

“A Knowledge of a Savior” Elder Gary E. Stevenson

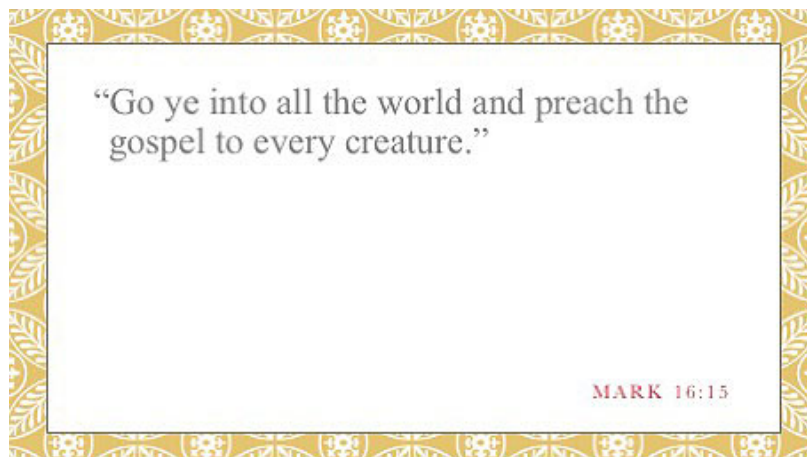
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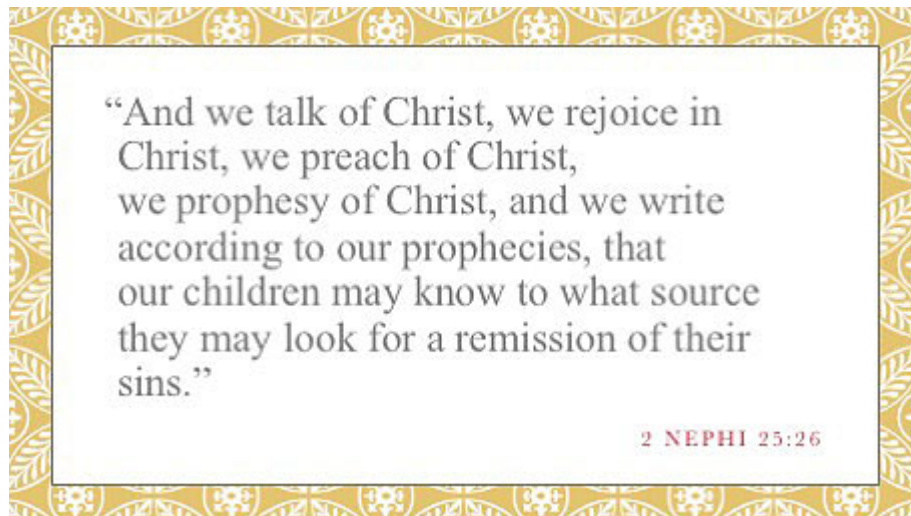
I consider it a great blessing and significant responsibility to have received the assignment to speak at this year’s BYU Women’s Conference, one which came from the First Presidency nearly nine months ago. I admit that this assignment seems to have created more consternation for me than even a general conference speaking assignment. Part of this stems from a memory of reports from a young adult age of inspiring women’s conference messages from my mother, sisters, aunts, and cousins or, in my early married life, from Lesa. And so this afternoon, unbeknownst to them, the bar has been set very high for me, by these very important women in my life. With this in mind, I will try to set aside my incessant worrying and not disappoint them in front of all of you.

Look around at this beautiful facility; there are screens, monitors, projection, and full video/audio streaming capabilities with a team to support it. Today I plan to use all of this technology to describe the role of technology in our gospel lives. I thought the best way to do this is to be right here comfortably close to you.

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](#)).

