

FOREWORD BY HANK SMITH

— *the* —

# MEANING

*of* YOUR

# MISSION

LESSONS & PRINCIPLES  
TO KNOW YOU ARE ENOUGH

DREW YOUNG

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Published by CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc.  
2373 W. 700 S., Springville, UT 84663  
Distributed by Cedar Fort, Inc., [www.cedarfort.com](http://www.cedarfort.com)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER: 2020938116

Cover design by Shawnda T. Craig  
Cover design © 2020 Cedar Fort, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed on acid-free paper

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE WHAT AND WHY OF MISSIONARY SERVICE



### THE WHAT OF MISSIONARY SERVICE

President Dallin H. Oaks said, “What we call ‘. . . missionary work’ is not a program, but an attitude of love and outreach to those around us.”<sup>1</sup>

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there is such an emphasis on the term *missionary work* that people forget *what* missionary work is. As President Oaks said, it isn’t a program, and it isn’t a checklist item. It is love. It is hope. It is faith. It is, as Alma tells us, being willing to mourn with those who mourn and to comfort those who stand in need of comfort (Mosiah 18:9). One word in that passage is more important than all the rest: *willing*. The Lord doesn’t command us to do something with no help provided, no hope promised, and no blessings offered if we fall short. He rewards those who are willing to serve, regardless of the length or perceived impact that service has. People describe their life as a mission. If that is the case, are the only ones who succeed the ones who live the longest or garner the most social media acclaim? Of course not. What we do with the time and opportunities given to us is what matters.

### A BRIEF SHOUT-OUT TO MY EARLY RETURNED MISSIONARY FRIENDS

Alma 40:8 states, “All is as one day with God, and time is only measured unto man.” Yes, a Latter-day Saint mission is “typically” twenty-four or eighteen months, but those who *cannot* serve that allotted length of time need not grow weary, for they are laying the foundation of a great work. What is that work? It’s their salvation, their future, their hopes and dreams, and a lifetime of service, however long that lifetime may be.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf encouraged those going through this situation when he said,

Many of our missionaries have prepared themselves from childhood on to serve a mission. They decided on their own free will that they wanted to go. And then they accepted the call from the Prophet of God to serve as a disciple of Jesus Christ, as a representative of the Savior, wherever the Lord would assign them for however long.

There have been other times in history when missionaries have had unexpected releases—due to health concerns, accidents, war, or other circumstances. The key points are the decision to go and the decision to accept.

Everything that happens after that is often influenced by circumstances not within the decision of the missionary. You prepared, you accepted the call, and you gave your best. That is what counts. That is what makes all the difference. That is what makes a missionary.<sup>2</sup>

Have you ever felt discouraged because even though you were trying your very best to do the right thing, someone else was getting noticed, or you weren’t feeling like the good you were doing really made a difference?

I’m here to tell you that it doesn’t matter who *sees* your service or the good you do. What matters is that you serve and *do good*.

When I returned home after sixty-three days of service, I was fatigued, ill, and discouraged. I didn’t have anyone to turn to, and I didn’t know what to do next with my life. Was I successful? Did I fail the Lord and my family? This question brought me to a mental and emotional collapse. Because of this experience, I sought professional help. I met two men I perceive as angels. They changed my perspective on missionary work and service in general. They ultimately shaped my full mental and emotional recovery. One of those men, whom I will call Jake, was my counselor. Jake was blessed

through various callings in the Church to stay close to the Lord. Through his professional duties, he had the opportunity to take care of people like me who were struggling.

A few weeks into my visits with him, I couldn't get past the belief that I had let everyone down by returning early from my mission.

"This wasn't part of *my* plan," I exclaimed with tears in my eyes. "I failed. I feel terrible."

Jake responded calmly, "Drew, let's open the scriptures. Have you heard of Oliver Granger?"

I shook my head. I had never heard of Oliver Granger, though I would quickly learn why the Lord decided to include him in the scriptures. It is, in part, because of Oliver Granger that I made it to where I am today. He helped me understand how the Lord defines "success."

Oliver wasn't well known among the Saints. He never saw many "numbers" and didn't accumulate any public acclaim during his earthly life or in his service to others. Yet, the Lord held him, and continues to hold him, in high esteem.

"I remember my servant Oliver Granger; behold, verily I say unto him that his name shall be had in sacred remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord" (D&C 117:12).

President Boyd K. Packer described Oliver Granger's standing in the Church when he explained,

Oliver Granger was a very ordinary man. He was mostly blind having "lost his sight by cold and exposure" (*History of the Church*, 4:408). The First Presidency described him as "a man of the most strict integrity and moral virtue; and in fine, to be a man of God" (*History of the Church*, 3:350).

When the Saints were driven from Kirtland, Ohio, in a scene that would be repeated in Independence, Far West, and in Nauvoo, Oliver was left behind to sell their properties for what little he could. There was not much chance that he could succeed. And, really, he did not succeed!

