



Taking the Gospel to All the World

*“We are in the work of saving souls,
of inviting people to come unto Christ.”*

From the Life of Howard W. Hunter

In 1979, Elder Howard W. Hunter, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: “I fully believe that in the near future we will see some of the greatest advancements in spreading the gospel to all nations that have ever taken place in this dispensation or any previous dispensation. I am sure that we will be able to look back in retrospect . . . and record as Luke did, ‘And the word of God increased’ (Acts 6:7).”¹

When Elder Hunter spoke those words, political restrictions prohibited missionaries from teaching the gospel in most countries of Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. Within 10 years, many of those restrictions began to be lifted. In 1989 and 1990 the Berlin Wall, which had separated West and East Germany for nearly 30 years, was torn down. President Hunter was serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve at the time, and he expressed the following thoughts about that historic event and other changes that were occurring in the world:

“Much attention of late has been devoted to the Berlin Wall. Of course, we are all pleased to see that wall come down, representing as it does newfound freedoms. . . . As we try to understand the spirit of reconciliation sweeping the globe and to give it meaning within the gospel context, we have to ask ourselves: Could this not be the hand of the Lord removing political barriers and opening breaches in heretofore unassailable walls for the teaching of the gospel, all in accord with a divine plan and a divine timetable?”²



*“The gospel of Jesus Christ . . . is a global faith
with an all-embracing message.”*

President Hunter felt that these changes placed an important responsibility on members of the Church. As more nations opened to missionary work, he said, more missionaries would be needed to fulfill the commission to take the gospel to all the world.³

President Hunter's eagerness to reach out to all of God's children, regardless of nationality or creed, was evident in his work in the Middle East. The First Presidency gave him significant assignments in Jerusalem, including oversight of the construction of the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden and the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. Although proselyting was not allowed in that region, President Hunter built lasting friendships among those with whom he worked, both Jewish and Arabic people. "The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order," he said.⁴

In his work with God's children around the world, President Hunter's message was the same: "We are your brethren—we look upon no nation or nationality as second-class citizens. We invite all . . . to investigate our message and to receive our fellowship."⁵

Teachings of Howard W. Hunter



The restored gospel is for all people, based on the conviction that all are children of the same God.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, which gospel we teach and the ordinances of which we perform, is a global faith with an all-embracing message. It is neither confined nor partial nor subject to history or fashion. Its essence is universally and eternally true. Its message is for all the world, restored in these latter days to meet the fundamental needs of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people on the earth. It has been established again as it was in the beginning—to build brotherhood, to preserve truth, and to save souls. . . .

In the message of the gospel, the entire human race is one family descended from a single God. All men and women have not only a physical lineage leading back to Adam and Eve, their first earthly parents, but also a spiritual heritage leading back to God the Eternal

Father. Thus, all persons on earth are literally brothers and sisters in the family of God.

It is in understanding and accepting this universal fatherhood of God that all human beings can best appreciate God's concern for them and their relationship to each other. This is a message of life and love that strikes squarely against all stifling traditions based on race, language, economic or political standing, educational rank, or cultural background, for we are all of the same spiritual descent. We have a divine pedigree; every person is a spiritual child of God.

In this gospel view there is no room for a contracted, narrow, or prejudicial view. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "Love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race" [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330–31]. . . .

The restored gospel is a message of divine love for all people everywhere, based upon the conviction that all humans are children of the same God. This primary religious message was beautifully expressed in a statement of the First Presidency on February 15, 1978, as follows:

"Based upon ancient and modern revelation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gladly teaches and declares the Christian doctrine that all men and women are brothers and sisters, not only by blood relationship from common mortal progenitors but also as literal spirit children of an Eternal Father" [Statement of the First Presidency Regarding God's Love for All Mankind, Feb. 15, 1978].

Latter-day Saints have a positive and inclusive approach toward others who are not of our faith. We believe they are literally our brothers and sisters, that we are sons and daughters of the same Heavenly Father. We have a common genealogy leading back to God.⁶

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**The Church has a mission to teach
the gospel to all nations.**

The Church, being the kingdom of God on earth, has a mission to all nations. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20). These words from the lips of the Master know no national boundaries; they are not limited to any race or culture. One nation is not favored above another. The admonition is clear—“teach *all* nations.” . . .

