

The Law of the Harvest

Practical Principles of Effective Missionary Work

Section III. Chapter 28: Reaching the World

The Divine Mandate

President Spencer W. Kimball taught repeatedly of the need for powerful strategic planning for reaching every soul with the gospel message: "Could we bring concerted action to a 'lengthening stride' movement that would bring into the missionary activity the good members of the Church the world around. The approach and the attack will need to be planned very carefully. We will need to impress upon stake, ward, and branch leaders around the globe their opportunity and responsibility. There will be need for strong, well-organized stake, ward, and district missions. It cannot be left to a mere suggestion, and a comprehensive score must be kept as a stimulant to the workers. Such a special, organized and developed program could bring many other of the blessings of the Church to more people as we have said."[272] In the address "When the World Will Be Converted," President Kimball taught:

The scriptures are replete with commands and promises and calls and rewards for teaching the gospel. I use the word command deliberately for it seems to be an insistent directive from which we, singly and collectively, cannot escape. I ask you, what did He mean when the Lord took his Twelve Apostles to the top of the Mount of Olives and said: "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). These were His last words on earth before He went to His heavenly home. What is the significance of the phrase "uttermost most part of the earth"? He had already covered the area known to the apostles. Was it the people in Judea? Or those in Samaria? Or the few millions in the Near East? Where were the "uttermost parts of the earth"? Did He mean the millions in what is now America? Did He include the hundreds of thousands or even millions, in Greece, Italy, around the Mediterranean, the inhabitants of central Europe? What did he mean? Or did He mean all the living people of all the world and those spirits assigned to this world to come in centuries ahead? Have we underestimated his language or its meaning? How can we be satisfied with 100,000 converts out of nearly four billion people in the world who need the gospel? After His crucifixion the eleven apostles assembled on a mountain in Galilee and the Savior came to them and said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" (He said "all nations.") "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt 28:18-20). Again as Mark records the events after the resurrection, he ... then commanded them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And this was just before the ascension. Do you think he meant Egypt and Palestine and Greece? Do you think he included the world of 33 AD or the world of 1970, 1980, 1990? What was included in his phrase "all the world" and what did he mean by "every creature"? And Luke records the event -- "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached ... among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Again, his last command. Surely there is significance in these words! There was a universal need and there must be universal coverage ... Remember also that Enoch the prophet beheld the spirits that God had created. (See Moses 6:36). These prophets visualized the numerous spirits and all the creations. It seems to me that the Lord chose his words when he said "every nation," "every land," "uttermost bounds of the earth," "every tongue," "every people," "every soul," "all the world," "many lands." Surely there is a significance to these words! Certainly his sheep were not limited to the thousands about him and with whom he rubbed shoulders each day. A universal family! A universal command! My brethren, I wonder if we are doing all we can. Are we complacent in our approach to teaching all the world? We have been proselyting now 144 years. Are we prepared to lengthen our stride? To enlarge our vision? ... Now, how can we do this? We see that there are these elements to be considered: the breaking down of resistance of the nations of the world to receive our missionaries; a greatly increased missionary force (greatly, I emphasize); a better trained missionary army; and better and additional methods and approaches. Now here we will consider each one in its turn. We need to enlarge our field of operation. We will need to make a full, prayerful study of the nations of the world which do not have the gospel at this time, and then bring into play our strongest and most able men to assist the Twelve to move out into the world and to open the doors of every nation as fast as it is ready.[273]

Brigham Young noted: "We should be a people of profound learning pertaining to the things of the world. We should be familiar with the various languages, for we wish to send missionaries to the different nations and to the islands of the sea. We wish missionaries who may go to France to be able to speak the French language fluently, and those who may go to Germany, Italy, Spain, and so on to all nations, to be familiar with the languages of those nations."[274] Tomorrow's outreach will require large numbers of Latter-day Saints who are fluent in the language and conversant in the customs of the unreached world.

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Current Performance

Opportunities for sharing the gospel are greater than ever, yet LDS growth rates have decreased. Most missionaries and mission presidents I have asked about how they are going to reach every soul in their area with the gospel message are unable to articulate a viable plan. Replies such as "we're trying to strengthen existing members and reactivate the less active," "we have a new referral program that we're excited about," or "members need to share the gospel more frequently" do not answer the question of how the gospel is to be sounded in every ear within a finite time frame. Rationalizations such as "it's difficult to tract after dark," "working through members is more effective than contacting," or "the culture here is closed to strangers" are not substitutes for well-researched, scriptural, and effective strategies for reaching the world.

