

# SOCIAL MEDIA

FOR

# MISSIONS

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE



MOBILE  
MINISTRY  
FORUM

## Social Media for Missions: An Introductory Guide

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Mobile Ministry Forum ([www.mobmin.org](http://www.mobmin.org))

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# **Aknowledgements**

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This guide's creation was initiated and spearheaded with oversight by the Mobile Ministry Forum and would not have been possible without the labor of the following key contributors (listed alphabetically by last name):

**Peter Brassington (Wycliffe)**

**Jaime Chambers (Cru)**

**Tim Cowley (Expat Media Pro)**

**Brad F**

**Brian James\* (Frontiers)**

**Paul Konstanski (Cru)**

**Keith Williams\* (WEC International)**

We are also deeply grateful to Bettina Dagan for her able work compiling and organizing the authors' contributions and adding her design flair to the mix to produce the finished product you have before you today.

\* Pen name for security reasons

# Foreword

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When the Mobile Ministry Forum first gathered together a multiagency team to consider developing an introductory guide to the use of social media for Christian outreach, two things drove us to say yes and amen; this is something worth the investment of hundreds of our combined man hours.

First was the fact that every day, three billion individuals pull their mobiles out of purses and pockets or open their laptops to zap a picture of and Instagram the meal they are eating, check on their friends' latest status updates, or catch a goofy cat video that is trending. A decade ago social media was largely restricted to students at certain university campuses in the U.S., but today I am as likely to be asked by a new contact for my WhatsApp details as I am for my e-mail address or phone number---whether I'm in Austin, Berlin, Cairo, Delhi, East Timor or anywhere in-between.

The second thing that drove us forward was that, as a group, we could not think of an appropriate individual resource we could share with someone who came to us asking how they could take initial steps into social media ministry. Sure, some websites address social media ministry, but it seemed to us that a relative newbie was going to have a difficult time pulling together the multitude of web postings to get a good start in social media ministry. Similarly, we couldn't find even one or two books we felt would set many of our enquirers off on a solid path. We found numerous social media marketing books that were helpful if you wanted to sell a product or a develop a strong brand following. There were books for American/Western pastors sharing how to use social media to grow and shepherd their pew-based flocks. While both were good in their respective areas, neither addressed issues faced by Christians living and working in non-Christian majority/potentially restrictive countries, men and women whose desire is to see Jesus lovers raised up and disciplinemaking movements flourishing in those places.



**We hope this guide will help fill in that gap and serve as a stepping stone for those of you considering or launching into social media ministry. This guide cannot and will not cover everything you want or everything you need, but we do hope and pray that what you find here will assist in you with a foundation you can build on for years to come.**

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# 1. Helping Others Find, Friend, and Follow Jesus

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## An Introduction to Social Media Ministry

*We don't have a choice on whether we do social media;  
the question is how well we do it.*  
Erik Qualmann

*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory  
of the LORD as the waters cover the seas.*  
Habakkuk 2:14 (ESV)



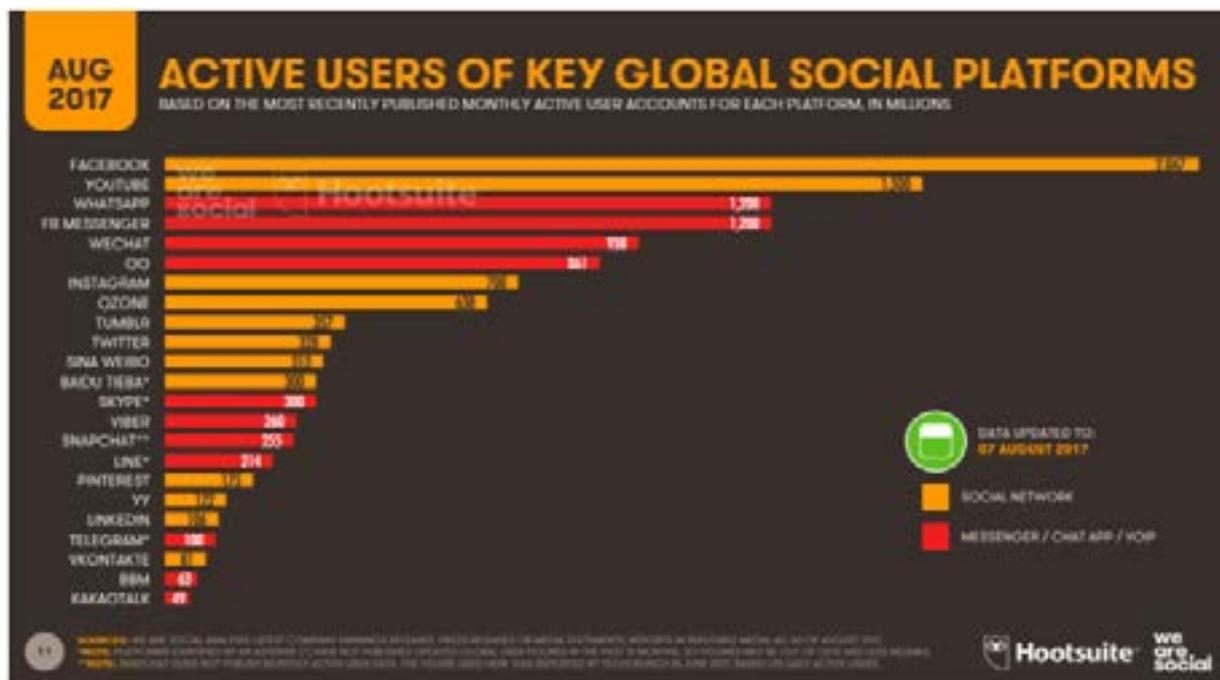
### Introduction

Nearly 600 years ago, the mission of the Church was catapulted to a new level of influence and reach when Johannes Gutenberg developed the printing press, paving the way for the gospel to reach farther and faster into the lives of people around the world. Thanks to mobile phones and the rise of social media, the gospel now has a way to reach beyond the limits of the printed word. You can view mobiles and social media as a modern-day Gutenberg press, enabling the further spread of God's kingdom among millions of the poor and illiterate who previously were separated from it. We hope this guide will help you see ways God may be calling and enabling you to take advantage of these new tools for the spread of His glory, goodness and Kingdom community among the last and the least.

## What are Social Media & Social Media Ministry?

In 2015, for the first time, over a billion people logged into Facebook on a single day. That is now old news, as Facebook counts over two billion monthly active users, and the total number of social media users worldwide is more than three billion. Multiply the three billion social media users by the two hours a day they average networking on social media, and you literally have hundreds of thousands of years (not hours) being spent on social media every day. So, if we want to meet people where they are, social media networks wouldn't be a bad place to go looking. Meredith Gould, author of *The Social Media Gospel*, defines social media as "Web-based tools for interaction that, in addition to conversation, allow users to share content such as photos, videos, and links to resources." Below you can find a chart sharing some of the largest social media platforms in existence today--are you on one or more of them?

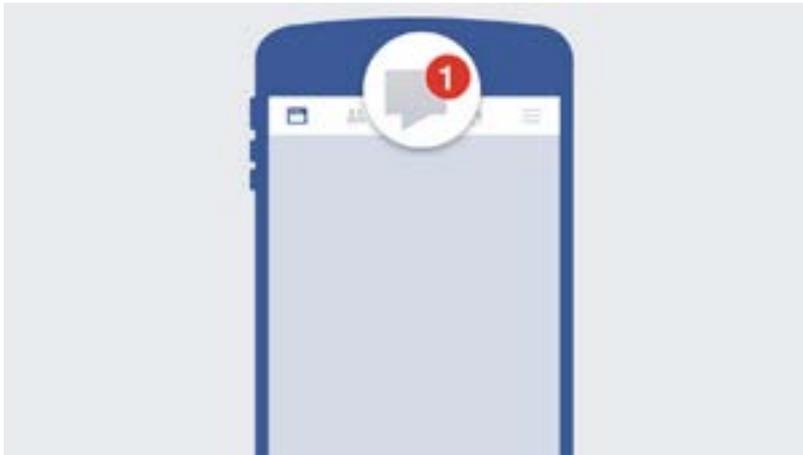
(Data source <https://kepios.com/blog/2017/8/10/there-are-now-more-than-3-billion-social-media-users/> )



You may recognize some of these social media platforms and be unfamiliar with others. In fact, hundreds of millions of people around the world are using social media sites you may never have heard of. If you lived in China, Indonesia, Central Asia, Japan or Thailand (all considered “least reached” countries), some of those social media platforms would be much more familiar.

Now that you know what social media is and what the major social platforms are, what about social media ministry? At its simplest, social media ministry is Christian ministry mediated through/enabled by social media networks. If God has called you to preach, love your neighbor, serve the poor, and share the Gospel with unreached peoples, that ministry can, to some extent, be mediated through and enabled by social media networks. Some of what many of you already do on social media could be considered “social media ministry,” and sometimes our entry into social media ministry isn’t entirely intentional:

*A retired minister had spotted from his Facebook feed that someone in the church was feeling low and sent a message asking if she wanted to chat. He expected that would mean meeting for coffee, but she said yes and started typing . . .*



**Social media enables sharing, connection, and community for individuals separated by distance, borders, and even cultures. Social media ministry enables the spread of God’s love, truth, and Kingdom community to people and places long separated from them.**

### Why Social Media Ministry?

India has more Facebook users than the U.S. India, in fact, has more Facebook users than any other country, period. Saudi social media users, on average, spend nearly a fifth of their waking hours on social media networking. I believe that Jesus is meant to be Lord of all and desires to be incarnated, “fleshed out,” among all peoples and in all parts of the world. He wants us to bring more of Him into these places.

Do you realize that ISIS is literally killing it (and us) when it comes to social media? I would guess that security services have shut down more ISIS social media sites in the last year alone than the total number of Christian outreach social media sites ever created. The Los Angeles Times ran a fascinating article some years back about a 63-year-old Afghan mullah whose mosque attendance had been declining until he took up Facebook and started drawing the youth back through his Facebook interactions with them ([Afghan mullah offers ancient wisdom to youths on Facebook](#)). Are we willing to let these people control the online conversation about Christ rather than enter into it ourselves? Are we willing to allow social media to be solely a place where people get radicalized for jihad rather than renewed in Jesus?

Many of you reading this guide are already running flat out and wishing you had 26 hours in a day. I empathize with those who look forward to learning a new ministry technique or technology as much as you look forward to getting a root canal. I agree with those of you who worry about the sin-seeped content to be found on many social media networks- one should definitely not enter such places lightly or without the backing of serious prayer and accountability. What's more, security concerns are rife when it comes to anything done on a social media platform. Any of these things could keep us from moving further with social media ministry.

But then there is the heart of Jesus. The heart that looks out upon the masses and, with compassion, sees how harassed and helpless they are, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt. 9:36). I believe God wants us to have that same heart as we see the masses out there, harassed and helpless, surrounded by wolves that would keep them from ever knowing the Great Shepherd. Jesus has sent us into all the world, and social media gives us access both to masses we've never been able to connect with and to a place in people's lives where deep sharing takes place. May this heart of compassion, those eyes that see people as they really are, lead us on into this field that is ripe to harvest (John 4:35).

## Using This Guide

The ministry potential of social media is enormous; yet getting started with social media ministry can be daunting. If social media were a swimming pool, should you dip your toes in first to test the water, wade in slowly to get acclimated, or dive in headfirst? There is no single correct answer, but this guide will help you better understand the pool (more like an ocean!) and equip you with insights to help you determine the best approach.

When we began brainstorming this guide we pictured a 40 page or less introduction to social media and missions but our end product is a 100 plus page resource that may be intimidating for some. Our recommendation would be to familiarize yourself with the general principles covered in chapters two and three and then turn to the appropriate chapter in this guide when you are looking for ideas on how to approach particular platform, advertising or security. Within each chapter we've included icons to point you to particular sub-sections:



**The compass icon** is used for the Introduction to each chapter.  
Come here to find out what will be covered in the chapter



**The refresh icon** is used for the Summary section for each chapter.

If time is limited reading this section may help you get a sense of what was covered in the chapter.



**The lightning bolt icon** is used for the “Power Tips” section in each chapter. In this section you’ll find a number of actionable pointers to help you apply what was shared in the chapter.



**The paper plane icon** indicates the “Going Further” section of the chapter. In this segment we’ve included useful links that will help you go beyond what we are able to cover in this introductory-level guide.

## Chapters Overview

An oft-quoted paraphrase from Lewis Carroll’s classic *Alice in Wonderland* states, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” Put another way, social media can be [an easy way to go nowhere fast](#). The social media pool is easy to dive into, which is what makes it such a great place to reach people with the gospel. However, most social media users aren’t entirely sure why they are getting wet. What is their objective, and how will they best accomplish it? If you want to use social media for ministry, the best place to begin is by having a plan. Chapter 2, “Developing Your Strategy,” will help you approach social media strategically and harness its power for the sake of producing greater fruit in your ministry.

Social media as we know it has been around for roughly a decade- long enough for it mature and for us to recognize some general principles and practices that will help us accomplish our goals, no matter what social platform you are using. These basics should be somewhat durable and apply wherever the winds of social media blow. (In the 12 months since the idea for this guide was conceived, Twitter’s Vine network has shut down, Snapchat has risen to prominence, and live, interactive video has become one of the fast-growing segments.) Chapter 3 covers general principles and practices that apply to any social media platform.

With some basics on strategy and general social media best practices as a foundation, we suggest you browse chapters 4 through 7 for insights on how some of the more popular social media networks and tools can be used. These chapters can help you further develop your strategy. However, they are not exhaustive. They are designed to help you start thinking about how to use these things for ministry. Each section includes a list of resources to help you go

deeper when you are ready. And the wonderful how-to repository, YouTube, is always at the ready if we have the bandwidth to go deeper still!

Chapter 8 looks at the rise of online/social gaming and the potential for ministering through social gaming and gamification. Chapter 9 shares some ways you can boost the influence of your social media efforts through no-cost simple adjustments to your content as well as via paid advertising, particularly Facebook advertising.

Finally, it is helpful to understand a few things about security. Any kind of ministry carries associated risks, and social media ministry is no exception. Stories of hacks and privacy intrusions online or through social media fill the news. The risks and security issues vary, depending on which social networks you use and how you use them, but they are there, and they are real. Chapter 10, “Social Media and Security,” will help you understand some basic precautions as you contemplate how to move forward.



## Summary

Social media provides marvelous opportunities for the Church (i.e. God’s people) to meet, friend and witness to untold millions who have, until now had very little chance to interact with Jesus’ followers or His gospel. This guide will help you and your ministry to recognize the opportunities before you, approach social media ministry strategically and maximize your opportunities for developing relationships and sharing the good news via social media.

## 2. Developing Your Strategy

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Start out with the end in mind so your efforts on social media produce eternal fruit!

*If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time!*  
Zig Ziglar

*My ambition has always been to preach the  
Good News where the name of Christ has never  
been heard.*  
Romans 15:20a



### Introduction

Any one of many things might have brought you to this chapter today. Perhaps you've noticed how all your friends and neighbors are continually on WhatsApp and wonder what you can do to help them know Jesus better through it. Perhaps your boss has issued the proclamation, "We need to do more on social media." Perhaps you've got some amazing videos you wish more people could see and wonder what you need to do to make that happen. Each of these is a fine place to start. But our focus in these next several pages is on where you want to end up- what's the end goal you would like to see for those with whom you or your media make a connection?

### Three Possible Approaches

In considering ways individuals or smaller teams--ones without a lot of time, money or personnel to throw at social media might look to leverage social media for ministry, we picture three overarching approaches. The first simply uses social media as a listening tool, a means of getting your finger on the pulse of the people you are reaching out to so you can better speak into their lives as you leave your home and step into their world. The second approach uses social media to broaden and deepen existing, "in real life" connections. The final approach is the most intensive, as it is focused on developing new connections and engaging with people on social media in a way that they move to a deeper level of identification with and discipleship to Jesus Christ.

## Pulse Finding

Not too long ago it was common to start your day by going to the front door, retrieving the newspaper and reading it while you downed your breakfast and cup of coffee. The newspaper gave you a sense of what was going on in the world, what the weather would be, and perhaps some advice on ways you might consider spending your day or weekend. Spending that little bit of time reading the paper would help you prepare for the day and enable you to have informed conversations around the water cooler at work.

While that kind of morning routine may not be as prevalent today, I think we can approach social media in a way that, likewise, enables us to be better prepared for our day and ready to speak to the issues that are likely to come up in our face-to-face conversations. Social media listening can enable us to get a feel for the issues, concerns, and even delights of the people we are reaching out to. Once we know those things, we can prayerfully ask the Lord to show us truths He wants brought into the conversations going on around us. Consider this a kind of applied digital anthropology that helps us grow in the relevance of our day-to-day outreach.

So how can we do this? One way is to set up a Facebook profile specifically for listening and interacting with members of your target audience. Grow a circle of local relationships, and join Facebook groups that involve people you minister among. Identify local community and thought leaders that are active on social media and follow them on Twitter or send a friend request on Facebook. Scan your social media feeds regularly to find out what people are talking about and reacting to. Additionally, various social media listening tools can help you see what people are Tweeting about in particular locations and show you the trending hashtags. Before you head out think of some way you use conversations related to those subjects to help your contacts see more of God's will for their lives. On the one hand, you run the potential risk of wasting time trying to stay up on the latest, the greatest, and even the gossip. On the other hand, much can be gained in increasing the timeliness and relevance of your gospel steeped conversations by putting focused time into this kind of social listening on a regular basis.

As an aside, social media platforms also provide the opportunity to locate members of your target audience and determine places it would be helpful to target for in-person outreach. A helpful paper that shows how Facebook can be used in this way is [Mapping the Diaspora with Facebook](#).

## Deepening Offline Connections Online

Sometimes it's hard to spend the time we would like with the people we'd most like to invest in. While nothing beats face-to-face time, it is wonderful that, when the Lord reminds us to pray for a contact or gives us a word we think He has for that person, we can get our phone out and text or WhatsApp them. In that way, we let them know we are thinking of them, are praying for them, and perhaps even have a word for them. Similarly, when we look at their wall and see posts sharing concerns and difficulties, we can reply with biblical insights and prayers we are offering up on their behalf. Additionally, we can note how our various contacts respond to truths we share via social media. Are they commenting on or liking those truths?

As we see patterns emerge in reactions (or lack thereof), we start to get a sense of which contacts are more open and in whom we should invest our time. The opportunity for online interaction becomes especially important in situations where you and your contact are no longer able to see each other face-to-face. A co-worker forced to flee Yemen's civil war has learned that lesson. He is thankful for daily WhatsApp chats and the opportunity to send Bible verses to both encourage and challenge the contacts he left behind.

How many of you have invested in a relationship with someone in the population you are ministering among, felt like a real relationship of openness and trust was developing, and then been shocked to find you had been led wildly astray in some way by how that person was portraying himself or herself to you? If that has happened to you, know that you weren't the first and won't be the last to have the proverbial wool pulled over your eyes. It's in situations like this that social media can actually enable us to see the other face of our "in real life" contacts.

They may show one face when we talk in person, but what face do they show their peers and family? Social media is a blessing in this because, while typically we would never be allowed to see that face, oftentimes we can now open their page and see it spelled out right in front of us. A coworker was developing a relationship with a young man in the capital of a Middle Eastern country, and things seemed to be coming along wonderfully. The young man sent a friend request to my co-worker, who decided to check out who the guy's friends were and what he was posting on Facebook. Much to his surprise he discovered his young man was involved with a jihadi network. It quickly became apparent that my coworker should take serious care in his interactions with this man.

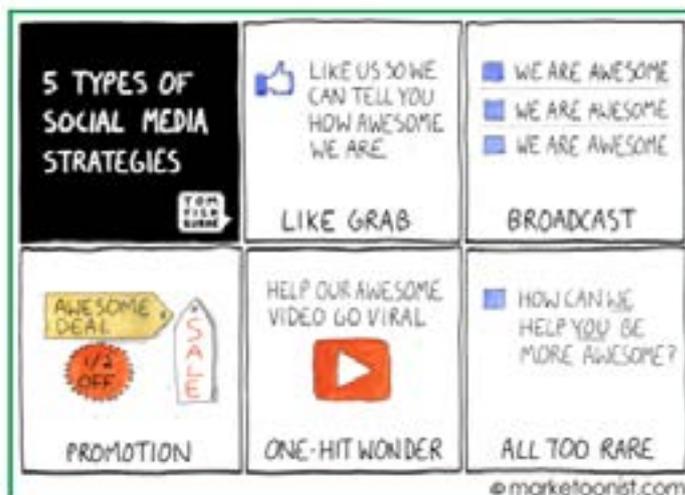
## Broad-Scale Seed Sowing & Disciple Development

This is the level we are most likely to see larger-scale results. But this level also requires the most significant investment of our time and energy, from planning to implementation and follow-up

When we approach social media as a key platform for outreach, we need to take care not to view it as a hyped-up bullhorn we can commandeer to push our message out to the masses. While pushing our message out before a great multitude is possible via social media, there is little evidence that blasting multitudes with our message correlates with movements of people coming to faith and pursuing deeper discipleship with Jesus. On the other hand, Christian media researchers have found that ministries using social media to identify potential seekers and attempt to draw them toward Christ in a focused way--by addressing their particular issues and concerns, and challenging them to take steps of faith--have a much greater likelihood of seeing not just individuals but even entire groups and movements coming to faith and obedience to Jesus Christ (learn more in [Pull vs. Push Media in Movements](#)).