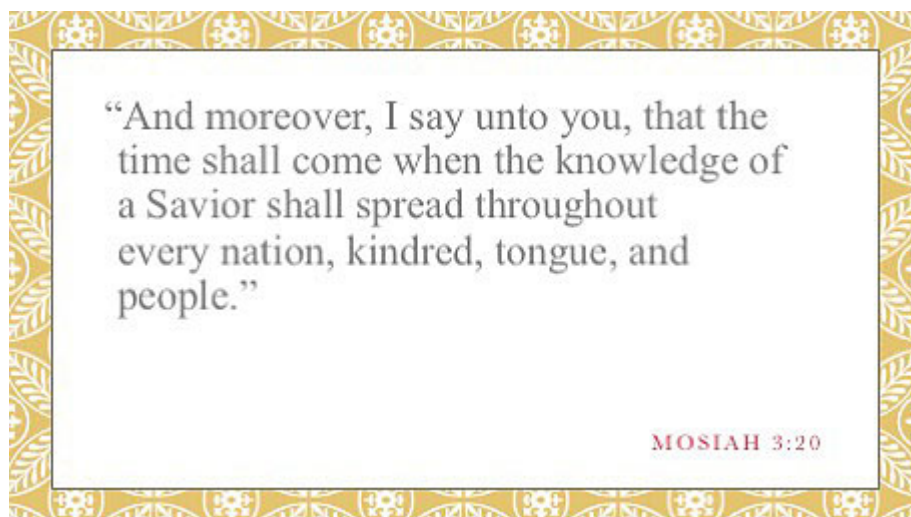


The ancient prophet Nephi succinctly and clearly summarized this mission and message and the object behind it: “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for 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 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.

The opening of the dispensation of the fulness of times in 1820 brought 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, called as a special witness of the name of Christ in all the world—with specific assignments in both the Public Affairs and Communication Services Committee, I am able to focus towards the fulfillment of this prophecy—that “the Knowledge of a Savior” is spread throughout the world—using the latest technologies available to us.

“Throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people”

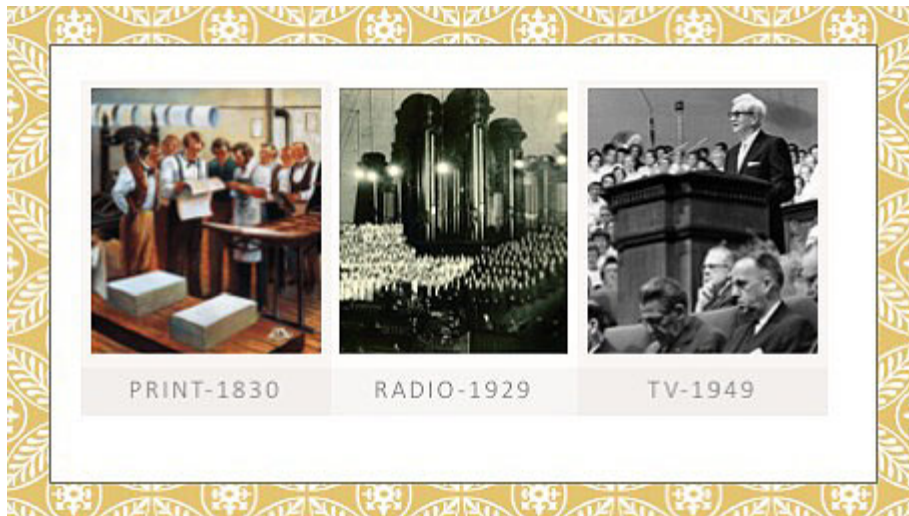
Historically, advancements in print and the invention of radio and TV enabled the message of the Restoration to go throughout the world.



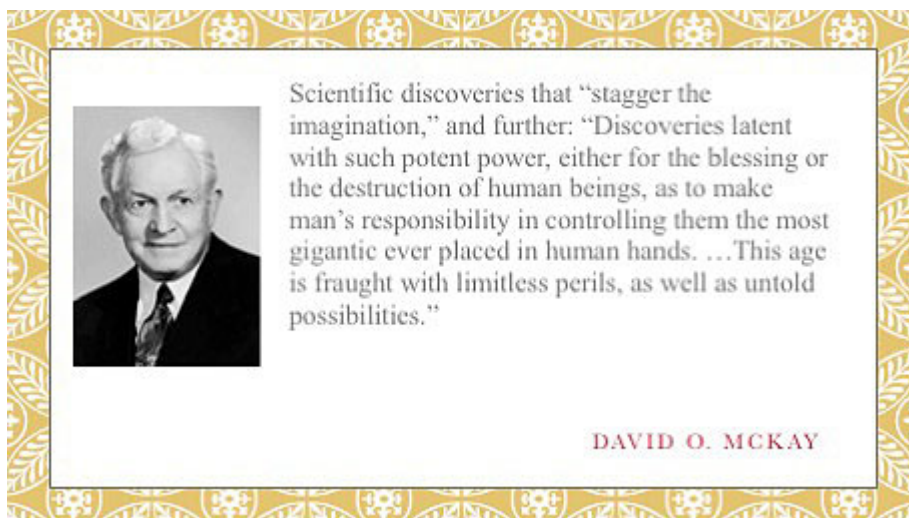
We find numerous examples of this, some of which are within our memory.

