

speaking up and telling his teammates to clean up their language. There are thousands of experiences that could be shared where people have joined the Church because of the spirit and attitude they observe in the lives of those who come from gospel-sharing homes.

Church literature or DVDs can introduce new friends to the Church. Invitations to hear a family member speak in sacrament meeting or to attend the baptismal service of a family member or to tour a meetinghouse have also been appreciated by those who are not members. From every indicator we have, there is nothing more effective than any of us can do for our friends than to say “come and see” by joining with us in sacrament meeting. Far too many do not know they are welcome to worship with us.

Assisting leaders and missionaries

Of course, all of us support the ward leaders and assist in making the ward mission plan effective. Whatever our Church

calling may be, we help priesthood and auxiliary leaders assist missionaries, welcome and involve visitors, and fellowship new members. You can ask the missionaries to show you their daily planners so you can see how you can best help them accomplish their goals. As we work together, the spirit of our gospel-sharing homes will overflow in our chapels, our classrooms, and our cultural halls.

I bear testimony that if we will just do some of these simple things, the Lord will lead us to find tens of thousands of Heavenly Father’s children who are ready to be taught the gospel. Our love for the Lord, our appreciation for His atoning sacrifice, and His mission to have all come unto Him should provide all the motivation we need to be successful in sharing the gospel.

May the Lord bless you, my brothers and sisters, with greater faith and trust in Him as you reach out now to introduce the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of the world, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Recent developments in missionary work

It would be difficult to imagine anything more exciting to do as a young man, woman, or couple in the world today than to be a full-time missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The message of the restored gospel we share is absolutely vital. It is from God, our Eternal Father, for every one of His children on earth and is centered in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. When that message is understood and lived, it can replace turmoil with peace, sorrow with happiness, and provide solutions to life’s persistent challenges.

We now have very clear direction for success in missionary service. It is provided by the guide *Preach My Gospel* and the resources developed to accompany it. The

highly effective new missionary lessons are based upon teaching by the Spirit rather than rote memorization. They have greatly improved sharing the gospel worldwide. Each mission president has been carefully taught how to implement the new materials. The result is a corps of highly capable, devoted, enthusiastic mission presidents with the capacity to inspire and powerfully motivate their missionaries.

The worldwide study and application of the concepts in *Preach My Gospel* by every missionary has strengthened our capacity to proclaim the message of the Restoration and to teach the plan of salvation and other gospel principles. Raising the bar of worthiness has had far-reaching consequences. There is more devoted ser-

vice in the field, stronger companion relationships, much more effective teaching, and improved retention of converts.

The overall guidance given to supervise missionary work is unequalled. It supports all missionary effort worldwide through Area Presidencies, the seven Presidents of Seventy, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the personal, concentrated interest of the First Presidency.

Exciting fields of labor the world over allow the inspiration of the Lord to call young men and women and devoted couples to challenging assignments conditioned to each personal need and capacity. I rejoice in the opportunity to participate in this captivating effort that potently blesses so many around the globe.

Preparing for full-time missionary service

Elder M. Russell Ballard has spoken about creating a gospel-sharing home. I will discuss how to prepare to be a full-time missionary as an elder, a sister, or a couple.

Teachings in the home

The process begins in the home long before missionary age when parents instill in the minds and hearts of every young boy the concept of “when I go on a mission,” not “if I go on a mission.” Children are best taught gospel truths in the home where instruction can be adapted to the age and capacity of each child. In the home the whole armor of truth is tailor fit to the individual characteristics of each child. Parental teaching qualifies children for life and prepares worthy young men for the joy of missionary service. In the home a young girl can understand that her primary role is to be a wife and mother. Yet as that preparation unfolds there may be an opportunity to serve a full-time mission, provided recent counsel of the First Presidency is followed:

“Worthy single women ages twenty-one and older . . . may be recommended to serve full-time missions. . . . These sisters can make a valuable contribution . . . , but they should not be pressured to serve. Bishops should not recommend them for missionary service if it will interfere with imminent marriage prospects.”¹

Use of Preach My Gospel

Many parents are using parts of the guide *Preach My Gospel* to stress the concepts that will bear fruit as their children’s testimonies mature while they are nurtured in the home. As a young boy you can learn how to fulfill your duty as a future priesthood bearer. You will be helped to understand and apply important teachings of the Lord. You will be strengthened to live worthily to be able to receive sacred temple ordinances and to serve a full-time mission. Such experiences will develop a foundation for the later blessing of your being a strong husband and father.