But the Lord said, "Let him contend earnestly for the redemption of the First Presidency of my Church, saith the Lord; and when he falls he shall rise again, for his sacrifice shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord" (D&C 117:13).<sup>3</sup>

“For his *sacrifice* shall be more sacred unto me than his increase, saith the Lord” (emphasis added, D&C 117:13).

With those words, the Lord teaches a lesson to all who have “tried but fallen short” or have felt discouraged in their service to others.

First, it’s not a matter of *if* we will fall but *when*, and when we fall, we will rise again.

Second, our sacrifice matters more to Him than the results (increase) we achieve.

We are promised that our joy will be great if we bring just one soul unto God. That one soul is our own (D&C 18:15).

So, take heart and be grateful. The Lord told Oliver Granger he was enough. He can tell you that too.

What does a mission *really* mean? What does service *really* mean? It means being willing to love. It means being willing to have faith and hope. It means that you trust in the Lord enough to say, “I may not have given you a lot of results, but I did give you a lot of heart. In fact, I gave you all my heart.”

And with arms outstretched, a heart full of love, and the utmost gratitude for your service, He stands before you proclaiming, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23).

## **THE WHY OF MISSIONARY SERVICE**

Having been reminded that missionary service, or service of any kind, is simply an attitude of love and fellowship, the question remains, why serve a mission? Or, more specifically, why serve at all?

In the story of the good Samaritan, a Jewish man was traveling the road from Jerusalem to Jericho by himself. As he was traveling, a group of thieves came out of their hiding places and beat him, stole his clothes, took his money, and left him for dead. People passed by him as he lay on the

ground in a state of unconsciousness. One man, a priest, looked down from his horse as he rode by but didn't stop. The second one, a Levite, dropped a few coins by the motionless body and moved on. Last, a Samaritan came by with his donkey. He looked upon the man with empathy and love. He poured oil into his wounds, wiped blood from his forehead, and gave him something to drink. He then dropped his own supplies on the side of the road, put the man on his donkey, and walked to the nearest village where he paid an innkeeper to take care of him until he was healed.

What's the moral of this story? Two things. First, it's important to mention that both the priest and the Levite were highly respected religious leaders. They were considered by the people to be close to God and able to hear and proclaim His word. They were powerful and influential. Yet, even with all the acclaim they had and the following they enjoyed, when it came time to live their faith and serve someone in need, they turned away. It seems that without an audience to impress, they thought it wasn't worth it.

On the other hand, the Samaritan that aided the man had no expectation to do so. Jewish people and Samaritan's didn't correspond or get along during that time, but that didn't matter. This was a man who lived what he believed and cared more about helping someone than being noticed for it.

Ironic, isn't it, that two thousand years later, the man who didn't serve to impress an audience is the one who is noticed and most esteemed?

President Thomas S. Monson taught,

Each of us, in the journey through mortality, will travel his own Jericho Road. What will be your experience? What will be mine? Will I fail to notice him who has fallen among thieves and requires my help? Will you?

Will I be one who sees the injured and hears his plea, yet crosses to the other side? Will you?

Or will I be one who sees, who hears, who pauses, and who helps? Will you?

Jesus provided our watchword, "Go, and do thou likewise." When we obey that declaration, there opens to our eternal view a vista of joy seldom equaled and never surpassed.<sup>4</sup>

Why do we serve? Because through it we experience "joy seldom equaled,

and never surpassed.”

Now, I have never met returned missionaries who said that their missions were easy, and many missionaries understand the *how* of a mission. They understand how to apply for a mission, they understand how to pack for a mission, and most of the time, they understand how to serve a mission. Many missionaries, however, never internalize that the *why* of a mission goes far beyond learning how to work, speaking a foreign language, or reading more scriptures.

Elder Uchtdorf explained, “While understanding the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the gospel is necessary, the eternal fire and majesty of the gospel springs from the ‘why.’”<sup>5</sup>

I love the imagery represented by a fire. Fire provides warmth and protection from the cold and dangers of life. Upon touching its crackling flame, we immediately jump, and adrenaline starts flowing through our bodies. Introduced to other substances, it spreads quickly. That is the same with the gospel, or, more specifically, with a mission. Its purpose is to provide all with a knowledge of Jesus Christ, missionaries and investigators alike. It gives an opportunity to feel of His warmth and protection. It ignites a feeling of awe and produces within us the adrenaline to be better. When shared, it can spread rapidly.

Yes, understanding “how” to serve and “what” serving means is important, but when we internalize the “why” of serving the Master, our lives take on an entirely new sense of meaning and wonder.

