

## Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

My dear brethren, what a wonderful feeling it is to be in the presence of worthy priesthood holders tonight! Among us are many young men. Though some of you are still waiting for your nineteenth birthday, others have already received your call to serve a full-time mission. It is to you that I would like to direct a few of my thoughts this evening.

### Receiving a mission call

On May 15 of this year, an event occurred in our home that is repeated literally hundreds of times per week in Latter-day Saint homes throughout the Church. After a period of anxious anticipation, a letter from the prophet containing a mission call for our son Bradley arrived. This was the third such letter that we have received in our family, but each time really is the first time. The letter arrived on a day when mission business had me away from home, so the unopened letter sat on Brad's desk in the mission home in Vienna, Austria, until late that night. Finally the moment arrived, and we were all gathered together—Mom, Dad, younger brother Stephen, and, of course, Bradley.

As in many families, there is also a sort of tradition in our family that accompanies the opening of a mission call. Each of us handled the envelope, turning it in our hands and holding it up to the light as if we could somehow discern its contents. Each of us took a piece of paper and recorded our own predictions for Bradley's call: Japan, New Zealand, and France. Then there was the inevitable fumbling at opening the envelope, extending the excitement for all of us. The letter was at last in Brad's hands: "Dear Elder Neuenschwander, you are hereby called to serve as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You

are assigned to labor in the Poland Warsaw Mission."

Tears flow easily at such moments, perhaps for different reasons. Mom's eyes are moist at the thought of another son leaving the nest and facing the world. Dad recalls so vividly a day long ago when he received his call to serve in Finland. Stephen understands that this last departure of older brothers means that he will finally be the oldest at home, but his tears also mean a quiet commitment that his letter will not be far behind.

There were phone calls to returned missionary brothers at home in America, each happy but playfully disappointed that Brad's call was not to New Mexico or Munich, where they had served. Grandparents were thrilled that yet another grandson was worthy to serve the Lord.

Busy days of preparation began. July 10 came all too soon, and it was time for Brad to leave. Bidding farewell to a missionary son, as many of you know, at the MTC definitely does not get easier with practice.

In our quiet moments, Brad and I spoke of his mission. For four years he had watched missionaries come and go through the mission home. Some had even gone to Poland. Yet there are things I would share with him and with you as this great missionary experience now becomes his.

### You make your mission successful

Your mission will be exactly what you decide to make it. Your excellent mission president, President Whipple, and good missionary companions will help you along the way, but keep in mind that you are the central and decisive factor in the success of your own mission. Your young but strong shoulders bear the responsibility of the call

you willingly and happily accepted. You have seen missionaries in a variety of countries and circumstances. You have also observed that in rather similar situations one missionary is successful, another a little less so. The difference lay in the attitude and desire of the individual missionary. Make the inevitable challenges of missionary work stepping-stones for your own spiritual growth. Determine now that nothing will keep you from magnifying with honor your missionary call.

### **Simplify your life**

As most missionaries, Brad, you come from school years, rich in their variety of choice and activity. But your success as a missionary will depend, in part, on your ability to simplify your life and focus on the purpose of your call. You now move from a life centered on your own needs to one concerned with the welfare of others. Some missionaries struggle, not wanting to let go of the past and consequently never fully committing themselves to the labor at hand. There is no way a successful missionary can have one foot in the world and one in his missionary labors. Successful missionaries make that transition. They leave behind everything that may distract them from their primary purpose. Resist bringing extra luggage with you into the mission field, both in your suitcase and in your mind.

### **Be teachable**

Whatever calling you hold in the Church, someone will always preside over you. That person will teach and encourage you in your responsibilities. Brad, be wise enough and humble enough to learn from them. Elder Boyd K. Packer taught us new mission presi-

dents in 1987 that if we would learn to be silent, the Brethren could teach us a lot. I considered it good advice, and I have learned since that in the mission field as well as in all Church callings a person who can be taught is also one who can be trusted.

### **Be obedient**

Mission rules are important in the same way commandments are important. We all need to keep them, understanding that they give us strength, direction, and limits. The smart missionary will learn the intent of the rules and make them work for him. Your mission is a time of discipline and single-minded focus. You will be required to go without some things common to your current life-style: music, TV, videos, novels, even girls. There is nothing wrong with any of these things, Brad, but then again, there is nothing wrong with food either, unless you are fasting, in which case even a teaspoon of water is improper.

### **Stay with the scriptures**

Missionaries sometimes feel they need doctrinal reference books to enhance their understanding of the gospel. Believe me, Brad, they are not necessary for your gospel study in the mission field. Make the scriptures the basic doctrinal textbook of your mission. The Lord has told his elders:

“Teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit;

“And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken” (D&C 43:15–16).

You will find the Lord to be a man of his word. The promise he extends to you as a missionary is true.

### Respect the title you hold

There are few men in the Church who are referred to as Elder, but one is you—a full-time missionary. Respect that title, Brad; refer to it with reverence. Many men have brought honor to it, including your brothers. You do the same.

### Keep a proper perspective

The real success of a mission is not measured on a chart—it is etched in your heart and in the hearts of those whose lives are eternally changed because of you. Share your testimony often. I have seen nothing in a missionary that exerts more power and positive influence than the bearing of pure and simple testimony. Your testimony is the first step in the conversion of those whom you teach. Have courage to invite others to change their lives and come to Christ through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

The Lord taught the Nephites: “Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may

stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel” (3 Nephi 27:20–21).

Bless the lives of others with your priesthood and your presence.

Brad, love every minute of your service to those wonderful Polish people. Love their country, their food, customs, language, and heritage. They will enrich your life and understanding.

The work in which you are engaged is true. You are teaching the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the promise of salvation to all who will listen and accept your message. Of this I bear my witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

We have just listened to Elders Rex D. Pinegar and Dennis B. Neuenchwander of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will join in singing “How Firm a Foundation,” following which we shall hear from Elder Jorge A. Rojas, who was also sustained as one of the Seventy at the April conference.

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The choir and congregation sang “How Firm a Foundation.”

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## Elder Jorge A. Rojas

I see there are many fathers and sons together. May I ask you to join me in something we all do at home very often? Thank you.

### Preparing for a bishop's interview

Hello, my son. How are you? How was your day at school? Good. Any calls? The bishop? An interview with you? Well, that's OK. Bishops have interviews all the time with young boys—just like the ones we have. We talk, we

listen, we learn from each other, we have a great time. No. It's the same thing. Don't worry. It's going to be all right.

Let's see, you'll be twelve next month, and he wants to have an interview with you. I wouldn't miss this for anything. Yes, he'll ask you questions about school and friends, the Word of Wisdom. Do you make your bed every morning? Do you take a shower every day? No, I'm not kidding you. He'll talk about those things. I'm serious. He'll