

Twitter Mini-Class Script

Click PRESENT

CLICK On March 21, 2006, Jack Dorsey sent the first tweet. What started as a small project by he and collaborators Biz Stone, Noah Glass, and Evan Williams, took only 5 years to see growth at 460,000 new accounts per day. Now, Twitter boasts over 1.3 billion users.

CLICK Twitter is defined as a microblog - that means that users write, or “tweet” messages that are limited to 140 characters or less. **CLICK** It’s great for mobile users, for trends and news, discussions, and for linking out to other sites. Anyone online can read tweets posted on twitter, but an account is required to write and post tweets.

CLICK Hashtagging, first suggested by user Chris Messina, began in August 2007. Hashtags allow you to make your tweets searchable by keywords, and allow you to search for tweets on particular topics. You can also @mention others on Twitter, which is similar to tagging someone in a post.

CLICK Twitter is one of the most widely used social networks. So today we’ll be answering the question ‘how can we best use Twitter to share the gospel’, especially when we only have 140 characters per tweet? Online missionary work is about opening the door to gospel conversations by being approachable, visible, and likeable when it comes to our religious faith. So let’s explore the most valuable ways to use Twitter as a missionary tool.

CLICK Twitter has a pretty simple interface. You can create a profile, include a photo and a couple sentences about yourself, and then start tweeting. If you want to be more approachable on gospel topics, it’s a good idea to include that you are LDS in your Twitter profile. Your profile also allows you to choose a header photo, so choose a picture of the temple, your family, or something else positive and descriptive of your personal faith. It’s all about creating a space that shows who you are in brief form.

When it comes to tweeting about religion, prayerfully choose the right time and the right topics to share. It’s best not to bombard your followers with tweet after tweet on the same topic, so keep this in mind in sharing your testimony. You can include religious elements in your everyday tweets and hashtags, and post tweets specifically about your faith, but remember that you are a person with a normal life, and people want to get to know who you are, not just one side of who you are. Normalcy makes you more approachable.

CLICK Blogger Drew Olanoff commented that, “When you want to search for something online, you “Google It.” When you want to connect with your friends, or someone that you just met, you “friend them on Facebook.” When you want to share your random thoughts with the world, you “tweet it.” Twitter has become a mega-force in the world of social media. Limiting your posts to 140 characters has it’s benefits. You can’t include *everything* in such a short post. Readers have to ask you for more information or look it up themselves when questions arise. That can actually be a big benefit for gospel topics, and for inviting readers to learn more about the gospel. Try tweeting quotes from general conference, snippets from lessons you’ve learned at church, and announcements about life events, including religious milestones.

Tweeting or retweeting what you believe on Twitter gives your friends an opportunity to see, read and feel the Spirit of what you are sharing. Live-tweeting church events is one of the best ways to share the gospel on Twitter, and is a perfect opportunity when it comes to quoting church leaders. You never know who might pick up on the truth in the gospel message you share. Rap and hip hop music artists Pharrell, LL Cool J and P-Diddy have all tweeted quotes from modern apostles and prophets. These tweets led to thousands of retweets and favorites, and seeds of truth are being planted as these messages go forward. As you tweet and re-tweet truth, you increase the opportunities for others to see, feel, and respond to the light of Christ. You provide another way for them to find the path to happiness - the path of following the Savior.

We know that not everyone will accept the gospel of Christ. Some who are directly opposed to the church and its teachings may respond negatively to your tweets. You can block accounts that you feel would lead you away from Christ, or report harassing or abusive behavior to Twitter. Don't let the fear of rejection keep you from sharing the gospel in the ways that the Spirit directs.

Another great way to share the gospel on Twitter is in the profiles you promote through follows, favorites, and re-tweets. There are many LDS Twitter profiles you can follow including The LDS Church, Mormon.org, the Mormon Newsroom, or even the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. It turns out that Duane Hiatt was especially inspired back in 1937 when he penned the lyrics to the primary song, "Follow the Prophet" -- now you can indeed follow the prophets and apostles, including on Twitter!

CLICK While posting and promoting positive LDS content on Twitter can lead to great missionary opportunities, you can also initiate gospel centered conversations through private messages. Strengthening a good relationship with your followers is most important, so prayerfully choose how you interact with them. As relationships build, missionary opportunities can present themselves. If you feel impressed to reach out to someone with a comment, a private message, or an @mention, just do it! People like to be thought about, cared about, and included. Even when someone isn't having a rough day, they'll appreciate the consideration and inclusion.

CLICK M. Russell Ballard shared the following: "In 2007 and 2008, I spoke to the graduating students at BYU-Hawaii and BYU-Idaho. On those occasions I said, "We cannot stand on the sidelines while others, including our critics, attempt to define what the Church teaches." At that time I urged the graduates to use the advances in technology to become involved in the worldwide conversation about the Church. I thought I was rather up to date when I suggested that they share their views on blogs. Since then, I have been introduced to Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+, [and] Instagram . . . It seems like the world of technology cannot stand still for even a few minutes."

Just after this broadcast, Elder Ballard was the first member of the Twelve Apostles to publish a tweet where he simply said, “Thank you to all who tuned in to the devotional. It was a joy to be with you, both those in San Diego and throughout the world. [#CESDevo](#).” Jeffrey R. Holland quickly followed suit. And if the apostles of the Lord are tweeting, those of us with a lifetime of technology exposure should definitely get to work as well.

CLICK Twitter is a concise, current, social platform with a huge audience. When it comes to missionary work, that makes for a fantastic combination. As you strive to share the gospel on Twitter and other social networks, remember what Elder Uchtdorf taught in “A Word for the Hesitant Missionary”, “Brothers and sisters, have faith. The Lord can magnify the words you speak and make them mighty. God doesn’t ask you to convert but rather to open your mouths. The task of converting is not yours—that belongs to the person hearing and to the Holy Spirit.” It’s time to open our mouths digitally in our profiles, in the things we post and promote via hashtags, tweets, favorites and follows, and especially in our personal connections. We can be filled with faith that as we do our part, small as it may be, even 140 characters small, the Lord will do the rest.

CLICK for Q&A

CLICK for During Activity