

PARENTS, HELP THEM TO Prepare

The new missionary interview questions provide parents with a great resource to guide their children toward successful service.

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My son-in-law is preparing to become a commercial airline pilot. As I have watched him work toward his goal, I have learned that the training and examinations are rigorous. He has spent years studying and practicing, obtained a private pilot license, flown hundreds of hours on his own and with certified instructors, and passed intense written, verbal, and practical examinations.

When he finally completes his preparation he will know, and the airline that employs him will know, that he is truly ready to fly. They will also know they can trust him to safely carry passengers from one destination to another.

Invaluable Interviews

Informal interviews with flight instructors—conversations, really—have been a constant part of my son-in-law’s training. Their guidance is invaluable.

“Talking things through with them, especially as we fly together, answers a lot of questions,” my son-in-law says. “They point out areas where I need to improve, and that enables me to work to become fully qualified.” These preliminary “interviews” prepare him for a final interview required to obtain a commercial license.

As I have thought about what it takes to become a commercial pilot, I have been struck with the similarities between flight training and missionary preparation, particularly when it comes to conversations and interviews between youth and their parents and leaders. Over time, frequent, informal discussions with parents and leaders can help children learn general principles, and help youth be ready for the formal interviews that can lead to full-time missionary service.

Interviews are a part of life—school admission interviews, job interviews, and performance appraisals, for example. In the Church you have a baptism interview, bishop’s interviews, temple recommend interviews, as well as interviews for serving a mission.

The First Presidency recently introduced standard questions to be used by bishops and stake presidents as they interview prospective missionaries, saying, “Effective interviews are an essential part of preparing missionaries.”¹

What’s New, What’s Not

Having a list of specific questions for interviewing missionary candidates is new. So is making the mission interview questions available to parents, leaders, and teachers.



Frequent, informal discussions with parents can help youth learn gospel principles that will enable them to “prepare for take-off” as full-time missionaries.



This allows them to teach principles to children and youth and identify areas where improvement or additional preparation may be required.

What's not new is missionary standards. The questions do not change or add to the requirements for full-time missionary service. They reflect the same standards and principles found in the scriptures, *Handbook 1* and *Handbook 2*, *Preach My Gospel*, *True to the Faith*, and *For the Strength of Youth*. The questions are intended to help prospective full-time missionaries understand what will be required of them so that they can better prepare.

“Church leaders desire that this sacred time of service be a joyous and faith-building experience for every missionary, from young men and women to senior couples.”²

In addition, “Missionaries are most likely to experience success when they are worthy and physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared for missionary service.”³

As President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) once explained:

“[Missionary] work is rigorous. It demands strength and vitality. It demands mental sharpness and capacity. . . .

“ . . . Missionary work is not a rite of passage in the Church. It is a call extended by the President of the Church to those who are worthy and able to accomplish it. . . .

“ . . . There must be health and strength, both physical and mental, for the work is demanding, the hours are long, and the stress can be heavy.”⁴

Those considering full-time missionary service can use the questions to gauge their own preparedness and have meaningful conversations about the qualifications for missionary service with their parents and priesthood leaders.

Gauging Preparation

Parents can also use the questions as a guide in teaching children gospel principles and in helping youth to prepare as they approach the age for full-time missionary service. Like the flight instructors who help my son-in-law, parents can point out areas where their children need to improve so that they can become fully qualified.

A father in North Carolina, USA, put it this way: “What a great thing to know the questions in advance! Can you imagine the advantage you would have, going to a job interview, if you knew beforehand what the prospective employer was going to ask?”

Parents can discuss with their children how to prepare spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially for missionary service. Prospective missionaries who face challenges will have time to address those challenges and will come to interviews able to discuss what they have done to prepare themselves to represent the Lord and His Church.

“Preparing a missionary for service is the collective blessing and responsibility of the prospective missionary, their family, and Church leaders. All are encouraged to engage in candid and meaningful conversations to ensure that the prospective missionary is adequately prepared to meet the rigors and challenges that a mission might present.”⁵

What the Questions Cover

Personal worthiness is just one qualification to serve a full-time mission. In addition, a missionary candidate needs to meet physical, mental, and emotional qualifications in order to serve. The questions are intended to guide the interviews bishops and stake presidents will have with missionary candidates, so that leaders may discern the candidate's mind, heart, and capacity to serve. The interviews “should be a sacred experience for the individual and the priesthood leader, characterized by great love and the guidance of the Holy Ghost.”⁶

You can find the full set of questions in this month's *New Era* magazine or online at LDS.org, or you can obtain them from your bishop or youth leaders. Here is an overview of the subjects the questions cover:

Worthiness and Testimony

- Faith in God
- Testimony of Jesus Christ and His Atonement
- Understanding of the Holy Ghost and spiritual promptings
- Ability to bear testimony



- Knowledge and application of repentance
- Testimony of living prophets, the Restoration, and the Book of Mormon
- Commitment to living gospel standards:
 - Being chaste
 - Avoiding pornography
 - Paying tithing
 - Living the Word of Wisdom (including being free from substance abuse)
 - Keeping the Sabbath day holy
 - Being honest
 - Avoiding affiliation with or sympathy for individuals or groups whose teachings oppose or are contrary to the teachings and practices of the Church
 - Resolving unresolved serious transgressions or misdeeds

Eligibility and Capacity

- Physical, mental, or emotional conditions that would make it difficult to maintain a normal missionary schedule need to be discussed.
- Reading disorders that may affect ability to read and memorize need to be discussed.

