



Salem Utah Woodland Hills Stake

Social Media

Prophetic Council



Faith-based Council



Scientific Findings

“Sometimes in our homes, we successfully teach the dance steps but are not as successful in helping our family members to hear the music. And . . . , it is hard to dance without music. Dancing without music is awkward and unfulfilling—even embarrassing. Have you ever tried it?”

“There are those who ridicule members of the Church for the things we do. That is understandable. Those who dance often appear strange or awkward or, to use a scriptural term, “peculiar” ([1 Peter 2:9](#)) to those who cannot hear the music. Have you ever stopped your car at a stoplight next to a car where the driver was dancing and singing at the top of his lungs—but you couldn’t hear a sound because your windows were rolled up? Didn’t he look a little peculiar? If our children learn the dance steps without learning to hear and to feel the beautiful music of the gospel, they will over time become uncomfortable with the dance and will either quit dancing or, almost as bad, keep dancing only because of the pressure they feel from others who are dancing around them.”

“The challenge for all of us who seek to teach the gospel is to expand the curriculum beyond just the dance steps. Our children’s happiness depends on their ability to hear and love the beautiful music of the gospel. How do we do it?”

“First, we must keep our own lives attuned to the correct spiritual frequency.”

“Second, when we can hear the music ourselves, we must try our best to perform it in our homes.”

The Music of the Gospel, Elder Wilford W. Andersen

Prophetic Council (Warnings)

1. **“Important opportunities are missed for developing and improving interpersonal skills, for laughing and crying together, and for creating a rich and enduring bond of emotional intimacy.”** Elder Bednar August 2014 BYU Education Week.
2. **“The use of social media, mobile apps, and games can be inordinately time-consuming and can reduce face-to-face interaction.** This loss of personal conversation can affect marriages, take the place of valuable spiritual practices, and stifle the development of social skills, especially among youth. President Russel M. Nelson.
3. Two additional risks related to social media are **idealized reality** and **debilitating comparisons**. . . Many (if not most) of the pictures posted on social media tend to portray life at its very best—often unrealistically. We have all seen beautiful images of home decor, wonderful vacation spots, smiling selfies, elaborate food preparation, and seemingly unattainable body images.” President Russel M. Nelson.
4. “[The] downside of social media is that **it creates a false reality,**” President Nelson said. “Everyone posts their most fun, adventurous, and exciting pictures, which create the erroneous impression that everyone except you is leading a fun, adventurous, and exciting life. Much of what appears in your various social media feeds is distorted, if not fake.” President Russel M. Nelson.
5. **“Any use of the Internet to bully, destroy a reputation, or place a person in a bad light is reprehensible.** What we are seeing in society is that when people wear the mask of anonymity, they are more likely to engage in this kind of conduct, which is so destructive of civil discourse. It also violates the basic principles the Savior taught.” Quentin L. Cook, *What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part: Avoid Wearing Masks That Hide Identity*

Prophetic Council - Blessings

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.

Elder David A. Bednar, *Flood the Earth through Social Media*

“I invite all of us to follow the example of Jesus Christ and be compassionately aware of those around us. Look and pray for opportunities to let your light shine that others may see the way to Jesus Christ. His promise is great: ‘He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ [John 8:12]. I testify that our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the way, the truth, the life, light, and love of the world.”

Bonnie H. Cordon, “That They May See,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2020

Prophetic Council (Guidance)

Four “Dos” of Social Media.

1. Be Authentic and Consistent: **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.

2. Edify and Uplift: **“Who will people decide you are if all they know is what is on your social media page? . . . 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.” BE THE GOOD**

3. Respect Intellectual Property: “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: “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.”

“Choose Wisely” October 2014 General Conference <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2014/10/choose-wisely?lang=eng>

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“All things have been given to us, and the act of choosing from among those things—or exercising our agency—alters the nature of our eternal souls. Each time we choose light, truth, and righteousness we become more like our Heavenly Father and we develop some of His most important characteristics: we expand our knowledge, we increase our capacities, we grow in our compassion and love for others, and we build our testimonies. All of these rewards come because our most important act of agency is to choose to see things from a perspective of eternity—to choose to see things through the vision of our Heavenly Father.”

Citing Elder Jeffery R. Holland, Amy Peterson Jensen, *Some Hopeful Words on Media and Agency* delivered at a devotional at Brigham Young University on March 20, 2012.