As members of the Lord’s church, we need to lift our vision beyond personal prejudices. We need to discover the supreme truth that indeed our Father is no respecter of persons. Sometimes we unduly offend brothers and sisters of other nations by assigning exclusiveness to one nationality of people over another. . . .

Imagine a father with many sons, each having different temperaments, aptitudes, and spiritual traits. Does he love one son less than another? Perhaps the son who is least spiritually inclined has the father’s attention, prayers, and pleadings more than the others. Does that mean he loves the others less? Do you imagine our Heavenly Father loving one nationality of his offspring more exclusively than others? As members of the Church, we need to be reminded of Nephi’s challenging question: “Know ye not that there are more nations than one?” (2 Ne. 29:7). . . .

To our brothers and sisters of all nationalities: We bear solemn witness and testify that God has spoken in our day and time, that heavenly messengers have been sent, that God has revealed his mind and will to a prophet, Joseph Smith. . . .

As our Father loves all his children, we must love all people—of every race, culture, and nationality—and teach them the principles of the gospel that they might embrace it and come to a knowledge of the divinity of the Savior.⁷



“We are in the work of saving souls.”

In our humble efforts to build brotherhood and to teach revealed truth, we say to the people of the world what President George Albert Smith so lovingly suggested:

“We have come not to take away from you the truth and virtue you possess. We have come not to find fault with you nor to criticize you. . . . Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father.”⁸

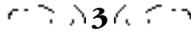
We are in the work of saving souls, of inviting people to come unto Christ, of bringing them into the waters of baptism so that they may continue to progress along the path that leads to eternal life. This world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel provides the only way the world will ever know peace.⁹

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring all truth together. We seek to enlarge the circle of love and understanding among all the people of the earth. Thus we strive to establish

peace and happiness, not only within Christianity but among all mankind. . . .

That which Joseph [Smith] was instrumental in establishing, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is now a world religion, not simply because its members are now found throughout the world, but chiefly because it has a comprehensive and inclusive message based upon the acceptance of all truth, restored to meet the needs of all mankind.

. . . We send this message of love and hope to all the world. Come to the God of all truth, who continues to speak to His children through prophets. Listen to the message of Him who continues to send His servants to preach the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Come and feast at the table laid before you by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Join us as we seek to follow the Good Shepherd who has provided it.¹⁰



**Those who have experienced the blessings
of the Atonement of Jesus Christ are under
obligation to bear testimony of Him.**

What does the Atonement have to do with missionary work? Any time we experience the blessings of the Atonement in our lives, we cannot help but have a concern for the welfare of [others].

Examples abound in the Book of Mormon that illustrate this principle. When Lehi partook of the fruit of the tree, symbolic of partaking of the Atonement, he said, “I began to be desirous that my family should partake” (1 Nephi 8:12). When Enos experienced his conversion and received a forgiveness of his sins, because of his faith in Jesus Christ he said, “I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites” (Enos 1:9). Then he prayed for the Lamanites, the implacable enemies to the Nephites. Then there is the example of the four sons of Mosiah—Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni—who received a forgiveness of sins through the Atonement and then labored for years among the Lamanites to bring them to Christ. The record states that they could not bear the thought that any soul should perish (Mosiah 28:3).

This supernal example of the covenanted one desiring to share the gospel with others is best illustrated by the example of Alma the Younger. I would like to read to you his testimony. . . .

“. . . From that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” [Alma 36:24; see also Alma 36:12–23].

A great indicator of one’s personal conversion is the desire to share the gospel with others. For this reason the Lord gave an obligation to every member of the Church to be missionaries.

Listen to the covenant one takes upon oneself when baptized into the Church:

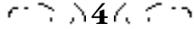
“As ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:8–9).

We are to stand as witnesses of God at all times [and] in all places, even until death. We renew that covenant during the sacrament when we covenant to take the name of Christ upon us.

Missionary service is one important way we take upon ourselves his name. The Savior has said if we desire to take upon us his name, with full purpose of heart, we are called to go into all the world and preach his gospel to every creature (see D&C 18:28). . . .

