

## *Begin with the End in Mind*

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Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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What an inspiring experience to see each one of you! We have studied your pictures, and we have studied your backgrounds, and we know much about you. But you just look so much better in the flesh. Thank you for being here, and thanks to Elder Allen for his marvelous ability to know you and to love you. You can just feel it with his effort.

We welcome you to this seminar. My words are inadequate to express our feelings of deep admiration and gratitude for each one of you. Thank you for your faith and your devotion. Thank you for your worthiness and willingness to serve the Lord and these wonderful missionaries.

President Eyring whispered to me as those missionaries sang, “One of them is my granddaughter.” That’s a blood relationship, but you will feel the same way about your missionaries.

Two of you are taking the places of daughters of mine who will be coming home. Thanks to you for letting a daddy get his girls back.

You are special souls. You have been reserved for this point in time to serve as the Lord’s representatives. Together, you will “catch the wave” of His righteousness that is sweeping across the world.

I would like you to meet my wife, Wendy. Wendy, would you please stand for a moment? She and I add our own personal words of welcome to this seminar for new mission presidents and their wives. Thank you, Wendy. We hope and pray that each of you will have a marvelous experience here.

The title I have chosen for my message is “Begin with the End in Mind.” Missionary work should begin and end with our minds focused on the blessings of the holy temple.

Missionary work is all about gathering people out of the world, ennobling them, and enabling them eventually to dwell with God forever. This is His divine desire. Simply summarized, God, our loving Heavenly Father, wants His children to return home to Him. How logical is that? What else would you expect from a loving Father?

Missionaries have a solemn responsibility to act on God’s fondest hope—that His children will return home to Him, and if we will help Him, He will help us.

Missionaries memorize their statement of purpose. It is written on page 1 of *Preach My Gospel*. The sequential steps of that statement refer to faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. As

missionaries recite that, I wonder what they are thinking of when they say those last four words, “enduring to the end.” Does that just mean inhaling and exhaling until we can’t anymore? No.

This statement becomes even more meaningful when considered in light of God’s statement of *His* purpose. His purpose undergirds *everything* we do in this Church. It should be foremost in the mind of each and every missionary. You know it; it is recorded in Moses 1:39: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”

These two objectives—immortality and eternal life—are both enabled by the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Through the Atonement, immortality (or resurrection) comes to all who will ever live. It is a free gift—an unconditional gift.

And through the Atonement, eternal life becomes a possibility for all who qualify for it. It is a conditional gift. We qualify for it step by step, first by gaining faith in Jesus Christ, followed by repenting of our sins, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end, which means the endowment and sealing ordinances of the holy temple. Missionaries open the door to these supernal blessings of eternal life.

Missionary labors should begin with this glorious end in mind. Perhaps I can illustrate that by recounting an experience that began 34 years ago during my professional days as a cardiac surgeon. In the year 1980, I was invited to be a visiting professor of surgery in the People’s Republic of China. Upon my arrival there, I met my host, Dr. Zhang—a distinguished, tall, stately, and scholarly Chinese professor and surgeon. As I met him,

I thought to myself, “How good would he look in white baptismal clothing!” And then, when I met his wife, I thought how really good they would both look in the white clothing of the temple! But I realized that those thoughts were improbable, if not totally impossible, in a communist country.

Professor Zhang and I worked together, not only in China but also in reciprocal visits when he came to my institution in Utah. We became very dear friends. A decade later, after my call to the Twelve, I received a letter from Doctor Zhang. In it he stated that he had lived under various kinds of ideologies. The only system that made any sense to him was the way of my religion. He asked if I would be able to find someone who could teach him and his wife about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints if they were to move to their daughter’s home in Toronto. Of course I replied that this could be done.

When I received the necessary information, I telephoned the mission president in Toronto, President Sidney A. Smith. I asked him if he could send his best missionaries to teach my friends from China. He chuckled and said, “Everyone wants me to send my best missionaries. They are all my best; they are all good.” Then, of course, he acquiesced to my request and said, “I’ll be glad to send them.”