Elder Uchtdorf also stated, “The what and how . . . mark the way and keep us on the right path. The why . . . sanctifies our actions, transforming the mundane into the majestic. It magnifies our small acts of obedience into holy acts of consecration.”<sup>6</sup>

We serve because we love God! We are grateful to Him for all He has given us. My dad is my exemplar when it comes to understanding the purpose of service in the gospel. He grew up in Brigham City, Utah, with two loving, hard-working parents. His mother spent most of her days on her feet as a waitress, and his father served in World War II and as a principal of

a high school. There was no backtalk in his home. The chores were to be done before play, and no dishes were to be left in the sink after dinner. Every summer, my grandparents would send my dad to a ranch somewhere in Northern Utah to herd sheep, move sprinkler pipe, and irrigate. Why? Because his mother discerned that his friends were not engaged in activities that would benefit him, and she couldn't have been more correct. Some four decades later, most of those friends had committed suicide, overdosed on drugs, or died from alcohol abuse.

Listen to your mothers!

Those summer months, though hot, dirty, and laborious, molded my dad into an industrious, conscientious, and careful young man.

Because my dad's father smoked, drank, and didn't attend church very often, his mother set the example in the family for why living the gospel was important and why serving others was noble.

After graduating high school, my dad attended one year at Utah State University and then submitted his mission papers. He recalled to me the events that led him to discover for himself the truthfulness of the gospel and the Book of Mormon, or, in other terms, why he desired to serve a mission.

When working on the ranch, there would be times throughout the day when he would be driving a pickup truck loaded with different materials to the dump. Because there were other vehicles in line, my dad would pull out his copy of the Book of Mormon and read a few verses. On one specific occasion, he opened his scriptures and started to read. As he did so, he felt a spirit so strong within him that he thought his bones would melt. His eyes filled with tears as the Holy Ghost testified to him of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. He vowed from that point on that he would serve the Lord, because he *knew* his confirmation came from Him.

He was called to serve in the Indiana-Michigan Mission in October 1971. He served faithfully under two mission presidents, but his last mission president would have a powerful impact on his life.

Because my dad held a leadership position in his mission, he worked at the mission home writing documents and assisting the president in other

clerical duties. During holiday break, the president's children came home from their respective universities. This was the first time my father would see Stephanie Benson. She was a sophomore at Brigham Young University, studying piano performance. She had a bright countenance. Though my dad was strictly devoted to his missionary service, he felt a personal connection to this beautiful girl.

Upon returning from his mission in October 1973, my dad was pleasantly surprised to see that his father had returned to church activity. He still drank coffee every morning, but he had overcome his habits of smoking and drinking alcohol. My dad also thought about the beautiful young lady he met in the mission home that one holiday season and built up enough courage to ask her out. Through months of joy, some disappointments, and a lot of work, she would eventually accept his marriage proposal. My dad attributes his father's reactivity and his marriage to his eternal sweetheart to his decision to serve.

Now, this probably won't happen to everyone who serves a mission, but the point of this story is this:

You never know what your service will bring.

You never know the fruits that may come forth.

In the words of President Gordon B. Hinckley, "You never know how much good you do."<sup>7</sup>

Why serve? Because when you do, miracles happen. Hearts are changed, relationships are built, the Spirit is felt, and doors you thought were forever closed often lead to windows being opened for your benefit.

To conclude our discussion on the importance of understanding why we serve, I'd like to share a story from one of my favorite childhood Christmas movies.

During a scene in the film *Miracle on 34th Street*, Kris Kringle is gaining public acclaim due to his ability to present himself as a department store's Santa Claus; however, he is questioned because of his personal belief that he *is* Santa Claus. In response to one of these questioners, he explains, "I'm not just a whimsical figure who wears a charming suit and affects a jolly

demeanor. You know, I'm a symbol. I'm a symbol of the human ability to be able to suppress the selfish and childish tendencies that rule a major part of our lives. If you can't believe, if you can't accept anything on faith, then you're doomed for a life dominated by doubt."<sup>8</sup>

Like the example of Santa Claus, a mission is a symbol. Service is a symbol. They are symbols of our love for the Lord. They are symbols of our desire to serve our brothers and sisters. They are, as Kris Kringle indicates, "A symbol of the human ability to be able to suppress the selfish and childish tendencies that rule . . . our lives."

I hope as we serve in our lives and within the Church, we will remember this counsel and choose to believe that what we are doing, no matter how small it may seem, is making a difference.

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## NOTES

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2. Sarah Jane Weaver, "Missionary Work Will Continue to Move Forward Despite COVID-19 Pandemic, Says Elder Uchtdorf," *Church News*, April 15, 2020. See [churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/](http://churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/). Accessed June 15, 2020.
3. Boyd K. Packer, "The Least of These," *Ensign*, Nov. 2004.
4. Thomas S. Monson, "Your Jericho Road," First Presidency Message, *Ensign*, Feb. 1989.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Living the Gospel Joyful," *Ensign*, Nov. 2014.
6. *Ibid.*, "Forget Me Not," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011.
7. Gordon B. Hinckley, "To the Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 2003.
8. *Miracle on 34th Street*, Twentieth Century Fox, produced by John Hughes and directed by Les Mayfield, 1994.

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