

Your Mission Should You Choose to Accept It

“And you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

In the mid-1960s a new spy adventure show premiered on television titled *Mission Impossible*. It was wildly popular. Subsequently, it was made into a movie with several sequels. In the early TV series each episode began with the lead agent, Jim Phelps, finding a tape recording in an unlikely location. On the tape would be an introduction, which always began with the phrase “Your mission, Jim, should you choose to accept it.”

Jim Phelps was a fictional character, but actual intelligence agents are important to the security of any nation, especially the United States. The Central Intelligence Agency

(CIA) was created by President Harry S. Truman in 1947 to handle all matters related to US national security. Although it has never been officially confirmed by our government, the CIA has a training facility for spies in Virginia, which has been affectionately referred to as “The Farm.”

How does one become one of the elite candidates who are selected to be trained at The Farm? In 2003 a movie titled *The Recruit* reportedly gave an accurate portrayal of what the CIA is looking for in prospective agents as well as the rigorous training they must endure. In the movie, James Douglas Clayton is actually pursued by the CIA due to the skill set he possesses. Initially, Clayton is not interested in such a career, commenting to a CIA recruiter that he is not CIA material. However, the CIA is relentless in their quest to attract Clayton, enticing him to take the job they repeatedly tell him he was born for.

What are the skills, talents, and abilities the CIA is looking for in a potential agent? They want someone who can be creative and think outside the box; someone who can be both autonomous and at the same time a team player; someone who is willing to endure months and months of clandestine training; and someone who will perform their job with a sense of purpose and an incredible spirit of pride realizing they will never be publicly recognized for their accomplishments. Ultimately, the CIA agent is asked to save the world, and if he does earn a medal it is only shown to him in the basement of some obscure government building.

Long before Jim Phelps or CIA agents began receiving missions, Jesus gave the ultimate mission assignment to His followers in Acts 1:8 when He said, “Be my witnesses.” Five hundred disciples received this mission assignment, but only 120 of them accepted it by going to Jerusalem. There they received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and were empowered

to become agents committed to changing their world by converting lost souls. Among these disciples was a hand-picked group, which Jesus personally trained for three and one-half years for His mission. With little regard for their personal welfare and no desire for public acclaim, in a coordinated effort they worked alone or in small groups turning the world upside down.

Fast forward 2,000 years and the mission remains the same. However, the disciples responding to the mission today may represent a lesser percentage than those we find in the Book of Acts. Followers of Christ throughout the world would likely tell you that of all the opportunities for service within the church, the one they are most unlikely to pursue is the one found in Acts 1:8. They truly believe that it is *Mission: Impossible*. Oh, they will say they are fulfilling this mission by singing in the choir or leading a crew on church workday or donating money to the church building fund. They might even ask why they have to win a soul. What they don't realize is that they *get* to win a soul! Yes, it is work, but it is the most exciting and rewarding mission one can accomplish for God.

I became aware of the mission as a child. I learned about it through my mother while we were attending a Baptist church in Ocala, Florida. She was a devout Christian and served God with all the knowledge she had of Him at that time. When I was about eleven, my father, who had been raised in an Apostolic church in Corinth, Mississippi, received the Holy Ghost and was baptized in the name of Jesus. His conversion caused conflict between my parents. After absolutely no religious involvement with his wife and kids, my dad challenged our religious beliefs by asserting to my mother that he had the truth and we did not. In essence, her response to him was, "What? I have taken our five children to church weekly, involved them in church programs and conducted family

devotions alone every night while you didn't darken a church door. Now you have found God at some other church, and somehow you are right and I am wrong? I don't think so!"

Unknown to us, my entire family was being groomed to become "agents," perhaps even secret agents for the Lord. Despite my mother's protests and what on the surface appeared to be a sensible argument, she began to be affected by the Holy Ghost. She was looking for more in the Baptist church and went to our pastor about filling the void she was experiencing. He advised her to become engaged in visitation and gave her the names of individuals who had visited our church so she could invite them back. I remember waiting in the car with my four siblings while she did this. This waiting was not a pleasant experience. Little did we know that we were experiencing our first exposure to the mission: winning souls.

Things began to change quickly with my mother over the summer of 1959. My Dad's prayers and the conviction of the Holy Ghost prompted her to attend the final night of the youth camp at the United Pentecostal Church campground in Ocala. J. T. Pugh was the speaker and his sermon that night was "Your First Night in Hell." When he finished that sermon there were few people remaining in the pews other than my siblings and me. Remember, we were Baptist kids. At the Baptist church we were not used to the pandemonium that appeared to be taking place in that service. We weren't used to all the screaming and crying and shouting. I heard a lady behind me crying and speaking in some language I didn't understand. It made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. Because my mother had joined the mass of people in the altar area, I could only turn to my older sister, Sandra, for guidance as to the nature of this strange language. She was thirteen so I assumed she would have an answer. She looked at the lady,

observed that she had an olive complexion, and confidently advised me, “Oh, she’s probably Spanish and is just praying in Spanish.” That answer made sense to me and for the moment it slightly reduced my anxiety.

