

The Divine Potential of Humankind

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It is sometimes taught at Church that we can “become gods”. While this is not a focus of our worship or way of thinking as we go through life, it is in a way true. Notice the caveat “in a way”. Using words like “become gods” is perhaps too blunt and loaded a way of phrasing it. People are liable to take offense because they may think that we are saying something that we are not, and miss out on the beauty of what we do believe.

The teaching and doctrine of the church is based upon modern revelation, and is supported by scripture. Following is a tour of the relevant lessons from the scriptures. Each of the lessons could be drawn from the teachings of the church leaders, as well.

1. God is truly God in every way. He will never cease to be God over us, we will never cease to worship Him as God, and we will never be equal to Him.

This topic could fill a whole book. The scriptures overflow with this message, hammering it into our heads and hearts. This lesson is the foundation of the Gospel, upon which rests an understanding of the atonement, the central and most important doctrine. The primacy, holiness, and goodness of God are taught in the first lesson of the missionary discussions, and we teach these things to our children when they learn to pray.

2. Unrighteous greed, ambition, and desire for power are indeed sins.

Your instincts are right—the desire to usurp God’s authority and take his power is a sin, and not just in the abstract. The scriptures contain several examples of individuals who fall into this trap. The clearest violation, of course, is the rebellion of Satan:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

For thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Isaiah 14:12-14

...the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying: Give me thine honor, which is my power;

D&C 29:36

And now, when Moses had said these words, Satan cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me.

Moses 1:19

Other wicked people in the scriptures seek power and glory for themselves (Moses 5:31-33).

3. The righteous display a contrasting humility and lack of desire for power. They submit to God wholeheartedly.

I love the examples of the humility and submission of the righteous people in the scriptures. Two examples:

[John the Baptist said] You yourselves can testify that I said, "I am not the Christ, but am sent ahead of him."

The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

He must become greater; I must become less.

John 3:28-30 (NIV)

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

And God said, "I will be with you..."

Exodus 3:11-12 (NIV)

And when Enoch had heard these words, he bowed himself to the earth, before the Lord, and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?

And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good.

Say unto this people: Choose ye this day, to serve the Lord God who made you.

Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me.

And the Lord spake unto Enoch, and said unto him: Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and thou shalt see. And he did so.

And he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eyes; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people.

And it came to pass that Enoch went forth in the land, among the people, standing upon the hills and the high places, and cried with a loud voice, testifying against their works; and all men were offended because of him.

Moses 6:31-37

The prophets routinely felt unqualified and unworthy, but they were made strong.

4. The scriptures teach that there is no other God.

The whole point of most of the Old Testament was that Jehovah is God, to the exclusion of all others. The covenant (the testament) was that the Israelites would remember and worship Him as God, they would not pay any attention to the gods of their neighbors, and they would be blessed in return. They would be (and were) punished when they broke the covenant.

In the Book of Mormon:

Now Zeezrom said: Is there more than one God?

And he [Amulek] answered, No.

Alma 11:28-29

See also from Moses 1:1 on.

5. God does not reveal everything.

God withholds knowledge from us. It is His prerogative to give us only what He decides we should hear:

And it came to pass that Moses called upon God, saying: Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so, and by what thou madest them?

And behold, the glory of the Lord was upon Moses, so that Moses stood in the presence of God, and talked with him face to face. And the Lord God said unto Moses: For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom and it remaineth in me.

Moses 1:30-31

In other words, "I have my reasons and I'm not telling you."

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature...

...we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and God destined for our glory before time began.

None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

However, as it is written: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love him—

but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

1 Cor. 2:6-10 (NIV)

[Speaking to the Corinthians:] I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

1 Cor. 3:2 (NIV)

See also Alma 12:9-11, Luke 9:21.

6. The scriptures paint a glorious picture of the future for God's followers.

Straight to the scriptures:

And I know that he will raise me up at the last day, to dwell with him in glory.

Alma 36:28

For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.

Alma 37:45

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Rev. 3:21 (NIV)

If we died with him, we will also live with him;
if we endure, we will also reign with him.
If we disown him, he will also disown us;
if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

2 Tim. 2:11-13 (NIV)

7. We are God's children. Children grow up to be like their parents.

It does not mean much to call God our Father if we are merely servants or friends, particularly in light of the repeated scriptures talking about our inheritance or our reign with him.

...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "*Abba, Father.*"

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The scriptures repeatedly talk about receiving an inheritance or being heirs.

8. Jesus cautioned people against taking offense at his words and actions.

Some of what He did and said was controversial. He told people to stop taking offense and pay attention to the lesson:

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?

If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—

what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why do you accuse me of blasphemy...

John 10:34-36 (NIV)

See also Matthew 12:1-6.

9. Modern revelation uses the word "gods" to describe the future state of God's disciples.

Judging from the description of what exaltation is like, this is an appropriate term.

...if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood...[they] shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths...it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

D&C 132:19-20

10. We are only exalted if we are valiant and are sealed by God's authority.

Not all "good people" will be exalted. See D&C 76:75 and 79, and D&C 131:1-4. However, it is important to keep in mind the way that God judges according to the light we receive: D&C 137:1-10.