

3

Missionary Conduct

3.0

Introduction

This section describes missionary standards of behavior and Christlike qualities you are expected to practice and develop during your mission as you become a more dedicated disciple of Jesus Christ. As the prophet Moroni counseled, “Remember the word of God which saith by their works ye shall know them; for if their works be good, then they are good also” (Moroni 7:5).

3.1

Christlike Behavior

Pray and work to develop Christlike attributes as described in the scriptures and in *Preach My Gospel*, including gratitude, kindness, love, humility, patience, empathy, and obedience. With the Savior’s help and your own sincere and diligent efforts, you can develop Christlike attributes (see Mosiah 3:19).

Be kind, positive, and uplifting. Be thoughtful of each person’s situation, asking yourself questions such as these:

- Is it too late or early to contact this person? Would this inappropriately interrupt family or personal time?
- Is there a way I can be helpful in this situation?
- Could this action or comment embarrass, intimidate, or offend someone?
- What is appropriate for this culture?

You are a guest in the area where you serve and should treat people and places with respect and appreciation. Respect the customs, religious beliefs and practices, and sacred sites in your area at all times. Be careful that your actions will not offend anyone. Remember, what you say and what you do may be heard, observed, and recorded.

For more information see section 7.3, “Respect for Others.”

3.2

Temple Worthiness

The Lord Jesus Christ invites you to “prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may

make you clean” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:74). Part of this preparation includes keeping your temple covenants.

3.2.1

Temple Covenants

Keeping temple covenants of obedience, sacrifice, and consecration will empower you and help you become more like the Savior.

Even if there is not a temple in your mission, keep a current temple recommend to help remind you of your covenants. Ask your mission president for a temple recommend interview before your recommend expires.

3.2.2

Temple Worship

If a temple is nearby, your mission president may allow you and other missionaries to attend occasionally on preparation day.

For more information see section 7.4, “Temple Attendance.”

3.3

The Law of Chastity

One temple covenant you have made is to obey the law of chastity. Do all you can to protect yourself, your companion, and others from sexual temptation that could lead to breaking this sacred covenant. Doing things that break the law of chastity may even be considered criminal in some areas.

You should avoid any thought or action that would separate you from the Spirit of God. This includes but is not limited to adultery; fornication; same-sex activity; oral sex; arousing sexual feelings; inappropriate touching; sending or receiving messages, images, or videos that are immoral or sexual in nature; masturbation; and viewing or using pornography (see 7.5.3). See *For the Strength of Youth* (2011), “Repentance,” 28–29, for additional information.

The Lord has taught, “Satan seeketh to destroy” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:57) and make you “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). He will use people, inappropriate media, and other temptations to deceive, trap, threaten, and embarrass you. For example, be especially careful of those who may demand financial payment in return for not revealing compromising or inappropriate images and messages that you may have sent them.

If you are struggling to keep these standards or if someone is threatening you, ask the Lord for help and talk with your mission president immediately.

3.4

Honesty

Temple worthiness includes being honest in all your dealings with others. In missionary service, this includes:

- Telling the truth, especially to your mission president regarding your conduct, testimony, work habits, and emotional and physical health.
- Giving accurate reports of your work and how you have spent your time throughout the week in your weekly reports.
- Using mission funds responsibly and turning in accurate receipts.
- Being trustworthy and never giving a false report or false information about any person, including your companion.
- Respecting others by not borrowing, taking, or using someone's personal items (including clothing, books, electronic devices, and jewelry) without permission.

3.5

Interactions with Others

The Savior taught, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Choose to follow the Savior's example and act in ways that are polite, safe, and appropriate for the situation.

3.5.1

General Standards for Interacting with Adults

Build trust and meaningful relationships with those you serve, including people you teach, other missionaries, and local members. Be professional and kind, and observe these standards:

- *Always stay with your companion.*
- Do not counsel adults about personal problems. Refer members to their bishop if they need counseling. If you feel someone of another faith needs help with personal problems, talk to your mission president.
- Avoid situations that could become physically or spiritually dangerous or that could be misunderstood.
- Do not flirt or associate inappropriately with anyone.
- Always ensure that another adult of your own gender is present with you and your companion when you teach (in person) or travel with someone of the opposite gender.

- Keep your language dignified and avoid using slang. Use appropriate titles when addressing others. For example, use the title of “Elder” or “Sister” when referring to other missionaries to show respect for their calling.

3.5.2

General Standards for Interacting with Children

For your safety, as well as the safety of children, strictly observe the following guidelines:

- *Always stay with your companion.*
- Never be alone with anyone younger than age 18.
- Be cautious about playing with groups of children, such as joining a soccer or other game. Do not do anything where your actions might be misinterpreted.
- Whenever possible, get a parent’s permission to interact with a child.
- Do not tickle children, change diapers, hold children, or allow children to sit on your lap. These and other actions could appear inappropriate or be misinterpreted.
- Politely decline to babysit children of any age.
- Do not participate in service activities where you would be alone with children (see 7.2.2).

3.6

Recreation

You can learn to more fully love the people you serve by taking sincere interest in their culture, history, land, and traditions through visits to local places of interest, generally on preparation day (see 2.5).

Ask those you meet to recommend appropriate and safe sites to visit. Choose activities that are uplifting and that help you relax. Appropriate places to visit may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Historical and cultural sites
- Museums and galleries
- Zoos and parks

3.6.1

General Recreation Standards

Avoid gathering as large groups of missionaries in public places. Normally, this means you should not gather in groups larger than the size of your district. Doing so can draw unnecessary attention or make people feel intimidated.

Use mission vehicles only for activities that are authorized by your mission president.

Exercise and be active to keep your body fit for missionary work. Play sports in ways that avoid injury and extreme fatigue.

