

Instagram Mini-Class Script

Click PRESENT

CLICK On July 17, 2010, the very first Instagram photo was uploaded by creators Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Three months later Instagram went public, and just two months after it launched there were 1 million users. Today Instagram is used by over 430 million people -- that's more than the population of the United States.

CLICK Instagram allows you to take pictures and videos, apply digital filters to them, and share the finished product with your friends. If you scroll through the pages of Instagram, you'll find millions of photos of things that people love and things that make them laugh.

CLICK Simply put, Instagram is a photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service. You can also follow other profiles, and like or comment on their photos and videos.

CLICK An average of 80 million photos and 5 million videos are posted each day and the like button is clicked over 2.5 billion times each day. With that kind of reach, it's no wonder the leadership of the church has encouraged us to use this and other social networks to spread the good news of Christ.

CLICK Today we'll be talking about how to use Instagram as a missionary tool in a fun, meaningful way. Along with sharing photos of friends and loved ones, we can share photos that represent another important part of our lives - our religion. As President Uchtdorf taught, "We can each find a way to use our own particular talents and interests in support of the great work of filling the world with light and truth." Today we'll be talking about how to be approachable, visible, and likeable when it comes to sharing your faith through photos.

CLICK Since Instagram focuses primarily on displaying small photographed pieces of your life rather than lengthy messages or multimedia postings, options for sharing your faith are a little more limited, which means your own creativity and inspiration are even more critical. One way you can share the gospel on Instagram is in your bio -- include "I'm a Mormon" or post a link to [lds.org](https://www.lds.org), [mormon.org](https://www.mormon.org), or your [mormon.org](https://www.mormon.org) profile. When people see that you are LDS, and that you aren't afraid to talk about it, they will be more comfortable coming to you with questions, when questions arise.

CLICK Another great way to share your testimony through Instagram is to show that your faith is part of your everyday life. Is it a beautiful day outside? Take a photo and include part of your testimony in the description. Is your family getting together for the weekend? Take a photo with them and use a hashtag like, "#familiesareforever. You can also take pictures that are more directly gospel themed, like pictures of the temple, at a missionary homecoming, or after a baptism or baby blessing. You can caption gospel related photos with quotes from general conference, lyrics from hymns, and inspirational thoughts. Instead of skipping from Saturday to Monday when recapping your week, take the time and courage to post pictures of Sunday and church related activities. And use hashtags such as #lds #mormon and #happy to let people know that the joy in your life comes from living the gospel.

A saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi reads, "Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words." President Uchtdorf taught that "Implicit in this saying is the understanding that often the most powerful sermons are unspoken. When we have integrity and live consistently by our standards, people notice. When we radiate joy and happiness, they notice even more." Remember this lesson as you Instagram - people notice the message you're sending, and they can see the light in you. Because of the non-intrusive nature of this type of missionary work, people can be drawn in without feeling pressured. Posting photos and videos is a great way to share your life while naturally including the gospel. Along with uploading your own photos, you can like and comment on the photos of other Instagrammers who are sharing faith-promoting posts. When you "like" a photo, it also shows up on the feeds of your followers, meaning the message goes further. To be a good member-missionary on Instagram, share the good in your own life and in the lives of others.

CLICK As you reflect your faith in your Instagram photos, make sure you are also living your faith by caring for and cultivating friendships. We have been asked to reach out to individuals, and to invite them to come unto Christ. You can initiate public conversations through comments, but you can also start one-on-one conversations using Instagram direct. Another way is to link your Instagram account, so you can talk with your friends through other social networks. From there, invite the missionaries to be part of the conversation, or share LDS videos, quotes, or even scriptures. Above all else, be a good friend. In order to invite others to come unto Christ, we need to know how and where to send the invitation. Everyone likes having their photos "liked" - so start reaching out more, pay closer attention to what's happening in the lives of your friends, and follow the promptings of the Spirit to prayerfully and appropriately share the gospel.

CLICK One amazing story of Instagram missionary success started in December of 2013, when Ben and Chelsea of Arizona made a New Year's resolution to read the scriptures consistently as a family. The couple went through the Book of Mormon and split it into 365 portions, and turned their resolution into an Instagram account called BofM365 to let friends and family follow along. Each morning, Ben gets up early to post a graphic on Instagram with a set of scripture verses to read that day. He said "The idea is that as followers see the post, they will read the short set of scriptures and 'like' the post as a way of checking off that they had read...If followers read every short set of posted scriptures, on Dec. 31, 2014, they will finish (reading) the Book of Mormon."

After only two days of posting the initial idea to Instagram, they had 1,000 followers. They now have over 50,000 followers from 41 different countries. Members and non-members alike comment on the account with their thoughts and impressions from the reading each day. Some of their favorite comments include "Thank you for this! In my 30 years I have never read the BOM all the way through. This feels good and reminds me that if I can be checking Instagram, that I can take a few minutes to read from the truest book on earth." and "I am not a mormon, but I decided to read the Book of Mormon with you this year and I learn much from your comments! Thank you!"

This simple project has been a huge blessing to Ben & Chelsea's family, and to individuals and families around the world who are taking the challenge to read the Book of Mormon everyday.

CLICK President Uchtdorf gave the following counsel in his talk, "A Word for the Hesitant Missionary", "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." Instagram is a casual place to connect, so use some courage and common sense, and share what's going on in the faith-filled side of your life. Ben & Chelsea started BofM365 with a desire to serve the Lord, follow the Spirit, and share what matters most to them. As we prayerfully do the same we will be blessed to become instruments in the Lord's hands in sharing His gospel.

CLICK for Q&A

CLICK for During Activity