

The Challenging and Testifying Missionary

Alvin R. Dyer

I have been thinking of what I might say to you further in this meeting, which I am sure isn't going to be the last meeting I will see you, despite all that has been said here today.

As I look back into my first mission as a young man, I remember one of my companions. He was a very brilliant student. He came into the mission at 20 with a doctor's degree. He had gained that in mathematics, and perhaps because of his training and his scholastic abilities, had in his mind solely that conversion to the gospel was a matter of detailed mechanism made possible by forceful teaching and the presentation of certain gospel facts that people might then, by power of argument, be made to accept the truth. I remember that everything about that bothered me because it did not seem to me the way to preach the gospel. He was the most wonderful of companions. He is today one of the most successful architects in America. He became a professor at Brigham Young university on his return from that mission and himself has lived to change his ideas about conversion to the gospel. We had many long, long discussions about this in the hills of Pennsylvania. When we could not find lodging with the people, we would lie on our grass or bough beds made up in scout fashion, and talk about this. I used to emphasize then, when I was only 18, that the way to teach the gospel was by the "Power of the Holy Spirit." This has been with me all my life - there can be no other effective way to teach the gospel.

I have come to know as years have gone by, that thing is truly the fact. The more I see of people coming into the Church, and I have seen many thousand's I see the reality of this one thing that the Lord knows who He wants in the Church. This has been determined beforehand and there isn't much that you and I can do to destroy that. The only thing is, that He has invited us to assist Him. If we move the same way, the Lord will lead us to these people. Last year in the Church there were many, many people that sought admission to the Church with no missionaries at all. They were prepared and inspired and directed in and of themselves to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the most difficult things to remember is that this matter of teaching by the spirit is the special talent that a missionary has been given, and unless he uses it in testifying of the truth, he may lose it. And when he once loses it he may never get it back again. There is no other talent the missionary has to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ other than to testify of it by the spirit. Any other attempted way is contrary to the will of the Lord in teaching the gospel. I want to read some scriptures because my parting message in past months. If we could get 70% of the missionaries to believe this, the number of convert baptisms we have had would be vary small compared to what is possible. I know in my heart that we have not sold this idea of testifying by the spirit fully to the missionary. I don't believe our missionaries as a whole are teaching this way.

We have learned the catchword of "teaching by the spirit" but we do not do it. We teach by our knowledge and this is often confusing to the people.

I want to read to you from the scriptures about this. I am reading from I Corinthians 2:9.

But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God - We have received not the spirit of the work, but the spirit which is of God: That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Then the Apostle John teaches this same principle in another way:

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but that the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no life, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. (I John 2:27)

Now in the spirit of that, I have prepared a bulletin which I want to give to you. I want to read this carefully, and Presidents Moyle, Brossard and Volker, if we can get our missionaries to follow this bulletin, I want to tell you and promise you that you will have more baptisms than you have ever thought possible in your mission, and I'm not afraid of that promise one iota. You will know it is true.

The Challenging and Testifying Missionary

Out of the ranks of the modern day heralds of Gospel Truth has come the "Challenging and Testifying missionary."

On his shoulders falls the responsibility of leading most of the converts into the Church. It is a matter of record, although unfortunately so, that 30% of the missionaries baptize 70% of the converts.

This type of missionary is one of true valiance. For he has learned by courageous early elders of our own dispensation- like them he is unafraid- in testifying and challenging - "yes, at the drop of a hat," - meaning at any slightest opportunity - at any sign of reaction or response on the part of listeners whom he seeks with almost the persistence of a hunter.

Yes, this "Challenging and Testifying" missionary is the man the Lord wants to do the job. He knows that the time is short not a single day - not a single hour can be wasted - his morning prayer is:

"Father lead me this day to a family that I can fulfill my purpose. I will bespeak thy power without hesitancy or fear and will lead them by the power of the Spirit to baptism into thy Kingdom."

His Code

He sets out at the beginning of each day firmly resolved that before he seeks rest from his labors of the day, that someone will hear and feel the influences of his "Challenge for Baptism." He knows that without the "Power of the Spirit" he is nothing so far as leading souls unto baptism.

This "Challenging and Testifying Missionary" has learned one thing of above all else, that of the power of testimony and of how it awakens interest in the hearts of good people.

He had learned that this talent as a missionary is to "Testify and Challenge" upon every occasion - time after time as he goes throughout the labors of each day. This gift, bestowed upon him must be used lest he will lose it.

