



The Faith to Find the Elect

President M. Russell Ballard

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

Brothers and sisters, I am honored to be with you this morning. I commend the Missionary Executive Council and all who have participated in this outstanding Mission Leadership Seminar.

It was 44 years ago that Barbara and I attended a mission presidents' seminar prior to our assignment to preside over the Canada Toronto Mission. The seminar in those days did not even remotely resemble the marvelous seminar preparation and presentations that you brothers and sisters have experienced here this year. The power of heaven has guided all we have been taught.

This is my 43rd Mission Leadership Seminar—which used to be known as the seminar for new mission presidents. Over all these years I have learned many things as I have had the privilege of meeting with missionaries throughout the world. I confirm that you will have a great adventure. You go forth with our prayers for your success. Cherish your time together. It will sustain you in later years just as it has for my dear Barbara and me.

My assignment is to talk to you about “The Faith to Find the Elect.” I will often repeat

what I have said before, recognizing that once in a while, someone listens to me. You will be doing the same on your mission.

Chapter 9 of *Preach My Gospel* is filled with excellent instruction and effective ideas that will help your missionaries to find the elect. Please read, study, and understand the principles of effectively finding God’s children to teach. Use every resource you have to teach these principles over and over and over again to your missionaries.

This morning I will focus on a few principles in *Preach My Gospel* that I *know*, if understood by missionaries and repeatedly acted upon by them, will help find the “elect.”

First: Missionaries must know how to teach the essential doctrines, principles, and commandments as found in chapter 3 of *Preach My Gospel*. Knowledge is power. Confidence builds courage.

Missionaries need to know all the gospel lessons in order for them to become watchful and bold finders. When they know, believe, love, and live the principles and commandments of the gospel, they will “find” the elect and they will know better what gospel principles to use in that process.

Second: Keep it simple! For example, if missionaries want to teach, convert, and baptize more people, they must talk to more people.

After I had served in Toronto for about three or four months, Elder Franklin D. Richards, an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, came to the Toronto stake conference. I asked if he would be kind enough to meet with our missionaries early Sunday morning. He agreed, and after the opening song and prayer, Elder Richards asked our missionaries the following: “Was yesterday [Saturday] a proselyting day?” The missionaries nodded yes. He then said, “How many of you spoke to at least 10 people yesterday? Raise your hands.” No hands went up. He repeated that question until he got down to 3 people, and finally several hands went up.

You can imagine how shocked I was to realize that my missionaries were not talking to people wherever they found them. Elder Richards promised that if every day, every missionary would talk to at least 10 people, they would find and teach more people. We put his counsel into effect, and within a short period of time, our convert baptisms improved from about 20 per month to the 60s, 70s, 80s, and finally the 90s.

Proselyting is talking to people wherever the missionaries find them. I observed that as our missionaries did this, they stayed *mentally, emotionally, and spiritually* in the Lord’s work all day long as they took turns finding those who would listen to their message. As our missionaries did this, it resulted in referrals being sent to companionships throughout the mission.

A mission president who is currently serving in the United States shared the following with me in a letter just two weeks ago:

“In January of 2017 you visited our mission and taught us that spiritual power and desire in a missionary comes through aligning our will with Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. You encouraged us to pray with full energy of heart for spiritual power as a gift from the Holy Ghost that would purify ourselves to become the best finders and teachers the mission has ever had.

“You asked us to do something that blessed our mission with miracle after miracle. You asked us to:

- Rise to a new level of commitment.
- Talk to people wherever we find them—20 new people per day per companionship.

“We decided that from that day forward we would set as our goal that each missionary would talk to 10 new people every day.