Even though my first encounter with Pentecost was a very unpleasant experience, we never went back to the Baptist church. My mother received the Holy Ghost that weekend and she was baptized in the name of Jesus. She called our Baptist pastor the next day and advised that we would not be coming back. I was not happy because I liked our church. Some of my best friends were in that church. It was a very abrupt ending to the church I grew up in.

Due to the dramatic changes that were caused by this new religion, I was not very receptive to it. Yes, my paternal grandparents, two of my aunts, and three of my cousins were attending this church, but in my opinion that was all that was good about it. This church was so much smaller, and the way they worshiped was peculiar.

Then the ultimate downers followed less than a year after we became Pentecostals. My dad informed my brother and me that we could no longer participate in Little League sports, especially baseball. He attributed this to the religious beliefs of our new church. What a blow! I thought, *Doesn’t my dad know I’m going to be a Major League shortstop playing for the LA Dodgers?* I was just coming into my own as a player and was one of the better players on the team for which I had played for the previous two years.

Not long afterward during family devotions my dad wanted to know how we (the kids) felt about selling our television so Sandra could get a piano. Of course, he added that he was convicted of watching television. This was another tenet of the Pentecostal church’s beliefs. You can imagine the exuberance my brothers, my little sister, Benita, and I displayed over this

idea. To add insult to injury, the TV was put in my bedroom with a blanket over it until it was sold.

The next year, 1960, I entered junior high school at the age of twelve. I was learning about the standards of this church, and knew it did not believe in wearing shorts in Physical Education (P.E.), which would now be a required course for me. I was already having to use the excuse that “it is against my religion” in reference to questions about me not being able to play baseball or watch TV. I was a shy, introverted kid, embarrassed every time I had to use this excuse. I discovered that if a student took band they would not have to participate in PE. Even though I was a good athlete and loved to play all sports, I reasoned that I could avoid additional humiliation by taking band if my dad consented. By this time my dad had been called into the ministry and he liked the idea as I could play the trumpet in church.

Of course, this maneuver only delayed the inevitable as I would have to take PE. in the ninth grade. I was all right with this and felt pretty proud of myself. I had dodged a bullet and for the first year of beginning band everything was great. The next year I entered Advanced Band. One of the requirements was to march in the Christmas parade. When I approached my dad about this, he indicated it was a worldly amusement and I could not participate. I had to get a note from him, expressing the same, to give to the band instructor. For the next two years I was ostracized from the band when Christmas came because I had to sit out marching practices. I guess my plan didn't work out that well, especially during ninth grade when I had to wear long pants in P.E. and not march in the Christmas parade.

These anecdotes illustrate my years and years of training on The Farm. As a potential agent I was being groomed, even as a youth who didn't want to be an agent. Obedience was an

unsolicited attribute being imposed upon me, but I took my medicine without an outward complaint. However, my training was not complete as I was not yet receptive to it. The only power I felt I had was to rebel against my dad's interpretation of Pentecostal standards by refusing to seek the Holy Ghost and become a Pentecostal. I reasoned that he could make me conform to Pentecostal standards but he could not make me become one. Don't worry; I was not emotionally scarred by all this, as I know my dad and mom did this in love.

When my eldest son entered the seventh grade he was already in Advanced Band, as he had been playing in summer band for three years. He was a very talented trumpet player and, just like me, he was required to march in the Christmas parade. Just as my father had done I informed my son's teacher it was against our religious beliefs to participate in the Christmas parade, but after a conversation with her and my son, I reasoned that I was only imposing my father's beliefs upon my son. I reversed my original decision and advised his band instructor it would be all right for him to participate. You may disagree with my actions and then again you might not. However, I recalled how it impacted me when I went through the same process and did not want to incite rebellion in my son. I made that decision out of love, just as my father had. It took longer for me to accept the truth due to my rebellious spirit. Both approaches were successful as my son and I are both in the church today. In fact, my son is now my pastor.

Despite my overall rebellion against the church's beliefs, there were times when I thought about seeking God. However, I believed that if I received the Holy Ghost I would have to witness to everyone I knew or came in contact with. I literally believed the words of the song "You Never Mentioned Him to Me":

*You never mentioned Him to me
You helped me not the light to see
You met me day by day and you knew I was astray
Yet you never mentioned Jesus to me.*

I did not like this song. To me it suggested I would have to climb atop the Ocala Junior High School building with a megaphone and announce to all my fellow classmates that they needed Jesus. This was a frightening image to me. In addition to my bashfulness and my embarrassment over my religion, I was the epitome of awkward as a tall, skinny, red-haired, freckle-faced adolescent. My imagined response to the aforementioned song was, "If I can barely be heard in the classroom and turn red every time a teacher calls on me, do you really think I'm going to announce to my world that they need God? Not on your life!"

