

Religion C 130 - 006
October 15, 2008

Dear President Livingstone,

Things are going well in the BYU North Mission. I wish to explain to you a few character attributes that I am working on, ones that are attributes of our Savior and attributes of successful missionaries. In doing so, I will share my own thoughts about each one and also what others have said about them (through scriptures, quotes, et cetera).

1. Faith. Every missionary needs to have faith that what he is doing is what the Lord would have him do. If he does not have faith, he may get discouraged with the work. Not only does he need to have faith in the work; he must also have faith in the Gospel. A missionary can't share a testimony that he does not have. Therefore, he must be sure that he prays for faith, studies in faith, and acts on faith. Ether 12:14-15 says, "Behold, it was the faith of Nephi and Lehi that wrought the change upon the Lamanites, that they were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost. Behold, it was the faith of Ammon and his brethren which wrought so great a miracle among the Lamanites." If a missionary wants to do any good, he must have faith. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, "If we think we have faith, we should ask, faith in whom or faith in what? ... The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."¹ Therefore, faith by itself is meaningless; our faith must be centered on our Savior, who is Jesus Christ.

2. Charity. It is charity that helps a missionary to care for those we teach. If he has charity, he can more easily relate to his investigators. He will work harder and longer to bring individuals to the Gospel, because he loves them and sincerely cares about how they are doing. He wants them to be happy. Ether 12:33-34 says, "I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life ... And now I know that this love ... is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the

mansions of thy Father.” The love that Christ showed for us is charity. Without charity we cannot receive exaltation. How do we obtain charity? In the words of Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, “[C]harity is given only to those who seek it, only to those who earnestly pray for it, only to those who are disciples of Christ.”²

3. Knowledge. If a missionary knows little about what he is to teach, he can’t answer the investigator’s questions, can’t respond to the needs of those he is teaching, and be an effective missionary. Doctrine and Covenants 11:21 says, “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.” The Spirit can’t bring things to the missionary’s remembrance if his memory is half-empty. Elder L. Tom Perry suggested, “The pre-missionary age is an ideal time to set the bar higher as you prepare your mind by acquiring the light and truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”³

4. Humility. Missionaries will not be able to bring the Spirit into the lives of those they teach if they do not rely on God. Humility is a reliance on God for everything, and acknowledgement of it. Those who are prideful reject guidance from the Holy Spirit. A prideful missionary without the Holy Spirit cannot be near to God. Alma 5:27-28 says, “Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? ... Behold, are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God.” Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, “As you submit your wills to God, you are giving Him the only thing you can actually give Him that is really yours to give.”⁴

5. Obedience. A missionary must be willing to follow the counsels he receives. Obedience is a principle of humility: if a missionary is humble, he will heed the authority of his leaders and will keep the commandments. If a missionary does not obey, he may lose the

guidance of the Holy Spirit. He risks difficulties and setbacks. In Doctrine and Covenants 82:10, the Lord says, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." God knows what is best for every person, so a missionary will be happier if he obeys God. President James E. Faust said, "Obedience leads to true freedom. The more we obey revealed truth, the more we become liberated."⁵

6. Diligence. Diligence is a steady effort to get something accomplished, despite setbacks and trials. Sometimes there may be disappointing days where nobody will listen to the Gospel message. In Moroni 9:6, we read, "[N]otwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation..." Even as the Nephites and Lamanites were falling into terrible wickedness, Moroni keeps working. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said, in speaking of Joseph Smith, "Beyond imprisonments, mobbings, and beatings, he suffered the anguish of betrayal by disloyal, unfaithful associates. But he offered the hand of friendship and fellowship to them even after they had opposed and betrayed him."⁶ Even in the times of hardest difficulty we must press on. It is diligence that enables us to endure to the end.

Perhaps one of the most important attributes that a missionary must have is gratitude. I quote here from James G. Duffin's missionary journal. After being spared from a train accident, he wrote, "I know it was by the power of God to protect his servants in the discharge of their duties. Our preservation is a great testimony to me of the watchful care of my Father in Heaven over me..."⁷ If a missionary wishes to succeed, he must express thanks for everything he receives. If we work to develop the attributes of the Savior, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" and we will purify ourselves even as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3)

Hurrah for Israel!

Samuel Bradshaw

Endnotes

- ¹ Dallin H. Oaks, "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, May 1994, 98.
- ² Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Cultivating Divine Attributes," *Ensign*, November 1998, 25.
- ³ L. Tom Perry, "Raising the Bar," *Ensign*, November 2007, 48.
- ⁴ Neal A. Maxwell, "Remembering How Merciful the Lord Hath Been," *Ensign*, May 2004, 46.
- ⁵ James E. Faust, "Obedience: The Path to Freedom," *Ensign*, May 1999, 45.
- ⁶ Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Patience, a Key to Happiness," *Ensign*, May 1987, 30.
- ⁷ Journals of James G. Duffin, 1899-1900, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, p. 144. As found archived on the library web site: <http://lib.byu.edu/dlib/mmd/>