A few weeks later, the mission president phoned me to state that my friends from China had been taught by the missionaries and were ready for baptism.

I went to my quorum president, President Howard W. Hunter, and said, “Do you think I could get an assignment somewhere near Toronto on about this day?” He quickly arranged for that so that I could be there at the baptismal service for Brother and Sister

Zhang, and one year after their baptism, I had the privilege of sealing these dear friends in the Toronto Temple. They really did look good in their white temple clothing!

We still maintain contact by telephone, email, and personal visits when possible. They are now in their 90s. They are still very grateful for my missionary and temple service to them.

So shall it be with you, dear presidents and sisters. Begin with the end in mind. Help your missionaries envision how good their contacts would look in white baptismal clothing and how very good they will look when clothed in white temple clothing.

God wants His children to return to Him. But the amazing thing is, He allows them to *choose* that course; He doesn't force them. He sends His children to earth, causing a veil of forgetfulness to come upon them. They are here to gain a body, to be tested, and to make choices. The greatest of all choices they may make is to *choose* to return to their Father. First, they learn of Him. Then they learn of His Beloved Son. They learn of His Church and of His plan of happiness that allows them to return to Him, via the holy temple, qualified to dwell with Him, His Son, and their families forever.

That glorious end we know as "eternal life." It is God's greatest gift to a human being.<sup>1</sup> Scripture teaches that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>2</sup>

The work of Almighty God and His great plan of happiness are opposed by the adversary and his minions. Satan wants us to be miserable like he is.<sup>3</sup> First he attacked the prophets. When that didn't work, he attacked

the scriptures. When that didn't work, he now attacks at the very heart of the Church, which is the family. You are all painfully aware of this war for the hearts and souls of our fellow human beings, even some members of our own families.

We as the Lord's missionaries teach the truth that "men are, that they might have joy."<sup>4</sup> Joy comes as each individual receives the initial ordinances of salvation. And great joy comes to families as they receive the ordinances of exaltation. The most precious things of life relate to our families.<sup>5</sup> Conversations about the family are wonderful door openers.

The little booklet *My Family: Stories That Bring Us Together* is very useful in conversations with neighbors and friends who would like to know more about their ancestors, and it is also a very useful tool in reactivating perspective elders, an army of which is out there in the world waiting for you. It is a wonderful way to attract and teach investigators. Bishops and branch presidents can also use this booklet as a resource new converts. They are all to have a calling in the Church. Why not have them fill out their own family information as their first assignment? To extend a call to converts immediately focusing on their families will be very happy for them. It can become a steppingstone toward temple work for relatives of these new members. The retention rates will be infinitely greater if they will do temple work for their ancestors. Even in the first year, they can be baptized for deceased relatives.

Joy is found in family relationships because they are central to God's eternal plan. Wise missionaries capitalize on that reality.

Missionaries invite people to come unto Jesus Christ. They talk of Christ. They rejoice in

Christ. They preach of Christ.<sup>6</sup> They teach that the Atonement of the Lord enables both of God's objectives, immortality and eternal life, to become a reality.

Eternal life is a conditional gift—conditioned upon obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.<sup>7</sup> This truth is a topic for missionaries. They can help by teaching God's plan and the doctrine of personal progression. They can teach the truth about the divine potential of every human being to literally become more like their Father in Heaven. That potential starts by developing an unshakable faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith in Their plan for God's children.

Their plan includes repentance. We are to call *all* people to repent. Yes, even as law-abiding, conscientious citizens, we—who are striving our best to do what is right—are still invited to repent. Repentance really means conversion—true conversion—to the Lord and His ways. Total conversion is total repentance!