Even at this young age I believed the mission would require soulwinning on a grand scale. As an introvert I believed I could never do this. It was truly a *Mission: Impossible* from my perspective. My flawed reasoning was that by not giving my life to Jesus, I would not have this obligation. This "mega-phone" mental picture haunted me throughout junior high and high school. Just like James Douglas Clayton I did not see myself as mission material.

Despite my reluctance to accept the mission, grooming to become a secret agent was still taking place. One of the first elements of mission training was that my brothers and I had to endure with our new church was to hand out flyers for an upcoming revival at our church in Ocala. I was about twelve. My dad volunteered us for this mission and Pastor Clyde Manley accepted our help, voluntary or not. We went door to door handing out these revival flyers along Anthony Road where the church was located. Barking dogs, angry

residents, fear of being seen by a classmate, and wasted time made this an unpleasant task for me.

My brothers and I were often volunteered for church projects, most of which we did not enjoy. However, one memorable experience during this time was fun: building the new church. We were not skilled workers at twelve, eleven and nine, but we could extract nails from 2 x 4 studs, sweep water from the building after a rain before the windows were put in, smash our thumbs with hammers, and pound new nails into blocks of wood when we were bored.

A few years later prior to camp meeting and youth camp, Daddy volunteered the Wells boys for another mission: paint all the buildings on the Florida campground—for free. I guess my dad assumed since we were not involved in any “espionage” missions during the summer we would be available for this less challenging mission. He would drop us off on his way to work at about 8:00 AM and pick us up at 6:00 PM.

It will never be said the Wells boys were not creative and resourceful in the way they performed assigned tasks. Since we were not being paid we decided that soft drinks (being stored for sale later during camp) would be our pay. We located the locked storage room, which, other than the locked door, had only one potential entry: an open circular hole two feet in diameter in the upper wall where a vent fan once had been positioned. My youngest brother, Kenneth, who was about twelve, and his friend Hank were the only two boys small enough and light enough for us to boost up to this opening. Once inside they would retrieve enough soft drinks for us for the day. We then put the drinks in the refrigerator in the camp kitchen along with our packed lunches from home. Our first task of the day completed, we would run to what was then the new girls’ dorm where beds awaited us. Once settled in our hiding place we would try to catch a few winks before

Superintendent Connell or one of his subordinates came looking for us.

As novice painters we got more paint on our clothes than on the walls of the buildings. Sometimes this was intentional, especially since we worked this job for three weeks and sorely needed to entertain ourselves. I remember my brother Larry slinging paint all over me one morning when he got angry at me. Being the conniver I was, I waited patiently for my opportunity to repay his evil misdeed. Later that afternoon I saw my opportunity as Larry was painting what was then the men's and women's restrooms. I sneaked around to the other side of the building, retrieved a 60 gallon trash can, and filled it with water. Using a nearby ladder I climbed up to the flat roof of the building. Stealthily, I tiptoed to a location just above his head, inverted the trash can, and let go. When it landed it came to rest on his shoulders. I think he almost drowned. I took off and hid because Larry had a ferocious temper. How's that for thinking outside the box?

I know you are wondering how in the world God could use these developmental skills for His future purpose. Consider Jesus' trainees while He walked this earth. All of them hid when He was arrested. They all baptized sinners with water. Matthew was a tax collector and therefore a thief by trade. Peter was known for his terrible temper. Obviously, God could see the similarities between the Wells boys and His disciples even at this early stage of our lives. Seriously, the real attribute God was instilling in us was faithfulness: performing tasks with no apparent reward through obedience to authority.

During the same time frame, my dad began filling in as an interim preacher on Sunday and eventually Wednesday nights at a church in Winter Haven, Florida. This went on for six months. It was 100 miles one way from Ocala to Winter Haven. Traveling this distance and back two times per week in

a station wagon with seven occupants tested the resilience of our family. I could not comprehend my dad's desire to preach the gospel so badly that he would put his family through what I considered to be anguish.

My dad decided not to take this church, but the members prevailed upon him to return to preach one more Sunday. En route to Winter Haven that Sunday morning with my mother driving so my dad could study his Sunday school lesson, buzzards eating carnage on the highway flew into the windshield of our car causing my mother to lose control of the vehicle. My dad reached over to steer our car out of the path of oncoming traffic and we hit the shoulder of the road flipping over four times. Kenneth was thrown out of the car through the back window, breaking his collar bone. The front and middle seats collapsed. Benita sustained a laceration to her head as did my mother. My dad was seriously injured and knocked unconscious. A portion of his scalp was peeled back later, requiring plastic surgery. Of greater concern was the damage done to his crushed left shoulder.