Portions of *Preach My Gospel* will prepare you as a young woman to understand and apply doctrine for your role as wife and mother. Should you choose to serve a full-time mission, you will have a foundation for it. The seminary programs will help you as a young man or woman to lay a foundation for happiness and success in life. There is a special course in the institute program and at the three Brigham Young Universities that can prepare you for missionary service. It is founded in the principles contained in *Preach My Gospel* and goes hand-in-hand with that powerful resource. It will give you a head start for when you are called to serve.

The power and effectiveness of the guide *Preach My Gospel* for missionaries, leaders, members, and parents is manifest in the fact that just under one million copies have been distributed thus far. Are you benefiting from your own personal copy?

Motivating interviews by leaders

As a bishop or branch president, through motivating interviews you can bless the life of every young man in your ward as well as appropriate couples by encouraging them to prepare for full-time missions. Not only will you bless those potential missionaries but you may answer the prayers of parents who have a maturing son not yet committed to a mission despite their efforts to encourage that desire.

For example, from childhood through maturing years, our daughter Mary Lee heard her parents speak of our treasured missionary experiences. We had explained how challenging missionary opportunities had enriched our lives and laid the foundation for all that we treasure in life. Yet we taught that it was her decision whether she would serve or not.

Through her growing years, it was clear that she intended to be a missionary. However, as missionary age approached, her exciting experiences in the university began to present attractive alternatives. Once when she mentioned wrestling with that uncertainty, she was counseled to talk to her bishop. An appointment was arranged. As she sat down before a choice bishop, she asked, "What do you think of my serving a full-time mission?" The bishop jumped from his chair, clapped his hands on the desk, and said, "That is the greatest thing I could imagine for you." That comment tipped the scales.

Mary Lee served a most effective mission in Spain that unveiled hidden capacities, matured her spiritual development, and caused to flower capabilities that have blessed her as a wife and mother. The bishop that had such a profound influence in my daughter's life is J. Willard Marriott Jr., currently an Area Seventy. But we remember him most for what he did for our daughter Mary Lee. Now in her own family, with the strong examples of a returned missionary father and mother, a son and a

daughter have fulfilled exemplary missions. The remaining son will clearly be a missionary, and the last daughter will in time make the proper choice. Another grandchild, following in the footsteps of his father, was recently called to serve in the Mexico Cuernavaca Mission.

Use of resources by leaders

Bishops and branch presidents, you can have that powerful impact in the lives of the missionaries you encourage and prepare as well as in lives of their posterity. Use your Aaronic Priesthood quorum leaders and the advisers, as well as the high priests, elders, and women leaders, to help you prepare to call as many worthy missionaries as you can. From the use of the new missionary resources, many more missionaries you recommend arrive in the field better prepared and highly motivated to serve. While most potential candidates can with little effort be ready, a few need substantial adjustments in their life to qualify. With the support of parents, help them meet the standards.

Pray about which couples can be encouraged to submit papers for a call to full-time missionary service. There is an urgent need for them.

I am constantly amazed at how the Holy Ghost matches the characteristics and needs of each missionary and couple to the widely varying circumstances of missionary service throughout the world. I have observed how some of the strongest, most capable elders and sisters are called to the United States and Canada to keep the roots of the Church strong there. I have seen how missionaries who return from unusual assignments, such as adapting to the native culture of a Pacific Island, Mongolia, or the highlands of Guatemala or otherwise serving with minimal personal contact with the mission president, develop previously unknown personal capacities extremely well.

Elder Scott's full-time mission experience

Now may I speak from my heart of what an honorable full-time mission has meant to me personally. I grew up in a home with very good parents, but my father was not a member and my mother was less active. After my mission, that changed. They became strong members and served devotedly in the temple—he a sealer, she an ordinance worker. But as a young man, like many of you today, I had no way to judge personally the importance of a mission. I fell in love with an exceptional young woman. At a critical point in our courtship, she made it very clear that she would only be married in the temple to a returned missionary. Duly motivated, I served a mission in Uruguay.