Commitment keeping prepares a person for covenant keeping. The gospel of Jesus Christ includes the making and keeping of sacred covenants, the first of which is the covenant of baptism. The act of baptism itself does not wash sin away. Thanks to the Atonement, the effects of sin depart when one faithfully keeps the baptismal covenant to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, comes the gift of the Holy Ghost. What a blessing that is! Like all gifts, it needs to be unwrapped and used. Then we come to those final four words in our purpose statement: “[endure] to the end.” That end includes the endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple.

“Whenever the Lord has had a people on the earth who will obey His word, they have been commanded to build temples.”<sup>8</sup> Temple patterns are as old as human life on earth. Actually, the plan for temples was established even *before* the foundation of the world, when provision was made for the redemption of those who might die without a knowledge of the gospel.<sup>9</sup>

Adam and Eve were instructed by the Lord to build an altar and offer sacrifices.<sup>10</sup> The tabernacle of Moses was a portable precursor.<sup>11</sup> Then came that temple built in the days of Solomon. It was destroyed in 600 B.C. and restored by Zerubbabel about a hundred years later. It was burned in 37 B.C. and rebuilt by King Herod.

This was the temple that Jesus knew and loved. But He did not love the way the people defiled the temple. At the first cleansing, Jesus reverently referred to the temple as “my Father’s house.”<sup>12</sup> At the time of the second cleansing of the temple, He called it “my house.”<sup>13</sup> Later, when He foresaw the temple being further desecrated, Jesus called it “your house . . . left unto you desolate.”<sup>14</sup> That prophecy was fulfilled when the temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70.

Several years ago, I was in Jerusalem being guided through excavations tunneled to the left of the present so-called “Wailing Wall.” There, in that tunnel, Jewish rabbis were praying for the day when the third temple would be built in Jerusalem. I was told that one of them had asked Israel’s famous archeologist, Yigael Yadin, what they would do with a new temple if it were built in Jerusalem. He replied, “I don’t know. Ask the Mormons. They’ll know!”

Indeed we do know! Temples are an essential component of the Restoration of the gospel in its fulness.

After decades of spiritual darkness came the beginning of the Restoration. In 1820, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Later, They directed him to build the first temple of this new and final dispensation of the fulness of times. It was built in Kirtland, Ohio. It was a preparatory temple, where important keys of the priesthood were conferred upon human beings. The next temple, the Nauvoo Temple, had a baptismal font provided so that Saints could be baptized vicariously for their deceased ancestors.<sup>15</sup>

You know that President Brigham Young, shortly after he arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, touched his cane to the desert soil and proclaimed, “Here we will build a temple to our God.”<sup>16</sup>

Year by year and step by step, revelation has come to successive prophets. President Wilford Woodruff taught this concept when addressing general conference in April 1894, he said: “[Joseph Smith and Brigham Young] did not receive all the revelations that belong to [temple] work; neither did President Taylor, nor has Wilford Woodruff. There will be no end to this work until it is perfected.”<sup>17</sup>

At the dedication of the St. George Temple on January 1, 1877, the very year that President Young passed away, he said: “What do you suppose the fathers would say if they could speak from the dead? Would they not say, ‘We have lain here thousands of years, here in this prison house, waiting for this dispensation to come?’ . . . What would they whisper in our ears? Why, if they had the power the very thunders of heaven would be

in our ears, if we could but realize the importance of the work we are engaged in. All the angels in heaven are looking at this little handful of people, and stimulating them to the salvation of the human family. . . . When I think upon this subject, I want the tongues of seven thunders to wake up the people.”<sup>18</sup>

President Howard W. Hunter added this statement: “I invite the Latter-day Saints to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of [their] membership. It is the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church worthy to enter the temple. It would please the Lord if every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend.”<sup>19</sup>

Now we have 143 functioning temples, and more are coming.<sup>20</sup>

Why do we have temples? Why do we have missionaries? Why should anyone join this Church? To make life more pleasant, satisfying, or uplifting? Yes, but other organizations can also do some of that. In fact, we join this Church to make and keep sacred covenants that will qualify us for eternal life! We join this Church so that our families can be together forever! Only the Lord’s Church can offer these enduring blessings!

