

Alma 29:1-2**1** *Missionary Work*

There is an urgent need in the Church today for missionary couples, not to go first-contacting or teaching the discussions, unless you want to do so, but for meaningful missionary service in all of the activities of the Church throughout the world. There is far greater flexibility in the service opportunities of couples than for single elders or sisters. In consultation with your bishop, you can indicate your own preferences for missionary service. We must train a growing number of fathers and mothers and priesthood and auxiliary leaders throughout the world who want very much to serve the Lord but simply do not know how to do it. You can help them as a leadership missionary couple. You can serve in temples, family history, educational and medical activities, welfare service projects, public affairs, and visitors' centers.... Your children and grandchildren will be positively influenced for good as witnessed by many couples who have honorably served, some on their third, fourth, or fifth mission. Don't wait to be asked. I invite each of you to come forth to participate some way in the glorious and varied opportunities for missionary service.

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 1997 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997], 36-37

2 I like to refer to missionary efforts as sharing the gospel. The work *sharing* affirms that we have something extraordinarily valuable and desire to give it to others for their benefit and blessing.

The most effective missionaries, member and full-time, always act out of love. I learned this lesson as a young man. I was assigned to visit a less-active member, a successful professional many years older than I. Looking back on my actions, I realize that I had very little loving concern for the man I visited. I acted out of duty, with a desire to report 100 percent on my home teaching. One evening, close to the end of a month, I phoned to ask if my companion and I could come right over and visit him. His chastening reply taught me an unforgettable lesson.

"No, I don't believe I want you to come over this evening," he said. "I'm tired. I've already dressed for bed. I am reading, and I am just not willing to be interrupted so that you can report 100 percent on your home teaching this month." That reply still stings me because I knew he had sensed my selfish motivation.

I hope no person we approach with an invitation to hear the message of the restored gospel feels that we are acting out of any reason other than a genuine love for them and an unselfish desire to share something we know to be precious.

Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, Nov. 2001 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001], 8

3 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. Please notice... I emphasized *becoming* rather than *going*....

The issue is not going on a mission; rather, the issue is becoming a missionary and serving throughout our entire life with all our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is possible for a young man to go on a mission and not *become* a missionary, and this is not what the Lord requires or what the Church needs.

My earnest hope for each of you young men is that you will not simply go on a mission—but that you will become missionaries long before you submit your mission papers, long before you receive a call to serve, long before you are set apart by your stake president, and long before you enter the MTC....

You will not suddenly or magically be transformed into a prepared and obedient missionary on the day you walk through the front door of the Missionary Training Center. What you have become in the days and months and years prior to your missionary service is what you will be in the MTC...

A key element of raising the bar includes working to become a missionary before going on a mission.

David A. Bednar, *Ensign*, Nov. 2005 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005], 45-47

4 I think the first time I ever attended a meeting in this building was at the funeral of my cousin, Carter Sessions, who died in the Northwestern States Mission.... When we go into the mission field we offer our lives, and sometimes the offer is accepted. In that instance the offer was accepted....

On one of my visits to New Zealand I went to a conference.... The mission president called on a new missionary to get up and speak, and that boy was scared. I knew just how he felt because I had had the same experience years before. He stood up there, and he tried to say something, but he couldn't get it out. Now, some people would have said, "Why on earth did they ever send a man like that out into the mission field?" But do you know what the old native said to me sitting next to me? He whispered in my ear, "Won't he be giving us the devil in six months from now?" Why, he could see that boy. He was thrilled with that lad up there trying to express himself because he could see the end from the beginning. He could see the architect's plan, and he could see the contractor's work, the great designer's influence in building that young man to be a servant of God.

Matthew Cowley Speaks [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 360-361

5 We must be willing to release the death grip which we have on things, which have become as a security blanket in our lives. Count the many hundreds of needed missionary couples who would be serving in the field if that firm grip on the familiarities of home and of children and grandchildren could be loosened. The Lord is prepared to perform the miracle that will follow, which miracle is that both they and you will survive, even grow, with an eighteen-month separation.