"But with some I am not well pleased," said the Lord, "for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talents? - which talents? - "Which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them."

"And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have."

"For I, the Lord, rule in the heavens above, and among the armies of the earth; and in the day when I shall 'Make up my jewels, all then shall know what it is that bespeaketh the power of God., (DC 60:2-4 emphasis ours)

The reproof is not against the missionary for any failure in simply teaching, but the failure to testify.

My Challenge to You

Now fellow missionary, What are you going to do? The Lord needs "The Challenging and Testifying Missionary." Be one from this moment on this is my challenge to you; IMMANUEL!

I don't know of a message that I could give you that could give you that could be more far reaching than that. Let us concentrate for a moment. I have been talking about this very thing every time I have come here. It is that element of teaching the gospel that is a basic requirement leading others to conversion. This is hard for missionaries to get this into their consciousness. We think we learn the language and a few lessons and this prepares us to teach the gospel. This is a serious mistake. Were I a young missionary again I would challenge almost everyone I met and I would do it almost every hour of the

day. I wouldn't care how many would turn me down because I would know in the manner I could lead many hundreds of people into the Church. We are prone to like our gospel presentations cut and dried. We say we shall teach so many lessons and then next week our investigators will be ready for the challenge. When a person is ready for the challenge, they do not need the challenge. Don't you understand that? How can you see the Challenge for next week, why not today? When you look into the faces of people and see any kind of response, that is when you are to give the challenge - at the drop of a hat. Give me enough missionaries who are doing that and I tell you that you quotas will double. This is what you must inculcate into the minds of your missionaries and get them out of the idea that we must solely by indoctrination teach the gospel to the people.

You actually do not know when you go to a door whom the Lord has prepared for the gospel. You must approach each door with the idea that here is where people who are prepared for the gospel live. You must do it without fail at every home because you do not know if these people have been chosen by the Lord. Our "Door Approach Message" is a declaration of testimony and when given under the influence of the Spirit, by a servant of God, is attended by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. This is what teaching by the spirit is your gifts, your talent, your power is in the feeling and the impression that you give unto the people and not in the slow, methodical way of teaching the people. I want to say I think the great majority of our converts come into the Church not because of the way we teach the gospel, because often the pressing of Gospel subjects confuse their mind. The missionary often says, "We have met the most wonderful family today and we are going to challenge them Wednesday." How do you know you are going to Wednesday? Why didn't You challenge them last night? Know more about what? Do you think you can teach a testimony? Can you analyze your own testimony of the gospel? Try and do it. Try and explain why you think Jesus is the Son of God. You will never explain it by physical reasoning. Where do you get the knowledge to say "I know Jesus is the Son of God?" John said, "Of this no man needs teaching." The gospel of Jesus Christ is not knowledge. When people say they are glad to have a knowledge of Jesus they speak in what we call a manner of speech. The gospel is a feeling. It is controlled and governed by the power of the Holy Ghost, and this great personage has been assigned to administer the gifts and the spiritual powers of this life and you cannot and never will be able to take the place of this power as it ministers unto and influences people. This is what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said,

"Faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servant of God. That testimony is always attended by the spirit of prophecy and revelations." (DHC VOL- III, p. 379)

The missionary learns that each contact is to be made with the deepest of conviction and the spirit of testimony. In this manner those in the household visited, whom God may have chosen to receive the truth, will recognize His message.

I want to do a little reasoning with you in a spiritual sense. This life is an intermediary in God's plan. Everyone of us who are here were in the preexistence with our Heavenly Father, and were all other children born in this life. They were there in

varying degrees. We have been given special charge to come into the world and proclaim the gospel unto others. We were told before we left the pre-existence there would be a powerful influence that would testify to us of the gospel and this influence would cause others to do better and accept the gospel plan. This great gift we are trying to give to people will prepare them for the celestial kingdom of administration where the kings and queens, and priests and priestesses will abide and will have power over the celestial and terrestrial planets We could talk about this for a long time. Do you suppose that this selection of people to go into that kingdom will depend upon the arguments of a missionary upon the subjects known as the Godhead, Apostasy and Restoration? Do you suppose for a minute that a determination of a man's place in the presence of God will be determined by such things as that? Of course it won't. These become only secondary tools that a missionary uses if he has to use them.

I know it is hard for some missionaries to get this slant and just as long as it remains will less people be led into the Church. Let's face it. Until we get to the point where we rely completely upon the Spirit and teach in that way, we just aren't going to lead many people into the Church.

