

Our Missionary Purpose

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Consider some examples of the difference between what happens when missionary work is centered in the missionary purpose versus what may happen when the focus is only on missionary activities:

- (1) If missionaries are purpose-driven, they teach people in a way that helps them truly understand the gospel and why and how they should repent. If the missionaries' focus is not on their purpose, they may simply teach to achieve a certain number of lessons taught per week. In that case, they will be trying to get through the lesson rather than really listening and responding to what is in the investigator's mind and heart. They will be sharing information rather than offering salvation, and those are two very different experiences for an investigator (and for a missionary).
- (2) Missionaries who forget their purpose might "open their mouths" and engage in finding activities to fill the teaching pool with a particular number of bodies without seeking and listening to the Spirit to discern who is feeling the Spirit as they talk. Finding will be focused on numbers without reference to the potential for conversion.
- (3) Without the missionary purpose in mind, the daily planner is likely to serve simply as a schedule and appointment calendar. However, with the purpose uppermost, the planner will become a tool for ensuring that the things that need to happen to produce an outcome, that is, to bring about conversion and baptism, are, in fact, identified, remembered, and made to happen with regard to each individual investigator. Otherwise, a missionary is likely to fall into the trap of thinking that the measure of his success is busyness.
- (4) A missionary who has internalized his purpose will look forward to his daily opportunity to feast upon the word of God because his study will have purpose. He will be searching for answers to his investigators' questions of the soul, as well as his own. He will be looking for guidance on how to teach

and lead investigators in the path of repentance. Without this sense of purpose, a missionary is likely to be less enthusiastic about individual and companion study. While he may devote the time, it will be without the fire that could later imbue his teaching with the spirit of revelation and prophecy. (See Alma 17:2–3; 43:2; D&C 11:21, 25–26.)

(5) A missionary might go through the motions of inviting people to attend Church because he believes that that is what missionaries are supposed to do. However, when the missionary purpose is burning in his heart, the missionary understands that participation in Church is essential for the investigator to develop a stronger desire for baptism and to establish a foundation for enduring to the end in the gospel covenant. With the ultimate purpose in mind, the invitation to attend Church will have greater urgency, the explanation of the importance of Sabbath worship and what to expect in an LDS Sunday service will be different, the spirit that attends the missionaries' words will have a persuasive power that would not otherwise be present.

Please do not ignore chapter one of *Preach My Gospel* and its question: "What is my purpose as a missionary?" When missionaries have internalized the purpose of bringing people to Christ through the principles and ordinances of the restored gospel, they will understand that missionary work is not a program, it is a cause—the cause of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They will understand that they are not salesmen or technicians but divinely authorized and commissioned teachers of righteousness. They will understand that the world has no access to atoning grace and salvation but through them and the Church they represent, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They will understand what they and this work are all about, and they will be up and about their Father's business. As the sons of Mosiah, they will teach "with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:3).



Discussion Questions

1. How can a missionary determine if his or her actions are being guided by the missionary purpose?
2. How could focusing on the purpose of missionary work affect how you perform daily missionary activities?
3. How does the last paragraph help you understand the eternal nature of what you will do as a missionary?

