

Raising An Army of Helaman's Warriors: Helping Our Youth Prepare for Missionary Service



*The Historical Announcement and the Responsibility
of Parents in Preparing Future Missionaries*

*"The single most important thing you can do to prepare
for a call to serve is to *become* a missionary long before
you go on a mission."*

*(Elder David A. Bednar, "Becoming a Missionary," Ensign,
Nov. 2005, 45).*

The Hastening



“God will “hasten” his work (Doctrine and Covenants 88:73). **He will also “shorten” the last days “for the elects sake” (Matthew 24:22); hence, there will be a compression of events** (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:20). Furthermore, “all things shall be in commotion” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:91). Only those in the process of becoming the men and women of Christ will be able to keep their spiritual balance” (Elder Neal A. Maxwell, *Conference Report*, April 1992, 57).

The Announcement



“I am pleased to announce that effective immediately **all worthy and able young men who have graduated from high school or its equivalent, regardless of where they live, will have the option of being recommended for missionary service beginning at the age of 18, instead of age 19.** I am not suggesting that all young men will – or should – serve at this earlier age. Rather, based on individual circumstances as well as upon a determination by priesthood leaders, this option is now available.

“As we have prayerfully pondered the age at which young men may begin their missionary service, we have also given consideration to the age at which a young woman might serve. Today **I am pleased to announce that able, worthy young women who have the desire to serve may be recommended for missionary service beginning at age 19, instead of age 21.**

The Announcement



“We affirm that missionary work is a priesthood duty — and we **encourage all young men who are worthy and who are physically able and mentally capable to respond to the call to serve.** Many young women also serve, but they are not under the same mandate to serve as are the young **men. We assure the young sisters of the Church, however, that they make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome their service**” (President Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign*, November 2012, 4-5).

The Explanation



Elder Holland stated,

“Perspective missionaries will be asked to enhance and improve and take more seriously their pre-mission preparation....

“Let me say something to the young missionary: “What does this mean for you? First of all, it means that God is hastening His work. And he needs more and more willing and worthy missionaries to spread the light and the truth and the hope and the salvation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to an often dark and fearful world.

“In the vernacular of the day, this announcement, I say to these young people, isn’t about you. It is about the sweet and pure message you are being asked to bear. And the ever greater numbers God needs to bear it.

“You must prepare by personal worthiness, and more cleanliness. And you must study diligently to know the gospel you will teach. We want you teaching effectively from the first day onward, and that will require preparation which starts long before you get your call to serve.

The Explanation



“We ask parents to take a strong hand in this preparation and not expect that it is somehow the responsibility of local church leaders, or the missionary department of the church or MTC’s to provide and direct all of that” (Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, LDS News Release, Press Conference, 6 October 2012, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/church-lowers-age-requirement-for-missionary-service>; emphasis added).

☞ Who is it that will prepare this greatest generation of missionaries?

☞ See Counter: 13:48

So.....



☞ Before our young men and young women enter the MTC, they should be able to:

1. Study the scriptures
2. Teach the gospel
3. Pray and receive answers
4. Get along with others
5. Being worthy
6. Be physically prepared
7. Be mentally prepared
8. Be financially prepared
9. Recognize the Holy Spirit in their lives
10. Talk with adults and have meaningful conversations
11. Have control over their emotions
12. Have a desire to be obedient
13. Be emotionally stable



Parental Duty



“Parents, the days are long past when regular active participation in Church meetings and programs, though essential, can fulfill your sacred responsibility to teach your children to live moral, righteous lives and walk uprightly before the Lord. With President Monson’s announcement this morning, it is essential that this be faithfully accomplished in homes which are places of refuge where kindness, forgiveness, truth, and righteousness prevail” (Elder Quentin L. Cook, “Can Ye Feel So Now?” *Ensign*, November 2012, 8).

Our Greatest Missionary Work

*“The greatest missionary work we will ever do will be in our homes. Our homes, quorums, and classes are part of the mission field. **Our children and grandchildren are our most important investigators**” (Elder Robert D. Hales, “Our Duty to God: The Mission of Parents and Leaders to the Rising Generation,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 95).*



The Bar Has Been Raised

“What we need now is the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church. We need worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries who, like Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors, are “exceedingly valiant for courage and also for strength and activity” and who are “true at all times in whatsoever thing they [are] entrusted” (Alma 53:20)....

