

“To Every Nation, Kindred, Tongue, and People”

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When Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” arrived at the empty tomb, they were greeted by an angel of the Lord who told them to “go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.”¹ Matthew, in chapter 28, goes on to state, “They departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did *run* to bring his disciples word.”²

Within a short period of time, we presume (remember, they were running), the message had been delivered, and the 11 disciples were again reunited with their Lord and Master. It was then that the Savior of the world gave His first postresurrection commandment to his disciples. He told them:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*³

He didn’t tell them to visit with their neighbors or to try to tract out their communities; rather, he told them to go and “teach *all* nations.” I wonder if those 11 disciples or the other followers of Christ at the time stopped and asked either verbally or at least in their own minds and hearts, “So, how are we going

to do this? We have these little fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee, and we don’t mind walking a distance or maybe riding a donkey or a camel to a neighboring village, but, really, we’re supposed to ‘teach *all* nations’?”

Now let’s fast-forward about 1,800 years. Tomorrow, April 6, marks a special anniversary for Latter-day Saints, as it was on that day that the Prophet Joseph Smith gathered with a small group in a farmhouse in western New York and organized the Church of Jesus Christ. Imagine how those six charter Church members must have felt when Joseph told them, “And, by the way, we’re going to take this gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world.” If they stopped to consider what he was saying, can you imagine how overwhelming and perhaps even unrealistic that charge must have felt to them and perhaps even to Joseph himself?

The first section of the Doctrine and Covenants states that “the voice of warning shall be unto *all* people”—not just to the followers of Joseph Smith, not just to the small gathering of Saints assembled at that special

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conference in 1831 where this particular revelation was given, but to “all people.”⁴

In the first and second verses at the beginning of the Doctrine and Covenants—verses that have become meaningful for me and my colleagues at BYU Broadcasting—the Lord stated:

Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

*For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.*⁵

In our world today it is easy for us, with our instantaneous access to modern technology, to comprehend at least some of the ways the admonition of the Savior to His disciples or to the early Saints through the Prophet Joseph can now be—and is beginning to be—fulfilled.

In earlier times word traveled person-to-person or through written epistles. If someone needed a message to arrive quickly, they could run, or perhaps they could ride a horse or employ some other form of transportation that by today’s standards would seem slow and primitive. If a message needed to reach a large group, they could speak from a hillside, or they could erect towers or cause that copies of the message be painstakingly handwritten and distributed. Think of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon and the tower he built and stood upon so his people could hear his voice.

Obviously, such methods of communication pale by comparison to what we are able to do today. In fact, the marvels of what we’re able to do today are so instantaneous and commonplace that some of us may miss the miracles most of us hold in our hands.

Those gathered in this assembly today have almost certainly seen the new BYU Broadcasting Building just east of the Marriott Center. It is the home of the radio and televi-

sion channels and the broadcast-related Web sites operated by the university. For those who may be watching this address on television or the Internet, either in the United States or elsewhere in the world, this new building is the home of the channel you are watching right now: BYUtv. This morning’s devotional is being transmitted instantaneously to over 180 countries of the world via BYUtv.

Likewise, as was explained by Elder Neil L. Andersen, this past weekend’s general conference was simultaneously translated into 93 languages and instantaneously transmitted to the four corners of the earth via television, radio, and satellite transmission and on the Internet via lds.org, byutv.org, the Mormon Channel, and a host of other digital platforms. As described in a recent *Salt Lake Tribune* article, 29 of the 93 languages were actually translated from other countries as interpreters received the live audio transmitted from Salt Lake City as the conference was taking place. From far-flung foreign lands they translated the talks and then instantly sent their translations back over the Internet to Salt Lake City, where the audio was married to the video and then, again, instantly beamed out to the countries of the world where that particular language was needed. All this took place during a live broadcast—all in a matter of seconds.⁶ The technology behind so much of what we are so used to is indeed remarkable and miraculous.

In 1947, when the technology of television reached less than one-half of 1 percent of the homes in the United States, President George Albert Smith said:

Before us is the magic of television and a host of other remarkable discoveries.

*We ought to regard these inventions as blessings from the Lord. They greatly enlarge our abilities. They can indeed become blessings if we utilize them in righteousness for the dissemination of truth and the furtherance of the work of the Lord among men.*⁷

And in 1974 President Spencer W. Kimball said:

King Benjamin “caused a tower to be erected, that thereby his people might hear the words which he should speak unto them.” (Mosiah 2:7.)