Graham W. Doxey, in Conference Report, Oct. 1991 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991], 34

6 In addition to the need for more young men and women to serve, there is an urgent need for couples. Each time we visit a mission, the universal request is for more couples. The need is great for mature couples who are financially able, possessing strong testimonies, and with reasonably good health. Their entry into the mission field adds strength and maturity to our missionary effort.... Is this not the special time of decision for all of you... special mature older couples? Have you ever sat down and contemplated what kind of entries you will prepare for your Life's history? Will yours be one comprised of slides and videos of worldly acquisitions of boats and motor homes, of travel and entertainment for personal gratification and amusement? Or will your history express the joy you have experienced in preaching and teaching the message of our Lord and Savior to all who would hear your voice?

Angel Abrea, *Ensign*, May 1992 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992], 24-25

7 The cause to which I speak is of missionary work as couples.... There is a need, not to leave homes forever, but for a time—then return and reap the rich harvest of the faithful labor. Your children and grandchildren will be blessed.... President Harold B. Lee taught the principle that only as we make ourselves totally available are we worthy disciples of Christ and obtain another promise that reaches beyond us. We worry and ache and pain over family members who have erred. The thirty-first section of the Doctrine and Covenants provides a great key in verse five: "Therefore, thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your back, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Wherefore, your family shall live."... The promise is sure, "Wherefore, your family shall live." Blessings will come to our wayward or wandering children, even those who are married and have children of their own.... As we come to the latter years of life, we come to a mature spiritual understanding. What better way have we to prepare to meet our God than to serve a mission when the autumn and winter of life is upon us?

Vaughn J. Featherstone, *Ensign*, May 1992 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992], 42-44

8 A young man recently shared with me how much he had learned from his perseverance as a missionary. I draw from his experience some of the things you can learn that would bring opportunities and blessings to you:

1. How to organize and use time wisely
2. The importance of hard work—that you reap what you sow
3. Leadership skills
4. People skills
5. The value of gospel study
6. Respect for authority
7. The importance of prayer
8. Humility and dependence on the Lord

James E. Faust, *Ensign*, May 2005 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005], 51

9 With reference to young women, the President said: “There has been some misunderstanding of earlier counsel regarding single sisters serving as missionaries. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot. But it should be kept in mind that young sisters are not **under** obligation to go on missions. They should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of your men, but some will wish to go” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, June 19, 2004, 27).

M. Russell Ballard, “One More,” *Ensign*, May 2005 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005], 70

10 All that I now hold dear in life began to mature in the mission field. Had I not been encouraged to be a missionary, I would not have the eternal companion or precious family I dearly love. I am confident that I would not have had the exceptional professional opportunities that stretched my every capacity. I am certain that I would not have received the sacred callings with opportunities to serve for which I will be eternally grateful. My life has been richly blessed beyond measure because I served a mission.

Now can you understand why I am so anxious to motivate every one of you young men to be a worthy missionary?...

I urge you not to pray to know whether you should go; rather, ask the Lord to guide you in whatever may be necessary to become a worthy, empowered full-time missionary. You will never regret serving a mission, but you most probably will regret not serving if that is your choice.

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, May 2006 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006], 89-90

11 There is no other labor in all the world that brings to a human heart, judging from my own personal experience, more joy, peace and serenity than proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I remember that while I was laboring in Japan, [after two years] . . . I received a cable: ‘Come home on the first vessel.’ When I arrived home President Smith told me that they had decided to send me to Europe [for at least one year] to succeed Brother Lyman. When I went into his office and bade him goodbye, and said, ‘I will see you in a year,’ he said, ‘We have decided to make it a year and a half.’ I said, ‘Multiply it by two and say nothing about it, and it will please me,’ and that is exactly what he did. I was there a little over three years, and never have I had sweeter *joy, more genuine* satisfaction in my life than during those three years, when I had no thought except the spreading of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heber J. Grant, Conference Report, Oct 1926, p. 4

12 I recall my own mission call to Argentina. After sharing the excitement of my call with my parents, I sought out my mentor, who was not a member of the Church, a former U.S. senator, to share the news of my call with him. He was not impressed, let me know in no uncertain terms that if I insisted on serving a mission, upon my return all the good jobs would be taken and I would never amount to anything. I was disappointed, but realized that he saw my future only as the world perceives. Years later I realized that my mission had prioritized my life toward family, service, and gospel principles. As an added bonus, I was far ahead of most of my former classmates in worldly achievements. . . . The call to missionary service rarely comes when it is convenient or easy to serve.