We need vibrant, thinking, passionate missionaries who know how to listen to and respond to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. This isn’t a time for spiritual weaklings. We cannot send you on a mission to be reactivated, reformed, or to receive a testimony. We just don’t have time for that. We need you to be filled with “faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 4:5)....

Please understand this: the bar that is the standard for missionary service is being raised” (Elder M. Russell Ballard, “The Greatest Generation of Missionaries,” *Ensign*, November 2002, 46-50).

Elder Ballard's Plan for Preparing Missionaries

- ❧ **Developing a meaningful prayer relationship with your Heavenly Father.**
- ❧ Keeping the **Sabbath day holy.**
- ❧ **Working and putting part of your earnings in a savings account.**
- ❧ Paying a full and honest tithing.
- ❧ **Limiting the amount of time spent playing computer games.**
How many kills you can make in a minute with a computer game will have zero effect on your capacity to be a good missionary.
- ❧ **Giving the Lord more of your time by studying the scriptures and gaining an understanding of the marvelous message of the Restoration that we have for the world.**
- ❧ **Serving others** and sharing your testimony with them.

To the Fathers



“Consequently, if we are “raising the bar” for your sons to serve as missionaries, that means we are also “raising the bar” for you. If we expect more of them, that means we expect more of you and your wife as well.

Remember, Helaman’s 2,000 stripling warriors were faithful because “they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:21) – **and that instruction came in their homes**” (Elder M. Russell Ballard, “The Greatest Generation of Missionaries,” *Ensign*, November 2002, 46-50; emphasis added).



To the Parents



“Today, we need young men and women who are ready, willing, and worthy to serve in defending and building the kingdom of God. We need young men and young women who have been prepared and taught by their parents, especially their mothers, to make and keep sacred covenants. **What we need now is worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries who, like Helaman’s two thousand, are “exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity” and who are “true at all times in whatsoever thing they [are] entrusted” (Alma 53:20).**

To the Mothers



“I am convinced, sisters, that you are perhaps the single most significant key in bringing this to pass. Because of your nurturing nature, because you are positioned at the crossroads of our children’s lives – day in and day out – because so much of what our children learn comes from your words and your actions, I appeal to you today to refocus and redouble your efforts in this marvelous cause. Our youth need to be taught by their mothers in clear, direct, specific terms the commandments of God. You can fill their hearts and minds with such strong faith in the Lord that they will not doubt. They, like the two thousand stripling warriors, need to be taught by their mothers to believe” (Elder M. Russell Ballard, “Raising the Greatest Generation of Missionaries,” *BYU Women’s Conference*, 2 May 2003, 3).

Future Missionaries Need to Learn to Interact



- ☞ We also need to send out a cadre of young men and young women who can understand, empathize, and relate to the people they teach.
- ☞ Elder L. Tom Perry shared the following concern:
- ☞ **“More and more, young people are isolating themselves from others by playing video games; wearing headphones; and interacting through cell phones, e-mail, text messaging, and so on instead of in person. Much missionary work involves relating face-to-face with people, and unless you set the bar higher in the development of your social skills, you will find yourself unprepared”** (Elder L. Tom Perry, “Raising the Bar,” *Conference Report*, October 2007, 51).



Just Think What You Could Do.....



“Be wise in how you embrace technology. Mark important scriptures on your device and refer back to them frequently. **If you young people would review a verse of scripture as often as some of you send text messages, you could soon have hundreds of passages of scripture memorized.** Those passages would prove to be a powerful source of inspiration and guidance by the Holy Ghost in times of need” (Elder Richard G. Scott, “For Peace at Home,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 30).

Connection



We Just Don't Need More Missionaries!