Science - Social Media and Youth

The prefrontal cortex of the brain does not fully develop until almost 30. As social media impacts this area of the brain, youth have a difficult time interpreting what they are seeing day in and day out. In 2008, a major shift occurred that affects all of us as analytics were introduced to social media, allowing social media providers the opportunity to send targeted marketing messages based on a person's search history. This has introduced a new element to social media as it reinforces patterns and behaviors, good or bad, unique to each individual, particularly the young. It is not surprising, then, that, in adolescents aged 12-17, studies show that the rate reported symptoms of major depression in a given year increased by 52% from 2005 to 2017, or that a 2017 study of 8th to 12th graders found that high levels of depressive symptoms increased by 33% between 2010 and 2015, while the suicide rate for girls in this age group increased by 65%. These effects are also felt by young adults, aged 18-30. Studies show that, among this group, mental health concerns such as anxiety have increased from 2009 to 2017 by 63% and reported psychological distress has increased by 71% from 2008 to 2017. Even more concerning, suicide rates and rates of reported suicidal ideations increased.

Bolton, S., & Hattie, J. (2017). Cognitive and Brain Development: Executive Function
<https://archivesofpsychology.org/index.php/aop/article/view/30>

Science - Social Media and Adults

Elder Neal A. Maxwell once quoted William Waltz Desert, who said: “I can endure my own despair but not another’s hope.”

The number of adults using social media has increased from around 250 million in 2009 to about 2.5 billion users worldwide in 2021. In that time span several Church leaders have spoken on the dangers of comparison brought on by social media. The Apostle Paul said “...but they measuring themselves..., and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

In a recent study, participants were asked whether they compared themselves to images that they see in the media. An incredible 87.73% of women and 63.37% of men answered in the affirmative. Further search has shown that the effects of these comparisons are: (i) increased depression, (ii) poor body image, (iii) feelings other people are better, look better or have better lives, (iii) low self-worth, (iv) sadness and jealousy, (v) social isolation, (vi) poor sleeping patterns, (vii) low energy levels and, in some extreme cases, (viii) eating disorders.

[Elder Gary E. Stevenson on Social Media - BYU Women's Conference 2017](#)

Social Media and the Spirit

“In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.” -- Russell M. Nelson

The dopamine loop effect has led to many social problems over the past decade, such as depression, anxiety, mood disorder, sleep disturbance, and suicide. As importantly, it has led to spiritual confusion as the effects of dopamine can mask or even imitate spiritual whisperings. In effect, the still, small voice of the spirit is often drowned out by the much louder cry of a dopamine-dependent brain.

“Using your agency to allow unrighteous anger into your heart is one of the quickest ways to lose the guiding influence of the Holy Ghost.”

Coping with the Age of Outrage on Social Media, Eleanor Cain Adams October 2020 Liahona

Social Media and Interpersonal Relationships

“[Through overuse of social media], important opportunities are missed for developing and improving interpersonal skills, for laughing and crying together, and for creating a rich and enduring bond of emotional intimacy.” It is worth remembering that humans’ neural architecture evolved under conditions of close, mostly continuous face-to-face contact with others. This includes non-visual, non-auditory contact such as touch and smell which cannot be accomplished through social media.

[Things as They Really Are,](#) *Ensign*, June 2010.

Social Media Family Plan

According to the Church's website: "parents have the opportunity and responsibility to counsel with their children to determine not only which social channels are appropriate to use in their own homes but also how to use the tools righteously and what safeguards the family will follow" giving these specific three points of guidance: "[i] Teaching children to "righteously exercise moral agency and become agents who act in accordance with the doctrine of Christ rather than objects that are merely acted upon"; [ii] Helping them "learn that the only filter that successfully can overcome and avoid evil resides in the heart and mind of a faithful disciple of Christ. Only the companionship of the Holy Ghost can fortify sufficiently against 'the fiery darts of the wicked' ([Ephesians 6:16](#))" and [iii] Helping them "discover by inspiration the many ways these tools can be used to move forward the work of salvation."

Elder Wirthlin said that when you don't know any direction other than "up", find the next best option and do it.

"Those who stand at the threshold of life always waiting for the right time to change are like the man who stands at the bank of a river waiting for the water to pass so he can cross on dry land. Today is the day of decision."