of the adversary are strong in the world today, but our collective influence, as true disciples of the living Savior, is even stronger. May we continually let our light—His light, which is in us—shine. ■

From a devotional address, "Children of the Light," given at Brigham Young University–Idaho on March 19, 2013. For the full address, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Unselfish Service," *Ensign*, May 2009, 94–95.
2. See Thomas S. Monson, "Stand in Holy Places," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 82–86.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, "Dare to Stand Alone," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 60–62, 67.
4. See Thomas S. Monson, "See Others as They May Become," *Ensign*, Nov. 2012, 68–71.
5. See Thomas S. Monson, "Stand in Holy Places," 83–84, 86.
6. Thomas S. Monson, "See Others as They May Become," 68.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32, 33.