

Principles of Member Missionary Work — Week 1

SUGGESTED LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Summary

Class will begin with a discussion of the joy that comes from sharing the gospel, as exemplified by Ammon and Alma the Younger. The instructor and class members will briefly exchange positive member missionary experiences as a way to personalize this message and further invite the Spirit. The instructor will then lead an open, honest discussion about the obstacles that members face in sharing the gospel. The instructor will explain that the aim of the three-week course is to address such concerns by teaching correct principles of member missionary work. The lesson will conclude by sharing Principle 1: We succeed when we invite.

Outline

- 1) Sharing the gospel brings joy (10 minutes [suggested time allotment])
 - Examples from Book of Mormon (i.e., Ammon and Alma the Younger)
 - Personal missionary experiences
- 2) Sharing the gospel is daunting for many (15 minutes)
 - Discuss concerns
 - Explain purpose of lessons (i.e., to address concerns)
- 3) How do we measure success as member missionaries? (10 minutes)
 - Principle 1: We succeed when we invite

Instructor's Objectives

1. Lead lesson in a way that helps class members feel comfortable contributing, do not feel judged, and fosters open, honest dialogue about what hinders members in participating in sharing the gospel or having positive experiences as member missionaries.
2. Teach first principle of member missionary work: We succeed when we invite.

Preparation and Materials

1. Read Alma chapters 26 and 29, assign a class member in advance to read Alma 26:16 and 29:16 during the lesson.
2. Reflect on a positive missionary experience you have had and be prepared to present it to the class (max 2 minutes).
3. Arrange for a room with a chalkboard, have chalk/eraser on hand.

LESSON

1. Sharing the gospel brings joy

One of the great messages of the Book of Mormon is that we can have joy in spite of life's difficulties (2 Ne 2:25). In fact, many passages in the Book of Mormon describe in wonderful detail the joy that comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Briefly mention the following examples, emphasizing the word 'joy' in the scriptures:

- Lehi, partaking of the fruit of the tree in his vision of the tree of life (1 Ne 8:12)
 - "the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great **joy**" (fruit of love of God).

- People at the time of Christ's coming (3 Ne 17:17–18)
 - “and no one can conceive of the **joy** which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father...so great was the **joy** of the multitude that they were overcome.”
- Alma the Younger when he received forgiveness for his sins (Alma 36:20–21)
 - “And oh, what **joy**, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with **joy** as exceeding as was my pain!”

A very poignant example of joy in the Book of Mormon is found in the account of Ammon and Alma the Younger as they labored as missionaries among the Lamanites. Ammon experienced such overwhelming joy in sharing the gospel that he fainted on more than one occasion (Alma 19:14; 27:17). In Alma 26 specifically, Ammon carries on about his joy and gratitude for being able to serve as a missionary, using the word “joy” eight times and the word “rejoice” 7 times.

Have a member of the class read the following passages

Alma 26:16 Therefore, let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord; yea, we will **rejoice**, for our **joy** is full; yea, we will praise our God forever. Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.

Alma 29:16 Now, when I think of the success of these my brethren my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my **joy**.

Whether as full-time missionaries or member missionaries, we have the opportunity to experience the same kind of joy that Ammon and Alma speak of as we fulfill our obligation to share the gospel with others.

Share a positive missionary experience that you have had; encourage one or two members of the class to share positive missionary experiences as well. Tactfully encourage brevity.

2. Sharing the gospel is daunting for many

Sharing the gospel seems to come naturally to some members. However, many find member missionary work uncomfortable, time-consuming, and even frustrating and are hesitant to get involved.

Ask the class why this is the case. Set the stage for an honest, open discussion about obstacles in participating in member missionary work. Encourage class members to share their own concerns or concerns of others that they are aware of. Emphasize that the spirit of the discussion is intended to be constructive rather than judgmental for “that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness” D&C 50:23.

Write responses on the chalkboard. Ask a class member to write the concerns down on paper so that you can refer to them in subsequent lessons.

The following are possible comments. You may mention some of these if class members seem reluctant to share concerns to stimulate the discussion (e.g. What about the fear of insincerity?).

- Fear of failure
- Fear of rejection

- Negative experiences
- Shyness
- Fear of insincerity
- Feel like you're "selling something"
- Don't want to come off as pushy
- Inadequate missionary skills (don't know what to say)
- Uncomfortable talking about religion
- Don't have sufficient gospel knowledge
- Time-consuming
- Overwhelmed with current Church calling/responsibilities
- Don't want to strain relationships with family members or friends
- Friends/acquaintances don't appear to "need" the gospel
- Friends/acquaintances are happy with their own church
- Don't have many or any friends who are not LDS
- Friends/acquaintances do not believe in God
- Friends/acquaintances are not religious types
- Not appropriate to discuss religion at work

Thank class members for honest and active participation in discussion.

