

Dear

FUTURE MISSIONARIES

By Caleb N. Porter

Now that I'm in the mission field, here are some things I wish I'd learned before I left.

Editor's note: While serving as a full-time missionary in the Mexico Torreón Mission, Elder Porter wrote this letter home to the younger members of his family.

I wanted to share some insights I have gained on how to better prepare to serve a full-time mission. These insights have come to me gradually with experience and time, and I hope by sharing them that I can encourage you to begin to prepare now to have greater success in your missionary efforts.

Learn to Talk to People

One of the first things I learned is the importance of being able to carry on a conversation with people face-to-face. Texting and social media can be wonderful tools, but they cannot replace the dynamic exchange that takes place while you're simply conversing with someone. If you are in the grocery line, talk with the person next to you, even if it's simply about the weather.

The best place to start is in your own home. Have conversations with your family. Talk with your parents and siblings about various things, and tell them how you feel. Learn how to express yourself. Your missionary efforts will be more successful if you can lessen your fear of talking to people, especially to complete strangers, about things that matter to you.

Talking to strangers can be hard, but it's a reality of missionary work—you will be talking with strangers

for the majority of your mission. The more you can learn to look someone in the eye and share your feelings, the greater the opportunities you will have to invite the Spirit to be a part of your conversations. You will also learn that even though folks may be "strangers" to you initially, all are in reality your brothers and sisters, so do not be afraid to "open your mouths" (D&C 33:8–9).





Learn to **Listen** and Then Act

You will be spending a lot of time listening to those you teach. They will share with you their thoughts, feelings, and even their doubts. Learn to sincerely listen. This will help you to more easily recognize the challenges your investigators may be facing and to more specifically address their concerns (see *Preach My Gospel* [2004], 185–86). Begin now by learning to listen sincerely to your sisters, brothers, parents, and friends. While you're listening, learn to forget yourself in the process. Don't focus on how you're going to fix other people's problems or respond to their concerns. Instead, just listen and allow the Spirit to direct you on what you should say and when.

This can be challenging, especially if you're learning a new language. I have noticed that if I become too focused on what to say or how to say things correctly with the language, then I often lose the chance for the Spirit to guide my thoughts and words. I have begun to learn how to focus on acting when the Spirit prompts me.

Learn to **Follow the Spirit**

One of the biggest blessings during my time of service has been learning the importance of acting on promptings when they are received. When the Spirit tells me to do something, I try to do it, no matter how small it may seem. For instance, I felt prompted to pray for rain while teaching a family for the first time. The little rancho where I am serving has been in drought for several years and rarely sees rain, but the Spirit prompted me to ask for rain. That night, it rained. This made such a strong impression that the family asked us to return to continue to teach the gospel.



Learn to **Ask Questions**

I have learned the importance of asking questions when prompted by the Spirit. To you future missionaries, I would recommend that you practice asking questions. In doing so, learn to be direct so that you can help others get to the heart of their concerns. From my brief observations, I have seen that successful missionaries are those who have learned the principle of listening and then asking questions that promote pondering. This approach





has been much more successful for me than trying to force a conversation that is one-sided or trying to prove the truthfulness of the gospel by logic alone. I have instead learned the significance of inviting others to learn for themselves by asking important gospel questions that invite deeper contemplation, reflection, and personal study.

Learn to Be Bold

I have learned the importance of being bold. We sometimes invite those we teach to set a baptismal date during our first visit. Initially, this was really scary for me, but I have seen many times the fruits of extending the invitation of baptism during that first visit. As I was reading the Book of Mormon, I realized that one of the first things Christ did during his visit to the Americas was to invite those He taught to be baptized in His name (see 3 Nephi 11:23). Baptism is the gateway that allows individuals to partake of the gospel and eventually receive temple blessings. This is one reason we serve missions—to extend the same invitation and blessings to all of God's children.

Therefore, be bold with those around you. Invite your friends to seminary, Church services, and activities. Invite them to hear the missionary lessons if prompted. Invite them to hear your testimony. As missionaries, you will have both the responsibility and authority to invite people to repent and “come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59). Remember, you have something of “great price” to share; there is no reason to hold back. Learn to be bold and direct.



Learn to Love

Perhaps most important, learn to sincerely love those you will have the opportunity to teach. Pray for them, serve them, and show them that you care, and they will begin to have confidence in you as a representative of Jesus Christ.



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If you begin to prepare now by talking to others, listening to their concerns, asking questions as prompted by the Spirit, and then learning to be bold and to love, I know the Lord will bless you in your missionary efforts. **NE**

More Ways to Learn

Find additional help to prepare for missionary work in *Preach My Gospel* (see [lds.org/go/02G](https://www.lds.org/go/02G)) and the *New Era* special issue on missionary preparation ([lds.org/go/02H](https://www.lds.org/go/02H)).