- ❧ Elder Perry further suggested that future missionaries prepare for their service by **securing jobs preceding their missions that require them to interact with people.**
- ❧ **He also recommended that our youth make enough money prior to their missionary service that they can put towards their missionary fund.**
- ❧ Elder Perry declared, **“I promise great blessings – social, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual blessings – to every [one] who pays for a significant part of [their] mission.”** We need missionaries who will make a difference – missionaries who are filled with faith, hope, charity, and love. **In order to expect more from our future missionaries, we must also expect more from parents, teachers, and leaders”** (Elder L. Tom Perry, “Raising the Bar,” *Conference Report*, October 2007, 51).

Idea #1: Acquiring Gospel Knowledge



- ❧ **“First seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed” (Doctrine and Covenants 11:21).**
- ❧ **“The scriptures can form a foundation of support. They can provide an incredibly large resource of willing friends who can help us. A memorized scripture becomes an enduring friend that is not weakened with the passage of time” (Elder Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 6–8).**
- ❧ **“Preach My Gospel is intended to help you be a better-prepared, more spiritually mature missionary and a more persuasive teacher. We urge you to use it daily in your personal ... preparation. ... Study the referenced scriptures and learn the doctrines and principles” (First Presidency Message, *Preach My Gospel*, v.).**

Spiritual Preparation



A MISSIONARY'S SPIRITUAL PREPARATION WILL BE STRENGTHENED BY BETTER FAMILY HOME EVENINGS, BY IMPROVED TEACHING IN THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD AND AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS, BY ATTENDANCE AT SEMINARY AND INSTITUTE, BY GOING TO THE TEMPLE TO BE BAPTIZED IN BEHALF OF THE DEAD, BY ENCOURAGEMENT TO READ THE BOOK OF MORMON.

GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Idea #2: Be Worthy



- ❧ **“Sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:74).**
- ❧ **“Your righteousness gives others a confirmation of the goodness of life anchored in eternal truth.** If ... you haven’t yet been a missionary, prepare to be one. You will bless many other lives and crown your own with great, enduring rewards” (Elder Richard G. Scott, *“The Power of Righteousness,” Ensign, Nov. 1998, 70*).
- ❧ “Should there be anything amiss in your life, there is open to you a way out. Cease any unrighteousness. Talk with your bishop. Whatever the problem, it can be worked out through proper repentance. You can become clean once again” (President Thomas S. Monson, *“Priesthood Power,” Ensign, May 2011, 67*).

We Are All Enlisted



“I especially ask the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood to sit up and take notice. For you, let me mix in an athletic analogy. This is a life-and-death contest we are in, young men, so I am going to get in your face a little, nose to nose, with just enough fire in my voice to singe your eyebrows a little – the way coaches do when the game is close and victory means everything. And with the game on the line, what this coach is telling you is that to play in this match, some of you have to be more morally clean than you now are. In this battle between good and evil, you cannot play for the adversary whenever temptation comes along and then expect to suit up for the Savior at temple and mission time as if nothing has happened. That, my young friends, you cannot do. God will not be mocked.

We Are All Enlisted



“So we have a dilemma tonight, you and I. It is that there are thousands of Aaronic Priesthood-age young men already on the records of this Church who constitute our pool of candidates for future missionary service. But the challenge is to have those deacons, teachers, and priests stay active enough and worthy enough to be ordained elders and serve as missionaries. So we need young men already on the team to *stay* on it and stop dribbling out of bounds just when we need you to get in the game and play your hearts out! In almost all athletic contests of which I know, there are lines drawn on the floor or the field within which every participant must stay in order to *compete*. Well, the Lord has drawn lines of worthiness for those called to labor with Him in this work. No missionary can be unrepentant of sexual transgression or profane language or pornographic indulgence and then expect to challenge others to repent of those very things! You can’t do that. The Spirit will not be with you, and the words will choke in your throat as you speak them. You cannot travel down what Lehi called “forbidden paths” and expect to guide others to the “strait and narrow” one – it can’t be done” (Jeffrey R. Holland, “We Are All Enlisted,” *Ensign*, November 2011, 45).