I don't believe that all who come into the Church are going to stay in and there will be many spin off because they were not able to sustain their conversion, which more than likely has been a doctrinal and not a spiritual conversion. Here is the right slant of missionary work. Dogmatic instructions tend only to confuse. Teach by the Spirit. A recent visit of the missionaries at home found a family of four still responding to their first visit of two days previous. The family was immediately invited to be baptized and they accepted the invitation. "The missionaries were wise, and prompted by the spirit received the commitment. This led to a more serious aspect in holding cottage meetings until baptism, and they found the investigators readily accepting each point of the lessons, for when investigators feel that the missionaries are truly the servants of good, they are fully susceptible to the message." Why, it is simple. If I believe with all my heart that you are a servant of God and you are teaching me, I'll accept everything you say. You don't have to argue with me. You are a servant of God. I know it because I have the spirit of God.

I remember as a young missionary we left the city of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to go northward. The sky was blue, it was a beautiful day. It was so still it was almost dull. We had gone about one-half mile on a dirt road when a tremendous whirlwind came up and almost turned us off our feet. I said, "Brother John Clark; we must be going the wrong way." We turned and went the other way and had gone almost a half day into the country when we turned down a farm lane. I can still hear the dogs barking as we opened the outer gate and approached the house. The man said, "I have been expecting you young men." He had a neighbor who had dropped by and left him a copy of the Book of Mormon. Some missionaries had given it to the neighbor and he was not interested in it and had left it with him. "I have been praying every day that someone would come to tell me about this." Would you go into a lengthy series of lessons with that man? We did not. We went out and dammed the creek in back of his place and baptized him before we left.

If people say they enjoyed your lesson, don't say we will challenge them next Wednesday. What kind of missionaries are we? We want to teach people the fullness of the gospel, which are faith, repentance and baptism. The Lord told the Nephites if they said anything else evil would come out of it. I am convinced that we keep people out of the church. I can tell by the look on some of your faces that this goes against the grain. You still like it nice and easy, where you go in and teach the lessons. Teach by the spirit when you go into the home, and have the spirit so strong it comes out of your fingers and they feel it so strong they say, "I know what you say is true." You can teach all six lessons in 10 minutes when they say that. That is all it took the Lord to teach in the DC. The Godhead talked one verse and He didn't go into a long discussion. "The father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us." That is the Godhead lesson, isn't it? No matter how you fix it up, there it is. If we say that to people who want to believe us and tell them we have no courage and are afraid to open our mouths and think we can do it easier by teaching the lessons.

I think the day will come when we will go to the doors of people and testify that we are the servants of God sent to them, call them to repent and be baptized, and I don't believe that day is too far away. The fact of the matter is, that's the way I think they used to preach it.

When Christ appeared to the Nephites and He had been prophesied of by Samuel and others - and the people were gathered in the valley of Bountiful, He appeared unto them, and the people bowed before Him. Nephi came forth and bowed and was told to stand. In the hush of this great congregation he people listened to what He should say to them, This was the long awaited moment. He said to Nephi to take these people, teach them to repent and baptize them into the Church. Before He left He said, ". . . who so shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil . . . and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them."

You know you can't confuse the issue of baptizing people. It is done simply placing them under the water. We ought to be talking about it more. We lose the golden opportunity because we think we ought to teach people for a given period before baptizing them. The only reason you teach people is when they are stubborn of heart and won't repent, so you have to teach them. This is what one missionary said:

"We teach by the spirit, and let our investigators know that the Lord loves them and wants them to be members of His Church."

The stressing of the Gospel lessons right at first, before the purpose and intent of the missionaries presence, can lead to confusion. Their initial reaction was the result of the Spirit testifying to them and where this is manifest baptism should be accomplished as quickly as possible, otherwise the Holy Ghost will leave them. Let me reiterate this. If

you have people who receive the spirit but you don't baptize them, they will lose the spirit. This is why you should baptize them as quickly as possible.

A missionary said to me, "I have a wonderful family just about ready for the challenge. They are just ready to receive it." "You mean they are just about ready to be baptized?" "Yes." "Then they don't need the Challenge." A challenge is to be given to people who are not ready. That is what the challenge is for, don't you see? If you are testifying to them and say you are a servant of God and they are to be baptized because the Lord loves them and wants them in the Church, they don't have to wait. Go out every day and challenge every person who will listen to you. Tell them you are going to have a baptismal service and the spirit of God will bear record through you in such a way that they will be baptized.

