

May the Lord bless us. May He make us strong and mighty in good works. May our faith shine forth as the sunlight of the morning. May we walk in obedience to His divine commandments. May He smile with favor upon us.

As we go forward, may we bless humanity with an outreach to all, lifting those who are downtrodden and oppressed, feeding and clothing the hungry and the needy, extending love and neighborliness to those about us who may not be part of this Church. The Lord has shown us the way. He has given us His word, His counsel, His guidance, yea, His commandments. We have done well. We have much to be grateful for and much to be proud of. But we can do better, so much better.

How I love you, my brothers and sisters of this great cause. I love you for what you have become and for what you can become. Notwithstanding the afflictions about us, notwithstanding the sordid things we see almost everywhere, notwithstanding the conflict that sweeps across the world, we can be better.

I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you as I express my love for you and com-

mend to you the great messages you will hear from this pulpit during the next two days, and do so in the sacred name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Baptism."

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### President Monson

We have just listened to President Gordon B. Hinckley, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing the musical selection "Baptism."

We shall now hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Sheri L. Dew, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Thank you, President Hinckley, for your great message. We are all profoundly grateful for your vigorous and inspired leadership in this difficult time. Under that leadership, we are going forward with the work of the Lord, so urgently needed in this troubled world.

### Sharing the gospel

To proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a fundamental principle of the Christian faith. Three of the gospel writers report this direction by the Savior.

The book of Mark records:

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

Matthew quotes the Savior's command, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Luke states, "Thus it is written . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:46-47).

Applying the Savior's directions to our day, modern prophets have challenged each of us to share the gospel.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has given the clarion call for our time. In a worldwide satellite address to missionaries and local leaders, he asked for "an infusion of enthusiasm" for missionary work "at every level in the Church" ("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 107). Though missionaries must continue their best efforts to find persons to teach, he declared that the "better way . . . is through the members of the Church" (105). He asked each of us to give our very best efforts to assisting missionaries in finding persons to teach. He also asked that each stake president and each bishop "accept full responsibility and accountability for the finding and friendship of investigators" within their units (107). President Hinckley also invoked the blessings of the Lord upon each of us "in meeting the tremendous challenge that is ours" (108).

Though it has been two and a half years since our president made this plea, most of us have not yet acted effectively upon his challenge.

As I have prayerfully studied President Hinckley's words and pondered over how we can share the gospel, I have concluded that we need three things to fulfill our prophet's challenge. First, we need a sincere *desire* to share the gospel. Second, we need *divine assistance*. Third, we need to *know what to do*.

## I. Desire

As with so many other things, sharing the gospel begins with *desire*. If we are to become more effective instruments in the hands of the Lord in sharing His gospel, we must sincerely *desire* to do so. I believe we acquire this desire in two steps.

First, we must have a firm testimony of the truth and importance of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This in-

cludes the supreme value of God's plan for His children, the essential position of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in it, and the role of The Church of Jesus Christ in carrying out that plan in mortality.

Second, we must have a love for God and for all of His children. In modern revelation we are told that "love, with an eye single to the glory of God, [qualifies us] for the work" (D&C 4:5). The early Apostles of this dispensation were told that their love should "abound unto all men" (D&C 112:11).

From our testimony of the truth and importance of the restored gospel, we understand the value of what we have been given. From our love of God and our fellowmen, we acquire our desire to share that great gift with everyone. The intensity of our desire to share the gospel is a great indicator of the extent of our personal conversion.

The Book of Mormon contains some marvelous examples of the effect of testimony and love. When the sons of Mosiah, who had been "the very vilest of sinners," acquired their testimony, "they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish" (Mosiah 28:3-4). In a later account, their associate Alma cried, "O that I were an angel, . . . that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth" and declare "the plan of redemption" to every soul, "that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (Alma 29:1-2).

I like to refer to missionary efforts as sharing the gospel. The word *sharing* affirms that we have something extraordinarily valuable and desire to give it to others for their benefit and blessing.

