Introduction

Have you ever noticed how often God makes a big deal about his own identity?

God's identity—especially how other people interact with it—is a major factor in almost all of the biggest plot points in the Bible.

Consider just a few of the highlights. When Exodus opens, God still hasn't revealed his name to a single Israelite. Moses is the first to hear it. But God refuses to show Moses his face.

Later, God uses two of his Ten Commandments to prohibit people from abusing his name or making up images for him. He's very interested in being represented right.

In the era of the prophets, an ongoing issue for the Israelites is men claiming to speak for God, yet not actually depicting him as he wants.

Ultimately, no prophet, priest, or king can represent God's identity accurately enough to satisfy him. God is so particular that he takes on human form to do the job himself.

After Jesus' resurrection, he commands Christians to represent him to the world, but he doesn't leave this task in their hands. Instead, he sends his Spirit to live in them—to make sure that if they are his representatives, they will get shaped into his image.

Finally, God packages his entire story in a set of texts inspired down to the letter. He calls them perfect, and warns against even the smallest amount of editing.

Theologically, we know God's interest in his identity is part of his mission to glorify himself. But if you didn't already have theological vocabulary for it, what words would you reach for?

You'd use words like *public relations, marketing, optics,* and *reputation.* You'd be talking about God's *brand.*

God's brand matters to him. He knows that the way we talk about him changes how we think about him, and the way we picture him changes how we feel about him. God's brand is a powerful thing.

The same is true, on a much smaller scale, for any other brand. It's true for Sojourn's brand. The way we represent our identity changes how people think and feel about us. It's because we love Sojourn and believe in her that we uphold our brand. Excellence and detail do matter, because they shape people's experiences. Just look at Leviticus!

For this reason, you, fastidious reader of the page two introductory blurb, are hereby named a brand manager. You are entrusted with the power to uphold your church's reputation. You are called upon to present it well to a watching world. Go forth, take up your mission, and may this brand book light your path!

Policy

This section covers the official stuff—how we approach our brand proper.

Recommendations

POLICY

Our Brand Proper

Identity Statements

Mission Statement

Our mission statement is the heart and soul of everything we do. It's literally the reason we exist. The day we abandon our mission is the day we should shut our doors.

Our mission statement has been word-smithed with precision. When you quote it, please quote it verbatim.

The mission of Sojourn is to reach people with the gospel, build them up as the church, and send them into the world.

Values

Our values are our core commitments. They are the standard by which we judge our approach to our mission—and the ends we hope our mission will achieve.

Biblical Faithfulness

We are submitted to and shaped by God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16)

Gospel-Centeredness

Jesus forms and fuels everything we do (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

Transformative Relationships

We are an intentional community, compelled by God's love (Romans 12:1-16)

Diverse Fellowship

Every person matters to God, so they matter to us (Galatians 3:26-29)

Creativity & the Arts

We strive to be fruitful and cultivate beauty in all things (Genesis 1:28)

Relentless Mission

We send and sacrifice for our neighborhoods and the nations (Matthew 28:18-20)

Visual Identity

Mark

Sojourn's mark is a gold fleur de lis. The fleur de lis, literally French for *lily flower,* is an abstraction of a lily. It may not look like a lily to you, but apparently it does in France.

Historically associated with French nobility, the fleur later became associated with sites of French colonization in the U.S., like Louisville, St. Louis, and New Orleans.

Louisville is Sojourn's home. The fleur symbolizes our call to build up the communities where God has placed us— both in Louisville and beyond.