While the task of reaching all or even most people with the gospel message may seem daunting, we are unlikely to succeed at something which we do not think about, talk about, or make plans to do. Without specific plans or goals for fulfilling the scriptural admonition to reach large numbers of individuals, church growth falls far short of potential even in highly receptive areas. Receptivity is often high in the early years of religious freedom in a country, but often wanes in subsequent years due to encroaching materialism and saturation of the religious market with competing groups.[275] Low contacting rates in newly opened nations have serious consequences. Numerous potentially receptive individuals have often already been discipled into other denominations or have succumbed to growing secularism by the time Latter-day Saints finally get around to making even the first contact many years later, if at all.

No efforts are made to track the number of people being reached by contacting or referrals in the vast majority of LDS missions. When measured, the actual number of contacts made by missionaries is often surprisingly low. How can we accurately evaluate progress in reaching the world with little idea of how many people are being reached? A mission with one hundred missionaries who average ten gospel contacts per day per companionship in an area with ten million people will take fifty-five years to provide each person with an average of just one contact with the gospel. If this rate is increased to 100 gospel contacts per day per companionship, the same task could be done in only five years. Since many individuals require multiple exposures to the gospel before they join the Church, the rate at which new contacts are made must be increased. Unless we enlarge our vision and establish powerful strategic plans on a mission, ward, and branch level, how will we ever reach the world with the gospel? Do we have decades or even centuries to reach everyone in our own area once, when much of the world's population still lives in areas without any missionaries at all? Effective and comprehensive outreach never occurs by accident.

The Forgotten Harvest: Unreached Peoples

By focusing resources on unreached and underreached areas, many groups have experienced rapid growth, while among Latter-day Saints strategic plans for reaching these people-groups are almost completely lacking. Only 5 percent of all LDS members live in the continental Afro-Eurasian land mass that is home to over 80 percent of the world's population. There are countless unused opportunities for Latter-day Saints among unreached culture groups where proselyting is permitted by law. In most countries with LDS congregations, the vast majority of the population lives in areas with no gospel witness.

Over one billion people live in the more than 500,000 villages, towns, and cities of India. Although LDS missionaries first arrived in India in 1850, in 2003, there were only 4,000 LDS members in all of India and twenty branches clustered in fewer than fifteen cities, with no plans to open additional cities. The Seventh-Day Adventists baptized over 100,000 new members in India within the first six months of 2000 alone.[276] One might hope that in a few more decades, there will be LDS branches in most of the 300 Indian cities with contemporary populations of 100,000 or more. Yet even this will barely scratch the surface of fulfilling the Great Commission, since only 11.7 percent of Indians live the 300 most populous cities.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, has more than 220 million inhabitants living in over 100,000 villages, towns, and cities, yet only 50 cities have 100,000 inhabitants or more. After more than thirty years of LDS presence in the country, there are twenty-two LDS branches in Indonesia, all but three of which are on the lone island of Java. Latter-day Saints still publish materials and teach in only one of more than one dozen languages with over one million speakers. There are over 35 million Indonesian Christians, and many denominations report spectacular growth. The Seventh-Day Adventists report over 180,000 active members in Indonesia and an impressive 4 percent annual growth. LDS growth has been painfully stagnant with 5,300 members, of whom only 20 to 25 percent are active, after more than thirty years of proselyting, and the Church has lost ground in recent years by growing more slowly (1.32 percent per year) than the Indonesian population (1.63 percent per year). Other Christian denominations have noted rapid growth among the Dayak peoples of Kalimantan and many other people-groups among which there is no witness for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, in spite of abundant opportunity and wide religious freedoms. Even in the unlikely event that the next few decades lead to the establishment of LDS branches in all major cities of Indonesia with at least 100,000 people, this will still provide the possibility of reaching 14 percent of Indonesians with the gospel message. The other 86 percent numbering nearly 200 million live in smaller towns and villages scattered across 6,000 islands.

Other unreached nations demonstrate similar trends. Of the 1.2 billion Chinese, 28.5 percent live in 370 cities of 100,000 or more. Pakistan's forty-three major cities are home to only 21 percent of the population. Yet China and Pakistan appear to be strongholds of the urban metropolis compared to most of the rest of South Asia. The major cities of Bangladesh and Burma hold 6 percent and 8 percent of the populace, respectively. In Cambodia, it is 3.4 percent. Of Nepal's 18 million, only 1 percent lives in Katmandu, the country's only large city. The years of 1998-2001 saw the baptism of approximately 3,000 new Latter-day Saints among the 130 million people of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church now has over 4 million active members in Africa and baptized 10,000 converts in Tanzania on a single day, virtually all of whom had already completed prebaptismal Bible study courses.[277] Numerous African nations allow wide religious freedom and are home to thriving Pentecostal and evangelical communities, but have never had any LDS missionaries. Africa is even more rural than

Asia: Nigeria is home to one out of four Africans, but only 6.25 percent of Nigerians live in medium or large cities. The urban population of Ethiopia weighs in at 5.8 percent of the national total of 68 million. The list goes on and on.

