



10 TIPS

ON SHEPHERDING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA



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10 Tips On Shepherding Through Social Media

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. - Ephesians 4:31-32

In a space that often contains political rants, kitty videos, and endless distraction lies opportunity for spiritual impact. In a spiritual community, it seems wise to learn to be who we are in all the places we live—whether online, at the workplace, or in our neighborhood. Imagine the tools of social media on your smart phone and computer actually helping foster fellowship and spiritual growth. The choice is ours to use this medium as a distraction or something more. But, how do we do this?

Here are 10 tips to help you foster fellowship and spiritual growth using the tools of social media for your church. Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter and even apps like Snapchat can be positive. But, how will we make them positive and spiritually uplifting?



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1. Live online as a team, not a lone wolf.

A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. - Ecclesiastes 4:12 NLT

The best part of social media's influence is the social part. If you do this alone, you miss the point. Gather a group that is committed to use their online expression as a witness and activity for edification. If you can get your church small-group Bible study, Sunday school class, or circle of friends to be together the results will be exponentially increased.

On the flip side, be selective in your social media team. Don't just give access to someone for being tech savvy. Make sure that you choose others who are responsible team players that you can work together with as a unit.



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2. Be accountable to a code of ethics.

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. - Hebrews 10:24 NLT

When your team is in place, the best thing you can do is write down a code of ethics.

For instance, posting a complaint about the service at a retail store may be appropriate. What attitude are you expressing, however? Are you sharing an experience for empathy, or venting anger?

Agreeing to how and what you post and being accountable is how successful “real-life” works.

Remember that everything you post is public and can possibly affect the perception others have for the church you serve at and for Christianity, in general so think twice before you post.



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3. Celebrate what God is doing!

*Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! - Philippians 4:4
NLT*

Now that you have tools in place and a strategy, what is the best content to post? If you saw a friend baptized at church, why not celebrate it online?

If a sermon spoke to you, mention it. When a prayer is answered, share the results. Take a quote from the pastor or worship leader and give it a background image that makes it stand out on your social feed.

Every victory shared is an act of worship and testimony wrapped into one. Use your social media as an online billboard about the goodness of God.



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4. Develop a discipline for posting.

All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. - 1 Corinthians 9:25-26 NLT

When you know your platform and your audience, you need to have a plan of action for posting and engaging your social media audience.

Create a schedule or set some reminders to take a break and post something going on or thoughtful questions for your audience.

A few minutes is all you need to keep your page fresh and keep them coming back for more.



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5. Pictures sometimes are better than words.

We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. - 1 John 1:3 NLT

You don't have to be preachy to share what God is doing. It sounds cliché, but sunrise and sunset photos we all can relate to.

Get some pictures of your community and surrounding areas to make a connection with your local followers on social media.

If you have permission from your church members, share images of your church family that reflect the culture and environment at your church.

Sharing your sense of God's presence in the real-life spaces you walk through might just be what a friend needs to hear—or see, in this case.



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6. Treat political controversies with respect.

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. - 1 Timothy 2:1-2 NLT

Can we Christians share our viewpoints in a way that pleases others? Maybe not. However, being respectful means that we actually respect others enough to not be condescending, rude, or stubborn.

Social media is not the best place to have a conversation about politics and government, especially when you represent your church. Whenever these topics come up in a public setting like social media, it's almost always best to suggest talking with someone in person or oftentimes, dropping the subject altogether and redirecting the conversation to a more edifying topic.

Sharing your view is one thing. Inciting people with a sense of superiority is what drives people away. Be wary of how you share politics!



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7. Never assume that your audience knows you.

Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings. - 1 Corinthians 9:22b-23 NLT

Before you post to social media, look at it through the eyes of a stranger who has never been to your church. Social media is a public platform that anyone can see.

Avoid using “Christian-ese” terms or references or inside jokes that only people in the church would get. You want your social channels to be as accessible and relatable as possible to anyone and everyone who runs across your posts or pages.

Instead, as a practice, think of posting what you would if you didn’t have service, but still wanted to reach others with the message of the Gospel and show what a Christian church looks like.



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8. Pray with friends online.

Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. - 1 Peter 3:8 NLT

The private message feature on Facebook, Twitter or other apps is perfect venue to share and pray together.

Oftentimes, someone will post questions or needs to a church's page, in which case, it is a great witness to pray for them and let them know that you are lifting them in prayer and how they can contact the church directly for additional help and information.

You can even do this as a group. As a group, you can share to specific people a request for prayer. Imagine if, during a work break, you see a post that someone in your small group felt led by the Spirit and prayed for you.



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9. Invite people into your real-world life.

Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. - Romans 15:7 NLT

When is the last time you invited a friend who is a non-church goer to a church event or to your house for a visit? That next men's church BBQ, the Christmas program, the kids VBS and other events at your church are often designed for the entire community. Don't be shy!

Encourage your members to share the church's outreach and events posts and publicize it as much as possible to help attract newcomers as well as friends and family that they want to invite.

Let your social media audience know that church isn't just a weekend sermon or Bible study, but a special family community where brothers and sisters in Christ get together and celebrate the Lord through all facets of life.



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10. Encouragement is the most powerful weapon you have!

So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. - 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT

The last thing here to say is that if you wonder what the goal of an online presence is you should think of the word “encouragement.” It means to give courage.

When you post something that lifts people, you are partnering with God in loving people. The more we speak of promise, the more hope we offer others.



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Always Keep In Mind...

Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior. - 2 Timothy 2:15-16 NLT

Our social media posts can say a lot about who we are and how we perceive the world around us. Remember that social media is a public platform and anything you post can and will be used against you.

With that in mind, don't give anyone ammo that can be used against you, the church, or Christ. We don't have control over what people think of us, but we can control our thoughts, actions, and words, both written and spoken.

With the popularity and ability that social media platforms give us, be thoughtful on how you can use it as a platform for spreading the Gospel and be wary that you think twice about how you conduct yourself in social media platforms.

