

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
OFFICE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY  
47 EAST SOUTH TEMPLE STREET, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84150-1200

October 20, 2017

To: General Authorities; Area Seventies; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops and Branch Presidents

Dear Brethren:

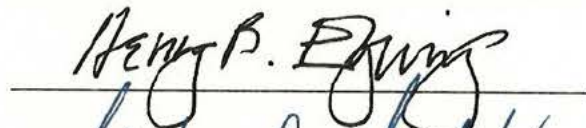
Standard Interview Questions for Prospective Missionaries

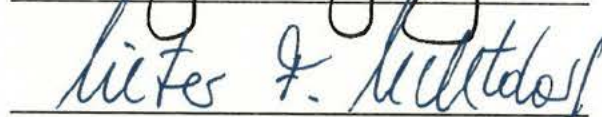
Thank you for your work to help prospective missionaries prepare to serve full-time missions. Your efforts help prepare them spiritually, physically, and emotionally for the rigors of missionary service.

Effective interviews are an essential part of preparing missionaries. To improve that effort, we ask priesthood leaders to use the enclosed standard questions when interviewing all prospective missionaries. Leaders should share these questions with youth well in advance of the interview. The questions should also be shared with each missionary candidate's parents.

Sincerely,

  
Thomas S. Monson

  
Henry B. Eyring

  
Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The First Presidency

This letter is being translated and will be distributed to units identified as Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Swedish, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. Distribution in these languages will be complete within two weeks. If leaders need this letter in languages not listed above, they may contact the Area Presidency. Area leaders can forward requests to the Priesthood and Family Department at ext. [REDACTED] 15137

## Interviewing Prospective Missionaries

For many members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, missionary service is a significant milestone in their lifelong spiritual growth. Church leaders desire that this sacred time of service be a joyous and faith-building experience for every missionary, from young men and women to senior couples. With this goal in mind, it is imperative that each missionary be appropriately prepared, worthy, and healthy.

Preparing a missionary for service is the collective blessing and responsibility of the prospective missionary, their family, and Church leaders. All are encouraged to engage in candid and meaningful conversations to ensure that the prospective missionary is adequately prepared to meet the rigors and challenges that a mission might present.

Missionaries, no matter their assignment, have the sacred privilege to represent the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. As such, they must be properly called, assigned, and set apart (see D&C 42:11). Bishops and stake presidents therefore have the responsibility to identify members who are spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared for missionary service. These priesthood leaders should submit a recommendation only when they are satisfied to the best of their knowledge that a missionary candidate is able to fulfill the responsibilities for which he or she is being recommended.

The enclosed interview questions are intended to guide these conversations with missionary candidates. Priesthood leaders should ensure that each prospective missionary and his or her parents or guardians (in the cases of young prospective missionaries) receive and understand the requirements for full-time missionary service, as described in the enclosed questions and appendix, well in advance of the missionary candidate's interview. These questions do not represent any change in the standards for missionary service.

The bishop and stake president represent the Lord in conducting thorough interviews to certify that each missionary candidate is worthy to serve and that he or she has been, is now, and will continue abiding by the standards described in the enclosed interview questions. The bishop and stake president should seek the gift of discernment as they interview missionary candidates, so that they may understand the individual's mind, heart and capacity to serve (see 1 Samuel 16:7). They ensure that each candidate clearly understands every question. If needed, they discuss and explain the meanings of terms and policies so that the candidate can honestly and completely answer the question. An appendix of terms and policies taken from the scriptures, *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops, Preach My Gospel, True to the Faith*, and *For the Strength of Youth* follows the enclosed list of questions.

If during an interview or at any other time during the recommendation process the bishop or stake president discerns that a missionary candidate may be unable to fulfill the requirements of a full-time mission because of physical, emotional or mental health challenges, he may suggest the possibility of serving a Church-service mission if the candidate still desires to serve after being honorably excused by the Missionary Department from serving in a proselyting assignment.

If a missionary candidate has not lived in the same ward continuously for at least one year, the bishop must contact the previous bishop(s) to certify the candidate's worthiness and physical, mental, and emotional ability to serve before interviewing him or her for missionary service. This usually is necessary when a member has been attending a young single adult ward.

