

Facebook Mini-Class

Click PRESENT

CLICK Mark Zuckerberg, an avid programmer and Harvard University student, invented Facebook. On January 11, 2004 the original thefacebook.com domain was registered, and Facebook quickly began spreading through schools and Universities before breaking out onto the national and then worldwide scene as the most popular social networking site online.

CLICK Facebook allows people to connect to share status updates, event invites, photos, videos, notes, and links to other websites. It's also great for targeting specific audiences, and advertising.

CLICK There are over 1.6 billion Facebook users all around the world, and that number is growing everyday. According to the United States Census Bureau the total world population is around 7.4 billion people. That means that over 22% of the world uses Facebook. **CLICK** If it were a country, it would be the largest in the world. With so much of the world using Facebook, it's no wonder the leadership of the church has encouraged us to use it to spread the gospel message. But how?

CLICK Our purpose today is to explore how to use Facebook as a missionary tool in a natural, confident, way. Online missionary work is not about being pushy or preachy -- it's about people, and being approachable, visible, and likeable when it comes to your faith.

CLICK Using Facebook to share the gospel can be as simple as changing your profile to say "I'm a Mormon", or making your cover photo a picture of the temple. If a friend had a question about the church, simple changes like these would make you much more approachable. We may assume that our friends know that we are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but how many of us can name the religious faith of all our Facebook friends? With increasing interest in Mormonism, media attention, and over 2 million people searching for Mormon on Google each month, letting your friends see that they have a Mormon friend can't be a bad thing.

CLICK Another great way to share the gospel on Facebook is by making your religious faith more visible in your own posts, and in the pages you promote. Have you liked the church on Facebook yet? When you like, comment, or re-post something faith-filled on Facebook, you're not only showing what you believe to your friends, you're helping others find good content later on in searches. As we collectively promote positive LDS content, we help people find good sources of information about the church before being bombarded by Anti-Mormon content.

Sharing what you believe on Facebook also gives your friends an opportunity to see, read and feel the Spirit of what you are sharing. You never know when a quote from a general authority is going to make all the difference in a friend's day, and a positive experience like that can lead to questions and conversations that ultimately lead to conversion.

In “A Word for the Hesitant Missionary”, Elder Uchtdorf teaches that “Mentioning spiritual experiences or talking about Church activities or events in casual conversation can be easy and pleasant if we invest a little courage and common sense.” Status updates, comments, and chats are great places to mention your church activities and spiritual experiences. Let people know what’s going on in your life, including your spiritual life. Pay attention to who’s interested in these posts -- who’s commenting, liking, and sharing your faith-filled messages. You may be surprised to find that others not of our faith are really taking notice. And then when you’re wondering who you can share the gospel with, you’ll have a much better idea of where to start.

CLICK It’s important to always remember that the Lord wants us to reach out to specific individuals. The broad brush stroke of sharing the gospel online is important because you never know who will see and benefit from it. But as we personalize our online interactions, and act on our love for others and for the gospel, we become more effective missionaries to members and non-members alike. There is a big difference between sharing a Mormon Message or favorite general conference quote on your Facebook wall to a broad audience, and sending the same message, video, or quote via private message or chat.

But remember that “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Prayerfully keep in mind friends who may be in need of a kind word, a gospel thought, or service to help them through a difficult time. Be a good facebook friend--we all enjoy seeing likes and comments on our status updates, friend requests, event invites, and messages from friends. Don’t just try to start sharing the gospel on Facebook - start living the gospel on Facebook by liking, posting, commenting, messaging, friending, and inviting. When was the last time you invited a friend to a church activity via Facebook? Sometimes a simple invitation like that is all it takes to give someone the courage to come, participate, and learn more. Seek inspiration on how you can utilize Facebook for service in your home and visiting teaching, your callings, and in your efforts to share the gospel online.

As you care for and cultivate friendships, make sure that your social media profile and online presence reflect your faith. And remember that our Prophet, President Monson has said that “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together, to labor in the Lord’s vineyard to bring souls unto Him.” Work with the local missionaries and the online missionaries on mormon.org/chat. If someone has a question you’re not sure how to answer, rely on the Spirit and ask for help from the full-time missionaries. The Lord, “has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work.” (HTTW)

CLICK As we’ve talked about, Facebook can be used in a variety of ways to share the gospel and better live your faith. In 2010, Trudi, a convert who learned about the gospel online and was taught by the online missionaries, took this lesson to heart. As a result of her conversion she appreciated the power of social media in missionary work and after her baptism was eager to get involved. She sent out a status update on Facebook saying, “If anyone would like to meet with the missionaries, I know where to find them!”. That same night, someone commented, “I would”, and someone else messaged her privately asking to learn more. This

low-risk invitation had a great impact, and helped her friends get in touch with the missionaries, and start being taught the restored gospel.

CLICK Not every update, message, or chat will yield this type of result, but the message remains the same: don't be afraid to live your faith online. You never know who around you is watching and willing to learn more! You also never know who might already be looking. But Heavenly Father does. And as President Uchtdorf taught, "Everyone wants to be happy. When we members of the Church radiate the light of the gospel, people can see our happiness and sense the love of God filling and overflowing in our lives. They want to know why... "Why are you so happy?" The answer... of course, leads perfectly into a conversation about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ." As you become more approachable on the subject of Mormonism, more visible in your personal expressions of faith, and more concerned with serving your friends, the Spirit will lead you to opportunities to share the gospel online in the right way, and at the right time.

CLICK for Q&A

CLICK for During Activity