Those of us who have partaken of the Atonement are under obligation to bear faithful testimony of our Lord and Savior. . . . The call to share the gospel with others represents our great love for our Heavenly Father’s children as well as for the Savior and what he did for us.¹¹



**With the Lord's help, we can overcome all
obstacles to sharing the gospel.**

As the walls in Eastern Europe . . . and many other parts of the world come tumbling down, the corresponding need for more missionaries to fulfill the divine commission to take the gospel to all the earth will certainly go up! Are we ready to meet that contingency?

To satisfy the new demands being made upon us in this great missionary work of the last days, perhaps some of us (particularly the older generation whose families are raised) need to take stock to determine whether “walls” that we have built in our own minds need to come down.

For example, how about the “comfort wall” that seems to prevent many couples and singles from going on a mission? How about the “financial wall” of debt that interferes with some members’ ability to go, or the “grandchildren wall,” or the “health wall,” or the “lack of self-confidence wall,” or the “self-satisfied wall,” or the “transgression wall,” or the walls of fear, doubt, or complacency? Does anyone really doubt for a minute that with the help of the Lord he or she could bring those walls crashing down?

We have been privileged to be born in these last days, as opposed to some earlier dispensation, to help take the gospel to all the earth. There is no greater calling in this life. If we are content to hide behind self-made walls, we willingly forgo the blessings that are otherwise ours. The Lord in modern-day revelation explains the great need:

“For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul.” (D&C 4:4.)

The Lord goes on to explain in that same revelation the qualifications that we need to be good missionaries. Knowing full well of our weaknesses and of our reservations as we stand before the huge gate of our self-made wall, he reassures us that divine help to overcome all obstacles will be forthcoming if we will only do our part, with the simple promise: “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” (D&C 4:7.)

May the Lord bless us that the walls of our minds may not obstruct us from the blessings that can be ours.¹²

Again and again during his mortal ministry, our Lord issued a call that was both an invitation and a challenge. To Peter and Andrew, Christ said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). . . .

Earlier prophets have taught that every able, worthy young man should serve a full-time mission. I emphasize this need today. We also have great need for our able, mature couples to serve in the mission field. Jesus told his disciples, “The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2).¹³

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Questions

- Ponder President Hunter’s teachings about the gospel being for all people, based on the truth that we are all children of God (see section 1). As we share the gospel, how can it help us to keep in mind that each person is literally our brother or sister?
- What do we learn from President Hunter’s teachings in section 2 about how Heavenly Father feels about His children? What can you do to better love all people and share the gospel with them?
- How would you answer President Hunter’s question “What does the Atonement have to do with missionary work?” (See section 3.) How can you increase your desire to share the gospel with others? What blessings have come as you have shared the gospel with someone—or as someone has shared it with you?
- After studying section 4, consider the “walls” that stop you from receiving the blessings of missionary work. Discuss ways to overcome those obstacles.

Related Scriptures

Amos 9:9; 2 Nephi 2:6–8; Mosiah 28:1–3; Alma 26:37; D&C 18:10–16; 58:64; 68:8; 88:81; 90:11; 123:12; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31

Teaching Help

“The Holy Ghost may prompt one or more of those you teach to contribute insights that others need to hear. Be open to promptings you receive to call on specific people. You may even feel impressed to ask a person who has not volunteered to express his or her views” (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 63).

Notes

1. “All Are Alike unto God,” *Ensign*, June 1979, 74.
2. “Walls of the Mind,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1990, 9–10.
3. See “Walls of the Mind,” 10.
4. “All Are Alike unto God,” 74.
5. “All Are Alike unto God,” 74.
6. “The Gospel—A Global Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 18–19.
7. “All Are Alike unto God,” 72–74.
8. “The Gospel—A Global Faith,” 19; the statement by George Albert Smith is found in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (2011), 152.
9. “Follow the Son of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 88.
10. “Come to the God of All Truth,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, 73.
11. “The Atonement of Jesus Christ” (address given at the mission presidents’ seminar, June 24, 1988), 4–7, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; see also *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 248–49.
12. “Walls of the Mind,” 10.
13. “Follow the Son of God,” 88.