

Social Media and Ministry

Introduction – Why are we talking about this?

Technology challenged?

Everyone has some kind of device.

We know we live in different world. Something has shifted and changed. In our assemblies, everyone has a device. Something as simple as, “Please open your Bible to Matthew 7 can be a real reminder of this. Phones. Kindles. ipads and yes, paper Bibles.

Kindle (2007)

iphone (June 29, 2007)

iPad (April 3, 2010)

Laptop

At first I saw these as new tools. Tools that could be used to bless and encourage. Now I see them differently. These devices along with Social Networking have become a language for a generation that cannot imagine life before the Internet. This is a language that a whole generation speaks and there is no going back.

In 1990, I was with my friend Chris Bullard who at that time preached for the Overland Park Church in KC. People were talking about AOL (America Online). They were inviting people to become members of AOL by sending cd’s to your home. In fact, they would send these cd’s to our home quite regularly. The other company was CompuServe, the first commercial online service in the USA. Then, I learned that it was possible to get on the Internet and not be a member of either one of these companies. It was a new day.

In 2004, I began a blog. I named it, “A Place for the God-Hungry,” and have kept the name since then. At first it was built on Blogger, then Typepad and finally Wordpress. Think of these platforms as the chassis on a car. I wrote posts for this blog primarily to connect with people in our church who I rarely if ever had conversation with, but who I thought might read something encouraging if they were aware of this.

An “aha” moment came when a woman in our church told me that she and some other co-workers at her office read my blog. One particular co-worker told her one day, “I feel as if I know your preacher. In fact, I feel as if I am able to look over his shoulder as he is writing and yet he doesn’t know I am there.” It occurred to me that this was more than writing posts or sharing information. Rather this was a way to connect with other people.

This realization impacted my writing. I began to write differently. I wanted to share good content but it was also important to me that I write in a way that connects. I wrote with the intent of connecting in some way. How can I frame this thought in a way that sounds like I am talking to another instead of simply posting more information?

What I was actually doing was building a “tribe” of people who followed my blog. A “tribe” is simply a group of people who actually care about what you have to say.

Let us think about where we are today (these may be two important takeaways):

1. Almost half of people on mobile devices are networking on social media (p. 2 Gary Vaynerchuk).
2. There are approximately 325 million mobile subscriptions in the USA alone.

According to Vaynerchuk, the fastest growing marketing sector is social media (p. 4). Under the umbrella of social media, there are a number of platforms available. These include: Facebook, Twitter, Tumbler, Instagram, and Pinterest (p. 5). (These are merely examples.)

Facebook (2004) By 2012, one billion active users. Facebook is like a living room coffee table.
Twitter (March, 2006) By 2012, 500 million registered users. Twitter is like a magazine rack.
Blogs (1990’s) By February, 2014, 172 million blogs.

What we are talking about today is not the need to get a FB account or to begin “Tweeting.” This is not the point of this presentation. Rather, it is about understanding social media well enough for this to be of value in your ministry.

Practically

- * Certain qualities necessary in order to use social media in a way that enhances one’s ministry. These include: consistency, commitment, and telling one’s story.
- * No substitute for high quality content.
- * These two can promote your blog (Twitter, FB) which results in a “platform.”
- * Short is more powerful than long.
- * What is on the Internet is there forever.

Why should I be interested in this?

- * Opportunity to broaden my influence and do good.
- * Opportunity to connect with people you otherwise would be unable to.
- * Opportunity to add value to others i.e. my tweets consist of links to articles, comments about books and anything that might help church leaders.