



Mission President Resources

Safeguards for Using Technology

DRAFT
January 2015



Mission President Resources

Safeguards for Using Technology

These habits will bless
[missionaries] long after
their missionary service
is completed.

The technology that your missionaries are authorized to use will help them improve their planning, finding, learning, teaching, and communication with others. As the lead trainer in your mission, help your missionaries learn how to use technology to fulfill their missionary purpose and develop righteous technology habits. These habits will bless them long after their missionary service is completed.

The resources below are available to your missionaries and will help you train them in using technology appropriately. Please become familiar with these resources:

- *Safeguards for Using Technology* booklet
- “Safeguards for Using Technology” online course
- “Safeguards for Using Technology: District Meeting Training” outline

All of your missionaries will send you a simple report (available through the Mission President’s Portal) as they complete the “Safeguards for Using Technology” online course. This report will include:

- An acknowledgment that they have read the booklet.
- A statement of their commitment to follow the safeguards with their companion.
- A plan of action for applying these safeguards.



The *Safeguards for Using Technology* materials listed above teach missionaries four safeguards and a simple three-step process on how to live them. These safeguards and the process will help missionaries:

- Use technology in a way that is centered on their missionary purpose.
- Develop good habits in using technology for righteous purposes.
- Overcome prior inappropriate habits, such as participating in excessive gaming, surfing the Internet mindlessly, viewing pornography, using social media excessively, wasting time on digital devices, or using devices to avoid talking to people in person.

The purpose of the district meeting training is to provide a social element to reinforce appropriate use of technology. Social support is essential in helping missionaries overcome challenges and habits that worsen with physical, social, and emotional isolation. This training depends on missionaries discussing how they will help and support one another—in a spirit of love and trust—to live the safeguards. It is not a place for them to divulge past sins or share specifics about personal vulnerabilities. You may use existing districts for this

training or organize other training groups. These groups should be small enough so that missionaries feel comfortable sharing their ideas with one another. Select mature mission leaders to lead this training so that they will keep the discussion focused on how they will support one another, rather than on personal transgressions.

According to the needs of your missionaries, you may choose to separate elders and sisters for this training. In this instance, your wife or sister training leaders can conduct the meeting with the sisters.

While *Safeguards for Using Technology* will help missionaries improve and overcome various types of misuse of technology, the remainder of this booklet will help you know how to address pornography-related issues that may come to your attention.

Guarding Missionaries against Pornography

You can best protect your missionaries by helping them learn, believe in, and follow the safeguards and by ensuring that they keep the approved filters and apps installed on their mobile devices.¹

Nevertheless, despite these precautions, some missionaries will still experience pornography-related issues. The sections that follow will guide you as you work with missionaries who struggle with pornography.

Understanding Pornography

Most, if not all, of your missionaries have been exposed to pornography at some point in their lives. However, exposure to pornography can come in a variety of ways and degrees, and individuals respond differently to that exposure.

Studies have shown that only a limited number of those who view pornography are addicted. Therefore, you must be sensitive to not treat a milder incidence of viewing pornography as if it were a case of addiction. When those who are struggling with pornography learn

that they are not addicted, they have hope and can better describe to you the challenge they have.

Some individuals view pornography out of mild interest or curiosity. That mild interest, however, may lead individuals to view pornography experimentally while still being able to control how often and how long they view it. They do not use pornography to cope with unpleasant situations or feelings, such as boredom, loneliness, anxiety, or stress.

Individuals who use pornography to cope with their feelings begin using it habitually. In general, these individuals can still purposefully abstain from pornography.

When individuals are truly addicted, they spend a significant amount of time thinking about, pursuing, and viewing pornography. They have almost no ability to control their impulses or cravings. President James E. Faust taught that addictions can be “mind-altering . . . to the point where they take away our God-given agency” (“The Power to Change,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 123–124). When helping individuals who are addicted to pornography, be understanding and aware of this debilitating power of addiction. Discerning the level of missionaries’ pornography use will help you know how you can best help them.

Fortunately, very few of the missionaries that struggle with pornography will have an actual addiction. Most will view pornography with mild interest or view it experimentally or habitually. Again, even habitual pornography use is not an addiction. Incorrectly labeling a missionary’s struggles with pornography as an “addiction” will often lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair that prevent repentance and healing. *Preach My Gospel* states that hope “is manifest in . . . patient perseverance. . . . When you have hope, you work through trials and difficulties with the confidence and assurance that all things will work together for your good. Hope helps you conquer discouragement” (117). Help foster

Again, even habitual pornography use is not an addiction. Incorrectly labeling a missionary’s struggles with pornography as an “addiction” will often lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair that prevent repentance and healing.

and instill this kind of hope within the struggling missionaries with whom you work.

Helping Missionaries Who Struggle with Pornography

When missionaries come forward and begin to seek help, express your love and gratitude for their courage and willingness to repent. Doing so will help these missionaries feel God's love and will

encourage ongoing repentance.

Most individuals who view pornography feel ashamed and have a low sense of self-worth.