The aim of this three-week course is to address these concerns by teaching correct principles of member missionary work. Applying these principles in your missionary efforts will enable you to have positive, empowering experiences and feel the joy that Ammon and Alma the Younger spoke of. We will conclude this lesson by discussing the first principle of member missionary work, which addresses a common concern, the fear of failure.

3. How do we measure success as member missionaries?

Statistically, about five of every ten people that members of the Church refer to missionaries end up taking one or more missionary discussions. And of those five who take a discussion, one is baptized. (This data has been collected by Clayton Christensen for the ten stakes in New England, for the years 2002–2003.)

Ask the following question:

Do these statistics mean that for every member who successfully refers someone who gets baptized, there are nine other members who failed as member missionaries?

This is an important question, because one factor that intimidates many members from being missionaries is, as just mentioned, the fear of failure. The answer, of course, is that the nine do not fail. We succeed as member missionaries when we invite people to learn about and accept the truth.

Principle 1: We succeed when we invite

God did not give the free agency of other people to us—He gave it to them. When we decide not to share the gospel with others, we are depriving them of their agency. When we give them the opportunity to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ more deeply, we give them a chance to exercise the agency that God gave them. It is our responsibility to invite and their responsibility to accept.

Ask the class what difference it makes to them to know that they succeed when they invite, regardless of the outcome.

When or if those we invite ever enter the waters of baptism, if they simply have a discussion with us or the missionaries about the truths of eternity, they have taken a step along the path of their own eternal progression and made some important initial correct choices. Once we realize that we succeed as member missionaries when we invite people to learn and accept the truth, much of the fear that kept us from sharing the gospel is gone.

One out of five who were referred to the missionaries end up getting baptized, so what happened to the other four? Where are they now? What caused them to not continue? People who had significant exposure to the Church have a greater likelihood of becoming investigators than people who had no exposure at all.

Ask the class, irrespective of when it occurred, if anybody had ever visited a church activity with them.

If yes, ask the individuals if those people ever met with the missionaries. Ask them to explain what happened with each person (there will usually be a lot more people than expected). Depending on how many people are in class, we recommend the instructor set up an appointment with the missionaries and those who had more than one person visit with them. The purpose of this meeting will be for the member to explain everything that occurred with each person to determine if there is a possible opportunity to help this individual who once visited with us grow closer to God by being re-invited to an activity or to meet with the missionaries.

The missionaries then visit the members who were identified and help these members continue to invite.

Close the lesson by bearing testimony of the things that have been taught.

Principles of Member Missionary Work — Week 2

SUGGESTED LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Summary

Class will begin with a discussion of Principle 2, we must refrain from judging others' receptivity and share the gospel freely. The instructor will introduce this principle by posing a set of rhetorical questions that will help class members consider the extent to which they make judgments about others' potential interest in the gospel. The instructor will present scriptures and a true member missionary story to further underline that we cannot predict in advance who will be open to a gospel invitation.

The instructor will then present Principle 3, we need not unnaturally alter a relationship with someone before inviting them to learn about the Church, by sharing a story in which an LDS family experiences disappointment in their efforts to share the gospel. The instructor will discuss the story with the class, identifying that the practice of engaging in time-consuming relationship-building rituals before sharing the gospel with someone is misguided and deceptive. Finally, the instructor will present ways to invite without making offense, in keeping with Principle 4 of member missionary work.

Outline

1. Can we predict in advance who will be interested in the Church? (10 minutes)
 - Principle 2: We must refrain from judging others' receptivity and share the gospel freely "without any respect of persons"
2. We cannot predict in advance who will be interested in the gospel
3. We can share the gospel with anyone, not just friends (15 minutes)
4. Principle 3: We need not and should not alter our relationship with someone before making a gospel invitation
5. Misconception: We must invest large amounts of time and energy building close friendships with people before we can share the gospel with them
6. How to invite without offending (10 minutes)
 - Principle 4: Be straightforward and sincere
 - "Decouple" invitation from relationship
 - Open doors in everyday conversations

Instructor's Objectives

1. Help class members expand their view of whom they can share the gospel with by teaching Principles 2 and 3 of member missionary work.
2. Teach class ways to invite without offending by teaching Principle 4 of member missionary work.

Preparation and Materials

1. Read Alma 16:14, Matthew 7:1 and 1 Samuel 16:7; assign class members in advance to read these scriptures during the lesson.
2. Reflect on and prepare to share any personal experiences that illustrate the points in the lesson.
3. Consult list of concerns from Lesson 1 and determine which concerns relate to and are resolved by Principles 5–7; touch upon them at appropriate points in the lesson.
4. Arrange for a room with a chalkboard, have chalk/eraser on hand.