3.6.2

Unauthorized Activities

Always be safe and use common sense when participating in recreational activities. Because missionaries have been seriously injured while participating in risky activities, you should not participate in activities during your mission that involve increased risk. These activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Contact, gymnastic, winter, and water sports (including swimming)
- Mountain climbing and rock climbing
- Riding on motorcycles and horses
- Riding in private boats or airplanes
- Handling firearms
- Using fireworks or explosives of any kind

Watch this video for more information about recreational safety.

3.6.3

Media

Choose approved and appropriate media. This generally means avoiding the following:

- Social media, mobile apps, and online media not used for teaching the gospel or communicating with your family (see 3.9)
- Television, movies, video games, and unauthorized videos
- Audiobooks, music, and reading material that does not meet mission standards

Refer to missionary technology standards for more information (see 7.5). Discuss questions about media with your mission leaders.

3.6.4

Musical Instruments

If approved by your mission president, you may bring a musical instrument to the mission field. It should be inexpensive, easy to transport, and able to meet baggage requirements. The type of instrument should be appropriate for Sunday meetings (see *General Handbook*, 19.4.2).

You may practice the instrument on preparation day and at other times your

mission president designates. When playing the instrument, consider your neighbors and other missionaries and how they may be affected. The type of music you play on the instrument should be sacred, dignified, and suitable for missionary work.

3.7

Photos and Videos

Photos can help you share your mission experience with people at home and can be meaningful reminders of your mission. When taking photos or recording videos, be careful not to embarrass anyone, including other missionaries and people who struggle with economic, social, or physical challenges. Some people may not want you or others to see, share, or be reminded of what is shown in a photo. Ask permission before taking and sharing photos or videos. In some missions, you may not be allowed to publicly share photos of anyone you are teaching because of local privacy laws.

Taking certain photos may be offensive or illegal in some cultures and places. Some examples include taking photos of:

- Certain government and military buildings.
- Security areas at airports, passport checks, border crossings, consulates, and embassies.
- Law enforcement or military personnel.
- People, buildings, or activities of other faiths.
- Culturally sensitive subjects, including people in traditional dress.
- People struggling with poverty, sickness, or disabilities.

As a general guideline, do not take photos of the objects, places, or people listed above. Discuss any questions you may have with your mission leaders.

The Church also has specific policies about taking photographs at meetinghouses:

- Do not take pictures or record video in meetinghouse chapels.
- Do not photograph, send, or record sacred ordinances, including the sacrament and baptisms and confirmations.

Watch this video for more information about guidelines for taking photos and videos.

3.8

Use of Technology

The Lord declared, “Behold, I will hasten my work in its time” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:73). Technology can be a tool to share teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ and should be used righteously.

For more information see section 7.5, “Technology.”

3.9

Communication with Family, Mission Leaders, and Friends

Your family, mission leaders, and friends can be a great support to you on your mission. Use a portion of your preparation day to communicate with them, members, and recent converts from other areas.

Prioritize your time on preparation day by communicating with your parents first and your mission president second.

You may read any communications you receive during the week whenever you have appropriate time to do so. You should reply to communications from home only on preparation day unless it is an emergency.

3.9.1

Family

You may communicate with your family on your weekly preparation day via letters, emails, text messages, online messaging, phone calls, and video chat.

Use the approved communication method that works best for you and your family and that is cost-effective so that you can stay within your monthly budget. This will vary depending on circumstances, location, and schedule.

If your parents live in different locations, you may contact each parent separately on preparation day. It is not expected that you will call or video chat with your parents every week.

You also are encouraged to contact your family on other special occasions, such as Christmas, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, your parents’ birthdays, and other holidays that are significant in your home country or culture.

You should initiate all text message conversations, online messaging, phone calls, and video chats. If your family needs to contact you, they should contact the mission president first.

When communicating with your family by phone or video chat, be wise in determining the duration of your calls. In making these decisions, be considerate of your companion and keep in mind the purpose of your missionary service.

3.9.2

Mission President

Write a letter to your mission president weekly on preparation day. Generally, you will submit your letter to him using the Missionary Portal.

Only your mission president will review your weekly letter. Be open and honest so that he can understand any concerns you have and provide relevant counsel and feedback. Please be aware that he will read, but not be able to respond to, every letter.

If you receive important news from home that needs immediate attention, inform your mission president and check with him before contacting your family on days other than preparation day or on special occasions.

3.9.3

Communicating with People in Your Mission

As you contact people from other areas in your mission, be sure that your communication is focused on fulfilling your missionary purpose. Follow the standards in section 3.5.1, “General Standards for Interacting with Adults,” and in *Safeguards for Using Technology*, and remember to include your companion as you participate in these communications.

3.9.4

Packages and Letters

Some missions may use the mission office address to receive mail and packages and as your return address. This practice can protect your safety and help prevent mail theft and lost mail due to transfers. Please follow all guidelines you receive in such cases.

3.9.5

Missionary Experiences with People from Home

You may know a person at home whose personal experience could help someone you are teaching in your mission. You should ask your mission president for permission for that person to share her or his experience and testimony. Counsel with the person about the best communication technology to use.

If your family or friends from home want to learn more about the gospel of Jesus Christ, your mission president may allow you to teach them using technology (see 7.5.4).

3.9.6

Personal Visits from Family and Friends

Generally, family and friends should not visit you during your mission. However, under special circumstances, your mission president may approve an exception. These visits should be short and not interfere with your missionary duties. A visit should not inconvenience your companion, other missionaries, or the people you teach. Take care that any such visit does not pull your thoughts away from your service or create a financial problem for your family.

3.9.7**Emergencies**

If your family tells you of an emergency at home, let your mission leaders know so they can give you support. Mission leaders will contact your family if you have an