

glorious step. My thanks are great for a wonderful blessing. He is now a deacon and is preparing to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Words fail to convey an expression of my gratitude and happiness at this time and for all the future, but you deserve to share in this beautiful time of joy in our family. Sincerely yours."

Brethren of the priesthood, may I submit to you a definition of happiness. Happiness is sharing with others the gospel of Jesus Christ, and witnessing in their lives the application of gospel principles. You Aaronic Priesthood holders, a mission is for you. No other experience in life can act as a substitute. Prepare now for it. Prepare by reading and by becoming familiar with the gospel, by learning the content and method of presenting the missionary discussions, and by gaining a firm

testimony through prayer and fasting. The mission field is beckoning. It is beckoning prepared missionaries, and it offers the most rewarding experience of a lifetime.

I thank the Lord for wonderful parents who taught me the gospel, and who have encouraged and supported me not only in the mission field but in all my life endeavors.

I bear you my testimony that the gospel is true, and that we have a great responsibility to share our testimonies with others, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

ELDER THOMAS S. MONSON

Of the Council of the Twelve

● Twice each year this historic tabernacle seems to say to us, with its persuasive voice: "Come all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood." There is a characteristic spirit that pervades the general priesthood meeting of the Church. This spirit emanates from the Tabernacle and enters every building where the sons of God assemble.

Some 13,000 of our number are absent tonight, but they are not beyond our love nor our prayers. In response to a call from God's prophet, they have left behind home, family, friends, and school, and gone forward to serve in his harvest fields so wide. Men of the world ask the question: "Why do they respond so readily and willingly give so much?" Our missionaries, your sons, your brothers could well answer in the words of Paul, that peerless missionary of an earlier day: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16.)

"... teach all nations."

The holy scriptures contain no proc-

lamation more relevant, no responsibility more binding, no instruction more direct than the injunction given by the resurrected Lord as he appeared in Galilee to the 11 disciples. Said he: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"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." (Matt. 28:18-20.)

This divine command, coupled with its glorious promise, is our watchword today as in the meridian of time. Missionary work is an identifying feature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It has always been so; it shall ever be. As the prophet Joseph Smith declared: "After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel." (*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 478.)

Requirements for ministry

Within two short years, all 13,000 missionaries in this royal army of God will conclude their full-time labors and return to their homes and loved ones. Their replacements are found tonight in the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood of the Church. Young men, are you ready to respond? Are you willing to work? Are you prepared to serve? Mediocrity is not in fashion. Excellence is the order of the day.

President John Taylor summed up the requirements: "The kind of men we want as bearers of this gospel message are men who have faith in God; men who have faith in their religion; men who honor their priesthood; men in whom the people who know them have faith, and in whom God has confidence. . . . We want men full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God. . . . Men who bear the words of life among the nations ought to be men of honor, integrity, virtue and purity; and this being the command of God to us, we shall try to carry it out."

Inexperienced missionaries

Now that is quite a demanding description. Especially is it so when I reflect upon several of the young and inexperienced missionaries who came to the mission where I had the privilege to preside. I shall ever remember the bewilderment of one boy from down on the farm when he first gazed at the skyscrapers of Toronto. He inquired of me: "President, how many people in this here town?" I answered: "Oh, about a million and a half." To which he responded, "Goll-ee! There are only eighty in my home town."

That evening in our traditional get-acquainted testimony meeting, some of the veteran missionaries expressed themselves regarding the difficulty of the work. "Doors will slam in your face, abusive language will be hurled toward you, you'll get discouraged and downhearted; but when it's all over, you will say, 'These have been the happiest two years of my life.'"

My missionary from the small town was more hesitant than ever as he spoke falteringly: "I'll be glad when the happiest two years of my life are over."

Requires devotion

At best, missionary work necessitates drastic adjustment to one's pattern of living. No other labor requires longer hours or greater devotion, nor such sacrifice and fervent prayer. As a result, dedicated missionary service returns a dividend of eternal joy that extends throughout life and into eternity.

Today our challenge is to be more profitable servants in the Lord's vineyard.

Formula for success

May I suggest, particularly to you bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, a formula that will insure your success:

First: *Search the scriptures with diligence!*

Second: *Plan your life with purpose!*

Third: *Teach the truth with testimony!*

Fourth: *Serve the Lord with love!*

Let us consider each of the four parts of this formula.

Search the scriptures

1. *Search the scriptures with diligence.*

The scriptures testify of God and contain the words of eternal life. They become the burden of your message—even the tools of your trade. Your confidence will be directly related to your knowledge of God's word. Oh, I am sure you have heard of some missionaries who were lazy, less than effective, and anxious for their missions to conclude. A careful examination of such instances will reveal that the actual culprit is not laziness, nor disinterest, but is the foe known as *fear*. Our Father chastized such: ". . . with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the *fear of man*." (D&C 60:2. Italics added.)

Had not this same loving Heavenly Father provided a prescription to overcome this malady, his words perhaps would appear overly harsh. In a revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, January 2, 1831, the Lord declared: ". . . if ye are prepared ye shall

not fear." (D&C 38:30.) This is the key. Will you use it?

How grateful am I that the *Family Home Evening Manual* places emphasis upon the scriptures. The seminary and institute curricula likewise stress the scriptures and help the student to internalize their vibrancy and meaning. The same holds true of the courses of study now used by the priesthood quorums and the auxiliary organizations, all programmed and coordinated through the correlation effort of the Church.

Sons of Mosiah

Let me provide but one reference that has immediate application to our lives. In the Book of Mormon, the seventeenth chapter of Alma, we read the account of Alma's joy as he once more saw the sons of Mosiah and noted their steadfastness in the cause of truth. The record describes these "missionaries":

"... they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

"But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God." (Al. 17:2-3.) Brethren, search the scriptures with diligence.

Plan with purpose

2. Plan your life with purpose.

Perhaps no generation of youth has faced such far-reaching decisions as the youth of today. Provision must be made for school, mission, military, and marriage. With this thought in mind, the First Presidency recently made standard throughout the world a two-year length of service for each mission. This policy permits a young man to plan more adequately the time of his departure and of his return, that a mission might mesh with his educational pursuits.

Preparation for a mission begins early. It is a wise parent who encour-

ages young Jimmy to commence even in boyhood his personal missionary fund. As the fund grows, so does Jimmy's desire to serve. He may well be encouraged as the years go by to study a foreign language, that if necessary his language skills could be utilized. Didn't the Lord say, "Teach all nations"? (See Matt. 28:19.)

The missionary call

Then comes that glorious day when the bishop invites Jim into his office. Worthiness is ascertained; a missionary recommendation is completed. There follow those anxious moments of wonderment and the unspoken question, "I wonder where I will be called?"

During no other crisis does the entire family so anxiously watch and wait for the mailman and the letter which contains the return address: 47 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah. The letter arrives, the suspense is overwhelming, the call is read. Often the assigned field of labor is a far-away place with a strange sounding name—Tonga, the Philippines, Japan-Okinawa, to name but a few. More frequently, the assignment may be closer to home. The response of the prepared missionary is the same: "I will serve."

Mission a family affair

The experience at the mission home is enjoyable, hectic, and helpful. Never have you had newer clothing, cleaner shirts, nor more uncomfortable shoes. You occupy the limelight. It is a touching scene to witness parents of modest means give so freely to outfit their sons. Young men, I hope you appreciate the sacrifice which they so willingly make for you. Their labors will sustain you, their faith encourage you, their prayers uphold you. A mission is a family affair. Though the expanse of oceans may separate, hearts are as one, as evidenced by this letter from a missionary son to his father:

"Dear Dad:

"This is my first Christmas away from my home and family. I wish that I could be home to share the joy, good cheer, and the love that come with this

season; but I am grateful to be here in Sweden as a missionary.

"I'm grateful for my father; I do so love, admire, and respect him. His life has always been a wonderful example to me and has helped countless times to make the right decisions.

"I'm grateful for his wisdom, which has counseled me; his love, which has disciplined me; and his testimony, which has inspired me.

"How can a son show his love for his father? How can he fully express what he feels? How can he demonstrate his gratitude? I wish I could answer these questions. There is, however, one way that I know I can show my gratitude, and that is by patterning my life after that of my father.

"This, then, is my task—to live a life equal to that of my father's, that I may spend eternity together with him.

"Merry Christmas and God bless you, Paul"

Missionary opportunities

As you plan with purpose your lives, remember that your missionary opportunities are not restricted to the period of a formal call. The time you spend in military service can and should be profitable. Each year, our young men in uniform bring thousands of souls into the kingdom of God. How do they accomplish this marvelous feat? They themselves honor their priesthood, live the commandments of God, and teach to others his divine word. Many returned missionaries have testified that their missionary experiences in the military were equally as bountiful and richly rewarding as in the mission field itself.

And while pursuing your formal education, do not overlook your privilege to be missionaries. Your example as a Latter-day Saint is being observed, weighed, and oftentimes will be emulated.

Make time in your lives and provide room in your hearts for school, a mission, the military, and, of course, temple marriage. Plan your life with purpose.

Teach with testimony

3. Teach the truth with testimony

Obey the counsel of the apostle Peter, who urged: "... be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." (1 Pet. 3:15.) Lift up your voices and testify to the true nature of the Godhead. Declare your witness concerning the Book of Mormon. Convey the glorious and beautiful truths contained in the plan of salvation. Regarding your testimony, remember, that which you willingly share you keep, while that which you selfishly keep you lose. Have the courage and the kindness, as did Jesus, to teach the Nicodemuses whom you may meet that baptism is essential to salvation. Teach and testify. There is no better combination.

Missionary experience

Remember our boy from the rural community who marveled at the size of Toronto? He was short in stature, but tall in testimony. Together with his companion, he called at the home of Elmer Pollard in Oshawa, [Ontario,] Canada. Feeling sorry for the young men who, during a blinding blizzard, were going from house to house, Mr. Pollard invited the missionaries into his home. They presented to him their message. He did not catch the spirit. In due time he asked that they leave and not return. His last words to the elders as they departed his front porch were spoken in derision: "You can't tell me you actually believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God!"

The door was shut. The elders walked down the path. Our country boy spoke to his companion: "Elder, we didn't answer Mr. Pollard's question. He said we didn't believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet. Let's return and bear our testimonies to him." At first the more experienced missionary hesitated, but finally he agreed to accompany his companion. Fear struck their hearts as they approached the door from which they had been turned away. A knock, the confrontation with Mr. Pollard, an agonizing moment, then with power, a testimony borne by the Spirit: "Mr. Pollard, you said we didn't really believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. Mr. Pol-

lard, I testify that Joseph was a prophet. He did translate the Book of Mormon. He saw God the Father and Jesus the Son. I know it."

Mr. Pollard, now Brother Pollard, stood in a priesthood meeting some time later and declared: "That night I could not sleep. Resounding in my ears I heard the words: 'Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know it. I know it. I know it.' The next day I telephoned the missionaries. Their message, coupled with their testimonies, changed my life and the lives of my family." Teach the truth with testimony.

Serve with love

4. *Serve the Lord with love.*

There is no substitute for love. Successful missionaries love their companions, their mission leaders, and the precious persons whom they teach. Often this love was kindled in youth by a mother, nurtured by a father, and kept vibrant through service to God.

In the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord established the qualifications for the labors of the ministry. Let us consider but a few verses: ". . . O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

"And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

"Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence." (D&C 4:2, 5-6. Italics added.)

Well might each of us assembled here tonight ask himself: Today, have I increased in faith, in virtue, in knowledge, in godliness, in love?

When our lives comply with God's own standard, those within our sphere of influence will never speak the lament: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. 8:20.)

Through your dedicated devotion at home or abroad, those souls whom you help to save may well be those whom you love the most.

Letters from home

Several years ago, while touring the California Mission, I interviewed a missionary who appeared rather dejected and downcast. I asked him if he had been sending a letter home to his parents each week. He replied: "Yes, Brother Monson, each week for the last five months."

I responded: "And do you enjoy the letters you receive from home?"

Came his unexpected answer: "I haven't had a letter from home since I came on my mission. You see, my Dad is inactive and Mother is a non-member. She didn't favor my accepting a mission call and said that if I went into the mission field she would never write nor send a dime." With a half smile that didn't really disguise the heartache, he said: "And she has kept her word. What can I do, Brother Monson?"

I prayed for inspiration. The answer came. "Keep writing, son, every week. Bear your testimony to Mother and to Dad. Let them know you love them. Tell them how much the gospel means to you. And serve the Lord with all your heart."

Six months later when I attended a stake conference in that area, this same elder ran up to me and asked: "Do you remember me? I'm the missionary whose parents didn't write."

I remembered only too well and cautiously asked if he had received a letter from home.

He reached into his pocket and held out to my view a large handful of envelopes. With tears streaming down his cheeks he declared proudly, "Not one letter, Brother Monson, but a letter every week. Listen to the latest one: 'Son, we so much appreciate the work you are doing. Since you left for your mission our lives have changed. Dad attends priesthood meeting and will soon be an elder. I have been meeting with the missionaries and next month will be baptized. Let's make an appointment to all be together in the Los Angeles Temple one year from now as you conclude your mission. Sincerely, Mother.'"

Love had won its victory. Serve the Lord with love.

Brethren, may each one of us search the scriptures with diligence; plan his life with purpose; teach the truth with testimony; and serve the Lord with love. The elements of this formula then become our ideals. Ideals are like the stars: we cannot touch them with our hands, but by following them, we reach our destination.

Great joy promised

The perfect Shepherd of souls, the missionary who redeemed mankind, gave us his divine assurance: ". . . If it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! "And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:15-16.)

Of him who spoke these words, I declare my witness. He is the Son of God, our Redeemer, and our Savior.

I pray that we will respond to his gentle invitation, "Follow thou me," in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President N. Eldon Tanner

Brother James L. Bradley will now lead the congregation and chorus in singing, "Redeemer of Israel."

We would ask those assembled in all the different buildings to rise and sing with us, after which Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Twelve, will address us.

The congregation joined in singing the hymn, "Redeemer of Israel."

ELDER MARION D. HANKS

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

● I have been thinking about the story of a man who was seen running full speed toward a river, a broad river. As he approached the dock he increased his speed and then flung himself with all his might into the water maybe ten feet, turned around and swam back, got out, and was asked by a startled onlooker why he had jumped into the river. He answered that a friend of his had bet him a thousand dollars to one that he couldn't jump across the river, and after a while he just couldn't stand thinking about those odds without at least trying.

Latter-day Saints Student Association

It is going to be quite a thing for me to talk about something else besides missionary work after this great meeting tonight, but I will try because it is my responsibility this evening, under assignment, to discuss the Latter-day Saints Student Association.

Under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the

Twelve and operating with the guidance of the Correlation Committee and the direct supervision and support of the Youth Correlation Committee of the Church, the Latter-day Saints Student Association functions as a correlating agency to serve Latter-day Saint students on college and university campuses across the world. The Student Association presently reaches about 285 campuses. Its work is important to all college-level students and to all those who one day will be; and, of course, parents and interested adults, bishops, executive secretaries, stake presidents, and other Church leaders will be deeply concerned, as should all Church members. It is our earnest hope that all of you who have the Student Association in your area will discover that and will cooperate fully and strengthen its work.

Underlying principles

I would like to talk tonight for a few minutes, in order to put this program