

30 July 2008

HOW TO DO MISSIONARY WORK

LESSON #3 WHY DO MISSIONARY WORK – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The hardest part of doing missionary work is getting started. We all want to do it. We all know we should do it. So why do so many of us have trouble doing it. Even returned missionaries who had wonderful experiences on their missions doing it full time, often have trouble keeping on keeping on doing it.

The reason we have such a hard time getting started is that we do not have a strong enough desire to do it. Even though we know we should, the desire is just not there. So that is the key to getting started. Finding a reason why we need to do it that is so compelling that it will make it more important to us than the other things that we are doing to interfere with our doing it, including fear of rejection. This lesson is an attempt to help you find several of those compelling reasons to do missionary work. To in fact make it your “LIFE’S WORK”.

Normally when we do something it is because we expect to receive something in return. We have to want to do it. If the reward is great enough we will go to no ends to accomplish the task and receive the reward. If there is little or no reward, or in some cases even negative consequences to doing something then there is little incentive to do it, or at least do it again if we have already had a bad experience in doing it the first time. That is true, especially if we have had a negative experience several times.

It has been my experience over the years as a leader working with members of the church that those who are not doing missionary work are not doing so because they see no perceived immediate benefit from it other than a clear conscience for doing it because we have been asked to. Many members have even had some very negative experiences in doing missionary work where they have experienced rejection, embarrassment or even rebuke. Those negative experiences have made it very difficult for them to try again.

Here then are some reasons for us to do missionary work that will hopefully help create within us a compelling desire so strong that we will overcome our fears or lack of understanding in why we should be doing it. I would like to I call this first reason for doing missionary work a “HOPE FOR SALVATION”?

Many years ago I had the privilege to be a guide in Nauvoo, Illinois for a summer. It was a life changing experience. It was actually a graduate religion class from the University of Utah and the class was held in the field. Each morning we would get up at 6 and go to a 2 hour class with T. Edgar Lyon where we studied the history of the church and in particular the events that took place in Nauvoo in the early days of the church. Then for the rest of the day, sometimes until late in the evening, we would act as guides, taking people around the city on tours sharing with them the things that we were learning about the city and it’s people. As I had that experience, something life changing happened to me. I became intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith and the other leaders of the Church of that time. I got to know a great deal about my own great-great-grandfather Jonathan Harriman Hale, who lived there in Nauvoo in that time period. The

more we studied their lives the more aware we became of the sacrifices that they made to be members of the church. We studied the persecutions they went through. We read in their journals, the spiritual experiences they had. We came to know almost first hand the faith that developed in them from those experiences. But above all, we started to understand what they gave for the church and what they received in return.

The longer I was there the more I started to ask myself over and over, “How can I expect to receive the same eternal reward as my great-great-grandfather, or Joseph Smith or those others who lived there if all I do is get up go to work, come home, get up go to work, come home, got to church on Sunday and then start over?” That thought started to rivet into my very soul. Those people made such tremendous sacrifices to be members of the Church. Most of them gave their whole heart and soul to living it. That became almost a prevalent thought in my mind for the next several years. How can I go to that lie and meet Father Abraham and have him look at me and my life in comparison to the faith he demonstrated and expect to sit next to him? How can I expect to receive an equal reward in the next life as Alma the Younger or the sons of Mosiah if all I do is attend Church and struggle with daily prayers or scripture study or having regular family home evening with my family? How can I expect to receive an equal reward in the eternities to my great-great-grandfather who walked all over Canada as a missionary companion with Wilford Woodruff if all I did was go on a mission to Finland and ride my bike a few miles every day and complain about how hard it was? He did not keep much of a journal but Wilford Woodruff did, so I know what they did together on that mission. I know the spiritual experiences they had together there. I know the number of people that they taught and baptized. I know of the success they had and the price they paid to have that success. How can I help but compare my mission in Finland to his?

How can I expect to receive an equal eternal reward with those who walked across the planes, many of whom left their little children behind in shallow frozen graves so we could have a life in the church, if all I do is serve as a Sunday School teacher each week? If I just show up, teach my lesson, do a little home teaching ever other month or so, go to the temple once or twice a year and call that good enough? How can I expect them to want me to be with them in the next life if I have not made a similar effort in my life to do all that I could do in my circumstances in my time like they did?

Every one’s experiences are different. We are not being asked to walk across the planes or face angry mobs because of our faith. Our times are different. But that does not mean that we don’t have to do anything now. It does not mean that we do not need to make a contribution in building up the church. It does not mean that in our time we can not find our power to have an influence and make a difference in the lives of others in the whole world, that would qualify us to look them in the eye, and welcome their embrace in the next life. Can we look at our current effort and then look forward to the time when we join them and anticipate that they will say with sincerity, “WELL DONE THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT”. Oh that I could hear the Savior say that to me. When I think about my ancestors who sacrificed so much to give me what I have, I wonder what they will think of me when they meet me and I report back to them what I have done with their name.

When our daughter Anna was on her mission she wrote something very profound to me. She had been having a little trouble with some of the mission leaders accepting sister missionaries as equals to the Elders. And she said to me, “BUT THEY HAVE NEVER MET A VAIL MISSIONARY BEFORE. And then she proceeded to do her almost magical work of making things happen. She showed them what a “VAIL MISSIONARY” is.

So there is my first reason for doing missionary work. I want with all my heart to meet Joseph Smith in person. I want to take him by the hand and look him in the eyes and say, “I love you Brother Joseph. I love this work that you have started and passed down to me. Thank you for the sacrifices you made in my behalf that I could have the gospel and the Priesthood in my life”. I would like to have the privilege to say that to him in person, like so many others were able to do when he was alive. And when that happens, and I know it will some day, I do not want to have him look at me and say, “But Cordell.....” I want him to say, “Oh brother Cordell, Oh Brother Cordell I am so happy to finally meet you. THANK YOU. THANK YOU FOR THE WORK YOU AND YOUR FAMILY HAVE DONE”. Who does not want to feel the embrace of the Savior of the world and have Him look us in the eye and truly say with tears in His eyes, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

So my first reason for doing missionary work is a hope for the power to make a difference.

Cordell

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