



Missionary Service: A Holy Calling, a Glorious Work

“After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel.”

From the Life of Joseph Smith

During the last few years the Saints lived in Kirtland, many members and even some leaders of the Church apostatized. The Church seemed to be passing through a time of crisis. “In this state of things,” the Prophet wrote, “God revealed to me that something new must be done for the salvation of His Church.”¹ This “something new” was a revelation to send missionaries to England to preach the gospel.

Heber C. Kimball, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, recalled: “About the first day of June 1837, the Prophet Joseph came to me, while I was seated in . . . the Temple, in Kirtland, and whispering to me, said, ‘Brother Heber, the Spirit of the Lord has whispered to me, “Let my servant Heber go to England and proclaim my gospel and open the door of salvation to that nation.”’”² Elder Kimball was overwhelmed by the thought of such an undertaking: “I felt myself one of the very weakest of God’s servants. I asked Joseph what I should say when I got there; he told me to go to the Lord and He would guide me, and speak through me by the same spirit that [directed] him.”³

The Prophet also extended calls to Orson Hyde, Willard Richards, and Joseph Fielding in Kirtland, and to Isaac Russell, John Snyder, and John Goodson in Toronto, Canada. These brethren were to join Elder Kimball on his mission to England. Gathering in New York City, they sailed on the ship *Garrick* for Great Britain on July 1, 1837. This first mission outside of North America brought some 2,000 converts into the Church during



Heber C. Kimball and Joseph Fielding in England being greeted by those who had joined the Church as a result of their missionary labors. "Glory to God, Joseph," Elder Kimball wrote to the Prophet, "the Lord is with us among the nations!"

the missionaries' first year in England. Elder Kimball wrote joyfully to the Prophet: "Glory to God, Joseph, the Lord is with us among the nations!"⁴

A second apostolic mission to Britain, involving most members of the Twelve under the leadership of Brigham Young, was directed by the Prophet from Nauvoo. Leaving in the fall of 1839, the Twelve arrived in England in 1840. There they began a labor that by 1841 would bring over 6,000 converts into the Church, fulfilling the Lord's promise that He would do "something new" for the salvation of His Church.

From Nauvoo, Joseph Smith continued to send missionaries throughout the world. Elder Orson Hyde landed in England in 1841 and later continued his assigned mission to Jerusalem. He carried a letter of recommendation from Joseph Smith recognizing "the bearer of these presents, a faithful and worthy minister of Jesus Christ, to be our agent and representative in foreign lands, to . . . converse with the priests, rulers and Elders of the Jews."⁵ On October 24, 1841, Elder Hyde knelt on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives and petitioned Heavenly Father to dedicate and consecrate the land "for the gathering together of Judah's scattered remnants, according to the predictions of the holy prophets."⁶ Elder Hyde then made his way to Germany, where he laid an initial foundation for the growth of the Church there.

On May 11, 1843, the Prophet called Elders Addison Pratt, Noah Rogers, Benjamin F. Grouard, and Knowlton F. Hanks to perform missions to the islands of the South Pacific. This was the first mission of the Church anywhere in that vast region. Elder Hanks died at sea, but Elder Pratt traveled to the Austral Islands, where he taught the gospel on the island of Tubuai. Elders Rogers and Grouard continued to Tahiti, where hundreds of people were baptized as a result of their labors.

Under the direction of Joseph Smith, the Saints were moving forward to fulfill the Lord's command: "Go ye into all the world; and unto whatsoever place ye cannot go ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world unto every creature" (D&C 84:62).

Teachings of Joseph Smith

Missionary service is a holy work; faith, virtue, diligence, and love enable us to do this work.

“After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel.”⁷

In December 1840 Joseph Smith wrote to members of the Quorum of the Twelve and other priesthood leaders who were serving missions in Great Britain: “Be assured, beloved brethren, that I am no disinterested observer of the things which are transpiring on the face of the whole earth; and amidst the general movements which are in progress, none is of more importance than the glorious work in which you are now engaged; consequently I feel some anxiety on your account, that you may by your virtue, faith, diligence and charity commend yourselves to one another, to the Church of Christ, and to your Father who is in heaven; by whose grace you have been called to so holy a calling; and be enabled to perform the great and responsible duties which rest upon you. And I can assure you, that from the information I have received, I feel satisfied that you have not been remiss in your duty; but that your diligence and faithfulness have been such as must secure you the smiles of that God whose servants you are, and also the good will of the Saints throughout the world.

