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YE Are the LIGHT of the WORLD

Returned missionaries often refer to their service as the best years of their lives. Why is this the case?

Perhaps it's the joy of seeing another soul come unto the Savior (see D&C 18:15). Perhaps it has to do with the bonds they feel with investigators, converts, members, companions, and mission presidents. I think these things are part of it, but I think it also has to do with the light of the Savior they feel—and the light they share in the form of service and testimony.

We know that the Savior identified Himself as the Light of the World (see John 9:5; 12:46). But in the Sermon on the Mount, He declared the same thing of His followers:

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which

is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16).

Sharing our light—that is, reflecting the Savior's light (see 3 Nephi 18:24)—is something we can do all of our lives, and it's something we need to begin while we are young. As we engage in formal missionary assignments and lifelong missionary work, we can look to three people who, in my opinion, best exemplify this work: Alma, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the Savior. All three have strongly influenced my understanding of the importance of missionary work—of showing the Savior's light to the world.

Alma: Being Humble

Alma's teachings were very instrumental in my intention to serve a mission. Although my grandmother ensured that I was baptized when I was eight years old, I seldom attended church in my youth. When missionaries crossed my path when I was a young adult and I began thinking about the Church, I started to study the scriptures. Alma's discussion about being compelled to be humble versus choosing to be humble caught

my attention (see Alma 32:13–15). I felt inadequate because of my shortcomings, but I gave it some serious thought—deciding to serve a mission would require significant change. I already had a career and my own business, and I wanted to marry my girlfriend (who, by the way, is now my wife). Could I give all of that up to serve the Lord?

I went to a private place and took time—real time—to pray and commune with my Heavenly Father. In humbling myself, I came to recognize that Heavenly Father did want me to serve. I decided to follow His word, and in doing so, I found the truth of Alma's promise: “He that truly humbleth himself, and repenteth of his sins, and endureth to the end, the same shall be blessed—yea, much more blessed than they who are compelled to be humble” (Alma 32:15).

Even though I was well over age 26, I went to my bishop, who helped prepare me. I submitted my mission papers and waited for months. Finally, I received a call telling me I was not eligible to serve a full-time mission but



As we engage in missionary work, we can draw inspiration from the examples of the Savior, Alma, and Joseph Smith.

that I could serve in public communications, the field I was already working in. It was an exciting time. I was trained and then appeared in media discussions soon after the Church in Mexico was officially recognized by the Mexican government. I helped stakes train their public affairs specialists and established relationships with government officials. This opportunity to serve blessed me in more ways than I can describe and in ways I never could have anticipated. It affected many aspects of my life for good.

Your missionary service will be the single most important thing to prepare you for the rest of your life. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) promised prospective missionaries: “The time you spend in the mission field, if those years are spent in dedicated service, will yield a greater return on investment than any other two years of your lives. . . . If you serve a mission faithfully and well, you will be a better husband, you will be a better father, you will be a better student, a better worker.”¹ If you are not beyond the age to serve



MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Formal missionary service is not limited to those who are able to serve proselyting missions. There are many young adults for whom a proselyting mission isn't possible due to physical, mental, or emotional challenges. These young men and women do a great deal of good in Church organizations throughout the world as Church-service missionaries.

Church-service missionaries are needed worldwide to serve in family history centers, bishops' storehouses, canneries, employment centers, community service organizations, media positions, and various other Church operations. Men and women of mission age who are unable to serve a proselyting mission can counsel with parents and leaders to consider options for a service mission. While service missions vary in terms of assignment and length depending on the missionary's abilities, they involve real work, real service, and real sacrifice that make a difference in building the kingdom of God on earth.

For more information on Church-service missions, please visit www.lds.org/service/missionary-service.



a full-time mission, prepare now to serve. The blessings you will receive will far outweigh any sacrifice you may make.

I know challenges may come as you contemplate serving a mission. The adversary does all he can to discourage the Lord's work from moving forward. If you are unsure about whether you should serve a mission, I invite you to humble yourself and

then kneel and ask Heavenly Father. He made known His will for me, and I know He will do the same for you.

Joseph Smith: Gaining an Eternal Perspective

From Joseph Smith I have learned that focusing on the eternal perspective can increase your ability as a servant of the Lord. I used to wonder how he was able to endure all that he endured—the trials and the persecution in particular. But I came to understand that because Joseph saw beyond the veil, he knew that this mortal existence is only a fraction of our eternal journey. I wondered what would happen to

me if I understood what he did, and in pondering this, I came to realize that when we focus on the here and now, our vision is limited. When we maintain an eternal perspective, we understand how crucial it is that we become committed to helping others, rescuing others, and bearing testimony of the truths we know.

If we were to focus, as Joseph did, on things from an eternal viewpoint, how much more willing and eager would we be to share the gospel in our everyday lives? Sharing our light—reflecting the Savior's light—need not be limited to formal missionary assignments. When you are open and receptive, you can share the Light of Christ with those around you, sharing who you are as a member of the Church and what you believe. As you move from place to place throughout your life and associate with many different people, I encourage you to get to know your neighbors, your classmates, and your co-workers of other faiths. Follow Elder M. Russell Ballard's instruction to share the gospel online, including through social media websites, blogs, and video-sharing sites.²

While we can teach others about the gospel through a formal discussion, sometimes all it takes for someone to turn to the gospel are a righteous example and a willingness to share your testimony through the way you live your life. When you live worthy of the Spirit and let your light shine, then people will "see your

good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

The Savior: Concentrating on Others

And finally, the Savior, who is our example in all things, taught me not to worry so much about myself but to concentrate on the salvation of others. His entire life was about others. Sometimes in considering sharing the gospel with those of other faiths, we are afraid of what they will think of us or how they will respond. In thinking about full-time missionary service, we often worry too much about income or schooling or relationships—these are good and important things but still things that can wait. The Savior Himself had “not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). He taught His followers to “seek . . . first the kingdom of God,” and “all these things” would be added to them (Matthew 6:33).

The same is true for us. As we seek to follow and reflect the Light of the World, blessings will come to the world and ultimately to us as individuals. May we all seek not to hide that light but to bring it forward throughout our lives. ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 52.
2. See M. Russell Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Ensign*, July 2008, 60.



RESPONDING TO A CALL FROM THE PROPHET

If the opening sessions of general conference are any indication of what is on the prophet’s mind, it’s evident that President Thomas S. Monson is thinking about missionary work.

In April 2011 he reported on the number of missionaries and missions throughout the world and then said: “Missionary work is the lifeblood of the kingdom. May I suggest that if you are able, you might consider making a contribution to the General Missionary Fund of the Church.”¹

In October 2010 he said:

“I repeat what prophets have long taught—that every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much. Young men, I admonish you to prepare for service as a missionary. Keep yourselves clean and pure and worthy to represent the Lord. Maintain your health and strength. Study the scriptures. Where such is available, participate in seminary or institute. Familiarize yourself with the missionary handbook *Preach My Gospel*.

“A word to you young sisters: while you do not have the same priesthood responsibility as do the young men to serve as full-time missionaries, you also make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome your service.”²

And in October 2009 he said: “I would ask that your faith and prayers continue to be offered in behalf of those areas where our influence is limited and where we are not allowed to share the gospel freely at this time. Miracles can occur as we do so.”³

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “It’s Conference Once Again,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 6.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “As We Meet Together Again,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 5–6.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 6.