

SALEM UTAH WOODLAND HILLS STAKE

Technology and discipleship: using innovation as followers of Christ

Sisters and Brothers,

We live in a world of amazing inventions and advancement. Technology can bless our lives and help us build God's kingdom—but only if we use it wisely. As your stake presidency, we testify that the Lord is inspiring our stake and thoughtful people around the world to change the way they use technology. Please consider these teachings, warnings, and inspired directions.

Our Purpose is to know God and Jesus Christ

The central purpose of life is to build a relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

- “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

We prove ourselves by choosing Him: “We will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.” (Abraham 3:25).

Have you ever considered how technology places us at crossroads? Tech can seem harmless but it can make us choose between following God or embracing the world.

Technology in God's Plan

God has given the world knowledge and scientific discovery to prepare the way for His work.

- “In 1966, President David O. McKay prophesied scientific discoveries that “stagger the imagination” would make possible the preaching of the gospel to every kindred, tongue, and people. And further: “Discoveries latent with such potent power, either for the blessing or the destruction of human beings as to make men'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” (CR Oct 1966, 4).

Technology can be used powerfully for good, but “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48).

Limitless Perils: Opposition in All Things

There are countless perils to allowing the content on our cell phones and other technology to influence us. At the very least, it can be a tremendous distraction from building relationships with God, family, and close friends.

Cell phone content has the power to create addiction, utilizing the same biological chemicals as drugs. Consider the following prophetic warnings:

- The Savior taught: “No man can serve two masters.” (Matthew 6:24). It's hard to admit, but technology, uncontrolled, can control us..
- President Russell M. Nelson: “If most of the information you get comes from social or other media, your ability to hear the whisperings of the Spirit will be diminished.”
- Elder Bednar: AI cannot replace the Holy Ghost and can “suffocate moral agency” if misused.

The world is waking up to the perils of inappropriate cell phone use. Consider the following clinical research:

Since smartphones and social media became common (after 2010):

- Teen depression, anxiety, and suicide have risen dramatically.
- Algorithms are designed to keep us hooked—just like addictive substances literally influencing our biology.
- Social media fuels comparison, distorts self-image, promotes pornography, and weakens family connections.
- Gaming can also lead to addiction and failure to launch.

Promised Blessings of Discipleship

- “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth...” (John 14:27). Many of us scroll our phone when stressed. Scriptures, prayer, meditation on Jesus Christ will promote peace.
- Elder Bednar: If we “look unto the Savior in every thought (D&C 6:36),” we will discern “things as they really are.”
- President Nelson: Covenant disciples have access to the Savior’s power, which can make “everything about life easier.”

Agency and Personal Responsibility

We are agents unto ourselves (D&C 58:28), and we have felt impressed to warn. The impression to speak to our stake candidly about cell phones and technology has been pouring in for months. We testify that God knows our stake and wants to warn us specifically. We pray you will ponder this topic deeply and let the Holy Spirit guide you in your choices. As the country is waking up to this problem (35 states have banned cell phones in their public schools), as the school system is legislating changes, we feel great momentum and further see the reason God is calling on us now to change.

It is one thing to warn about a danger, but we desire to move us away from danger. In that spirit, here are some recommendations supported by current secular research and impressions we are feeling. Remember fence laws (laws that give clear boundaries) are not commandments, but are intended to be helpful safeguards.

Practical and Parental Guidance

- Under 13: Communication and location device only—no internet/social media.
- 13–16: Parent-approved educational apps only.
- 16+ social media you should only be considered if there’s a demonstration of strong spiritual and emotional maturity – age alone is not a green light.

The Lord is directing our stake with clarity. He asks us to:

- Remember, the Savior has the power to heal. If you feel you or your family have been affected already, we invite you to earnestly seek the grace of Jesus Christ and He will heal you. Don’t be too hard on yourself, this technology feeds upon our very biology, and few have not been affected in some way.
- At least one phone-free family meal daily.
- Phones put away at church, except for scriptures.
- No electronics, including TV’s, in bedrooms and bathrooms.
- Rely on the Holy Ghost. President Nelson: “In coming days, we will not be able to survive spiritually without... constant guidance of the Holy Ghost.”
- Create a family phone/technology plan. Teach discernment about influencers, algorithms, and where to find truth.
- Unite with other families to build critical mass for change.
- Take a 10-day fast from social media, then decide how to continue by the Spirit; repeat when you feel too drawn back in and as the spirit impresses you.
- Parents should model wise phone use. Choose uplifting content. Do not post self-promoting content, your exceptional accomplishments, etc. Resist vanity and promote goodness.
- Rediscover meaningful activities to strengthen family and community life. Teach and relearn skills that technology has taken away from us (ie writing skills, communication, etc.).

Our Testimony

We testify that as we use the wonders of technology as disciples of Jesus Christ, our lives will change. We will find peace, reclaim joy, and strengthen our relationships with God and family. We will have greater success in our spiritual and secular lives, utilizing technology for more good than we ever imagined. The cell phone (all technology), this unparalleled and unprecedented device, so amazing and useful in so many ways, will indeed become a tool of great power.

Please read the full version of this document, including notes, found on the stake website at:

<https://suwhstake.org/resources/technology-and-discipleship/>