Our Father in heaven has now provided us mighty towers—radio and television towers with possibilities beyond comprehension—to help fulfill the words of the Lord that “the sound must go forth from this place into all the world” [D&C 58:64].⁸

“I am confident,” President Kimball said, “that the only way we can reach most of these millions of our Father’s children is through the spoken word over the airwaves.”⁹

I believe what prophets, seers, and revelators since the dawn of the Restoration have said: that the Lord has inspired good men and women throughout the ages—inventors, scientists, philosophers, and explorers—in ways that would lead to the furtherance of His work.

Allow me to share with you just a few moments in the timeline of technology and the Church of Jesus Christ and this university. I start with the employment of the movable type printing press, which allowed the Bible and then the Book of Mormon to be printed in mass as a testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ and the Restoration of the gospel.

It was in October 1861 that the first trans-continental telegraph message was transmitted in the United States, having been sent by none other than the namesake of this university, Brigham Young. It was just two days later that the Pony Express system was deemed obsolete and ceased to operate. Indeed, the new technology of the telegraph had changed the world for those living at that time.

In 1897 the earliest audio recording was made of a president of the Church when Wilford Woodruff’s voice and testimony were recorded on a wax cylinder.

On May 6, 1922, President Heber J. Grant delivered the first Church message broadcast

on the first radio station in Utah, KZN—which we now all enjoy as KSL. It was that same year, 1922, that the first radio station owned by the Church was established. It was an experimental radio station operated by none other than the physics department here at Brigham Young University. Two years later, in October 1924, general conference was broadcast for the first time on radio. And in July 1929, the Tabernacle Choir’s weekly *Music and the Spoken Word* broadcasts began, which continue today in what is now the longest continuously running broadcast program in the history of radio. I would also note that in each of these instances our prophets were on the cutting edge of using emerging technologies to take the gospel to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”¹⁰

There certainly are many other mileposts on this timeline, but in the interest of our time this morning, I will fast-forward to a time when I was just a little younger than most of you. I remember fondly being a young Aaronic Priesthood holder in the mid-1970s and sitting with my father in our chapel in Virginia listening to the priesthood sessions of general conference, which were piped in via a telephone line that someone had dialed in to Salt Lake City and hooked up to the loud speakers in the chapel.

It may seem a little out of sequence here, but I would be remiss and later questioned by my colleagues if I did not mention in this timeline of technology in the Church and the university the earliest days of KBYU-FM, which last year celebrated its 50th anniversary; KBYU-TV, which went on the air in 1965; BYUtv in 2000; and BYUtv International, which went on the air in 2007 in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

We could go on and talk of the first satellite broadcasts of the Church or of how the Church has embraced the Internet, including the Church’s YouTube channel and Facebook pages for the various programs and departments of the Church and the university.

It has been intentional, of course, that I've spent the first half of my talk extolling the virtues of the technologies before us as miracles and blessings from a loving Heavenly Father. But, as we all know from scripture mastery, there "must needs be . . . an opposition in all things,"¹¹ and we have likewise been warned by prophets, seers, and revelators that the adversary is embracing these exact same technologies to fulfill his purposes.

Elder Russell M. Nelson, in his last conference address, spoke of this truth when he said:

*The forces of evil will ever be in opposition to the forces of good. Satan constantly strives to influence us to follow his ways and make us miserable, even as he is [see 2 Nephi 2:27].*¹²

In the same general conference, President Thomas S. Monson said:

The moral compass of the masses has gradually shifted to an "almost anything goes" position. . . .

. . . Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it's growing ever wider.

*Many movies and television shows portray behavior which is in direct opposition to the laws of God. Do not subject yourself to the innuendo and outright filth which are so often found there.*¹³

Similar warnings and cautions have been given in past conferences and in other materials from the Brethren, such as the *For the Strength of Youth* booklet. We've been cautioned regarding the Internet, movies, music, video games, online chat and social media sites, and the many other forms of media available to us today.

I suspect that many, or perhaps even most of you, know of someone who once carried with them a wonderful spirit, but because of letting their guard down and being influenced by the side of the media that is not "virtuous,

lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy,"¹⁴ they lost the light they once carried with them. Some who have been overtaken by the darker side of these technological marvels have withdrawn from their families and loved ones, let their careers or schoolwork suffer, and turned from those things that once made them truly happy.