LESSON

1. Can we predict in advance who will be interested in the Church?

Member missionary work is a common topic of sacrament meeting talks, conference addresses, firesides, "after dinner messages" from the full-time missionaries, and of Sunday School classes such as this.

Pose the following rhetorical questions to the class:

Question 1: How many of you in these situations have mentally scanned through a list of people you are acquainted with who are not LDS and gone through some sort of a selection process, deciding who you would or would not talk to about the gospel, or who would or would not be interested?

Question 2: What were your selection criteria/how did you make these judgments?

Allow class members to reflect for a moment and proceed with the following question:

For those people you thought you might not approach, did your thoughts follow a pattern somewhat like this: 'This person is...'

- too affluent
- too comfortable
- too involved in another church
- too intellectual
- too worldly
- dependent on alcohol, smoking, or drugs
- too excessive in lifestyle choices
- too...(judgment left blank) an unspoken judgment that reveals not only our biases about who could be a "good Mormon," but some of our own personal prejudices about people and whom we esteem to be of worth

Allow class members to comment or discuss any feelings about these questions.

While in the end we may not be incorrect in some of our judgments about others' potential interest, we have been counseled to refrain from judgment and to share the gospel freely with all people, allowing them to decide for themselves if they are interested in accepting a gospel invitation. When we determine that someone would not be interested and consequently do not approach them about the gospel, we undermine their ability to exercise their own free agency, having in essence made the decision for them.

Principle 2: We must refrain from judging others' receptivity and share the gospel freely "without any respect of persons"

Have a class member read aloud one or more of the following scriptures about refraining from judgment: Alma 16:14 And as many as would hear their words, unto them they did impart the word of God, without any respect of persons, continually. (*speaking of Alma and Amulek*)

Matt 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. (*Christ's Sermon on the Mount*)

1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. (*Speaking of Samuel recognizing the Lord's anointed David among Jesse's sons*)

Most people who have been active member missionaries or have served full-time missions would likely say that in looking back on the people who accepted and rejected their invitations to learn about the gospel, they simply were unable to predict in advance who would actually accept their message.

Ask class members to consider if this has been true of their experience. Allow brief comments if any.

Have a class member read the following true story related by Elder Clayton Christensen to illustrate the above points. Preface the story by explaining that Elder Christensen had prayerfully selected a date by which he would find someone for the missionaries to teach (this principle of setting a date will be taught in a later lesson, if necessary provide a high level explanation to the class before continuing).

Alternatively, share a personal experience that illustrates similar points, or paraphrase the story for the class.

One year my self-imposed deadline to share the gospel was January 31. I had invited many people in the preceding months and had no luck, and now it was January 22. I had to make a business trip to Hawaii on that day, and I had prayed that I would be able to sit next to someone on the plane whom I might invite to hear the missionary discussions, since it would be such a long flight. I was extremely disappointed when the man who sat next to me was clearly a playboy—a man wearing a loud Hawaiian shirt, unbuttoned to his sternum with all this curly black chest hair billowing out, and several gold chains around his neck. I introduced myself to him, and learned that every January he took a month off of his work as a stonemason to go to Hawaii and meet girls. I quickly concluded that there was no way he would be interested in the gospel, and so I busied myself in some work—feeling quite resentful that with so little time left, God had not helped me meet someone to introduce to the missionaries.

A while later, however, my seatmate asked if I had ever been to Hawaii before. I responded that actually I had lived in Laie for two months in a language training school prior to serving as a Mormon missionary in Korea. Immediately the man's demeanor changed. "You're a Mormon?"

"Yes, I am," I responded. "Why do you ask?"

He then said that he was not a religious man, but that a curiosity about the Mormons had been building inside for some time. He then asked me to tell him about our church. I simply went through the Articles of Faith, bearing my testimony after my explanation of each one. A wonderful spirit descended on us, and for four hours we had a warm, memorable discussion. At its conclusion I asked if I could send missionaries to his home when he returned, and he said he very much wanted to meet with them and learn more. Several times during the remainder of the flight, he interrupted my work to thank me for telling him what I knew was true. Historically, people of all types, backgrounds, and circumstances have been receptive to the gospel message. As Nephi reminds us in the Book of Mormon, Christ “inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33). We as members must carefully avoid judging people as to whether they might be receptive to the gospel. We must speak about our faith in an honest and open way with many, many people. The more we do so, the more likely we are to intersect with someone who will respond to the truth.

2. We can share the gospel with anyone, not just friends

A common phrase that members use in referring to their missionary efforts is “We’re working with so-and-so.” What people often mean in “working with” someone is that they’re trying to become closer friends with them—with the hope that someday they will be close enough that they can then invite them to learn about the gospel.

Generate a brief discussion about what might be problematic about this idea—that we should somehow alter our relationship with someone as a precondition to asking them to learn about the gospel.