“In the first six months, our baptisms doubled over the previous year and this year’s baptisms have increased slightly, but May baptisms more than doubled from 22 last year to 46 this year. Our best month in a few years. Every missionary would point to our goal of contacting 10 people per day as the major driving force for this increase.”¹

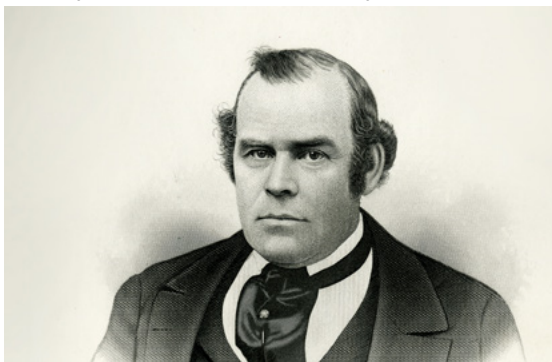
Keep in mind that often the elect are found when serving others—which also blesses and enriches the lives of the missionaries. Recent studies and surveys show that service to strangers can often improve the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of missionaries.

Where available, JustServe is an excellent resource to missionaries in finding opportunities for service in their communities. If JustServe is not yet available, missionaries are welcome to find their own opportunities to serve as explained in the mission handbooks and *Preach My Gospel*.

Third: Teach when you find, and find when you teach.

One of our missionary couples was assigned to a small branch in northern Ontario in the winter. Their story proves the power of this principle. The second day after they arrived, they went to the Dominion grocery store. As they checked out with their groceries, our dear senior sister spoke to the clerk. “We are new here. We are from Utah. We have a special message that we have come all this way to share. Can we come to your home and tell you why we have come to Ontario?” The clerk said, “Yes,” and an appointment was made. After the first lesson, with the help of the zone leaders, the missionaries asked, “Who else would you like to be here when we come again to teach you?” The clerk said to her husband, “I think your brother and his wife would like to come.”

Fast-forward to the rest of the story. Last I knew, 18 members of that family joined the Church because the missionaries asked, “Who else would you like to be here when we come again to teach you?” Remember—teach when you find, and find when you teach.



Fourth: Missionaries follow up—they do not give up!

There is a great lesson that comes from Elder Parley P. Pratt’s mission to Ontario, Canada. His missionary experience there is historic in spite of his very difficult circumstances. Elder Pratt prayed for help

and was blessed when a stranger gave him some money so that he could cross Lake Ontario on the ferry going from Hamilton to Toronto. The stranger also gave him a piece of paper with a name of someone in Toronto whom he should meet. The name was John Taylor.



Of that meeting, B. H. Roberts wrote in John Taylor’s biography: “Mr. Taylor had heard the evil rumors circulated about [Mormons]. . . . He treated Apostle Pratt courteously, as he considered himself bound to do, because of his letter of introduction; but the reception he gave him could not be called cordial.”² He was very cautious. “He therefore rendered Elder Pratt no assistance, until he began to discover that there were good grounds for believing he was a messenger sent of God.”³

After serious investigation, John Taylor was baptized on May 9, 1836, and was ordained an Apostle on December 18, 1838. He became the third President of the Church on October 10, 1880.

Thankfully, Elder Pratt did not fail to follow up. Through John Taylor, Elder Pratt was introduced to the Fielding family. Concerning these events in Canada, Brother Pratt wrote:

“My first visit to the country was about nine miles from Toronto, among a settlement of farmers. . . . John Taylor accompanied me—this was before he was baptized—we rode on horseback. We called at . . . Mr. Joseph

Fielding's, an acquaintance and friend of Mr. Taylor's. This man had two sisters, young ladies, who, seeing us coming, ran from the house to one of the neighboring houses. . . . Mr. Fielding . . . said he was sorry we had come, he had opposed our holding [a] meeting in the neighborhood; and, so great was the prejudice, that the Methodist meeting house was closed against us. . . .

"Ah," said I, "why do they oppose Mormonism?" "I don't know," said [Brother Fielding], "but the name has such a contemptible sound; and, another thing, we do not want a new revelation, or a new religion contrary to the Bible." "Oh," said I, "if that is all we shall soon remove your prejudices. Come, call home your sisters, and let's have some supper." . . .