- Speech disorders or conditions that may affect ability to speak, learn, teach, and communicate need to be discussed.
- Legal and financial responsibility and freedom, including unpaid debt.
- Criminal behavior.
- Sexual abuse of children.

Information concerning the physical, mental, and emotional preparedness of the missionary candidate will be shared with medical professionals at Church headquarters to help the Brethren determine the best opportunities for that missionary. It is important to know that once missionary recommendations are received at Church headquarters, all decisions concerning missionary eligibility are made by General Authorities of the Church. When a missionary is called by the President of the Church, the person’s assignment is always made by a member of the First Presidency or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Like flight instructors, parents can point out ways their children can become fully prepared to soar in service.

LEARN MORE

Find answers to frequently asked questions about the new missionary interviews at lds.org/go/answersE818.



When pilots complete preparation, they know they are ready to fly. As prospective missionaries complete their preparation, they should feel a similar feeling.

Some prospective missionaries who face challenges may, with time, prepare themselves to qualify to serve. For example, Rachel Roy of Utah, USA, faced physical limitations because of cystic fibrosis. But she worked on her diet, exercise, and medical treatments, and was able to serve a full-time mission in Massachusetts, USA.⁷

The candidate's bishop and stake president can provide counsel about repentance for serious transgressions, such as adultery, fornication, heavy petting, other sexual perversions, or serious violation of civil law. Repentance must be genuine and demonstrated over time. A prospective missionary must also overcome any addictions before being considered for missionary service. A person with an extended pattern of serious sexual transgressions will not normally be considered for missionary service.

Celebrate What *Is* Possible

Like my son-in-law, I also thought about becoming a pilot. But my eyesight is poor

and I'm afraid of heights. Still, I loved being around aircraft. When I was in the military, I was able to serve for eight years on a ground crew. I conducted pre-flight and post-flight inspections, made sure planes were serviced and maintained, helped to park planes and jets, and in dozens of other ways contributed to our squadron's success. I wasn't a pilot, but I *did* feel I belonged.

As prospective missionaries prepare to serve, some may find that they will not be able to serve full-time away from home. President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, offers this counsel:

“Young men and young women with serious mental, emotional, or physical limitations are excused from full-time missionary service. They shouldn't feel guilty about that. They are just as precious and important to the Church as if they were able to go into the mission field.

“But while they don't serve full-time, they can take every opportunity to find and help

people join the Church. They can be member missionaries in college, at work, and in their neighborhoods. They ought to go forward, have a wonderful and full life, and help build the kingdom wherever they are.”⁸

For worthy candidates not eligible for full-time service, priesthood leaders can help identify other appropriate service opportunities, such as serving as a Church-service missionary, volunteer, temple and family history consultant, temple worker, and more. Parents and leaders can help youth understand that the Lord values all of the ways His children serve Him, share His gospel, and build His kingdom. (To learn more about what young Church-service missionaries do, go to lds.org/yccsm.)

Ready to Fly

When commercial airline pilots complete their preparation, they know they are ready to fly. As prospective missionaries complete their preparation, they should feel a similar feeling.

Remember that “missionaries, no matter their assignment, have the sacred privilege to represent the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. As such, they must be properly called, assigned, and set apart. . . . Leaders should submit a recommendation only when they are satisfied to the best of their knowledge that a missionary candidate is able to fulfill the responsibilities for which he or she is being recommended.”⁹

Missionaries should feel the same way. And so should parents. ■

NOTES

1. First Presidency letter, Oct. 20, 2017, news.lds.org.
2. “Interviewing Prospective Missionaries,” attachment to First Presidency letter, Oct. 20, 2017, news.lds.org.
3. “Frequently Asked Questions,” supplement to First Presidency letter, Oct. 20, 2017, news.lds.org.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Missionary Service,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 17, 18.
5. “Interviewing Prospective Missionaries.”
6. “Interviewing Prospective Missionaries.”
7. Rachel Roy, “Exercising Faith,” *New Era*, March 2018, 18–23.
8. M. Russell Ballard, “How to Prepare to Be a Good Missionary,” *New Era*, March 2007, 9.
9. “Interviewing Prospective Missionaries.”

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- Take an active role in helping your children prepare for missionary service.
- Share the qualifications for missionary service with your children and help them in their efforts to understand and live the standards.
- Use interview questions as topics for family home evening lessons and discussions.
- As children near the age for missionary service, be sure they understand the questions they will be asked in interviews with the bishop and stake president.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

- Share interview questions with all prospective full-time missionaries and their parents before the interview and encourage them to review and discuss them.
- Discuss the interview questions as a ward council.
- Consider a fifth-Sunday discussion or other forum to share the interview questions with the adults and discuss ways parents can help youth prepare for missionary service.
- Share the interview questions with young men and young women beginning at an early age to help them understand the standards and qualifications for full-time missionary service.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

As parents discuss repentance, chastity, tithing, the Word of Wisdom, Sabbath day observance, and honesty and integrity, the following resources may be helpful:

- Resources included with the official letter of Oct. 20, 2017 (see news.lds.org) and in the Missionary Online Recommendation System.
- *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*
- *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*
- *For the Strength of Youth*
- The Topical Guide in the scriptures
- Gospel Topics at topics.lds.org