The fleur is also a reminder of our name. By choosing a mark that symbolizes our earthly location, we are rehearsing the truth that we are *sojourners*—here for a time, but passing through on our way to another world.
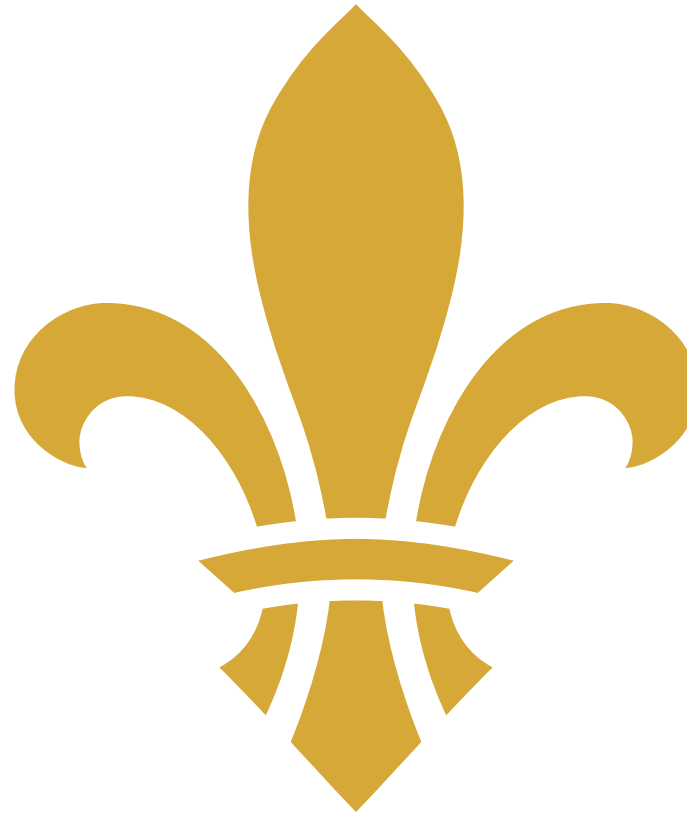
Logo Anatomy

When you combine the mark with other elements, you get a fullmark. More commonly, we refer to these fullmarks as "logos." However, "fullmark" is helpful when you need to be specific.

Some designs look better with a fullmark, but some look better with just the mark or wordmark. Feel free to use what works best for your project—just keep it classy.

Formal and public-facing designs should usually incorporate both our mark and our wordmark, either separately or as a fullmark.

MARK

WORDMARK

SOJOURN CHURCH
MIDTOWN

FULLMARK

SOJOURN CHURCH
MIDTOWN

Logo Lockups

Our logos have six different lockups, or arrangements.

These have been carefully constructed to meet our needs while also looking good. Please do not make your own lockups. Remember that you can use the mark and workmark by themselves.

CENTER FULLMARK

SOJOURN CHURCH
MIDTOWN

CENTER WORDMARK

SOJOURN CHURCH
MIDTOWN

STACKED CENTER FULLMARK

SOJOURN
CHURCH
MIDTOWN

STACKED CENTER WORDMARK

SOJOURN
CHURCH
MIDTOWN

LEFT FULLMARK

SOJOURN CHURCH
MIDTOWN

LEFT WORDMARK

SOJOURN CHURCH
MIDTOWN

Color Variations

All logo files are provided in six different color variations.

Full-color options are always our preference. If you can't use full color, grayscale is the next best. Use black or white only as a last resort.

Pantone color versions are only for printers that specifically request them.

File Formats

All logos are provided two file formats:
- **PDF** logo files are preferable and should be used whenever possible.
- **PNG** files are also available for programs that don't accept PDF.

All color options are available in both versions, except for Pantone, which is only available in PDF.

Download Logos

COLOR

COLOR WHITE

SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

PANTONE (PMS)

GRAY

BLACK

WHITE

SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

Logo Don'ts

Please care for our brand by *not* doing these things.

ADDITION	SUBTRACTION	PARKED TOO CLOSE
SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN FAMILY MINISTRY	SOJOURN	SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

SMUSH	BUSY BACKGROUND	SPECIAL EFFECTS
SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN	SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN	SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

MAKEOVER	REMIX	YUCK
SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN	SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN	SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

Lorem ipsum dolor adipiscing elit. Ves a placerat eu, pulv Interdum et males primis in faucibus ultrices interdum. Donec at ullamcor elit sit amet libero tempus nisl ut enin eget aliquam sem, mi in elit molestie id dolor imperdiet vitae justo. In nisi vel, accumsan id es vestibulum nunc, u scelerisque eget. Pr

Brand Colors

These colors are intended to reflect the character of Sojourn. Varied, expressive, but also somewhat subtle. Nothing that yells.

Continual use of this color palette is an important part of building brand equity.

