I. Introduction

Last month our Missionary Executive Council posted a two-hour broadcast to all mission presidents and their companions. Now we have this unique opportunity to speak to all of our 75,000 missionaries in the world. We love you as servants of the Lord and welcome this opportunity to help you in the great work you are doing.

Today we have been taught fundamentals from *Preach My Gospel*. Elder Neil L. Andersen taught our purpose as full-time missionaries, which is to teach the doctrine of Christ. As he taught, always keep your testimony of the Savior and His gospel as the most important part of your work. Elder David A. Bednar described how conversion comes through the Holy Ghost as you and your companion do what is necessary to assure that the Holy Ghost testifies to those you teach.

Bishop W. Christopher Waddell taught that investigators must act in order for the Holy Ghost to teach them and that missionaries must invite investigators to act and then follow up to be sure they are moving forward on the road to conversion. Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson reminded us that we teach people, not lessons. We always prepare and we are constantly “treasuring up,” but as we teach, we carefully listen to the Spirit, which will lead us to teach what each investigator needs.

Finally, we cannot teach if we don’t have investigators. A major part of your work is to find. President L. Whitney Clayton and Elder Brent H. Nielson taught that we should always find when we teach. All missionaries must develop the faith and skill to find. The best finding is done when we work with members. As President Thomas S. Monson taught us, “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together.” Your best success will come as you work with ward councils and ward mission leaders and as you are seeking to retain and to activate. Behind each reactivated contact are family members and friends who are golden prospects. The more people we find and teach, the more we will baptize.

II. The Doctrine of Christ

Now that we are past the large expenditures of time necessary to adjust to big variations in the numbers of missionaries, especially sister missionaries, we can now seek an improved focus on the doctrinal purpose...
of missionary work, which is to teach repentance and baptize converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is what our Savior commanded us to do: “Teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

During his message to the new mission presidents last June, President Russell M. Nelson said, “More than anything else, we want our missionaries . . . to have the doctrine of Christ engraved in their hearts—rooted deeply in the marrow of their bones.” Truly, all missionary work is founded on the doctrine of Christ. It is the polestar of our precious handbook Preach My Gospel, which we want you to study daily.

The doctrine of Christ was described by the Savior Himself:

“And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

“And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Later the Savior repeated His doctrine in these words:

“Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that [if ye then endure to the end] ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.”

And thus we see that the doctrine of Christ is that we must repent and be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and endure to the end in order to be saved in the celestial kingdom of God. Missionaries are called to teach that doctrine.

III. Your Calling as a Missionary

In this unique worldwide gathering, it is most important to remind you missionaries who you are and what you are called to do. If you understand these two things, you have the big picture and the basis to understand everything else about being a missionary.

Who are you? You are sons and daughters of God! Everything else we are is subordinate to that. Think of it! We are royalty—the sons and daughters of God!

What are you called to do? President John Taylor—himself a great missionary—taught that missionaries should not lose themselves in little things and thus lose sight of the great purpose of their calling. He continued:

“We forget that this kingdom was established upon the earth for the purpose of introducing righteousness and the laws of heaven upon the earth, and of blessing mankind and of saving the living and the dead. We forget what we are here for, and what the kingdom of God is established for. It is not for you or for me or anybody else alone; it is for the interests of the world and the salvation of mankind.”

That is what the Lord has called you, His sons and daughters, to do! You are not called to preach what is politically correct or personally comfortable. You are not called to invite people to join a social club whose rules are made by its members. You are called to testify of Jesus Christ and to invite people to do what He has required to come unto Him and walk the path He has defined by His doctrine to reach exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

Can you imagine what it would mean for the world in which we live—what it would mean for each family and each person in the world—if everyone understood God’s plan for His children and if even a small fraction tried to keep His commandments and assist Him in this great work? If you and I can only understand what that would mean for the world,
Young missionaries, in time to come you will understand your unique opportunity and responsibility better than you do now. You will come to realize how important this period of full-time missionary service is for the work of the Lord and for your own personal life. I urge you to pray to understand and to have strength to act upon that understanding so that in time to come you will not look back on your missionary service with the regret that comes from dishonor or even from opportunities lost and blessings postponed. Pray that with the help of our Savior, you will act so that you can look back on your missionary service with the sweet recollections that come from being faithful and true.

IV. Teach Repentance

As servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is critical that we understand the role of His Atonement in our lives and in the lives of those whom we teach. This is an essential part of the doctrine of Christ.

The Book of Mormon teaches that the Savior does not redeem men “in their sins.” The Savior came to redeem men “from their sins” upon the “conditions of repentance.”

One of those conditions of repentance is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, including faith in and reliance upon His atoning sacrifice. As Amulek taught, “He that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.”

