





By Elder Gary E. Stevenson

Of the Quorum
of the Twelve
Apostles

LET US Share OUR KNOWLEDGE OF A SAVIOR

*Ours is the
message of peace,
and you are
the messengers
who preach it.
You can do this
through new and
exciting channels
of technology.*

We are the Church of Jesus Christ, established in the latter days. In the same way that the Lord instructed His ancient disciples, we have been charged in the latter days to “go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

The ancient prophet Nephi succinctly summarized this mission and message and the object behind it: “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

In the book of Mosiah, we read how ancient Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin gathered his people throughout the land at the site of the temple, caused a tower to be erected, and taught them. As he taught them, he also prophesied to



1830



5,000

1850
1870
1890
copies of the Book of Mormon printed

Music and the Spoken Word:

began in 1929—now approaching 5,000th broadcast.

1950

1974



2010

2030

Today: 175 MILLION copies of the Book of Mormon printed

them of our day: “And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Mosiah 3:20).

“The Knowledge of a Savior”

One of the most precious gifts to treasure within our families and to give to others is “the knowledge of a Savior,” or of Jesus Christ.

With the opening of the dispensation of the fulness of times came an enlightenment upon all mankind and a waterfall of technological advancements. It brought with it the industrial age and communication tools, allowing the prophecy of King Benjamin to be fulfilled.

As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, called as a special witness “of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23) with specific assignments in both the Public Affairs and Communication Services Committee, I am able to focus on the fulfillment of this prophecy—that “the knowledge of a

Savior” is spread throughout the world—using the latest technologies available to us.

“Satellites are only the genesis of what is in store for the future of worldwide broadcasting. . . . I believe that the Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly had a glimpse.”

—President Spencer W. Kimball

“Throughout Every Nation, Kindred, Tongue, and People”

Historically, advancements in print and the invention of radio and TV enabled the message of the Restoration to go throughout the world. We find numerous examples of this, some of which are within our memory.

Within 10 years of the First Vision, and the month before the Church was organized, 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon were published. Since then, over 175 million copies have been printed.

Any Sunday morning, you can listen to or watch the broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word*, which is approaching its 5,000th broadcast. The first broadcast occurred on live radio in 1929. The first broadcast of general conference on TV took place in 1949.

Interestingly, in 1966, President David O. McKay (1873–1970) began speaking of things to come: “Discoveries latent with such potent power, either for the blessing or the destruction of human beings, as to make man’s responsibility in controlling them the most gigantic ever placed in human hands. . . . This age is fraught with limitless perils, as well as untold possibilities.”¹

In 1974, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) described his vision of a day to come: “The Lord has blessed the world with many . . . satellites. They are stationed high in the heavens, relaying broadcast signals back to almost every corner of the earth’s surface. . . . Certainly these satellites are only the genesis of what is in store for the future of worldwide broadcasting. . . . I believe that the Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly had a glimpse.”²

With technological advances in communication and media now coming largely on the

heels of the internet, it seems that we have witnessed in our lifetimes the literal fulfillment of the prophecies of King Benjamin, President McKay, and President Kimball.

There is also a clear pattern of the adoption of these technologies to build the Lord's kingdom on earth. I would like to share examples of this with you.

LDS.org and Mormon.org

In 1996, the Church officially began use of the web as a messaging and communication vehicle. Since then, an estimated 260 Church-sponsored websites have been introduced, including sites available in nearly every country where members of the Church live, in their local language.

I share two familiar examples of these websites. First is LDS.org, established in 1996, which today receives over 24 million new visitors a year and over 1 million average visitors each week. Many members find curriculum for teaching and past general conference talks here. Second is Mormon.org, a website designed to introduce the gospel to our neighbors and friends who are not members of the Church. This site receives over 16 million unique visitors a year.

Mobile Apps

Of course, technologies evolve at a breakneck pace, requiring considerable effort and resources to keep up. With the invention of smartphones came the power to harness and access massive amounts of data in a handheld modality. Much of this data is organized in the form of mobile applications, or "apps." The first Church-sponsored app was released in 2007.

Examples abound of our beneficial use of mobile apps to spread our "knowledge of a Savior." I won't describe the content of the many apps that are available at your fingertips, but here are some examples of apps that are likely familiar to you:



- Gospel Library
- Mormon Channel
- LDS Tools
- LDS Music
- Family Tree

These are being used millions of times a week by millions of users.

Social Media

By definition, social media are computer-mediated technologies that allow individuals and organizations to view, create, and share information, ideas, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.

Beginning in about 2010, the Church began an earnest adoption of the use of social media to accomplish spreading "the knowledge of a Savior." This is a fast-moving and dynamic digital modality. It's almost incomparable in speed of change.