Sojourn Blue, Sojourn Gold, and Warm Gray are the three colors used in the logo.

Slight variations of any of these colors can be used to create distinctions when needed.

Download Swatch .ase Files

SOJOURN BLUE
PMS **302 U**
RGB **43 81 102**
HTML **2B5166**

EGGPLANT
PMS **7659 U**
RGB **101 81 92**
HTML **65515C**

SOJOURN GOLD
PMS **7752 U**
RGB **206 170 78**
HTML **CEAA4E**

ORANGE
PMS **1385 U**
RGB **189 127 50**
HTML **BD7F32**

SOJOURN SEA BLUE
PMS **7704 U**
RGB **52 139 172**
HTML **348BAC**

FIR
PMS **562 U**
RGB **61 127 122**
HTML **3D7F7A**

DARK GRAY
PMS **NEUTRAL BLACK U**
RGB **75 72 70**
HTML **4B4846**

WARM GRAY
PMS **WARM GRAY 6 U**
RGB **162 155 150**
HTML **A29B96**

LIGHT GRAY
PMS **WARM GRAY 1 U**
RGB **219 213 205**
HTML **DBD5CD**

RED
PMS **173 U**
RGB **167 74 44**
HTML **A74A2C**

Typography

The consistent use of recognizable typefaces is an easy way to build brand equity.

GOTHAM

Our primary typeface is Gotham, a workhorse sans serif known for its broad appeal and flexibility.

With the wide range of weights, Gotham can range from serious to playful. Most of the time, we use the Light, Book, Medium, and Bold faces. The Ultra face is great for Sojourn Kids designs.

Gotham tends to look feminine in its lighter weights and lowercase, but masculine in its heavier uppercase.

[Purchase Gotham]

ULTRA

out of the world. They belonged t
them to me, and they have obeye
understand that everything you

BLACK

from you, because I have given th
given me. They accepted them an

BOLD

I came from you, and they believe
am praying on behalf of them. I a

MEDIUM

of the world, but on behalf of thos
because they belong to you. Every

BOOK

you, and everything you have belo
been glorified by them. I am no lor

LIGHT

but they are in the world, and I am
Father, keep them safe in your nam

EXTRA LIGHT

me, so that they may be one just as
with them I kept them safe and wat

THIN

your name that you have given me.
except the one destined for destru
could be fulfilled. But now I am com

KLINIC SLAB

Our secondary typeface is Klinic Slab, a slab serif that pairs well with Gotham.

Klinic doesn't have the same command as Gotham, and isn't usually ideal for headlines, but it is usually better than Gotham for long passages of text.

Klinic is softer than Gotham, and can be set under an intense Gotham headline as a subhead to feminize it or make it friendlier. Klinic's elegant, modern italics are great for this.

Klinic does not look great in all caps. If you need to SHOUT, pick a heavier face or switch to Gotham.

Purchase Klinic Slab

The Lord descended in the cloud and

and proclaimed the Lord by name. The

BOLD him and proclaimed: "The Lord, the L

and gracious God, slow to anger, and a

and faithfulness, keeping loyal love for

MEDIUM iniquity and transgression and sin. But

the guilty unpunished, responding to t

fathers by dealing with children and ch

BOOK third and fourth generation." Moses qui

and worshiped and said, "If now I have

sight, O Lord, let my Lord go among us,

LIGHT people; pardon our iniquity and our sin,

inheritance." He said, "See, I am going to

all your people. I will do wonders such as

all the earth, nor in any nation. All the p

live will see the work of the Lord, for it is

When Gotham and Klinic Slab are not available, we have other options.

GOTHAM ALTERNATIVES

Proxima Nova is available in some web settings like Google Docs and Sheets. It's what we use on the Sojourn website.

Metropolis isn't as polished as Gotham, but most people wouldn't spot the differences without looking for them. → Download a free copy here.

Avenir or **Avenir Next** is not as close as Metropolis, but comes installed on Macs and serves in a pinch.

Arial (boo) is a last resort.

KLINIC ALTERNATIVE

There aren't any good, easily accessible Klinic alternatives. **Georgia** is a passable option, but should only be used for small body text. Don't use it for headlines or large text.