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

This Sunday morning, you can listen to the 4,572nd broadcast of [*Music and the Spoken Word*](#), the first of which was broadcast on live radio in 1929. The first broadcast of general conference on TV took place in 1949.



Interestingly, even in 1966, President David O. McKay began speaking of things to come, things which would spread the knowledge of a Savior throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Listen to these prophetic words about scientific discoveries that “stagger the imagination” and further: “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” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 4).



Some of you who are listening remember President Spencer W. Kimball, who in 1974 described *his* vision of a day to come: “I believe that the Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly had a glimpse” (“[When the World Will Be Converted](#),” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 10).

With technological advances in communication and media coming largely on the heels of the internet, it seems to me that we have witnessed in our lifetimes the literal fulfillment of the prophecies of King Benjamin, President McKay, and President Kimball.

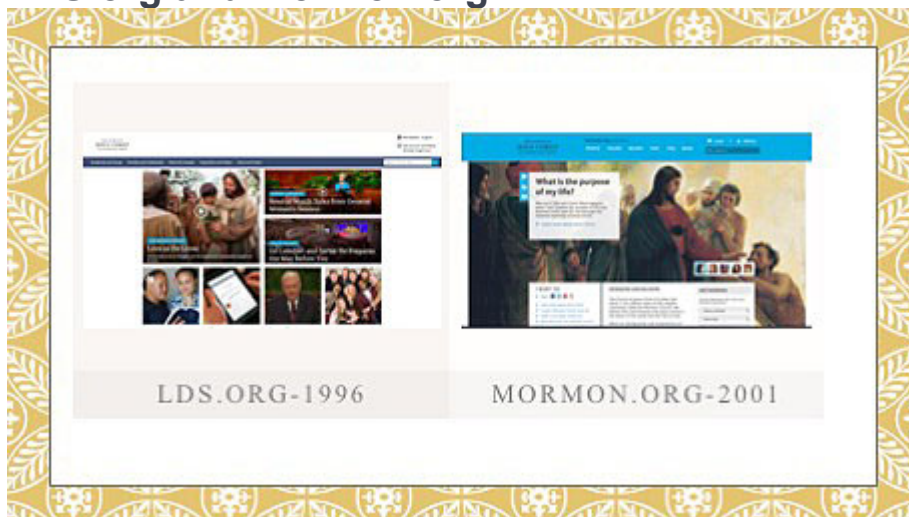
There is also a clear pattern of the adoption of these technologies to build the Lord’s kingdom on earth. I would like to share examples of this with you.



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.

LDS.org and Mormon.org



I share two familiar examples of these websites:

First, 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, 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 smart phones 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 published in 2007.

Examples of our beneficial use of mobile apps to spread our knowledge of a Savior to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people abound.

We don't really have the time today to describe the content of many of the apps that are available at your fingertips.

Here are some examples with respective number of users which are likely familiar to you:



- [Gospel Library](#)
- [Mormon Channel](#)
- [LDS Tools](#)
- [LDS Music](#)
- [Family Tree](#)