Do not "react with shock, anger, or rejection" (Linda S. Reeves,

"Protection from Pornography—a Christ-Focused Home," *Ensign*

or *Liahona*, May 2014, 15). These

kinds of reactions will heighten the feelings of shame and low

self-worth that these individuals

likely already feel. Help struggling

missionaries realize that "there is

no habit, no addiction, no rebellion,

no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness" (Boyd K. Packer, "The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995).

Those who view pornography at any level may not be able to accurately describe to themselves or to you the level of their pornography use. Questions such as the following will help you discern struggling missionaries' needs by determining the "where," "when," and "how" of each situation:

- What is your history with viewing pornography? How long has it been an issue? When was the last time you viewed pornography?



- How are you accessing pornography (for example, magazines, books, television, movies, music, or the Internet)?
- Help me understand the types of pornography that you view. Is it in images or videos? What does it depict?
- When you view pornography, how much time do you spend viewing it in a single session?
- When are you most tempted to view pornography?
- Do you masturbate? If so, how often? Where? Is pornography involved?

Help missionaries identify what they can do to overcome their pornography-related issues by asking questions such as:

- How has *Safeguards for Using Technology* helped you? What safeguards are you struggling with?
- Tell me about how you use the “Be Aware and Acknowledge,” “Choose to Act,” and “Learn and Improve” process. How can you use this process more effectively?
- What has helped you overcome temptation in the past? What are you trying to do now?
- How has your companion been a help to you in overcoming pornography? Who else has been a help?
- What effect has viewing pornography had on your missionary efforts? On your relationship with the Lord? What can you do to strengthen your relationship with the Lord?

Some missionaries may mistakenly believe that, because they still experience temptations or cravings, all of their fasting, prayer, blessings, and spiritual efforts have been ineffective. Help them internalize what President Boyd K. Packer has taught:

“Do you understand the consummate cleansing power of the Atonement made by the Son of God, our Savior, our Redeemer? . . . In that supernal act of love, the Savior paid the penalties for our sins so that we might not have to pay.

“Priesthood holders carry with them the antidote to remove the terrible images of pornography and to wash away guilt.

The priesthood has the power to unlock the influence of our habits, even to unchain from addiction, however tight the grip. It can heal over the scars of past mistakes.”

President
Boyd K. Packer

Do not shame, condemn, or overemphasize that pornography can destroy individual lives and families. Doing so will likely cause individuals struggling with pornography to hide their behavior, thus preventing repentance and healing.

“For those who truly desire it, there *is* a way back. . . . Priesthood holders carry with them the antidote to remove the terrible images of pornography and to wash away guilt. The priesthood has the power to unlock the influence of our habits, even to unchain from addiction, however tight the grip. It can heal over the scars of past mistakes. . . .

“Sometimes, even after confession and paying penalties, the most difficult part of repentance is to forgive one’s self. You must come to know that forgiveness means forgiveness.

“‘As often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me’ [Mosiah 26:30]” (“Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 76).

No matter how often individuals may repeat a sin, if they truly strive to repent, the Lord will always forgive them, again and again. Strengthen struggling missionaries’ faith in Jesus Christ and help them see that He is healing them. Speaking to those who continue to feel guilt after repenting, Elder Richard G. Scott taught:

“To you who have sincerely repented yet continue to feel the burden of guilt, realize that to continue to suffer for sins when there has been proper repentance and forgiveness of the Lord is prompted by the master of deceit. Lucifer will encourage you to continue to relive the details of past mistakes, knowing that such thoughts can hamper your progress. Thus he attempts to tie strings to the mind and body so that he can manipulate you like a puppet to discourage personal achievement” (“The Path to Peace and Joy,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000).

Some of your missionaries will struggle to forgive themselves. Allow their missions to be a time when they let go of their past. Help them see that they are worthy to serve and can be trusted.

As you help missionaries come to the Savior to be healed, consider these suggestions:

- Help missionaries identify which safeguards from *Safeguards for Using Technology* they are struggling to follow.

- Review the process on pages 14–21 in *Safeguards for Using Technology* to help fortify missionaries against temptation.
- Do not shame, condemn, or overemphasize that pornography can destroy individual lives and families. Doing so will likely cause individuals struggling with pornography to hide their behavior, thus preventing repentance and healing.
- Help missionaries see their identity as children of God and recognize their own individual strengths, talents, and abilities.
- Ensure that missionaries who are struggling do not feel labeled or judged by other missionaries. Help all missionaries show compassion, love, vigilance to the safeguards, and confidentiality. Commitment to the missionary purpose, not fear of pornography, should motivate obedience.

Commitment to the missionary purpose, not fear of pornography, should motivate obedience.

If struggling missionaries continue to view pornography, they may need additional support. Counsel with your Area Mental Health Advisor to determine how to best help these missionaries.

In exit interviews, discuss with missionaries how they will follow the safeguards when using technology after returning home. If some of your missionaries have consistently struggled with viewing pornography during their mission, consider discussing with their stake presidents ways in which they can continue to help these returning missionaries.

Endnotes

1. See pages 11–13 of *Implementation Guide: A Mission President's Resource for Missionary Work in the Digital Age* for more information.

