

Turn the Hearts

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Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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My dear brothers and sisters, it is a great privilege to be with you consecrated leaders.

The Lord has established a covenant pathway to achieve His purposes. I have been impressed with the emphasis the general presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary have placed on the “Covenant Pathway.” It has felt very inspired to me.

The gateway to this path is the first principles and ordinances of the gospel: “first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”¹

We continue on the covenant pathway with the sacred saving and exalting ordinances of the temple and enduring to the end.

The spiritual conditions necessary to proceed along the pathway all relate to the “heart.” The scriptures refer favorably to hearts that are changed, broken, healed, and turned, and to hearts full of love, gratitude, joy, and peace. The scriptures refer unfavorably to hearts that are hardened.

The reference to hearts has been used in the scriptures to convey the deepest feelings that

combine the spirit and the intellect. We are spirit children of a righteous, loving Father whose glory is based on intelligence. However, the Lord has declared that He does not see “as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”²

When we speak of righteous hearts, we are combining feelings that emanate from truth, intelligence, our spirits, the Light of Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

If we place hearts on the covenant pathway, a *changed heart* goes with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the beginnings of repentance. I love the description “a mighty change of heart.”³ Repentance is also accompanied by a *broken heart*, coupled with a contrite spirit, and is a requirement for baptism. A *healed heart* is most often present when one understands that the Atonement of Jesus Christ overcomes the unfairness of life and the poor decisions of those who exercise agency in a way that inflicts harm on us. A *turned heart* is what happened to the prophet Lehi when he tasted of the fruit of the gospel and immediately desired to share it with his family. A turned heart elevates us from thinking about ourselves and focuses us on others, particularly our own families.

Hearts full of love,⁴ gratitude, joy, and peace⁵ are the righteous rewards of staying on the covenant pathway and enduring to the end.

It should be noted that *hardened hearts* are also a choice and a reality. Missionaries who have done everything right can still be rejected because of hardened hearts.⁶ However, in Doctrine and Covenants 29:7 we learn that “mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley always reassured missionaries that they would have more success if they had more faith. President Thomas S. Monson has emphasized that hearts can change.

For my purposes here today, I will concentrate primarily on turned hearts. The scriptures most commonly associated with this concept are the last two verses in the Old Testament, where we read in Malachi that before the Lord’s Second Coming, He will send Elijah the prophet, “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”⁷

The prophet Elijah returned on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple to fulfill Malachi’s promise. He committed priesthood keys for sealing families in this dispensation.⁸ Elijah’s mission is facilitated by what is sometimes called the spirit of Elijah.

Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught that the spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family.”⁹

We will now be blessed to observe President Henry B. Eyring describing this seminal event.

[BEGIN VIDEO CLIP]

HENRY B. EYRING: It is important to know why the Lord promised to send Elijah. Elijah was a great prophet with great power given him by God. He held the greatest power God gives to His children: he held the sealing power, the power to bind on earth and have it bound in heaven. God gave it to the Apostle Peter. And the Lord kept His promise to send Elijah. Elijah came to the Prophet Joseph Smith on April 3, 1836, just after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the first temple built after the Restoration of the gospel. Joseph described the sacred moment:

“Another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

“Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

“To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—” (D&C 110:13–15).

. . . Remember that the names which will be so difficult to find are of real people to whom you owe your existence in this world and whom you will meet again in the spirit world. When you were baptized, your ancestors looked down on you with hope. Perhaps after centuries, they rejoiced to see one of their descendants make a covenant to find them and to offer them freedom. In

your reunion, you will see in their eyes either gratitude or terrible disappointment. Their hearts are bound to you. Their hope is in your hands.¹⁰

[END VIDEO CLIP]

This message captures the spirit of Elijah. Why do you suppose Elder Russell M. Nelson spoke about the temple yesterday afternoon? Why do you think I have been assigned to speak about turning hearts? It is because this is all one great work of salvation, and the ultimate goal of the covenant pathway is the ordinances of the temple and the conditions of the heart that must accompany those ordinances.

