

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 180th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 2, 2010. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

A priesthood choir from the Provo Utah Missionary Training Center provided the music. Douglas Brenchley and Ryan Eggett directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Uchtdorf opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

We welcome you, brethren, to the priesthood session of the 180th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in many locations throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the

Provo Utah Missionary Training Center, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley and Ryan Eggett, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Hark, All Ye Nations!” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Hark, All Ye Nations!” Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis offered the invocation.

President Uchtdorf

The choir will now sing “Go, Ye Messengers of Heaven.” Following the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us, and he will be followed by Elders Patrick Kearon and Juan A. Uceda of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Go, Ye Messengers of Heaven.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson

“Be thou an example of the believers”

My beloved brethren, this evening we are assembled in many locations throughout the world. Wonderful full-time missionaries are among us. I would like to invite all full-time missionaries to stand. Wherever you are, elders and mission presidencies, please stand. We are grateful for each one of you! We thank you! We love you! You may be seated.

From time to time we need to remind ourselves why we have missionaries. It

is because of a commandment from the Lord, who said:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”¹

This commandment is one of many that have been renewed because the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fullness. Missionaries serve now just as they did in New Testament times. The book

of Acts describes early missionary labors of the Apostles and other disciples following the Lord's mortal ministry. There we read of the remarkable conversion and baptism of Saul of Tarsus,² who had previously been "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord"³ and persecuting members of the fledgling Church. From such beginnings, Saul became the converted Paul, one of the Lord's greatest missionaries. The final 15 chapters of the book of Acts report the missionary labors of Paul and his companions.

In a letter to one of his most trusted companions, Paul wrote to young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but *be thou an example of the believers*, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁴ That counsel is just as valid for us now as it was then. It applies to our full-time missionaries; it applies equally to each member of the Church. Whether full-time missionaries or members, we should all be good examples of the believers in Jesus Christ.

Full-time missionaries

Full-time missionaries, some 52,000 and more, serve in 340 missions around the world. They are believers and devoted servants of the Lord. Their purpose is to "invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end."⁵

Like Timothy, most full-time missionaries are young men. Some are sisters; some are senior missionaries. We love each one! Missionaries serve to make life better for God's children. Heavenly Father loves every one of His children. After all, He is their Father. He wants to bless them with His greatest gift, that of eternal life.⁶ Missionaries so teach wherever they serve. They help people to develop faith

in the Lord, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, receive the ordinances of the temple, and endure faithfully to the end. God's work and glory—"to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man"⁷—is also the sacred work and glory of each missionary.

We need more missionaries—more worthy missionaries. During His earthly ministry, the Lord told His disciples, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."⁸

At this morning's session of general conference, our beloved President Thomas S. Monson made an impassioned plea for each young man of this Church to prepare for missionary service. I hope his entire message will be heeded in every home of the Church.

To President Monson's wise counsel, I add my witness. In my family, I have observed the blessings that come to each missionary. Thus far, the number of our children, grandchildren, and their spouses called to serve as full-time missionaries is 49, and that number will continue to increase. In each instance, I have seen the growth in wisdom, maturity in judgment, and flowering of faith that developed in each missionary. They, just as many generations before them, embarked in the service of God to "serve him with all [their] heart, might, mind and strength."⁹ Missionary service has helped to shape their divine destiny.

Member missionaries

Paul's counsel, "Be thou an example of the believers," applies equally to members. Most have not been and may never be full-time missionaries. But all can be member missionaries. That statement reminds me of a report of a humorous event. On a large playing field at a missionary training center, a sign was posted. It read, "Missionaries Only!" People who also

wanted to play on that field posted a new sign of their own. Their sign read, “Every Member a Missionary!”

Each member can be an example of the believers. Brethren, as followers of Jesus Christ, each of you can live in accord with His teachings. You can have “a pure heart and clean hands”; you can have “the image of God engraven upon your [countenance].”¹⁰ Your good works will be evident to others.¹¹ The light of the Lord can beam from your eyes.¹² With that radiance, you had better prepare for questions. The Apostle Peter so counseled, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”¹³

Let your response be warm and joyful. And let your response be relevant to that individual. Remember, he or she is also a child of God, that very God who dearly wants that person to qualify for eternal life and return to Him one day. You may be the very one to open the door to his or her salvation and understanding of the doctrine of Christ.¹⁴

After your initial response, be ready to take the next step. You may invite your friend to attend church with you. Many of our friends do not know they are welcome in our Church buildings. “Come and see” was the Savior’s invitation to those who desired to learn more about Him.¹⁵ An invitation to attend a Sunday meeting with you or to participate in a Church social or service activity will help to dispel mistaken myths and make visitors feel more comfortable among us.

