

that important and appreciated service. If we really want our homes to be places of holiness, we will try harder to do those things that are conducive to the Spirit of the Lord.

Chapels are holy places

Our chapels are dedicated to the Lord as holy places. We are told we should go to the house of prayer and offer up our sacraments upon His holy day.¹¹ Partaking of the sacrament is a solemn and sacred privilege. In our chapels we are instructed in principles of the gospel, children are blessed, members are confirmed and given the gift of the Holy Ghost, and testimonies of the truthfulness of the gospel are borne. A convert in Texas said, when she walked through the chapel door, there was a feeling of holiness that she had never before experienced in her life.

Strive each day for greater holiness

We must try harder to be a holy people. We live in the fulness of times. So much has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. This places upon us a special relationship to the Lord. We are the beneficiaries, guardians, and caretakers of these responsibilities under the delegation, authority, and direction of President Hinckley, who holds all the keys. As children of the Lord, we should strive every day to rise to a higher level of personal righteousness

in all of our actions. We need to guard constantly against all of Satan's influences.

As President Brigham Young taught, "Every moment of [our lives] must be holiness to the Lord, . . . which is the only course by which [we] can preserve the Spirit of the Almighty to [ourselves]." May the Lord bless each and all of us in our special responsibility to find holiness to the Lord by standing in holy places. That is where we will find the spiritual protection we need for ourselves and our families. That is the source of help to carry forth the word of the Lord in our time. Standing in holy places will help us rise above the evil influences of our time and draw us closer to our Savior. I testify that if we do this, the Lord will bless us forever and we will be made mighty "in faith and in works."¹² In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Jeff Davidson, "'Overworked Americans' or Overwhelmed Americans?" *Business Horizons*, Jan.–Feb. 1994, 62–66.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 101:22.
3. 1 Timothy 4:12.
4. *Deseret News*, Apr. 2, 1862, 313.
5. "Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 109:13.
7. *History of the Church*, 4:194.
8. Zechariah 14:20–21.
9. 2 Corinthians 3:6.
10. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:9.
12. Helaman 10:5.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

High standards for missionary service

Brothers and sisters, a few weeks ago Sister Ballard and I enjoyed speaking to the missionaries at the Provo Missionary Training Center. We were thrilled to see their radiant, eager faces and feel the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. These fine

missionaries are well on their way to carrying the message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. We thank parents, bishops, stake presidents, and especially our young people for responding to the prophet's call for more thorough spiritual preparation to serve the Lord.

As we “raised the bar” for missionary service, President Gordon B. Hinckley said: “This work is rigorous. It demands strength and vitality. It demands mental sharpness and capacity. It demands faith, desire, and consecration. It demands clean hands and a pure heart.”

He went on to say: “The time has come when we must raise the standards of those who are called . . . as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We simply cannot permit those who have not qualified themselves as to worthiness to go into the world to speak the glad tidings of the gospel” (“Missionary Service,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 17).

Today we call for more qualified missionaries, young men who have prepared to serve by accepting the challenge of our prophet “to practice self-discipline, to live above the low standards of the world, to avoid transgression and take the high road in all their activities” (“Missionary Service,” 17).

Prepare every young man

The work of the Lord in our 339 missions is expanding, so we must increase our efforts to see that every 12-year-old young man is worthily ordained a deacon; every 14-year-old, a teacher; every 16-year-old, a priest; and every 18- to 19-year-old worthily receives the Melchizedek Priesthood. We can do this by filling the hearts of our young men with love for the Lord, understanding and appreciation of His Atonement, and a clear vision of the marvel of the Restoration.

When our youth understand the significance of the Restoration of the gospel and know for themselves that God is our Heavenly Father and He loves all of His children, that Jesus is the Christ, and that together They personally visited Joseph Smith to open this, the final dispensation of time, they will want to help carry this message to the world. When our youth see

the Book of Mormon as tangible evidence that the message of the Restoration is true, they will be filled with a desire to do their part in teaching these truths to our Heavenly Father’s children.

We learned from the missionaries at the Missionary Training Center what would have helped them most to prepare for their mission. Above all else they wished they had:

- Learned the doctrine better through focused scripture study.
- Learned how to study and to pray sincerely.
- Been more disciplined and worked harder.
- Understood better what is expected.
- Had more teaching opportunities.
- And had more searching interviews by bishops and parents.

Brothers and sisters, together we can teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, in its simplicity and power, to all of our youth in the Church. Working with parents, we can help them prepare for a mission and a lifetime of service. Let us go forward to search for every one of our precious youth, regardless of their activity level, illuminating the Light of Christ that is within them. President Boyd K. Packer said:

“The Light of Christ is as universal as sunlight itself. Wherever there is human life, there is the Spirit of Christ. Every living soul is possessed of it. . . . It is the inspirer of everything that will bless and benefit mankind. It nourishes goodness itself” (“The Light of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 13).

So we know that all have within them the Light of Christ. Our responsibility as parents, teachers, and leaders is to kindle that light in our youth until the flame of testimony burns deep within their hearts and souls and then to encourage each one of them to take that flame and use it to help kindle the Light of Christ in others.