The most effective missionaries, member and full-time, always act out of love. I learned this lesson as a young man. I was assigned to visit a less-active member, a successful professional many years older than I. Looking back on my actions,

I realize that I had very little loving concern for the man I visited. I acted out of duty, with a desire to report 100 percent on my home teaching. One evening, close to the end of a month, I phoned to ask if my companion and I could come right over and visit him. His chastening reply taught me an unforgettable lesson.

"No, I don't believe I want you to come over this evening," he said. "I'm tired. I've already dressed for bed. I am reading, and I am just not willing to be interrupted so that you can report 100 percent on your home teaching this month." That reply still stings me because I knew he had sensed my selfish motivation.

I hope no person we approach with an invitation to hear the message of the restored gospel feels that we are acting out of any reason other than a genuine love for them and an unselfish desire to share something we know to be precious.

If we lack this love for others, we should pray for it. The prophet Mormon's writings about "the pure love of Christ" teach us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:47-48).

## II. Divine assistance and right timing

We also need divine assistance to guide us in sharing the gospel. Just as our desires must be pure and rooted in testimony and love, our actions must be directed by the Lord. It is His work, not ours, and it must be done in His way and on His timing, not ours. Otherwise, our efforts may be fated to frustration and failure.

All of us have family members or friends who need the gospel but are not now interested. To be effective, our efforts with them must be directed by the Lord so that we act in the way and at the time when they will be most receptive. We must pray for the Lord's help and directions so we can be instruments in His

hands for one who is now ready—one He would have us help today. Then we must be alert to hear and heed the promptings of His Spirit in how we proceed.

Those promptings will come. We know from countless personal testimonies that in His own way and His own time the Lord is preparing persons to accept His gospel. Such persons are searching, and when we are seeking to identify them the Lord will answer their prayers through answering ours. He will prompt and guide those who desire and who sincerely seek guidance in how, where, when, and with whom to share His gospel. In this way, God grants unto us according to our desires (see Alma 29:4; D&C 6:8).

In modern revelation, the Lord's prophet has told us that "there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded . . . and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it" (D&C 123:12). When we are standing as "witnesses of God at all times and in all things" (Mosiah 18:9), the Lord will open ways for us to find and have appropriate communications with those who are seeking. This will come when we seek direction and when we act out of a sincere and Christlike love for others.

The Lord loves all of His children. He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when they are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His directions on sharing His gospel. When we do so, those who are prepared will respond to the message of Him who said, "My sheep hear my voice, . . . and they follow me" (John 10:27).

## III. How to do it

When we have a sincere desire to share the gospel with others, and when we have sought divine assistance in our efforts, what should we do? How do we proceed? We begin by beginning. We should not wait for a further invitation

from heaven. Revelation comes most often when we are on the move.

The Lord has given us this instruction as to *who* and *how*: "And let your preaching be . . . every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness" (D&C 38:41). "Neighbors," of course, means not only those who live beside us and other friends and associates. When He was asked, "Who is my neighbour?" the Savior told of a Samaritan who recognized a neighbor on the road to Jericho (see Luke 10:25-37). Thus, our neighbors also include those we encounter in our daily travels.

We should pray, as Alma of old, for the Lord to give us "power and wisdom that we may bring" our associates to the Lord (Alma 31:35). We also pray for the welfare of their souls (see Alma 6:6).

We must be sure we act out of love and not in any attempt to gain personal recognition or advantage. The warning against those who use Church position to gratify their pride or vain ambition (see D&C 121:37) surely applies to our efforts to share the gospel.

The need to act out of love also warns us against manipulation, real or perceived. People who do not share our belief can be repelled when they hear us refer to something as a "missionary tool." A "tool" is something used to manipulate an inanimate object. If we talk about something as a "missionary tool," we can convey the impression that we want to manipulate someone. That impression is entirely contrary to the unselfish, sharing spirit of our missionary service.