The Savior’s atoning sacrifice was for “all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.”

When a person has gone through the repentance process, the Savior does more than cleanse that person from sin. He also gives him or her new strength. That strengthening is essential for us to realize the purpose of the cleansing, which is to return to our Heavenly Father. To be admitted to His presence, we must be more than clean. We must also be changed from a morally weak person who has sinned into a strong person with the strength to resist sin and the spiritual stature to dwell in the presence of God. That is what it means to be saved.

You will understand from what I have just said why it is so important for missionaries to teach repentance. In our day the Lord has commanded missionaries to “say nothing but repentance unto this generation.”

The Lord explained further:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, they who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my name, for the remission of their sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned, and shall not come into my Father’s kingdom where my Father and I am.”

We do not preach and teach in order to “bring people into the Church” or to increase our membership. We do not find and teach just to persuade people to live better lives. We honor and appreciate the many ministers and others involved in efforts that make bad men good and good men better. That is important, but we offer something more. From modern revelation we know that children of God can qualify for a significant heaven or degree of glory without the ordinances of His Church. As missionaries called by Him and preaching the fulness of His doctrine, we are concerned with something more than a lesser kingdom of glory.

The fundamental purpose of our missionary work is to teach the word of God that men and women cannot be saved in the highest degree of glory, the celestial kingdom, without faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Further, we teach that the
only way to lay claim to the ultimate merits of His Atonement is to follow His commands: repent and be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and the ordinances of the temple and endure to the end. Those who do so can be exalted in the celestial kingdom instead of being damned in a lesser status or kingdom.

No one else can do this. Other churches cannot do it. Good Christian living cannot do it. Good faith, good desires, and good reasoning cannot do it. Only a man or woman teaching the fulness of the gospel with priesthood authority can teach this, and only a man exercising the priesthood of God can administer a baptism that will satisfy the divine decree: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

V. Establish the Church

You missionaries, who are on the front line in this great effort, need to remember that the baptism we seek is the baptism that follows sincere repentance—the baptism that is part of a conscious change and coming unto Christ with a deliberate decision “to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people.” In the 18th chapter of Mosiah, Alma concludes his teaching about the burdens we covenant to bear by characterizing baptism “as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you.”

Six months after the Church was established, when some of the first missionaries were being called and sent from New York State, the Lord told them to go and teach the gospel and “cause my church to be established among them.” Establishing the Church is a vital direction in the work to which you have been called. You are not just called to proclaim the gospel. You are called to establish the Church. As President Gordon B. Hinckley often taught, we should all seek to “grow the ward.” That is part of your missionary activities. Think of that as you seek to find persons to add to your teaching pool, teach the gospel to investigators, and retain them in activity after their baptisms. Reactivation is also an important part of establishing the Church. So are the assignments you may receive to labor in individual wards or branches. But never lose sight of your paramount responsibility, which is to teach repentance and baptize converts.

In this great effort, don’t fail to teach the basic principles outlined in chapter 3 of Preach My Gospel. And don’t fail to teach from the Book of Mormon. As stated in chapter 5 of Preach My Gospel about the role of the Book of Mormon:

“The Book of Mormon is powerful evidence of the divinity of Christ. It is also proof of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith. An essential part of conversion is receiving a witness from the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true. . . . It teaches the doctrine of Christ plainly, especially in the lessons you teach investigators. Use it as your main source for teaching the restored gospel.”

When you connect your investigators to the Book of Mormon, you will give them a secure resource to grow and go forward, with their families, to qualify for all of the blessings of the restored gospel.

The conversion we seek is not just an event that precedes baptism, but a process that follows baptism and continues throughout our lives. You should therefore teach your investigators to study so they can be nourished by the good word of God. Teach them to pray so they can be inspired by the Holy Ghost. Teach them to pay their tithing so they can enjoy the blessings promised for obedience to that important principle of the gospel. Teach them to attend church each Sabbath so they can partake of the sacrament and be renewed in the cleansing effect of their baptism and enjoy the fulfillment of the Savior’s promise that the Spirit of the Lord will always be with them.
My dear fellow missionaries, we salute you and love you as choice servants of the Lord spending this portion of your lives in His service. And you are in His service, carrying the fulness of the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. As His servant, I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I testify of the truth of the things taught in this worldwide broadcast. And as His servant, I invoke His blessings upon you in all of your efforts in His service, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 84:85.
5. 3 Nephi 11:32–33.
6. 3 Nephi 27:20; see also verse 16.
9. Helaman 5:11; emphasis added.
10. Alma 34:16.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:9; 11:9; see also Doctrine and Covenants 14:8; 19:21.