Most countries with missionaries remain highly underreached. In 2003, there were an estimated 40,000 small towns and villages in Ukraine, but just 60 LDS church units in 28 cities. If the entire full-time missionary force of the Church were concentrated in Ukraine, it could not supply even a single companionship to each town or village. To establish an LDS missionary-to-population ratio in India equivalent to the current ratio in the United States, the number of full-time missions in India would have to be increased from one to four hundred. Even a hundredfold increase would still be vastly inadequate under current paradigms. Yet there remains a need for the gospel to be preached to all people. The Savior made no exclusion for those living in small villages and towns when He commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel to every creature. How can we effectively fulfill our divine commission to reach the unreached, given limited resources and seemingly unlimited needs? We can find answers to questions of outreach by turning to the words of scripture and modern-day outreach, our missionary predecessors, and effective examples of other denominations.

Planning for the World's Needs

At current rates, how long will it take for Latter-day Saints to sound the gospel trump in every ear? While both scriptures and modern prophets speak of the need for strategic outreach, we can find relatively few working models in the LDS mission community that we can look to for experience and insight. Other groups and denominations with effective strategic plans provide at least a glimpse of the unrealized potential.

DAWN stands for Discipling a Whole Nation. Judging by their performance, they seem to be serious about that goal. In the mid-1970s, evangelical DAWN leaders established the goal of increasing the number of evangelical churches in the Philippines from 200 to 50,000. Due largely to DAWN's efforts, there are over 60,000 evangelical churches in the Philippines today -- more than twice the number of LDS congregations in the entire world.[278] The adoption of DAWN strategies has resulted in an explosion of evangelical growth in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Denominations which have practiced the principles of strategic missionary work advocated by DAWN have seen growth double, triple, and more. DAWN founder Dr. Jim Montgomery observed that churches which adopt appropriate strategic planning measures on average see their growth rates double.[279]

The Seventh-Day Adventist church trained one million lay members for church planting and adopted an initiative to reach one billion homes around the world (and up to two-thirds of the world's population) with Bible study invitations by the end of 2003.[280] Citing a 2 percent response rate from a pilot study in Minnesota, Pastor Paulsen noted that even a 0.5 percent response rate would generate over five million new Bible study participants. Although their reported annual budget is only about one-fourth of the estimated LDS budget, the Seventh-Day Adventists are doing that which many LDS believe impossible due to limited resources. The Seventh-Day Adventists' vast, concrete, and well-implemented strategic plans provide insight into some of the reasons why the Seventh-Day Adventist Church is growing at three times the rate of the LDS Church, while achieving excellent retention and maintaining high member standards.

Strategic outreach initiatives to unreached peoples by many Protestant and evangelical groups have revolutionized cultural outreach and accelerated church growth. Johnstone and Mandryk's Operation World provides a wealth of information for mission planners and detailed country by country breakdown of evangelical mission needs, opportunities, and challenges.[281] The Joshua Project,[282] Joshua Project II, and Caleb Project[283] have cataloged over 17,000 people-groups worldwide and help church congregations and individuals to "adopt" unreached or underreached people groups. Bethany World Prayer Center has created carefully researched profiles on over 1,500 unreached and underreached people-groups worldwide. Global Mapping International generates detailed maps of spoken languages, ethnic groups, church growth, and more for mission agencies.[284] Among Latter-day Saints, there are no concerted attempts to educate members about unreached people-groups and no proactive efforts to prepare outreach resources in their languages.

A focus on people-groups is vital in order to successfully reach every nation, kindred, tongue, and people with the gospel. Baptist mission organizer Don Kammerdiener stated: "Looking at the world as a collection of individual nations is not the best approach because it assumes that all people in a nation are the same. Yugoslavia is a classic example. We thought it was one nation, but now we know that there are Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Muslims -- and they are all different."[285] Political boundaries in much of Asia and Africa often reflect arbitrary administrative boundaries of the colonial era that have limited relevance to language or ethnicity. Members of the same people-group may be found in multiple distinct nations (i.e., Kashmir is divided between India, Pakistan, and China), while widely different languages and cultures may be found within the same nation (i.e., the Indo-European languages of North India than Northern Indian languages are much more closely related to English than to the Dravidian languages of Southern India). Consideration of the world in terms of nations inevitably leaves major people-groups unreached or underreached. Protestant church planting has also been enhanced by concerted efforts to evangelize the "10/40 Window" -- an imaginary rectangle that stretches from northern Africa and the Middle East to Asia. The 10/40 Window is home to 60 percent of the world's population, but only 1 percent of the world's Christians.[286]