In his great message President Hinckley declares that "opportunities for sharing the gospel are everywhere" (*Ensign*, May 1999, 106). He mentions many things we can do. We should live so that what he called "the tremendous power of the example of a member of the Church" (104) will influence those around us. "The most effective tract we will carry," he said, "will be the goodness of our own lives and

example" (107). We must be sincerely friendly to all.

President Hinckley reminded us that we can "leave a piece of Church literature" (106) with those with whom we come in contact. We can offer our homes "to carry on this missionary service" (105). The missionaries "may appropriately ask the members for referrals" (107), and when they do, we should respond.

In summary, President Hinckley said every member of the Church can "work constantly at the task of finding and encouraging investigators" (107).

There are other things we can do, especially as we act upon the prophet Mormon's great statement, "I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear" (Moroni 8:16; see also 1 John 4:18). We can invite friends to Church meetings or Church-related activities. We can make appreciative references to our Church and the effect of its teachings and ask persons if they would like to know more.

Even easier, we can carry a packet of these attractive pass-along cards and give them to persons—even casual acquaintances—with whom we come in contact in the daily activities of our lives. These cards are an ideal way to invite people to investigate the additional truths we have to share. In a nonintrusive way, they offer something precious, but the gift depends upon the choice and initiative of the potential recipient. In our experience, a significant fraction of those who telephone for the offered gift choose to have it delivered by those who can tell them more.

The Church has just announced another way to share the gospel, worldwide, on the Internet. In its potential, this new initiative is as exciting as the publishing of written tracts in the 19th century and our use of radio, television, and film in the 20th. The Church has activated a new Internet site to which we may refer persons interested in obtaining information about the Church and its doctrine and how they can find a place to worship with us. Its ad-

dress is [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org). For missionaries, the value and use of this new resource will emerge with experience. For members of the Church, it will help us answer the questions of friends directly or by referring them to the site. It will also allow us to send our friends electronic greeting cards that include gospel messages and invitations.

#### IV. Conclusion

We have been asked to redouble our efforts and our effectiveness in sharing the gospel to accomplish the Lord's purposes in this great work. Until we do so, these wonderful full-time missionaries—our sons and daughters and our noble as-

sociates in the Lord's work—will remain underused in their great assignment to teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have spoken about loving desire, heavenly guidance, and ways we can proceed with the divine command to share the gospel with our neighbors. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the brightest light and the only hope for this darkened world. "Wherefore," as Nephi teaches, we "must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and of His desire that we join wholeheartedly in this, His work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Charles Didier

### Building a bridge of faith

Entering the offices of a large advertising company, one could read the following thought framed on one of the walls: "Men are building too many walls and not enough bridges" (from JCDecaux, a firm based in France).

Indeed, walls are usually built to separate two or more entities physically, mentally, or even spiritually and to create obstacles. They are built because they represent the idea of defense, protection, or separation. Some walls have acquired fame because of that nature: the walls of Jerusalem, the Great Wall of China, the Wall of Berlin. Walls, as a symbol, are also used in our common vocabulary to reflect this idea of separation, as in "a wall of incomprehension," "a wall of intolerance," or "it is like talking to a brick wall!"

Bridges are the opposite of walls. Bridges are built to bring together, to join two or more entities, and to create unity. They are built to overcome obstacles. Some bridges have become famous, like

the Bridge of Sighs, the Allenby Bridge, and so many others. The term is also used in our language to express the idea of reunion or unity, as in "to bridge a gap" or "to bridge differences."

As we consider our mortal existence on this earth and the purpose of life expressed by Amulek—that "this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32)—what is the Lord's way to help us achieve this very purpose? It is simply, by using this metaphor, to help us build a bridge of faith in our life for crossing and overcoming the walls of unbelief, indifference, fear, or sin. Our mortal life is the time for men to meet God by building a bridge of faith, opening the door into immortality and eternal life.

### Building a bridge in Belgium

How do we build such a bridge of faith?

When I was a young man living in a city called Namur in Belgium, there was a large river separating it from an adjacent city on the other side of the river. At that