When we post on social media--whether Facebook, Twitter, or some other platform--what we share may be seen by hundreds, thousands--or even millions. A smaller percentage will pay attention to the post. Fewer still will engage with us in a meaningful way. And even fewer will "convert"- that's a marketing term used to describe a customer replying to a "call to action" and engaging at a deeper level--e.g., clicking on a link to learn more, sharing a post with his/

her network, purchasing a product, sharing a story, etc. The funnel gets narrower and narrower--from many to few. But with intent-based social media, it is the few we are usually after. In terms of ministry, we are most interested in finding those who are open to the gospel or eager to learn and grow in their faith. We still care about the many and hope that everyone with whom we connect will be affected, but we focus our attention on those who are responsive.



An important paradigm shift for many ministries is to realize that our job isn't telling people how they should to think but rather, to get them to spend more time thinking about the things that are important (telling them what to think about). The old adage "we learn best what we learn ourselves" rings true in ministry too. We want to see people spending time considering alternative truths and realities to the ones they've believed and trusted in until now, really wrestling through and coming to conclusions that will hold through thick and thin.

Simply telling them what and how they should think can work at cross purposes to that goal. Similarly, we want our outreach to lead people to start discussing these new truths and realities offline with their group of significant others--their buddies or best friends--forever. Seekers who come to faith in the context of open discussion with their buddy group are A) the most likely to carry on in the faith and B) most likely to see a fellowship group formed from that group.

An important paradigm shift for those coming into social media from a media background is that content is definitely not king. Strategy is king. Specifically, having a well-planned follow-up strategy around which you develop the appropriate media. Far too many ministries start with the media they already have available and try to form a strategy around that. Such tactics rarely lead to successfully engaging people where they are and pulling them down the funnel of deep discipleship. Media should be identified and/or developed to meet the needs of the strategy rather than trying to construct the semblance of a strategy around the needs of the media you have available.

One final thought for those interested in pursuing this level of social media outreach. While it is great to develop online relationships with people and help them take steps toward Christ "from afar," it should be your goal to help seekers and those who have come to faith to connect face-to-face with a believer as early as is possible. Similar to having your contacts share what they are hearing online with their "buddy group," having seekers and new believers connecting in person with believers is key to successful outreach.

## Questions to Answer Before Launching

Five minutes, maybe less. That's how long it takes to set up an account on most social media networks. And with very little effort, within 15 minutes you can post at least once and be all but certain to obtain followers or "friends," and possibly even comments. But is that all it takes to connect with the seekers you long to share the good news with? See them come to faith and become fellowshiping members of the body? Are your target group members even on that network? Do you know what it will take to make an initial connection? Do you know what concerns and objections will need to be addressed as contacts consider the claims of Christ?

It is said that a project well begun is halfway done and answering the following three questions is a big part of how you begin any media project well:

<b>WHO?</b>	Whom are you trying to reach?
<b>WHAT?</b>	What do you want them to do/what do you want to occur as the result of your connection and communication with them via social media?
<b>WHERE?</b>	Where are they/what context are they in when you connect?

While these are simple questions, getting the full answers takes a little effort and brainpower. So let's look at each question a little more deeply.

### Who?

While this sounds like a simple question, the more specifically you can answer it at the beginning, the more likely you are to harvest fruit from your labors in social media. While it may be exciting to start making all kinds of contacts on social media, you should be seeking a select target group to connect with. Are they of a certain ethnicity, do they live in a certain area, do they share a special interest? The more tightly you can narrow down your "who," the more likely you will be to truly engage with them and communicate in ways that speak to them and move them toward deeper discipleship with Jesus.

We highly recommend developing a target persona (or a few of them) whom you and others you minister with can refer back to whenever you are considering potential ministry opportunities and communications ideas. This ensures that what you are doing fits the "who" you are doing it for. We won't cover all the ins and outs of persona creation but we can recommend the following resources for that: [Indigitous' Persona Creation Kit](#) (particularly pages 4-5) or, from a marketing rather than ministry perspective, [Buffer's The Complete, Actionable Guide to Marketing Personas](#), or [Hubspot's Buyer Persona Template](#). Here are some of the things you

might want to include in a one to two-page persona:

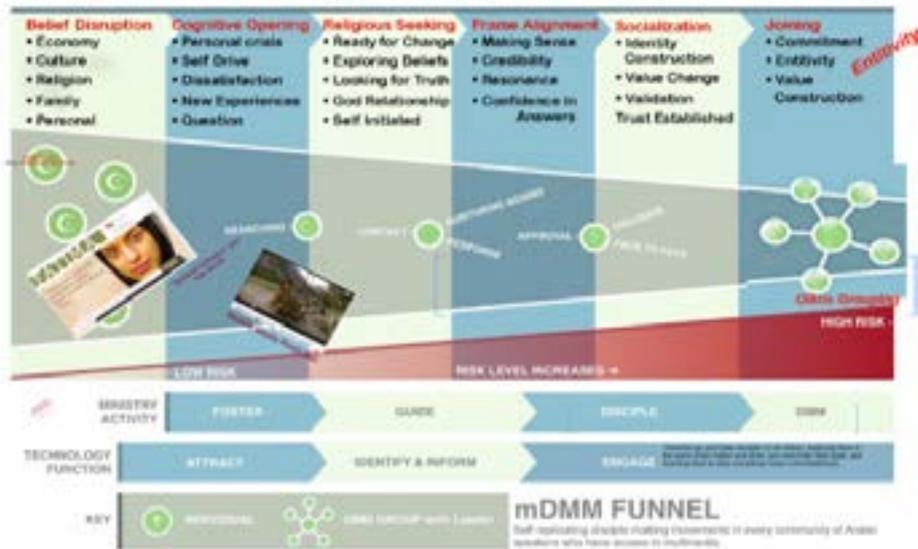
- Make the persona as real a “person” as possible, perhaps even somewhat based on real contacts you or your teammates already have. Give them a name, gender, age, and “address” (city, town or rural setting). Note their education, occupation, religion, particular interests, likes, and dislikes.
- A photo of the face of someone who could be that persona is often helpful for individuals and teams using those personas to help direct their outreach.
- Create a quote that sums up their life outlook or some other core aspect of their identity.
- Express the values that govern their actions and attitudes. Indicate their current religious practice (from completely nonpracticing to fulfilling and even exceeding the requirements of their religion), spiritual openness (from no openness to new/alternate ideas to very open to examining new/alternate ideas), their emotional response to Christianity (anywhere from strongly opposed on one end to neutral to strongly favorable to secret follower or even publicly identifying follower on the other end).
- List their felt needs/pain points. How satisfied are they with their life? What is missing or lacking in their life? What struggles do they face? What concerns, questions and past experiences keep them awake at night?

## What?

What you want your contacts to do as a result of your social media outreach has to be more than them friending you, commenting on your posts, or liking your pictures. While those are certainly not bad things, We trust that what you really want to see happen is people moving on to a closer relationship with Jesus and perhaps even movements of Christ followers being raised up to become salt and light in their communities.

It’s here that we need to think about a funnel that people progress through, with members of your general target audience mainly being found at the wide opening of the funnel and your ideal Christ follower coming out at the narrow end. While our goal may be to see people become followers of Jesus, we need to recognize that becoming a Christ follower often involves many small steps: changes of belief, the development of relationships, an ability to imagine a new reality and identity, alterations of values, and perhaps even a reversal of emotional reactions to certain concepts. You should try to imagine actions and decisions they might make along a path of discipleship. Then, your media strategy can focus on helping them through these steps.

## Funnel Media Strategy for High Level-Decision Making



From the [Why Rahmad Comes to Faith and Abdul Does Not](#) video

We cannot possibly know all the steps members of our target audience must go through to come out at the other end of such a funnel. But with much prayer, we need to ask God to help us see the likely steps and issues they will face the further down the funnel they travel. Then we can develop a strategy of communications, media, and opportunities for interpersonal interaction that will address those steps and issues. Ideally, we will bring them into face-to-face connection with believers from the earliest possible point so they can continue to move further along the funnel. Frank Preston provides an excellent overview of this in his presentation *Why Rahmad Comes to Faith and Abdul Does Not*.

### Where?

Your audience's viewing or listening context can make a lot of difference in the kind of interactions you plan for, the ways you reach out, and the platforms you use. What media technologies do they have access to, and how do they use them? Do they watch certain TV channels/shows, listen to certain radio channels/programs? What do they do with their phones? Calls, texting, games, listening to music, watching videos? Do they do social media and, if so, which platforms and what devices do they use?

If you hope to connect with them via media, what kind of context will they be in when that connection occurs? Will they be alone or with others? If they are worried someone could be looking over their shoulder (physically or online) you need to be prepared to take a different approach in your interaction with them. Are they filling brief snippets of time between other duties or spending leisurely hours looking for the latest and greatest? If they're randomly checking in while waiting for a ride to show up any second, you'll want to keep your engagement opportunities short and thought-provoking. If your target is taxi drivers, it's probably better to use audio content than hope they read your text or watch your video while driving!



## Summary

This chapter is meant to serve as an introduction to thinking and acting strategically when it comes to social media ministry. You need to determine the overarching role social media is meant to play in your outreach efforts. You could simply use social media to get a better insight into the lives of your target audience so you can minister to their needs. Alternatively, using social media can grow and deepen face-to-face contacts you have already developed. Finally, social media could be the platform you use for a focused media outreach strategy meant to identify seekers and pull them down the discipleship funnel to deep-level identification and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Any social media outreach requires that you answer the questions whom (do you want to reach), what (do you want them to do), and where (are they when they engage with your message). Seeing that entire courses and books have been created on this subject, we apologize for not being able to delve further into the subject but highly recommend your consideration of some of the resources listed below in the “Going Further” section.



## Power Tips

- Determine how you want to approach social media. Will you use it as a “pulse finder” to help you better know the day-to-day heartbeat of the people you are ministering among? Will you use it as a tool to deepen the “in real life” relationships you already have? Or, will you use social media as a platform for broad-scale seed-sowing to enable connection with seekers you might never otherwise meet?
- Have a well developed follow-up strategy worked out before launching a social media outreach and aim to move conversations with those identified as truly seeking from online to face-to-face as rapidly as possible.
- Clearly define who your audience is and create a profile of at least one fictional person representing the audience (known as a “persona”) that your messaging/media must speak to. - **the WHO**
- Clearly define what it is that you want to happen as a result of your social media outreach. - **the WHAT**
- Recognize that people typically go through a series of steps as they progress along the funnel from unbelief to committed discipleship. Plan your social media outreach to address particular points that may either be likely areas/issues that open them to considering moving towards Christ or, alternatively, choke points that slow or stop them from moving forwards in becoming Christ followers.

- Ensure your messaging and media are contextualized to the setting in which your audience members will likely come into contact with them. What are the opportunities/constraints that are provided by the hardware and platforms they are using? The context within which they are using social media. Are they relaxed or hurried, focused or multi-tasking, alone or with others, surveilled by the government?- **the WHERE**



## Going Further

Much of the theory that forms the backbone of what has been shared in this chapter comes from the [Media2Movements](#) blog, an initiative of Arab World Media/Pioneers. We highly recommend working through the [media strategy blog entries](#) from start to finish.

[The Foundations of Media Strategy](#) course builds upon the Media2Movements' theoretical backbone and enables participants to get their heads around foundational aspects of new media ministry through guided readings/viewings, interactive lessons with fellow classmates and instructors, and focused assignments that enable them to put theory into practical action plans for outreach.

A couple of resources that can help in answering the “Where” question are the Mobile Ministry Forum's [Digital Ministry Atlas in 40 Least Reached Countries](#) (includes a country research template in the appendix if your country isn't included) and the Kepios/We Are Social Singapore's 2017 Global/Regional/Country Specific 2017 [DATA- ALL THE NUMBERS YOU NEED](#) slide decks.

You may find some helpful tools to assist you in using social media as a research tool to get a better feel for the pulse of your people in [Top 15 Free Social Media Monitoring Tools](#).

Cru has a great article on [Searching for Interested People on Facebook](#) and another on [Spiritual Conversations on Social Media](#).

## 3. General Social Media How-To's

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Things to help you on any social media platform, from starting out to setting up your account and doing content and engagement well.

*Social media has helped make the world flatter and reduces the degrees of separation, leading to the situation where many of us can interact with people who, but for this platform, we may never have had the privilege to meet or speak with. That is the opportunity social media brings.*  
Nana Awere Damoah

*Act wisely toward outsiders, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*  
Col. 4:5-6



### Introduction

While there are many social media platforms to choose among, our recommendations in this chapter deal with commonalities in best practices across most platforms.

### Before You Start

Human relationships are precious, whether face-to-face or virtual ones that take place on social media platforms. They require time, prayer, and personal investment. While we applaud your interest in pursuing social media as a ministry platform, we want to impress upon you that the creation and building of relationships, something which ministry in general and social media in specific focus upon in a significant way, is both a magnificent opportunity as well as a heavy responsibility that should not be taken lightly. C.S. Lewis, with his probing eloquence, stated:

*“It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest, most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you*

*would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.”*  
(C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*)

Are you or your team willing to invest yourselves personally in any relationships that develop or ensure that others will? Will you regularly bring contacts before the throne, pleading for God's mercy upon them? If you purpose to do both of these, continue on. But if you aren't so sure you are willing or able to do them, seek the Lord's face to see whether He really wants you to move down this path.

In that same vein, human relationships in a fallen world require much care and caution. We read far too often of pastors leaving the ministry after developing inappropriate relationships with church members they were counseling. Similarly, how many times have we heard of a husband leaving his wife after reconnecting with an old flame on Facebook? Our plea to you is that you not enter into any ministry, especially social media ministry, without both significant prayer backing as well as accountability from peers and spiritual leaders. No one is beyond temptation, and the potential snares to be found in social media are beyond counting. Our recommendation to any individuals pursuing social media ministry is that they, in conjunction with a spiritual and/or ministry leader, create a covenant stating the boundaries they will not cross as they launch into this ministry. Areas to be addressed include:

1. Relationships with members of the opposite sex
2. Relationships with minors
3. Things they will not set before their eyes and that they will share with their accountability partner/leader if they view them, whether purposefully or inadvertently
4. Steps to be taken should they fail to keep any of the standards addressed

For accountability to work, this covenant needs to be reviewed regularly, and ministry workers need to be asked frequently if they have broken any of the agreed to commitments.

Finally, many of us can think of times when we thoughtlessly pulled up our social media page on a whim just to see the latest/greatest and found ourselves, an hour or more later, looking up in bewildered amazement, wondering where the time had flown. While social media provides many opportunities for ministry, it also provides many opportunities to escape our reality and responsibilities. If you already find self-discipline in other areas somewhat of a challenge, social media ministry may not be the best outreach avenue for you to pursue. This is another area where some form of accountability can help ensure that the hours spent on social media are being invested in outreach rather than entertainment or the fulfillment of idle curiosity.

All this to say, do not lightly consider pursuing social media ministry.

## Choosing a Social Media Platform

While it is possible to set up accounts on most every social media platform out there it is advisable to, instead, start with one social media platform and work on developing your skills and methods there before branching out to other platforms. The first and most obvious criteria for determining which platform/s you should set up shop on is which platform/s are being used by members of your target audience? Spending time with people and finding what they are using is the best approach to seeing which platforms are most used. Recognize that different platforms may be preferred by various groups within one society- whether by generation, occupation, etc. You can also check out the links in Appendix A of the [Digital Ministry Atlas](#) for country-wide insights into social media usage. Second, you should think through the types of interactions you want to have via social media. Each channel has particular strengths and weaknesses. If you're trying to create awareness then Instagram might be a good channel. If you're trying to develop group discussions around deeper topics, perhaps Facebook with its Facebook Groups possibilities would be a better platform to use. If you mostly want to listen in on what thought leaders are talking about you might want to try Twitter. The following chapters in this guide will give you more insights to various platforms strengths. Third, recognize your own strengths and limitations and the amount of time and effort you can realistically put into social media. Keeping up with postings and creating new content can be very time consuming. Instagram requires more proficiency and effort in creating high quality images than Facebook while YouTube users' appetite for new video content is insatiable.

## Setting Up

Once you have figured out the social media platform/s you're going to focus on, it's time to personalize your account. As you approach this you need to think about the "you" that others will discover when they first come across you/your ministry's profile or account. Realize that, as people come across your social media account for the first time they are, within the space of a few short seconds, going to ask questions like "Who is this?" "Is this somebody who seems trustworthy/credible?" "Is this somebody who seems relatable and relevant?" You can increase the chance they will react positively by the way you handle the following elements when setting up your account.

### Profile Photo

The first thing most people will notice is your profile photo (sometimes called an avatar), the picture you use to show who you are. Leaving a gray silhouette or whatever the stock placeholder is as your profile photo definitely increases the chances of someone passing you by without a glance. Here are some recommendations for a good profile photo:

- A. Choose an image that leaves an impression of you as likeable and trustworthy (smiles usually help with the former but not in all cultures).
- B. The image you upload should be a reasonably large size (600x600 pixels or so) in order for those who click on it to be able to see it at a relatively viewable size rather than just the thumbnail size it is typically displayed at.
- C. Have your face fill the majority of the image, as it will usually only be seen as a thumbnail-size image.
- D. Have your face well-lit (while not blown out into a ghostly white image by too much light).
- E. You can use an image other than your face. One Arab-world outreach uses a cartoon image of an Arabic person who appears good-natured and kind. This protects the anonymity of outreach workers and allows for different ministry staff to respond to social media contacts.
- F. Alternatively, many companies and outreaches simply use their logo for the profile photo.

One other item to note: if you are setting up accounts on various social media using the same name, it is advisable to use the same profile photo/avatar across all accounts. If you are setting up the account to represent a ministry, you will need to use already established branding guidelines (the name to be used, a particular logo/avatar that is always used, a color palette, fonts, etc.) or, if none exist, develop them to keep consistency across social media platforms.

## Background Image

After your avatar, the second thing most people coming across your account will notice is the image that fills the background of your page. This image is called the “cover photo” on Facebook and LinkedIn and the “header” in Twitter. According to Guy Kawasaki, its purpose is to “tell a story and communicate information about what’s important to you” (The Art of Social Media, p 8). The cover photo can be used as a kind of “billboard” you can switch out occasionally to share the things you are currently focusing on as a ministry. Kawasaki would warn you to make sure you insert an image rather than leave the stock background in. We would warn you to make sure any image you use doesn’t distract from the content you are posting and doesn’t contradict the image you want people to have of you or your ministry. Types of images you could use include things you or your target audience have a passion for, something you are promoting, or scenes your target audience would find beautiful. The latter include local cityscapes, nature, folk art or events, etc.



## Profile

The final, and perhaps most important, part of your social media identity is the profile you fill out describing who/what you are. Be short and sweet here, trying to be relatable to members of your audience (such as being a mother, student, resident of the same city, etc.) while possibly sharing something of what makes you tick/what you are passionate about too.

## Ways to Increase Reach & Engagement

Reach, for better or for worse, is what most people think about as their eyes go wide while contemplating the potential of social media ministry. It's the huge number of people who are a potential audience on the particular social media platform. It's the idea of the viral post or video that is viewed by thousands and hundreds of thousands that sends chills down the spine of marketers and missions executives alike. In the old gospel song "Deep and Wide," it's the wide we're talking about when we use the word "reach." How many followers do we have, how many people are seeing our postings, this is reach. Reach can provide exciting statistics to share with supporters. But our hope is that you're interested in social media ministry for much more than reach.

Engagement, on the other hand, is the deep part of "Deep and Wide." How much interaction are we having with our audience? Do we have likes, comments, shares, retweets, replies, and mentions in response to our postings. Reach and engagement can be measured and shared, and give us a sense of the effect of our efforts. But even engagement is only a waymarker on the path toward what we trust is your ultimate purpose: seeing lives transformed and people growing into faith, obedience to, and worship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and communities being transformed by the Spirit of God (for more on ensuring engagement leads to the achievement of ministry objectives check out the "Tracking and Follow Up" section below as well as the video [Why Rahmad Comes to Faith and Abdul Does Not](#)).

That said, communications and social media experts recognize that several variables can have a significant impact on the reach and/or engagement of our social media efforts and postings. I'd like to share some of them here, as they apply pretty much universally across social media platforms.