It was not easy. The Lord gave me many challenges that became stepping-stones to personal growth. There I gained my testimony that God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, did in fact visit Joseph Smith to begin a restoration of truth, priesthood authority, and the true Church on earth. I gained a witness that Joseph Smith is a singular prophet. I learned essential doctrines. I discovered what it meant to be led by the Spirit. Many a night I got up as my companion slept to pour my heart out to the Lord for guidance and direction. I pled for the ability to express effectively in Spanish my testimony and the truth I was learning to a people I had come to love. Those prayers were abundantly answered. At the same time, my future eternal companion, Jeanene, was being molded to become an exceptional wife and mother by her own mission.

Most important, all that I now hold dear in life began to mature in the mission field. Had I not been encouraged to be a missionary, I would not have the eternal companion or precious family I dearly love. I am confident that I would not have had the exceptional professional opportunities that stretched my every capacity.

I am certain that I would not have received the sacred callings with opportunities to serve for which I will be eternally grateful. My life has been richly blessed beyond measure because I served a mission.

Now can you understand why I am so anxious to motivate every one of you young men to be a worthy missionary? Can you comprehend why I encourage you as a mature couple to plan, if health permits, to serve the Lord as missionaries? Can you see why I suggest that some of you young women, where there is a desire and it will not affect an impending marriage, seriously consider serving the Lord as a missionary? Our home has been greatly blessed by a wife and mother who chose to serve a full-time mission during my period of service.

Young men, seek guidance

If you are a young man wondering whether you ought to fulfill a full-time mission, don't approach that vital decision with your own wisdom alone. Seek the counsel of your parents, your bishop, or stake president. In your prayers ask to have the will of the Lord made known to you. I know that a mission will provide extraordinary blessings for you now and throughout your life. I urge you not to pray to know whether you should go; rather, ask the Lord to guide you in whatever may be necessary to become a worthy, empowered full-time missionary. You will never regret serving a mission, but you most probably will regret not serving if that is your choice.

I know that Jesus is the Christ, that His Church and the fulness of His gospel have been restored to earth through a singularly important prophet, Joseph Smith. I testify that devoted full-time missionary service is a source of great happiness and rich blessings, not only for those who hear the message but also for those who, under

the guidance of the Spirit, deliver it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. Communication from the First Presidency, unpublished.

Elder David R. Stone

Zion in the midst of Babylon

Last summer, my wife and I had the opportunity to travel to San Diego, California, and there see Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at the Old Globe Theatre. We saw two performances, because our daughter Carolyn was playing the part of one of the three witches in that play. Of course, we were delighted to see her in the play and even more delighted when, at a dramatic moment, she said those famous lines: "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes" (act 4, scene 1, lines 40–41).

When I heard that, I thought how useful it would be to have an early-warning system which would tell us about the approach of evil and allow us to be prepared for it. Evil is coming toward us, whether or not we have an early-warning system.

On a later occasion, my wife and I were driving cross-country one night and were approaching a great city. As we came over the hills and saw the bright lights on the horizon, I nudged my wife awake and said, "Behold the city of Babylon!"

Of course, there is no particular city today which personifies Babylon. Babylon was, in the time of ancient Israel, a city which had become sensual, decadent, and corrupt. The principal building in the city was a temple to a false god, which we often refer to as Bel or Baal.

However, that sensuality, corruption, and decadence, and the worshipping of false gods are to be seen in many cities, great and small, scattered across the globe. As the Lord has said: "They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and af-

ter the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world" (D&C 1:16).

Too many of the people of the world have come to resemble the Babylon of old by walking in their own ways and following a god "whose image is in the likeness of the world."

One of the greatest challenges we will face is to be able to live in that world but somehow not be of that world. We have to create Zion in the midst of Babylon.

"Zion in the midst of Babylon." What a luminous and incandescent phrase, as a light shining in the midst of spiritual darkness. What a concept to hold close to our hearts as we see Babylon becoming more widespread. We see Babylon in our cities; we see Babylon in our communities; we see Babylon everywhere.

The culture of our place and time

And with the encroachment of Babylon, we have to create Zion in the midst of it. We should not allow ourselves to be engulfed by the culture which surrounds us. We seldom realize the extent to which we are a product of the culture of our place and time.

During the days of ancient Israel, the people of the Lord were an island of the one true God, surrounded by an ocean of idolatry. The waves of that ocean crashed incessantly upon the shores of Israel. Despite the commandment to make no graven image and bow down before it, Israel seemingly could not help itself, influenced by the culture of the place and time. Over and over again—despite the prohibition of the Lord, despite what prophet and priest