PROXIMA NOVA

For the message about the cross is foolishness are perishing, but to us who are being saved it *of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisd* and I will thwart the cleverness of the intelligent." *wise man? Where is the expert in the Mosaic law*

METROPOLIS

the debater of this age? Has God not made *of the world foolish? For since in the wisdo* the world by its wisdom did not know God, *pleased to save those who believe by the fo*

AVENIR

preaching. For Jews demand miraculous sign *ask for wisdom, but we preach about a cruci* a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to G *to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,*

ARIAL

power of God and the wisdom of God. For th *of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the* of God is stronger than human strength. Think a *circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters.*

GEORGIA

were wise by human standards, not many *powerful, not many were born to a privi* position. But God chose what the world thinks f *the wise, and God chose what the world thinks* *the strong. God chose what is low and despised*

Templates

We have lots of Sojourn templates intended to make your job easier.

Download Templates

A Google Docs document template is also available. **→ Access Google Docs template**
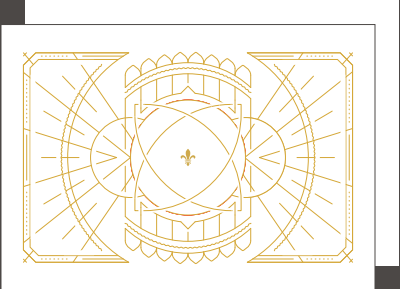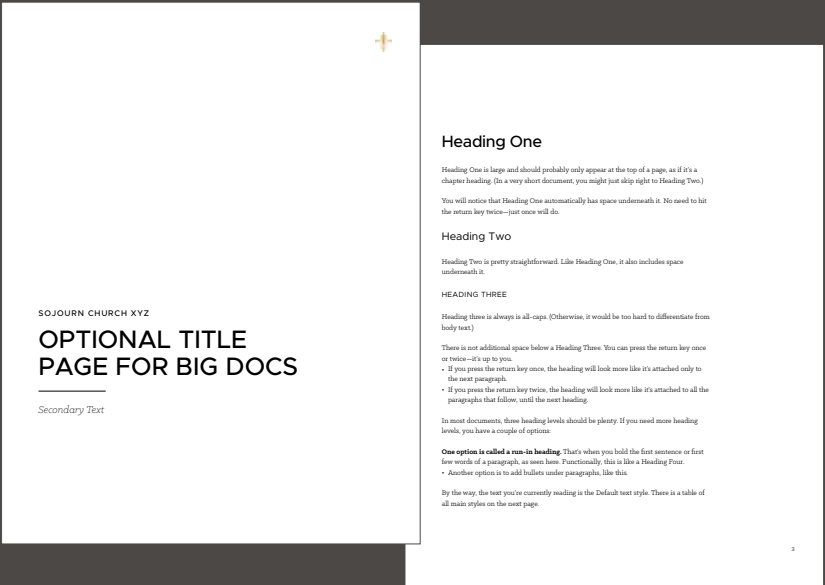
Implementing our Visual Identity

While all communications should be on brand, not all will implement our visual identity.

WHEN OUR VISUAL IDENTITY IS REQUIRED

If a design relates directly to Sojourn, it should conform completely to the Sojourn visual identity.

Examples include
- Our website and app
- Signage
- Brand identity assets (business cards, letterhead, etc.)
- Templates (documents, emails, etc.)
- Membership documents
- Security documents
- Other high-level official reports or paperwork (concerning mission, values, policy, governance, finances, etc.)
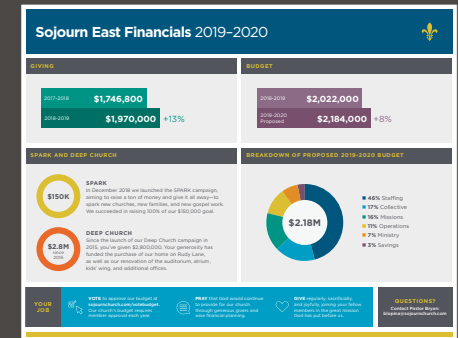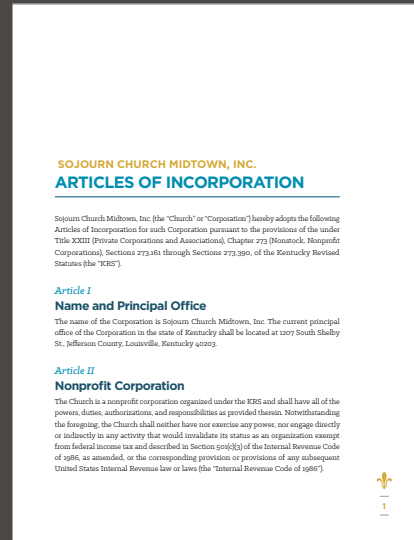
WHEN OUR VISUAL IDENTITY IS OPTIONAL