## Being Social

Conversations involve more than one person; there is a big difference between dialogue and a monologue. Social media is called that because it is meant to be about interaction. Our efforts on social media must involve a lot more than simply broadcasting our message. Tune into the lives and feeds of others you are connecting with. Reply and comment on their updates, and repost their content. You may find that your interest in others leads to a growth in their interest in you and your message. One rule of thumb (The Pareto Principle) would have you strive for an 80/20 ratio of four interaction/community-building communications for every one ministry content/call-to-action/invitation/promotional message that your outreach puts forward.

(This is explained more fully in the book *Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook*, which has a wealth of social media insights interspersed, unfortunately, with far too much foul language).

## Storytelling

Everyone likes a good story, and it's likely that the story shared in a sermon is going to be better remembered the following Wednesday than the three points the pastor was trying to make. Whenever possible, share things in story form. We and your audience thank you for that in advance!

## Being Visual

Studies show that social media posts that include images have 180 percent more engagement than posts that don't. Likewise, memory recall rates for text-only sources is only 10 percent, while sources that combine text and visuals have a 63 percent recall rate. So if you want your postings to be noticed and engaged with, and if you want people to remember what you are posting, include visual images! Similarly, video engagement rates are way higher than text-only posting rates, so you should definitely consider the use of videos in your postings too. Note that some social media channels autoplay videos without audio unless the viewer clicks to unmute the video. In such cases you should plan on your video being seen without audio/narration, and add text overlays that share the message you wish to convey. (See [A Straightforward Guide to Text-Overlay on Social Videos](#) for some pointers and examples).

## Adding Value

While we know that helping someone come to faith and grow in the depth of their walk with Jesus is supremely valuable, we want to show our audience that we're also interested in their day-to-day needs and concerns. If you haven't already created a persona and worked through what your target members' interests and concerns are, take a break, go back to the previous chapter, and follow the advice in the "Who" section. Posting things that benefit our audience members in the areas they care about will generate greater reach and engagement. Look for and post things that will bring a smile to your audience's face, make their life a little easier, or give them information they are looking for. Often you can simply repost others' content that fit these criteria. Your audience will appreciate what you've shared and will come back for more, including deeper posts you intersperse among the others.

## Using Hashtags & Keywords

One of the ways you can increase the likelihood of a post being noticed is by using a hashtag. Hashtags are keywords immediately preceded by the # symbol. It's easy to search hashtags on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. See what your target audience members are posting and the hashtags they are using. Then use what you learn to guide the kind of posts you produce and the hashtags you tag them with to potentially develop a greater

following. A way to identify trending hashtags in a certain geographic area is described in the article [Locate Regional Trending Topics on Twitter](#). Posting content along with the associated hashtag increases the chances your audience find your posts, engage with you, and follow you.

## Being Active

You're much more likely to have people checking back in with your social media channel if you post regularly. This may involve locating others' content/postings that you can repost or, alternatively, creating a content calendar and producing a number of content pieces ahead of time, which can then be scheduled for later posting. One piece of advice is to think through the local "calendar" of important events, remembrances, celebrations and holidays, and consider timely imagery/messages you can prepare to share on those occasions.

## Being Brief

Time is valuable, and it is given somewhat grudgingly. Respect your audience's time by not being long-winded. [CHURCHM.AG](#) has an excellent post sharing the optimal length in characters, words or minutes for almost any type of social media posting, and we highly recommend checking out [The Optimal Length for Social Media Updates \[Infographic\]](#).

### Making Sure it Works on a Mobile Screen

In June of 2014 Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg declared, "We're a mobile company now." Not an internet company, not a media company, but a mobile company. Why would he say such a thing? Because Mark recognized that more and more of the world's population is doing media first--and often only--on mobile phones. If you want your social media efforts to have an impact in the parts of the world where you are most likely to interact with the unreached--Africa, Asia, and the Middle East--you had better make sure your media and postings work well on mobile phone screens. That is the device that will mediate the connection you have with your audience in such places.

## Friending & Following Strategically

While it's great to have any and all friends and followers, in some ways you will find that friending and following certain people is key to opening the doors to a greater segment of your intended audience. Intimately knowing your Persona/s as mentioned in the "Who" section of Chapter 2:Developing Your Strategy helps here. Sleuth around both online and off, and find out who are the thought leaders, social leaders, "gatekeepers," artists, and other important members of your intended audience and attempt to friend or follow them. As they and their friends/followers start to notice you, you will be drawn further into the social web of the community you want to reach as they reach out to friend and follow you in return.

## Tracking and Follow-Up

While many companies have a presence on social media and track the engagement and reach of their efforts, far fewer have actually figured out how to track the Return on Investment (ROI) for the money and time they are investing. What effects, if any, are their social media efforts having on their sales and profit margin? Similarly, while we sincerely hope most ministries aren't looking to see how much their social media presence is adding to their profit margin, we should be considering outcomes beyond reach and engagement. Outcomes we are looking for include people coming to faith, taking steps to deepen obedience to and worship of the Lord, and communities being transformed by the gospel.

Some amount of tracking and contact management are required to both create and measure these outcomes. Seriously consider tracking each individual that engages with your social media efforts in any way. As you do this, you want to potentially "score" their level of interest/place in the funnel (discussed in chapter 2) and determine whether you need to take follow-on actions/interactions. (See more on this at the [Media2Movements](#) website). This kind of tracking can be done through something as simple as an Excel spreadsheet or as complex (and expensive) as a Salesforce account. A helpful discussion of needs and possibilities for tracking systems like this (often called Customer Relations Management, or CRM, solutions) can be found in this [CRM Meet and Greet Notes and Recording](#). As people move forward, you can make note of their progress and have good evidence as to the effectiveness of your efforts.

## Analysis, Experimentation and Adjustment

The phrase "Once you stop learning, you start dying" is attributed to Albert Einstein. Indeed, ongoing learning, experimentation, and adjustment are hallmarks of a healthy social media outreach. Even if you feel like you are hitting the mark with your efforts today, the social media platform you rely on may change its system tomorrow. You need to be ready to adjust to accommodate that shift.

Many social media platforms give you means to assess your followers and their reception of your posts. Facebook analytics can give you a lot of detail on your followers. Twitter can tell you how many views individual Tweets had, and [Twitter's advanced search](#) function can give you even further detail. With these data points, it is possible to assess when it is best to post, how often it is best to post, attributes of posts that are correlated with more or less engagement (length, subject matter, use of certain hashtags, images), etc.

While social media platforms provide some measure of free, built-in analytics, a large, usually fee-based industry has blossomed in recent years that can dig even deeper. It can provide greater and more actionable details about your followers and the relative success of your efforts. Providers of such services (listed alphabetically) include Argyle Social, Commun.it, Goo-

gle Alerts, Hootsuite, LikeAlyzer, PostPlanner, SocialBro, Social Mention, TailWind (Pinterest), TweetDeck, and Tweriod.



## Summary

In this chapter we have presented requirements for making the jump into social media. We've also made recommendations for accountability and covenanting for those who believe the Lord is calling them into such ministry. Additionally we've reviewed the concepts of reach and engagement, and covered a number of cross-platform recommendations that can help your social media efforts produce a greater amount of engagement and/or a wider reach. We've also started the conversation about using tracking/CRM tools to measure outcomes as well as assist you in moving your contacts through the funnel you'd like them to travel. Finally, we've taken a look at the importance of analysis, experimentation and adjustment in social media efforts to increase its impact among our target audience.



## Power Tips

1. Pray and ensure that the Lord is in you entering social media ministry. Set up accountability structures so that you have others standing with you as you enter an arena where temptations are rampant.
2. Set your social media pages up so that, within a very few seconds, people are attracted to the images you have set up for your profile and background and, further inspired by your profile description, check you out even further and friend or follow you.
3. Be social- make sure you comment on or repost others postings, respond to comments, etc.
4. Use plenty of images and video. The percent of people who actually view images and video postings is much higher than those who view text-only postings. Recall of details of visual postings versus text-only postings is much higher too.
5. Be regular/consistent. People are more likely to come back and check for postings if you are putting out new ones regularly.
6. Match your activity and interactions with your strategic goals. Make sure the majority of those you are reaching and engaging with are from your target audience- change your tactics if they aren't.
7. Track your interactions with those who engage with you and purposefully act to help them move them along the funnel towards high-level discipleship to Jesus Christ.



## Going Further

Cru's look at [9 Tips for Making Your Social Media Content Awesome](#) and [Social Media is Weird: A How-To Guide on Using Social Media for Ministry \(64 pg\)](#)

The US Agency for International Development's (USAID) [Social Media Guide for CSOS \(84 pg\)](#)

[How to Develop A Winning Social Media Content Strategy](#)

[The 21 Social Media Conversations You're Going to Face: How to Master Them All](#)

[How to Use Built-In Social Media Analytics to Uncover Hidden Insights](#)

[6 Fundamental Tools for Social Media Success](#)

## 4. Facebook and Twitter

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### Two Social Media Giants as a Primer on Social Media Ministry

*Can you imagine doing ministry the last five hundred years and getting away with 'Sorry, I don't do books'?  
Can you imagine doing ministry in the next five years and getting away with 'Sorry, I don't do Facebook'?"*  
Leonard Sweet

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*  
Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)



### Introduction

Social networking was not created by Mark Zuckerberg (creator and CEO of Facebook). But just as brands like Xerox became synonymous with photocopiers and Coke with sweetened, carbonated beverages, Facebook has given definition to how people think of social media. With more than two billion monthly active users - more than 25 percent of the world's population - understanding Facebook is important, though regional preferences and demographics should determine which social platforms are right for a particular audience (for example, WeChat dominates China and LinkedIn is preferred by business professionals).

What is significant about these major social platforms is how they give people a voice and a presence, deliver news, and shape what people believe and value. We can easily and quickly connect to people right next door as well as on the other side of the world. For followers of Christ who take seriously the Great Commission, using social media provides God's people with unprecedented opportunities to be salt and light and present "the Way, the Truth and the Life" in a sea of mixed ideas and "fake news".

This primer uses Facebook and Twitter as models for how social media platforms can be used as effective ministry tools. Even if you don't use these two, the principles in this chapter can be applied to other platforms.

With Facebook the most widely used social media channel, we are going to use it as our starting point for this primer. Along with being the biggest, not surprisingly, it is also the most complex and presents security challenges. Nonetheless, it presents the Church with the greatest opportunity to reach into the lives of people in towns, villages, and cities throughout the world. There are a variety of ways it can be used for ministry.

## Facebook Profiles: Relational Sharing

Personal profiles on Facebook are all about sharing life together--our happy moments, our personal struggles, our successes, and the things we find interesting, educational, informative, or just plain funny. For many, it is a great way to stay connected and know about what is happening in the lives of those you care about. As of August 2017, the average Facebook user spends nearly an hour per day updating his/her status, viewing, liking and commenting on what others have posted, and sharing (reposting interesting things that others have posted). This presents God's people with an amazing opportunity to point people to Jesus.

Facebook has undoubtedly led to narcissism and a lack of authenticity on the part of many users. The best way for God's people to share is to simply be themselves and allow their "friends" a window through which to view their relationship with Christ. Be authentic, yet conspicuously spiritual. Our use of Facebook and other social platforms should flow from a vibrant relationship with Christ. One of the very best ways to do this is to answer the question, "How has the gospel been good news to me today?"

While it is possible to use a personal profile to overtly preach the gospel, the highly social nature of Facebook emphasizes authentic, relational sharing (Facebook Pages are a better place for more overt sharing). The more people see the real you--your successes and failures, your gifts and flaws, your triumphs and your struggles--the more they will be able to relate to you and want to know more. In the following example, the woman posting is very honest about a struggle, but uses it show the hope she finds in Christ. It doesn't sound "preachy," as though she is trying to convince others to think a certain way, but rather natural and genuine. She ends with a Bible verse, which give weight to what she is testifying to.



In other posts, this woman shares things that are humorous and lighthearted, as well. When you post on Facebook, try to do the same. Let your posts reflect your unique, God-given personality, an online reflection of who you are in real life.

Another approach to use on Facebook, as well as other social media sites, is to promote active engagement by asking questions in your posts. This stimulates people to think about their lives and encourages them to participate in a conversation. In the above post, the author could have followed up with a comment like, “Anyone else facing a struggle today? Let me know how I can pray for you.” Whether your questions are lighthearted and fun or designed to make people think deeply, many individuals are looking for invitations to open up and share. As an ambassador for Christ, consider using Facebook and other tools to extend those invitations and point people to Jesus. See Appendix ?? for a helpful list of questions to stimulate

## Facebook Stories: A New Way to Share

Facebook continues to evolve, which requires ongoing learning on our part but also creates new opportunities to share in creative ways. One feature, which can be accessed on your Facebook profile, is called Facebook Stories. Trying to keep pace with the wildly successful feature developed by Snapchat, Facebook Stories are collections of photos and videos you create (wacky filters optional) and share with your friends. They can be viewed only twice by each “friend” before disappearing for good after 24 hours, making room for new content each day. You have the option of sharing stories privately with one or more friends or sharing them on your News Feed for a broader audience (based on your privacy settings). It is unclear how successful this will be, but any time a new feature is released, it can create a “first to market” opportunity for those who are among the first users. Even if you are not among the first, there will likely be some creative ways to use Stories for ministry. To learn more about getting started, see Buffer’s [“Facebook Stories: Everything You Need to Know About Facebook’s Latest Feature.”](#) Snapchat and Instagram both offered this feature first, so consider exploring how it is being used there to help you think through possible uses for Facebook Stories.

## Facebook Pages: Extending Your Influence

Unless you are new to Facebook, you’ve most likely seen or liked one or more “Pages.” Pages are for brands, businesses, organizations, and public figures to create a presence on Facebook (Profiles represent individual people). People who like a Page--and their friends--can get updates in News Feed. Anyone with an account can create a Page or help manage one.

Whereas profiles are the place for connecting within our personal social networks, Pages are for connecting more broadly. They are ideally suited for any broader ministry strategy that seeks to reach outside the confines of an individual’s personal network. A couple of examples illustrate this.

Dr. Aaron Tabor wanted to find a way to encourage people, so he launched the [Jesus Daily Facebook page](#) in 2009 as a hobby effort. It quickly grew in popularity. While not the most “liked” page on Facebook (as of early 2017, it has over 30 million “likes”), by 2011 its simple posts were garnering more likes, comments, and shares from around the world (even in Saudi Arabia) than any other page, beating out perennial social media giants Lady Gaga and Justin Bieber. While the approach taken by Jesus Daily is not necessarily the best model for everyone to follow, its success makes clear that many people around the world are drawn to Jesus and the words of Scripture. Furthermore, reviewing its posts and how interaction takes place can serve as a good model for what is working well in many places around the world.

A more recent and specific example is that of a team working in a Muslim country that is closed to missions work (details withheld for security reasons). Disheartened seeing Muslims dying far faster than they were entering the kingdom of God, the team felt God calling them to make use of Facebook to counter the perception that to be “X” (name of local ethnic group highly self-identified with Islam) is to be Muslim. “The Messiah for X” Facebook page was established in the local language to accomplish this by talking openly about Jesus. In just over two years, the page has received over 20,000 likes and has put the team in contact with numerous Muslims who have demonstrated a sincere desire to know more about Jesus. These contacts are followed up with face-to-face meetings, and many have chosen to follow Jesus and be baptized.

Running a successful Facebook Page requires planning, effort, and time. A single individual can manage a page, but he or she has to commit to putting in the time to plan, create, and share content, and engage with those who respond. See “For Further Learning” below for some helpful resources to get you started with a Facebook Page.

With Pages, get organized by planning and scheduling your posts in advance (leaving room, of course, for spontaneous posts). This can be particularly useful for events you know about ahead of time--holidays, celebrations, etc.

## Facebook Groups & Friends Lists: Go Deeper

Facebook Groups are a way for you to go deeper with a specific group of people. You can organize groups around Family & Friends, Teams & Clubs, Organizations, or School and Work. You can use them to share information, post photos and links, and stay in touch. You can discuss, plan, and collaborate easily and without distractions.

They can be public or private to accommodate the level of visibility they have, a feature ideally suited to regions where privacy is an issue. For a bit of Facebook-crafted inspiration on how

others have benefitted from Groups, view Facebook's promo video. (*Note they use Facebook Stories to talk about Groups*).

What makes Facebook Groups so convenient and powerful is that everyone--well, over 25 percent of the world's population anyway--is already on Facebook. This makes it an ideal place to connect with smaller groups of people who share a particular interest. Facebook has also released a dedicated app, Facebook Groups, which significantly eases the ability to connect with your group without having to use the more cluttered Facebook interface. The app even allows you to create app icons on your mobile's home screen that will take you directly into a specific group (groups can also be accessed through your Facebook profile on your mobile device or on a computer).

Closely related to Groups is the Friends List feature. Look for this in the left column under the "Explore" header. You can create multiple Friends Lists, then use them to share posts with specific subsets of friends. Lists can be created based on geographic location, shared interests, etc. You have full power to choose what lists to create and which of your Facebook friends to add to them.

There are a variety of ways to use Facebook Groups for ministry. They are an excellent way to bring together groups of people with shared interests and promote community. Small churches may wish to use groups as an easy way to share news, prayer requests, and other information with one another. Private groups have been used effectively for discipleship, even in countries where censorship is high.

## Facebook Live Video

Facebook Live Video is covered in the Live Video chapter.

## Facebook Live Audio

Facebook Live Audio brings podcasting together with the interactivity and reach of social media. Here are six reasons to consider using Facebook Live Audio:

1. It provides immediate access to the breadth of the worldwide Facebook audience (more than 2 billion people).
2. It caters to those who enjoy or prefer oral content. Many unreached peoples come from oral cultures. Even in the West, podcasting has been surging in popularity. Aside from preferences for oral content, Facebook Live Audio allows people to continue doing other things, even browsing their Facebook timeline, while they listen.
3. It is interactive. Listeners can "like" what is being broadcast (and see what others like) and even post comments or ask questions in real time.
4. It is accessible to those for whom connectivity is limited or expensive. Facebook Live Audio is not bandwidth-intensive for either the broadcaster or the listeners.
5. It has a very low learning curve. Any mobile phone or other device that has an active Wi-Fi or cellular connection and can run the Facebook app (or access Facebook via a Web browser) can use Facebook Live Audio. Of course, use of an external mic can improve the audio quality and provide a better experience for listeners.
6. Once the audio broadcast is finished, it can be posted to your timeline for people to view.

Here are a few quick ideas for how to begin using Facebook Live Audio:

- Interactive Bible reading or Bible study
- Live prayer meetings. Share a passage of Scripture, comment on current news events, or otherwise engage people; then offer to pray for them (listeners can submit prayer requests as comments).
- Audio broadcasts of church/worship services

There are just a few basic steps to using Facebook Live Audio:

1. Schedule and promote your broadcast so people know when you will be live and will be ready to tune in (spontaneous broadcasts are also possible but might limit your audience). Keeping a regular schedule--for example, every Monday at 14:00 (2 pm)-- will make it easier for people to remember to join the broadcast. Be sure to mention the time zone when sharing the time ([this website can help](#))!
2. Write a brief description of what the broadcast will be about. Use attention-grabbing words that will inspire your audience to listen in. If you will be broadcasting regularly, mention that in the description so that people know to tune in regularly.
3. Choose an image to display during your broadcast. By default, your profile picture will be used.

## Facebook Watch

Announced in summer 2017, Watch is the latest addition to Facebook's growing arsenal of media services. In their own words, "Watching video on Facebook has the incredible power to connect people, spark conversation, and foster community... Now we want to make it even easier to catch up with shows you love. We're introducing Watch, a new platform for shows on Facebook. Watch will be available on mobile, on desktop and laptop, and in our TV apps.

Shows are made up of episodes – live or recorded – and follow a theme or storyline. To help you keep up with the shows you follow, Watch has a Watchlist so you never miss out on the latest episodes."

Shows on Watch can be organic or involve extensive production efforts. Either way, as it begins to roll out in summer/fall 2017, it will almost certainly begin to attract audiences. For those working in minority languages, this may present an excellent "first to market" opportunity. Here are just a few ideas for possible shows: a daily or weekly Bible study, a series that interviews believers about their faith, interfaith debates or discussions, book or movie discussions that draw out spiritual lessons, original dramas with a Christian theme. This could also be a place to repurpose existing video content.

To learn more about Facebook Watch, see the [official Facebook announcement](#).

## Facebook Advertising

With more than two billion people actively using Facebook, finding the relative thimbleful who fit the profile for your target audience might seem like hunting for a needle in a haystack. Thanks to the power of Facebook advertising, however, reaching your desired audience now is anything but impossible. Better yet, it is incredibly affordable, especially in most of the countries that are home to the world's unreached peoples (costs vary by country).

Advertising can be used for a variety of purposes: increasing the reach of your posts, making more people aware of your Facebook page, driving people to an evangelistic website, and more. Is it easy or effective? We have an example of how an investment of \$12 for ads and 30 minutes of time was used to pinpoint a specific group of Muslims in India and share the gospel with 90 of them in their own language ([see story](#)).

