

Sharing the Restored Gospel

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What we call “member missionary work” is not a program but an attitude of love and outreach to help those around us.

I.

Nearing the end of His earthly ministry, our Savior, Jesus Christ, commanded His disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19) and “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). All Christians are under these commands to share the gospel with everyone. Many call this the “great commission.”

As Elder Neil L. Andersen described in the morning session, Latter-day Saints are surely among those most committed to this great responsibility. We should be because we know that God loves all of His children and that in these last days He has restored vital additional knowledge and power to bless all of them. The Savior taught us to love all as our brothers and sisters, and we honor that teaching by sharing the witness and message of the restored gospel “among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (D&C 112:1). This is a vital part of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint. We look on this as a joyful privilege. What could be more joyful than sharing the truths of eternity with God’s children?

Today we have many resources to share the gospel that were not available in earlier generations. We have TV, the internet, and social media channels. We have many valuable messages to introduce the restored gospel. We have the prominence of the Church in many nations. We have a greatly increased number of missionaries. But are we using all these resources to maximum effect? I believe most of us would say no. We desire to be more effective in fulfilling our divinely appointed responsibility to proclaim the restored gospel in all the world.

There are many good ideas for sharing the gospel that will work in individual stakes or countries. However, because we are a worldwide Church, I wish to speak of ideas that will work everywhere, from the newest units to the most established, from cultures now receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ to cultures and nations that are increasingly hostile to religion. I want to speak of ideas that you can share with persons who are committed believers in Jesus Christ as well as with persons who have

never heard His name, with persons who are satisfied with their current lives as well as with persons who are desperately seeking to improve themselves.

What can I say that will be helpful in your sharing the gospel, whatever your circumstances? We need the help of every member, and every member can help, since there are many tasks to perform as we share the restored gospel with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

We all know that member participation in missionary work is vital to achieving both conversion and retention. President Thomas S. Monson has said: "Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together ... [and] labor in the Lord's vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work."¹

Sharing the restored gospel is our lifelong Christian duty and privilege. Elder Quentin L. Cook reminds us, "Missionary work is not just one of the 88 keys on a piano that is occasionally played; it is a major chord in a compelling melody that needs to be played continuously throughout our lives if we are to remain in harmony with our commitment to Christianity and the gospel of Jesus Christ."²

II.

There are three things all members can do to help share the gospel, regardless of the circumstances in which they live and work. All of us should do all of these.

First, we can all pray for desire to help with this vital part of the work of salvation. All efforts begin with *desire*.

Second, we can keep the commandments ourselves. Faithful, obedient members are the most persuasive witnesses of the truth and value of the restored gospel. Even more important, faithful members will always have the Savior's Spirit to be with them to guide them as they seek to participate in the great work of sharing the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Third, we can pray for inspiration on what *we* can do in our individual circumstances to share the gospel with others. This is different than praying for the *missionaries* or praying for what *others* can do. We should pray for what *we* can do personally. When we pray, we should remember that prayers for this kind of inspiration will be answered if accompanied by a commitment—something the scriptures call "real intent" or "full purpose of heart." Pray with a commitment to act upon the inspiration you receive, promising the Lord that if He will inspire you to speak to someone about the gospel, you will do it.

We need the guidance of the Lord because at any particular time some are—and some are not—ready for the additional truths of the restored gospel. We should never

set ourselves up as judges of who is ready and who is not. The Lord knows the hearts of all of His children, and if we pray for inspiration, He will help us find persons He knows to be “in a preparation to hear the word” (Alma 32:6).

As an Apostle of the Lord, I urge every member and family in the Church to pray for the Lord to help them find persons prepared to receive the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Elder M. Russell Ballard has given this important counsel, with which I concur: “Trust the Lord. He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His sheep. ... If we are not engaged, many who would hear the message of the Restoration will be passed by. ... The principles are pretty simple—pray, personally and in your family, for missionary opportunities.”³ As we demonstrate our faith, these opportunities will come without any “forced or ... contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters.”⁴

I know this is true. I add my promise that with faith in the Lord’s help, we will be guided, be inspired, and find great joy in this eternally important work of love. We will come to understand that success in sharing the gospel is inviting people with love and genuine intent to help them, no matter what their response.

