

Gatherers of Light



Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf
The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles
Commencement
December 14, 2018

President Tanner, honored guests, beloved graduates, family, and friends, I am pleased to be with you to share this day of joy, pride and, I'm sure for many, not a small amount of relief. I extend my congratulations to those who have worked so hard to reach this milestone in their lives and my warmest gratitude to those who have supported them in this goal—teachers, administrators, family, and friends. This kind of success is rarely an individual one and, when these wonderful scholars cross the finish line, you can be sure that a company of others cross alongside them.

On a personal note, I am thrilled to have my wife, Harriet, at my side. Today is a special day for us—we are celebrating our 56th wedding anniversary. It occurs to me that there are worse places to celebrate a wedding anniversary than on this beautiful campus here in this beautiful state. And we are particularly happy to be surrounded by people who so naturally radiate warmth, generosity, and love.

When I ask our grandchildren what I should talk about at a commencement service, they quickly respond, “Keep it short, and don't worry about the topic. Everyone will be thinking about other things anyway.”

It is tradition for commencement speakers to impart a few words that might be of use to graduates.

To that end, I wish to offer one simple piece of advice that I trust may be of use to you.

That message is simply this: be gatherers of light.

Photosynthesis

Hawaii is known throughout the world for its beautiful landscapes, lush forests, and wondrous flowers. I always marvel at the beauty of these islands.

As you know, Utah is a desert. And, although it has its own particular and stunning beauty, it is a very different kind of landscape compared to the lavish green and colorful islands in this part of the world.

Those of you who have studied the process of plant growth are familiar with the remarkable way plants take light from the sun and transform it into energy and new growth. Most plants can't survive long without light. If there is no light, there is no energy. Plants that are deprived of light begin to wear away and eventually perish.

Without light, they cannot sustain life.

Light is Truth

One of the remarkable things about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is that, at times, the curtain parts and we catch a glimpse into the mysteries of heaven.

For example, in the Doctrine and Covenants we learn that Jesus Christ is “in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ.”[\[i\]](#)

In the 93rd section of the Doctrine and covenants, we learn that Jesus Christ is “the true light that lighteth every [one] that cometh into the world,”[\[ii\]](#) and that, “In him [is] the life of men and the light of men.”[\[iii\]](#)

Later, we read these intriguing words: “And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things.”[\[iv\]](#)

We understand the role light plays in the growth and survival of plants. Do we understand its role in ours?

We know what happens to plants that are severed from light. What happens to mortals who are separated from the light of Christ?

What happens when we walk in paths that shade us from God's light? Can our spirits thrive without being drenched in the pure light of truth, the light and Redeemer of the world?

We Are Light Gatherers

Over the past years, you have been blessed with an opportunity to gather knowledge and increase your understanding of truth. It has been a time of learning and growth.

Now, you are stepping across a threshold into a new world. Many of you are returning to your homes or moving to areas of the world that may be far from here.

Will you become a beacon of light to the world? Wherever you go? No matter your circumstance?

A large part of the job description of a disciple of Christ is to become a light gatherer and to bear that light to the world.

Jesus taught His disciples that they were, “the light of the world,”^[v] and He urged His followers to not allow that light to be put under a bushel, “but on a candlestick; [that] giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that [others] may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”^[vi]

How do we acquire this light of which the Savior speaks? Jesus answered, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”^[vii]

Although we can spend a lifetime understanding what He meant by that, the doctrine is so simple that a child can understand. We gather light as we believe. As we love as He loved. And as we do as He did.

All Can Believe

It has become a trend among some to say that belief is not something that is available to all—that only those who are “chosen” receive this gift.

But God Himself contradicts this idea. How could our loving Heavenly Father, who desires all to return to His presence, measure out the gift of belief to only a portion of His children?

That is not to say it comes easily to all. For some, it is a process that takes time, diligence, patience, and earnest seeking.

We know that “God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”^[viii] We have God’s unbreakable promise that If we humble ourselves and “draw nigh to God ... he will draw nigh to [us].”^[ix]

No matter how long it takes for us personally, we can be certain that God will not “unfriend” any who draw near to Him and seek to follow His way. We have His word that, “He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”^[x]

What a glorious promise!

The more we are filled with God’s light, the more our hearts are filled with love—for Him and for those around us—the stronger we grow in spirit and in truth; the healthier we are spiritually.

A Life-long Quest

That is the essence of my message to you today.

When you leave with diploma in hand, your days of gathering light are not ending. They have just begun!

And heavenly light is promised to all who set their hearts and minds to the task of seeking it.

I am honored to be with you, my beloved friends. I commend you for your diligence. I admire you for what you have achieved.

But mostly I am grateful for your goodness. For your faith. For your desire to be a light unto the world.

I leave you my blessing that, as you gather light into your souls and allow your spirits to be filled with the shining truth of heavenly things, your lives will be better.

Unfortunately, you will certainly experience times of sorrow and trial in your life. But as a light gatherer and disciple of Jesus Christ you will experience His abiding joy in the midst of your trials. You will feel His watchful hand guiding your steps.

Gathering light is a day job. It is not something you get from a class or a sermon. It cannot be checked off a list and considered completed. It is a process of every day and every hour. When you awake in the morning, you begin your quest for light. And when you finish the day, you evaluate your engagement in the task.

As you receive this light, you let it shine so that others will see it and glorify God because of it.

This great quest for light has the power to enlighten your minds, expand your spirits, and endow you with penetrating understanding and profound joy. It allows you to grow in the redeeming and exalting glory that proceeds from the presence of your magnificent Heavenly Father.

This is as worthy a quest for a disciple of Jesus Christ and one that is truly worthy of your best and finest efforts.

I hope and pray that you will remember this straightforward concept as it applies to everything you do today and in the future. And keep this special BYU spirit in your lives. Dear friends, do nothing without the Spirit of God. The presence of the Spirit of God will bring focus, certainty, and confidence into your life. And “by the power of the Holy Ghost [you] may know the truth of all things.”^[xi] The gift and the power of “the Holy Ghost . . . will show unto you all things what [you] should do.”^[xii]

You are a marvelous generation. You are blessed beyond measure. The world needs you and your goodness. Great opportunities await you. I love and admire you. Do not fear. God is with you. Have faith. Always live worthy to have the Spirit with you.

Congratulations Class of 2018!

I leave you my blessing and love, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

^[i] See D&C 88:6,7

^[ii] D&C 93:2

^[iii] D&C 93:9

^[iv] D&C 88:11-13

^[v] Matt. 5:14

[\[vi\]](#) Matt. 5:15.16

[\[vii\]](#) John 8:12

[\[viii\]](#) Acts 10:34,35

[\[ix\]](#) James 4:8

[\[x\]](#) D&C 93:28

[\[xi\]](#) Moroni 10:5

[\[xii\]](#) 2 Nephi 32:5