Given the low cost and effectiveness of Facebook advertising, it can be a worthwhile way to extend the reach of your ministry. To learn more, see "Advertise to Boost Reach and Engagement" (chapter 9).

## Facebook Examples

### Reaching Out to People in a Closed Country

A worker in the Middle East had to leave the field for family reasons. He wondered how he could impact Arab Muslims with the gospel. God led him to Facebook. Using Facebook's powerful search features, he was able to identify a vast number of young Arab Muslim men on Facebook who spoke English and lived in one of a handful of key cities. One by one, he reached out to these men with an introductory message asking if they would like to discuss spiritual matters and learn more about Jesus. Many didn't respond. Many said no. But he began a dialogue with those who accepted the invitation. Interest was strong enough that he made periodic trips into that country, where he met individually with these men to share with them further. Without diminishing the importance of traditional on-the-ground ministry and relationship building, this man was able to accomplish more in this country in weeks and months than many missionaries accomplish in years.

### Using Facebook to Continue Face-to-Face Conversations

In 2011, a woman attended an event in the United States where she met and "friended" a believer. Noticing an initial sensitivity toward spiritual things, the believer initiated a conversation via Facebook. Each interaction ended with the believer asking how to pray for her. Over the years, prayer was discussed over 200 times!

As time went on, the woman demonstrated an ongoing openness to Jesus. The believer began to share verses from the Bible and, eventually, longer Bible stories with probing follow-through questions: "What did you learn about God? What did you learn about Man? How

do you think God wants us to obey Him? Whom are you going to tell?"

Their study of God's word led to steps of obedience. For example, after a study of David, she shared Psalm 31 on Facebook, and many of her friends responded with delight at the words from this unknown poet.

Over the past six years, ongoing ministry has been maintained through the exchange of more than 4,000 Facebook messages, in addition to other dialogue using Skype and Telegram. This level of contact would be difficult in-country, but through Facebook, this deep, ongoing interaction has been possible. Somewhere along the way, this woman came into the Kingdom and has since shared her story with others who are now also hearing about Jesus and meeting believers.

## Facebook and Security

Facebook has long been a challenge for anyone concerned about security, and for good reason. It has a vast array of settings that impact what is known about you - and those you are "friends" with - and by whom. Facebook periodically changes how it handles all of these things, making security a "moving target." You need to regularly review your account settings to make sure everything is in alignment with your wishes. Whether you're an existing user or preparing to set up a new account, take a few minutes to review [Facebook's own page on privacy](#) and take advantage of the included privacy checkup tool (look for this at the bottom of the page).

The added challenge of Facebook is that it knows more about you than you think. Its use of cookies to track your web activities ([learn more](#)) coupled with its use of data-mining algorithms enable it to develop a growing profile on all of its users. Even those who do not post regularly or who log in infrequently have a growing profile. One easy way for Facebook--and Facebook users--to gather information about you is by looking at your friends and your page likes. It is believed that this information has been used to identify Christian workers in closed countries. Another way Facebook builds its profile of you is through what others share about you. Anytime someone mentions you by name in a photo or text, even if they do not specifically tag you, more is known about you--who you know, who you associate with, what you like to do, places you visit, etc. Facebook also continues to develop its facial and place recognition tools so that even if you are not explicitly mentioned, it might be able to glean information about you by matching your face in photos posted by others and by determining your location from photos that you share.

Given these challenges, security on Facebook needs to be thoughtfully managed. While not an exhaustive list, here are some things to consider:

- Review the above links to learn more about securing your Facebook account.
- Diversify your "friends" and liked pages to make it more challenging for Facebook to create a strong profile of your connections and interests.
- If you live in a sensitive country and want to create a Facebook page, use an alias account or, better yet, find someone who lives outside of the country to establish the page. He or she will then be the owner of the page but can make you an administrator to give you full

rights to manage it.

- Periodically review your Facebook privacy settings and make adjustments as needed.
- If you are a field-based missionary, clearly advise your family, friends, and supporting churches that follow you on Facebook as to what to say or not say when sharing with or about you.
- Organize your friends into “Friend Lists”, then use these groupings of friends to control who can see your posts. For example, if you are from Brazil but serving in Uganda, you could create two different friend lists, then choose whether you want to share a post only with your friends in Uganda, only your friends in Brazil, or with all of your friends (or you could choose to make your post “Public”, which would allow anyone visiting Facebook to find your post). See Facebook’s [“Friend Lists” help page](#) to better understand the use of lists.



## Power Tips

- **Pray.** See your use of Facebook as a spiritual activity. Ask God to give you wisdom about who to become friends with, what to post, how to interact with people, etc.
- **Be conspicuously spiritual.** Let it be known that you love God and have a vibrant, personal relationship with Him through Christ. Be the aroma of Christ.
- **Be authentic.** People are fairly astute when it comes to recognizing if a person is being genuine or not.
- **Be social.** This applies to your use of all Facebook features. Do not merely use Facebook as another tool to broadcast a message. Instead use it to interact with people.
- **Be visual.** Research shows that visual posts get more attention and higher levels of engagement (likes, comments, shares) than do posts that are only text. Images are a great place to start, but the preference for video is soaring.
- **Be consistent.** Post every day as you are able. Based on research, the optimal number of posts to maximize engagement is two times per day. Respond to comments quickly.
- **Be organized.** Use Friends Lists and Groups to segment your contacts. If you are posting to a Facebook Page, plan your posts.
- **Be relevant.** Be mindful of holidays, local events, trending news stories and other topics of interest to your particular audience.
- **Use Facebook hashtags** (sparingly). A hashtag (#) turns a keyword or phrases (no spaces) into a clickable link that helps people find discover your post and/or find posts on that have tagged with the same keyword or phrase. While not used as regularly as they are on other social platforms, they can be useful. See the Facebook Help Center to better understand how hashtags work. Also consider a web search on “Facebook hashtags” for the latest best practices.
- **Be visible.** If you are running a Facebook page, consider spending a small amount on targeted advertising to attract followers. Also consider “boosted posts,” another form of Facebook advertising that can make individual posts visible to more people.
- **Keep Learning.** Stay up on news related to Facebook--security issues, new features, etc.--and periodically review popular profiles and pages among your audience.



## Going Further

[TechBoomer's mini-course on Facebook](#): Eighteen-plus tutorials to help you learn the pros & cons of Facebook as well as how to create and configure your account, share photos and videos, like pages, join groups and more.

[Cru's Facebook learning page](#): a collection of helpful resources on getting started using Facebook for ministry.

[Making the Most of Facebook](#): a one-hour video presentation on how to be "salt and light" on Facebook.



## Twitter

Twitter is a popular, text-based social networking tool that limits users to sharing with one another in 140 characters or less. While used far less than Facebook, it boasts 328 million active monthly users (2Q 2017). Seventy-nine percent are outside of the U.S. and 83 percent of world leaders maintain an account. It has become increasingly visual, with the option of including photos or a video along with the text message. The use of visual images has become increasingly important on Twitter if you want your posts to be seen and read.

While 140 characters--about two brief lines of text--may not sound like much, it is consistent with what people around the globe have become accustomed to through the use of SMS (text) messages, and the format is ideal for creating and consuming on mobile devices. Adding to the appeal and effectiveness of Twitter is the ability to include a hyperlink as well as images or a video (visuals are not part of the 140-character limit). Twitter became still more appealing when it added the ability to incorporate live video through the use of Periscope (see the section on Live Video to learn more on using Periscope for ministry).

Because Twitter requires users to be brief, it is best used as a tool for brief conversations as well as sharing informative, helpful, or provocative content and inviting people to respond. Peter Guirguis ([www.notashamedofthegospel.com](http://www.notashamedofthegospel.com)) demonstrates this well in his [@petenaotg](https://twitter.com/petenaotg) Twitter account:



## Understanding & Using Twitter

Twitter is rich in features and is far less complicated to use than Facebook. Anyone with access to the Internet can navigate to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and begin to browse tweets. Once you have an account, you can choose to follow people or organizations that interest you, and others can begin to follow you. When logged in via a Web browser or app, you will see an ongoing stream of tweets posted by those you follow, and your tweets will appear in the timelines of those following you. Originally tweets were shown purely in chronological order; however, by default Twitter now uses an algorithm to show you tweets it thinks will be of greatest interest to you ([you can change this in your account settings](#)). If your account is set to public, anyone can choose to follow you (when this happens, you will receive a notification) or view your profile complete with a list of all of your tweets (i.e., it is not necessary for someone to follow you to see your tweets). Your tweets will also be included in search results, and anyone seeing your tweets can choose to “retweet” them (share them with their followers), which can exponentially increase the reach of your tweets.

## Security

Twitter provides a variety of ways to address security. At the most extreme level, you can choose to simply consume tweets from public accounts, which does not require an account. To post tweets and interact with others, you will need an account, but you may choose to use an alias and/or a dedicated or secondary email account that is distinct from what you use for most of your email activities. If your account is private, you will need to approve anyone who wants to follow you, and any tweets you post while your account is private will be accessible only to your followers. Direct messaging (“DM” for short) is another way to communicate securely. Direct messages are private, visible only between the sender and recipient.

## Ministry Potential

Twitter is being used in a variety of creative ways for ministry, including sharing the gospel with unreached peoples.

1. Grow your list of followers from among your target audience, and post tweets that engage them. The more specifically you’ve identified your audience, the easier it will be to select or create content worth sharing. For practical insights on how to use Twitter for ministry, consult “General Social Media How-Tos” (chapter 2).
2. Use appropriate hashtags to connect with those who do not (yet) follow you. People interested in a particular topic commonly search for associated hashtags. There is no magic formula for the number of hashtags to use, but a general guideline is using three relevant hashtags per post.
3. Consider developing your own set of custom hashtags to use frequently, and occasionally tweet to encourage others to use them for relevant content also. For example, the Mobile Ministry Forum uses #mobmin, but also uses #mobvid (video), #mobsec (security), and #mobsm (social media).

4. Avoid using Twitter simply as a tool to broadcast content. Instead look for ways to engage people. In your tweet, or even in an attached image, consider asking provocative questions or including a call to action.
5. Advertise on Twitter. If Twitter is a platform being used heavily by those you seek to reach with the gospel, advertising is a great way to increase your reach.



## Power Tips

- Be visual. As with other social media platforms, the more visual your posts are, the more likely they are to get noticed.
- Post regularly. While there is no magic formula to determine how frequently to tweet, research suggests that three tweets per day is optimal.
- Use hashtags wisely.



## Going Further

[TechBoomers' mini-course on Twitter](#): Thirteen tutorials to guide you in setting up your account, creating tweets, sending direct messages, sharing videos, and more.

[Tweeting Church: How Christians Can Use Twitter to Spread the Gospel and Connect Communities](#) by Paul Clifford (available in both print and Kindle versions)

[The Ultimate Evangelism Social Media Swipe File](#), a collection of evangelistic resources ready to share on Facebook and Twitter (use as is or to help stimulate ideas for original content contextualized for your particular audience)

### Other General Social Media Networks

Facebook and Twitter are not the only general social networks to consider using for ministry. There are a plethora of others that have a unique niche based on geography or other demographics. Space doesn't allow a detailed investigation of these, but it is worth being aware of them. Go to the list of social media networks in chapter one or visit the [Wikipedia listing](#).

Scan the list and see if there is a network that is a high priority in your regional focus or your intended target audience (e.g. LinkedIn for business professionals or QZone in China). Many of the principles and examples shared in this guide should provide worthwhile insights on how to begin using these networks missionally with other networks.



## Summary

As our opening quote said, “Sorry, I don’t do Facebook” doesn’t work if you want to reach new audiences today. If you are still in doubt, take a look at the most recent video from [Erik Qualman](#). He makes a compelling argument that question is no longer whether we engage in social media, but only how well we do it. Done in the right way, using social media can open exciting new ministry opportunities. While getting started need not be difficult nor enormously time consuming, simply dabbling in social media is unlikely to yield significant results. Success requires careful thought, good strategy, and some elbow grease. Subsequent chapters will provide ideas and tools to help you succeed.



## Power Tips

- Think of social media in a way that is in line with what the phrase implies--being social. Use it to interact, be vulnerable, show your heart, and engage.
- No one likes a one-sided conversation. Be proactive about two-way conversations.
- Start with the question of what role Facebook should play in your ministry or organization. If it’s a popular choice for your region and audience, the time you invest in learning it can be well worth it.
- Talk with others or do an online search to find out what might be some popular social networks.
- Come up with a plan, and then regularly stop and evaluate your progress.
- Be visual . . . make your conversations more colorful with pictures, quotes and other attractive approaches.
- Take the principles of this primer and apply them to other regional or target audience-specific social networks.

## 5. Instant Messaging/Chat Apps

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The fastest growing segment of social media today

*The first rule of social media is that everything changes all the time. What won't change is the community's desire to network.*

*Kami Huyse*

*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

*Colossians 4:5-6*



### Introduction

The ability to connect with individuals is faster and easier than ever before in the history of our world. We attribute this in part to the rise of instant messaging/chat app services (to be referred to henceforth simply as chat apps) over the last five years. WhatsApp, introduced only three years ago, now has over one billion monthly active users. Chat apps, in general, are now installed by nearly two-thirds of all smartphone owners. Additionally, the innovation in chat apps development far exceeds most other areas of the mobile and social media world.

Not only do chat apps allow us to connect with individuals, but a growing number of services and companies are using chat apps to better connect with their existing and potential customers, and to improve their brand experiences. In this chapter we look at the various chat apps and present ways ministries can leverage them for Kingdom purposes.

### It's All About Location, Location, Location

In real estate a property's value is most affected by its location. When it comes to chat apps, your audience's location is one of the most important determinants of which chat apps you should consider. SimilarWeb.com provides an annual breakdown of the most popular Android

App	Users	Reach	Regions
 WhatsApp	1 billion +	global	The leading chat app in 56 countries (South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania)
 Facebook Messenger	1 billion +	global	The leading chat app in 49 countries (Dominant in North America and Australia)
 QQ	377 million	regional	China
 WeChat	845 million	regional	China
 iMessage	400 - 500 million	global	Countries with a higher portion of iPhone users will have a higher portion of iMessage users
 Viber	249 million	global	The leading chat app in 10 countries (eight in the Balkans and Eastern Europe)
 Line	217 million	regional	Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Indonesia
 BBM	100 million	regional	60 of BBM's 100 million monthly active users live in Indonesia
 Telegram	100 million	regional	20 of BBM's 100 million monthly active users live in Iran. It's also popular in Iraq, Uzbekistan, Russia, Italy and Brazil

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_instant\\_messaging\\_clients](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_instant_messaging_clients)

<https://www.androidpit.com/whatsapp-vs-facebook-messenger-vs-telegram-comparison>  
chat apps by country which you can find at <https://www.similarweb.com/blog/popular-messaging-apps-by-country>.

Chat app usage patterns will change, and countrywide overviews may not match the reality on the ground in a particular region. Find up-to-date, local data, keep your eyes open and ask around to see what is happening locally. The chart below gives the latest statistics for total monthly active users for the largest chat app platforms and includes the iOS-only iMessage platform.

## Chat Apps Security

Of the chat apps listed on the previous page, the more secure ones are WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, with Telegram a distant third. The [Signal](#) chat app, by Open Whisper Systems, has the best encryption implementation; it has our highest recommendation as a secure chat app. That said, Signal is not one of the more highly used chat apps, and you or your contacts' use of it could increase a government's interest in your activities. One other point: during political and civil unrest, some governments choose to block access to messaging services. So relying on them for your communications in such situations can be problematic.

## Chat Bots: What They Are & Why They Matter

Chatbots are kind of like virtual assistants--akin to customized versions of Apple's Siri or Amazon's Alexa--that work within messaging apps. They sit in the background ready to respond automatically to your audience's questions and comments. While they might sound too impersonal and too complicated for you to bother with, they are spreading like wildfire and will soon be integrated with all sorts of apps and websites that involve social media, messaging, e-commerce, and more. As they continue to become a more significant part of how we live in the digital realm, more and more potential ministry applications will develop. An example of a chatbot created for ministry purposes is the [@ASLBibleBot](#). [Chatfuel](#) is a service that provides coding-free tools to help you create your own chatbots.

## Ministry Case Studies

We're at an early point in the uptake of chat apps by ministries and marketers alike, so how-to's and best practices are few and far between. That said, we'd like to share with you some case studies that ministries in various parts of the world have shared:

### Using WhatsApp in Central Asia

When you're part of a church planting team, one challenge is getting people to read and interact with the Bible for themselves on a daily basis. With this goal in mind, we decided to start doing evening Bible study on our WhatsApp group.

Each morning, the other leader or I copied the passage into the group. Of course, most people have the Bible on their phones anyway, but we felt that having it actually download into the group would be an added impetus to read it. Then each evening for a half hour the group went "live" with members sharing their insights or asking questions about the chapter for that day.

Usually people responded by text, but we also exchanged voice messages. This was helpful when someone had a lot to say (which would

take too long to type) or when the group language was not their mother tongue.

We found that with a group of about fifteen to twenty people, six to eight were “active.” Of those, four or five would be more interactive while another four to five were “lurking,” but not contributing. They were able to listen to the insights, questions and answers, while at the same time reading the passage for themselves.

## Using WhatsApp in Africa

Monday was one of those random days in which I was stuck at home due to illness. A message pops up on our Facebook page from a student who was part of our circle of influence a few years ago. He had left the country but is now back in touch and wants my WhatsApp details. I check his profile and see that he has posted something about forgiveness. I wonder what he thinks of forgiveness? The post about forgiveness is in poor English text and could be from the Bible or Quran; I just can't tell. But I can start a conversation based on this, and I know what direction to take it. I'm excited!

Our WhatsApp chat begins like any other social interaction with the normal greetings on health. I test the waters by sending out a short video clip on happiness. He likes it. I look for something on forgiveness. Nothing suitable springs to mind. I make a note to hunt online and check further into my resources. Before I get a chance to find something, my friend responds. He tells me about being in a foreign land and his desire to meet someone face-to-face. I try to wrack my brain for people I know close to him...

The more I use WhatsApp, the more I am invited to be a member in groups that my friends are in. Some are political, some are immature, one or two have turned frightening. You can sit on the fringes, soak up the way that your friends are sharing, and learn what is normal before saying anything yourself. Or you can invite folks to breakaway groups. You can also completely opt out if things get weird. But unless you have seen what your friends do and how they interact in this format, it is a challenge to know how best to use this medium. Creating a meaningful group is my next challenge. Many of my contacts are happy to receive Christian materials and to interact one-to-one, but no one so far wants to be part of a group where we discuss these things. I've had a small, select group of men reading Scripture on a regular basis. I had hoped that they would settle into a WhatsApp group, but that has not happened yet.

## Resources to Help You Get Going with WhatsApp

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[ch Boomer's 14-part tutorial series on How to Use WhatsApp](#)

Cru's [How to Use WhatsApp for Ministry](#)

[IFES' TOP TIPS FOR STARTING A WHATSAPP BIBLE STUDY](#)

## Using WeChat in East Asia

As I walk around looking for someone to start a conversation with, I get tired of smiling and saying hello to people without engaging anyone. So I sit down at a local coffee house, pull out my phone, and use WeChat to try and start conversations with those around me.

I can use an option in WeChat called “discover people nearby.” I see 20 people within 200 meters of where I am. With the end goal being a house church, I am to first start a Bible study by engaging people around me. So I send these 20 people all the same message, something like, “What do you think are the biggest problems facing the youth today?”

I try and ask a question most people have an opinion on and are most likely to engage with. Usually about 30 percent respond to me. Then, as I sit in a comfortable chair in the coffee house drinking a latte, I discuss with them these issues of life and the deeper problems of society.

I talk about when I was young and some of the things I did; then I share my own story of faith. This is all a dialogue over WeChat. After an hour or so, several people are no longer chatting with me, but one or two still remain engaged. I then invite those remaining to join me over coffee where we can continue discussions face-to-face.

Occasionally I'll try this around 9:30 PM in a residential area because I can find more potential people to engage with. A larger group of 50 or so may start; then I can head home and continue chatting from there. Over the next few weeks I try and see if I can meet anyone for coffee and share Christ face-to-face. I hope eventually to find enough in that area so a core group of people with spiritual interest can form a fledgling church.

Any messaging platform strategy needs stepping stones to help move conversations further along. Based on the topic of the conversations I'm having, I will send a video or link to an article. I keep it friendly and say something like, “It was great talking with you; I came across this video and thought it might help answer some of what you were asking me (insert link here).” A day or two later I will send another message asking their thoughts on the material I sent. In person I'll

engage in small talk for a while, then say, “What did you think about that video I sent?” This gets the spiritual conversation started again.