Gardner H. Russell, *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, p. 82

13 Pray for the chance to encounter people who sense there could be something better in their lives. Pray to know what you should do to help them. Your prayers will be answered. You will meet people prepared by the Lord. You will find yourself feeling and saying things beyond your past experience. And then in time you will feel yourself drawing closer to your Heavenly Father, and you will feel the cleansing and the forgiveness the Savior promises His faithful witnesses. And you will feel His approval, knowing you have done what he asked of you, because He loves you and trusts you.

Henry B. Eyring, "A Child and a Disciple," *Ensign*, May 2003, 32

14 **Alma 29:3**
Our Allotment

...we had our own free agency in our pre-mortal existence, and whatever we are today is likely the result of that which we willed to be heretofore. We unquestionably knew before we elected to come to this earth the conditions under which we would here exist.... I have a conviction deep down in my heart that we are exactly what we should be, each one of us, except as we may have altered that pattern by deviating from the laws of God here in mortality.

Henry D. Moyle, *Conference Report*, Oct. 1952, pp. 71-72

Alma 29:4-5

15 We are free to choose, but we are not free to alter the consequences of those choices.

Ezra Taft Benson, *Come Unto Christ* p. 40

16 Agency is the gift of heaven. It is only in and through the proper exercise of this gift that men and women can obtain exaltation, that they can willingly serve God and become like him. As with all of heaven's gifts, its power to exalt is matched by an equal power to condemn when abused or misused. Agency is fruit plucked from the tree of life. In it are seeds which, if properly planted, nurtured, and pruned, will bear the fruits of salvation; but if allowed to grow wild, they will produce the gall of bitterness and eventual destruction. Agency is our glory or our condemnation (see D&C 93:31-32).

Millett & McConkie, p. 196

17 The laws of God can reward a righteous desire or attitude because an omniscient God can determine it," Elder Dallin H. Oaks has written. "If a person does not perform a particular commandment because he is genuinely unable to do so, but truly would if he could, our Heavenly Father will know this and will reward that person accordingly.

Upon the same principle, evil thoughts or desires are sinful under the laws of God even through not translated into the actions that would make them punishable under the laws of man. Similarly, if a person performs a seemingly righteous act but does so for the wrong reasons, such as to achieve a selfish purpose, his hands may be clean but his heart is not 'pure.' His act will not be counted for righteousness.

Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart*, pp. 12-13

18 “Desire denotes a real longing or craving. Hence righteous desires are much more than passive preferences or fleeting feelings. Of course our genes, circumstances, and environments matter very much, and they shape us significantly. Yet there remains an inner zone in which we are sovereign, unless we abdicate. In this zone lies the essence of our individuality and our personal accountability. . . . Mostly, brothers and sisters, we become the victims of our own wrong desires. . . . Like it or not, therefore, reality requires that we acknowledge our responsibility for our desires. . . . Righteous desires need to be relentless, therefore, because, said President Brigham Young, ‘the men and women, who desire to obtain seats in the celestial kingdom will find that they must battle every day’ (Journal of Discourses 11:14). Therefore, true Christian soldiers are more than weekend warriors. . . . Some of our present desires, therefore, need to be diminished and then finally dissolved.”

Neal A. Maxwell, Ensign, Nov. 1996, pp. 21-22

19 It was our privilege... to be living across the street from Elder F. Enzo Busche, now an emeritus Seventy, and his wife. One day Elder Busche taught our high priests quorum, and he cited a scripture in the book of Alma where Alma longs to have the voice of an angel. Then Alma immediately repents of those feelings and in verse four makes a remarkable statement. He suggests that we have to be careful what we desire, for the Lord grants unto to us the desires of our heart. And then came what was to me almost a stunning statement: “Whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.” God will grant unto to us, according to our will, the things which we desire (see Alma 29:1-5).

I went home that day—and it’s not that I felt any of my desires were wrong—but in that moment I realized that those desires were *mine*. That day I began to try to let the Lord know that what I’d like to do is fulfill *His* desires. Even then, I thought I really meant it, but I came to know that that’s an easy thing to say and a difficult thing to do. As Elder Maxwell said yesterday, only when we truly yield our hearts to God can He begin to accelerate the purification and sanctification and the perfecting process (see Hel. 3:35).