Interviewing a prospective missionary should be a sacred experience for the individual and their priesthood leader, characterized by great love and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. As prospective missionaries and their priesthood leaders counsel together, they will discern the ability and capacity of each individual to serve. When appropriate, bishops and stake presidents should help prospective missionaries to understand when they are honorably excused from fulltime missionary service and help them find meaningful ways to remain faithful as they contribute to the building up of the Lord's kingdom—a blessing for which all can be qualified (see D&C 4:5).

## Interview Questions

1. Do you have faith in and a testimony of God the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost?
2. Do you have a testimony that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God and the Savior and Redeemer of the world? Please share your testimony with me. How has the Atonement of Jesus Christ influenced your life?
3. What does it mean to you to repent? Do you feel that you have fully repented of past transgressions?
4. Will you share your testimony with me that the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and that [current Church President] is a prophet of God?
5. Full-time missionary service requires living gospel standards. What do you understand about the following standards?

- a. The law of chastity

In reference to the law of chastity, have you always lived in accordance with what has been discussed? If not, how long ago did the transgression(s) occur? What have you done to repent?

- b. Avoiding pornography

- c. The law of tithing

- d. The Word of Wisdom, including the use of drugs or the abuse of prescribed medications

- e. Keeping the Sabbath day holy

- f. Being honest in all you say and do

Have you lived in accordance with all of these standards? Are you now living in accordance with them? Will you live in accordance with them as a full-time missionary?

6. Do you have any legal actions pending against you? (If yes, ask the candidate to explain in detail possible legal or financial obligations. See *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 4.4.)
7. Have you ever committed a serious violation of criminal law, regardless of whether or not you were arrested, you were convicted, or the record was expunged? (If yes, ask the missionary candidate to explain in detail what happened, the outcome of any criminal

charges, whether there are criminal or other legal requirements that have not been completed, and what he or she has done to repent. See *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 4.4 and “Serious Transgressions” in 4.5.2.)

8. Have you ever sexually abused a child in any way, regardless of whether or not you were charged, you were convicted, or the record was expunged? (If yes, and the abuse has not been reported, see *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 17.3.2, for instructions. If the abuse was previously resolved, see *Handbook 1*, 4.4, for direction.)
9. Have you ever committed any other serious transgression or misdeed that should be resolved before your mission? (If yes, ask the candidate to explain in detail what happened, the outcome of any criminal charges, whether there are criminal or other legal requirements that have not been completed, and what he or she has done to repent.)
10. Do you support, affiliate with, or agree with any group or individual whose teachings or practices are contrary to or oppose those accepted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
11. Do you have any unpaid debts? How will these debts be paid off before your mission or managed while you serve a mission? (See *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 4.4.)
12. Do you currently have or have you ever had any physical, mental, or emotional condition that would make it difficult for you to maintain a normal missionary schedule, which requires that you work for 12–15 hours a day, including studying for 2–4 hours a day, walking or biking for up to 8–10 hours a day, and so forth?
13. Have you ever been diagnosed with or received treatment for dyslexia or other reading disorder? If so, are you comfortable reading the scriptures and other documents aloud? Do you believe that you could memorize appropriate scriptures and other information with the assistance of your companion? In what ways do you now compensate for this disorder?
14. Have you ever been diagnosed with or received treatment for a speech disorder? If so, are you comfortable speaking in front of others? Do you feel that you have adequate tools to help you learn, teach, and communicate?
15. Have you ever been on medication or otherwise treated for any of the following conditions: attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), or autism spectrum disorder (including Asperger’s)? If yes, please explain.

16. If you were being treated for one of these conditions and discontinued treatment, did you do so under a doctor's supervision? If not, why did you stop? How well have you been functioning without treatment or medication? When was the last time you were on medication for these issues?

## Appendix

### Worthiness

“A person who has been guilty of adultery, fornication, heavy petting, homosexual activity, other sexual perversions, serious violation of civil law, or other serious transgressions must repent before he or she may be recommended for missionary service. A prospective missionary must also overcome any addictions before being considered for missionary service.

