

Every Young Man Should Serve a Mission

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OBJECTIVE Each young man will realize that full-time missionary service is both a privilege and a responsibility.

PREPARATION

1. Prayerfully study James 5:20; Mosiah 28:1–5; Alma 17:2–5; 28:13–14; 29:1–2, 9–10, 13–15; and Doctrine and Covenants 1:4–5, 17–20; 4; 6:3; 18:10–16; 42:6–8; 50:13–14, 22.
2. Materials needed:
 - a. Copies of the scriptures (each young man should bring his own).
 - b. Pencils for marking scriptures.
3. If it is available in your area, show “The Joy of Missionary Work,” on *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276).
4. Optional: Assign two or three young men to prepare to tell the class about how missionaries helped bring them (or their families) into the Church.
5. Optional: Arrange for a recently returned missionary to visit your class for five to ten minutes and talk with the young men about preparing to serve missions.

NOTE You might want to divide this lesson over two class periods or select from the lesson those items you feel would have the greatest influence on the young men in your class.

**SUGGESTED
LESSON
DEVELOPMENT**

Why Missionary Work Is Important

Scripture and discussion

Tell the young men that you are going to read a passage of scripture. Ask them to identify who it is about, what led up to this situation, and what happened afterward. Read Mosiah 28:1–5, beginning in the middle of verse 1 with “They took a small number.”

Help the young men bring out the following:

1. The passage is about the four sons of Mosiah (see Mosiah 27:34).
 2. They had been very wicked and tried to destroy the Church (see Mosiah 27:10).
 3. An angel appeared and called them to repentance (see Mosiah 27:11–17).
 4. They repented and began to preach the gospel among the Nephites. They wanted to go on a mission to the Lamanites (see Mosiah 27:34–37; 28:1–4).
 5. As a result of their preaching, thousands of Lamanites were converted (see Alma 17:2–5; 19:35–36; 22:22–23; 23:4–5).
- Why were the sons of Mosiah so anxious to serve missions?
 - How has missionary work affected your life?

Some of the young men might be converts. Others might have ancestors who joined the Church many years ago. Encourage several of them to tell about the missionary effort that helped bring them or their family into the Church. If you asked some class members to prepare for this, have them share their stories now.

Story

In your own words, tell the following story about how a pair of young missionaries listened to the Spirit and taught the gospel to an entire family:

When she was seventeen years old, Sarah Pea Rich had a marvelous dream and a powerful experience with the Book of Mormon that helped her and her family join the Church. In 1835 two Latter-day Saint elders told Sarah, her family, and several of their neighbors about Joseph Smith and his translation of the gold plates. After listening to these “strange men,” as she called them, Sarah did this:

“Feeling anxious to see the Book of Mormon . . . , I asked [for it] . . . then retired to my room and spent the rest of that evening and most of [the] night reading it. I was truly astonished by its contents. The book left an impression on my mind never to be forgotten. It appeared to be open before my eyes for several weeks afterwards.”

The following day the elders left for a city five hundred miles away. They took their Book of Mormon, and Sarah’s family thought they would never see the book or the missionaries again. On a Friday night six weeks later, Sarah dreamed that at sunset the next day the missionaries would return, stand on her porch, and have a certain conversation with her. When she awoke, Sarah was so sure of her dream that she asked her father to come home early from town so he could be there when the missionaries arrived.

“Father said I must be crazy, for those men were hundreds of miles away. But I insisted: ‘Father hurry home this evening, for I am sure they will come.’ He only laughed, and he and mother went off to town. Then I said to my sister, ‘Let’s prepare, for those men will surely be here.’ ”

As the sun was setting, the missionaries appeared at Sarah’s home and stepped onto her porch. Sarah and the missionaries then had, word for word, the conversation she had dreamed, during which the missionaries said, “We had a dream that we were to return here and baptize you and build up a church in this region.” Sarah asked the elders to sit inside her house while she waited on the porch for her parents. She described their arrival:

“My father said to me, ‘Well, Sarah, where are your Mormon elders?’ I told him they were in the house, at the same time they stepped out on the porch, to meet him. Father was struck with astonishment.”