Have a class member read the following true story to illustrate the misconception that we need to become friends with someone before inviting them to learn about the Church (told by a member of the Boston Stake at a missionary fireside).

Alternatively, share a personal experience that illustrates similar points or paraphrase the story for the class.

In the ward we lived in prior to moving to Boston, we were blessed to have wonderful, aggressive missionaries. To help us do our duty as members, they visited our home and asked us to make a chart that listed people we knew down the left column, and then asked us to plan steps we would take each person through, culminating in our inviting them to take the missionary discussions. These steps included taking some goodies to them; going out with them socially to an athletic, dramatic, or musical activity; inviting them over to dinner; going out with them again; and so on—culminating six weeks later in an invitation to hear the discussions.

We diligently filled the chart out, selecting those people who we thought might have an interest in the Church, and started marching these people through all the steps. It was exhausting. I was horribly busy in my schoolwork, and my wife spent inordinate time cooking and baking. We were having people to dinner twice each week. Since the more gracious of these people generally reciprocated our invitations with ones of their own, we ended up with a very heavy social calendar indeed. The top people on our list were Ken and Jane Spencer. They looked Mormon—were very clean living—and had known Mormons while growing up. Ken and I knew each other because we had the same scholarship to the university. We invited them to see a play with us, and the next week we invited them to dinner. The following week we invited them to go boating with us. Two weeks later they invited us to a concert at the university. We then asked them to come to a sacrament meeting where we had been assigned to speak, and to come to our home for dinner afterward. After dinner we gave Ken and Jane a copy of the Book of Mormon, and asked if they'd like to know more about the Church.

Ken awkwardly accepted the book, but declined our invitation to learn more. "We're Episcopalian, and are really enjoying our church." We felt awkward, and after a bit of small talk, the Spencers had to leave. Later that night, feeling tired and like failures, we set our sights on the next people on that list on the refrigerator door.

In the ensuing weeks, with all we had to do, we never invited the Spencers to do anything else. We heard later through mutual friends that the Spencers had felt a bit misled and betrayed—that the reason for our rather sudden and intense displays of friendship was not because we were interested in them as friends, but because we wanted them to become Mormons. The whole experience left us with a bad feeling as well.

Ask the class the following question: Why did this intensive missionary effort end in such a negative way?

After taking responses from the class, revisit the earlier discussion about the phrase "We are working with so-and-so" by asking the following question:

What is problematic about the notion that you must prepare a person or family through a long sequence of friendship-building rituals, before inviting them to learn about the gospel?

Instructor and class members may make some of the following points:

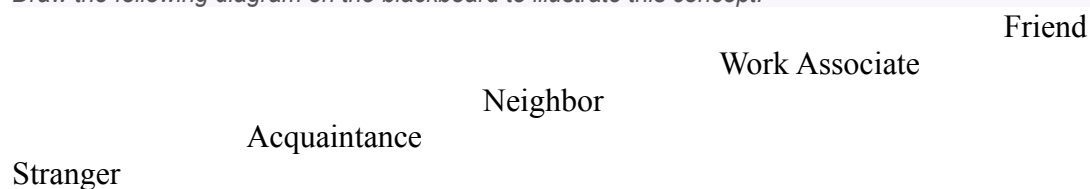
- It is exhausting.
- It is deceptive—not exactly the way to introduce honest people to the truth.
- It is impossible. If the principle that we can't predict in advance who might be interested is true, then this mode of missionary work means you've got to become friends with everybody before you can invite them to learn about the gospel.

There is no need to artificially or deceitfully change the natural level of our relationship with another person before asking them to learn about the Church.

Principle 3: We need not and should not alter our relationship with someone before making a gospel invitation

We should build whatever relationships with others that we naturally would have with them. We should be close friends with people with whom we have a natural basis for friendship. And we should be neighbors, work associates, and casual acquaintances with others for whom these constitute the natural basis for relationship.

Draw the following diagram on the blackboard to illustrate this concept:



We can launch an invitation to learn about the gospel from any one of these platforms. We should only attempt to elevate a relationship to another level if there is a natural basis for it. Otherwise, in a way consistent with the second principle of member missionary work, we should invite all of these people to learn about the Church.

To conclude this discussion, have a class member read the following excerpt from a conference address by Elder M. Russell Ballard, in which he explains how to create a gospel-sharing home.

Creating a gospel-sharing home does not mean that we are going to have to dedicate large amounts of time to meeting and cultivating friends with whom to share the gospel. These friends will come naturally into our lives, and if we are open about our membership in the Church from the very beginning, we can easily bring gospel discussions into the relationship with very little risk of being misunderstood. Friends and acquaintances will accept that this is part of who we are, and they will feel free to ask questions.