“Mere confession and refraining from a sin for a period of time do not on their own constitute repentance. There must also be evidence of a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and a lasting change of behavior (see Mosiah 5:2). The bishop and stake president are to confirm that the member is free of transgression for a sufficient time to manifest genuine repentance and to prepare spiritually for the temple and for a sacred mission call. This period could be as long as three years for multiple serious transgressions and should not be less than one year from the most recent serious transgression. Questions about specific individuals may be directed to a General Authority in the Missionary Department, the Area Presidency, or a member of the Presidency of the Seventy” (*Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 4.5.2).

### Extended Pattern of Serious Transgressions

“A person who has been promiscuous with several partners or with one partner over an extended period of time in a relationship outside of marriage will not be considered for missionary service. Stake presidents and bishops help these individuals repent and provide them with other meaningful ways to serve the Lord.

“If priesthood leaders believe that unusual circumstances or situations warrant an exception, the stake president may submit a recommendation for the First Presidency to consider. He submits the recommendation through the Missionary Department and includes specific details of the situation and a letter from the candidate describing the nature of his or her repentance. Bishops and stake presidents should not recommend exceptions that are unwarranted or that they do not endorse without reservation” (*Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010], 4.5.2).



## Repentance

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43).

“The second principle of the gospel is repentance. Our faith in Christ and our love for Him lead us to repent, or to change our thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors that are not in harmony with His will. Repentance includes forming a fresh view of God, ourselves, and the world. “When we repent, we feel godly sorrow, then we stop doing things that are wrong and continue doing things that are right. Bringing our lives in line with God’s will through repentance is a central purpose of our lives. We can return to live with God the Father only through Christ’s mercy, and we receive Christ’s mercy only on condition of repentance.

“To repent, we recognize our sins and feel remorse, or godly sorrow. We confess our sins to God. We also confess very serious sins to God’s authorized Church leaders, who can help us repent. We ask God in prayer to forgive us. We do all we can to correct the problems our actions may have caused; this is called restitution. As we repent, our view of ourselves and the world changes. As we change, we recognize that we are children of God and that we need not continue making the same mistakes over and over. If we sincerely repent, we turn away from our sins and do them no more. We resist any desire to commit sin. Our desire to follow God grows stronger and deeper.

“Sincere repentance brings several results. We feel God’s forgiveness and His peace in our lives. Our guilt and sorrow are swept away. We feel the influence of the Spirit in greater abundance. And when we pass from this life, we will be more prepared to live with our Heavenly Father and His Son.

“Even after we have accepted Christ and repented of our sins, we may fall short and sin again. We should continually try to correct these transgressions. In addition, we should continually improve—to develop Christlike qualities, to grow in knowledge, and to serve more effectively. As we learn more about what the Savior expects of us, we will want to show our love by obeying Him. Thus, as we repent daily, we will find that our lives will change and improve. Our hearts and our behavior will become more Christlike. We will come to feel great joy in repenting daily” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 62–63).

## The Law of Chastity

“Chastity is sexual purity, a condition that is ‘pleasing unto God’ (Jacob 2:7). To be chaste, you must be morally clean in your thoughts, words, and actions. You must not have any sexual relations before you are married” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, [2004], 29).

“[Before marriage,] do not participate in passionate kissing, lie with or on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not allow anyone to do such things with you” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, [2004], 32).

“Do not view, read, or listen to anything that depicts or describes the human body or sexual conduct in a way that can arouse sexual feelings. Pornographic materials are addictive and destructive. They can rob you of your self-respect and of a sense of the beauties of life. They can tear you down and lead you to evil thoughts and abusive conduct” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, [2004], 32).

“Like other violations of the law of chastity, homosexual activity is a serious sin. It is contrary to the purposes of human sexuality (see Romans 1:24–32). It distorts loving relationships and prevents people from receiving the blessings that can be found in family life and the saving ordinances of the gospel” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, [2004], 30–31).

“The Lord’s standard regarding sexual purity is clear and unchanging. Do not have any sexual relations before marriage, and be completely faithful to your spouse after marriage. Do not allow the media, your peers, or others to persuade you that sexual intimacy before marriage is acceptable. . . .