And so for the next few minutes I'd like to share with you just a few of the things we might do to keep us from falling into the adversary's technological trap. I will focus on three main strategies that mirror the strategies we are using to expand the reach of BYU Broadcasting to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people:

1. Decide today, right now, who you would like to be and whether your actions and the decisions you are making today are leading you *toward* your goal or *away from* it. I refer to this step with the question "What's your tagline?"

2. Conduct a self-assessment of your own consumption of media, or, in other words, ask yourself, "What's on my playlist?"

3. Become anxiously and actively engaged in using technologies for good. Ask yourself, "What's my role in all of this?"

First, what's your tagline? I encourage you to decide today who you would like to be and whether your decisions and actions are leading you toward or away from your goal. This, of course, is true not just for decisions you make regarding your media consumption—but, for the moment, let's consider it in that light.

In the broadcast industry, media and television networks often use taglines, usually for branding or marketing purposes, but occasionally as corporate mission statements. Most use taglines because they define how the networks want us, the viewers, to think of them. I suspect most of you could tell me, without even thinking, the tagline for ESPN: "The Worldwide

Leader in Sports.” TBS uses “Very Funny,” and in the 1990s NBC rolled out “Must-See TV.” BYUtv’s tagline is “See the Good in the World.” We use this tagline as the guiding principle for our programming decisions.

So, I ask you, what is your tagline? What would you like it to be? As you are considering this, you might also ask yourself, “What would my friends, family members, and associates say is my tagline? Would they agree that the television programs I watch, the music I listen to, the Internet sites I visit, and the conversations in which I engage reflect the tagline for which I wish to be known?”

I’m particularly fond of the tagline the youth of the Church are aligning themselves with this year as they’ve adopted the thirteenth article of faith as their Mutual theme. BYU Broadcasting likewise is trying to model its programming after this theme:

*We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men. . . . If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.*¹⁵

Second, conduct a self-assessment of your own consumption of media, or ask yourself, using the terminology of today’s generation, “What’s on my playlist?”

As you decide on a tagline, you then need to assess whether the decisions you are making around media are compatible with your tagline. In other words, is your tagline credible when weighed against your playlist? When referring to your playlists, I’m not just talking about your iPods or MP3 players, although they would certainly be included. Your playlist would include all of the daily decisions you make.

President Cecil O. Samuelson, in his opening devotional of winter semester this year, shared a quote from President David O. McKay regarding self-mastery and personal character, and then he said:

*While President McKay did not live during the time of the Internet, texting, tweeting, reality television, MP3 players, or social networking, the principles he taught are just as vital today as they were in the twentieth century. We all know the blessings of appropriate self-control and the heartache attached to addictions or indiscretions of every kind. Just like King Benjamin, we can’t list all the ways we need to practice self-control, but King Benjamin’s advice is also absolutely timely.*¹⁶

And then President Samuelson quoted the closing verses of one of my favorite chapters in the Book of Mormon—as it is, in my opinion, the perfect blueprint for how we should live our lives:

And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

*But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.*¹⁷

Several years ago I was visiting with a friend—Dale Andersen—from Mesa, Arizona. At the time Dale was serving as a stake president in Mesa, and he shared a personal experience with me that, with his permission, I’d like to share with you this morning. He said:

I was preparing for our stake conference and having a bit of a stupor of thought on what I should share with the members of my stake. On the Friday night prior to conference I had a most peculiar dream—one of those dreams that was as real as any experience I have ever had while awake.

I dreamed I was at a family reunion with my entire family—my wife, my children, and my

grandchildren. We were all gathered in the backyard of our home and enjoying a wonderful spring afternoon together.

And then I saw a most amazing and beautiful sight. It was a flock of blackbirds—but not an ordinary flock of blackbirds. This was one of those flocks that must have had tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of birds, all flying gracefully in perfect unison.

The birds would dart one direction, and then, as if cued by their leader, they'd immediately dart the other direction. Not a bird missed a beat. I stood there with my family—eyes transfixed. It was beautiful and captivating.

President Andersen continued:

As we watched this spectacle, the birds came closer and closer to us. It was all very exciting to see. And as we watched, we noticed the birds were pairing off two by two, and it appeared as though they were landing in the yards of all of the homes in my neighborhood. I thought this was rather peculiar. And then, as they got closer to my own backyard, the scene began to come into focus, and I realized in an instant that these were not blackbirds after all. These were dark, evil spirits!