I know missionaries who cling to the idea that they can't be baptized until they know what they are being baptized for. You teach about the Godhead and the apostasy. Often they don't know what you are talking about. Neither did you until you studied it for a few weeks. Now these lessons are important. I'm not saying they are not. When people are baptized they have an eagerness to learn everything about the Church. But you can teach them. But be alert to the investigator challenge from the first time you meet them. The Lord knows who he wants in his Church.

I was telling the president about a fine attorney we baptized recently. He got his testimony the first night. Here is a man who stands before the judgement bar and argues cases, but he got a different feeling that night. The attorney said he knew that Joseph Smith was prophet by the way the missionary said it. The missionary said, "We'll get him after the third lesson," and they did. This man had the stamina to withstand the three lessons. He said, "I didn't know that they were talking about. The only desire I had was to get into the Church. Now the missionary says, "You won't have to worry about me again, henceforth. I am a 'Challenging and Testifying Missionary!'."

Are you afraid to be turned down? Some are afraid to be turned down and want to be sure everything is all right. The need of the Challenge is gone, so is courage. I guess you'll feel the same before you ask the girl of your dreams the important question. You will do a lot of checking first - that isn't a proposal, that's an agreement.

But seriously, do you see what I mean? Can we go back to our missionaries and encourage them to be a challenging and testifying missionary? I would like to encourage them to be a challenging and testifying missionary? I would like to see in your magazine each month a section of the "Challenging and Testifying missionary." Build this up in the minds of the missionaries. When a new missionary comes out say, "how's your faith?" not "How's your knowledge?" "Have you got the faith to go out and challenge someone today to be baptized?"

There is a real slant on effective proselyting already referred to, given by a missionary who I interviewed recently, asking the reasons for his success in getting baptisms - he had baptized 20 in the past 8 months and had 4 ready for the day after our

interview. He Said, "Golly, President Dyer, we just teach by the spirit and let our investigators know that the Lord loves them and wants them to be members of His Church." His reply was, "That is just the way we do it.

"This is the right slant! Why not follow it? Let's lead these wonderful people we meet into the WATERS OF BAPTISM. The Lord wants them, we want them.

No more appropriate bulletin than this could be sent out on the anniversary of the organization of the Church. LET'S GO MISSIONARY!

On the day the Church was organized it was made known unto the Prophet Joseph that the Apostle John was then with the Lost Tribes of Israel preparing them to return to Jackson county, Missouri. That was 130 years ago. There has been given unto the Apostle John, who is an administering angel, the power to prepare and his assignment to the city of Zion. They are teaching like we should be teaching here.

I know this plan is far greater than you and I. It is more than just a few baptisms and goals each month. We are preparing people to be leaders in the worlds that will follow this one. Do you suppose He will have to change the man or woman that He wants to prepare to be a future king and queen in some other world? That is ridiculous. This is God's work. Our work is to help Him get people into the Church. There is no reason for being here. The element of success we will come only when we use the things I have introduced today. Say to your friends, 'You ought to be a member of this Church! Now what about it?' LET'S GO MISSIONARY!

I told President Volker about a wonderful lady who led the Singing Mothers in Holland and how she came into the Church. She was not member the first time I met her. She was having some difficulties. I told her, "Don't let anything stand in your way. You are the kind of person who ought to be a member of this Church." When I went layer again she was a member. If we would go to the people in this way, they would respond to us. The Lord has given you the gift, the special talents so that people will remember the special blessings. It is now a question as to whether you are going to use this wonderful gift.

I had some wonderful experiences in England. The first person I met was Governor Clyde's daughter. She said, "I've got some of the most wonderful news for you. You remember my brother who is a Bishop and you remember he and his wife came to you for a blessing?" I said, "I sure do." I knew them in Oklahoma. The wife had said, "President Dyer, we can't have any children." "How do you know?" "Because we just came from the doctor and he says organically I cannot have a child." "What are you coming to me for?" She told me that she and her husband had the faith that if I would bless her she would have a child. Sister Clyde said she had just received a letter and that her brother and sister-in-law were having a child.