The Church and the Village

As the Church enters the twenty-first century, LDS missionaries stand at the frontiers of the unreached world. No degree of multiplication in the number of full-time LDS missionaries will allow for full proselytization of unreached towns and villages under

current policies. New methods and approaches will be needed to successfully reach the remaining billions of inhabitants of millions of towns and villages where there has never been a gospel witness. The Lord stated that when Israel is gathered, He will take "one of a city, and two of a family, and bring [them] to Zion" (Jeremiah 3:14). Not every village, town, and city will be able to sustain an LDS congregation. Nephi prophesied of a day when the Church of Jesus Christ would be "upon all the face of the earth" but foresaw that its dominions would be small (1 Nephi 14:12). Methods of offering the gospel in towns and villages without having full-time missionaries permanently stationed there are needed. Analysis of the counsel of Latter-day Saint prophets, the words of scripture, and the effective example of other denominations can help us to understand the steps of strategic planning and implementation necessary to successfully reach unreached billions with the gospel message. Our challenge and opportunity is to adopt and implement measures to reach the unreached reliably, effectively, and within a reasonable time. The barrier to reaching the unreached is not in them, but in us.

Small towns and villages present unique opportunities and challenges. Throughout history, village dwellers have frequently been considered to be somewhat more religious (and sometimes more superstitious) than the inhabitants of large cities. Villages often have more cohesive families and lower crime rates than large cities. Villages often face challenges with poverty, education, communications, and infrastructure. The inhabitants of small towns are sometimes more easily swayed by community opinion than inhabitants of large cities.

Dan Jones was the first mission president of the modern dispensation and one of the most effective missionaries of all time. In two missions to the small towns and villages of rural Wales in the 1840s, Dan Jones baptized 6,000 converts and achieved excellent retention. This was done without the benefit of radio, television, or the resources and technology of the modern Church. Dan Jones visited hamlets and small villages itinerantly to give as many people as possible the opportunity to hear the gospel. He used the media to reach people effectively and consistently. Dan Jones used newspaper articles to inform people of upcoming church meetings in their area. He started the first international LDS publication in Welsh and wrote and edited over thirty-two editions, using it as an outreach tool. He would telegraph ahead to cities and villages, informing the mayor that he was coming to "convert the whole town." He taught with a sense of urgency. When receptivity waned in one area, Dan Jones moved on. He obeyed the Lord's word: "If they receive not your testimony in one area, flee to another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matthew 10:23). In contrast, many missionaries today have a difficult time understanding when it is time to move on until being asked not to come back by people they teach. Dan Jones recognized that his missionary efforts could not have been nearly as successful if he had spent all his time preaching in one or two major cities without venturing into the villages and hamlets to share the gospel. Dan Jones contacted hundreds of thousands of people by various means. He constantly contacted people everywhere he went and made the gospel message as widely available as possible within a short period.

Modern groups that have adopted approaches similar to those of Dan Jones have also experienced dramatic missionary success. Gospel For Asia (GFA), an evangelical group run by Indian-born pastor K. P. Yohannan, fields over 10,000 full-time local missionaries in India and South Asia.[287] In a predominantly Hindu nation traditionally resistant to Christian proselytism, GFA's missionaries are organizing an average of six new congregations per day, or two and a half times as many new congregations as the LDS church organizes across the entire world. Why are GFA missionaries, who live on a shoestring budget of $90 to $150 per month, so successful? Instead of seeking to find contacts by repeatedly visiting the few existing members several times per month to ask for referrals, with an hour or two of tracting or street contacting thrown in once in awhile, Gospel For Asia missionaries are constantly breaking new ground. Each GFA van staffed by two missionaries travels to an average of twelve to fifteen remote interior villages each day to share the Christian message. Equipped with bullhorns, VCR equipment, and the "Jesus" video, GFA missionaries reach hundreds or thousands of people each day. Those who are not allocated vans travel on bicycles with bullhorns and lanterns for evening evangelistic meetings. GFA missionaries are also well-stocked with tracts and Bibles and conduct vigorous literature distribution campaigns. Even with only fractional response rates, GFA missionaries experience tremendous success. Gospel For Asia and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church each organize more new congregations in India every four days than Latter-day Saints have organized in the country over the past 150 years.