One observable characteristic of social media is that as soon as one feels acquainted or comfortable with one platform, a newer, bigger, or perceivably cooler or better one emerges.

I will briefly describe five social media platforms that the Church is using as communication channels:

1. Facebook has more than 2 billion users worldwide. Here, users build their own social network of online friends.
2. Instagram is a social site that centers on pictures and videos.

With the invention of smartphones came the power to harness and access massive amounts of data in a handheld modality.



In August 2016, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf posted a video on Instagram, teaching gospel principles to his grandson Erik in—can you guess—the cockpit of an airplane!

3. Pinterest is like a virtual bulletin board. Here visual images called “pins” are tacked onto the board. These can be inspirational phrases or aspirational photo images.

4. Twitter is a social network that enables users to send and read short 280-character messages called “tweets.”

5. Snapchat features photos and short videos that disappear either immediately or within 24 hours.

Institutionally, we are using these social media sites in a powerful way.

FACEBOOK

You may recall the tender conference message on depression that Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a few years ago.³ From his talk, a video segment was produced that received over two million views on Facebook alone, with many thousands of likes, shares, and positive comments.⁴

INSTAGRAM

In August 2016, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf posted a video on Instagram, teaching gospel principles to his grandson Erik in—can you guess—the cockpit of an airplane!⁵ Elder Uchtdorf’s Instagram post was enjoyed by thousands, and numerous

positive comments accompanied it.

The Church also published to its Instagram account in November 2017 a video of President Dallin H. Oaks and President M. Russell Ballard answering a young adult woman’s question about sisters serving missions. This post was viewed over 112,000 times.

PINTEREST

On Pinterest, one can find hundreds of pins from LDS.org and even more from individual members, inspiring others.

For example, many share words of the prophets—past and present. A pin of one of the teachings of President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) reads, “So much in life depends on our attitude.”⁶

TWITTER

A tweet that Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared last year on Easter morning was viewed 210,000 times. Elder Bednar demonstrated that a short, simple message, “He is not here: for He is risen” (Matthew 28:6), can have a profound and lasting impact.

SNAPCHAT

Finally, pictures and words sharing one of President Monson’s First Presidency Messages recently appeared on Snapchat.

Associated Risks

Now, having just espoused all the virtues of these new technologies and demonstrated their appropriate use, I think it is also useful to discuss some of the risks associated with them.

We should all be aware of the *time that can be consumed* on social media or in the use of mobile apps. The use of social media also

carries a risk of *reducing face-to-face interaction*, which may be stifling the development of the social skills of many of our young people.

The hazards associated with *inappropriate content* cannot be understated. There is an increasing epidemic of pornography addiction in society, which is negatively affecting and victimizing even Church members and families.

Finally, I offer two additional merging risks, whose nets are cast over virtually everyone, including young women and millennial mothers and wives. I label these two risks as “*idealized reality*” and “*debilitating comparisons*.” I think the best way to describe these two risks is to offer some examples.

Generally speaking, pictures that get posted on social media tend to portray life in the very best and often in even an unrealistic way. They are often filled with beautiful images of home decor, wonderful vacation spots, and elaborate food preparation. The danger, of course, is that many people become discouraged that they seemingly don’t measure up to this idealized virtual reality.

Inspired by a pin of a “pancake” birthday cake, my niece recently posted her attempt at the same. Rather than allowing this to create undue pressure, she decided to inspire others by posting her “Pinterest fail” (see pancake photo).

Hopefully, we can learn to find more humor and less discouragement when confronted with images that may portray idealized reality and that too often could lead to debilitating comparisons.

This apparently is not just a sign of our times but, measuring the words from Paul, was in times past as well: “But they measuring themselves . . . and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Elder J. Devn Cornish of the Seventy recently provided timely counsel as well:

“We torture ourselves needlessly by competing and comparing. We falsely judge our self-worth by the *things* we do or don’t have and by the *opinions of others*. If we must compare, let us compare how we were in the past to how we are today—and even to how we want to be in the future.”⁷

Let me share one of our family secrets, found in this family photo (see next page) taken some years ago, before the advent of social media. Were this taken today, it likely would be posted, presenting a family of four lovely, color-coordinated, well-behaved boys enjoying a harmonious family photo opportunity together. Would you like the real story?

I still remember the phone call from my wife. “Gary, where are you? We’re here at the photographer’s outdoor studio. We’re all ready to shoot. It hasn’t been easy getting the boys all dressed, coordinated, and ready. Are you nearly here?”