“The spread of the Gospel throughout England is certainly pleasing; the contemplation of which cannot but afford feelings of no ordinary kind in the bosom of those who have borne the heat and burden of the day, and who were its firm supporters and strenuous advocates in infancy, while surrounded with circumstances the most unpropitious, and its destruction threatened on all hands—like the gallant bark [boat] that has braved the storm unhurt, spreads her canvas to the breeze, and nobly cuts her way through the yielding wave, more conscious than ever of the strength of her timbers, and the experience and capability of her captain, pilot, and crew. . . .

“Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man

filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race. This has been your feeling, and caused you to forego the pleasures of home, that you might be a blessing to others, who are candidates for immortality, but strangers to truth; and for so doing, I pray that heaven's choicest blessings may rest upon you."⁸

**We teach the simple truths of the gospel
with humility and meekness and avoid contending
with others about their beliefs.**

“Oh, ye elders of Israel, hearken to my voice; and when you are sent into the world to preach, tell those things you are sent to tell; preach and cry aloud, ‘Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent and believe the Gospel.’ Declare the first principles, and let mysteries alone, lest ye be overthrown. . . . Preach those things the Lord has told you to preach about—repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.”⁹

“I spoke and explained concerning the uselessness of preaching to the world about great judgments, but rather to preach the simple Gospel.”¹⁰

“The Elders [should] go forth . . . in all meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith, or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course. This I delivered by way of commandment; and all who observe it not, will pull down persecution upon their heads, while those who do, shall always be filled with the Holy Ghost; this I pronounced as a prophecy.”¹¹

“If there are any doors open for the Elders to preach the first principles of the gospel, let them not keep silence. Rail not against the sects; neither talk against their tenets. But preach Christ and him crucified, love to God, and love to man; . . . thereby, if possible, we may allay the prejudice of the people. Be meek and lowly of heart, and the Lord God of our fathers shall be with you forevermore.”¹²

“Notice this *Key*, and be wise for Christ’s sake, and your own soul’s sake. Ye are not sent out to be taught, but to teach. Let



“Preach Christ and him crucified, love to God, and love to man. . . . Be meek and lowly of heart, and the Lord God of our fathers shall be with you forevermore.”

every word be seasoned with grace. Be vigilant; be sober. It is a day of warning, and not of many words. Act honestly before God and man. . . . Be honest, open, and frank in all your [dealings] with mankind. [See D&C 43:15; 63:58.]”¹³

*Before George A. Smith departed for a mission in 1835, he visited with the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was his cousin. George A. Smith recorded: “I called to see Cousin Joseph. He gave me a Book of Mormon, shook hands with me, and said, ‘Preach short sermons, make short prayers, and deliver your sermons with a prayerful heart.’ ”*¹⁴

We teach the gospel as directed by the Spirit.

“All are to preach the Gospel, by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost; and no man can preach the Gospel without the Holy Ghost.”¹⁵

“As Paul said he had to become all things to all men, that he might thereby save some [see 1 Corinthians 9:22], so must the elders of the last days do; and, being sent out to preach the Gospel and warn the world of the judgments to come, we are sure,

when they teach as directed by the Spirit, according to the revelations of Jesus Christ, that they will preach the truth and prosper without complaint. Thus we have no new commandment to give, but admonish elders and members to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God [see Matthew 4:4], lest they come short of the glory that is reserved for the faithful.”¹⁶

The Prophet spoke at a conference held in October 1839: “President [Joseph Smith] proceeded to give instruction to the Elders respecting preaching the Gospel, and pressed upon them the necessity of getting the Spirit, so that they might preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; to be careful in speaking on those subjects which are not clearly pointed out in the word of God, which lead to speculation and strife.”¹⁷

On May 14, 1840, Joseph Smith wrote from Nauvoo to Elders Orson Hyde and John E. Page, who were on their way to a mission in the Holy Land: “Do not be discouraged on account of the greatness of the work; only be humble and faithful, and then you can say, ‘What art thou, O great mountain! before Zerubbabel shalt thou be brought down.’ [See Zechariah 4:7.] He who scattered Israel has promised to gather them; therefore inasmuch as you are to be instrumental in this great work, He will endow you with power, wisdom, might, and intelligence, and every qualification necessary; while your minds will expand wider and wider, until you can circumscribe the earth and the heavens, reach forth into eternity, and contemplate the mighty acts of Jehovah in all their variety and glory.”¹⁸

We seek opportunities to teach the gospel and bear testimony of its truthfulness.