## Resources to Help You Get Going with WeChat

[WeChat, QR Codes, and the Future of Mobile](#)

[WeChat: China’s Integrated Internet User Experience](#)

[WeChat Ministry of a Christian: a WeChat Group Equals A Pasture](#)



## Summary

If Facebook is the heavyweight champion of the social media world then instant messaging/chat apps are the up-and-coming rivals bringing a serious challenge to its reign. Instant messaging/chat apps provide a host of new engagement opportunities for ministries but, at the same time, are more limiting in terms of the amount of reach per effort. Whatever your perspective is regarding chat apps’ outreach utility ministries must recognize that this current generation is turning more and more to instant messaging/chat apps as its preferred social media platform and we should be there doing our best to meet the lost where they are at.



## Power Tips

1. Figure out which chat app platform is most popular among your target audience and then set up an account on it and start making connections.
2. Take time to watch and learn the ins and outs of how the platform is used by people in your target audience as well as marketers seeking to reach that same audience.
3. Chat apps are enormously popular now and continue to get new features. Start experimenting with new ways of using them for ministry.



## Going Further

[Chat Apps: New Frontiers of Mobile Audience Engagement by Online News Association](#)

[Guide to Chat Apps](#) by The Tow Center for Digital Journalism

[The Future of Messaging Guide](#) by The Mobile Ecosystem Forum

[Using messaging apps without being creepy](#) by Marketing Week

[Instant Messaging: BBC News on Chat Apps](#) by BBC Academy

[The Bot Evangelist](#) by OneSheep

## 6. Visual Media-Based Channels

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*A picture is worth a thousand words.  
English idiom*

*If a picture is worth a thousand words,  
a video is worth a million.  
author unknown*



### Introduction

While social media platforms continue to evolve, one trend continues to gain momentum: everything is going visual. Twitter prides itself on those precious few 140 characters of text, but images are usually what get tweets noticed and retweeted. Facebook has evolved from a longer form of text-based sharing into one that is similarly focused on visuals. Perhaps one contributing factor to their growing popularity is how they also enable those who are illiterate, or less literate, communicate in meaningful ways. Media studies clearly point toward the growing prominence and soaring popularity of still images, animated GIFs, videos and similar forms of visual media.

Research on how the brain works lends credence to these trends. Our brains are said to process images 60,000 times faster than text. Just as significantly, images have immense power to tell a story, transcend language, trigger an instant emotional response, change our attitudes, stir long-forgotten memories, and even help us visualize our lives in a different light. For many around the world today, visual media is rapidly becoming the preferred and most influential mechanism for communicating. Most, if not all, social networks are becoming increasingly visual; however, the following networks specialize in the use of visual media for social connecting.

### Instagram: More Than Just Pretty Pictures

When Instagram launched in 2010, it was intended as a fun and easy way for photographers to show off their images. It blossomed into so much more. Today Instagram is known around the world and is used not only by photographers but also by teenagers, parents, community activists, big brands, and even world leaders. As of January 2017, it had more than 600 million active monthly users.

The core of Instagram is fairly simple. Create an account, post pictures or videos, add captions (optional), and include hashtags (keywords preceded by the “#” sign) so more people will discover your posts. The pictures you post appear somewhat chronologically in the timeline of anyone who follows you (Instagram uses an algorithm to prioritize posts it thinks will be of the most interest to you), and anyone with access to your photos can like them and/or comment on them. (Anyone can view public accounts from a mobile device or computer, but you must have an account to like or comment on an image.)

One of the things that helped catapult Instagram to prominence was its built-in editing tools. After shooting a photo from within the app or importing an existing photo, users can choose among several simple-to-use filters to give the image a unique look. Editing tools allow you to adjust brightness, contrast, and other aspects of an image. Instagram also gained a following due to the unique square aspect ratio it originally required for images and videos. (Square is no longer mandatory, but it remains the most preferred aspect ratio.)

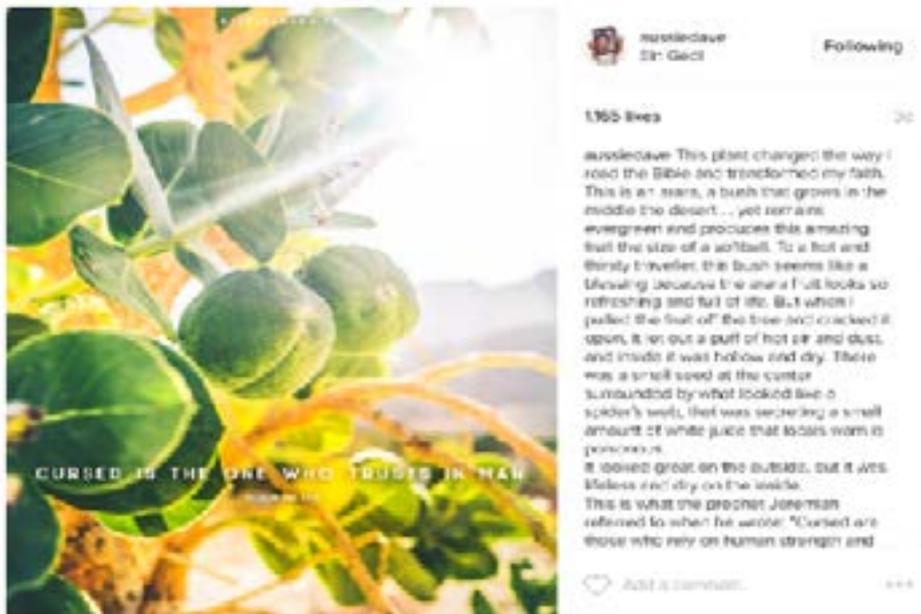
Video has long been a part of Instagram, but clips are limited to a maximum of 60 seconds, a length that is well suited our increasingly brief attention spans. You can apply filters to videos just as you can with images.

While visual media is the core of Instagram’s content, it is no less social than rivals such as Facebook and Twitter. In fact, studies suggest that Instagram far surpasses both of these social media titans in terms of engagement. The social nature of Instagram consists of followers, likes (you can like both posts and comments), comments, and occasionally sharing (You can share posts with a small number of followers, but you can’t repost them, as you can on Twitter or Facebook, without taking a screenshot or getting permission from the original poster). Direct messages (DMs) are also supported and do not require an image. The social nature of Instagram has even fostered face-to-face gatherings of Instagrammers in what are called InstaMeets, and photo walks are a way to organize groups of people for relationship building while capturing the sights of their hometowns or sites of interest.

Like most social platforms, Instagram continues to evolve to retain and grow its user base and encourage greater engagement. In 2014 it launched [Hyperlapse](#), a free iOS app for creating time-lapse videos (Microsoft Hyperlapse is a good alternative for Android users). In 2015, it launched [Boomerang](#), an add-on app that allows you create fun, looping micro-videos that accentuate action. In 2016, Instagram began offering two new features: live video and stories. Live video allows anyone with an account to livestream. Anyone with notifications enabled will get a message at the top of their Instagram feed (and in their phone notifications) alerting them when someone they follow has gone live. Stories are collections of user-selected video clips and images that play as a slideshow. They can be embellished with stickers, filters and text for added impact. A key feature of stories is that they appear in a row at the very top of your Instagram feed, giving them added prominence. To learn more, see CRU’s “How to use Instagram Stories, it’s easier than you think!”

**Tip:** InstaPic makes it possible for Windows 8/10/RT users to quickly edit and share images with captions from the comfort of a computer (larger screen and full keyboard).

[@AussieDave](#) is a pastor and photographer who uses compelling images to share brief devotional content via extended captions. Each of his captions ends with a question to provoke people to think about what he's shared and to respond. In the following post, he talks about how prone we are to concern ourselves with outward appearances while neglecting our inner life. He ends with this question: "What are you doing today to ensure you are healthy on the inside?" Not surprisingly, the post had more than 80 comments (replies). While he doesn't respond to all of them, he does reply to some as a way to further minister to people.



## Ministry Uses

- **Visual texts:** Text overlays on images have been popular since Instagram was launched. Since many Instagram users scan their feeds quickly, captions are often ignored. Visual texts solve this problem. Scripture verses or poignant quotations are popular choices. Use a simple colored background, a textured background, or even an image that helps catch the eyes of those who are scanning quickly. Also, since most images will be viewed on a mobile phone, keep the text brief and use larger fonts that are easily read on smaller screens. Many apps make it easy to create visual texts. For mobiles, consider Over (Android, iOS), Rhonna Designs (Android, iOS), Phonto (Android, iOS, Windows), or even the built-in image tool included in YouVersion's Bible app (Android, iOS, Windows).
- **Sharing Life:** Instagram is a social tool, and personal accounts should get personal. Share thoughts and events from your everyday life, and use the caption to share reflections that draw on Scripture or your personal relationship with Christ. Be conspicuously spiritual, but authentic.
- **Commenting:** There is a strong tendency to use Instagram merely as a platform for broadcasting our content for others to see, but it is a social tool. Be intentional about liking and commenting on the images others share. When using Instagram, ask God to lead you to people and posts that will provide opportunities to serve as an ambassador for Christ. Ask for wisdom in how to respond to them. Post comments to encourage, empathize, celebrate, or even point people to Jesus. One cross-cultural worker in Southeast Asia shared how her efforts to continually like and comment on another person's posts made that person feel

affirmed, valued, and loved. When they bumped into each other in real life, the positive actions begun on Instagram jump-started a fruitful relationship.

- **Searching for hashtags:** One way to proactively use Instagram comments for ministry is to search for posts with particular hashtags. For example, people will frequently use Instagram and other social tools to share how they are hurting (#lonely, #afraid, #feelinghopeless, etc.). These can provide opportunities for us to point people to Jesus the healer, transformer, hope giver, and lover of their souls.
- **Praying over people:** Another proactive way to use Instagram is to pray over the people you encounter there. Let the Holy Spirit guide you to those in need of prayer. Explore their recent posts, then pray for them with insight. Consider commenting on a recent post to bless them--or even to share that you prayed for them.

Beyond use of a personal Instagram account, you can create a theme-based account. Here are a few ideas:

- Highlight and honor local places of beauty or business. You can use this approach to also meet the business owners or others who work at those places. Honor them and share their stories, or remark on something interesting or admirable about them.
- Comment on local news in ways that encourage people to look to Christ or Christ-honoring principles or practices.
- Create a faith-based group account and use the posts to communicate with members. This can be used by small groups, campus ministries, or even Discovery Bible Study groups (The account can be set to private if security is an issue; this will require the account owner to approve any “follow” requests). For an example of this in action, see [“How to Start a Movement on Instagram.”](#)
- Focus on a particular hobby, activity, or interest. For example, if you live in an area where doors or gates are unique, you could share those, but periodically include a biblical reference to doors/gates in your post (e.g. Rev 2:20 - Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”).

In choosing how to orient your posts, consider what might resonate with those you are seeking to reach. What are their interests? What are their struggles? What do they take pride in? What would honor them? What aspects of God’s character might most effectively speak into their lives? The possibilities of using Instagram for ministry are limited only by your imagination and creativity!



## Power Tips

- Use the caption strategically. Be creative. Consider asking a question that encourages viewers to comment. Don’t be afraid to use longer captions, but be sure to capture attention in the first sentence, as this may be all that is visible without viewers clicking on the “more” link.
- One goal of using Instagram is to encourage dialogue. However, it is possible that you will encounter those intent on posting rude or disruptive comments. Offensive or inflammatory comments can be deleted with a swipe, but you can now also [block the use of offensive terms](#) using an Instagram-defined list of terms, or a list that you customize..

- Hashtags are incredibly useful for getting your posts noticed by those not yet following you. Be sure to post them in the local language, or in multiple languages as appropriate. Pay attention to the hashtags being used by others in your audience. Feel free to create your own hashtags, especially if you want to begin a series focused on a particular topic or post about an event you are hosting,
- Develop your own, consistent look with images that are oversaturated, overexposed, use a particular filter, are shot from a particular perspective, include a recurring object or background, etc.
- Grow in your image editing skills. Many people don't realize that Instagram not only provides a list of preset filters for styling your images, but also allows you to adjust a variety of settings. Another option is to learn to use other excellent editing apps such as Snapseed or VSCO (both are free).
- Spice up your posts with the use of videos, animated GIFs, and Boomerangs (looping micro-video that works well with quick motions). Create stunning panoramic images (or even get creative with visual text that spans multiple images) using an app such as InSwipe or Pannify, which automatically segment panoramas into a series of square images that can be posted as a carousel.

## Snapchat: It's Not Just for Tweens and Teens

Among the fastest-growing social media tools, especially among teens and young adults (63 percent of users are 18- to 34-year-olds), Snapchat is probably the least used thus far for ministry. While still known for its disappearing, private, visual messages, Snapchat continues to innovate. It has grown to such prominence that it is now a key tool for marketers in the secular arena.

Snapchat is a cross between instant messaging, Instagram, and Facebook. It provides people with a quick, organic way to share life, using text, images, and brief videos. "Snaps," or messages, are shared with one or more individuals, and teens pride themselves on [Snapstreaks](#) ("streaks" for short), the number of days they've shared a snap with a friend daily within a 24-hour window. Images and videos can be embellished with a variety of filters as well as text and doodles, features that lend themselves to the creative nature of Snapchat and keep younger users highly engaged.

[Snapchat Stories](#) were introduced in 2016 and are different from basic "snaps." They are an accumulation of videos and images that tell the story of your day, or to be more precise, the previous 24 hours. Once an element in your Story (an image or a video) is 24 hours old, it automatically gets dropped to make room for new elements. As Snapchat itself describes it, "The end of your Story today is the beginning of your Story tomorrow." While basic snaps are private, Stories are visible to all of your followers, offering the opportunity for greater reach and influence.

Because of the way Snapchat limits the viewing time of photos and videos to a maximum of 10 seconds, it demands the attention of your audience. This makes the message seem important and fleeting, which can lead people to take action and interact more than they might on other platforms. Sending individual snaps (photo, video, or text messages) to your contacts is a great way for the message to seem personal and not a general call to action or announce-

ment.

However, if you want a message to last for a 24-hour span and reach more people, posting to your Story is a more effective way to share. Avoid constant calls to action or announcements, as your audience will eventually get annoyed and start ignoring your snaps. Conversely, to increase engagement, consider using popular topics and styles of snaps, such as live coverage of events, behind-the-scenes exclusives, exciting activities, or a day in the life. If you're artistic, create drawings rather than take pictures. Each of these forms of storytelling will be an effective tool to help calls to action or announcements stand out. Ultimately, Snapchat is a tool for short-form storytelling, and the more creative you are in sharing your story or message, the more interaction you'll have.

Snapchat has a few downsides. First, Snapchat makes it challenging to discover users in your contacts list whom you may want to follow. For this reason, building your personal network can take time. To avoid talking to an empty room, share your Snapchat scan code or username on other social networks and encourage others to follow you. Growing an audience with Snapchat is definitely less intuitive than with other social media channels, but the individual interaction often outweighs the initial struggle to grow in views. A second downside is the darker side of Snapchat, particularly for youth. [Click here](#) for information about some of the negative influences they may be exposed to. Finally, be aware that while snaps and stories disappear after seconds or hours, they may not be truly gone. Users in the early days of Snapchat quickly realized that while they couldn't easily share or save snaps, they could capture a screenshot to be saved or shared.

Snapchat continues to look for ways to safeguard your privacy. It will now alert you when someone takes a screenshot. However, if another camera is used to capture an image or video of a snap, there is no way for the app to know. Be aware that anything you share on Snapchat can be captured and shared by those you share with. And because content passes through Snapchat's servers, it could be archived, at least temporarily, and subject to interception by authorities.



## Power Tips

- Snapcodes, unique to every user, are the common way for Snapchat users to connect with one another. However, you can now create custom snapcodes that point to any web page. This is a powerful way to direct people to your web-based content! To create a snapcode, simply go to Settings - Snapcodes - Create Snapcode, then enter the URL for the web page you'd like to share.
- Use the [Snapchat Group feature](#) for chatting with a group of up to 16 people. As with direct messages to individuals, messages in group chats disappear after 24 hours (unless you save them first). Chats can even include voice and video notes. This could be used, for example, for discipleship, prayer, and other ministry efforts.
- Create a custom [geofilter](#) for other Snapchat users to use - perfect for any ministry that has a physical space where people can gather.
- Get creative with your Snapchat content using [Spectacles](#), Snapchat-made sunglasses that record point-of-view video for posting directly to Snapchat. Weird? Yes, but they provide a way to create unique and engaging content.



## Going Further

[“Hootsuite’s How to Use Snapchat: A Guide for Beginners”](#)

[CRU’s collection of resources for getting started with Snapchat and Snapchat Stories](#)



## Pinterest

Pinterest launched in 2010 and has become a big player in the social media game. Highly visual, it allows registered users to organize boards based on themes where they can also repin content from others. Most of its users are female, educated, and affluent, although male use is increasing. Users love collecting and sharing ideas, products, recipes, infographics, and more.

To learn more about using Pinterest for ministry, see CRU’s [“Pinterest 101”](#) and [“8 Ways Churches are Using Pinterest”](#) by Margaret Feinberg. See also AdWeek’s [“The Large Untapped Opportunity with Pinterest”](#) for helpful insights from a secular perspective.



## YouTube

YouTube, the ubiquitous video-sharing platform, needs no introduction. It is practically synonymous with the word “video” and made “viral” (or “gone viral”) a household word. In 2011, YouTube became the second most-used search tool on the planet behind its parent, Google, and it continues to be ranked as one of the most-used websites in most, if not all, countries to this day (it certainly doesn’t hurt that Google can prioritize YouTube content when delivering Google search results).

With the meteoric rise of video content, YouTube cannot be ignored. In February 2017, YouTube announced a new milestone: one billion hours of YouTube content were being viewed daily. In sharing about where people in his country now go to have their religious questions answered, one cross-cultural worker in the Middle East commented, “We live in the age of i-everything--iPhone, iPad, and now even the iSheik. Instead of going down the street to the local mosque, Muslims here simply pull up YouTube on their mobiles.”

## Ministry Potential

Clearly YouTube presents the Church with an enormous opportunity to share the gospel with the world in creative, relevant ways. This can take two forms.

## Creating and Posting Videos on YouTube

Any video that can be leveraged in some way for ministry, barring copyright restrictions, should be posted on YouTube. YouTube itself is a destination where people around the globe actively go to be informed and entertained. When posting a video, you have the option of allowing comments, which creates the opportunity for social interaction. However, many posters disable commenting, using YouTube simply to host videos. Within the video description, or even through a call to action in the video itself, video creators can direct people to a website, email address, social media account or another form of media where viewers can learn more and/or interact with others. A few ideas of original content to consider include:

- Scenic videos with background music
- Bible story videos (anyone can learn to use free tools to create simple but effective still-image-based videos that combine images, story narration, and local music)
- Original, dramatic films (short films or feature-length films)
- Music videos
- Teaching videos, including sermons, Bible teaching, etc.
- Worship in a local context

## Sharing YouTube Content

While YouTube is a destination itself for media consumption, one of the most powerful ways to use YouTube content is to share it. YouTube makes it easy to embed videos on other websites, share direct links on other social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), send via email or share in other creative ways. This allows you to wrap any available YouTube content with your own message--a question, a story, a testimony of God's work in your life, or even something fun and lighthearted.

What might this look like? Consider what Laura Krokos, co-author of the excellent book [Reach: How to Use Your Social Media Influence for the Glory of God](#), has done by leveraging YouTube, Instagram, and a dedicated website to share the gospel. Laura created a series of YouTube videos called "The Story of the Stars" that explain how God has made Himself known through His creation of the cosmos. Most of the videos are named after a specific constellation. [Images were posted on Instagram](#) to make people aware of the videos and provide a place where people could dialogue, if desired. A special website was also created to provide another way for people to discover the videos and hear the stories: [www.thestoryofthestars.com](http://www.thestoryofthestars.com).

## YouTube Security & Privacy

YouTube offers three levels of security for video content: public, unlisted, and private. Public

content is visible to everyone and will be indexed and included in web search results. Unlisted content does not get indexed, so will not be included in web search results, but anyone with the URL can view the video and share it with others. Private videos can only be viewed by those given explicit permission via email to do so. Attempts to access the video URL without permission will result in an error message.



## Power Tips

1. As was done in the example above, use YouTube in conjunction with other social platforms. This type of multi-channel approach takes a little more work but can help you reach many more people.
2. Add [subtitles and/or closed captioning to your videos](#) to increase engagement and understanding among viewers who are deaf, cannot hear well, or are not proficient in the language spoken in your videos. Subtitles, captions, and even metadata can be done in multiple languages to extend your videos' reach. YouTube even provides [tools to help you with translation](#).
3. Consider making the move to [360-degree and VR](#) (virtual reality) content. This is likely to be one of the hottest trends in video. 360-degree cameras, such as Samsung's Gear 360, can now be found for less than \$100.



## Going Further

Indigitous offers some helpful insights in its post, "Making YouTube Work for You." And, of course, the best source for learning how to grow in your video creation and sharing skills is... YouTube!