A gospel-sharing home is not defined by whether or not people join the Church as a result of our contact with them. Our opportunity and responsibility are to care, to share, to testify, to invite, and then to allow individuals to decide for themselves. We are blessed when we have invited them to consider the Restoration, regardless of the outcome. At the very least, we have a rewarding relationship with someone from another faith, and we can continue to enjoy their friendship (“Creating a Gospel-Sharing Home, *Ensign*, May 2006, 84).

3. How to invite people in ways that do not offend

I. Be straightforward and sincere

Ask the class the following question:

What sort of invitation, when declined, creates offense? How could you invite someone, and even if they decline, have it create a warm and grateful response?

The answer is that our invitations run the risk of creating offense if we approach people in an evasive way. If we are straightforward and sincere, and if the people we are inviting feel our love and God's love for them emanating through us when we're inviting, then they will be touched and grateful, never offended—even when they say no.

Principle 4: We must be honest, straightforward and sincere in making invitations to learn about the gospel

Have a class member read the following statement by Elder Ballard:

Some members say, "I'm afraid to share the gospel because I might offend someone." Experience has shown that people are not offended when the sharing is motivated by the spirit of love and concern. How could anyone be offended when we say something like this: "I love the way my church helps me" and then add whatever the Spirit directs. It's when we appear only to be fulfilling an assignment and we fail to express real interest and love that we offend others. ("The Essential Role of Member Missionary Work," *Ensign*, May 2003, 37)

Allow comments/reactions from class members, if any.

II. "Decouple" relationship from invitation

Another way to extend a gospel invitation without offending is to explicitly *decouple* whatever relationship you have with a person from your invitation—saying something like, "Jack, we've been neighbors for a long time. I'm going to ask you a question, but before I do, I want you to know that your answer won't in any way affect how I feel. So here goes my question: I'm a Mormon, as you know, and you know how much my church means to me. At some point I'd like to sit down with you, if you're interested, and describe who we are and what I have valued from my membership."

Allow comments/reactions from class members, if any.

After we have learned how not to offend when we invite, we should follow the "what is next" principle. This principle was created to help members build confidence in their own abilities to share the gospel. As member missionaries, we need to learn how to commit ourselves to do something and overcome our fear of inviting friends to learn about the gospel.

This principle starts by asking each member of the class what missionary activity they will do this week.

The instructor will write this down and ask them if there is anything the class, missionaries, instructor, etc. can do to help them accomplish this commitment. If there is, the instructor and missionaries will follow up to make sure that this occurs. If the member did not meet their commitment, they will inquire why and either adjust the commitment or reissue it for that next week.

After the commitment is kept, the instructor or the missionaries will then ask the member what they can do next. This process will continue over and over again until missionary work becomes a part of our daily lives. For most members this takes years to accomplish, which means that the instructor, ward mission leader, missionaries, etc. need to keep track of these commitments and continue to help each member more fully become daily member missionaries. This principle is personalized to every member.

III. Open doors

A technique that enables us to tactfully allow another person to signal their interest in the Church is to “open doors” by using “Mormon words” in everyday conversations. If we freely refer to things like BYU, our mission, our children’s church activities, or our church callings—things that signal our affiliation with the Church—it “opens the door” to a conversation about the Church. Most people we talk with who hear these words will simply choose not to walk through the door, and that’s fine. But every once in a while we’ll use a Mormon word and the listener will say, “So are you a Mormon?” When that happens, it gives us a chance to respond with something like, “Yes, I am. It’s really a great church. Do you know much about us?”

In the ensuing discussion, we can then open the next door. “If at some point you had any interest in learning a bit about what makes Mormons tick, I’d love to have you come to our home to talk about it.” Most people won’t walk through that door, and that’s fine. But occasionally someone will walk through and we’ll have the exciting opportunity to share more with them.

Allow comments/reactions from class members, if any.

Conclude lesson by pointing out what common concerns have been addressed by this lesson (taken from the discussion in the first lesson) and bearing testimony of what has been taught.

Principles of Member Missionary Work — Week 3

SUGGESTED LESSON DEVELOPMENT

Summary

This lesson focuses on practical concerns in member missionary work. The instructor will begin by presenting the classic set-a-date approach, with particular emphasis on clarifying that we are intended to select a date rather than a person. The instructor will then introduce Principle 5 and the “101 Ways to Do Member Missionary Work” resource list. The instructor will focus in particular on inviting others to serve with us in the Church as one of the most effective ways to acquaint someone with the gospel, Principle 6 of member missionary work. Finally, the instructor will present Principle 7, which offers guidelines in responding to questions about the Church. The instructor will end class by reviewing Principles 1–7, summarizing the concerns that have been addressed in the lessons and extending a challenge to class members to actively participate in sharing the gospel with others according to the principles that have been taught.

