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SUNBEAMS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND GOSPEL JOY

A few years ago, when Elder M. Russell Ballard and I were the General Authority advisers to the Church Public Affairs Department, we realized that media outlets often contacted people who weren't members of the Church to find out about the Church. Desiring a change, Elder Ballard and I, under the direction of the First Presidency, began visiting the editorial boards of major newspapers, sharing the message that, as Latter-day Saints, we are politically neutral. We don't take a position in terms of candidates or parties. We do, however, want to be the ones who define our own faith. "We want you," we told them, "to come and talk to us if you're going to discuss what we believe."

Those visits were well received, and we found that our request resonated. And we're now finding a much better understanding of Latter-day Saints among the media. Some old stereotypes have been broken down, and we see other people recognizing us as people of character who try to approach life from an educated and informed point of view. We've also noticed a realization outside the Church that Latter-day Saints aren't all the same; our people are very different from one another in good and interesting ways.

With these shifting attitudes, it's a wonderful time to be a member of the Church and for members to speak up and answer questions from their friends and neighbors about our beliefs. As we do so, there is nothing more

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 have to do with
 public affairs?
 A lot when they
 represent the joy
 of the gospel.*

significant than that we feel joy and that we rejoice in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know what the ultimate outcome is, we know who Jesus Christ is, and we have the opportunity of having a loving Father in Heaven bless us.

I find it interesting that our best member missionaries, those who take the opportunity of sharing the gospel, are often people who are joyful. When I was the Executive Director of the Missionary Department, we suddenly noticed some baptisms in France. Thrilled, we wondered about the reasons, and there were several. But one of the main reasons was a sister who went to work on Monday morning and talked about Sunbeams. After the Sabbath, she would—with great joy and delight—tell her co-workers about her experience teaching young children the day before. Before long, her associates could hardly wait for her to talk about the Sunbeams. And what did that do? Here was a group of people living with the same concerns we all have about our world and the future, and all of a sudden, there was a person who was not only joyful but joyful about children—who represent the future. This sister clearly loved the Savior, and that love radiated. Her co-workers wanted to know more.

If we rejoice in what we have, if we feel joy and express it, we are happier. We do what the Lord wants us to do, we become better people, and by association, those around us—our children and friends and neighbors—are happier. Joy is the key. As we share the joy of the gospel, we accomplish what the Lord wants us to accomplish. ■

Adapted from a Mormon Channel interview. To listen to the entire interview in English, go to mormonchannel.org/conversations/27.