As a member of the Church, reach out to those you do not know and greet them warmly. Each Sunday extend a hand of fellowship to at least one person you did not know before. Each day of your life, strive to enlarge your own circle of friendship.

Using the Book of Mormon

You can invite a friend to read the Book of Mormon. Explain that it is not a novel

or a history book. It is another testament of Jesus Christ. Its very purpose is “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.”¹⁶ There is a power in this book that can touch the hearts and lift the lives of honest seekers of truth. Invite your friend to read the book prayerfully.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”¹⁷ The Book of Mormon teaches of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and is the instrument by which God will fulfill His ancient promise to gather scattered Israel in these latter days.¹⁸

Many years ago two colleagues of mine—a nurse and her doctor husband—asked me why I lived the way I did. I answered, “Because I know the Book of Mormon is true.” I let them borrow my copy of the book, inviting them to read it. A week later they returned my book with a polite “Thanks a lot.”

I responded, “What do you mean, ‘Thanks a lot’? That’s a totally inappropriate response for one who has read this book. You didn’t read it, did you! Please take it back and read it; then I would like my book back.”

Admitting that they had only turned its pages, they accepted my invitation. When they returned, they said tearfully, “We have read the Book of Mormon. We know it is true! We want to know more.” They learned more, and it was my privilege to baptize both of them.

Other ways to share the gospel

Another way that you can share the gospel is to invite friends to meet with full-time missionaries in your home. Those missionaries are called and prepared to teach the gospel. Your friends, in the comfort of your home and with

your constant reassurance, can begin their journey toward salvation and exaltation. The Lord said, “Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts.”¹⁹

Scripture tells us that “there are many yet on the earth . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.”²⁰ Isn’t that your opportunity? You can become their own disciple of discovery!

Now in this day of the Internet, there are new and exciting ways you can do missionary work. You can invite friends and neighbors to visit the new mormon.org website. If you have blogs and online social networks, you could link your sites to mormon.org. And there you can create your own personal profile. Each profile includes an expression of belief, an experience, and a testimony. Because this is a new feature, most of these profiles are available in English. Profiles in other languages will follow.

These profiles can have a profound influence for good. Two months ago a young man named Zac—a freshman in college—saw an ad for mormon.org on television in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He connected with the website and was intrigued by the profiles of Church members. At our website he found the link that informed him where he could attend church. The next Sunday, dressed in a white shirt and tie, he attended church, was introduced to members of the ward, and enjoyed all three hours of meetings. He was invited to a member’s home for dinner, followed by his first missionary lesson. In less than two weeks, he was baptized and confirmed as a member of the Church.²¹ Welcome, Zac! (He is listening.)

Each exemplary follower of Jesus Christ can become an effective member

missionary. Members and full-time missionaries may walk arm in arm in bringing the blessings of the gospel to cherished friends and neighbors. Many of them are of Israel, now being gathered as promised. This is all part of the preparation for the Second Coming of the Lord.²² He wants each of us truly to be an example of the believers.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. The Book of Mormon is true. Joseph Smith is its translator and the prophet of this last dispensation. President Thomas S. Monson is God’s prophet today. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 28:19–20.
2. See Acts 9:3–18.
3. Acts 9:1.
4. 1 Timothy 4:12; italics added.
5. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 1.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
7. Moses 1:39.
8. Luke 10:2.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
10. Alma 5:19.
11. See Matthew 5:16; Alma 7:24.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:11.
13. 1 Peter 3:15.
14. See 2 Nephi 31:2, 21.
15. John 1:39. For this pattern, see also Revelation 6:1, 3, 5, 7.
16. Title page of the Book of Mormon.
17. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
18. See 3 Nephi 21:1–7. Note that these seven verses comprise one sentence.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 29:7.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
21. Personal communication from William G. Woods, president of the Louisiana Baton Rouge Mission.
22. See Malachi 4:5; 3 Nephi 25:5; Doctrine and Covenants 2:1; 110:14–16; 128:17; 138:46; Joseph Smith—History 1:38.