An ingenious strategy for reaching remote unreached villages was pioneered by Phillip and Karen Brown, Baptist missionaries in Senegal, to reach the rural Sereer people.[288] The "Bread of Life" project involved the printing of one million bread wrappers which were distributed freely to vendors at local markets. The bread wrappers, in turn, were passed on to bread customers, who came into town to buy bread from remote villages all over Senegal. The wrappers could be redeemed for gospel literature from Sereer pastors and evangelists in each market. While the wrappers are distributed in ten markets, the bread wrappers found their way into almost all of the 160 Sereer markets, because many vendors attend different markets each day. The pastors keep track of how many gospel stories each person has read. When all fourteen were completed, the person earned the privilege of having an evangelistic team come to his or her village to show the Jesus film. In this way, large numbers of individuals in remote regions were reached, and Baptist churches in Senegal reported a surge in growth.

Translation of Scriptures and Outreach Material

The Book of Mormon is available in part or full in just over 100 languages. Ethnologue catalogs over 6,700 living languages.[289] Fifty-two percent of the 6,700 languages are spoken by less than 10,000 people, and 28 percent are spoken by less than 1,000 people. Eighty-three percent of them are limited to single countries. There are over 273 languages spoken by over one million people each, totaling 5.4 billion speakers. Correlation of language speaker data with a list of Book of Mormon translations demonstrates that the Book of Mormon is available in full in languages spoken by approximately 64 percent of the world's population and in part in languages spoken by 14 percent of the world's population. Based on Ethnologue language speaker data, part or all of the Book of Mormon is available in languages spoken by approximately 78 percent of the world's population, compared to 87 percent claimed in the July 2001 Ensign.[290] The Ensign figure may have been calculated by summating the

number of speakers of each language with a translation and dividing the total by the world's population, resulting in an overcount because bilingual individuals are counted twice. The Book of Mormon is not available in 204 of the 273 languages spoken by over one million people each, and over one billion people collectively (16 percent of world population). Another 6 percent speak languages with fewer than one million speakers in which the Book of Mormon is not available. The Book of Mormon is printed in 28 languages spoken by less than one million people, with many spoken by less than 100,000 people.

With barely half of the world's 100 most spoken languages and only 25 percent of languages spoken by over one million people having a Book of Mormon translation after more than 175 years, new approaches to speed the translation of scripture are needed. Latter-day Saint scripture translations are initiated when approval is given by the area presidency, usually after missionaries have started teaching large numbers of people who speak a given language. A translation typically takes eight to twelve years to be completed. This policy has resulted in the Church repeatedly being unprepared to enter new nations and cultures. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, missionaries had a Russian translation of the Book of Mormon not because of any foresight of the Missionary Department, but through the donation of a private member. Major languages such as Ukrainian had no LDS scripture, even though there had been a sizeable LDS Ukrainian community in Canada for decades. Other denominations, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists, swept across Western Ukraine and achieved rapid growth. LDS missionaries entered Ukrainian-speaking regions of Ukraine only six years later after an expedited translation of the Book of Mormon had been completed. Modest growth was still achieved, but the window of high spontaneous religious interest of earlier years had been lost. Several of my mission companions in Russia were transferred to the Baltic States, where they were assigned to learn Latvian and Lithuanian, which had no LDS scriptures until eight to ten years later. Finding, teaching, and baptizing converts without the Book of Mormon and without any official LDS literature presented special difficulties. Recognizing that the Book of Mormon is the key to missionary work, that the gospel message must go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, and that the first few years in every newly opened nation represent a time of exceptional receptivity, it would seem that the need for Book of Mormon translations in major world languages could be proactively anticipated. We know from population and linguistic data how many individuals speak each language without having to wait for prolonged missionary contact and field research. Harnessing the translation and outreach expertise of expatriate and immigrant members through global planning and coordination would be central to such a strategy.

With vision and good planning, quality translation of both scriptural and nonscriptural materials into many languages can be completed in only modest periods. Wycliffe Bible Translators has translated the entire New Testament into 611 languages and has translations in progress in another 1,682 languages, starting projects in 84 new languages in 2004 alone.[291] Operation World reported that Wycliffe Bible Translators adopted a strategically oriented plan to translate the Bible into every language which is anticipated to need one by the year 2025.[292] Through research, visionary planning, and careful coordination, Wycliffe Bible Translators expects to complete a task in 25 years which would have taken 150 years at the prior rate. By February 2006, the Campus Crusade for Christ's Jesus Film had been translated into over 925 languages and had received more than 6 billion individual viewings, resulting in over 200 million referrals to local churches.[293] The Jehovah's Witnesses translated their main proselyting manual into 126 languages between 1995 and 2001. They also simultaneously translate and release the Watchtower every two weeks in 141 languages and translate material less regularly into a total of 262 languages.[294]