Gerald N. Lund, Ensign, May 2002 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002], 85

Alma 29:8

20 All Nations Taught of Their Own Nation

“We believe that Joseph Smith was called by God as the prophet to inaugurate this present era, known as ‘the dispensation of the fullness of times’ (see Eph. 1:10; D&C 112:30; 121:31; 124:41; 128:18, 20; 138:48). . . . This modern dispensation of which I speak fulfills the biblical promise of a ‘restitution of all things’ (Acts 3:21; see also Rev. 14:6-7). It also fulfills another scriptural promise that ‘the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word’ (Alma 29:8).”

Russell M. Nelson, Ensign, Nov. 1993, p. 104

21 He is the Father and God of all men and women of all ages and all cultures, and his love for them is as great as it is for the Christian nations or the Latter-day Saints. It is a doctrine of the true Church that the Almighty has granted portions of his light to such notables as Socrates, Confucius, Buddha, the Reformers, and to many, many others, in order that whole nations might be lifted to higher standards of living. Ultimately, of course, there is only one standard—the gospel standard; and God will provide an opportunity for every soul to receive the fullness of the everlasting gospel either in this world or in the world to come.

First Presidency Message, 15 February 1978; See also Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, p. 312

22 Since about 92% of all missionaries in the field are Americans, we must call to the attention of all members in other lands that we need far more local missionaries. Through Alma the Lord said, [Alma 29:8]. This scripture indicates, brethren, that every nation is to furnish its own missionaries and we expect that to follow. . . . It is all nations of their nation and tongue. We need far more, thousands—more Brazilians to preach in Brazil in Portuguese; thousands more Mexicans to preach in Spanish—Chileans, Peruvians, Bolivians, Columbians, Argentines,

Venezuelans—Spanish to proselyte in Spanish—hundreds more of local men to preach in Scandinavian, German, French, Filipino, Indian and all nationalities in all tongues and nations. . . . Since the local men can better represent their own people without problems of language, visas, and other rights and services, we need soon hundreds of more young men of every race and nation.

Spencer W. Kimball, Regional Representatives Seminar, Sept. 1977, p. 17

23 **Alma 29:9**

Becoming Spiritually Content

In just a few words, a major insight came to the conscientious and the converted through Alma: “For I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted me” (Alma 29:3). However, just prior, Alma urgently desired to be the “trump of God” so that he might “shake the earth” (Alma 29:1). But not because of ego; in fact, Alma wanted to declare repentance and the plan of redemption to all mankind so that there might be no more human sorrow (see Alma 29:2). Yet Alma’s contentment rested on the reality that God finally allots to us according to our wills (see Alma 29:4). What could be more fair?

Thus becoming content with his calling, Alma then meekly hoped to be an instrument to help save some soul (see Alma 29:9). A significant spiritual journey is thus reflected in but nine soliloquy-like verses.

The same contentment awaits us if our own desires can be worked through and aligned.

Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Apr. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 89-90

24

A willingness to sacrifice all we possess in the work of the Lord is surely a strength. In fact, it is a covenant we make in sacred places. But even this strength can bring us down if we fail to confine our sacrifices to those things the Lord and his leaders have asked of us at this time. We should say with Alma, “Why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?” (Alma 29:6). Persons who consider it insufficient to pay their tithes and offerings and to work in the positions to which they have been called can easily be led astray by cultist groups and other bizarre outlets for their willingness to sacrifice.

Dallin H. Oaks, *With Full Purpose of Heart* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002], 169

25

The Lord knows our circumstances and the intents of our hearts, and surely the talents and gifts He has given us. He is able to gauge perfectly how we have performed within what is allotted to us, including by lifting up some of the many surrounding hands that hang down. Thus, yearning for expanded opportunities while failing to use those at hand is bad form spiritually....

I have a special grand-daughter, Anna Josephine, who was born without a left hand. The other day a conversation was overheard between Anna Jo, almost five, and her cousin Talmage, three. Talmage said reassuringly as they played together, “Anna Jo, when you grow up you will have five fingers.” Anna Jo said, “No, Talmage, when I grow up I won’t have five fingers, but when I get to heaven I will have a hand.”

Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Apr. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 92-93

26

When I arrived in Holland on my first mission I was very disappointed at being assigned to serve as secretary of the Mission. I had looked forward for years to the time I would be a missionary, and I had a strong desire to preach the gospel. Whenever the other missionaries went out I chafed at the restraint of having to stay in and do secretarial work. I wanted to be out actively bearing witness to the truth. It bothered me so much that the Lord blessed me with a dream which made me feel satisfied to do the work I had been assigned.

I dreamed that I was keeping books for my father in his implement and lumber business. I kept pleading with my father to let me leave because I wanted to go outside and work as a regular laborer. Finally, Father gave his consent and I took the train for Salt Lake. Upon my arrival I was met by a friend who took me and introduced me to the foreman of a section gang.... We had gone but a short distance when one of the men asked me what I had been

doing. When I told him, he replied, “You are foolish. If I could keep books, I wouldn’t be out here. Anyone can do this, but not everyone can keep books.”

With that I awakened.... This satisfied me so that I was content to keep the books, realizing I was doing what I was needed to do. Later, when I was given the responsibility of presiding over that Mission, I understood all the office procedures which was a great help to me in my work.

LeGrand Richards, *Just to Illustrate* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1961], 89-90

27

When I think of missionary work—and incidentally it is my first love—I remember the words of Alma, “I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I might be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.” (Alma 29:9)

When I think back on early missionary experiences, there comes to mind one incident which I shall never forget. Fifty-six years ago I was in Norwich, England, on a mission. I had been tracting, and in those days we went three times to every door regardless of the reception. On this occasion I came to a door where I remembered the woman had been particularly antagonistic, and I knocked on the door with the big brass knocker. I knocked as a mature missionary knocks, for I had been there nearly two years. New missionaries, as you know, sometimes knock rather carefully hoping they won’t be heard, but I knocked vigorously and had no response. I looked through the window and saw a woman sitting in the front room knitting. I recognized her, for she had given me a tongue lashing before, and I knew she wasn’t deaf nor dumb. She wouldn’t respond so I went around to the back door.... I took my walking stick and knocked on the door so hard that she came out like a setting hen comes off the nest in response to a troublesome boy. I think for several minutes she gave me the worst Scotch blessing I have ever had. But she had an impediment of speech; she had to stop every fifteen minutes to draw her breath, and when she did stop I said, “My dear lady, I apologize for having annoyed you, but our Heavenly Father sent me 6,000 miles to bring you a message and inasmuch as he sent me I can’t go home until I give you that message.” She said, “Do you mean the Lord sent a message to me?” I said, “I mean just that. He sent it because he loves you.” She said, “Tell me the message.” And I told her as best I could the Joseph Smith story. She listened intently, apparently impressed. And then I again apologized for having been rude enough to insist on her coming out and then I added, “Sister, when you and I meet again, and we will meet again, you are going to say ‘thank you, and thank God that you came to my back door and insisted on speaking to me.’”

That was in 1906. Ten years later, in 1916, I was in England again, this time in uniform. President George F. Richards was president of the mission. He had the flu, and he called me at the military camp and asked if it was possible to get a leave and go down to Norwich and hold a conference for him. I, of course, was very glad to visit my old mission field. At the close of the morning session a woman and four grown daughters came down the aisle.

I was shaking hands with old friends, and as I took her by the hand she bowed her head and kissed my hand and wet it with her tears. She said, “I do thank God that you came to my door ten years ago. When you left that day I thought about what you had said, I couldn’t get it out of my mind. I was fighting it, but I couldn’t sleep that night. I kept thinking, ‘God has sent a message to me.’ But,” she said, “I fought it for three days. I tried to find the missionaries from the address on the tract, and when I found them, you had returned to Canada. We continued to investigate until my daughters and I joined the Church, and next month we are leaving for Utah.” I cite that as a word of encouragement to you, my brothers and sisters. The joy that comes into the heart of a man or woman who has been instrumental in the hands of God in carrying the message of life and salvation to some soul, be it only one, is a joy beyond anything that men in the world can know. I am sure I need not emphasize that to you for you know it from experience.

Hugh B. Brown, *Continuing the Quest*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961], 61-63.