

Sweep the earth with messages filled with righteousness and truth.





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FLOOD THE EARTH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

We live in a truly distinctive dispensation. A gospel dispensation is a period of time in which the necessary priesthood authority, ordinances, and doctrinal knowledge are found on the earth to implement the Father's plan of salvation for His children. Essential to the establishment of a dispensation is an authorized servant of God, a dispensation head, who holds and exercises the authority and keys of the holy priesthood. Gospel dispensations were established through Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith, and others. In every dispensation gospel truths are revealed anew—or dispensed—so the people of that period are not entirely dependent upon past dispensations for knowledge of Heavenly Father's plan.

Apostasy from the truth occurred in each previous dispensation. However, the work of salvation that was commenced but not completed in those earlier eras continues into the final dispensation. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that for this reason, the rolling forward of the latter-day glory, even the dispensation of the fulness of times, “is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day.”¹

In this greatest and last of all gospel dispensations, “a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding

together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and the prudent, shall be revealed . . . in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 128:18).

The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times and Technology

We are blessed to live, learn, and serve in this most remarkable dispensation. An important aspect of the fulness that is available to us in this special season is a miraculous progression of innovations and inventions that have enabled and accelerated the work of salvation: from trains to telegraphs to radios to automobiles to airplanes to telephones to transistors to televisions to computers to satellite transmissions to the Internet—and to an almost endless list of technologies and tools that bless our lives. All of these advancements are part of the Lord hastening His work in the latter days.

In 1862 President Brigham Young (1801–77) said: “Every discovery in science and art, that is really true and useful to mankind has been given by direct revelation from God, though but few acknowledge it. It has been given with a view to prepare the way for the ultimate triumph of truth, and the redemption of the earth from the power of sin and Satan.”²

Please now consider the words of President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), spoken in 1974, as he described the future of missionary work:

“I believe that the Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly had a glimpse. . . .

“With the Lord providing these miracles of communication, and with the increased efforts and devotion of our missionaries and all of us, and all others who are ‘sent,’ surely the divine injunction will come to pass: ‘For, verily, the sound must go forth from this place into all the world, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth—the gospel must be preached unto every creature’ (D&C 58:64).”³

And in 1981 President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught: “We are confident that as the work of the Lord expands, he will inspire men to develop the means whereby the membership of the Church, wherever they may be, can be counseled in an intimate and personal way by his chosen prophet.”⁴

Messages and pictures that used to require days, weeks, and months to send and receive now can be communicated around the world in seconds. We thank Thee, O God, for the prophets who have taught and prepared us for the time in which we live—and who have urged us to use technological advancements to support the ongoing mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁵

The Lord is hastening His work, and it is no coincidence that these powerful communication innovations and inventions are occurring in the dispensation of the fulness of times. Social media channels are global tools that can personally and positively impact large numbers of individuals and families. And 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.

Several basic guidelines should be followed as we use social media to convey gospel messages:

1. Be Authentic and Consistent

First, we are disciples and our messages should be authentic. A person or product that is not authentic is false, fake, and fraudulent. Our messages should be truthful, honest, and accurate. We should not exaggerate, embellish, or pretend to be someone or something we are not. Our content should be trustworthy and constructive. And anonymity on the Internet is not a license to be inauthentic.

Authenticity is strengthened through consistency. The gospel messages you share will be accepted more readily if your Christlike example is evident in the ongoing pattern of your posts.

Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson is a strong example of the power of consistency in social media. When called to serve as the Young Women general president in April of 2013, her Pinterest followers doubled overnight. Sister Oscarson’s previous pins provided ample evidence of her integrity, prompting one blogger to ask, “Would your Pinterest page pass the Bonnie Oscarson test? . . . Who will people decide you are if all they know is what is on your social media page?”⁶

2. Edify and Uplift

Second, we and our messages should seek to edify and uplift rather than to argue, debate, condemn, or belittle.

Share the gospel with genuine love and concern for others. Be courageous and bold but not overbearing in sustaining and defending our beliefs, and avoid contention. As disciples our purpose should be to use social media channels as a means of projecting the light and truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ into a world that increasingly is dark and confused.

3. Respect Intellectual Property

Third, we and our messages should respect the property of other people and organizations. This simply means that



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SIX EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS

Here are several examples of gospel messages and images that have been created by the Church and by its members and communicated to the world through social media.



1. *Because of Him.* A brief Church-produced video honoring the true meaning of Easter. It was viewed more than five million times during Easter week last year in 191 countries and territories. Using the accompanying #BecauseofHim hashtag (something used to identify related social media messages), members and others communicated many of their own thoughts and images about the Savior and His Resurrection in many social channels and places, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. See it at lds.org/media-library/video/topics/easter.