“Never do anything that could lead to sexual transgression. Treat others with respect, not as objects used to satisfy lustful and selfish desires. Before marriage, do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not do anything else that arouses sexual feelings. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 35–36).

“God delights in chastity and hates sexual sin. Chastity includes strict abstinence from sexual relations before marriage and complete fidelity and loyalty to one’s spouse after marriage. . . . Chastity requires faithfulness in thought and action. We must keep our

thoughts clean and be modest in our dress, speech, and actions.” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 77).

## **The Law of Tithing**

“One of the great blessings of membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the privilege of contributing to the growth of the kingdom of God through paying tithing. Tithing is an ancient, divine law. For example, the Old Testament prophet Abraham paid tithes of all he possessed (see Alma 13:15).

“To those who pay tithing, the Lord promises that He will “open . . . the windows of heaven, and pour . . . out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). These blessings may be temporal or spiritual, but they will come to those who obey this divine law.

“Tithing means one-tenth, and the Lord has commanded us to give a tenth of our increase, which is understood to mean income, that we may be blessed. The law of tithing gives us the opportunity to help build His kingdom. Our tithes are holy to the Lord, and we honor Him by paying tithing. God promises to abundantly bless those who pay an honest tithe. Those who do not pay tithing rob God (see Malachi 3:8). They keep for themselves something that rightfully belongs to Him. We should seek first the kingdom of God, and tithing is an important way of doing that. Paying tithing is an expression of our faith. It is an outward sign of our belief in God and His work” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 78–79).

## **The Word of Wisdom**

“The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith a law of health called the Word of Wisdom. This law teaches us what foods and substances we should and should not use to maintain the health of our bodies and to keep us free from evil influences. The Lord promises blessings of health, strength, protection against evil, and greater receptiveness to spiritual truths.

“Remember that our bodies are sacred. We should treat them with respect and reverence. The Word of Wisdom teaches that we are to eat healthy foods. It teaches very specifically that we are to avoid harmful substances, including alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee. We must also avoid harmful drugs in any form” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 78).

## **Sabbath-Day Observance**

“Our Sabbath-day behavior is a reflection of our commitment to honor and worship God. By keeping the Sabbath day holy, we show God our willingness to keep our covenants. Each Sabbath day we go to the Lord’s house to worship Him. While there we partake of the sacrament to remember Jesus Christ and His Atonement. We renew our covenants and show that we are willing to repent of our sins and mistakes.

“On this day, we enjoy a rest from our labors. As we attend Church services and worship together, we strengthen each other. We are renewed by our association with friends and family. Our faith is strengthened as we study the scriptures and learn more about the restored gospel.

“When a community or nation grows careless in its Sabbath activities, its religious life decays and all aspects of life are negatively affected. The blessings associated with keeping the Sabbath day holy are lost. We should refrain from shopping on the Sabbath and participating in other commercial and sporting activities that now commonly desecrate the Sabbath.

“Latter-day Saints should set this holy day apart from activities of the world by entering into a spirit of worship, thanksgiving, service, and family-centered activities appropriate to the Sabbath. As Church members endeavor to make their Sabbath activities compatible with the intent and Spirit of the Lord, their lives will be filled with joy and peace” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 74).

## **Honesty and Integrity**

“Be honest with yourself, others, and God at all times. Being honest means choosing not to lie, steal, cheat, or deceive in any way. When you are honest, you build strength of character that will allow you to be of great service to God and others. You will be blessed with peace of mind and self-respect. You will be trusted by the Lord and will be worthy to enter into His holy temples.

“Dishonesty harms you and harms others as well. If you lie, steal, shoplift, or cheat, you damage your spirit and your relationships with others. Being honest will enhance your future opportunities and your ability to be guided by the Holy Ghost. Be honest at school; choose not to cheat in any way. Be honest in your job, giving a full amount of work for your pay. Do not rationalize that being dishonest is acceptable, even though others may think it does not matter.

“Closely associated with honesty is integrity. Integrity means thinking and doing what is right at all times, no matter what the consequences. When you have integrity, you are willing to live by your standards and beliefs even when no one is watching. Choose to live so that your thoughts and behavior are always in harmony with the gospel” (*For the Strength of Youth: A Gospel Reference*, [2004], 19).