Without sealing ordinances performed for families in the temple, the whole earth would be utterly wasted!<sup>21</sup> The purposes of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement would all be frustrated.

I repeat: God simply wants His children to return to Him. For this to happen, each of us needs to make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of salvation and exaltation, and be linked to both our ancestors

and our posterity. Only then are we qualified to dwell with Deity and our families forever.

These hopes we harbor for every new member of the Church. Practically speaking, however, we realize that too many of our new members fall away from the Church and never enjoy these blessings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley once said: “There is absolutely no point in doing missionary work unless we hold on to the fruits of that effort. The two must be inseparable. These converts are precious. Every convert is a son or daughter of God. Every convert is a great and serious responsibility. It is an absolute imperative that we look after those who have become a part of us. To paraphrase the Savior, what shall it profit a missionary if he baptize the whole world unless those baptized remain in the Church? (see Mark 8:36).”<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, what shall it profit any of us?

As you dear presidents and sisters embark on your new assignments, remember the important qualities of leadership, stewardship, and the power of partnership. Let me explain by an analogy.

When a heart surgeon performs an operation, he does not act alone. He works with an assistant, an anesthesiologist, nurses, and others. Each member of the team plays a vital role in safeguarding the life of the patient.

A successful operation is immediately followed by a period of intensive care in the hospital. Later, when the patient’s condition is stable, he or she is referred to a step-down unit, where he or she receives continuous but less intense hospital care, and then ultimately the patient is released to the tender and loving

care of family at home. A successful outcome depends upon good communication, cooperation, and commitment by each member of the team at all levels. If a complication should ensue, immediate steps are taken to rescue the patient, and nobody quibbles about whose job it is to save the patient’s life.

In missionary work, a successful outcome with either a new or returning member reflects complete cooperation among the bishop, ward council, ward missionary leader, and full-time missionaries. They work as partners. They sense their combined responsibility to care for the spiritual life of each precious son or daughter of God.

Regardless of their age, new members are like children in the Church. We cannot fail to provide them with spiritual nurturing and strength whenever needed. Let us remember the lesson so often taught by President Gordon B. Hinckley: Every convert needs a friend, a responsibility, and to be nurtured by the word of God. That advice is as good now as it was when it came from his own lips.

Now, in order to accomplish this team effort more effectively, and as directed by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we announce four adjustments to the teaching process, designed to offer more help for our new members. Remember, we want them to remain so that they can attain all the blessings the Lord has in store for His faithful children.

The following four adjustments are to be implemented immediately:

1. Missionaries will teach “Lesson 5: Laws and Ordinances” in chapter 3 of *Preach My Gospel* both *before* and *after*

baptism. Formerly, the lesson was taught only after baptism.

2. Mission presidents will actively teach and reteach the Lord's standard for baptism, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants section 20, verse 37, and repeated in *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 12. Two phrases are particularly important in preparing the investigator for the covenant of baptism: "having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins."

These first two adjustments will strengthen the investigator before baptism and ensure that he or she is spiritually prepared to live according to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, enduring to the end, which includes receiving the endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple.

3. When possible, missionaries will work closely with each new member for at least three to four months after baptism and continue to keep close to them for at least a year, and hopefully for many years and even generations.

This is not a major adjustment; it is a practical step. Think of it just as a doctor looks at a medical record to assess a patient's progress in follow-up visits. Good missionaries are like good doctors. With the passage of time, they want their patients (new members) to enjoy excellent results. Missionaries work with the ward mission leader and the ward council using the New and Returning Member Progress Form to monitor the spiritual progress of each new member.