III.

Here are some other things we can do to share the gospel effectively:

1. We need to remember “that people learn when they’re ready to learn, not when we’re ready to teach them.”⁵ What *we* are interested in, like the important additional doctrinal teachings in the restored Church, usually isn’t what *others* are interested in. Others typically want the *results* of the doctrine, not the doctrine. As they observe or experience the effects of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives, they feel the Spirit and begin to be interested in the doctrine. They may also be interested when they are seeking more happiness, closeness to God, or a better understanding of the purpose of life.⁶ Therefore, we must carefully and prayerfully seek discernment on how to inquire about others’ interest to learn more. This will depend on various things, such as another person’s current circumstances and our relationship with him or her. This is a good subject to discuss in councils, quorums, and Relief Societies.
2. As we speak to others, we need to remember that an invitation to learn more about Jesus Christ and His gospel is preferable to an invitation to learn more about our *Church*.⁷ We want people to be converted to the gospel. That is the great role of the Book of Mormon. Feelings about our Church follow conversion to Jesus Christ; they do not precede it. Many who are suspicious of churches nevertheless have a love for the Savior. Put first things first.
3. When we seek to introduce people to the restored gospel, we should do this in ways that are authentic and in loving concern for the individual. This happens when

we are trying to help others with problems they have identified or when we are working with them in community service activities, such as relieving suffering, caring for the poor and needy, or enhancing the quality of life of others.

4. Our efforts to share the gospel should not be limited to our circle of friends and associates. During the Olympics we learned of an LDS taxi driver in Rio de Janeiro who carried copies of the Book of Mormon in seven different languages and gave one to whoever would receive them. He called himself the “cab driving missionary.” He said, “The streets of Rio de Janeiro ... are [my] mission field.”⁸

Clayton M. Christensen, who has impressive experience as a member missionary, states that “over the past twenty years, we have observed no correlation between the depth of a relationship and the probability that a person will be interested in learning about the gospel.”⁹

5. Ward bishoprics can plan a special sacrament meeting to which members are urged to bring interested persons. Ward members will be less hesitant to bring their acquaintances to such a meeting because they will be more assured that the content of the meeting will be well planned to enlist interest and represent the Church well.
6. There are many other opportunities to share the gospel. For example, just this summer I received a happy letter from a new member who learned about the restored gospel when an old classmate phoned her to inquire about an illness she was experiencing. She wrote: “I was enlightened by the way he presented himself to me. After [a] few months of learning from the missionaries, I was baptized. My life has improved since then.”¹⁰ We all know many whose lives would be improved by the restored gospel. Are we reaching out to them?
7. Our young members’ fascination and expertise with social media gives them unique opportunities to reach out to interest others in the gospel. Describing the Savior’s appearance to the Nephites, Mormon writes, “He did teach and minister unto the children ... , and he did loose their tongues ... that they could utter” (3 Nephi 26:14). Today I suppose we would say “loose their [thumbs] that they could utter.” Go to it, youth!

Sharing the gospel is not a burden but a joy. What we call “member missionary work” is not a program but an attitude of love and outreach to help those around us. It is also an opportunity to witness how we feel about the restored gospel of our Savior. As Elder Ballard has taught, “A most significant evidence of our conversion and of how we feel about the gospel in our own lives is our willingness to share it with others.”¹¹

I testify of Jesus Christ, who is the Light and Life of the World (see 3 Nephi 11:11). His restored gospel lights our way in mortality. His Atonement gives us the assurance of life after death and the strength to persist toward immortality. And His Atonement gives us the opportunity to be forgiven of our sins and, under God’s glorious plan of

salvation, to qualify for eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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