

By President  
Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Second Counselor  
in the First Presidency



# A Word for the Hesitant Missionary

**D**isciples of Jesus Christ have always been under the obligation to take His gospel to the world (see Mark 16:15–16). Nevertheless, sometimes it is difficult to open our mouths and speak about our faith to those around us. While some members of the Church have a natural gift for talking to others about religion, others are a little hesitant or may feel awkward, embarrassed, or even fearful of doing so.

To that end, may I suggest four things that anyone can do to follow the commission of the Savior to preach the gospel “unto every creature” (D&C 58:64).

## **Be a Light**

A favorite saying of mine often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi reads, “Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.”<sup>1</sup> Implicit in this saying is the understanding that often the most powerful sermons are unspoken.

When we have integrity and live consistently by our standards, people notice. When we radiate joy and happiness, they notice even more.

Everyone wants to be happy. When we members of the Church radiate the light of the gospel, people can see our happiness and sense the love of God filling and overflowing in our lives. They want to know why. They want to understand our secret.

That leads them to ask questions such as “Why are you so happy?” or “Why do you always have such a positive attitude?” The answers to these questions, of course, lead perfectly into a conversation about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **Be Conversational**

Bringing up the subject of religion—particularly to our friends and loved ones—can seem daunting and challenging. It doesn’t have to be. Mentioning spiritual experiences or talking about Church activities or events in casual conversation can be easy and pleasant if we invest a little courage and common sense.

My wife, Harriet, is a wonderful example of this. When we were living in Germany, she would find a way to work Church-related topics into her conversations with friends and acquaintances. For example, when someone asked about her weekend, she would say, “This Sunday we had an impressive experience in our church! A 16-year-old young man gave a beautiful talk in front of 200 people of our congregation about living a clean life.” Or, “I learned about a 90-year-old woman who knitted more than 500 blankets and gave them to our Church’s humanitarian program to be shipped to people in need all around the world.”

More often than not, the people who heard this wanted to know more. They asked questions. And that led to opportunities to talk about the gospel in a natural, confident, nonpushy way.

With the advent of the Internet and social media, it is easier today to talk about these things in a conversational way than ever before. What we need is simply the courage to do so.

### **Be Full of Grace**

Unfortunately, it is so easy to be disagreeable. It happens too often that we argue, belittle, and condemn. When we become angry, rude, or hurtful with people, the last thing they want is to learn more about us. It is impossible to know how many people have either left the Church or never joined because someone said something that hurt or offended them.

There is so much incivility in the world today. Because of the anonymity of the Internet, it is easier than ever to say toxic or grating things online. Shouldn't we, the hopeful disciples of our gentle Christ, have a higher, more charitable standard? The scriptures teach, "Let your speech be alway[s] with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:6).

I like the idea of our words being clear as a sunny sky and full of grace. Can you imagine what our families, wards, nations, and even world would be like if we could adopt this simple principle?

### **Be Filled with Faith**

Sometimes we take upon ourselves too much credit or too much blame when it comes to others accepting the gospel. It's important to remember that the Lord doesn't expect us to do the converting.

Conversion comes not through our words but through the heavenly ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes all it takes is one single phrase of our testimony or about an experience to set in motion the softening of a heart or the opening of a door that can lead others to experience sublime truths through the promptings of the Spirit.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) said he knew the gospel was true when he "saw a man without

eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only say, 'I know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord.'" President Young said when he heard that humble testimony, "The Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminate[d] my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality [were] before me."<sup>2</sup>

Brothers and sisters, have faith. The Lord can magnify the words you speak and make them mighty. God doesn't ask you to convert but rather to open your mouths. The task of converting is not yours—that belongs to the person hearing and to the Holy Spirit.

### **Every Member a Missionary**

My dear friends, today there are more ways than ever for us to open our mouths and share with others the joyful news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a way for everyone—even the hesitant missionary—to participate in this great work. We can each find a way to use our own particular talents and interests in support of the great work of filling the world with light and truth. As we do so, we will find the joy that comes to those who are faithful and courageous enough "to stand as witnesses of God at all times" (Mosiah 18:9).

#### **NOTES**

1. St. Francis of Assisi, in William Fay and Linda Evans Shepherd, *Share Jesus without Fear* (1999), 22.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 67.

