

Full Time Mission Message #19

Elder / Sister xxxx,

Years ago I was called to the Finnish mission. It was a very difficult mission and for the most part I was not able to convert anyone there. I in fact never even heard the 6 missionary lessons my whole mission. All we did was knock on doors for 70 hours a week. I was very discouraged when I came home and felt like I had failed as a missionary. That feeling of discouragement caused me to decide that I would try and continue to be a missionary rather than become a RETURNED missionary in hopes of making that feeling of having failed on my mission go away. As I studied missionary work and how to do it I was fascinated by what Ammon promised us in the Book of Mormon in this scripture in particular:

Alma 26:22 Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing--unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed; yea, and it shall be given unto such to bring thousands of souls to repentance, even as it has been given unto us to bring these our brethren to repentance.

I wondered how that could be possible that a common member of the church like me could baptize 1000's. But I knew that it was a prophetic promise and I was determined to see if I could fulfill that promise in my life some way. As I studied further I found this talk published in the July 1985 Ensign by President Ezra Taft Benson that led me to believe that I could lay claim to Ammon's promise after all.

"Wilford Woodruff baptized two thousand people on his mission in England in a short few months and ... Heber C. Kimball baptized 1,800 in a few months. ... There are hundreds of other brethren who have baptized tens and fifties and hundreds during their missions. Is it possible that each of you could develop some Wilford Woodruffs and Brigham Young's who could baptize hundreds and thousands? Can we raise our sights?" (Mission Presidents' Seminar, June 1975.)

Quoting from that marvelous verse in the Book of Mormon where Alma talks about bringing thousands of souls unto the Lord, President Kimball then said, "Did you hear the word thousands? ... Not hundreds, not dozens, not tens, but thousands. ... The Lord ... knows what these words mean, and when he uses the word thousands, he means thousands...!" (Mission Presidents' Seminar, June 1978.)...

Another talk I found by President Kimball came to be our watch word on doing missionary work. We honestly believe that what he says here is true.

... I believe there is none who cannot be converted—or I might say reactivated—if the right person makes the right approach at the right time in the right way with the right spirit. I know that the blessings of our Father in Heaven will attend our efforts if we prepare ourselves, and if we happily live gospel principles, and if we will seek our Heavenly Father's assistance. ...

Teachings of President Spencer W. Kimball
Chapter 24: Sharing the Gospel

The key words here are of course RIGHT PERSON, RIGHT APPROACH, and RIGHT TIME. So when we got married 50 years ago, my wife and I took courage from the wisdom in those talks and we set out on what we decided to call,

“The rest of our life’s mission”. As our children grew up we tried to involve them in missionary work as much as we could as well so it became a family project for us to seek the fulfillment of Ammon’s prophetic promise to us.

We have a web page www.cordellvail.com and on that web page we have our testimonies. Over 65,000 people have looked at that web page. We often get letters from people all over the world thanking us for our testimony. How else could it have been possible for us to reach out to over 65,000 people as missionaries if it were not for the miracle of the Internet?

Now after a life time of missionary experiences, as we look back at Ammon’s promise we can tell you that his promise can be fulfilled literally just as President Kimball said. Not 10’s not 100’s but 1000’s. How is that possible? Here is how it was made possible in our life after 50 years of doing our “The rest of our life’s mission”. Janice converted her friend in High School and a few years ago Sister Winters contacted her. As a part of their getting to know each other again she told her all her children have gone on missions now. Five of our six children served full time missions and each converted people who have now either sent their kids on mission or converted people themselves. While in the Army we helped convert Jerry and Pam Bettes. Their kids have now gone on missions and converted people. When our son Nathan was in the MTC his missionary companion was the son of someone we helped convert at BYU. So they both went off to Hungary on their missions and converted over 30 people there who have now sent their sons and daughters on missions. When we lived in North Carolina we had the privilege of helping to convert Margo Matthews. She went to California on a mission and converted several families whose children have now gone on missions and converted people. When we lived in Salt Lake we helped convert Steve and Violet Payne. Their three kids went on missions. One of their sons went to Mexico on his mission. He told me he had converted over 100 people there. Now many of them have sent sons and daughters on missions as well. There have been many others over the years as well but I think those examples are enough to illustrate the point that common members of the church just asking a friend here and a friend there can do miracles over time. One here, one there but it soon adds up to many, even 1000’s.

I think you can see from these examples that our family passed up Ammon’s promise of 1000’s a long time ago. And it is our witness to you that we know your family can do it too, because Ammon’s promise is to the everyday common members of the church. He did not say, you can convert 1000’s if you are an above average member of the church. It is a promise to us all. All we have to do is remember the Lord’s invitation to us in the D&C

60:2 But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man...

I can tell you that every time I ask someone about the church I am still scared even after all these years. I suppose I am still in shell shock from rejection that came from 70 hours of contacting on my mission, door after door being slammed in my face for 2 ½ years. But I take courage in what the Lord said in the D&C. He said we need to open our mouths but He did not say we needed to know what to say. We can tell you from 100’s of past experiences that if you will take courage to just say something to someone about the church the Lord will tell you what to say.

D&C 84:85 Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man.

Brother & Sister Vail

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