The elders stayed with the family that night and again discussed the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. They remained in the area until they had baptized a congregation of over seventy members, including Sarah and her father, mother, and sister. (See Susan Easton Black, *Stories from the Early Saints Converted by the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992], pp. 12–14.)

Chalkboard
discussion

- Why does the Church send missionaries to preach the gospel?

Write the young men’s answers on the chalkboard. Their responses may include the following:

1. Because Heavenly Father has commanded us to do so
2. To help people come unto Christ and his church
3. To help people receive the saving ordinances, such as baptism
4. So people can repent of their sins and be forgiven
5. To warn people of the consequences of sin
6. To gather the faithful out of the world
7. To give us a chance to serve and grow
8. To set up the kingdom of God and prepare for the Second Coming

Every Young Man Should Serve a Mission

Quotation	<p>President Spencer W. Kimball said:</p> <p>“The question is frequently asked: Should every young man fill a mission? And the answer has been given by the Lord. It is ‘Yes.’ Every young man should fill a mission. . . .</p> <p>“ . . . Every man should also pay his tithing. Every man should observe the Sabbath. Every man should attend his meetings. Every man should marry in the temple” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” <i>Ensign</i>, Oct. 1974, p. 8).</p>
Adviser presentation	<p>Emphasize that through his prophets the Lord has commanded us to serve missions. We cannot escape that obligation any more than we can be exempt from paying tithing or from keeping any other of the Lord’s commandments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some common excuses for not going on a mission?
Quotation	<p>Explain that Elder William R. Bradford of the Seventy addressed this subject:</p> <p>“Some of you say in your minds, ‘Oh well, you just don’t understand my case. My situation is different. I plan to be a great lawyer, or doctor, or athlete, or some other great person. Surely neither you nor the Lord would expect me to leave my studies at such an important time. A mission would interfere with my future plans.’</p> <p>“Others are thinking, ‘Yes, I know about missions, but if you had a girl friend like mine, you’d never leave her. What will happen to her while I’m gone?’</p> <p>“Yet others of you are thinking, ‘Missions cost so much. I just got this job. I just purchased a car and a stereo. It’s just the time of life when I’m starting to get things together for myself. I can’t drop all that now. I just can’t afford it.’</p> <p>“Then there are also those who are thinking, ‘My situation disqualifies me. I have fallen into transgression and am not participating in the Church. I had always planned on being a missionary, but I slipped and now I don’t live the standards required of a missionary’ ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, p. 71; or <i>Ensign</i>, Nov. 1981, p. 50).</p>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is exempt from serving a mission? • What are sufficient reasons for deferring a mission? <p>It should be clear from the statements of President Kimball and Elder Bradford that only rarely should a young man in the Church not serve a mission. Explain that in some cases a young man may be excused because of severe health problems.</p>
Quotation	<p>Share the following statement by Elder Bradford:</p> <p>“If I could speak separately to each of you young men, . . . I would say with all the power of speech I could generate, ‘Just who do you think you are? What right do you have to match your wisdom with that of God, who through His prophets has issued a firm decree, a solemn mandate, that the restored gospel must be declared to all the world by the voice of His disciples? This means you!’ ” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, p. 72; or <i>Ensign</i>, Nov. 1981, p. 50).</p>
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should a young man do who has good health but does not want to go on a mission? <p>This may be a good opportunity for the young men to teach each other. Their responses may include—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visit the bishop and discuss the situation. 2. Repent. Make sure he is worthy to serve a mission. 3. Pray earnestly and search the scriptures. Work to strengthen his testimony and prepare for missionary service. 4. Offer to help the local missionaries. See what their work is like and talk with them about their experiences. 5. Consider honestly his reasons for not wanting to serve. Pray for help to overcome fears or obstacles.

We Can Serve Others and Sanctify Ourselves

Scriptures and discussion

Explain that Alma had a vision of the need for missionaries. Have the young men read and mark Alma 29:1–2.

- According to Alma, what causes sorrow and inequality on the earth? (See Alma 28:13–14; 29:2.)
- According to Alma, what is the best solution for the world’s problems?
- If you were Alma and had his desire, what would you do?

Have the young men read and mark Alma 29:9 and 13.

- How did Alma feel about his opportunity to spread the gospel?
- How can the gospel be preached to all the world?