President Spencer W. Kimball emphasized this and is quoted in *Preach My Gospel*:

“I hope to see us dissolve the artificial boundary line we so often place between missionary work and temple and genealogical work, because it is the same great redemptive work!”¹¹

No one was more successful in dissolving this artificial boundary than Wilford Woodruff. He baptized over 2,000 people during his ministry. President Heber J. Grant said of him, “I believe that no other man ... was a greater converter of souls to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹²

President Thomas S. Monson said of Wilford Woodruff: “He commenced endowment work for the dead, laid the foundations for our family genealogies, and systematical temple work. Inspiration from heaven guided him in his work.”¹³

His personal example was incredible. By the time he was 78 years old, 3,188 of his

deceased relatives had been baptized vicariously and 2,518 had been endowed.¹⁴

At last year’s seminar for new mission presidents Elder David A. Bednar stated:

“The time has come for us to capitalize more effectively on the potent combination of the mighty change of heart, made possible primarily by the spiritual power of the Book of Mormon, and the turning of hearts to the fathers, accomplished through the spirit of Elijah.”

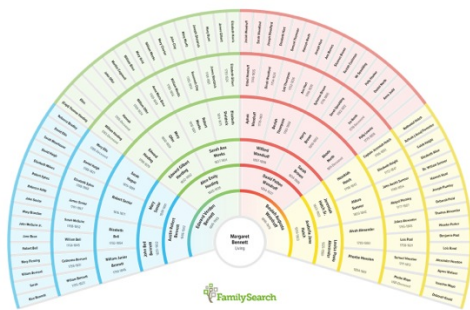
Before discussing how missionaries can utilize family history, let us discuss the *My Family* booklet that each of you have received. You were asked to take the time to gather your family and follow the three steps found in the booklet before the seminar. We requested that you would be prepared to share some of the experiences you had, the feelings you enjoyed, and the impressions you received in using the booklet.

Our purpose in doing this is to give you a spiritual foundation for sharing the spirit of Elijah with your missionaries. It is difficult to teach the spirit of Elijah unless you have felt the spirit of Elijah—just as it is difficult to teach the spiritual power of the Book of Mormon unless you have read the Book of Mormon. Our desire is that you share what you have learned and what you felt with your missionaries.

I have spoken with many of you who have had remarkable, spiritual experiences as you have prepared your own booklet. You then went to FamilySearch.org, entered any missing information, and printed a fan chart. It might have looked like this one with many empty spaces.



Or like this one with a much-expanded genealogy.



Some of you have found family members that needed sacred saving ordinances. You printed the ordinance cards and have already had the great spiritual experience of completing the temple work.

Raise your hands if you were able to complete a significant portion of the booklet.

Have any of you discovered family members who needed sacred ordinances?

Today we have the doctrine, we have the technology, and we have the temples to accomplish this glorious work of salvation. How do we bring all of this together in a doctrinally sound, practical way that will allow your missionaries to be successful in this effort?

Missionaries need to understand that they are ward and branch builders. The

responsibility of the First Presidency, the Twelve, and the Seventy as set forth in section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants is to build up the Church in all nations. You and your missionaries assist in this great effort. Our responsibility is to help the Savior establish His Church. Doctrine and Covenants section 31, verse 7, reads,

“Yea, I [the Savior] will open the hearts of the people, and they will receive you. And I [the Savior] will establish a church by your hand.”

A secondary objective is to help missionaries find fulfillment, meaning, and powerful personal conversions.

The remainder of my time will be utilized to identify a few applications so your missionaries can achieve both objectives. Instead of starting with finding (which I will cover later), I will first cover those whom the missionaries have already baptized and who need to continue on the covenant pathway (we sometimes call this retention).

This next video will demonstrate missionaries helping people in this process.

[BEGIN VIDEO CLIP]

ELDER HAMILTON: In *Preach My Gospel* it talks a lot about how family history helps solidify recent converts’ testimonies.

SISTER DURAN: When we shared that he could be baptized for his brother, he was just all tears. That’s when the plan of salvation made sense to him.

ELDER HAMILTON: And so we thought it would be a real cool experience to prepare names—to fill

out the pedigree charts and family group sheet—and then for them to be baptized. We really think that this is going to be something that, long after my companion and I are gone, they are going to remember these experiences and stay true to the gospel.