In the fall of 1832 Joseph Smith traveled with Bishop Newel K. Whitney from Kirtland, Ohio, to the eastern United States. On October 13, the Prophet wrote to Emma Smith from New York City: “When I reflect upon this great city like Nineveh not discerning their right hand from their left, yea, more than two hundred thousand souls, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them, and I am determined to lift up my voice in this city and leave the event with God, who holdeth all things in his

hands and will not suffer a hair of our heads unnoticed to fall to the ground. . . .

“I have had some conversation with a few, which gave satisfaction, and one very beautiful young gentleman from Jersey, whose countenance was very solemn. He came and sat by my side and began to converse with me about the cholera, and I learned he had been seized with it and came very near dying with it. He said the Lord had spared him for some wise purpose. I took advantage of this and opened a long discourse with him. He received my teaching apparently with much pleasure and became very strongly attached to me. We talked till late at night and concluded to omit conversation till the next day. But having some business to do, he was detained until the boat was ready to go out and must leave. He came to me and bid me farewell, and we parted with much reluctance.”¹⁹

Newel K. Whitney's wife, Elizabeth Ann, recalled her husband's 1832 journey to the eastern United States with Joseph Smith: “My husband traveled with Joseph the Prophet, through many of the Eastern cities, bearing their testimony and collecting means towards building a Temple in Kirtland, and also to purchase lands in Missouri. . . . He said to my husband, ‘If they reject us they shall have our testimony, for we will write it and leave it upon their doorsteps and windowsills.’”²⁰

In 1834 Joseph Smith preached in a schoolhouse in Pontiac, Michigan. Edward Stevenson was present and recalled the experience: “It was on those school grounds where two Mormon Elders introduced the restored Gospel in the year 1833; and in 1834 Joseph Smith the Prophet preached with such power as had not there ever before been witnessed in this nineteenth century. . . . I can very well remember many of the words of the boy Prophet as they were uttered in simplicity, but with a power which was irresistible to all present. . . .

“With uplifted hand he said: ‘I am a witness that there is a God, for I saw Him in open day, while praying in a silent grove, in the spring of 1820.’ He further testified that God, the Eternal Father, pointing to a separate personage, in the likeness of Himself, said: ‘This is my Beloved Son, hear ye Him.’ Oh, how these words thrilled



*Each member of the Church has a responsibility to share the gospel.
 "All are to preach the Gospel," the Prophet Joseph Smith declared,
 "by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost."*

my entire system, and filled me with joy unspeakable to behold one who, like Paul the apostle of olden time, could with boldness testify that he had been in the presence of Jesus Christ! . . .

“ . . . A succession of meetings were held, in which the Prophet was joined, and very interestingly, too, by the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. During his visit to this branch the Prophet testified that he was instructed to organize a Church after the pattern of the Church which Jesus organized, with Twelve Apostles, Seventies, Elders, gifts and blessings, with signs following, as found recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Mark. . . . ‘As a servant of God,’ said Joseph, ‘I promise you, inasmuch as you will repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins, you shall receive the Holy Ghost.’ ”²¹

While being taken from Far West, Missouri, in November 1838, to his imprisonment in Richmond, Missouri, the Prophet again taught the gospel: “We were visited by some ladies and gentlemen. One of the women came up, and very candidly inquired of the troops which of the prisoners was the Lord whom the ‘Mormons’ worshiped? One of the guard pointed to me with a

significant smile, and said, ‘This is he.’ The woman then turning to me inquired whether I professed to be the Lord and Savior? I replied, that I professed to be nothing but a man, and a minister of salvation, sent by Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel.

“This answer so surprised the woman that she began to inquire into our doctrine, and I preached a discourse, both to her and her companions, and to the wondering soldiers, who listened with almost breathless attention while I set forth the doctrine of faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance, and baptism for remission of sins, with the promise of the Holy Ghost, as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles [see Acts 2:38–39].

“The woman was satisfied, and praised God in the hearing of the soldiers, and went away, praying that God would protect and deliver us.”²²

*Dan Jones recalled that on the evening before the Prophet was martyred in Carthage Jail, the following occurred: “Joseph bore a powerful testimony to the guards of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Gospel, the administration of angels, and that the kingdom of God was again established upon the earth, for the sake of which he was then incarcerated in that prison, and not because he had violated any law of God or man.”*²³

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages vii–xii.

- Review pages 327–29, noting the missionary efforts that were organized under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Have you been influenced in some way through the work of those early missionaries? If so, how?
- Read the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 330, and consider why love influences us in the way the Prophet describes. What are some other characteristics we need in order to be effective missionaries? (For some examples, see pages 330–31.)