Idea #3: Learn to Work and Become Self-Reliant



- ☞ **“Be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [your] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (Doctrine and Covenants 58:27).**
- ☞ **“Whether future missionaries go away to college or for work, living away from home helps them adjust to the necessary independence of being a missionary. This also provides opportunities for them to wash their own clothing, clean their own living areas, prepare food, and be responsible for their own safety and well-being.** Even if future missionaries cannot live away from home, they can be more independent by taking on these responsibilities” (Robert K. Wagstaff, “Preparing Emotionally for Missionary Service,” *Ensign*, March 2011, 23).
- ☞ **“[Young people need to learn] social and other skills: how to participate in a conversation, how to get acquainted and interact with others, ... how to pursue hobbies without becoming addicted, how to correct mistakes and make better choices” (Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “Brethren, We Have Work to Do,” *Ensign*, November 2012, 48).**

Missionary Work is Rigorous

“This work is rigorous. It demands mental sharpness and capacity. It demands faith, desire, and consecration. It demands clean hands and a pure heart. The time has come when we must raise the standards of those who are called to serve as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. ... We need missionaries, but they must be capable of doing the work” (President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Missionary Service,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, 11 Jan. 2003, 17, 18).



A Living House



“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what he is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised.

“But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of — throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards.

“You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but he is building up a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself” -- C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*

Idea #4: Make Sure You Are Physically and Emotionally Healthy



- ❧ **“They were all young ..., and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity” (Alma 53:20).**
- ❧ “Maintain your health so that you can serve with all your heart, might, mind, and strength” (*Missionary Handbook* (2006), 50).
- ❧ **A missionary must be able to walk an average of six miles (10 km) per day and ride a bicycle 12 miles (19 km) per day” (Donald B. Doty, “Missionary Health Preparation,” *Ensign*, March 2007, 64).**
- ❧ **“Missionary service is emotionally demanding. Your support system is going to be withdrawn from you as you leave home and go out into the world. ... There will be days of rejection and disappointment.** Learn now about your emotional limits, and learn how to control your emotions under the circumstances you will face as a missionary” (Elder L. Tom Perry, “*Raising the Bar*,” *Ensign*, November 2007, 48).

Idea #5: Be Prepared Financially

- ☞ **“All ... who ... are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice ... are accepted of me” (Doctrine and Covenants 97:8).**
- ☞ ***“You need to prepare financially. ... I speak to that young man who doesn’t have any idea how he can finance a mission. I do not know either. But I do know this: if you have faith and determine that you will go, there will be a way. Opportunities will come to you as manna from heaven. Do not let that deter you from your duty”*** (President Boyd K. Packer, “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” *Ensign*, August 1983, 71).
- ☞ **“Prospective missionaries ... ought to have a job and save money for their missions. Every mission president would concur with me that the missionary who has worked and saved and helped pay for part or all of his or her mission is a better-prepared missionary”** (Elder M. Russell Ballard, “How to Prepare to Be a Good Missionary,” *New Era*, March 2007, 7).

Idea #6: Begin Living a Missionary Life Now



- ❧ **Missionaries live on a strict schedule:** They are in bed at 10:30 and up at 6:30. This can be very different for those young men who are up watching movies, playing video games, and dinking around until 3:00 a.m., and then wake up after noon each day.
- ❧ **Missionaries should eat healthy:** Many of our young people do not.
- ❧ **Missionaries should know how to make meals.** Many of our young people do not.
- ❧ **Missionaries practice good hygiene.** Some of our young people don't use soap or wash their hair.
- ❧ **Missionaries practice solid social skills.** Most missionaries talk to people every day that are older than them. Young people do not. **Missionaries must strike up conversations with complete strangers.** Most young people do not.

“Missionary Work is a new world for most young missionaries, a radical change of lifestyle. Many wish they had been better prepared” (S. Brent Scharman, “Preparing Your Future Missionary,” *Ensign*, October 2004).

How Firm is Their Foundation?

“We can rely on the faith and testimony of others only so long. Eventually we must have our own strong and deeply placed foundation, or we will be unable to withstand the storms of life, which will come” (President Thomas S. Monson, “How Firm a Foundation,” *Ensign*, November 2006, 62).