[END VIDEO CLIP]

(I loved seeing Elder Hamilton in this video. Many years ago when I was stake president, I called his father as a bishop.)

There is absolutely no question that family history can be effectively utilized for new converts and for many of the less-active people. They typically have spiritual feelings as they go to the temple.

In *Preach My Gospel* we read:

“Convert retention is enhanced as new members are able to search their family roots and perform sacred ordinances in behalf of their ancestors.”¹⁵

Family history can also be used for activation. The next video shows missionaries serving both new converts and less-active members.

[BEGIN VIDEO CLIP]

ELDER HAMILTON: We are in regular contact with the bishop, and always on our progress record we talk about things. He gave us names of some other families that he would like us to focus on with family history—to reactivate through family history.

ELDER WILLIAMS: There is an opportunity for them to really feel the Spirit. It is an opportunity for them to meet the consultant and become

friends with them, to trust them. There is a fellowship. If there is an opportunity for them to feel the joy that comes from knowing that their loved ones are cared for in the life to come and that God cares about us. I’d say that is a perfect opportunity.

ELDER HAMILTON: What we noticed is that by talking about family members and not just family members, like in the current family, but deceased members, that they really feel that spirit of Elijah, which by definition is a special manifestation of the Spirit about families and the eternal nature of them.

SISTER MARKLE: It just binds them to the Church a little more and gets them interested about going to the temple and becoming worthy to come to the temple.

[END VIDEO CLIP]

There are three practical applications that are particularly important:

First, missionaries can and should assist with family history training for new converts in preparation for baptisms for the dead and ultimately their endowment.

Second, missionaries, along with family history consultants, can provide the instruction.

Third, the training is also an excellent forum for missionaries to work with less-active members who have been assigned by the ward council.

In some areas, family history can also be a very effective finding tool.

Preach My Gospel declares: “Family history is a *powerful resource* to use in finding those whom the Lord is preparing to receive the restored gospel.”¹⁶

“The Spirit of Elijah is influencing millions of people throughout the world to search for their ancestors.”¹⁷

Practice how you will offer family history help to those you meet.

It is easy to start conversations using family history. Let me provide a few suggestions:

- Have you ever researched your family history?
- Where is your grandfather from?
- Where does your last name come from?
- Do you know any interesting stories about your grandparents?
- Do you know about the free resources on FamilySearch.org that can help you discover, preserve, and share your family history?

After the initial conversation, missionaries should transition to a gospel discussion.

The missionaries should ask them: “Do you know why we do family history work and why we build temples?” And then invite them to learn why.

Before discussing what the missionaries might teach, let me share some information that will help you determine whether family history should be a major finding effort in your mission.

First, for missions that are having significant finding success, it may be wise to stay with existing finding methods. In these missions

family history should be emphasized for retention and reactivation.

Second, in North America, the current state of technology and our family resources are such that two out of three investigators will learn something about their family on FamilySearch.org. Thus, using the new technology can be highly effective either to strengthen those being taught or, in some cases, for effective finding.

Third, in non-Christian nations or highly secular advanced nations like those in Asia and Europe, or anywhere English as a second language is utilized for finding, family history should be a highly successful finding tool. In many of these wards and branches there are six or eight missionaries. Some of those missionaries can be assigned to become very proficient in teaching family history. Invitations to family history classes held in ward or branch buildings can be effective for finding.

Recently, in Lyon, France, the missionaries held a family history open house in a meeting house with a family history center. They made numerous contacts to promote the event. They put a table on the sidewalk with a roll-up banner from FamilySearch as an introduction spot. They drew a large tree display where people could write their first name on a leaf and then tape it to the tree for fun. They invited people inside to watch videos about the family from Mormon.org. Seventy people entered to start conversations. Many filled out information on their family tree. Thirty went into the family history center for deeper information.

Five lessons were taught that day, and twelve appointments were set up for future lessons. This is a mission where it can be difficult to find people to teach.

Worldwide, 4 million people, feeling the spirit of Elijah, come to our family history centers every year. 70 percent of them are not members of the Church.

Where technology is not available, the *My Family* booklet should be the main emphasis for starting family history conversations.