2. *Did You Think to Pray?* Church members and others published more than 300 photos of themselves on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and other social channels with signs that completed the phrase “I pray when . . .” In addition, thousands of people used the #DidYouThinktoPray hashtag to share thoughts about when and why they communicate with their Heavenly Father. These simple actions led to more than 40,000 conversations about the need for prayer. See mormonchannel.org/watch/collection/mormon-channel-videos/i-pray-when-didyouthinktopray.



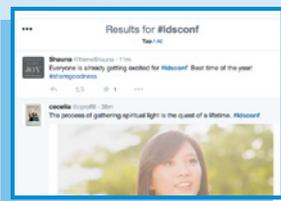
3. *Book of Mormon 365.* An Instagram account created by a couple from Arizona, USA, who post a reading assignment from the Book of Mormon every day. The assignments are divided into 365 pieces—the perfect size to allow followers to read the full Book of Mormon in one year. More than 55,000 people followed this account in 2014, with many of them actively sharing their thoughts and impressions as they read the Book of Mormon together.



4. **General Authority Social Media Accounts.**

Last summer the Church established an official Instagram account. The members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles now specifically choose photos of themselves to be posted.

Some of the Brethren now have their own Twitter accounts. All of the Brethren also have their own Facebook pages on which they communicate important gospel messages. Find their pages at lds.org/media-library/social.



5. **#LDSconf.**

The #LDSconf hashtag, now displayed on the lower left corner of the screen during general conference broadcasts, was created in October 2008 by a faithful member looking for an opportunity

to follow and share conference-related tweets—long before the Church started using it. Thousands of members participate in the #LDSconf hashtag conversation about counsel from living prophets and apostles, and through it millions of people around the world are edified by general conference messages.



6. **Meet the Mormons.**

A Church-produced feature-length film to help those not of our faith better understand us as a people. This film addresses common misperceptions about our beliefs

and highlights the blessings that come from living the gospel of Jesus Christ. The film can be viewed on DVD, in visitors' centers, on Internet movie channels, and on social media channels. For more information, visit meetthemormons.com. This movie is one additional way members can share their beliefs with family and friends in a simple and effective way.



I exhort you to
**SWEEP THE EARTH WITH
MESSAGES** filled with
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUTH
—messages that are
**AUTHENTIC, EDIFYING,
AND PRAISEWORTHY.**

you should not create your own content using someone else's art, name, photos, music, video, or other content without permission. The content in the Media Library on LDS.org, unless otherwise indicated, has been cleared for use by members without seeking permission from the Church. Additional information about the use of Church media can be found at social.lds.org.

When you share messages online, make sure others understand that you are expressing your personal thoughts and feelings. Please do not use the Church logo or otherwise suggest that you are speaking for or on behalf of the Church.

4. Be Wise and Vigilant

Fourth, be wise and vigilant in protecting yourself and those you love. We should remember that the Internet never forgets. Anything you communicate through a social media channel indeed will live forever—even if the app or program may promise otherwise. Only say it or post it if you want the entire world to have access to your message or picture for all time.

Following these simple guidelines will enable members of the Church around the world to create and share gospel messages that will cause the light to “shine forth out of darkness” (Mormon 8:16).

An Apostolic Invitation

What has been accomplished thus far in this dispensation communicating gospel messages through social media channels is a good beginning—but only a small trickle. I now extend to you the invitation to help transform the trickle into a flood. Beginning this day, I exhort you to sweep the earth with messages filled with righteousness and truth—messages that are authentic, edifying, and praiseworthy—and literally to sweep the earth as with a flood (see Moses 7:59–62).

I pray we will not simply participate in a flash flood that rises swiftly and then recedes just as rapidly. I am not suggesting a one-time glitzy initiative from which

we quickly move on to the next task on our lengthy list of gospel things to do. We need not become social media experts or fanatics. And we do not need to spend inordinate amounts of time creating and disseminating elaborate messages.

Imagine the impact we can have as hundreds of thousands and millions of members of the Lord's restored Church contribute in seemingly small ways to the rising floodwaters. May our many small, individual efforts produce a steady rainfall of righteousness and truth that gradually swells a multitude of streams and rivers—and ultimately becomes a flood that sweeps the earth. “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

We have been and are blessed in so many ways; and where much is given, much is required. I pray that you may come to understand more fully the spiritual significance and blessing of living in the dispensation of the fulness of times, that you may have eyes to see clearly both the possibilities and the pitfalls of the remarkable technologies that are available to us today, that you may increase in your capacity to use these inspired tools appropriately, and that you may receive inspiration and guidance about the role you should play in helping to sweep the earth as with a flood of truth and righteousness. As you press forward in this holy work, I promise you will be blessed in mortality in the individual, specific, and necessary ways that will prepare you for eternity. **NE**

From an address given on August 19, 2014, during Campus Education Week at Brigham Young University.

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 186.
2. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 18–19.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, “When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 10–11.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Faith: The Essence of True Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 5.
5. See “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19.
6. “Would Your Pinterest Page Pass the Bonnie Oscarson Test?” latterdaysaintwoman.com.