

The Mormon Messages Channel on YouTube

Written by Tom Johnson
Tuesday, 26 May 2009

You may have seen a few Church videos on YouTube, but did you know the Church has an official channel on YouTube called [Mormon Messages](#) ? The Mormon Messages Channel features regular, fresh videos produced by the Church's Audiovisual (AV) Department, posted each Friday. Each video lasts about three minutes and focuses on a single message communicated in an engaging way.

The small AV team that creates these videos puts them together without much time—usually in few days with a crew of only two or three people. They often have to shoot new video to match the message they want to convey. For example, for the Easter video of Elder Holland, two members of the AV crew went to Utah Lake to capture video of a shoreline for a scene depicting the Sea of Galilee.

Most videos receive about twenty thousand hits, but the Elder Holland video had nearly 500,000 hits. The video was promoted on LDS.org and sent out to Church employees, who were encouraged to view and share it. As the views of the video increased, the video's popularity rating increased as well, making it the number one viral video on the Internet for 48 hours.

More popular videos rise to the top of searches and related videos lists, as well as trends lists and other rankings, leading to more views. In this way, the views and popularity feed on themselves—the more views a video gets, the more popular it becomes. And the more popular it becomes, the more views it gets.

Jonathan Nelson, manager of the AV team that creates these videos, says they try to make the videos engaging for a YouTube audience. To do so, they focus on a single message to keep it brief, and pull together the right audio and video content to match the speaker's message. The result can be a powerful, mesmerizing experience that motivates viewers to keep watching.

The Mormon Messages Channel does have challenges because of the way YouTube currently works. When you watch a video today, you're presented with videos that have similar

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themes. This Related Videos section poses challenges because some listed videos contain anti-Mormon or inappropriate content, but they are pulled in because of keyword matches with the video's meta tags.

Jonathan says the number of these unwanted Related Videos will decrease over time as the Church pushes out more videos on YouTube. Right now the Mormon Messages Channel site has about 25 videos (since its start in late January 2009). But already many of the videos that appear in the Related Videos section are Church-produced videos.

Besides influencing the Related Videos list, one of Jonathan's goals is to increase coordination with other groups, such as the Missionary and Curriculum Departments, to ensure they target the right message at the right time without overlapping or duplicating efforts. The various departments can build on similar themes to share resources and information for their individual purposes and campaigns.

Because YouTube makes it easy to embed and share videos across a variety of platforms, these videos put powerful missionary tools in the hands of Church members across the world, allowing them to embed the videos on their blogs and link to them on Twitter or Facebook.

In a sense, these videos are an electronic form of pass-along cards, geared toward a video-driven audience and perfect for social media sharing. Additionally, members and non-members can engage in discussions through comment threads directly below each video.

More than just missionary tools, though, the Mormon Messages Channel provides an engaging media outlet for the Brethren to send a message in a powerful, inspiring way, reaching Church members across the world.

To view the latest videos on the Mormon Messages Channel, go to <http://youtube.com/mormonmessages>