

5 Social Media Cautions for Pastors

Recently, [Mark DeMoss](#) addressed a group of fifty senior pastors on the topic of social media. As a well known Christian public relations guy, I expected a list of pros and cons. But Mark shared 30-minutes worth of cons only, focusing on the unintentional abuse of social media by leaders and the downsides of engagement without reflection. After a few days of ruminating on his insights, the following "cautions" are my re-articulated points of his advice to pastors.

Crucial Caution #1: Beware of a gradual grip of narcissism

As someone who studies the brands of ministries and Christian leaders, Mark made a provocative statement. He noted that there is little difference sometimes between the social media of famous Christians and those just "famous for being famous." While social media doesn't change the heart or create narcissism, it certainly can be a tool to accelerate an unhealthy focus on self.

Crucial Caution #2: Don't let immediate emotions get the best of you

The instant access to publishing on social media means that we can start "talking" in public while being frustrated and angry. Recently Perry Noble, the lead pastor of NewSpring Church, tweeted his frustration at American Airlines. [His blog and apology for "I freaking hate American Airlines"](#) is a worthwhile lesson for any pastor on social media.

Crucial Caution #3: Consider whose benefit you are posting for

The question is, "Who is your constituency?" Who really is the designed beneficiary of your social media content. You? Your family? Your peers? Your congregation? Your "followers?" Is it the people who sit on the front line of your ministry or other pastors in your network? I think it is easy for pastors to post content that is **positioning themselves rather than serving the people they lead**.

To help calibrate the social media content for a pastor, Mark suggested asking this question: *"Would an unemployed person in your church, whose spouse is battling cancer, appreciate your post?"*

Crucial Caution #4: Manage content to minimize "dueling brands"

It's possible over time that the messaging of your social media feed starts to contradict your mission. What types of content create a disconnect from your true calling among the people in your sphere of social influence? To dramatize the reality that your social media is always emanating a brand, a message and a mission, Mark posed the scenario: *"What if the next time you were introduced, they pulled up your instagram feed instead?"* Would your most recent pictures and content be a suitable introduction? Would the mission and values of your life and ministry be present?

Crucial Caution #5: Don't respond to critics in the social media space.

Because Mark deals with crisis management, I thought his black and white advice on responding to critics was helpful: *Don't!* Due to the public nature of social media and the inherent lack of accountability and control of people who can attack, manipulate and fabricate, he recommends not responding.

One humorous example Mark gave involved a pastor who was responding back and forth to a critic on twitter. The pastor, with tens of thousands of followers, engaged in what became a social debate with the critic. The pastor soon realized that the critic only had a dozen followers. The critic was criticizing and no one was listening. No one was listening that is, until the pastor starting responding.

> [Read more from Will.](#)