

# “Bring Souls unto Me”

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*Missionaries will continue to do the best they can, but wouldn't it be better if you and I stepped up to do a job that is rightfully ours?*



Many years ago I was driving along University Avenue near the mouth of Provo Canyon when I saw ahead of me the traffic slowing down. Up ahead there were police cars with their lights flashing, a fire truck, and several search and rescue vehicles all huddled together, blocking the road into Provo Canyon. At first I was annoyed since it seemed like we might be there for a long time. I was also curious—what was causing all the commotion?

As I looked up the rock face along the east side of the entrance to Provo Canyon, I saw some men climbing. I assumed they were the search and

rescue people. What were they climbing to? Eventually I saw it. Somehow a ewe, a lost sheep, had made her way about 25 feet (8 m) up the rock face, and she was stranded there. She was not a mountain goat or mountain sheep, just a white ewe separated from a shepherd's flock.

As I had nothing else to do, I searched the rock face for a way up to where the ewe stood. I could not for the life of me figure out how she ever got there. Nevertheless, she was there, and all the commotion in front of me was focused on her rescue. To this day, I don't know the end of the story since the police figured out a way to get the traffic moving again.

As I drove away, a concern bothered me. While the search and rescue personnel were certainly well intentioned, how would the ewe react to them? I'm sure they had a plan for how they would calm her—perhaps they would shoot her with a tranquilizer dart from a close distance so they could catch her before she fell. Knowing nothing of their plan but knowing a little about how animals react to being cornered by strangers, I worried about the feasibility of their rescue effort. And then I wondered, “Where is the shepherd?” Certainly he would have the best chance of

approaching the ewe without alarming her. The shepherd's calming voice and helping hand were what the situation needed, but he seemed to be missing in action.

As members of the Church, sometimes we seem to be missing in action, just like this shepherd. Consider for a moment what President Monson told the newly called mission presidents at the 2008 seminar for new mission presidents. He said: “There is . . . no substitute for a member-oriented proselyting program. Tracting will not substitute for it. Golden questions will not substitute for it. A member-oriented program is the key to success, and it works wherever we try it” (“Motivating Missionaries,” June 22, 2008, 8).

Viewed in this light, member missionaries—both you and I—are the shepherds, and the full-time missionaries, like the search and rescue team, are trying to do something almost impossible for them to do alone. Certainly the full-time missionaries will continue to do the best they can, but wouldn't it be better if you and I stepped up to do a job that is rightfully ours and for which we are better suited since we know personally those who are lost and need to be rescued?

I would like to focus on three objectives for members of the Church found in the Doctrine and Covenants. Each of these encourages us not to be missing in action when friends, neighbors, and family members need our help. This should include those who have fallen away, the less active. All of us should be better member missionaries.

In section 88, verse 81 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we read, “And it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor.” I have had the privilege of traveling to many of the stakes of the Church to encourage the growth and development of ward missions. It has



been a very rewarding and spiritual experience for me. I have discovered in these travels, and a recent survey has confirmed the fact, that over one-half of the people in the United States and Canada have little or no awareness of our practices and beliefs. I am certain the percentage would be much larger in other parts of the world. This same survey also showed that when nonmembers interact with faithful members of the Church over an extended period of time or are exposed to clear and accurate information regarding Church beliefs and doctrines, their attitudes become positive and open.

The Church has over 50,000 full-time missionaries serving around the world. *Preach My Gospel* has helped make them the best teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ we have ever had in the history of the Church.

Unfortunately most of our full-time missionaries spend more of their time trying to find people rather than teaching them. I view our full-time missionaries as an underutilized teaching resource. If you and I did more of the finding for the full-time missionaries and freed them up to spend more time teaching the people we find, great things would begin to happen. We're missing a golden opportunity to grow the Church when we wait for our full-time missionaries to warn our neighbors instead of doing it ourselves.

It should be "with great earnestness" (D&C 123:14) that we bring the light of the gospel to those who are searching for answers the plan of salvation has to offer. Many are concerned for their families. Some are looking for security in a world of changing values. Our opportunity is

to give them hope and courage and to invite them to come with us and join those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord's gospel is on earth and will bless their lives here and in the eternities to come.

The gospel is centered on the Atonement of our Lord and Savior. The Atonement provides the power to wash away sins, to heal, and to grant eternal life. All the imponderable blessings of the Atonement can be given only to those who live the principles and receive the ordinances of the gospel—faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. Our great missionary message to the world is that all mankind is invited to be rescued and to enter the fold of the Good Shepherd, even Jesus Christ.

Our missionary message is strengthened by the knowledge of

the Restoration. We know that God speaks to His prophets today, just as He did anciently. We also know that His gospel is administered with the power and authority of the restored priesthood. No other message has such great eternal significance to everyone living on the earth today. All of us need to teach this message to others with power and conviction. It is the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost that testifies through us of the miracle of the Restoration, but first we must open our mouths and testify. We must warn our neighbors.

This leads me to the second scripture I want to share with you from the Doctrine and Covenants. While verse 81 of section 88 teaches us that missionary work becomes the responsibility of each of us as soon as we have been warned, verses 7–10 of section 33 teach us to open our mouths.

Verse 7 leaves no doubt in anyone's mind who has memorized section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants that the Lord is talking to us about missionary work: "Yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that the field is white

already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickles, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength."

Then comes the injunction—three times—to open our mouths:

"Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness.

"Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you.

"Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (vv. 8–10).

What would each of us say if we had to open our mouth three times? If I may, I would like to offer a suggestion. First and foremost, we should declare our belief in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. His redeeming act blesses all mankind with the gift of immortality and the potential of enjoying God's greatest gift to man, the gift of eternal life.

The second time we open our mouths, we should tell in our own words the story of the First Vision—that is, our knowledge of a boy not quite 15 years of age who went into a grove of trees and, after sincere and humble prayer, he had the heavens open to him. After centuries of confusion, the true nature of the Godhead and God's true teachings were revealed to the world.

The third time we open our mouths, let us testify of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon complements the Bible in giving us a greater understanding of the doctrines of our Savior's gospel. The Book of Mormon is the convincing evidence that Joseph Smith is truly a prophet of God. If the Book of Mormon is true, there was a restoration of the priesthood. If the Book of Mormon is true, then with the power of that priesthood, Joseph Smith restored the Church of Jesus Christ.

I have just concluded the book of Alma in my current reading of the Book of Mormon. Near the close of Alma's great message to the Church in Zarahemla, he said:

"For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him.

"And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed" (Alma 5:59–60).

The Savior is the Good Shepherd, and we are all called to His service. The ewe on the side of the rock face along the entry to Provo Canyon and these words of Alma remind me of the question the Savior asked in the



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15th chapter of Luke: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (v. 4).

Usually when I think of herding sheep, I think of the requirement, or stewardship, of the shepherd to do *everything* he can for *all* of his sheep. This experience, however, reminded me that it is the parable of the *lost* sheep, and my thoughts turned to the precarious nature of that one lost ewe, all alone and unable to take another step up the rock face and equally unable to turn around and find her way down. How frantic and hopeless she must have felt, completely powerless to rescue herself, one step away from certain disaster.

It is important for each of us to ponder how it feels to be lost and what it means to be a “spiritual” shepherd who will leave the 99 to find the one who is lost. Such shepherds may need the expertise and assistance of the search and rescue team, but they are present, accounted for, and climbing right beside them to save those who are infinitely valued in the sight of God, for they are His children. Such shepherds respond to the final injunction to be a member missionary that I want to share with you from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (D&C 18:15–16).

As the scripture also teaches, such shepherds experience inexpressible joy. I bear witness to this fact in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■