". . . I preached, and the people wished to hear more. . . . And in a few days we baptized Brother . . . Fielding and his two amiable and intelligent sisters. . . . We also baptized many others in that neighborhood, and organized a branch of the Church, for the people there drank in truth as water, and loved it as they loved life."⁴

Now, a personal thanks to Elder Pratt for not giving up but following up. When Mary Fielding arrived in Kirtland, she was introduced to Hyrum Smith, the brother of the Prophet Joseph. Hyrum's wife, Jerusha, had passed away. In time, Hyrum and Mary were married. They had two children. The son they named Joseph Fielding; the daughter, Martha Ann. Joseph F. Smith became the sixth President of the Church, and their grandson Joseph Fielding Smith became the 10th President of the Church. My mother's father, Hyrum Mack Smith, was Joseph F. Smith's oldest son and served in the Quorum of the Twelve until, at the age of 45, he died

suddenly. Other family members have served in many Church callings.

So how did this happen? Because Elder Parley P. Pratt did not give up. He did not allow rejection to stop him from following up to be sure that those he had met would receive the message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Brigham Young recounts his conversion as follows:



"When the Book of Mormon was first printed, it came to my hands in two or three weeks afterwards. Did I believe, on the first intimation . . . ? The man that brought it to me, told me the same things; says he, this is the gospel of salvation; a revelation the Lord has brought forth for the redemption of Israel; it is the gospel; . . . according to Jesus Christ, and his apostles, you must be baptized for the remission of sins, or you will be damned. Hold on, says I. The mantle of my traditions was over me, to that degree, and my prepossessed feelings so interwoven within my nature, it was almost impossible for me to see at all; though I had beheld, all my life, that the traditions of [all] people was all the religion they had, I had got a mantle for myself. Says I, wait a little while; what is the doctrine of the book, and of the revelations the Lord has given? Let me apply my heart to them; and after I had done this, I considered it to be my right to know for myself, as much as any man on earth.

"I examined the matter studiously, for two years, before I made up my mind to receive that book. I knew it was true, as well as I knew . . . I could see with my eyes, or feel by the touch of my fingers, or be sensible of the demonstration of any sense. Had not this been the case, I never would have embraced

it to this day; it would have all been without form or comeliness to me. I wished time sufficient to prove all things for myself.”⁵

Our early history is filled with stories just like this. Eliza R. Snow, her brother Lorenzo Snow, and many of our faithful forefathers were converted by missionaries who did not give up, but rather, they followed up.



Now, presidents, your missionaries will also follow up and not give up if they faithfully contact every referral they receive, from whatever source it may come. Teach them to constantly use the area book to record, plan, and follow up on every opportunity to find and to teach.

Church research indicates that far too many investigators wonder why there was no follow-up from the missionaries. The investigators may not have kept an appointment they made with the missionaries, and so the missionaries write them off without prayerful follow-up to teach them the gospel. *Preach My Gospel* explains: “Extending an invitation without following up is like beginning a journey without finishing it or buying a ticket to a concert without going into the theater. Without the completed action, the commitment is hollow.”⁶

Fifth: Finding through members.

Members, united with missionaries, work together to find the elect and lead them into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints. Chapters 9 and 13 of *Preach My Gospel* teach missionaries and members how to find by working together. Pay special attention to page 167 in *Preach My Gospel*.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that “after all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel.”⁷



In 1974, President Spencer W. Kimball said: “The scriptures are replete with commands and promises and calls and rewards for teaching the gospel. I use the word *command* deliberately for it seems to be an insistent directive from which we, singly and collectively, cannot escape.”⁸



President Thomas S. Monson echoed exactly the same message to members of the Church. He 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.”⁹

We know that many members hesitate to do missionary work and share the gospel for two basic reasons.

The first one is fear. Many members do not even pray for opportunities to share the gospel, fearing that they might receive divine promptings to do something they think they are not capable of doing. The second reason is misunderstanding of what missionary work is.