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### **TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE**

One effective way to teach is to "encourage those you teach to set . . . goals that can help them live the principle you have taught" (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 159). Consider inviting those you teach to prayerfully set a goal to share the gospel with one or more people this month. Parents can discuss ways younger children could help. You could also help family members brainstorm or role-play ways to bring up the gospel in regular conversation and think of upcoming Church activities to which they could invite a friend.

## YOUTH

### Sharing with a Friend

By Adriana Vásquez

One day while studying for my seminary class, I had a beautiful and distinct impression. As I was reading over the lesson for the next day, I saw the face of a friend from school and had the strong feeling that I should share my testimony with her.

Despite the clarity of this impression, I was afraid. I was worried that my friend might reject me, particularly because she didn't seem to be the kind of girl who would be interested in joining the Church.

I thought back to a talk by Sister Mary N. Cook of the Young Women general presidency in which she challenged us to work hard and be valiant.<sup>1</sup> I wanted to be like this, so I wrote this girl a letter and testified of the truthfulness of the Church and of my love for the Book of Mormon. The next day I slipped a copy of the Book of Mormon, together with my letter, into her bag.

To my surprise, my friend was very receptive to the gospel. Starting that day, she would tell me about

what she had learned in her study of the Book of Mormon. A few weeks later, I introduced her to the missionaries. Almost immediately, she received a confirmation from the Holy Ghost that what she was learning was true. The missionaries and I cried as she told us of her feelings. My friend was soon baptized, and her parents were amazed to see the changes that had occurred in her.

I am so happy I was able to overcome my fears and help bring the gospel into her life.

#### NOTE

1. See Mary N. Cook, "Never, Never, Never Give Up!" *Liahona*, May 2010, 117–19.

## CHILDREN

### I Can Be a Light to Others

President Uchtdorf says that to be a light to others, our words should be "clear as a sunny sky and full of grace." Our words should be happy, honest, and kind. What can you do or say to be a light to others? You could write in your journal five nice things you plan to say to family members or friends.



Faith, Family, Relief

# Converted unto the Lord

Prayerfully study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life. For more information, go to [reliefsociety.lds.org](http://reliefsociety.lds.org).

New sisters of the Church—including Young Women entering Relief Society, sisters returning to activity, and new converts—need the support and friendship of visiting teachers. “Member involvement is vital to convert retention and in bringing less-active members back into full activity,” said Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Capture the vision that the Relief Society . . . can become [one of] the most powerful friendship resource[s] we have in the Church. Reach out early to those being taught and reactivated, and love them into the Church through your organization.”<sup>1</sup>

As members of Relief Society, we can help new members learn basic Church practices, such as:

- Giving a talk.
- Bearing testimony.
- Living the law of the fast.
- Paying tithing and other offerings.
- Participating in family history work.
- Performing baptisms and

confirmations for their deceased ancestors.

“It takes attentive friends to make new members feel comfortable and welcomed at church,” said Elder Ballard.<sup>2</sup> All of us, but especially visiting teachers, have important responsibilities to establish friendships with new members as a way of helping them become firmly “converted unto the Lord” (Alma 23:6).

## From the Scriptures

2 Nephi 31:19–20; Moroni 6:4

## From Our History

“With the ever-increasing number of converts,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’ (Moroni 6:4).”<sup>3</sup>

Visiting teachers are in a position to help those they watch over. Friendship often comes first, as it did for a young Relief Society sister who was the visiting teacher of an older

sister. They had been slow in building a friendship until they worked side by side on a cleaning project. They became friends, and as they talked about the Visiting Teaching Message, they were both nurtured by “the good word of God.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) said Relief Society “is a vital part of the kingdom of God on earth and . . . helps its faithful members to gain eternal life in our Father’s kingdom.”<sup>4</sup>

## NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “Members Are the Key,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2000, 18.
2. M. Russell Ballard, *Liahona*, Sept. 2000, 17.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Every Convert Is Precious,” *Liahona*, Feb. 1999, 9.
4. Joseph Fielding Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 97.

## What Can I Do?

1. Do I pray for my companion and ask that the Spirit will guide us as we minister to our sisters?
2. In what ways do we serve each sister we watch over so that she knows we truly care about her?