Have the young men read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 1:4–5 and 17–18.

Discuss with the young men the commandments and promises given to missionaries. Help the young men understand that the Lord has directed us to warn “all people,” and that as missionaries go forth, “none shall stay them.”

Testimony

Bear your testimony about the blessings and responsibilities of living at this time, when the gospel has been restored in its fulness. Remind the young men that they were born to assist in the work. Point out that by serving missions they will help to fulfill the prophecies about the spread of the gospel in the last days.

Discussion and scripture

- What are the responsibilities of missionaries?

Point out that the Lord has a specific plan for missionary work and for each missionary. Have the young men read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 42:6–8.

Help the young men understand that when bearing their testimonies missionaries are, in a sense, “speaking with the trump of God.” Television, radio, and other modern communications media have been developed and are used to spread the gospel, but missionaries are the main means of preaching the gospel.

Have a young man read Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–16. The young men may want to mark parts of this passage, especially verses 10, 15, and 16. Help the young men understand that usually individuals or families, rather than large groups of people, join the Church.

- What feelings or experiences have helped you know that your soul is precious to Heavenly Father?
- How do you feel when someone you love repents?
- How would you feel about a person who helped your friend or relative learn the gospel?

Testimony and story

Testify that all efforts to share the gospel are worthwhile, even if only one person joins the Church. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley quoted Elder Charles A. Callis in relating this experience:

“When I was President of the Southern States Mission, I had each missionary come into the office before he was released. One day a young man came in and I said, ‘What have you accomplished?’

“He said, ‘Nothing, and I am going home.’

“ ‘What do you mean you have accomplished nothing?’

“ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I baptized one man in the backwoods of Tennessee. . . . He didn’t know enough or have enough sense to wear shoes. And that’s all I’ve done. I have wasted my time and my father’s money. . . .’

“ . . . I went up into that area six months later to check on that man. The sense of failure with which that boy went home disturbed me, and I decided to check on the man he had baptized. I found he had been ordained a deacon and he had some small assignments in the branch in which he lived. Later he was ordained an elder and was given further responsibilities. He moved off the tenant farm on which he had lived and bought a little piece of ground of his own. Later he was made branch president. He later sold his farm,

moved to Idaho and bought a farm there. He reared his family; his sons and daughters went on missions and their sons and daughters. I have just completed a survey which indicates, according to the best information I can find, that over 1100 people have come into the Church as a result of the baptism of that one man by a missionary who thought he had failed" (*The Consequences of Conversion*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Provo, 28 Jan. 1959], pp. 4–5).

The Blessings of Missionary Service

Adviser presentation and quotation	<p>Explain that missionary work is a great blessing and opportunity. You might want to tell the young men about the blessings you received as a result of your own mission, or about the blessings received by a missionary you know. Elder Bradford pointed out some of the blessings that can come from missionary work.</p> <p>He explained that missionary service "is a marvelous gift of time, a time given when you can experience glimpses of heavenly life here on earth. It is a time of cleansing and refreshing. It is a special time when the Holy Ghost can seal upon you the knowledge of the great plan for your exaltation. It is one of your best opportunities to become a celestial candidate.</p> <p>"The highest of all service to others is to teach them truth and bring them into the kingdom of God" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1981, p. 73; or <i>Ensign</i>, Nov. 1981, p. 81).</p> <p>Have the young men read, mark, and discuss James 5:20.</p>
Adviser presentation	<p>Explain that missionary work blesses both the missionary and those who hear the gospel. People experience great joy when they accept Christ's gospel and obey his commandments. As they do this, they are filled with the Spirit of God and feel peace they have never before experienced.</p> <p>Have the young men read and mark Doctrine and Covenants 50:13–14, 22 and 6:3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In these verses, what blessings are promised to faithful missionaries?
Quotation	<p>President Ezra Taft Benson said:</p> <p>"Men and women who turn their lives over to God will find out that he can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life to God will find he has eternal life" ("Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," <i>New Era</i>, May 1975, p. 20).</p>
Story	<p>To illustrate the blessings that can result from missionary service, read or tell the following story:</p> <p>Doug was an exceptional athlete. He was also a talented student. During his last year of high school, coaches from many colleges and universities tried to recruit him. His parents, who were not active in the Church, were proud of Doug and encouraged him to continue his education and his athletic career.</p> <p>Doug's bishop called him in and reminded him that he would soon turn nineteen. The bishop suggested that they start preparing the papers to recommend Doug for a mission. Although he wasn't too excited about the idea, Doug took the papers home and told his parents what the bishop had said. They were amazed that Doug could even consider a mission when he had such good opportunities if he went straight to college.</p> <p>Doug thought about his opportunities and weighed them against the obligation he felt to Heavenly Father and the Church. He wanted to go to college right away, but he knew that might not be right. In his daily prayers, he asked Heavenly Father to help him make the correct decision and to help him feel good about it. He finally went to his parents and told them he had decided to go on a mission. They thought the mission was a bad choice but said they would not oppose him.</p>