Immediately I panicked and yelled to my family to run into the house and to lock the doors and windows. I was frantically trying to make sure all the members of my family were accounted for and safe—my sweetheart, my children, and their children. We ran through the house slamming the windows and shutting the doors and locking them tight. I gathered everyone together in our family room, where we would be safe, but then, as I turned around, there they were. I found myself standing between these two terribly evil beings and my precious family.

President Andersen said:

A window had been left ajar in the basement, and they had found their way into our home.

You know and I know that the adversary and his evil spirits are descending upon our families and trying to find their way into our homes, our apartments, and our dorms. At first they appear to be beautiful, enticing, and captivating—even to the point that, if we are not careful, our families will stand right in their path gazing upon them as though we were extending an open invitation to them to enter our homes.

So again I would ask that you consider the question “What’s on my playlist?”

Third, become actively engaged in using technologies for good. In His Sermon on the Mount, the Savior taught:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. . . .

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.¹⁸

At BYU Broadcasting and with most every other media organization in the world, we know that television and media in general are no longer “push technologies” for a passive viewing experience. Today’s audiences want to be engaged. They want to participate in the conversation.

To illustrate this point, I would like to conduct a little object lesson. Those of you here today with a portable digital device, will you please hold it up? Cell phones, iPhones, iPads, laptops—any portable device that connects you to others. Of course, most of those in attendance would fall into this category. If such a request had been made when I was a student at BYU, not a single hand would have gone up.

Students as young as elementary and junior high school age, but more frequently high school and college-age students, including many of our students here at BYU, are very much engaged in the worldwide online community.

You are building your own Web sites, iPhone and iPad apps, and other digital and social media applications. You are shooting, editing, and uploading videos to your own Web sites and other public sites like YouTube. As we heard two weeks ago from Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, who joined us at BYU for a special technology forum, over 500 million people, including most of you, now have a Facebook account.

Speaking at graduation exercises at BYU–Hawaii, Elder M. Russell Ballard encouraged BYU students to not just see the good but to do the good. He told them to “join the conversation by participating on the Internet.”¹⁹

How different the world is today. . . . If you read newspapers, the chances are you read them on the Internet. Ours is the world of cyberspace, cell phones that capture video, video and music downloads, social networks, text messaging and blogs, handhelds and podcasts. . . .

*There are conversations going on about the Church constantly. Those conversations will continue whether or not we choose to participate in them. But we cannot stand on the sidelines while others, including our critics, attempt to define what the Church teaches.*²⁰

And in the Sunday morning session of the April 2011 general conference, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf told us:

With so many social media resources and a multitude of more or less useful gadgets at our disposal, sharing the good news of the gospel is easier and the effects more far-reaching than ever before. . . . Perhaps the Lord’s encouragement to “open [your] mouths” [D&C 60:2] might today include “use your hands” to blog and text-message the gospel to all the world! . . .

*. . . With the blessings of modern technology, we can express gratitude and joy about God’s great plan for His children in a way that can be heard not only around our workplace but around the world.*²¹

Brothers and sisters, you are the light of the world and the future mileposts in the timeline of technology. May we recognize a loving Heavenly Father’s hand in the miracles of the technologies around us and remember that He gave them to us to bless us and our families and to advance His purposes. May we hold strong to the taglines and playlists that we wish to be known for, and may we be actively engaged in the cause of truth as we seek not only to see the good but to be the good and to do the good. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Matthew 28:1, 7.
2. Matthew 28:8; emphasis added.
3. Matthew 28:19–20.
4. D&C 1:4; emphasis added.
5. D&C 1:1–2.
6. See Vince Horiuchi, “Bringing Messages to World,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 March 2011, 14–15.
7. George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others: Excerpts from the Sermons of President Smith*, comp. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948), 41.
8. Spencer W. Kimball, “When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, October 1974, 10.
9. Kimball, “When the World,” 10.
10. Mosiah 15:28.
11. 2 Nephi 2:11.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “Face the Future with Faith,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 34.
13. Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 66.
14. Articles of Faith 1:13.
15. Articles of Faith 1:13.
16. Cecil O. Samuelson, “Seven Suggestions,” BYU devotional address, 4 January 2011.
17. Mosiah 4:29–30.
18. Matthew 5:14, 16.
19. M. Russell Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Ensign*, July 2008, 62; adapted from a commencement address given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii,

15 December 2007; see also Ballard, “Making Your Influence Felt,” BYU–Idaho commencement address, 11 April 2008.

20. Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel,” 58, 61.

21. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 76–77.