Outline

1. How can I get started? (5–7 minutes)
 - Set-a-date
2. Get active! (5 minutes)
 - Principle 5: There are many different ways to participate in member missionary work
 - “101 Ways to do Member Missionary Work” resource list
3. Sharing the gospel through invitations to serve (10 minutes)
 - Principle 6: We can share the gospel by inviting people to serve with us in the Church
4. What should we say about the Church when someone asks? (10 minutes)
 - Principle 7: Seek guidance from the Spirit in responding to questions about the Church
- Gauge situation
- Gauge listener
- Understand what initially draws people to the Church
5. Review of Member Missionary Principles (3–5 minutes)

Instructor’s Objectives

1. Help class members understand how Elder Ballard’s set-a-date approach can guide them in their member missionary efforts.
2. Give class members an expanded view of the many ways they can be actively engaged in member missionary work by teaching Principles 5 and 6.

3. Remind class members of the important role of the Holy Spirit in responding to others' questions about the Church by teaching Principle 7.

Preparation and Materials

1. Make copies of excerpt from Elder Ballard's talk on set-a-date to hand out.
2. Make copies of "101 Ways to Do Member Missionary Work" to hand out.
3. Reflect on and prepare to share any personal experiences that illustrate the points in the lesson.
4. Consult list of concerns from Lesson 1 and determine which concerns relate to and are resolved by Principles 5–7; touch upon them at appropriate points in the lesson.
5. Arrange for a room with a chalkboard, have chalk/eraser on hand.

LESSON

1. How can I get started?

One of the most effective ways to guide your member missionary efforts is to prayerfully select a date by which you will find someone who is prepared to receive the missionary lessons. Otherwise known as "Set-a-Date," this approach was originally given as a challenge to Church members by Elder M. Russell Ballard in a conference address in 1984 and again in 1986.

Find out to what extent class members are familiar with this approach.

Set-a-date is simple and straightforward, although different understandings of the approach have arisen since it was first introduced. An important clarification is that the approach does not require that we prayerfully select a *person* and prepare him or her to receive the gospel by a certain date. Rather, Elder Ballard asked us to select a *date* as a goal, and then to pray fervently that God will help us intersect with someone, somewhere, who would accept an invitation to study with the missionaries if invited.

Give class members a handout with the following excerpt from Elder Ballard about setting a date. Have a class member read the excerpt aloud:

May I suggest a simple way in which each one of us can exercise our faith and start our personal missionary service. Write down a date in the near future on which you will have someone ready to be taught the gospel. Do not worry that you do not have someone already in mind. Let the Lord help you as you pray diligently for guidance. Fast and pray, seeking guidance and direction from our Heavenly Father.

You will have special spiritual experiences as the Lord inspires you. I know from my own experience that the Lord will enlighten your mind. He will sharpen your vision of this work by bringing names of nonmembers to your mind that you have never before regarded as potential members of the Church. As you continue, you will be blessed to know what you should say and how you should approach each person.

Brothers and sisters, you will notice that I did not suggest that you write down a name, but rather that you write down a specific date. The key to our success will be to ask for divine guidance that we might be directed to those who will accept the gospel.

Because living the gospel is essential to the remission of sins, and because giving missionary service is essential to living the gospel, I believe each one of us must set a definite date at least once each year to have an individual or a family ready to be taught the gospel. We should expect to have wonderful success. No joy equals that of bringing the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ into the life of one of Heavenly Father's children. Missionary experiences can bring to every member of the Church the calm reassurance that his sins are in very deed being forgiven ("Name of Talk," *Ensign*, May or November 1984).

Ask class members for comments/reactions to Elder Ballard's challenge. If there are class members who have followed through with set-a-date, request that they share their experiences with the class.

Invite class members to set a date, if they have not already, and bear testimony of the blessings that come from following the inspired directives of the Lord's chosen apostles.

2. Get active!

Committing to being actively engaged in member missionary work takes faith. Members of all ages, stages, and circumstances have been successful in following through with Elder Ballard's set-a-date challenge. In addition to faith and prayer, it is essential to constantly seek out missionary opportunities and invite many people to learn about the Church. This task may seem overwhelming to some; however, there are numerous creative ways to go about maximizing missionary opportunities that are adapted to different comfort levels and personal circumstances.

Principle 5: We can actively participate in member missionary work in many different ways

In fact, there are at least 101 different ways to do member missionary work.

Present the 101 Ways to Do Member Missionary Work resource list to the class. Explain that the intent of the list is to serve as a resource for the apprehensive or enthusiastic beginner, as well as the experienced member missionary, with suggestions that work for an array of comfort levels and personal circumstances.

Allow class members to make comments or ask questions about the list.

Invite class members to select at least one item from the list to do in the coming week.