- Review the Prophet Joseph Smith’s words about what missionaries should teach and how they should teach (pages 331–33). Why should we preach “the first principles” of the gospel? What can be the consequences of contending with others on the subject of religion? What do you think it means to “let every word be seasoned with grace” when preaching the gospel?
- Review the second full paragraph on page 332. In what ways has the Holy Ghost guided your efforts to share the gospel? Why can’t we preach the gospel without the Holy Ghost?
- Review Joseph Smith’s experiences recounted on pages 333–36. What can we learn about sharing the gospel from these experiences?
- In what ways can we actively seek opportunities to share the gospel with others? In what ways can we prepare ourselves for such opportunities? How can we involve our families in missionary work?

Related Scriptures: Matthew 28:19–20; 2 Nephi 2:8; Alma 26:26–37; D&C 4:1–7; 31:3–5

Notes

1. *History of the Church*, 2:489; from “History of the Church” (manuscript), book B-1, p. 761, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. Heber C. Kimball, “Synopsis of the History of Heber Chase Kimball,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 14, 1858, p. 33; punctuation and capitalization modernized.
3. Heber C. Kimball, *Deseret News*, May 21, 1862, p. 370; capitalization modernized.
4. Quoted by Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1920, p. 33.
5. Letter of recommendation issued by Joseph Smith and others to Orson Hyde, Apr. 6, 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 1840, p. 86.
6. Orson Hyde, *A Voice from Jerusalem, or a Sketch of the Travels and Ministry of Elder Orson Hyde* (1842), p. 29.
7. *History of the Church*, 2:478; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 6, 1837, in Kirtland, Ohio; reported by *Messenger and Advocate*, Apr. 1837, p. 487.
8. *History of the Church*, 4:226–27; punctuation and grammar modernized; from a letter from Joseph Smith to the Twelve, Dec. 15, 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Jan. 1, 1841, p. 258; this letter is incorrectly dated Oct. 19, 1840, in *History of the Church*.
9. *History of the Church*, 5:344; spelling modernized; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 8, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards and William Clayton.
10. *History of the Church*, 4:11; from instructions given by Joseph Smith on Sept. 29, 1839, in Commerce, Illinois; reported by James Mulholland.
11. *History of the Church*, 2:431; from instructions given by Joseph Smith on Mar. 30, 1836, in Kirtland, Ohio.

12. Letter from Joseph Smith and others to Hezekiah Peck, Aug. 31, 1835, Kirtland, Ohio; in "The Book of John Whitmer," p. 80, Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri; copy of "The Book of John Whitmer" in Church Archives.
13. *History of the Church*, 3:384; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on July 2, 1839, in Montrose, Iowa; reported by Wilford Woodruff and Willard Richards.
14. George A. Smith, "History of George Albert Smith by Himself," p. 36, George Albert Smith, Papers, 1834–75, Church Archives.
15. *History of the Church*, 2:477; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 6, 1837, in Kirtland, Ohio; reported by *Messenger and Advocate*, Apr. 1837, p. 487.
16. *History of the Church*, 5:404; from a letter from Joseph Smith to the editor of the *Times and Seasons*, May 22, 1843, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1843, p. 199; this issue of the *Times and Seasons* was published late.
17. *History of the Church*, 4:13; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Oct. 6, 1839, in Commerce, Illinois; reported by *Times and Seasons*, Dec. 1839, p. 31.
18. *History of the Church*, 4:128–29; from a letter from Joseph Smith to Orson Hyde and John E. Page, May 14, 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois. Although Elder Hyde completed his mission to the Holy Land, Elder Page remained in the United States.
19. Letter from Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, Oct. 13, 1832, New York City, New York; Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri.
20. Elizabeth Ann Whitney, "A Leaf from an Autobiography," *Woman's Exponent*, Oct. 1, 1878, p. 71; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized.
21. Edward Stevenson, "The Home of My Boyhood," *Juvenile Instructor*, July 15, 1894, pp. 443–45; punctuation and grammar modernized; paragraph divisions altered.
22. *History of the Church*, 3:200–201; an account of a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Nov. 4, 1838, near the Missouri River, while being taken as a prisoner from Far West to Independence, Missouri; reported by Parley P. Pratt.
23. *History of the Church*, 6:600; an account of instructions given by Joseph Smith on June 26, 1844, in Carthage Jail, Carthage, Illinois; reported by Dan Jones.