Social media



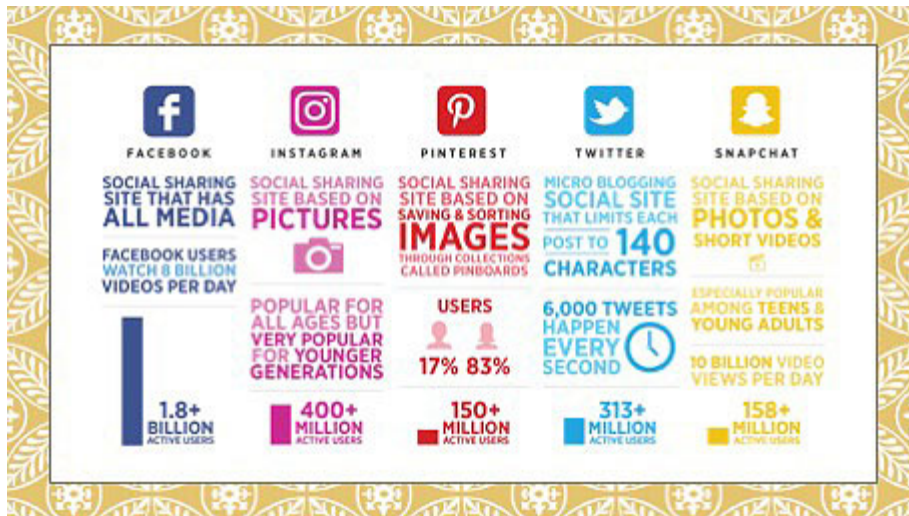
By definition, social media are computer-mediated technologies that allow individuals or organizations to view, create, and share information, ideas, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.

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 very fast moving and dynamic digital modality 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.

It also seems that when our millennial children or grandchildren get even a hint that baby boomers are adopting their social media technology, they quickly move to the next newest and latest platform.

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



1. **Facebook** has more than 1.8 billion users worldwide. Here users build their own social network of online friends.
2. **Instagram** is a social site that is all around pictures and videos.
3. **Pinterest** is like a virtual bulletin board. Here visual images called “pins” are tacked on the board. These can be inspirational phrases or often aspirational photo images.
4. **Twitter** is a social network that enables users to send and read short, 140-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 which Elder Holland gave a few years ago. From his talk, a video segment was produced which received over 2 million views on Facebook alone, with many thousands of likes, shares, and positive comments.

Instagram



Last August, President Uchtdorf posted a video on Instagram, teaching gospel principles to his grandson Erik in, can you guess, the cockpit of an airplane! Let's [watch](#) together, as have over 70,000 others. President Uchtdorf's Instagram post enjoyed numerous positive comments.

More recently, the Church published to its Instagram account a [video](#) of Sister Jean B. Bingham, General Relief Society President, addressing the United Nations last month. This particular post was viewed by over 102,000 in the first three days!

Pinterest



On Pinterest, one can find hundreds of pins from [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org) and even more from individual members, inspiring others.

For example, many share words of the prophets—past and present. Here is a pin of one of President Monson’s teachings.



Twitter



This tweet that Elder David A. Bednar shared on Easter morning was viewed 210,000 times.

Elder Bednar demonstrated that a short, simple message, “He is not here, for He is risen,” can have a profound and lasting impact.

Snapchat



Finally, here are pictures and words sharing one of President Monson's recent First Presidency Messages on Snapchat.

Risks associated

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 very aware of the time that can be consumed on social media or in the use of mobile apps.

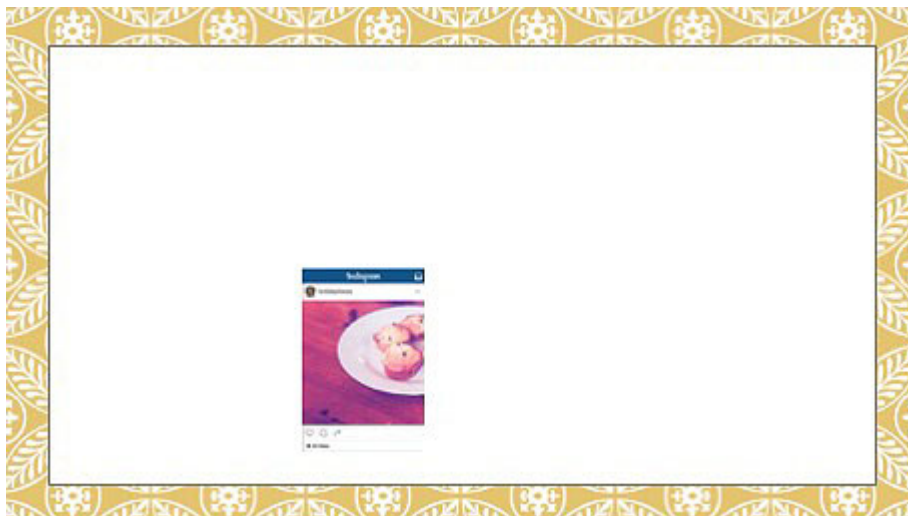
The use of social media also carries a risk of reducing face-to-face interaction, which may be stifling the development of the social skills of many young people.

