

Sharing the Gospel

BY SHARING YOU

*The best way to share the
gospel is to live it.*

By Stephanie J. Burns and Darcie Jensen

For some of us, sharing the gospel comes naturally. But for many of us, it's not that easy. In fact, we might even be afraid of opening up to friends, family, or neighbors to talk about the gospel, even though we know how important it is to do so.

Further, sometimes when we think about missionary work, we focus too much on the method, activity, or outcome, rather than focusing on helping the individual. The problem is that any efforts that lose sight of the individual can make those efforts feel forced and insincere.

There may be a better way.

That way is to become more converted to the gospel—as individuals—and let the example of our lives and our friendly conversation open the way. The more converted we become, the more comfortable we are with our religion, and we begin to feel an increasing desire for others to enjoy the blessings of the gospel. When that happens, sharing comes more naturally.

In fact, we may not even realize we are sharing the gospel. As we increase the level of our faithful discipleship, the effect it has on our actions, speech, and even countenance will be difficult to ignore. “Your good works will be evident to others,” explains Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “The light of the Lord can beam from your eyes. With that radiance, you had better prepare for questions.”¹



Living Testimonies

Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service explains: “The Savior has shown the way. He has set the perfect example, and He commands us to become as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27).”² As members learn of Christ and seek to incorporate His attributes into their lives through the power of His Atonement, they become more like Christ and thus more capable of leading others to Him.³

One recent convert from Washington, USA, says that spending time with members was all it took for her to become interested in the gospel. “The happiness they brought with



them and the way I felt around them was undeniable,” she shares. “They didn’t preach to me about God. It was simply in their very being: their lifestyle, their choices, their actions and reactions. When I looked at them, I said to myself, ‘That is how I want to live. That is where I want to be in life.’”

As we become more comfortable with the gospel’s influence in our lives, talking about that influence becomes easier both because we have things to talk about and because we can share what that message has done for us.

Miriam Criscuolo from Italy found that, even after establishing a meaningful friendship with a neighbor, she still didn’t know how to talk about the gospel. “We spent a

lot of time together, but the courage to speak to my new friend about the gospel, even though I knew it was my duty, escaped me,” she shares.

But when the gospel came up naturally, things started to happen. Miriam remembers, “It was my daughter who, when showing a Primary project, aroused the curiosity of my friend. ‘What’s Primary?’ she asked. From that question were born a hundred others. I learned that my friend had been looking for something for years. I told her that the peace of mind she was looking for would be found in our Church.

“She later joined the Church. She was an answer to my prayers about how to find a way to do missionary work and to show my children how it can be done.”



SAY A LITTLE MORE

“Years ago our family lived and worked among people who in almost every case were not of our faith. When they asked us how our weekend was, we tried . . . to share some religious experiences we had as a family over the weekend—for instance, what a youth speaker had said about the standards from *For the Strength of Youth* or how we were touched by the words of a young man who was leaving on his mission.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2011, 76.

Being Friends First

Like Miriam, sometimes we may feel duty-bound to share the gospel and find that this sense of duty can foster forced, uncomfortable discussions. In addition, the feeling of responsibility can overwhelm us and inhibit our ability to effectively explain gospel principles.

Successful missionary opportunities are more likely to be found when members are just good, true friends with others. As Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “If we are open about our membership in the Church from the very beginning, . . . friends and acquaintances will accept that this is part of who we are.”⁴

Including the gospel in existing friendships rather than basing friendships on sharing the gospel can increase missionary successes. Eliana Verges de Lerda, a member of the Church in Argentina, met her friend Anabel when they were both six years old. Their friendship grew as they went to school together. During that time, Eliana never hid the fact that she was a member of the Church.

“I felt very comfortable talking about the gospel with Anabel, even though we didn’t share the same beliefs,” she says.

When the girls were 14, Anabel agreed to listen to the missionaries, but she decided not to be baptized.

Eliana was disappointed, but this did not stop her from continuing their friendship; nor did it stop the gospel discussions. A few years later, Eliana invited Anabel to attend seminary with her. During the lesson, Anabel felt the Spirit very strongly. As Eliana prepared to go to the temple a few days later, Anabel told her, “I promise to go with you next time.” Anabel was baptized a short time after.

