

They Had Been Taught by Their Mothers

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My husband was called to preside over the Missionary Training Center in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and that's where we were when I received the call to serve as first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. Because of this recent experience working with missionaries and helping them become true representatives of Christ to do His work, I would like to take the time today to recognize and celebrate the small things that you faithful women do in your homes every day to rear righteous children, preparing them to become missionaries. This is an errand of angels given to women.

I will begin by comparing the missionary training center to the house of God.

Once a week we all go to a session in the temple. It gives us an opportunity to reflect on the covenants we have made. It helps us to keep focused on the purpose of our existence, our mission on earth, and the worth of each soul.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88 and verse 119, the Lord is speaking about establishing a house of God—a temple. I will liken it to a missionary training center. He said:

“Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer,”

The day at the MTC always begins and ends with prayer. Prayers are offered during personal and companion study time, in district meetings, before meals, in classes, and in every meeting. It really is a house of prayer.

“. . . a house of faith,”

Missionaries strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice as they study

the scriptures, understand the doctrine, and obey with exactness. They exercise their faith as they rely on the Holy Ghost to teach them and to help them learn.

“ . . . a house of learning,”

A lot of time is spent in classrooms with instructors who teach about language, culture, teaching skills, doctrine, and Christlike attributes.

“ . . . a house of glory,”

We hold worship services, devotionals, and firesides. We sing hymns. Every missionary prepares a talk each week, and they bear testimony.

“ . . . a house of order,”

They learn to plan and use their time wisely. They also help keep their rooms and facilities clean, and they do their own laundry.

“ . . . a house of God.”

In an atmosphere of love, respect, trust, and confidence, they become true representatives of Christ and share the gospel with others. There is a special feeling at the MTC. You feel the Spirit. It is a house of God.

When a young man or woman enters the MTC he or she will not suddenly transform into a well-prepared and obedient missionary. That preparation has already begun years before, in his or her home. Mothers play an important role in this preparation. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve stated, “The single most important thing you can do to prepare for a call to serve is to become a missionary long before you go on a mission.”¹

To do that, it helps to live in a home where the gospel is at the center. Missionary spirit develops in a home where parents and children share the gospel one with another. Missionaries need to know the doctrine; they need to know how to pray with real intent. They need to know how to invite the Spirit into their lives. These things will give them the confidence, the strength, and the power to go and teach.

Some missionaries shared with me their feelings of gratitude to their mothers for helping them learn to love the scriptures, for teaching them to pray, for always making the effort to hold family home evening and ensure that they had a gospel discussion as part of it. An elder told me that his mother had served a mission and she always shared her mission experiences with him, which made him want to serve a mission. Another sister said her mother would invite nonmember friends into their home, and she would share her testimony with them. This sister missionary became very accepting of members of other faiths and felt comfortable sharing her beliefs with them.

These missionaries bring to mind the story of two thousand stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon. Helaman describes the faith, courage, and integrity of these young men:

“And they were all young men, and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

“Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:20–21).

“Yea, they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

“And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (Alma 56:47–48).

“Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them. . . .

“Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually”(Alma 57:21, 27).

What we learn from our mothers comprises our core values. A woman who patiently teaches a young child to pray, who makes time to read the scriptures, who teaches how to dress appropriately for worship services, who helps prepare talks and family home evening lessons is helping prepare a son or daughter to become a missionary. There are many other values, good habits, and skills that are taught in the home that help prepare our youth to become effective missionaries: learning how to study, doing assigned tasks well, finding joy in a job well done, assuming responsibilities, gratitude, personal cleanliness, basic cooking skills, treating others with courtesy and respect, getting up on time, obedience, the joy of giving service, self-reliance; the list goes on and on.

When our eight children were young, I never thought that our home was also a missionary training center, but in a real sense, it was. Our two boys served missions, and three of our six girls also found great joy in serving missions. “Out of small things proceedeth that which is great,” we are told in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 64:33).

I am grateful for the mothers who taught and prepared the two missionaries who knocked at my door forty-seven years ago, bringing the news of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for all the small things the noble women of the Church are doing to prepare the next generation of missionaries. They understand the significance of mothers getting their children where they need to be; they sense that mothers are the anchor of the good things that happen, the predominant figure in the righteousness of youth. My plea to you

is keep doing it, don't give up, you are laying the foundation of a great work, and the Lord is on your side. He will bless you, and your children will thank you for it.

I have a firm testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and Redeemer, the Son of God. He loves us and has entrusted to us the important errand of teaching and setting standards in our homes. I pray that the Lord will continue blessing you as you prepare the next generation of great missionaries.

Note

1. "Becoming a Missionary," *Ensign*, Nov. 2005.