Book of Mormon and Religious Literature Distribution

Although the LDS Church has the largest full-time missionary force of any Christian denomination, many other groups outpace Latter-day Saints in the distribution of religious literature by orders of magnitude. While the Book of Mormon is the "keystone of our religion" and the "key to conversion," the average LDS missionary distributes just one copy of the Book of Mormon every five days. Less than one dollar per LDS member per year is spent on printing copies of the Book of Mormon, and an average of over seventy dollars of missionary support fund money is spent on missionary housing, food, and personal expenses for every copy of the Book of Mormon that is distributed. In the 170-year period from 1829 to February 2000, a total of 100 million copies of the Book of Mormon were printed. Approximately 5.0 to 5.6 million copies of the Book of Mormon are printed each year,[295] or one copy for every 1,200 people. In an era when Latter-day prophets have spoken of the imperative need to "flood the earth with the Book of Mormon," we must ask if we are really doing our all. The total number of copies of the Book of Mormon printed in the history of the Church would more than double in a single year if every LDS member would share a copy with a nonmember once per month, or over the course of a two-year mission, if each missionary would share just three copies per day with nonmembers.

A sense of the possibilities for Book of Mormon utilization can be gleaned from the examples of other groups. On November 11, 2001, the Protestant World Bible Translation Center distributed 370,000 copies of the Bible in an outreach in Ibadan, Nigeria, that drew over 1.3 million visitors, while acknowledging that this effort was grossly inadequate to local needs.[296] One small Protestant mission group based in Florida with modest resources distributed over 100 million copies of a summary of the four gospels worldwide in less than one decade. In fiscal year 2001, Lands' End distributed over 269 million product catalogs.[297] Gospel For Asia missionaries distribute Christian tracts in bulk, which are printed locally at a rate of $1 per 250 tracts. The Jehovah's Witnesses printed more than 31 million copies of their introductory text "What Does the Bible Really Teach?" in 2005 alone. They print 45 million copies of the Watchtower and Awake! every two weeks, or over one billion copies per year.20 Over 5,000 tons of Jehovah's Witness literature are distributed in Russia alone each year. While distributing thirty-two-page Watchtower magazine is very different from sharing a copy of the Book of Mormon, one might wonder if there is not something that can be learned from these other groups about the feasibility of producing and distributing vast volumes of religious literature. The cost of such outreach is surprisingly small, and common estimates suggest that the budget of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization is only about one-quarter that of the LDS Church.

Many missionaries and leaders have claimed that widespread distribution of the Book of Mormon is ineffective. I challenge such claims, which demonstrate light-minded attitudes toward the Book of Mormon for which the Church is under condemnation.[298]

With fewer than five baptisms per LDS missionary per year and world convert retention rates near 25 percent, making a single retained convert requires on average nearly eleven months of full-time missionary labor and nearly $5,000 in missionary support fund money, in addition to other mission overhead. If we are to assume very conservatively that missionary time is worth just $5 per hour, which is below U.S. minimum wage and far below the immeasurable spiritual value of missionary time, the total value of the time and money to find a single retained convert exceeds $16,000. At approximately $2 per Book of Mormon copy, over 8,000 copies of the Book of Mormon would have to be printed for the cost of baptizing a single retained convert under current outreach paradigms. In reality, only about twenty copies of the Book of Mormon are printed per baptized convert today. Our actual use of the Book of Mormon is more than two orders of magnitude below the level that would be required for anyone to validly conclude that utilizing large numbers of copies of the Book of Mormon is ineffective. The tiny sum of one dollar per year per member spent on the Book of Mormon is dwarfed by tremendous expenditures for budget, ward social activities, meetinghouse construction, and other high-cost, low-impact items.

Many missions continue to practice restrictive policies about Book of Mormon use. The concept of "flooding the earth" of necessity implies abundance or excess. Many missionaries have no second thoughts about spending a couple hours to travel across town for an appointment with a new contact who has read nothing in the scriptures at all, but most will not loan a copy of the Book of Mormon to the most interested street or tracting contact. This approach requires that the investigator makes a significant commitment to receive the strangers into their home before they have the opportunity to do any thoughtful reading or data-gathering. Do we imagine that our own words are any more convincing or more important than the inspired words of the Lord himself in the scriptures? I have frequently heard the phrase "everyone deserves a chance" used to justify considerable time spent in repeated nonproductive discussions with individuals who have put forth little or no personal effort to plant the seed of faith. Everyone does deserve a chance, so why not provide a real chance to accept the gospel through the Book of Mormon rather than a false chance based on personality or charisma?