Anabel’s conversion did not take days; it



took years. The process was possible because Eliana was her friend first—regardless of whether or not Anabel felt an interest in accepting the gospel.

Listening with Love

Friendships like Eliana and Anabel’s often begin when people discover that they share similar interests, standards, or other commonalities. These friendships deepen as individuals share their experiences, emotions, and love. And love, of course, is a central part of the restored gospel.

We, as members of the Church, can express Christlike love by spending time with our friends—through activities, service, and conversation. In fact, many people are looking for just that kind of friend.

Describing our interactions with others, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counsels: “More important than speaking is listening. These people are not lifeless objects disguised as a baptismal statistic. They are children of God, our brothers and sisters, and they need what we have. Be genuine. Reach out sincerely. Ask these friends what matters most to *them*. . . . And then listen. . . . I promise you that *something*

in what they say will *always* highlight a truth of the gospel about which you can bear testimony and about which you can then offer more.”⁵

We don’t need to bombard our friends with the gospel. We just need to be good friends and not be afraid to share gospel concepts when opportunities arise. Satan uses fear to attempt to prevent members from sharing testimony. This powerful emotion can be crippling. President Uchtdorf notes: “Some would rather pull a handcart across the prairie than bring up the subject of faith and religion to their friends. . . . They worry about how they might be perceived or how it might harm their relationship.” He continues, “It doesn’t need to be that way because we have a glad message to share, and we have a message of joy.”⁶

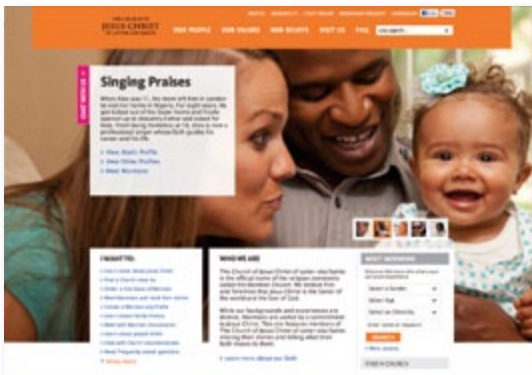
The prophet Mormon taught, “Perfect love casteth out all fear” (Moroni 8:16). As we live the gospel more fully, we can eliminate fear by replacing it with charity—the pure love of Christ—toward our friends, family, and neighbors. This love will increase our natural tendency to share the gospel.⁷

Sharing the Gospel Naturally

Heavenly Father’s children need the perspective the gospel offers. For members who follow the gospel pattern, their life stands as a witness of Christ’s love. When members focus on actively becoming like Jesus Christ, building meaningful friendships, and developing charity, sharing the gospel becomes a natural outgrowth of who they have become. As they work to share who they are, members can find comfort and guidance in the Savior’s words to His disciples: “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Be Thou an Example of the Believers,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 48.
2. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 115.
3. See *Preach My Gospel*, 115.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Creating a Gospel-Sharing Home,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2006, 86.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Witnesses unto Me,” *Liahona*, July 2001, 16; *Ensign*, May 2001, 15.
6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2011, 76.
7. See Barbara Thompson, “Mind the Gap,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 120.



THE POWER OF “I’M A MORMON”

Launched in 2010, the “I’m a Mormon” campaign has been an easy and effective way for members of the Church to share their feelings about what they believe. The campaign has included

TV and billboard ads in many US cities as well as an online component. At Mormon.org, Latter-day Saints share personal stories and answer dozens of questions such as

“Are Mormons Christian?”

and “What do Mormons believe about the Bible?” Rochelle Tallmadge from Texas, USA, shares: “I had been praying for missionary experiences and got a call from someone who wanted to know if I would be interested in this new Mormon.org program.

“Because my boys are disabled, most of my correspondence on the site has come from those who are either disabled or in a family with someone who is disabled. My most exciting experience was with Mia. She lives in Oslo, Norway, and is confined to a wheelchair. She was searching on Mormon.org for something about disabilities and came across our video. It really touched her. She contacted the missionaries, we corresponded all summer, and she was baptized mid-August. We both see it as a miracle that the Lord was able to connect us across an ocean.”