3. Sharing the gospel through invitations to serve

A very effective way to help people kindle interest in the gospel is by inviting them to serve with us in the Church. The Savior addressed this principle in John 7:17: “If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

Principle 6: We can effectively share the gospel by inviting people to serve with us in the Church, rather than simply benefit from our service.

What lies behind this principle are the basic human needs to feel needed and to help others. We tend to develop the deepest commitment and love for those institutions or causes for which we work and sacrifice the most. Our love and commitment is proportional to what we put *in*, not what we take *out*.

This in fact is one reason the LDS church as an organization has been so successful in developing committed, faithful members. We don't hire professional ministers to take care of us, but we work to care for each other. Most of us feel needed in the Church and see within its structure a way to help others, to make a difference. Members who *don't* feel needed, in fact, typically struggle to remain active.

In member missionary work, we tend to say: “Come to this social, you'll have fun.” “Here's a plate of cookies.” “Look at what the Church can do for you.” However, many people actually have far deeper needs to *give* service than to *receive* service. This is particularly true among people whose life situation is comfortable and who themselves may not see a need to learn about the Church. Many people would spend far more time serving others than they presently do, if they had ready access to an infrastructure that facilitated giving service. When people are given an opportunity to feel the Spirit by serving the Lord, they often come to realize that something has been missing from their lives and want to learn more.

Have a class member read one or more of the following three accounts of how members involved others in service in the church. Explain that these stories were gathered in an ongoing project to write a history of the Church in New England.

Alternatively, share a personal experience you have had with this principle or paraphrase the accounts for the class.

Account 1

I was serving as a home teacher to a widowed woman who needed an old refrigerator removed from her basement. I initially tried to call several members of the Elders Quorum, but as none were available, I asked my neighbor Don to help me. In the car driving to her home, I explained what home teaching was about, and told Don about the difficulty this sister had experienced. The fridge was old, heavy, and smelly, and it was a hot, humid July evening. The basement staircase was windy and steep, and it took two hours of backbreaking work, taking the doors and handles off of everything, to get that awful fridge out of her basement. All the time I was thinking, "Boy, Don's really going to resent this." When we finally finished, the sister thanked us with some cookies, and we started walking back to the car. Don put his hand on my shoulder and thanked me for asking him. "Do you do this sort of thing very often? If you ever need me to help with someone else, just call. I love doing this sort of thing."

As we drove home, Don asked all sorts of questions about home teaching and about the Church. I thought, as I dropped him off, that Don had learned far more about the Church of Jesus Christ that night than he ever could have in missionary discussions. His questions continued, and he eventually took the discussions in our home.

Account 2

Some years ago there was a family in the Cambridge 1st Ward, where the wife was a member of about ten years, but the husband was not. He attended church quite often, but resisted any efforts to take the missionary discussions and be baptized. One day Bishop Bowen felt impressed to call Hank to serve in the Sunday School presidency. This was back when sacrament meeting was in the evening, and we had a 20-minute Sunday School opening exercise. Hank accepted the assignment and soon was conducting our meetings, recommending people to serve as teachers, and working with them to be better teachers. He started coming every Sunday because he needed to be there. He began learning about the gospel. And although he had resisted baptism for years, he was baptized within three months of accepting this calling.

Account 3

I've served a number of years as Priests Quorum adviser. We decided with our boys that we would devote one activity night each month to exploring possible careers—asking men with jobs in various professions to show the boys what they did. We sustained this effort for a few months by tapping ward members, but soon had exhausted the supply of people in professions that interested the boys. So I then started asking my friends outside the Church to help. The result was amazing. One was a scientist, who showed the boys how to operate an electron microscope. We examined the eye of a housefly. Another ran a welding shop. He helped the boys cut bars of steel with an acetylene torch, and then helped them weld it into a useful structure for one of his customers. Another was a policeman who took them through the process for arresting drivers suspected of being intoxicated. Without exception, these activities that my friends managed were of higher quality than ones led by our ward members, I think because they had never been asked to do this sort of thing before, and were complimented that the boys were interested in their professions.

What was most amazing was that of the twenty or so friends of other faiths whom I asked to help us with various Young Men's activities, I was *never once* refused. And in every instance, my friends finished the project having learned a lot about the Church. They learned about our mutual program. They saw the quality of young people that are raised in LDS families. And they felt great about themselves. They had helped someone else, and found that others were interested in them. What more could you want?

Allow class members to comment on or react to the stories and to the principle of inviting others to serve in the Church as a way to introduce them to the gospel.

Generate a discussion on ways to implement this principle. Have class members turn to section 8 on service in the church in the "101 Ways..." handout and use the ideas listed there as starting points.

After this discussion, ask class members to think of someone they know, whom they would like to introduce to the Church, and ask the following rhetorical question:

How could you find a way for this friend to share an opportunity to serve with you in the Church?