Well, I had forgotten and hadn’t left the office yet! I was half an hour late, and things

Many people become discouraged that they seemingly don’t measure up to idealized virtual reality.



Idealized reality



Debilitating comparisons



As for our third son, we had to wait for 20 minutes so his eyes were no longer red from crying. And, of course, the bloodstains are now on the back of our youngest son's shirt.

Now, our second son has his hands placed strategically over the top of his white athletic socks so that everything matches.

As for me, I am now in the "doghouse" because it was *my* late arrival that was the trigger for all of this.

So, when you see this beautiful picture of our family and lament, "Why can't we get things together and be a picture-perfect family like theirs?" you all know better!

Social Media and Missionary Work

As you can see, we need to be mindful of the hazards and risks, including idealized reality and debilitating comparisons. The world usually is just not as bright as it appears on social media. Nevertheless, there is much good that has and will come through these communication platforms.

The Missionary Department provided some new instruction in 2017 on practical ways social media can be used in missionary work. The many digital resources available to us can be used in powerful, easy, simple, and extremely effective ways.

There are so many applications for the use of technology in appropriate and inspired ways. We should do all we can to teach the righteous use of technology to the rising generation and to warn of and prevent the unrighteous use and associated hazards as well. This should help assure us that

had not gone so well in my absence, bordering on chaos.

What had happened? Well, my oldest son had been running through the yard and had found an apple tree, picked some apples, and begun throwing them at the other boys. He hit our third son in the back with an apple and made him fall down, and so he started to cry.

Meanwhile, as that was happening, my second son sat down and his pants went up a little bit. The other kids saw that his socks were white athletic socks, not the church socks his mother had laid out for him to wear. She asked him, "Why didn't you wear your church socks?"

He said, "Well, I don't like them. They're scratchy."

And while she's talking to him, our two-year-old son was running through the yard, tripped on something, fell down, and bloodied his nose. Now there is blood dripping onto his white turtleneck shirt, and it's stained. This is when I showed up. The only way to salvage the picture was to reverse the turtleneck and put it on backward, hiding the blood stains from the camera.

As it turns out, while our oldest son was running around and throwing apples, he fell down and got a large grass stain on his knee. So, in the picture, his arm is strategically placed, covering up the grass stains.

the benefits of technology will outweigh the associated risks.

“How Lovely Are the Messengers”

During the time I was pondering and praying deeply about this message, I woke up early one morning with a song and its simple lyrics on my mind: “How lovely are the messengers that preach us the gospel of peace.”⁸

Ours is the message of peace, and *you* are the lovely messengers who preach it. You can do this through these new and exciting channels of technology. We live in a unique world in the fulness of times with the ability to preach the gospel of peace literally at our fingertips.

We have the prophetic words of ancient prophets, which perfectly characterize our time and give direction for our day: “And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Mosiah 3:20).

We also have words that come to us through modern-day revelation, speaking to and giving guidance for our time and circumstances. I quote Elder Bednar: “I believe the time has come for us as disciples of Christ to use these inspired tools appropriately and more effectively to testify of God the Eternal Father, His plan of happiness for His children, and His Son, Jesus Christ, as the

Savior of the world; to proclaim the reality of the Restoration of the gospel in the latter days; and to accomplish the Lord’s work.”⁹

I invite each of you to fully consider your role to preach the gospel of peace as lovely messengers. Let each of us do our part to share our “knowledge of a Savior” with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The best way to do this is one step at a time and in a unique way that works best for you and your family. May each of you have the courage to blog, pin, like, share, post, friend, tweet, snap, and swipe up in a way that will glorify, honor, and respect the will of our loving Heavenly Father and bring a knowledge of the Savior to your family, loved ones, and friends—including your friends on social media. ■

From a Brigham Young University Women’s Conference address, “The Knowledge of a Savior,” delivered on May 5, 2017. For the full text, go to lds.org/prophets-and-apostles.

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 4.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 11, 10.
3. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Like a Broken Vessel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40–42.
4. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “Mormon Message: Like a Broken Vessel,” June 20, 2016, mormonnewsroom.org.
5. See “President Uchtdorf Relates Flying to Gospel in Post and Video with Grandson,” Sept. 30, 2016, LDS.org.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Living the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2012, 4.
7. J. Devn Cornish, “Am I Good Enough? Will I Make It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 33.
8. “How Lovely Are the Messengers,” hymnary.org.
9. David A. Bednar, “Flood the Earth through Social Media,” *New Era*, Aug. 2015, 32; see also David A. Bednar, “Sweep the Earth as with a Flood” (video), LDS.org.

Let each of us do our part to share our “knowledge of a Savior” with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

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