I remember a young married girl in Jefferson City, Missouri. She came and said, "I am going to have a serious operation in the morning. Will you give me a blessing?" she

had also wanted to have a child, "But not only will that privilege be denied me, but I am in danger of losing my life and I must have this operation." "How do you and your husband feel about it?" I asked her. Seldom do you see such faith. The girl had been a victim of epilepsy all her younger life. I told her to go and talk the blessing over with her husband, then fast and pray about it and to come back the next day and tell me what they wanted the Lord to do. They came back filled with faith and I blessed her that she would not need the operation. The Lord told me to tell her something else - that she would have a child. She went to the doctor early the next morning and said, "I don't want the operation, but not only that, I'm going to have a child." The doctor said, "You are crazy! You Mormons think you can run to the Priesthood and that is all that is needed. Right here and now I wash my hand of you." That girl, when she knew she was going to have a child, made a special trip to see the doctor to tell him the good news and he would not even let her in his office. I've got the picture of myself holding their child.

These things have nothing to do with teaching. They are the power and spirit of the Lord.

In setting up the Central British Mission, with President James A. Cullimore as President, Elder Dallas Lon Bailey, was called to be his second counselor. He was set apart to this position at Ipswich in one of the Great White Horse Hotel. In fact, the specific room in which this was done was the very room where Charles Dicker concerning which he has written much in his Pickwick Papers. President Dyer promised Elder Bailey that he would go forward and accomplish a great work and that his missionary labors already had met with great success through his faith and devotion.

That evening while speaking at the conference of the Norwich District and Ipswich, Elder Bailey told of having been set apart to this mission by President Dyer and that he had been given a very wonderful blessing which has been taken down by his mother and both of them had asked the question, "How can all these wonderful things happen?" Elder Bailey then testified that all of them had been fulfilled, and especially now since he had been called to serve as the second counselor to President Cullimore.

President Dyer had forgotten of this incident but rejoiced in the knowledge that the blessing given to Elder Baily as a departing missionary had literally been fulfilled.

I do not want to close without bearing my testimony to you. There have been many wonderful experiences come to me in my life giving indicating of the power and spirit of God in this work. I can witness to you that I know these things are true. I have always felt that there is no other way than this to carry the work on.

We are privileged to sustain the authorities of the Church. I hope you understand how important it is to sustain this work. The consent of the people or missionaries is sought for; but when the will of the Lord is presented actually our free agency becomes expressive as we sustain and not oppose. We do not have the veto power when the general authorities of the church are presented. It is the same way in the missionary work. We don't have the veto power in changing the missionary work. You have only a

sustaining power in it and this is the basic principle that the Reorganized Church never did understand or the opponents of Joseph Smith. As you know, they have set up in their Church the veto power of its members over the revelations of the Lord.

If we are to understand the ways of the Lord, we must understand we are but the servants. We sustain Him. It is His work. It is not our work. We must annex ourselves to His will and purpose. It matters not whether in the priesthood work, missionary work, or any other work in the Church we are to do it the way the Lord wants it done.

The 131st annual conference of the church is ending today. Since the last conference a year ago, the work of the Lord had opened up and with great strides is going forward. Don't you realize the work of the Lord has entered its final preparation for the day of His coming. Knowing this, we ought not let a single day go by in doing the work the way the Lord wants it done. So why should we hesitate in challenging and testifying of the work of the Lord? When we attempt to do it another way, the Holy Ghost can't bear record. This is why we do not get people into the Church as we should for we rely on our own strength and not upon the Lord as He has asked us to do. In Section 50 we find there are two ways of preaching the gospel and if you preach it without the spirit of the Lord it is not of Him.

He Means there will be no other way for the spirit to bear witness to the people that what we say is true. If we will become "Challenging and Testifying Missionaries" first and foremost, and last of all of necessity, a teaching missionary - then we shall have the right slant. If I could leave that message with you and you could give it to the missionaries we would see a surge of the work as never before. This is the message that I leave with you. Use it more than ever in this important year, because we have a great work to accomplish now.

Have you ever stopped to think how very little you know outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Therefore, everything we have, or everything we try to do is in fulfillment of what we promised God in the pre-existence, that we would serve Him and lead people back to Him. Let me tell you another thing. Only those who go to the Celestial Kingdom will have all of their former knowledge given back to them. "These are they who know as they are known" means those of the Celestial Kingdom. Those of the Terrestrial and Terrestrial Kingdoms the Celestial Kingdom will not end until the morning of the first resurrection; then will begin the work of the Terrestrial Kingdom.

This is the Lord's plan. We think about it. We talk about it, but in reality sometimes we forget it. Let us remember we are here as servants of God to do what He wants us to do. I bear my testimony to you, as a special witness of Jesus Christ, this is the work of our Heavenly Father. We must be more courageous, more definite. we must be the "Challenging and Testifying missionary. We know it is true. We know that the Lord knows that we know that it is true. I pray we will go forward in this important work and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.