We also know that no one likes feeling guilty when asked to share the gospel with family, friends, or neighbors. Help your missionaries

to remove any fear members may have in sharing the gospel with others.

Help members do what Jesus Christ has asked us to do:

“Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

“For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”¹⁰

Remember, this promise will come when missionaries invite those they teach to pray and ask if the gospel message is true.

Brothers and sisters, fear will be replaced with faith and confidence when members and the full-time missionaries kneel in prayer together and ask the Lord to bless them with missionary opportunities.

Then, there will open up opportunities to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father’s children, and surely those opportunities will come. These opportunities will never require a forced or a contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters.

Simply stated, working with members is a matter of faith and action. The principles are simple—encourage members to pray, personally and in their family, for missionary opportunities. Some may want to set a date to find the elect. The Lord has said that many people have been kept from the truth only “because they know not where to find it.”¹¹

The Lord has promised if members and missionaries “lift up your voices unto this people [and] speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, . . . you shall not be confounded before men;

“For it shall be given you . . . in the very moment, what ye shall say.”¹²

I received a letter a while ago from a very successful member missionary family. They wrote:

“Dear Elder Ballard, 30 minutes after the worldwide broadcast on hastening the work of salvation, we held our family missionary council. We were thrilled to find that our teenage grandchildren wanted to be included. We’re happy to report that since our council meeting, we have expanded our family teaching pool by 200 percent.

“We have had grandchildren bring friends to church, have enjoyed sacrament meeting with some of our less-active friends, and have had some of our new contacts commit to take the missionary discussions. One of our less-active sisters has not only returned to church but has brought new investigators with her.

“No one has turned down the invitation to take the missionary discussions. What an exciting time to be a member of this Church.”¹³



On Sunday we heard the following promise from the Lord’s prophet, President Russell M. Nelson: “Your ability to link the enthusiasm of the missionaries

with the loving stability and helpful efforts of the members cannot be overemphasized. . . . Your success will be multiplied exponentially as you harness the power of . . . members with whom you serve.”¹⁴

Effectively working with members requires missionaries to carefully record in the area book their work with ward mission leaders and members. Mission presidents and leaders need to review the area books from time to time to be sure missionaries are

attending properly to all of Heavenly Father’s precious children.

Sixth: Finding through technology. The Church is successfully using technology to find people who are searching online for gospel-related questions. Digital media tools provide opportunities to engage those who are searching for truth. In a sense, people are finding us!

Video content has been developed to help answer the questions of those who are searching. You will receive more details about this great resource this afternoon. Remember, however, that technology will never replace the daily finding efforts of our missionaries.

Seventh: Finding with the Book of Mormon—“the keystone of our religion.”¹⁵ Chapter 5 in *Preach My Gospel* focuses on the role of the Book of Mormon. Our missionaries need to recognize and utilize the power of the Book of Mormon in their finding efforts.



“President Ezra Taft Benson said that missionaries ‘need to show how [the Book of Mormon] answers the great questions of the soul.’”¹⁶

Elder and Sister Holland taught us yesterday everything we need to know about the power of the Book of Mormon in finding the elect.¹⁷ So among other things you have learned, strive to have your missionaries understand the spiritual teachings of the Apostles and others at this seminar. Always remember, “Nothing happens in missionary work until you find someone to teach.”¹⁸

Now a concluding thought: 174 years ago, Joseph turned to his companion Hyrum and said, “Brother Hyrum, you are the oldest, what shall we do?” Hyrum responded, “Let us go back [to Nauvoo] and give ourselves up, and see the thing out.” After a moment to assess the situation, Joseph responded, “If you go back I will go with you, but we shall be butchered.” Hyrum’s answer showed his great faith in the Lord and willingness to die for His cause: “Let us go back and put our trust in God, and we shall not be harmed. The Lord is in it. If we live or have to die, we will be reconciled to our fate.”¹⁹