Larry, Sandra, and I did not incur serious injury and were not hospitalized. All the rest recovered except for Dad, whose shoulder was so badly damaged that his doctors told him he would never again use his left arm for work. He was a barber by profession and relied heavily upon the use of his hands and arms. After several months of rehab he tried to go back to work, but he could not raise his left arm high enough to cut hair. (Both hands are essential for this task.)

More important, Dad could not raise his left hand while praising and worshiping God. He later recounted that one Sunday afternoon before church he was praying in his bedroom with both hands extended in front of him on the bed. He asked God to restore strength to his left arm so he could lift both arms when he worshiped God. He attempted to lift

both arms and was instantly healed. From that day forward not only was he able to lift his hands to praise God, but he returned to work just as he had before without pain or restriction.

This was the second miraculous event in my dad's life within five years. As I stated earlier he began attending church when I was eleven. What prompted this visit was a death-bed repentance at the age of thirty-eight and a miraculous healing. I was not aware of the events surrounding this miracle at the time they occurred, but I heard him repeat his testimony many times thereafter during his sermons. He was diagnosed with Thrombophlebitis, which during the 1950s was not responsive to medical treatment. He spent six weeks in the VA Hospital in Lake City, Florida. I still recall some of those long afternoon drives to Lake City following Sunday school at the Baptist Church to visit him.

The essence of my dad's testimony was that he was dying of this disease and knew it. Doctors had removed diseased veins from his thigh and sent them away to Walter Reed Hospital for research. He was in ICU and receiving pain medication every four hours, but it didn't touch the pain. Every day he read his Bible until the words ran together. There came a point when he realized his time was short. He prayed, "God if You will heal me and get me back to my family and job, then I will serve you the rest of my life." He felt nothing. Later that evening he petitioned God again, recalling the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will but thine be done." Prompted by this recollection he cried out in desperation, "God I don't care if You heal me or let me see my family again or allow me to work again; just save my soul." Suddenly he felt something in his stomach begin to move upward through his esophagus and throat, almost choking him before it left his

body through his mouth. He said he then erupted into praise to God.

The next morning Daddy shaved himself for the first time in six weeks. He gained strength every day and shortly thereafter was examined again by doctors. Following the exam the lead doctor told him that whatever happened to him was not anything they had done. He was then released from the hospital completely healed. He lived to the age of eighty.

Eventually, my dad started a home missions church in Fruitland Park, Florida. By this time I was a senior in high school. Although I was still unsaved, one of my jobs on the weekend was to pick up those who did not have transportation and bring them to church in the family nine-passenger station wagon. After I left home to attend the University of Florida and came home on weekends, I was still expected to pick people up for church. I recall one weekend when I brought my girlfriend (now my wife) home with me and had to carry out this task. I swore to her that after I graduated from college and was on my own, I would never pick up people for church again. I believe the Lord must have laughed out loud when He heard me say this and then proclaimed to the angels around Him, "His training is almost complete."

At this point in my life, I still had not chosen to accept the mission. I was oblivious to the fact that I was being exposed by God to His mission for all mankind to become a soulwinning agent.

So how about you? If you haven't accepted the mission, there is no time like the present. The Lord can use your help. Review the following application to become a Secret Agent for Jesus. If you are willing to commit yourself to this mission, fill out the application and sign it. No experience is necessary; ineptitude is a strength. Take it from an expert on the subject.

SECRET AGENT APPLICATION

YOUR MISSION SHOULD YOU ACCEPT IT:
“You will be Jesus’ witness” (Acts 1:8).

Title: Soulwinning Agent

Mission Area: The World

Name _____ **Age** _____

Address _____

COMPETENCIES REQUIRED

The following competencies are required for this position:

Communication	Will seek to possess the power to become a witness. Will not worry about what you are to say and how to say it. Will believe at the designated time you will know what words to say.
Motive	Have a love for lost souls. By the very nature of this clandestine operation, agents can expect limited external recognition for themselves but great rewards in Heaven.

Problem solving	This is more than just a job—it’s a way of life that challenges the deepest resources of prayerful insight, reliance upon the Scriptures and Christian responsibility.
Self-Management	Able to endure extensive training. Capable of working independently while being a team player. Personally committed to briefing, defending, persuading, and instructing the lost about their need for salvation.
Planning and Organizing	Capable of clandestinely spotting, assessing, developing, recruiting, and mentoring potential converts. Need to be creative and able to think outside the box.

COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

This job description has been designed to indicate the general nature and level of work performed by soulwinning agents. It is not a comprehensive inventory of all duties, responsibilities, and qualifications needed for this role.

I _____ hereby pledge this date to begin winning souls for the cause of Christ.

Signature: _____

Date: _____