Within one month of a new member's baptism, missionaries will work with ward leaders to ensure that:

- The bishop has interviewed the member and reviewed the principle of tithing and other worthiness matters to assist in preparation for temple worship.
- Eligible males have been interviewed for and have received the Aaronic Priesthood.
- The member is enrolled in the Gospel Principles course.
- Ward and full-time missionaries are reteaching missionary lessons.

Within six months after a new member's baptism, missionaries help ensure that the member:

- Has been interviewed for and received a responsibility or calling in the Church, such as entering information in their own *My Family* booklet and filling out their own family group sheet.
- Is regularly attending sacrament meeting.
- Is preparing to perform vicarious baptismal ordinances for ancestors.

4. Missionaries will take the lead in reteaching all five of the lessons in *Preach My Gospel* after baptism.

Missionaries will look to their ward mission leader as their personal partner so that a friend in the ward may be identified to help teach the lessons. The missionaries should be the active force in scheduling and teaching the lessons, helping each new member to make and keep sacred covenants.

This fourth adjustment will require a bit of wisdom and tact. At the same time missionaries are teaching the convert, they may also be teaching ward members how to teach the lessons. Missionaries will need to be as patient and compassionate with a ward member as they would be with a new missionary companion. Together, members and missionaries work as partners to ensure the spiritual health of new members.

The magic of a true partnership is this: More can be accomplished by partners than could be done by each acting alone. With true partners, one plus one is more than two. Dr. Will Mayo and Dr. Charles Mayo formed the Mayo Clinic. A wife and a husband can form a family. As partners, missionaries and members can grow a ward and build up the Church.<sup>23</sup>

As equal partners, missionaries and ward members understand their shared stewardship for new members. They act in love as guided by the Spirit. They love new members and help them progress toward their own sacred ordinances and covenants of the holy temple.

Some of you may wonder, “How will we know if we have been successful as a mission president and companion?” The answer: Love and care for your missionaries. That love will result in conversions!

Every missionary can have at least one convert on a mission: himself or herself! Not just a baptism, not just an attender, not just a name to be remembered—but a rock-solid, true-blue, through-and-through disciple of the Lord who will be an exemplary member and spouse long after the mission is over. We want your missionaries to develop faith so steadfast that their children and their grandchildren will qualify for the blessings of the temple.

How will we measure your success as mission presidents?

Yes, we want both converted missionaries and plenty of baptisms. But most of all, we want the grandchildren of your missionaries and the grandchildren of those whom your missionaries baptize to be endowed and sealed in the temple. We want multi-generational families of faith. God wants His children to return to Him, converted, endowed, and sealed as families!

God bless you beloved presidents and companions. We will be praying for you and your missionaries every day. We honor you, we love you, and we bless you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>1</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.

<sup>2</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>3</sup> See 2 Nephi 2:27.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Nephi 2:25.

<sup>5</sup> See 1 Nephi 8:12.

<sup>6</sup> See 2 Nephi 25:26.

<sup>7</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.

<sup>8</sup> Bible Dictionary, “Temple.”

<sup>9</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 124:33, 41; 128:5.



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- <sup>10</sup> See Moses 5:5. The Old Testament has many references to temple activity and clothing (for example, see these chapters: Exodus 28, 29; Leviticus 8).
- <sup>11</sup> See Exodus 38:21.
- <sup>12</sup> See John 2:13–16.
- <sup>13</sup> See Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17.
- <sup>14</sup> Matthew 23:38; Luke 13:35.
- <sup>15</sup> There, some 6,000 ordinances were performed before the temple had to be abandoned. Rebuilt and rededicated in the year 2002, it now stands in full splendor and majesty.
- <sup>16</sup> See Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (1930), 104–5.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (1946), 154.
- <sup>18</sup> *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 403, 404.
- <sup>19</sup> “Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> All 143 temples are equal in authority and efficacy. The ordinances are the same and the covenants equally binding.
- <sup>21</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 2:3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
- <sup>22</sup> “Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 108.
- <sup>23</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 31:7; 64:33.