Challenge class members to involve non-member friends and acquaintances with them in church service as often as possible.

4. Taking advantage of Sacrament Meeting

When you are asked to participate in a sacrament meeting, fireside, baptismal service, etc., commit to inviting your friends to come and support you.

Ask the class if anybody has been asked to participate in these types of church meetings in the next couple of weeks.

The instructor should work with the missionaries and counselor in the bishopric to find out who will be asked to participate in these types of events in the next couple of months. In advance, these members should attend these lessons on member missionary work and commit to invite at least one friend to come support them. It is extremely common in other faiths for people to invite their friends to a singing performance, baptismal service of a child, etc. They will see your invitation in a similar light. Attached are potential invitations that the members and missionaries can fill out, print and mail to their friends if they would like.

Additionally, the missionaries should become part of the fabric of the ward's ministering and outreach efforts. Missionaries essentially serve as full-time workers in the ward where they visit and teach whoever the ward leadership are not currently visiting in the ward. One goal is to bring less active members back, and in the process teach as many people connected to them as possible. The missionaries cannot do this without your help and guidance. You are the ones who know who they can reach out to and help.

Ask the class to provide a list of those they think the missionaries could visit and teach. Each member who suggested a name should set up a time to meet with the missionaries to provide sufficient information about the person and their needs if known.

5. What should we say about the Church when someone asks?

In member missionary work we look forward to those golden moments when someone asks us to tell them about our church. However, between excitement about the opportunity and feeling pressure to give "just the right answer," these situations can be somewhat overwhelming.

Ask class members the following question:

What advice would you offer to a beginning member missionary about how to respond when someone asks about the Church?

In the ensuing discussion, class members will make different points about how to best respond to a general question about the Church. Write the following points on the board, acknowledge if class members touched upon them, and explain that you would like to talk about these points in greater depth.

- Follow the promptings of the Spirit
- Gauge the situation
- Gauge the listener
- Understand what initially interests people in the Church

I. Follow the promptings of the Spirit

We have been promised that if we open our mouths to share the gospel, it will be filled (D&C 33:8). When we respond to questions or inquiries about the Church, we are essentially being given an opportunity to bear our testimony. When we speak of truth, the Spirit touches hearts and confirms that what we are saying is, in fact, true (D&C 50:14). Just as the Spirit guides and inspires us when we face important life decisions, the Spirit will enlighten your mind so that you can talk about the Church in a way that is effective and appropriate for the situation and listener.

Principle 7: We must seek guidance from the Spirit in responding to questions about the Church

II. Gauge the situation

People ask us to tell them about our church in many different situations, some of which are more conducive to gospel conversations than others. We may be sitting on an airplane or bus, at a youth sporting event, walking in between classes, at a park with young children, or on a break at work. We need to consider the constraints of the situation, such as frequent interruptions, distracting background noise, a limited time frame, etc. In less than ideal situations, we can share a brief, simple testimony with those who inquired and invite them to continue the conversation at a specified time later in a more suitable environment.

III. Gauge the listener

A good starting point in determining what to say when someone asks about the Church is with the listener him or herself. Begin by building on common ground. Is this person a mother? Talk about the Church's focus on families or the Relief Society. Is this person a young man in college? Talk about our belief in the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the eternal perspective that the plan of salvation imparts. Is this person an elderly person? Talk about eternal families and family history. Is this person of a non-Christian religion? Talk about our reverence for our ancestors, our health practices, or temples as appropriate. Even when people are interested in knowing what is different about us, starting on common ground creates a rapport that sets the stage for a positive discussion.

IV. Understand what initially interests people in the Church

In 1975 and again in 1993, the Church did an extensive survey of new converts to determine what it was about the Church that initially interested them. These were the results, in order of frequency of mention:

1. The feeling of closeness to God that they wanted to experience, because they could see this closeness in the lives of Mormons they knew.
2. Happiness and a sense of peace, which they wanted and which they saw in the lives of Mormons they knew.
3. They wanted a better sense of purposefulness and direction in their lives. They tended to see this in Mormons they knew.

Generate a brief discussion with the class about how these survey results relate to our question of what to say when someone asks about the Church.

Ultimately these survey results underline the importance of not only what we say about the Church, but how we personally exemplify the closeness with God and the sense of peace, happiness and direction that others seek. *Close this portion of the lesson by reiterating the importance of following the promptings of the Spirit when responding to a person's inquiry about the Church.*

6. Review of principles and conclusion *Briefly review principles 1–7 with class along with the related concerns that each principle addresses. You may use the chart “The Principles of Member Missionary Work” to guide the review.*

Conclude the lesson by bearing testimony of the joy and responsibility of doing member missionary work. Strongly urge class members to apply the principles from these lessons in their efforts to share the gospel.