Of course, the adversary knows this and is working overtime to influence some of our youth to disregard the teachings of

the Church. That is why parents, leaders, and teachers need to counsel together and know every young man and young woman—every one. Whether they are active or not, we need to know them.

The need for more missionaries

It is true that the bar has been raised for our missionaries. This means that the bar has been raised for parents and leaders as well. We will need to increase our faith and expand our efforts to give every young man the opportunity to serve.

President Hinckley also expressed this concern: “We need more missionaries. The message to raise the bar on missionary qualifications was not a signal to send fewer missionaries but . . . a call for parents and leaders to work with young men earlier to better prepare them for missionary service and to keep them worthy of such service. All young men who are worthy and who are physically and emotionally able should prepare to serve in this most important work” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 19, 2004, 27).

Similarly, with reference to young women, the President said: “There has been some misunderstanding of earlier counsel regarding single sisters serving as missionaries. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot. But it should be kept in mind that young sisters are not under obligation to go on missions. They should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men, but some will wish to go” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” 27).

Brothers and sisters, there is an incredible amount of work that needs to be done. The Spirit of the Lord is brooding over many of the nations of the world. Doors previously locked are opening to us. We need more hardworking, testimony-enriched missionaries in order to reach more of our Heavenly Father’s children who are now at a place where we can reach

them. These are our brothers and sisters, and we have the responsibility to teach them the message of the Restoration.

Blessings of missionary service

We know that great things happen in the lives of those who faithfully serve full-time missions. Missionary service is not easy, but it is infinitely worth it. Those who serve and return home with honor have established a pattern of living and serving that will bless their own lives and the lives of generations to follow. They return better prepared to be strong leaders and teachers in the organizations of the Church. They return better prepared to be righteous fathers and mothers and able to teach their children the gospel. Full-time missionary service is a blessing for those whom the missionaries find and teach as well as for the missionaries themselves.

Find one more young man

Now we have a special request for you bishops and branch presidents. We are aware that you already know those who have cleared the bar and are preparing to accept mission calls during this year. What we are asking leaders in every unit to do is to counsel together with parents and pray to find at least *one more* young man, above those already committed, who can be called to serve.

If the over 26,000 wards and branches in the Church will send all of those whom they are already planning to send into the mission field plus *one more*, the ranks of our full-time missionaries will swell and we will move much closer to our divine mandate to take the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Of course, these missionaries need to be worthy, faithful, healthy, and fully committed. Perhaps this *one more* may not be ready right now. So we ask parents and stake and ward council members to rely upon the discerning power of the Holy Spirit to know whom you can help to be ready for a call this year.

As you reach out to them, please remember the experience of a friend of mine. He had never owned a horse in his life until he married a wonderful woman who loves horses. Wanting to impress his new bride, he announced one evening that he was going to the pasture to teach a colt how to be led. He weighed more than the colt. He knew more than the colt. He assumed all he would need to do was pull on the lead rope and sooner or later the colt would follow. He was confident that the process would be short and simple.

He attached the lead rope to the halter, got in front of the colt, and pulled. The colt resisted. My friend pulled harder, and the colt planted his legs more firmly. So he really pulled, and the colt fell over. The process was repeated several times until my friend made this assessment: in just four or five minutes he had successfully taught the colt to fall over. All he had to do was get in front of the colt, pick up the rope, and over it would go.

His wife, watching this process, finally suggested that instead of getting in front of the colt and pulling, he might try wrapping the rope around the colt and simply walking alongside. To my friend's chagrin, it worked.

There seems to be something inside each of us that resists being told or pushed or pulled. But if someone puts an arm around a young man and walks alongside him, he is likely to follow along with a desire to serve. Please remember this as you strengthen the testimony of *one more* who can serve.

Making missionary service a tradition

May I make three suggestions for your consideration to help establish a rich tradition of missionary service in your family, stakes, wards, or branches?

First, make sure all of our youth understand who they are. From their earliest days in Primary, our children sing "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301). Help

them to know what it really means to be a child of God. Remind them that they are here at this particular time in the history of the world, with the fulness of the gospel at their fingertips, because they made valiant choices in the premortal existence. Our youth need to stand firm for righteousness and truth. They need the vision of the blessings that can be theirs as they demonstrate their love for Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through their willingness to serve.

Second, teach the doctrine. While activities and social events have their appropriate place in our overall youth program, it is the doctrine that converts and commits. Our youth have a right to expect that their parents and Church leaders and teachers will see that they know and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost will confirm the truth to their hearts and will ignite the Light of Christ in their souls. And then you will have *one more* fully prepared missionary. Yesterday, Elder Richard G. Scott suggested that *Preach My Gospel*, the new guide that our missionaries are now using to teach the gospel, can be a good resource to help you.

Finally, we recognize that it may not be wise for some of our young men and young women to face the rigors and challenges of a full-time mission. If priesthood leaders excuse any of you from full-time missionary service, we ask you and your families to accept the decision and move forward. You can prepare to participate in the saving ordinances of the temple and find other ways to be of service. And we ask all of our members to be supportive and to show great love and understanding in assisting all of our faithful youth in their various Church callings.

Brothers and sisters, I add my testimony of the divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ and pray that He will bless all of us in our efforts to inspire and motivate more of our youth and couples to serve a full-time mission. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.