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.

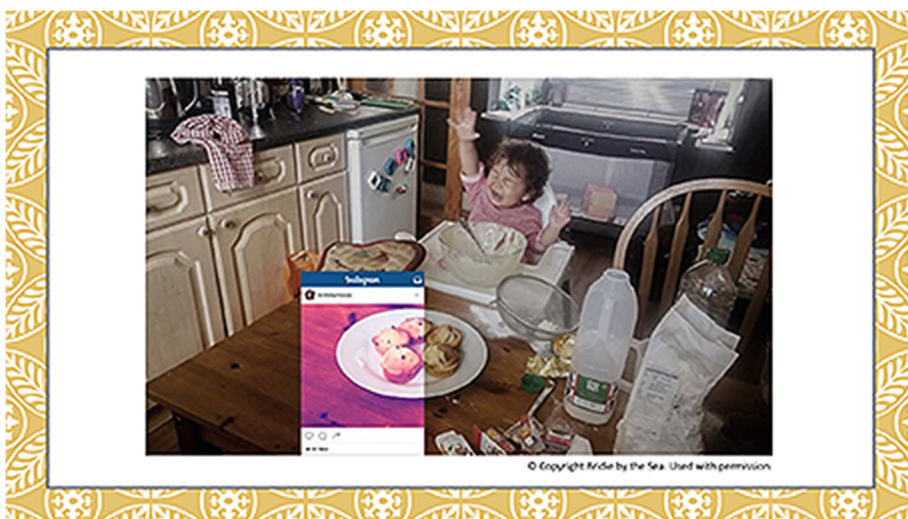
Finally, I offer two additional merging risks, which net is cast over virtually everyone, including young women and millennial mothers and wives. I label these two risks as “idealized reality” and “debilitating comparisons.” I think the best way to describe these two risks is to offer some examples.

Generally speaking, pictures that get posted on social media tend to portray life in the very best and often in 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 become discouraged that they seemingly don't measure up to this “idealized virtual reality.”

Here is an Instagram post by a mom who just pulled hot homemade blueberry muffins fresh out of the oven.



Now, here is the unseen reality, which may more often be the more accurate picture of real life.



Inspired by this pin of a “pancake” birthday cake,

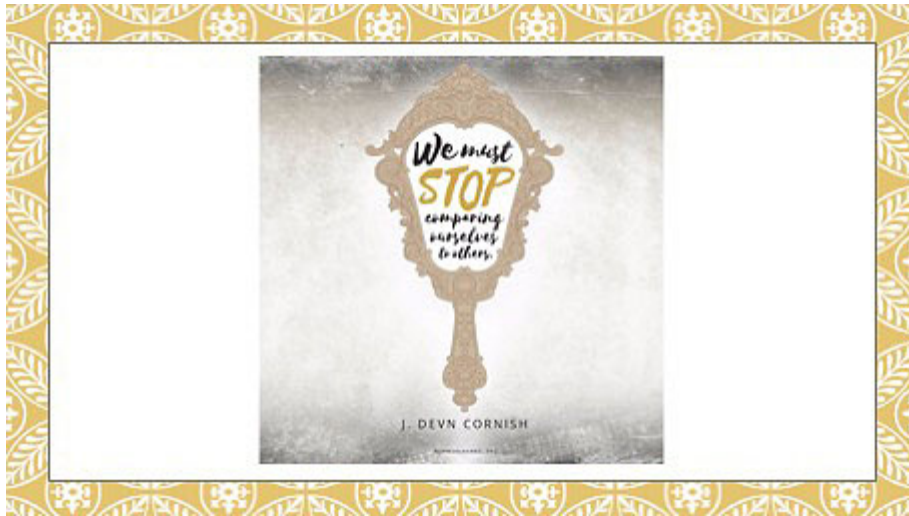


my niece recently posted her attempt at the same.