When the stake president set Doug apart as a missionary, Doug was promised that he would not regret his decision to serve the Lord. He was also promised that he would be blessed in ways he could not yet recognize. During the first months of his mission Doug worked hard, but he sometimes wondered how things might have been if he had gone to college.

As time went on, Doug noticed that his parents' letters were changing. His father told him about a priesthood lesson he had attended, and his mother said that she and his father had been to sacrament meeting a few times. In one letter, his parents said that the bishop had asked them to attend a temple preparation class. They told Doug that they had decided to do it because he seemed so dedicated and happy on his mission. His parents finished the class, went to the temple, and were sealed to each other.

The week after Doug returned from his mission, he and his parents were sealed as a family. All the time they were in the temple Doug kept thinking, "What if I had not gone on a mission?"

Tell the young men that a missionary's family will not always experience dramatic changes or miracles, but they will always receive great blessings. You may want to share an experience or bear your testimony about the blessings that have come to your family or a family in the ward because of a child's missionary service.

We Must Prepare for Missionary Service

Scripture and discussion

Have the young men read and mark Alma 17:2–3.

- What spiritual strength and blessings had the sons of Mosiah received?
- What had they done to qualify for those blessings?

Scripture and chalkboard discussion

Have the young men read and discuss Doctrine and Covenants 4.

- What attributes should a missionary have?

Write the young men's responses on the chalkboard.

- How can you develop those attributes?

Emphasize to the young men that to be effective, a missionary must be prepared.

Quotation

President Ezra Taft Benson said:

"The Lord wants every young man to serve a full-time mission. . . . Not only should a mission be regarded as a priesthood duty, but every young man should look forward to this experience with great joy and anticipation. What a privilege—what a sacred privilege—to serve the Lord full time for two years with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. You can do nothing more important. . . .

"Prepare well for a mission all your life, not just six months or a year before you go.

"We love all of our missionaries who are serving the Lord full time in the mission field. But there is a difference in missionaries. Some are better prepared to serve the Lord the first month in the mission field than some who are returning home after twenty-four months.

"We want young men entering the mission field who can enter the mission field 'on the run,' who have the faith born of personal righteousness and clean living that they can have a great and productive mission. . . .

"Give me a young man who has kept himself morally clean and has faithfully attended his Church meetings. Give me a young man who has magnified his priesthood and has earned the Duty to God Award and is an Eagle Scout. Give me a young man who is a seminary graduate and has a burning testimony of the Book of Mormon. Give me such a young man, and I will give you a young man who can perform miracles for the Lord in the mission field and throughout his life" (*Ensign*, May 1986, pp. 44–45).

Returned missionary presentation

If you have invited a recently returned missionary to visit your class, let him speak for several minutes to the young men about preparing for missions. You may also want to allow time for the returned missionary to answer the young men's questions.

Discussion

- How can you prepare for missionary service?
- What can you do right now to share the gospel?

Encourage the young men to set specific goals that will help them prepare to serve missions. Encourage them to share the gospel with their friends and to serve those who are not members of the Church.

Conclusion

Class participation

Invite young men to share their feelings about serving full-time missions.

Testimony and challenge

Testify that each young man should serve the Lord as a full-time missionary and that great blessings will come to those who serve honorable missions. You might want to share your feelings about the blessings that have come to you through missionary work.

Challenge each young man to fast and pray and ask the Lord to strengthen his testimony and his desire to serve a mission.