

# Missionary Work

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Before Jesus ascended into heaven he gave his disciples a bold commission: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19-20). Following his conversion, Paul took this commission seriously and endured a number of daunting excursions to teach and convert people to Christianity in many different countries. He risked his life at every turn and eventually lost his life in the pursuit of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The process of teaching and baptizing individuals is commonly known in the Christian world as missionary work. Missionary work is carried out across the globe by a variety of organizations, typically linked to a particular religious denomination or alliance.

## The Scriptural History of Missionary Work

The scriptures reveal that all of the prophets throughout history were missionaries—called to preach to the children of God the good news of the gospel. During his public ministry, Jesus ordained apostles (and others) and commissioned them to preach the gospel to the Jews (Matt. 10:5-6) and, eventually, to the gentiles throughout the world. This great commission was reaffirmed before

his ascension, when Christ said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

The prophet Joseph Smith was told by the Lord: “Proclaim my gospel from land to land, and from city to city. ... Bear testimony in every place, unto every people” (D&C 66:5, 7). Another revelation given in 1839 reaffirmed that “...there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12).

## Missionary Work Continues Today

Each Christian church has their idea of what constitutes missionary work and how it should be carried out. Some fulfill missionary work through week long trips to third world countries, while others may do so over an entire summer. Some churches focus on international missions outside of the US, while others find it more meaningful to remain local in their efforts.

Perhaps the most visible missionary work that takes place in our own neighborhoods is that of the Jehovah Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Missionaries from these two Christian Churches can often be seen going from door to door to evangelize their message.

Since the calling of Samuel Smith in 1830, more than one million Latter-day Saint missionaries have been called, set apart, and sent into the world to preach the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the message of the restoration, and to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This is in fulfillment of the prophecy from Isaiah, reiterated by Paul, that “every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom. 14:11 and Isa. 45:23). The majority of Latter-day Saint missionaries serve full-time for a two year period in countries all over the world.

## The Lord Prepares the Way for Missionary Work

The Lord prepared a way for missionary work to happen in his day, and still prepares ways for it to happen today throughout the world, even opening areas of the world

where preaching the gospel was once prohibited. In addition to paving the political and social roads of the world for missionary work, the Lord is bringing forth technology to help the missionary cause. Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said the Lord is “inspiring the minds of great people to create inventions that further the work of the Lord in ways this world has never known” (Russell M. Nelson, “Computerized Scriptures Now Available,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1988, p. 73). In 1974 the prophet Spencer W. Kimball wrote that newspapers, magazines, television, radio, satellites, computers, and related discoveries help bring the gospel message to millions of people (Spencer W. Kimball, “When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 10–14).

### Preparing the World for Christ’s Second Coming

The importance of missionary work extends to preparing the earth for the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Lord has directed his people in this way: “Wherefore, labor ye, labor ye in my vineyard for the last time—for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth” (D&C 43:28), and “..lift up your voice as with the sound of a trumpet, both long and loud, and cry repentance unto a crooked and perverse generation, preparing the way of the Lord for his second coming” (D&C 34:6).

### All Christians are Missionaries

Besides those who serve formal missions, it should be understood that missionary work is the duty of all Christians. D&C 88:81 states: “It becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor” (D&C 88:81). The prophet David O. McKay declared on many occasions “every member a missionary.”

### The Blessings of Missionary Work

The Lord has promised great blessings from missionary work. Speaking through the prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord told a group of returned missionaries, “Ye are blessed, for the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you” (D&C 62:3). This same blessing is promised to all who perform missionary labors: “If it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the

kingdom of my Father! “And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (D&C 18:15–16).

### Conclusion

Missionary work continues as passionately today as it was done in the early days of the Christian Church. The Lord prepares a way for missionary work to happen on the smallest and largest of scales throughout the world in preparation for the second coming. While some may serve formal missions, every Christian is called to be a missionary for the Lord Jesus Christ, who has promised blessings for those who diligently spread his gospel.

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