Late in the afternoon of June 27, 1844—174 years ago tomorrow—a hate-driven mob burst up the stairs and into the room where Hyrum, ever the oldest brother, was holding the door in an attempt to protect his companions. He became the first martyr that dark day, falling to the floor when he was shot, declaring, “I am a dead man!” Joseph’s thoughts went immediately to his brother. He exclaimed, “Oh, dear brother Hyrum!” John Taylor was the next prisoner to be shot, after which Joseph leaped to the window to draw the mob’s attention. As soon as he was shot and fell to the ground below, the mob rushed outside, leaving the wounded John Taylor

and Willard Richards to survey the gruesome scene in the room.²⁰

Mother Lucy Mack Smith reported that even in the midst of so much grief and despair, there was comfort and even peace. She cried in agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken this family!” She reported hearing a voice reply, “I have taken them to myself, that they might have rest.” Then, as she looked upon the mortal remains of her two sons, she said, “I seemed almost to hear them say,—‘Mother, weep not for us, we have overcome the world by love; we carried to them the Gospel, that their souls might be saved; they slew us for our testimony, and thus placed us beyond their power; their ascendancy is for a moment, ours is an eternal triumph.’”²¹

Dear Mother Lucy then lost her son Samuel, the first missionary of this dispensation, who died as a result of his extended horse ride to Carthage to try to protect his beloved brothers.²²

No missionary should ever fail to understand and appreciate the great price others have paid to establish once again the Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth. No assignment or challenge of any missionary should hold him or her back from boldly declaring the gospel truths that are ours to share.

Joseph was called by the Lord to this work, just as President Oaks taught us so beautifully yesterday.²³ You and your missionaries have also been called to this great work by the Lord through His prophet.

Joseph and Hyrum, missionary companions, true and faithful one to another and to God, are the example for every missionary companionship in this Church. None of

your missionaries will be called upon to go through what Joseph and Hyrum did. None will be required to voluntarily lay down their lives for this Church, but all can learn from these two powerful missionaries how to support and strengthen one another.

Your missionaries need to devote themselves to this great cause. They can learn the power of the message of the Restoration. They can learn the attributes and skills that it takes to be a fearless disciple of the Master. They can learn and practice the principles for success found in *Preach My Gospel*. Your missionaries can come to know that the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ is glorious and provides to everyone the way to immortality and eternal life.

This is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are on His errand. I bear testimony that Joseph and Hyrum were prophets of the living God. We must be bold and steadfast in carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Father’s children—wherever we find them!

May God bless you, my dear presidents and your dear companions, with every blessing to instill in the hearts of your missionaries a deep and abiding love for Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is my humble prayer and testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Personal letter.
2. B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor: Third President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (2009), 17.
3. B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor*, 19.

4. Parley P. Pratt, in *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (1938), 121–22.
5. Brigham Young, “A Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 2, 1852, 96.
6. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 200.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330.
8. Spencer W. Kimball, “When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 4.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Faith in the Work of Salvation” (address given at a special broadcast, June 23, 2013), broadcasts.lds.org.
10. 3 Nephi 14:7–8.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6.
13. Personal letter, Aug. 15, 2013.
14. Russell M. Nelson, “Hopes of My Heart” (address given at the Mission Leadership Seminar, June 24, 2018), Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
15. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
16. *Preach My Gospel*, 107; see also Ezra Taft Benson, “Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 5.
17. See Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland, “Christ and the Book of Mormon” (address given at the Mission Leadership Seminar, June 25, 2018), Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
18. *Preach My Gospel*, 156.
19. *History of the Church*, 6:549–50.
20. *History of the Church*, 6:617–18.
21. Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (1853), 279; see also Lucy Mack Smith, *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996), 457–58.
22. See Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 280; Smith, *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 459.
23. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Joseph Smith: The Prophet and the Man” (address given at the Mission Leadership Seminar, June 25, 2018), Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS