

Thursday, April 6

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Robert L. Simpson, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy, and he will be followed by Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Milton R. Hunter

Of the First Council of the Seventy

My dear brethren and sisters, I humbly ask that the Spirit of God attend me in what I may say today.

Miracle of missionary work

In my opinion, one of the great miracles in our generation is the miracle of missionary work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

At the present time, the Church has ninety-eight missions, which cover most of the world. There are over 15,400 missionaries devoting their full time to proselyting activities. In addition to these, there are several thousand mature men and women from all professions serving on a part-time basis in the stake missions. These missionaries are either paying their own expenses or they are receiving financial support from their friends, relatives, or Melchizedek Priesthood quorums.

The vast majority of the full-time missionaries are young men nineteen to twenty-one years of age, a time of life in which young people, as a general rule, would not devote themselves to full-time church service.

It should be pointed out that these young men interrupt their education, put off marriage, and adjust their missions to their military obligations, so they can do missionary work for their church and their Savior.

Thus the miracle of missionary service is repeated over and over with every missionary who gives of his time and in the sacrifices made by those who supply the financial help.

Reasons for support

Why this modern miracle of missionary work?

First, this extensive missionary work is carried forward because those people who serve as missionaries and those who give them their financial support have strong testimonies in their hearts that they belong to Christ's true church, which he restored on earth in 1830. They are positive that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only church in the world which possesses God's holy priesthood, his true doctrines and ordinances, and the power to bring people into celestial glory to dwell with their Creator. And so they go on missions in order that other people may receive the gospel and share the same joy and blessings that they have.

Second, the modern miracle of extensive missionary work occurs because in several revelations Jesus Christ commanded that it be done. For example, he commanded Church members as follows:

"Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

"And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." (D&C 68:8-9.)

Faith of young man

As I have toured missions, many missionaries, as well as converts, have

reported to me unusual missionary experiences or miracles. A stake president in California told me the following missionary experience.

A young man in his stake from a well-to-do family had been taught the gospel by missionaries. His interest in the Church was very displeasing to his parents. They endeavored to persuade him not to join, but he still declared that he had a strong testimony that this was the true church of Jesus Christ and that he must join. Then, in desperation, the parents took the drastic step of telling him that if he became a member of the Mormon Church, he would be disinherited. In spite of this warning, the young man joined the Church and his parents literally turned him out of his home.

He was invited to live with a Mormon family. While he was there, the bishop and stake president asked him to go on a mission. He accepted the call. Before he left, however, his parents heard through a mutual friend that their son was going on a mission. They sent word to him that if he did, they would never write him a word, nor send him money, and that he was not to contact them.

About a year later, when the young man was in the mission field, the stake president was called on the telephone about one o'clock in the morning. The gentle voice of a woman on the other end of the line asked if he would please give her that missionary's address because she wanted to send him some money. Thus, it appears that the love of a mother had risen above her religious prejudice.

Choice of a mission

While touring a mission, I ran across a missionary who had been an all-American basketball star in college. Upon graduation from the university, he had turned down a high-paying contract to play professional ball so he could go on a mission.

Another missionary told me that

when he graduated from high school he was offered \$30,000 a year to play professional baseball. He refused the offer so he could go on a mission.

When a young man is faced with the choice of a mission or of playing professional ball at a high salary, it takes great faith and devotion to choose the mission; but many young Latter-day Saint men have made this choice.

Missionary in South America

Recently in South America, a lady missionary, who impressed me greatly, told me the story of her conversion to the LDS Church and her missionary call. Before coming on her mission she was a nurse. Her roommate was a Mormon girl. The nurse liked the girl's habits, was very pleased with her character and personality, and so she decided to study the LDS religion. The Mormon girl got two missionaries to teach the nurse the gospel.

When the nurse's parents heard that she was favorably inclined toward the Mormon religion, they thoroughly opposed her actions. They forbade her to join the Church, telling her that if she did she would be disinherited.

The Holy Ghost had borne witness to her so strongly that the Church of Jesus Christ was the true church that she asked the missionaries to baptize her even against the wishes of her parents, whom she loved dearly. It grieved her when her father and mother told her not to return home.

After joining the Church, she had a very strong desire to go on a mission and so she decided to work and save the money. It took her three or four years' time to save approximately \$3,000. She was called to labor in South America, where she is doing an outstanding job in taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of that land. When she returns home, she hopes to regain the love and favor of her parents.

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Results of missionary effort

Several years ago, after returning from touring a mission, I said to one of my friends, "Did you make any converts when you were on your mission in a certain town?" And I told him the name of the town.

He replied, "No, I didn't make a single convert there. My companion and I had very poor missionary success in that town."

I informed him that recently I had held a meeting in that town. Following the meeting, a woman approached the mission president and me and said, "When I was a girl two Mormon missionaries came to our home a number of times and talked with my mother. Each time the missionaries came to our home, I ran into the kitchen and peeked through the door and listened while they conversed with mother, who wasn't very interested. As soon as they had left, I would run into the living room, pick up the literature that they had left on the table, and go to my room and study it. I was very thrilled with what I was learning.

"Finally I obtained a copy of the Book of Mormon and read it. I became thoroughly converted to the Church of Jesus Christ, having a firm conviction that it was the true church. When I grew to maturity, two more Mormon missionaries came to town and I asked them to baptize me. After I had become a Church member, I taught the gospel to my friends and relatives. There are over fifty members in this branch who belong to the Church as a result of my conversion and baptism."

I then said to my friend, "You see, you and your missionary companion indirectly have over fifty converts in that town in which you thought you got none."

An answer to prayer

A missionary related an experience that illustrates one method that God has used to bring the searchers after

truth into his true church. He stated that he and his companion had knocked on a door. A woman opened the door immediately, enthusiastically invited them in, and said to them, "You young men have come to my home today in answer to my prayers.

"For a long time I have been dissatisfied with the church to which I belong, feeling that it does not contain many of the doctrines that Christ taught while here upon the earth. I felt that it was not the true church that was founded originally by our Savior. I prayed earnestly and asked our Father in heaven to send somebody to me who would bring me the true gospel plan of salvation and make it possible for me to find the true church.

"After doing so, I had a dream that two young men knocked on my door and when I let them in they said to me, 'We have come to bring you the true gospel of Jesus Christ.' I recognize that you two young men are the same two young men I saw in my dream, and as in my dream, you announced yourselves by saying, 'We have come to bring you the gospel of Jesus Christ.' I know that you are the servants of our Master and that you will teach me his gospel."

The two missionaries were surprised at the reception but happy to have the privilege of teaching this good woman the gospel. She eagerly received it and soon thereafter was a baptized member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thus, another modern miracle in missionary work had occurred.

Devotion of mission presidents

The faith and devotion of mission presidents and their wives and families present marvelous stories of sacrifice and service to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and build up his kingdom.

When the First Presidency, serving as God's holy prophets, call a man

and his wife to preside over a mission, regardless of their business situation or economic conditions, the answer is yes. All personal interests are pushed aside and they faithfully accept the call from the Lord through the First Presidency to preside over a mission for three years' time.

Each mission president's individual call, his experiences and faithfulness in accepting that call, adjusting his economic affairs, and completely readjusting the social life for himself and family, is a modern missionary miracle.

Response to mission call

For example, in a casual conversation I had recently with the president of one of the full-time missions of the Church, he told me that when he received his mission call from the First Presidency, he asked his employers for a leave of absence. Within three years his financial interest in the company in which he was employed would be large enough to support him and his family for the remainder of their lives.

His employers, being non-church members and unfavorable toward his going on a mission, refused to give him a leave of absence. Also, they informed him that he would lose all of his financial benefits in the company if he accepted the mission call. In spite of this terrific financial sacrifice and the loss of his job, he accepted the mission call and is now faithfully serving his church and his God.

I asked the mission president, "Why

didn't you tell the First Presidency of the financial loss you would suffer if you went on a mission at that time and ask them to postpone your call for three years?"

He replied, "The Lord didn't call me on a mission for three years from now. He called me to serve now. My wife and I decided to obey the call of the Lord and trust that our financial affairs would be taken care of later."

Such a sacrifice to render Christian service is certainly astounding. It is a modern missionary miracle.

Testimony

In closing, I bear my testimony that the true Church of Jesus Christ has been restored to earth by the Savior and other heavenly beings to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Membership in this church and living in accordance with the revealed teachings therein is the only way back to God. This church marks out the pathway that mankind must follow to attain eternal life in the presence of the Father and the Son.

In the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us.

Elder Alvin R. Dyer

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

I am both humbled and grateful, my brothers and sisters, for the confidence of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve for the new assignment given me in the Historical Department

of the Church. It is truly gratifying to be associated with men of the caliber of Leonard Arrington, the Church Historian; Earl Olson, the Church Archivist; and Donald T. Schmidt, Church Librarian.