How about that? Shall we let her know that we think she “nailed it”? Rather than allowing this to create undue pressure, Jennifer decided to inspire others by posting her “Pinterest fail.”

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



Let me share one of our family secrets, found in this family photo 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, well-behaved boys, color coordinated, enjoying a harmonious family photo opportunity together. Would you like the real story?

I still remember the phone call from Lesa. "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 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 found an apple tree, picked some apples, and had begun throwing them at the other boys. He hit our third son in his back with an apple and made him fall down, and so that son started to cry.

Meanwhile, as that was happening, my second-oldest son sat down and his pants went up a little bit and the other kids saw that his socks were white athletic socks, not the church socks that Lesa 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, Kyle, is running through the yard, trips on something, falls down, and bloodies his nose. Now there is blood dripping down onto his white turtleneck shirt and it’s completely stained. This is when I showed up. The only way to salvage the picture was to reverse the turtleneck, put it on backwards, hiding the blood stains from the camera.

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

The third son, well, we waited for 20 minutes so his eyes were no longer red from crying.

And, of course, Kyle’s bloodstains are now on the back of his shirt.

Bryan, well, he now has his hands placed strategically over the top of his white athletic socks so that everything matches.

As for me, well, Gary is 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 anyway and lament, “Why can’t I get things together and be a picture-perfect family like theirs?” You all know better!

Social media and missionary work

Well, as you can see, we need 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 new communication platforms.

Recently, new instruction was given from the Missionary Department on practical ways social media can be used in missionary work. This is an unrehearsed demonstration of actual missionaries and members using social media to spread the gospel. Let’s watch.

See video (video of conference talk) [here](#).

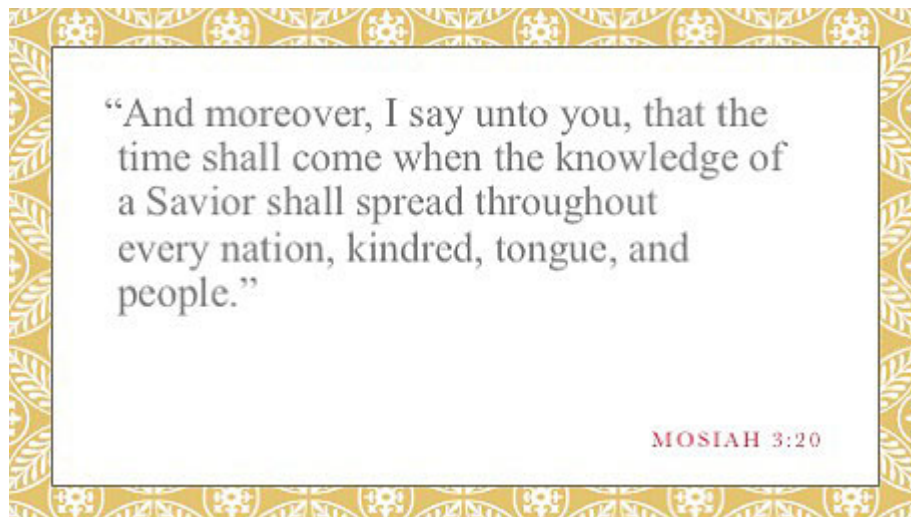
Isn't that absolutely inspiring? And doesn't it demonstrate how powerful and easy it is to use the many digital resources available to us in an easy, simple, and extremely effective way?

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 warn and prevent the unrighteous use and associated hazards as well. This should help assure that the benefits of technology will outweigh the associated risks.

“How lovely are the messengers”

During a time when I was pondering and praying deeply about this speaking assignment, I woke up very early one morning with a song and its simple lyrics on my mind: “[How lovely are the messengers who preach us the gospel of peace.](#)” Ours is the message of peace, and *you* are the lovely messengers that 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 which 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."

ELDER DAVID A. 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" (Elder David A. Bednar, "[To Sweep the Earth as with a Flood](#)"). Let each of us do our part to share our "knowledge of a Savior" to 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 or 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.