## SlideShare



SlideShare, owned by LinkedIn, is highly used in academic and professional communities. It is the place to "share what you know and love through presentations, infographics, documents, and more." Over 18 million resources have been shared on SlideShare, and it has more than 80 million monthly visitors, most coming from outside the U.S. The Mobile Ministry Forum, which has a multi-platform digital presence, commented, "We are now firm believers in SlideShare. We frequently share presentations on YouTube or on our blog, but on a whim, we loaded some on SlideShare. We were shocked when we later saw the stats and realized that our content was having far more reach on SlideShare than any of our other platforms!"

One benefit of SlideShare is that it requires minimal effort compared to many other social platforms. Simply create an account and start posting your presentations, infographics, or documents. If you are already creating meaningful content in these formats, this is a simple, free, and effective way to extend the reach and influence of that content. Built-in tools allow users to easily share content via email, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Content can also be downloaded.

## Ministry Potential

SlideShare is all about the content. Consider touchpoints in your particular socioreligious and cultural context. Create and share content that speaks clearly to your particular audience. Consider content that will promote the idea that Jesus is for them. Use appropriate communications forms, such as stories. As much as you can, present content in the local language. Refute common myths or misperceptions about Jesus and the Christian faith. Honor the people and culture you are addressing. Avoid anything that is demeaning, derogatory, or might otherwise provoke a negative response. Use visual images that are appropriate in your particular cultural context. Include explanatory notes to accompany your slides, using the “Notes” feature. Consider including on the final slide some call to action--what you want viewers to do in response to what they’ve just seen and read. For example, encourage them to visit your website, view a follow-up presentation, or download a related resource such as a Bible, a video, or an audio story. Be sure to respond, as appropriate, to comments people leave on your SlideShare page. Create an appropriate profile with contact details leading interested viewers to people and information sources that can address their questions or desires to dig deeper.

## SlideShare Security

Due to its somewhat limited social features, security risks associated with SlideShare are low. Creating an account requires only an email address. Unless you have a public profile you don’t mind associating with your SlideShare account, consider using an alternate email address--even creating a new, dedicated address--that cannot be easily tied to you. If you live in a region where security is a significant issue, consider having a friend or colleague outside of your country use his/her email address. Craft your SlideShare profile with security in mind. For example, do not provide your phone number or other personal information.



### Power Tips

- **Be visual.** Appropriate visual images capture attention and are memorable. You’ll need text on SlideShare since viewers don’t have the benefit of hearing you present, but try to keep your text brief. Use the notes section to provide details.
- **Be compelling.** Your title slide should be visually appealing and attract attention. Use a provocative or descriptive title that makes your potential audience want to see what you have to share. Back it up with a description that further draws them in.

- **Be brief**, but not too brief.
- **Be social.** While the focus is on content, SlideShare is community-oriented, and the more you participate, the greater your influence will be. “Like” and comment on content that others post, and consider sharing it as well. This will help get you and your content noticed, viewed, and shared.
- **Be informed.** Follow SlideShare on Twitter, Facebook, and Google+ and read the Slideshare blog to keep up with new features, tips, and other helpful resources. A growing number of resources are available to help learn.

## Tumblr

Tumblr is a visual-based microblogging platform that was launched in 2007 and acquired by Yahoo in 2013. With nearly half of its users based in America, it may not be the ideal place to connect unreached peoples with the gospel. Still, as of January 2017, Tumblr boasted 550 million users, the vast majority of those under age 25. It has become known as a place where you can say pretty much anything you want while remaining fairly anonymous (not surprisingly, pornography has more than a small presence on Tumblr, though the site does try to minimize what is visible without users taking intentional steps to discover it). Social features include the ability to follow other Tumblr users, like and repost Tumbls, and ask questions and leave comments. Should Tumblr be used for social media ministry? It clearly is not for everyone, but there are at least 550 million reasons to consider doing so.



## Going Further

- [wikiHow’s “How to Use Tumblr”](#)
- [“How Tumblr Can Boost Your Youth Ministry” \(2015\)](#)
- [The New Evangelization on Tumblr \(2012\)](#)

## Popular Forms of Visual Media

When thinking of visual media, still images (graphics and photographs) and video are the two main forms that come to mind, but there are other forms to consider using as well. Consider learning about and using these regardless of which social platforms you are using.

### • Memes

A meme is an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In popular usage, memes are visual images, usually with text overlays, use for humor or shock value. They are one of the most engaging forms of media on social platforms today. Lifewire’s article [“What is a Meme?”](#) provides some helpful insight on what memes are and how they are being used today.

While they should not be overused, memes are worth using on occasion. [Memes.com](#) offers

popular memes to inspire you, as well as a “meme generator” for creating your own. Numerous mobile and browser-based apps are available. For Android devices, try Instameme. On iOS devices, consider Mematic.

- **Visual Text**

Given the higher popularity of visual media over text, there has been a huge trend toward sharing text visually. Visual text images are very similar to memes but are typically used to ask questions or share information such as a witty quotation or a poignant Bible verse (often referred to as a (Scripture graphic). Normally these graphics have enlarged text over a plain, colored, and/or textured background or over a scenic background.

Creating visual texts is incredible simple with the plethora of mobile and web-based creation tools now available. One of the best web-based tools is Canva. On mobile devices, consider apps such as WordSwag, Over, or Phonto. Users of YouVersion’s popular Bible app can quickly and easily [create a Scripture graphic](#) right within the app.

- **Animated GIFs**

GIF is a common type of graphic file that has been around for decades. An animated GIF combines multiple frames (images) that play in succession, much like a video. Social media has led to a resurgence of animated GIFs due to their video-like quality and relatively small file size, which makes them easy to share. Like memes, they are great attention grabbers in social media posts, and there are numerous mobile and browsers-based apps available to help create them (see “[5 Great GIF Maker Apps for iPhone and Android](#)”), as well as sites for searching for ready-made GIFs that can be shared in your posts (Giphy.com).

- **Emojis and Emoticons**

No talk of visual media could be complete without mention of one of the biggest trends in social media today--the use of emojis and emoticons. While easy to dismiss as silly and childlike, these tiny graphics have gone heavily mainstream to the point of impacting engagement levels of our social media posts. They have become so ubiquitous, in fact, that most voice-to-text services on our computers and phones now automatically replace terms like “smiley face” with a corresponding image. A growing number of studies reveal the effectiveness of the pint-sized pictographs.

By the way, is it “emojis” or “emoticons”? Apparently there is a difference. Emoticons stem from the earliest images used to express a feeling (happy, sad, angry, etc.). Emojis are pictographs that represent an object or activity--food, people, dancing, sports, etc. While emojis seems to have emerged as the preferred catch-all term, the important thing is learning to use them. The best way to get started is simply by observing how they are being used on whatever social networks you are using; then follow suit.



## Going Further

[Emojipedia.org](https://emojipedia.org) - your most comprehensive source for finding and using emojis  
[“7 Reasons to Use Emoticons in Your Writing and Social Media, According to Science”](#)  
[“This is Why You Should Use Emojis to Boost Engagement on Social Media Ads”](#)  
[“Here are Rules of Using Emoji You Didn’t Know You Were Following”](#)  
[“How to Use Emojis” \(Bing search results\)](#)

## Micro-Videos

Micro-videos are a particular type of visual media that can be used across the spectrum of social media. They are ideally positioned to capitalize on what Google has dubbed “[micro-moments](#),” a trend in consumer behavior brought about by the mobile revolution.

Micro-videos are brief video clips or animated images. While limited in terms of what you can communicate in such a brief segment, micro-videos are popular because they don’t take long to watch, and the files are small. It can be argued that animated GIFs were the original micro-videos, and their popularity has seen a resurgence with the rapid growth of visual media. Instagram and Vine (now defunct, but resurrected as Vine Camera) helped popularize micro-videos on social media with their respective 15- and six-second video limits. The format has caught on, gaining renewed and growing interest as a result of Snapchat, which encourages messaging through the use of micro-videos. Snapchat’s model has proved so popular that other networks have since mimicked Snapchat with their own versions: Facebook Stories, Instagram Stories, Messenger Day, and WhatsApp Status. YouTube has also picked up on this trend and challenged attendees at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival to [tell stories with six-second bumper ads](#).



## Summary

The power of visual media to both inform and move us emotionally is undeniable (to better appreciate this, consider reading *Worth a Thousand Words: The Power of Images to Transform Hearts* - now available free as an eBook). It is, therefore, no surprise that visual media continues to soar in popularity, nor is it a surprise to see the growing variety in the forms of visual content (we didn’t even mention cinemagraphs or plotagraphs!). Learning to share visually may well become one of the most important communications skills of our time, so, it is critical that we grow in our ability to communicate the beauty of the gospel visually. Before you feel overwhelmed thinking you need to get a Master’s degree in visual media, go back to the basics. Figure out what forms of visual media your audience prefers. Start there, and simply be willing to learn and try new things.

# 7. Live Video

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## Ministry in Real Time

*Broadcast to the largest audience in the world  
with the camera in your pocket!*

*Facebook Live tagline*

*And he said to them, “Go into all the world and  
proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.*

*Mark 16:15 (ESV)*



## Introduction

The ability to broadcast live video has been around for several years but, with technology continuing to improve around the globe, live video is going mainstream. With little effort, it is possible to find people broadcasting everything from personal ramblings and family celebrations to major breaking news stories. The ability to get a real-time glimpse into what is happening in random places around the world is amazing, but social media is helping to drive the popularity of live video. It is no longer simply about one-to-many broadcasting. Today’s live video services allow viewers to interact with broadcasters in real time with comments, questions, and emojis showing their emotional reaction to what is taking place.

The best way to understand live video is to experience it. To browse and watch available Facebook Live broadcasts, visit [www.facebook.com/livemap/](http://www.facebook.com/livemap/), then click and drag the map to find an area of the world you are interested in. Each blue dot represents a live broadcast. On mobile devices, install Twitter’s Periscope app. Within the app, click on the globe icon at the top of the screen to view an interactive map with dots showing the number of broadcasts taking place around the world. Tapping one of the dots will display a list of all available broadcasts.

## Ministry Potential

Live video, especially the more social-oriented services that allow real-time interaction, is fairly new. This presents gospel workers with a unique opportunity to capture people’s attention by being among the “first to market.” Both Periscope and Facebook Live, and perhaps other services, allow people to easily find live broadcasts based on geography. As more people have the bandwidth to view live video, and learn of its availability and ease of use, the more popu-

lar live video content will become. Facebook rolled out [Live 360](#) to the masses in March 2017. This allows people across the globe not only a window into your world, but also to feel like they are experiencing it with you through the immersive power of 360-degree video. In the meantime, here are a handful of ideas on how to begin using live video for ministry:

- **Broadcast your own live event.** Live video streaming provides unique opportunities for people to have a window into your life for a brief period --to see the world through your eyes-- and to interact with you as you stream. Often livestreams are casual, with little planned out ahead of time. Other times they can be highly planned and structured. Some potential ways this can be used for ministry include:
  - Bible studies or other teaching/training
  - Group coaching/mentoring
  - Virtual prayer walks or group prayer times (e.g., a team on the field could invite supporters back home to join them for a live prayer time).
  - Sharing worship services, celebrations (e.g., baptisms)
  - Demonstrations (how-to type videos)
  - Sharing cultural events or showing where you live, work, or are visiting
  - Sharing what it's like to "walk in your shoes," a behind-the-scenes look at your life or how you do something
- **Use it as a way to experience and learn about another culture.** If you are preparing to visit another country, consider looking for live broadcasts from that area to get an insider's look at the local culture.
- **Interact with others in a live broadcast.** When you open a live broadcast, you may see a chat box that allows you to join the conversation. Engage the presenter and the rest of the audience in a kind and respectful manner, but also in a way that might motivate them to learn more about Christ. This is an excellent opportunity for those with experience in a particular language and culture to speak into the lives of locals.

## Live Video Tools

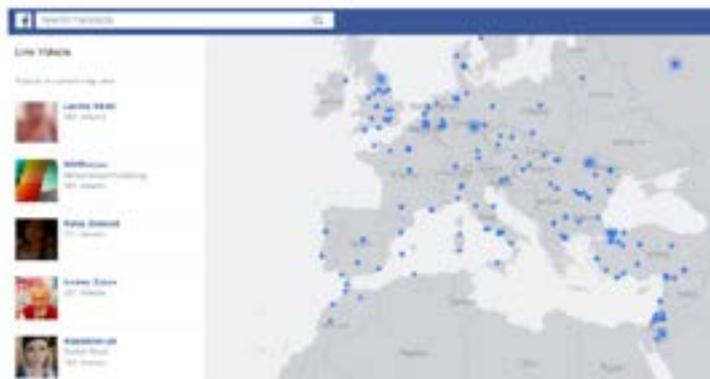


Facebook Live launched in early 2016 and capitalizes on the base of two billion active Facebook users around the world. Because it integrates directly into Facebook (live video for anyone you follow will appear in your timeline), Facebook Live has a huge advantage over other live video services. Anyone with a Facebook account and a mobile phone or other device with a camera and internet connection can begin sharing a live video simply by tapping a button within Facebook.



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While broadcasting video with Facebook Live was designed for use on a mobile device, Facebook began rolling out the ability to broadcast from a computer in March 2017, a feature that should allow for more creative, higher-quality broadcasts. Whether using a computer or mobile device, browsing available Facebook Live videos and viewing them from your computer is easy to do. Live video from anyone you follow will be available in your news feed. Alternatively, there is a [Live Video](#) link under the “Apps” section of the menu panel (left side of the screen) when viewing Facebook in your browser.

Each blue dot represents a live broadcast. Basic navigation tools allow you to pan around the globe to see what is available. Use the +/- buttons on the map to zoom in or out (zooming

in will likely reveal far more live broadcasts than first appear when you are zoomed out). To change locations, simply click and drag the map left, right, up or down. To view a broadcast, click on the blue dot on the map (simply pointing at it with your mouse will bring up a live preview).

For a good example of someone using Facebook Live for ministry, see the Facebook page for Isik Abla, a Turkish evangelist who is actively broadcasting live video to reach Muslims: <https://www.facebook.com/isikablatv>.



## Periscope

Periscope is Twitter's live video tool and integrates nicely with Twitter, though it is a separate mobile app. If your primary audience has a significant presence on Twitter, then you should strongly consider Periscope for your livestreaming. Anyone following you on Twitter will see a message in his or her Twitter feed indicating when you go live. Of course, you can alert your followers ahead of time, letting them know when you plan to go live. Your livestream is archived and available for replay for 24 hours after you end and you can save it to your device's camera roll if desired, allowing you to extend its life. So what is Periscope all about? In Periscope's own words:



“Periscope was founded on the belief that live video is a powerful source of truth and connects us in an authentic way with the world around us. We are fascinated by the idea of discovering the world through someone else's eyes. What's it like to see through the eyes of a protester in Ukraine? Or watch the sunrise from a hot air balloon in Cappadocia?

“While there are many ways to discover events, movements and places, we realized there is no better way to experience something than through live video. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but live video lets us explore the world together.”

The ability to interact in real time with people of interest has been a real draw for Periscope users. The tool was quickly adopted by well-known Twitter “celebrities,” including influential Christian leaders such as Michael Hyatt. Interactivity on Periscope includes the ability to “heart” (like) what is being shared at any given moment as well as to comment. Anyone can view public broadcasts, but to interact with the presenter, viewers must be logged into their Periscope account (which, for ease of use, can be tied to a Twitter account).

Periscope now offers users the ability to create broadcast-quality live streams through its new Periscope Producer tool. Use of this tool will require some advanced video skills, but it may be of interest for ministries wanting to leverage the power of Periscope but offer content with

much higher quality. Learn more: Periscope Producer.

To better understand how your Scopes are being received, the app provides you with basic stats, including number of live viewers, number of times a video is replayed, and the number of hearts (likes) it receives.

Periscope offers some basic features to help you address security concerns. Scopes can be made private or public, allowing you to broadcast to a select few or to the world. Location sharing can help others find your livestream, but can be turned off if that is a potential risk. If you do choose to share your location, Periscope no longer shows your exact location, but instead shows a more general area.

Some may argue that the initial popularity of Periscope is beginning to wane now that Facebook Live, Instagram, and others are making their presence felt. While this may be true, consider where your audience is spending its time, then “fish where the fish are biting.” See [11 Smart Ways You Can Use Periscope for Your Church Communications](#) to stimulate your thinking about how Periscope might be used in your ministry.



## YouTube Live Streaming with Super Chat

In YouTube's ongoing battle to remain the top purveyor of video content, Google announced in January 2017 that YouTube is going to begin supporting live video with interactivity. The feature is rolling out first to accomplished YouTubers with large followings, but it should be available to everyone at some point. It boasts a “super chat” option that allows viewers to pay to pin their comments to the top of the chat screen for up to five hours.

YouTube is already synonymous with video and, given its backing by Google, likely will quickly become one of the most popular tools for live video. See [“How to Broadcast with YouTube Live”](#) for a good primer on getting started.



## Skype

Skype was one of the early pioneers of online video chatting. Now owned by Microsoft, it continues to evolve and innovate, though in light of a plethora of new, more social tools, its future is uncertain. In addition to messaging apps like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Telegram, other similar services now include Google Hangouts and Zoom. However, Skype has an established base of users around the world along with mobile apps for most platforms, and people have found creative ways to use it for ministry. One organization pairs believers with groups of ESL learners for online ESL training. The provided curriculum helps create opportunities for the teacher to have group or private discussions about faith-related topics. One worker, who had spent several years in Central Asia, has made use of Skype in a similar way. The ability to view one another in real time enhances the personal connection that people experience. Skype allows people to connect for live interaction (text, voice, and/or video) as well as message one another. It also allows for files to be shared.

## Other Options

Live video is gaining traction, and there are sure to be more and more options available. Other tools to consider right now include:

- Instagram
- Google Hangouts
- LiveStream

## Security

Today, almost anyone anywhere in the world is capable of broadcasting and receiving live information. This same connectivity creates new risks for those broadcasting and those receiving alike. The standard methods of communicating online or via mobile can leave a trail that is easy for skilled individuals to monitor. These digital trails not only can put you at risk but may endanger your contacts and colleagues as well. Be sure to get permission from those who might be recognizable in your live videos, and be aware of how other content appearing on your videos might disclose information about you or others. While it is important to consider going where your audience is, those in more sensitive areas may want to first explore Periscope or Instagram, which allow for easier anonymity than does Facebook. Improvements in facial recognition technology, coupled with revenge tactics such as [doxxing](#), might be reason to consider not showing faces of those living in areas that might be hostile to gospel work.



### Summary

While the world hasn't yet seen a mass migration to live video streams, they bring together the power of video and real-time communications at a time when technology is beginning to make such a genre feasible. Expect to see rapid growth in live video in the near-term, and begin planning for how you can best capitalize on this trend.



### Power Tips

As with anything, practice makes better, so the best way to learn is to start doing. These power tips should help you get off to a strong start.

- Keep in mind that these livestreams are social. Unlike traditional one-way broadcasts, they are intended to be interactive. Encourage interaction along the way. Acknowledge people by name (their screen names will be visible when they comment) and respond to their

comments and questions while you broadcast.

- Be prepared. The organic nature of live video can be part of the appeal (consider how reality TV shows have become so popular), but that doesn't mean you shouldn't take time to think about what you are going to share--or even go a step further by scripting what you are going to share. If you expect an audience to stay on with you, plan how you can keep them engaged.
- An important part of any good video is audio quality. Consider investing in a mobile-friendly mic that will cleanly capture your voice or other audio source(s).
- Give thought to how to capture the best video. Think about how to position your camera or mobile device to provide the best perspective, how to improve the lighting, etc.
- Timing: Consider when your intended audience is most likely to be available and able to view your live video. Replays may be possible, but much of the value of this type of content is the interaction that can occur when people are viewing live. Also, be sure to let your audience know ahead of time when you'll be live. Use your various social media accounts to do this, and encourage your followers to spread the word. Facebook Live allows live video to be scheduled as a Facebook Event, making it easier to get the word out.
- Increase your reach: To attract more viewers, choose a compelling, descriptive title. Also consider targeted advertising (see section on advertising) or using some sort of promotion (e.g., "I will give away five copies of my new eBook if we reach at least 100 viewers!" or "Join my livestream at 3pm for a chance to win a \$25 Starbucks gift card!").
- Practice, especially if you are new to live video. Use your computer's webcam or your phone to record yourself, then review it to find ways you can improve. Then consider broadcasting to a live audience consisting of trusted friends or colleagues who can provide further coaching on how to improve.