Family history classes could be offered in addition to or in lieu of English as second language classes.

With respect to finding, one question some missionaries will ask is, “What do I teach after I have described the family history concepts?” Some *Preach My Gospel* history will help you answer this question.

The genesis of *Preach My Gospel* was President Gordon B. Hinckley expressing dismay that missionaries were memorizing a set of discussions that needed to be taught in a regimented order. He told the following account to emphasize his point.

Two elders knocked on a door and when a woman answered, they identified themselves as ministers. She exclaimed, “Ministers are my problem! My baby died recently and my minister told me my baby was consigned to hell because she had not been baptized.” President Hinckley, with some emotion, said it would be terrible for missionaries to tell her they would discuss that issue in a future discussion if she would agree to be taught. (At that time the plan of salvation was in the fourth discussion.) President Hinckley said the missionaries should go directly to Moroni chapter 8 and teach that infant baptism is wrong and that little children are alive in Christ because of the Atonement.

Chapter 3 of *Preach My Gospel* was designed so that it would not be memorized. The 42

principles were to be learned, but were to be taught according to the needs of the investigators as directed by the Spirit.

Elder Ballard and I had an opportunity to listen to the numerous focus groups that were interviewed prior to *Preach My Gospel*. They had all received the missionary lessons. Some had been baptized; some had not. Some had been baptized and were less active. They were requested to write down what they could remember from the lessons. There were only two things that 90 percent of them could remember: one was the First Vision and the other was the plan of salvation. It was very clear that these two supernal doctrines had stayed in their remembrance because the Holy Ghost had borne witness of the truthfulness of them.

The plan of salvation can be especially effective as the doctrinal steppingstone from family history. The Restoration, Joseph Smith’s First Vision, and the Savior’s central role as the Messiah can be taught within the framework of the plan of salvation, and that will be consistent with the intent of *Preach My Gospel*. The plan of salvation message resonates with Heavenly Father’s children. They feel an echo from the past with respect to premortal existence, and many already believe that families will be reunited after death. The Holy Ghost bears witness to the eternal nature of the family and changes and turns hearts.

The expected benefits that will result from utilizing family history and the accompanying spirit of Elijah are significant. Remember, people all over the world are influenced by the Holy Ghost to be involved in anything to do with families.

In conclusion, Doctrine and Covenants section 101, verse 65 is completely relevant to our day:

“I [the Savior] must gather together my people, according to the parable of the wheat and the tares, that the wheat may be secured in the garners to possess eternal life, and be crowned with celestial glory, when I shall come in the kingdom of my Father to reward every man according as his work shall be.”

The wheat refers to those who are baptized, and the garners are the temples where those who continue on the covenant pathway receive sacred saving and exalting ordinances. To possess eternal life and be crowned with celestial glory is the ultimate reward!

As Ammon recorded in a scripture with a similar message, “They are in the hands of the Lord . . . and he will raise them up at the last day.”¹⁸

When we turn our hearts to the fathers, it will be a beautiful day!

I bear witness that the Lord is hastening His work and as hearts respond to the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, His purposes will be accomplished. This work is both for the living and the dead. I testify that the Savior lives and is the head of this Church, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ Articles of Faith 1:4.

² 1 Samuel 16:7.

³ See Alma 5:10-51.

⁴ See Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.

⁵ See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.

⁶ See Doctrine and Covenants 10:53.

⁷ Malachi 4:6.

⁸ See Doctrine and Covenants 110:14–16.

⁹ Russell M. Nelson, “A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34.

¹⁰ Henry B. Eyring, “Hearts Bound Together,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 78–80.

¹¹ Spencer W. Kimball, “The Things Of Eternity—Stand We In Jeopardy?,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 3; and *Preach My Gospel*, 164.

¹² Conference Report, June 1919, 8.

¹³ Gordon B. Hinckley, *Heroes of the Restoration*, 215.

¹⁴ Gordon B. Hinckley, *Heroes of the Restoration*, 216.

¹⁵ *Preach My Gospel*, 165.

¹⁶ *Preach My Gospel*, 165 (emphasis added).

¹⁷ *Preach My Gospel*, 163.

¹⁸ Alma 26:7.