Using the Book of Mormon as an initial sieve in the contacting stage can make missionary time vastly more efficient by helping to self-select nonmembers who are receptive to the Lord's word and the gospel rather than to American culture or missionary personalities. Self-selection based on each individual's opinion of the Book of Mormon is much more reliable than arbitrary selection of investigators based on missionary judgment. Additional copies of the Book of Mormon can always be printed to accommodate needs, while missionary time is finite, especially in areas where relatively small missionary complements serve a large population base. The opportunity cost of time is far greater than the economic cost of materials. It is not necessary to distribute a copy of the Book of Mormon to every living person, since only a fraction of people are willing to read it, but it is vital that we make it far more widely available than at present.

While I believe that there are more effective ways to utilize copies of the Book of Mormon than simply distributing them in mass (see The Book of Mormon Loan Program in the Witnesses of Christ section), there is no question that dramatically increasing Book of Mormon publication and utilization rates is one of the greatest needs of the modern missionary program. Our missionary programs will never achieve their potential until we "remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon" (D&C 84:57).

Outreach Broadcasting

In 1974, Spencer W. Kimball declared:

King Benjamin, that humble but mighty servant of the Lord, called together all the people in the land of Zarahemla, and the multitude was so great that King Benjamin "... caused a tower to be erected, that thereby his people might hear the words which he should speak unto them" (Mosiah 2:7). Our Father in heaven has now provided us mighty towers -- radio and television towers with possibilities beyond comprehension -- to help fulfill the words of the Lord that "the sound must go forth from this place unto all the world." Even though there are millions of people throughout the world who cannot read or write, there is a chance to reach them through radio and television. The modern transistor radio can be mass produced by the thousands in a size that is small and inexpensive. We can preach the gospel to eager ears and hearts. These should be carried by people in the marketplaces of South America, on the steppes of Russia, the vast mountains and plains of China, the subcontinent of India, and the desert sands of Arabia and Egypt. Some authorities claim that this tiny miracle will be recorded by future historians as an event even greater than the invention of the printing press. The transistor is an eloquent answer to the illiteracy and ignorance which reign supremely over the earth. The spoken voice will reach millions of hearers who can listen through a $3 or $4 transistor but could not read even an elementary treatise. There are over 7,000 AM and FM radio stations in the United States, with thousands more in other parts of the world. There are innumerable opportunities for us to use these stations overseas, if we only prepare the message in the native languages. Also, missionaries could be supplied with small portable cassette tape players and go into the homes with prepared messages to humble family groups all around the globe. Millions of people are anxious and willing to learn, if only they can hear the "sound" in their own language and in a manner that they can grasp and understand. Just think what can be accomplished when we broadcast our message in many languages over numerous radio stations, large and small, around the world, and millions of good people listening on their transistors are being indoctrinated with the truth. The Lord has blessed the world with many Early Bird satellites. They are stationed high in the heavens, relaying broadcast signals back to almost every corner of the earth's surface. Today there are 67 earth receiving stations operating in 50 countries of the world. Certainly these satellites are only the genesis of what is in store for the future of world-wide broadcasting. With the Lord providing these miracles of communication, and with the increased efforts and devotion of our missionaries and all of us, and all others who are "sent," surely the divine injunction will come to pass: "For verily, the sound must go forth from this place into all the world, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth -- the gospel must be preached unto every creature ..." (D&C 58:64).[299]

Many Latter-day Saints believe that one of the main reasons for the technological explosion of the past two centuries has been to provide new and superior means for sharing the gospel, yet little has been done to utilize new technologies for outreach. Now, over thirty years after President Kimball's inspired mandate, LDS radio outreach remains virtually nonexistent. There is still

not a single full-time outreach-oriented LDS radio station anywhere in the world, and the few stations that carry LDS messages are directed almost exclusively toward enrichment of existing members. Characteristic LDS public service television messages are almost entirely restricted to the Americas. There is little organized LDS media outreach in the developing world, where 75 to 80 percent of convert baptisms occur.

Many Protestant and evangelical groups have effectively incorporated broadcasting technologies into their outreach strategies. World Christian Trends reported: "Regular listeners to Christian programs over secular or religious radio or TV stations rose from 22% of the world in 1980 to 30% in 2000,"[300] while George Barna noted that Christian mass media reaches more people than the churches themselves.[301] Although 119 countries with over half of the world's population prohibit or seriously restrict foreign missionaries,[302] only four nations (Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom) with just 2.5 percent of the world's population prohibit independent religious radio.[303] These are important findings that should not be ignored. To reach successfully the remainder of the world with the gospel message, Latter-day Saints will need to learn to work in new ways.