## Going Further

[CRU's Tips on Hosting a Facebook Live Video](#)

[E4e's Facebook Live is an Easy Ministry Tool](#)

[How Your Business Can Capitalize on Facebook Live](#)

[5 New Facebook Live Video Features for Marketers](#)

# 8. Social Gaming & Gamification

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## Social interaction through games as a bridge for the gospel

*I long for games to be inviting spaces where college students will be able to explore facets of life following Jesus, and for this exploration to be an initial on-ramp toward following Jesus with the rest of their lives.*

*Bret Staudt Willet*

*Missional gaming is not simply playing games and believing in Jesus.*

*It's seeing gaming as an opportunity to reach out to others in love, to fulfill the Great Commission even in our recreational gaming time.*

*Andrew Fallows*



## Introduction

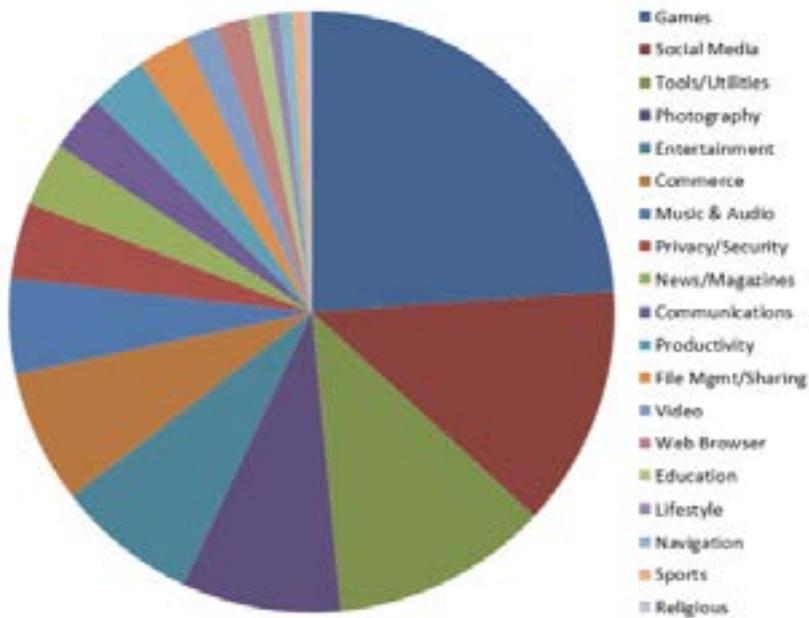
Sharing faith at work, over meals, or even preaching to people while they sleep in a pew-- these things are not new. Neither is the idea of reaching out to people while playing games. Even if the playing field is something that's changing. Bret and Andrew, quoted above, work with Intervarsity's [Ministry in Digital Spaces](#) initiative and have been exploring missional gaming.

My own introduction to a gamified church occurred in 2004 when I was asked to be a guest preacher in the Church of Fools. The church was a strange place. People wandered in and out and typed along to worship in a weird form of reverse karaoke.

Suffice to say, the online world is a place where church has been happening for much of this century. Interaction takes place in Christian chat rooms, social media channels, and in a wide variety of gaming environments.

Sometimes people will specifically engineer Christian games or game-like environments such as virtual churches, or community elements of online Bibles and discipleship apps. Other encounters happen in ordinary games (but be aware of the context--no serious gamer wants you putting them off their game to talk about Jesus any more than a sports player or fan wants you to interrupt in the middle of the game.)

## Android Apps Appearing in Daily Top 10 Downloads in 17 Least Reached Countries\* By Number of Individual Apps in Each Category (2H 2016)



\* Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Yemen

[The Mobile Ministry Forum’s research on app use in 17 least-reached countries](#) shows that games are a huge part of the app market in all parts of the world.

## Games are Popular Everywhere

Worldwide, mobile gaming active users have now hit 2 billion individuals ([The Numbers Article for Mobile in 2017 - All the Statistics You Could Ask For](#)).

*This is not a detailed “how to” section for ministering in specific gaming environments, just a heads up that it is worth exploring and a few things to think about to help you quickly get to the next level.*

As a family we play Clash of Clans, a game that is hugely popular around the globe, including in 17 least-reached countries.

We play as part of a clan of mostly Christians, and occasionally in the chat boxes we encourage one another about real-life things.



It's not a serious game but, like most games, some people take it seriously and can find parallels to life outside the game ([see Clash of Syrian Clans: How an Online Game Reflects the Syrian Conflict](#)).

## Many Platforms, Many Players

My first computer came with 1k of memory where games were typed up from magazines and saved on cassette. My son has access to Wii, X-box, Nintendo 3DS, Android, and a range of PC games and online options. There are many more platforms ("platform" can refer to technology, software, and environment). Some may be more popular in some countries and among different types of players.

If you are considering games as a tool for mission, decide how much you are going to reach out within the games that you play or whether you are going to explore what is being played by the people you reach. Both may be valid.

## Games and Gamification

Games and gamification (game-like things used in non-gaming environments) were used by the church long before computers and mobile phones came along because play is a part of every culture. Games can be used to teach and reinforce behavior, to build social skills, and to relax. At times we have focused on the Christian work ethic and forgotten to develop a [theology of play](#).

Think of some examples of how games and game elements have been used in your own church. (You can give yourself five points for each example.)

When there are things you have to do (or want to do but need extra motivation), adding a game element (even as simple as giving points) can make them more fun or somehow competitive.

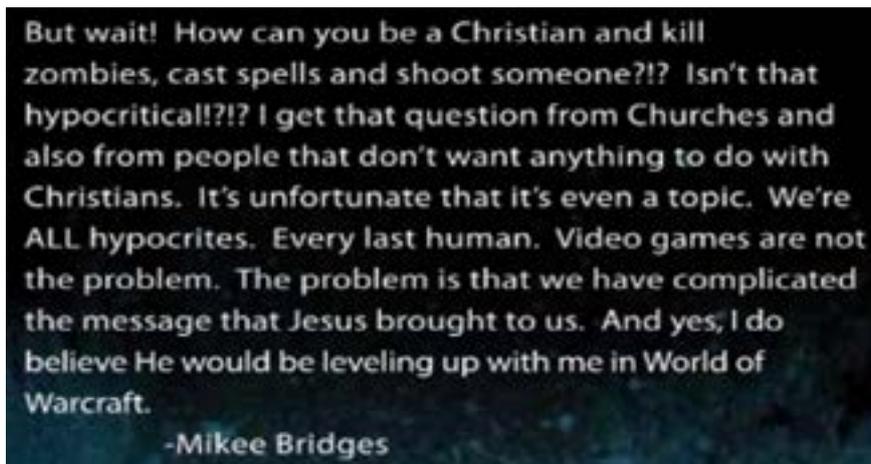
An example would be a progress bar that encourages you to fill in more of an online profile. Or let's say you are learning a new language in [duolingo](#). Designing some levels, rewards, and opportunities to chart your progress against friends can be motivational.<sup>1</sup>

Think about some of the non-game apps and websites you use today, and think about how they use game elements to draw you in and keep you engaged. Ten bonus points for each example you spot and 250 points if you are using gamification in your own ministry. (Any thoughts on how to make use of [tinycards](#), in which you can make your own sets of fun flash cards for teaching any subject?)

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<sup>1</sup> As language learning is often a connection for people working cross-culturally, Duolingo itself might serve as a game-like environment offering bridges to conversation.

As with games themselves, some elements of gamification may work better in some contexts and cultures than in others. Earn another 50 points if you google #ethnogamification, and 1000 points if you use the term yourself in a blog, tweet or academic paper.



But wait! How can you be a Christian and kill zombies, cast spells and shoot someone?!? Isn't that hypocritical?!? I get that question from Churches and also from people that don't want anything to do with Christians. It's unfortunate that it's even a topic. We're ALL hypocrites. Every last human. Video games are not the problem. The problem is that we have complicated the message that Jesus brought to us. And yes, I do believe He would be leveling up with me in World of Warcraft.

-Mikee Bridges

## Games are Not (All) Bad

[Gamechurch.com](http://Gamechurch.com) is a group of people who love video games and love Jesus. They are careful not to condemn people for the games they play, but if you can avoid being judgmental, it's worth thinking through what you think Jesus would play himself (perhaps different from what David, Samson, or Deborah would play).

You may decide Saint Paul would apply "all things are permissible" to video game genres. But be aware that he'd also possibly say, "Not all things are beneficial." Jesus might not condemn people for playing violent or demeaning games, but there might be times when he'd also say, "Go, play no more."

Whether or not you are working cross-culturally, be aware of what the local church and community think about the games you believe are OK.

There is definitely a range of opinion on games, especially violent or fantasy-type games. This may relate to spells, bullets, how much blood and gore there is, and how sexualized female characters are. "Cartoon violence" is different from graphic gore of some first-person shooters. I suspect there are also different levels of magic is a spell just about zapping something or about trying to harness occult power?

For a discussion starter on what is acceptable within your own family, church, or ministry, try a round of "[What would Jesus Play?](#)" in which people are simply encouraged to think about a game and rate it "Let us play" or "Go, and game no more."

## Some People Who Play Games are Not Nice

Parents and children should be watchful for strangers online who are making friends with vulnerable people to lure them into unhealthy relationships. If you are online, you need to be accountable for your own actions and motives, and to be above suspicion. Also recognize that some parents would view an evangelist almost as suspiciously as any predator. How would you feel if someone was trying to convert your child to another faith?

Adopt similar standards to those you would adopt if you were interacting with people face-to-face. Maintain a level of accountability in your online interactions for your own safety, as well as for that of others.

## How to Decide Which Games can be Helpful in Your Ministry

- What are people playing? What am I playing? Whom do you want to reach out to, and are you playing what they are playing?
- Can I play it? You don't have to be the best, but if you are chatting to people while playing, it helps if you can play.
- Should I play it? Perhaps you might like a game of What would Jesus Play to help you think through this.
- Does it allow for meaningful interaction? Is there text or voice chat? Does the pace of the game allow for conversation?
- Does the game itself provide openers for discussion? Jesus often spoke in parables, and used illustrations from the things around him. What can you see in the game that provides a natural discussion starter?
- Recognize games as an opportunity for community. It's actually OK if every interaction doesn't turn into an opportunity to discuss life or faith. It's OK for games to be a time of rest, but the benefits of such rest go down after the first two or three hours of play.
- Does the game have strong messages you disagree with? What are you being encouraged to do through the game? How are women depicted?
- Think outside the box. For example, Pokemon Go has been used as a way to gather people together face-to-face for gaming, allowing time for intentional conversations about life.

## Same Game, Different Cultures



(image CCO from <https://pixabay.com/en/not-ludo-game-board-glass-cone-1745964/>)

With the anonymity of some online games, it is easy to assume that if you are playing the same game, you are playing by the same rules and with the same ideas. When interacting with people from different cultures (or even from your own), recognize that they may have different experiences, views, assumptions, and expectations.

- [Granny's Bible Dojo](#) (available free on Web, IOS, and Android) is a fun game to help kids and people who were once kids learn the order of books of the Bible. Book titles appear on wooden boards, and granny must karate chop them in the correct order. As you progress you win rewards in the form of artifacts collected on Granny's travels. For many people this is quirky and innocent, but some people have commented that some of the trophies have spiritual significance for some cultures. Might it offend some people? Might it encourage some to think that religions can be blended together?
- Working in one Asian country I was surprised by how much some people in the local church were opposed to Pokemon (this was before Pokemon Go, when people started using Pokemon to attract people to churches). For me Pokemon is far enough removed from my real-world experience to be just a game (and not one that interests me), but for some people the game embodies religious beliefs they are trying to stand against.
- Games have been used effectively in health education for a long time. But serious games expert [Mohina Dutta](#) learned the hard way that not every game crosses cultures. A workshop on combating malaria was going great until she brought out the dice. Within the local culture, dice were associated with gambling, and gambling was seen as sinful. Suddenly all respect was lost. Mohina and her colleague salvaged the situation but learned a valuable lesson.

## Online and Offline

Your ministry may include social media, but that doesn't mean all your interactions will be online.

Face-to-face meetings may continue via online discussion, and online discussion may result in face-to-face meetings.

Take time to think through how online and offline contact differ in terms of safety, security, potential for greater communication, potential for greater miscommunication.

## Games as Conversation Starters



Some games can be used to spark conversation. For example, a game like [Stack](#) simply requires you to click when sliding layers overlap (try it). It's an example of how easy it is to do the right thing-- for a short while--but that none of us is perfect, and you will eventually miss the target.

With the ability to screencast from a phone to a TV, you can also use phone games as crowd pullers at an event

## Research What People are Playing

Method No. 1 - Talk to people.

Method No. 2 - Look around. What games can you see on people's phones or advertised on sale locally?

Method No. 3 - use the Web. To find the top games within a country, simply look at the Google Play store. From outside a country you can also use sites such as AppAnnie to discover what is popular.



## Local Games?

Some of the top games are popular throughout the world (sometimes with versions translated and contextualized for the local audience). It may also be worth looking to see if anyone is developing games specifically aimed at the people you are trying to reach.



Moraba is a combination of a traditional African game plus a quiz on relationships aimed at reducing gender-based violence. What other issues could be addressed through games?



### Power Tips

- Games can provide a valid arena for ministry. Take some time to reflect on your own attitudes about play and discuss with others the boundaries you wish to establish.
- Think about the kind of games you enjoy and whether they can be useful in reaching others.
- Research your players. What do the people you are trying to reach play? How do they view games and play?
- Explore differences between your own culture and the culture of the people you wish to reach. How does this affect what and how you play, and how you engage with others?
- Establish accountability. Set limits and stick to them. Discuss your plans with someone else and make yourself accountable.
- **Pray before you play. However playful, Christian ministry is not a game. Even in a virtual world you are involved in real spiritual warfare.**



## Going Further

[Games as Scripture Engagement: An introduction for those not quite sure if games and missions go together](#)

[Intervarsity's Ministry in Digital Spaces](#)

[GAMECHURCH](#), an active community of people passionate about both video games and God

[GAMECHURCH on 7 Great Games About Immigration](#). Games can be places where you not only meet people from other cultures but also put yourself in the virtual shoes of another and explore issues from a different perspective.

[Christian Game Developers Conference](#) - a real face to face conference held each year in the US, plus online community and info/

[Games Christians Play](#), a growing list of some of the games Christians play

[Games4Change's Let the Games Begin: A Toolkit 4 Making Social Issues Games](#)

[The MindShift Guide To Digital Games And Learning](#)

# 9. Advertising to Boost Reach and Engagement

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## Green Light Ideas to Maximize Your Budget

*People influence people. Nothing influences people more than a recommendation from a trusted friend. A trusted referral influences people more than the best broadcast message. A trusted referral is the Holy Grail of advertising.*  
Mark Zuckerberg

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."  
Mark 16:15*



## Introduction



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/85217387@N04/8451718717/>

If I run out onto the pitch in a Champions League game with a banner that reads “Messi is the greatest player who ever played!” I may have “reached” 80,000 people with my message, but I’ve not engaged them. If I can get even one percent of those fans to enter a dialogue about whom they consider to be the greatest player, and I’m able to present my rationale for saying it is Messi, then I’ve engaged them.

Both of these concepts get a bit complicated, though, because even though your assumed “reach” may have been 80,000, your banner only faces half the crowd. So now you’re down to 40,000. And if security tackles you quickly when you run out on the field, then maybe only 20,000 had a chance to see you.

**REACH:** How many people from my potential audience that *I have touched* with my message.

**ENGAGEMENT:** How many people have *interacted with* my message in some way.

So which is more important to focus on, “reach” or “engagement”?

It depends on your desired outcome. If you have a concept that can be captured in a short phrase or marketing slogan, then your “reach” is crucial; it’s an essential first step of awareness. But if you need time to build a person’s trust, then engagement is needed to bring people along and gain their trust. And trust is vital when we’re seeking to influence fundamental ways that someone views the world.

## Free Advertising

This chapter was originally titled “Advertising to Boost . . .” but we changed it to “Advertise to Boost . . .” Dictionary.com definitions seem to confirm that when we use the phrase “advertising,” our mind naturally associates the term with paying for a service or opportunity. Yet the definition of “advertise” serves us so much better by reminding us that you don’t have to pay money to advertise something.

**Advertising:** *the act or practice of calling public attention to one’s product, service, need, etc., especially by paid announcements in newspapers and magazines, over radio or television, on billboards, etc.*

**Advertise:** *to announce or praise (a product, service, etc.) in some public medium of communication in order to induce people to buy or use it.*

One of the big mistakes people make is jumping to the conclusion that you need to spend money to boost your reach and engagement. Although it often is the case that paid advertising will take you to new heights, that’s not the place to start.

This chapter will continue with a brief introduction to some of the key ideas for both free and paid advertising.

## Progressive Steps to Consider

### Three Free Quick Things to Do

We assume you are on Facebook and Twitter (with the notable exception of China). If not, go back to the beginning of this guide and start over. Get familiar with the most popular or most strategic platform for your context. Then use these three general tips to boost your reach and engagement without adding a penny to your ministry costs.

- **Include photos and videos in your posts.** Studies have shown a substantial increase in people taking note and reading posts if the posts have photos and videos. Even a simple picture with a statement is an excellent place to start. The Canva website is a great place to go for help creating beautiful graphics to enhance your post.
- **Ask an either/or question.** Selecting thought-provoking or interesting questions can also increase your exposure and reach. Be careful to not make it too controversial or polarizing.

- **Seek advice.** When you are about to venture in a new direction or launch a new product, ask your users for advice. This accomplishes a few things: 1) It gives you some great feedback. 2) It builds anticipation for the product. 3) It shows you value their input, which is part of the trust-building process.

## Work on Your Timing, Words, and Actions

- **What's your best time to send?** The key principle here is that you are trying to post at a time that gets the most response. This may vary based on your focus. There are key times to reach men, women, youth, different ages, etc. Just use a search engine for ideas like “best time to post on Facebook to reach teenagers.” A lot of articles will pop up. Spend a little time skimming them and try different ideas to determine what works best.
- **What about frequency?** The general rule of thumb is that it should be at least once a day. But don't post so much that people stop following you because you're filling their news-feed.
- **What words really connect?** Pay attention to which words you use in your posts that seem to connect best, then use those words often. Try to develop a list of about ten keywords that you come back to regularly.
- **Stay focused. What do you want them to do?** Give them a reason to take action, and be clear about what it is.
- **Vary your content.** Don't simply promote something with every post. Spice things up with posts that are related to your overall theme.

## Working with Others

Another great way to get free publicity is to work with others. Here are some things you can do:

- Partner with other people by offering ideas that benefit them.
- Do a guest post on somebody else's blog. Make sure your post is of value to them and not just about your product or ministry.
- Jump on top of hot news items or keywords:
  - For example, at a Willow Creek leadership summit or other major event, you can make comments on the event's Twitter feed back to something on your site. Don't overdo it, but a couple of comments during the day, mixed with other non-linked tweets, are fine.
  - You can also go to news stories that allow for comments. If you can make a relevant, appropriate comment as coming from your site or a recognized persona, it will increase awareness of your ministry activities.

## Ideas for Spending Money Wisely

- Once you get into the realm of spending money, there are a few ways to do it:
- Hold a contest. While still doing some of the free things above, now put some money into a reward or prize.
- Offer something of value for those who take an action.
- Buy advertising.
- You may also find social media channels will encourage you to spend by offering you “free money” in the form of free advertising funds, or matching funds. This is common when you are getting started.

## Get the Most for Your Money

Now that you’ve absorbed some tips on how to achieve results without spending a lot, it’s finally time to fork out some money! Spending for reach and engagement can be a valuable and even necessary way to achieve your desired results.

### • Paid Social Media Advertising Case Study: SE Asia

It is possible to have strong engagement at very low cost. Over the past year we built up a strong following of more than 25k Facebook fans who are engaged around our topic. We’ve then been posting routine questions related to our Page’s topic and user-generated content to solicit feedback from our audience. Our goal is to simply host a discussion around the topic and this has encouraged much interaction. The formula is “post an image + ask questions” like “Have you ever ...” “How do you ...” “What do you think this means?” + link to the related content. Engagement seems to vary a bit based on the question, but the key variable here seems to be the way we pose an open ended question that is relevant to our audience. For example, one of the topics that surfaced on our page was about death and sin, so we followed with the question: “Why are our sins such a scary thing?” Because of our community forum-like format, we ask the question and don’t police the answers even when they don’t hold to our view. Because of that, some of the user’s replies will spark intense discussion among the page’s followers. One user’s comment alone had 32 replies.

Yet, these posts do not take off on their own; we have had to boost these posts to get optimal buzz as they reach only a tiny fraction of our audience naturally through Facebook’s non-boosted (“organic”) posting and audience sharing. Our process has been to boost with an initial budget of \$20.00 for 1-2 days to Fans and Friends of Fans primarily. The least engaging pulse encouraged 4,300 post engagements with the higher ones surpassing 6,000 engagements at cost between \$0.003-0.004 per engagement. We started initially with a daily budget of \$3.00 as a test for these kinds of posts and then ramped up the budget as we noted the successful engagement and sharing.

