

THRUST IN YOUR Sickle

A harvesting tool can help us learn how to be effective member missionaries.

Field of grain

Reaper

Sickle

Ripe (white) ears of grain

Blade (either serrated or smooth)

Handle

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

"The harvest is the Lord's. Your responsibility is to thrust in the sickle."

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, "What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves on His Mission," *Ensign*, May 1996, 42.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN

A sickle is:

A tool. People use tools in order to do things that would otherwise be impossible or much more difficult. We have many available tools (including social media, the Internet, and just opening our mouths) to share messages about the gospel of Jesus Christ and invite people to learn more about it. We just need to use them.

Sharp. As a boy on a farm, Elder Kevin R. Duncan of the Seventy learned that a sickle needs to be kept sharp to be effective. "On the farm, we kept a file on hand to sharpen our sickle every day. In missionary work and indeed in all areas of life, we need to keep our spiritual sickles sharp so that we can achieve our own best potential. Reading scriptures daily, praying, and keeping all other commandments help us stay sharp and useful" ("Abandoned Seeds in Rocky Places," *New Era*, July 2014, 18).

Common. To participate in the harvest, people needed a sickle. Fortunately, sickles were relatively easy to make and quite common. When it comes to sharing the gospel, there's no special or incredibly rare thing you need to have before setting out to do it. If you have "faith, hope, charity and love" and "an eye single to the glory of God," you are qualified for the work (D&C 4:5).

Personal. Though harvesting technology has advanced and many farmers now use vehicles called combines to harvest large fields, the pattern for effective harvesting in missionary work has not changed since the Savior first sent laborers into the field. We thrust in our sickles and serve, teach, and baptize people individually.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: "Covenants are made personally, individually. . . . Ordinances are performed for individual persons, one by one, no matter how many must ultimately receive them. . . .

"That's how the kingdom of God is built—one person at a time, one covenant at a time" ("Keeping Covenants: A Message for Those Who Will Serve a Mission," *New Era*, Jan. 2012, 3). ■

BIBLE FACT

After the Savior Jesus Christ spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, testifying to her that He was the Messiah (see John 4:7–26), He spoke to His Apostles of "fields . . . white already to harvest" (John 4:35). ("White" was a way of saying the grain was ripe.) The woman told the people of her city about the Savior, leading to the conversion of many in that place (see John 4:28–30, 39–42). So, in speaking of the fields that were white, the Savior was helping His Apostles see just how many people were ready to hear and accept the message of His gospel, including people they may have overlooked.

A Sickle

The sickle is one of the oldest and most common agricultural tools around the world. Its invention coincides with the Agricultural Revolution in the Neolithic Age, when people discovered that they could cultivate and harvest grains from wild grasses (such as barley and wheat). It has a curved blade for cutting down stalks of grains. The earliest sickles were made of

jawbones or other curved bones, wood, or clay and had flint or other sharpened stones set into a groove. Later, sickle blades were made of brass, copper, iron, and other metals and then set into handles made of wood or other material. The blades needed to be kept sharp for the tool to be effective.

A sickle's blade bunches the grass stems in its curve, allowing the reaper to slice and catch the bunch at the same time, making for an efficient way of collecting the grain-bearing grasses.

ILLUSTRATION BY GREG NEVBOLD