Full-time Protestant outreach radio stations have been broadcasting internationally for over eighty years. Today, there are tens of thousands of Christian radio stations worldwide. Adventist World Radio broadcasts over 1,200 hours of outreach radio and television programs in over 50 languages each week.[304] These programs can be heard by 85 percent of the world's population.[305] The Seventh-Day Adventist Church now owns its own satellite system for the satellite broadcasts which have been central to massively successful evangelization efforts, drawing nightly crowds of up to 100,000 and promoting remarkable church growth in Papua New Guinea[306] and Africa. DVD presentations have been screened to crowds exceeding 50,000 in India. Yet the Seventh-Day Adventists, who are growing at three times the rate of the LDS Church, are not satisfied and continue to explore aggressively the potential of new technologies to supplement conventional evangelism.[307]

The Far Eastern Broadcasting Company, which broadcasts Christian messages in over 50 languages, reported receiving over 600 letters per month from listeners in Thailand alone, of which 100 are referred to local churches.[308] Gospel radio stations in India report receiving thousands of letters per month from listeners. Christian radio networks across Central and South America, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia maintained by Transworld Radio,[309] Assemblies of God, and other groups report dramatic responses to gospel radio. One well-known and effective evangelical church growth strategy on the Indian subcontinent is to have local listeners organize Bible studies and then send missionaries to the village to organize a congregation when the group consists of 100 or more believers! While many LDS missionaries have difficulty finding interested people to teach, other denominations which make effective use of media ministries are often faced with the opposite problem of large numbers of interested believers with few missionaries or pastors to teach and disciple them.

Finnish Christian broadcaster Hannu Haukka observed: "Radio and television waves cannot be taken hostage, captive, or be chained. They do not respect boundaries. They are free to visit every home and tell every occupant about the love of God."[310] Religious radio can carry messages continuously, in contrast to the brief periods of exposure churches receive in the secular media. Religious broadcasting has become remarkably inexpensive. Seventh-Day Adventists, Assemblies of God, and many other groups that conduct regular radio, television, and satellite outreach broadcasts throughout the world have only a fraction of the income of the LDS Church, primarily because most of their members live in developing nations. Groups unable to hire full-time staff for religious broadcasting have achieved success with short programs looped to play continuously or with on-demand audio.

While the Bible is available online in over 100 languages, the Book of Mormon is officially available online only in English, even though less than 50 percent of LDS members and less than 40 percent of Internet users speak English. While English-speaking members benefit from abundant enrichment resources, online LDS materials in other languages consist mainly of conference talks and curriculum materials for existing LDS members. Official LDS outreach sites such as mormon.org contain only a superficial overview of beliefs, and virtually none of the standardized outreach resources -- not even the Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon -- are available online in major languages other than English and Spanish. While Latter-day Saints have made some technological strides in recent years, such as the online broadcast of the LDS General Conference in over fifty languages, this technology is overwhelmingly directed toward existing members rather than outreach. Greater utilization of the resources and opportunities the Lord has already provided for sharing the gospel would result in an explosion of growth.

Fostering Relationships in the Unreached World

When a referral is submitted by an individual who lives in a city without an LDS congregation, the referral information is placed in a folder at the respective mission office and remains there until full-time missionaries begin proselyting in that city, often years or decades later, if at all. In the interim, no attempt is made to contact the individual or even to acknowledge receipt of the request. In an age when missionaries in some areas work for days without teaching a discussion, the handling of referrals in areas without Church units provides great opportunity for improvement.

Referrals are time-sensitive. Individuals may feel exploited when they respond to a message promising Church information or a missionary visit but never receive any acknowledgment. Few customer service departments would feel that they could simply ignore out of area requests. At a minimum, such individuals would benefit from a letter informing them regarding the absence of local congregations and providing contact information of the nearest mission office and LDS congregations. Interested individuals living in cities without missionaries can be sent copies of the Book of Mormon or other church literature by mail, rather than having to wait for the missionaries to hand-deliver them years later, if at all, when interest may have waned and

contact information may no longer be valid.

An editorial in The Economist observed: "Western governments would do better to give a helping hand to those courageous individuals who are working to keep the flame of independent thought flickering. Often the best deliverers of such help are not embassies or visiting politicians, but non-governmental agencies. Tiny amounts of money -- a printing press here, an internet-linked computer there -- can make the difference between survival or extinction for a local party or lobby group."[311] The same is true of church outreach in new areas. Many international LDS congregations have begun with a core of individuals in unreached areas who maintained contact with the Church until missionaries were sent, yet such responsiveness on the part of the Church has been the exception rather than the rule. Increased attention to prompt follow-up of referrals in cities and branches without missionaries, even if by correspondence or telephone, could pay rich dividends. A little effort to cultivate strategically oriented relationships with individuals in unreached cities and with members of underreached people-groups can make a decisive difference for entering a city or country on the right foot for rapid and sustained church growth.

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