- **Facebook Advertising Mini-Guide**

As the world's most pervasive social media platform, Facebook is a great option for advertising. Hootsuite's [Social Media Advertising: The Complete Guide](#) is a great introduction to paid advertising. As you read the guide, keep in mind that Hootsuite's aim is to get you to subscribe to its social media management dashboard. We find that the platform adds the most value for **scheduling** and **listening** but can be a bit overwhelming for those just starting out. Many of you will be better served by a simpler post-scheduling tool such as the [Later app](#). And most advertisers would be better off using Facebook and other native (built-in) advertising tools.

While Hootsuite provides a nice overview, we want to offer a few tips from our experience that can save you time, headaches, and hard-earned cash. To help you prepare your first campaign, we offer the following as a parallel guide to the article [Social Media Advertising: The Complete Guide](#). You may also want to refer to [Creating Facebook ads in Ad Manager](#), along with the contextual links below.

### **Step 1: Choose your campaign objective**

With so many choices, how do you [determine the right objectives?](#) For starters, we highly recommend that you check out the [Facebook Ads Guide](#) before selecting a campaign objective, and refer back to it often. It describes the purpose of each campaign objective and provides detailed specs and previews of what ads look like for each channel. Campaign objectives and layouts change regularly in Facebook, so be flexible and alert. **Your campaign objective should align with your overall strategy.** Note that a strategy could be multi-phased. For example, you may start with a Video Views campaign that feeds into a Lead Generation or Offer Claims campaign.

**Tip:** *Keep in mind that you won't be able to change your campaign objective, so choose wisely.*

**Campaign structure** works as follows:

- Campaign (objective of your advertisement, overall campaign spending limit)
- Ad Set (targeting, budget, channel selection)
- Ads (ad design and copy)

**Tip:** *Create one ad set and all ads in the set, review, then use the duplicate tool to copy this ad set as many times as desired, adjusting for your targeting preferences.*

## Step 2: Create your ad account

This may seem backward, but choosing to create your first ad is what triggers the creation of your ad account.

**Tip:** Pay attention to the small print and **get the Currency and Time Zone correct.** You won't be able to change it without creating a new ad account.

**Tip:** Now's also a good time to think about [adding other users to your ad account](#).

## Step 3: Target your ad (set)

This section will blow you away once you dive into it.

**Targeting tip:** Create a persona for your ideal campaign targets. We won't waste space here; just review [the Personas section in Chapter 2- Developing Your Strategy](#) and get going. Once you have your personas, target and exclude\* ideal audiences based on location, interests, behaviors. For more reading, see Facebook's [Reach the Audiences You Care About](#) and [Ad Targeting Options](#).

\*exclude = people you do not want included in your target.

**Placements:** Most of you will want to focus on **“Facebook feeds (mobile and desktop).”** If your audience is particularly active on Instagram or on Facebook's Ads Audience Network, do some homework about those platforms and continue. Facebook recommends “automatic placements,” but we're hoping you know your audience better than they do. We can take a guess about why they want us on all placements.

Using [Connections](#) is another powerful way to achieve higher conversion rates by connecting with folks who are already connected to you or who have engaged with you. We highly encourage targeting Fans (yes, you will have to pay for this), Friends of Fans, and other connections.

**What's a good audience size?** Look at the estimated size of your audience and estimated number of users who will see your ad daily. Make an assumption of what frequency (number of times each user will view your ad) is desirable, and then do the math to see how well you will reach this audience.

**Tip:** As you get some data, relevance is a key metric to understanding your ad and campaign performance. The relevance column is viewable from your ad's performance reports after receiving 500 impressions. When your relevance score is low score (less than six), try updating your audience or changing your ad's design to be more appealing to the audience.”

## Step 4: Set your budget

### How much should I spend?

Work backward by starting with your objectives. How many people do you want to view your video? What is your targeted number of website clicks?

Then find your estimated **Combined Ad Set Reach** (Ad Set 1 + Ad Set 2 + Ad Set X) to see if your budget is reasonable. Remember that budgets are set at the Ad Set level, so you must combine your Ad Sets to calculate total spend or limit this with a Campaign Spending Limit.

**Tip:** Choose **Lifetime** if you want to set the budget for the entire period. Choose **Daily** if you desire to spend a set amount every day. We tend to find ourselves using Lifetime budgets primarily. Lifetime budgets also unlock the ability to use [advanced scheduling](#) to run your ads on a specific day and time.

## Step 5: Build your ad

Think like a user. Create ads that **grab mobile users' attention** and would cause them **to take the desired action**. Always **use the mobile preview first** (even though it's not selected by default).

**Video ads are essential.** Video ads are an incredibly **cheap and efficient way of creating awareness and capturing attention**, as many users have them set to play automatically. One of our partners in Asia started to run a few video ad campaigns in 2016 and routinely sees cost per video view of \$0.001 or less with high numbers of views. **Prepare your videos with text captions to be viewed and easily read without sound.** Videos in Facebook are also great in that they [can be used for effective engagement of a custom audience](#).



**Tips:** As you create images and headlines, refer back to the [Facebook Ads Guide](#) to find the right image for your ad type and text length. It's always a good idea to abide by the 20 percent text rule/guideline using Facebook's [Image Text Check Tool](#) to check your ad images before uploading to your campaign.

## Tips for Advanced Users

Consider using **Power Editor** if you plan to use multiple ad sets with multiple ads per ad set. The Power Editor offers time-saving copy tools for ads and ad sets, hidden or unpublished posts for ads, and some level of offline editing.

Buried in the Ads Manager Menu is the **Audience Tool**, which is your ticket for creating and editing [Lookalike Audiences](#) and [Website Audiences](#). Once you have hundreds of fans, Lookalike Audiences become a must. The more relevant the audience, the more rewarding the results tend to be.

**For those with a website:** Before you launch your campaign, we suggest you [install your pixel](#). Follow the instructions or get some help to implement this techie piece. This tool is a must for optimization and measurement for those integrating a campaign with a website. Why add your pixel? Facebook describes the pixel:

When someone visits your website and takes an action (e.g., buys something), the Facebook pixel is triggered and reports this action. It will then try to match this action to someone on Facebook. This way, you'll know when a customer took an action after seeing your Facebook advert. You'll also be able to reach this customer again by using a Custom Audience.<sup>2</sup>

Our favorite resource for advanced Facebook Advertisers is [Jon Loomer's blog](#). Check out his [Facebook Ad Campaign Process: Build Audience, Leads, and Conversions guide](#).



## Summary

Social Media Advertising can be a powerful means of getting your word out to an ever-growing audience. Used rightly, it can connect you to many people who can benefit from what you have to offer. There are many free and paid ways to boost your engagement through advertising. Plan well and you'll succeed often. But stay alert! Paid advertising can get away from you quickly if you're not careful. It can be an exhilarating experience to see the names of new people joining your ranks after you run an ad or a free post.

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2 <https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/facebook-ads-pixel>



## Power Tips

- Learn about the free options for advertising, and make sure you are using those to their full advantage.
- Use Facebook as a starting point for paid advertising. It has good training materials and helpful set-up ideas. It is the biggest player in the field, so doing well with Facebook is crucial.
- Realize that things move quickly in social media. Define your goals clearly and understand what success is. Set limits on advertising so that you don't spend more than your budget. Tweak and adjust to get it right. Don't set and forget. Stay keenly involved.



## Going Further

[Comparison Chart for Choosing Between Top Social Media Sites for Marketing](#)

[The Difference Between Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, & Pinterest](#)

[Boosting Engagement Through Social Advertising](#)

# 10. Social Media Security

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Recognizing and responding to the risks inherent in the digital world we live in and in social media outreach in particular!

*If security were all that mattered, computers would never be turned on, let alone hooked into a network with literally millions of potential intruders.*

*Dan Farmer*

*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.*

*Matthew 10:16*



## Introduction

Much of what we do in life is determined on the basis of risk versus reward. The risk of a heart attack later in life versus the reward of biting into the juicy, mouth-watering hamburger sitting on the table in front of you. The risk of crossing a busy street versus the reward of getting to the store on the other side. Sometimes options are available to reduce the risk while maintaining the reward--options like choosing the grilled chicken burger instead of the hamburger or crossing at the light rather than directly across from your destination. At other times the alternatives that would make the risk worth the reward just aren't available or worth the effort (the doctor just told you your cholesterol levels are off the charts and your arteries are nearly blocked off with plaque or it's an eight-lane highway with loads of traffic and no place to cross for kilometers in either direction) and you just have to say, "maybe it wasn't meant to be."

Ministry decisions are sometimes made on the same risk versus reward basis, and anyone considering social media ministry needs to spend a bit of time considering the potential risks versus rewards involved. Time needs to be taken, as well, to examine various options that could minimize the risks while still allowing for the most reward possible. We hope this chapter will help you assess potential risks, identify appropriate risk-reduction tools and strategies, and implement a social media outreach that maximizes the potential for ministry impact while minimizing security risks to yourself and those you are ministering among.

# Risk Management Planning

You would have had to be living under a rock to miss the digital hacking disasters that have hit major countries and corporations over the last few years. Whether it was WikiLeaks or Edward Snowden, Home Depot or Yahoo (a billion accounts compromised), it seems that no one's digital information or accounts are safe from being plundered. When faced with such threats it is easy to respond with either cynical abandon--failing to act at all since "nothing you do can protect you anyway"--or, at the other end of the spectrum, pulling the plug on any and all digital outreach efforts because "it's too dangerous to do anything on such an insecure platform." The first response is patently untrue and puts outreach at risk. The second response, while valid in some cases, doesn't recognize the myriad ways digital outreach can be handled responsibly and with a good measure of security.

## Questions You Need to Ask

In each of the cases mentioned above, the country or corporation was targeted for a reason. The hack was not random. Rather, it was guided by a particular intent on the part of the attacker. If we or our ministry wants to be prepared for the security threats we may face, we need to start by asking serious questions about who might target us and for what reasons. Questions that need to be asked include:

- 1) Who might find our ministry of particular interest/a potential target? Who might find the people we are ministering to of particular interest/a target?
- 2) Who might consider us or our ministry a threat? Who might find the people we are ministering to a particular threat?
- 3) What information would those parties be interested in obtaining? What information do we have that, in the hands of the wrong people, could be potentially harmful to us, our ministry, those we minister to, and those we minister alongside? A question you might want to ask yourself: "What information about our ministry or the people we are ministering to would we not want shared on the evening news?"
- 4) What are the potential/likely consequences of our online activities being compromised?
  - a) In terms of the ongoing viability of our ministry
  - b) In terms of our safety
  - c) In terms of the safety of those we are ministering to
  - d) In terms of consequences to other ministries and individuals with whom we have some form of relationship

Once those questions are answered, a second set of questions needs to be raised:

- 1) Who has access to the information we desire to protect? (In the case of social media outreach, it could be as wide as everyone who has joined a chat group)
- 2) Who needs to have access to the information we desire to protect?
- 3) What are online means by which that information can be accessed?
- 4) What and where are physical locations/devices where that information can be accessed? What are the potential outcomes of information being accessed maliciously at any of those locations or on any of those devices?
- 5) How likely is it that information we want to protect could be accessed by someone we don't want seeing it? Online, consider the potential of being targeted with malware or that someone we are ministering to might leave a social media account up where others could see it. Consider, too, the risk of a ministry worker or someone you minister to losing a mobile device or having that device examined by a family member or security service member.

## Developing a Safety Plan

At this point you should be able to list potential risks and score them for their likelihood and the relative severity of their occurrence. Scoring can give you a good idea of which issues require the greatest/most urgent focus. Which leads to yet another set of questions you will want to ask as you consider each of those issues:

- 1) How can this threat be eliminated? What would the cost be (not just financially but also in terms of effect on ministry efforts, ongoing time investment, etc.)? Could there be any side effects to our efforts to eliminate the threat (such as the possibility of increasing a government's interest in you because you are encrypting your communications)?
- 2) How can this threat be reduced? And again, what would the costs be? Could there be any side effects to our efforts to minimize the threat?
- 3) What can we do to minimize the harm should the threat become reality (secondary prevention: minimizing the effects of an event)?

Answers to these questions can be as simple as setting up alternative social media accounts, unfriending contacts from back home whose social media identity/postings potentially raise questions about your identity/purpose, etc. Alternatively, answers to these questions could be as complex as needing to purchase and install physical and software firewalls to keep intruders away from your information or creating a new ministry model that segments users so that a breach in one segment only reveals the details of those users, not the rest.

As you reflect on the benefits versus risks for social media ministry in your setting, you could decide to pull back from social media ministry involvement entirely. That said, ministries need to recognize that such a decision in no way guarantees their security. A deep risk analysis would show that ministry members' simple possession of a phone (not even a smartphone) can provide access to information most ministries would prefer be kept secret. Phones' microphones can be turned on remotely, enabling the recording of conversations. Phones' locations can be tracked (via cell towers or GPS), which also enables logging of which phones/individuals are gathered together at various times. Similarly, any internet use or social media involvement by staff, volunteers, supporters, and those we minister among can potentially threaten a ministry, even if we avoid the use of social media for direct outreach purposes.

## Threat Management

### General Digital Security Recommendations:

1. Have unique and strong passwords for each social media account as well as devices (phones, tablets, and computers). Check out [7 Password Experts on How to Lock Down Your Online Security](#) for an up-to-date and approachable overview of how to do passwords correctly. If you are worried about how you're going to keep track of all those passwords, consider using a service like [KeePass](#) that can safely store passwords, so you only have to remember one password to access the rest.
2. Enabling "two factor authentication" for your accounts. Most experts recommend two-factor authentication, with the proviso not to use authentication that relies on SMS text messages. Such authentication can be hacked relatively easily (see [So Hey You Should Stop Using Texts for Two-Factor Authentication](#)).
3. Keep all computers and phones updated with the latest software and operating system patches and updates. Allowing your software and operating systems to become out of date/unpatched leaves you vulnerable to hackers who now know the vulnerabilities those updates and patches repaired.
4. Use antivirus and firewall programs and keep them up-to-date. Tom's Guide's [Antivirus Software Buying Guide](#) is an excellent introduction to making decisions about which antivirus program you should use.
5. Trust no one. At least, don't trust links anyone sends you. Any account can be compromised, and malicious links can be sent through friends', colleagues', and social media contacts' accounts. Such malicious links can appear to be a video, document, PDF, etc. but instead (or additionally) launch or implant a virus or another piece of malware on your device. Similarly, email addresses can be spoofed so they appear to be coming from legitimate business and personal contacts, and malicious links can be disguised to appear as legitimate links meant to verify account activity, view updates, etc. Clicking on such malicious links can either infect your computer or bring you to a website which, appearing to be legitimate, will ask you to enter login or account details. Should you enter those details, the keys to the kingdom will now be in enemy hands. Two approaches to deal with this issue are:
  - a) Contact the sender via a different means than the account you received the link through and verify that the company or individual did, indeed, send the link.
  - b) After receiving a link, rather than directly click on it, copy the link address and either place it in a Google search window to see if it is legitimate or, alternatively, place it in the Web browser's address bar and see if it matches what the hyperlink you received said it

was.

6. Security-in-a-Box offers some other excellent basic security advice for Android (phone), Windows, and Linux users. Additional resources are available in the “Going Further” section at the end of this chapter.

## Social Media-Specific Security Recommendations

1. Recognize that when you log into a social media platform you are leaving the freedom of the internet behind and entering a space that is governed by the desires of its owner. Privacy may be enabled by the platform, but that “privacy” only protects your information from other users of the site rather than from the platform’s owner. Your data is available to the owner, they are able to choose how to use it and whom to share it with or sell it to. For an overview and rating of most social media services’ terms of service visit [Terms of Service; Didn’t Read](#).
2. Check your privacy settings often. Modify the settings so only the people you want to see your information and postings are allowed to. Recognize, too, that platforms like Facebook have been known to change their privacy policies without notice. Check back regularly to see if any changes have been made.
3. No matter what your privacy settings, recognize that privacy and security on social media platforms is relative. Some would say to act as if anything you post on social media were like a postcard, able to be read by unintended audiences. Anything you post even in a private group can be reposted elsewhere by others in that group or by anyone who hacks the account of one of the group members.
4. Signal and WhatsApp messaging services have excellent and very good message encryption, respectively, and the services cannot decrypt and share messages you share even if ordered to by a government. Signal has the absolute best encryption/security implementation but, as it is much less widely used by the general public and is often used by activist organizations, your use of it may increase a government’s interest in your activities. WhatsApp has the advantage of being so widely used by the general public that your use of it should not raise any eyebrows. On the other hand, it has a setting that enables man-in-the-middle attacks potentially allowing an outside entity to eavesdrop on your communications (see [What’s Up with the WhatsApp ‘Backdoor’ Story](#)). WhatsApp’s terms of service also allow governments to request and receive listings of the members of your WhatsApp groups, whereas Signal will never hand that information over.
5. Have very clear criteria on whom you will accept friend requests from and how you will ensure that the individual who appears to have sent the request really did send it. (In other words, how you will ensure the request isn’t from an impostor?)
6. Turn off geotagging options that log where you are posting from. Similarly, ensure that photos you take on your smartphone, etc. are not geotagged, giving away the exact location they were taken when uploaded and shared via social media.
7. Be aware that social media platforms like Facebook run very advanced facial recognition technology. Be careful about posting (or allowing others to post) pictures of individuals

or groups. It is difficult to maintain anonymity when Facebook can identify everyone in a picture by his or her real name.

8. Only be logged into your social media accounts when you are intentionally using them. Facebook and other social media platforms track all your online activities as long as you are logged in so it is wise not to be logged into them any more than absolutely necessary.
9. When creating a group, joining a group, inviting people to a group and/or posting in a group, consider the following:
  - a) What information are you revealing about yourself if you create or join a group? What will people infer about you if they see you are in such a group?
  - b) What information is being revealed to social media onlookers if someone joins a group you invite them to? What will people infer about the person if they see the person has joined the group and/or sees the people in the group the individual is now relating to?
  - c) How might the answers to the above potentially put you or other individuals at risk? Are there ways to minimize those risk (such as by using a different/encrypted social media service)? Or should you avoid use of such groups to protect yourself and the individuals you are ministering to?
10. While Facebook gives you the ability to create a “secret” group, it’s worth noting that all the information shared in such groups is shared not only among members but also with Facebook and whoever has access to the platform’s data, which can include state agencies or other third parties that request it. Help on how to use Facebook Groups safely can be found at Facebook Groups: Reducing Risks.
11. Consider creating a “harmless” social media account you can show to authorities if requested upon entry to a country, detention, etc. This account should back up and not contradict any answers you would be likely to give in such situations. Avoid any cross-linkages between that account and your ministry account by not friending/following any of the same individuals. You should update the account on occasion to support its legitimacy.
12. Don’t rely on any social networking site as the primary host for your content or information. Such sites may remove content they believe host governments may find objectionable in order to avoid censorship. It is easy for governments to block access to social media sites if they decide that their content is too objectionable.



## Summary

Just this week well over a third of the population of the United States had their most personal details stolen in a hack of a credit rating company. It didn't matter if these people had ever used social media, connected with the internet, or used a smartphone once in their lives- their most important details were still available to be hacked online. We live in an inherently risky digital world whether we choose to embrace digital media or steadfastly refuse it. Knowing that running away and hiding in a cave is not an option we must be proactive to maximize the potential benefit of this amazingly connected world we now live in while, at the same time, minimizing the risk that come with this brave new world. It is essential for ministries perform risk management assessments and determine potential threats to themselves and those they minister to. Once a thorough risk assessment is performed ministries need to develop safety plans that minimize and mitigate identified threats. Knowing that our enemy prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour those He can ([1 Peter 5:8](#)) let's be good stewards of the talents that the Lord has entrusted us and, with prayer, trust Him to lead us on into His victory.



## Power Tips

1. Ask the right questions. Who is opposed to you/your ministry? Who is threatened by you/your ministry? Who else might target you/your ministry? What information and access do we need to keep these people from obtaining? Who has that access and information currently (don't forget previous employees, etc. if passwords haven't been changed)?
2. Rank potential threats and develop a safety plan that both a) eliminates the threat or minimizes the chances of its occurrence and b) minimizes the harmful effects should the threat actually occur.
3. Having worked through those steps determine whether the potential benefits of active use of social media for ministry outweigh the risks involved with its use.
4. If you decide to move forward with social media ministry read follow the old advice to pray as if the security of you, your ministry and those you minister to depends upon God (it does) and work as if it depends on you (i.e. be a good steward/wise as a serpent) by reading and implementing the suggestions found in this chapter.



## Going Further

A helpful tool to assist in conducting risk assessments is found on pages 25-34 of Internews' [SaferJourno: Digital Security Resources for Media Trainers](#)

Media Impact International's ministry-focused [Cyber Security Report](#)

The Centre for Investigative [Journalism's Information Security for Journalists](#)

Security-in-a-Box's [Tactics Guides](#) and guide to Social Networking Platforms

For an incredibly deep dive into how to use the Web securely, check out [HowTo: Privacy & Security Conscious Browsing](#)

If you think you may already have had a security breach/been hacked, check out Digital Defenders Partnership's [Digital First Aid Kit](#)