If a design relates more directly to a specific opportunity (an event, resource, etc.) than to Sojourn itself, it could adopt parts of our visual identity (like our fonts or colors) or have a completely separate, unique look. It's up to you.

Examples include
- Training material
- Promotional art for events, campaigns
- Album artwork
- Devotionals
- Sermon art
- One-off social media graphics
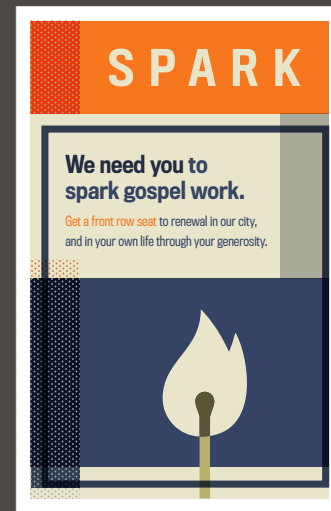
Verbal
Identity

Voice & Tone

Sojourn's voice and tone express our values of truth, beauty, and goodness.

For less prominent or permanent communications, feel free to let your personal voice and tone come through. However, as projects grow more prominent and permanent, and especially when they reflect directly on Sojourn, you should increasingly adopt the voice and tone of the Sojourn brand.

Our voice and tone can be described with five words:

1 **Warm:** motivated by what we love and believe in; enthusiastic, joyful, grateful

2 **Confident:** calm and self-assured, comfortable taking initiative, but not pushy.

3 **Winsome:** appealing and interesting, able to woo and persuade hearers

4 **Mature:** polished enough to sound like an adult, but not businesslike or stuffy.

5 **Real:** unafraid and candid; speaks to the heart of things and speaks honestly

GUSHING
"Everyone HAS to get baptized!! It's such an amazing experience!! Plus, Jesus commands it!"

WARM
"Baptism is a beautiful symbol of new life in Christ. Every believer should be baptized."

APATHETIC
"You should probably get baptized. It's in the Bible. Plus we require it for membership."

STERN
"All CGs are expected to decorate a trunk. This is just for two hours, so you should make time for it."

CONFIDENT
"Don't forget to sign up for Trunk or Treat. This is a great opportunity to serve our neighborhood."

INSECURE
"If you're not doing anything Sunday, and you're feeling creative, and if you don't mind…"

MANIPULATIVE
"Since our event is cancelled, we know your evening is free to help decorate for the S2 party."

WINSOME
"We've got great ideas for the S2 party. They're going to love it. Who has an hour to help decorate?"

TACTLESS
"We need some warm bodies to help me slap up decorations for the kids tonight. Who's free?"

FORMAL
"Believers must therefore practice community, but know that, as with all the disciplines, it shall yield joy."

MATURE
"We want you to take community seriously—but expect it to be rewarding and fun, too."

IMMATURE
"Community groups can be the worst, but then there are also parties. Get sanctified! Haha."

CYNICAL
"Everybody hates talking about giving, so let's skip it. If you can give, great. If not, you do you."

REAL
"Some people enjoy giving, but for others, giving may be a fearful subject. Let's talk about it."

NAIVE
"God's people love to give! What a blessing not to have to worry about what tomorrow brings."

Areas of Caution

COLORFUL LANGUAGE

Be thoughtful about any vocabulary or humor that may offend hearers and hurt your credibility. Make sure you know your audience: what is considered inoffensive in your subculture may be offensive in another subculture.

CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

Be cautious when communicating about controversial topics, like politics, race, gender, certain points of theology, and issues of Christian liberty like drinking alcohol and smoking.

When speaking about these issues (as at all other times), your words must be not only true, but helpful—intended not to beat down but to win over. In addition, they should be crafted to avoid unnecessary offense and misunderstanding.

In addition, if you come across as preachy, harsh, or loud, you will lose your audience. Labor first to be persuasive through love and gentleness.

VOCABULARY

church Avoid using this word to refer to Sunday services. "Church" is something we do all week long. Prefer Sunday morning, Sunday services, Sojourn Gathered, worship services, etc.

churchy language Avoid when speaking to outsiders.
- Grow instead of be sanctified
- Relax or celebrate instead of fellowship
- Coaching or teaching instead of discipleship

elder People are confused when we use "elder" and "pastor" as if they mean two different things. Prefer pastor.

Pastor names When writing for people who might not yet know the pastors at a church, sometimes it's nice to add "Pastor" for clarity, as in Pastor Justin instead of Justin.

Sojourn jargon Avoid when speaking to outsiders.
- Community group instead of CG
- Sojourn Students instead of S2

Other Policies

Quality Standards

Sojourn has a two-tier quality standard for communications. These standards explain "how high we set the bar" at Sojourn. They're intended to clarify what's good enough and what still needs work.

These quality standards are "of grace, not law." They're intended to gently urge us all toward our best, not to shame or frustrate anyone for their efforts.

EXCELLENCE

Excellence is our standard for our most important communications—those that have a broad audience, are more prominent or permanent, or reflect more directly on Sojourn.

Examples include
- Sunday stage announcements
- Reports, letters, or resources printed for the whole church
- A church-wide email
- Content on a primary web page
- Promotional material for a big event
- Permanent signage
- Art installations

EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness is our standard for all other communications—those that have a smaller audience, are less prominent or permanent, or reflect less directly on Sojourn.

Examples include
- Most internal communication
- Announcements at a class or meeting
- Reports, letters, or resources printed for small groups
- An email or app notification to a set of volunteers
- Content on a secondary web page
- Promotional material for a small or medium event
- Most social media posts

SUBSTANDARD COMMUNICATIONS

Substandard communications are also described in the following pages. When a communication fails to meet the right standard, it is an opportunity for learning and growth.

If someone struggles repeatedly to meet standards for a communication, he or she might consider another approach:
- Enlisting the help of other reviewers/editors
- Reducing the scope
- Choosing a different medium
- Devoting more time or resources to the project

	EXCELLENT COMMUNICATIONS	EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS	SUBSTANDARD COMMUNICATIONS
Mission	Pursue our mission to reach, build, and send		Do not pursue our mission
	Strengthen the credibility of Sojourn (or Christ, the Church, Scripture, etc.)	Do not endanger the credibility of Sojourn (or Christ, the Church, Scripture, etc.)	Endanger the credibility of Sojourn (or Christ, the Church, Scripture, etc.)
Values	Driven by desires for truth, beauty, and goodness		Driven by desires counter to our values
	Appeal to Spirit-led desires for truth, beauty, and goodness in hearers		Appeal to guilt, pride, or fear in an unscriptural way
Vision	Driven by a clear, focused vision	Driven by a general vision	Vision is vague, unfocused, or not understood by all communicators
Leadership	Communicators strongly buy in	Communicators buy in	Communicators don't really buy in
	Communicators are known and credible—appearing honest, skilled, and thoughtful	Communicators demonstrate basic competency and sincerity	Communicators appear unreliable, amateurish, or hypocritical
Sojourn identity statements	Convey identity statements with no changes		Convey identity statements with changes
Sojourn visual identity Not needed for all projects—see **Implementing our Visual Identity** ➔ 20	Convey visual identity with no changes	Convey visual identity with minor changes	Convey visual identity with prominent, or more than a few, changes

	EXCELLENT COMMUNICATIONS	**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS**	**SUBSTANDARD COMMUNICATIONS**
Sojourn verbal identity	Have voice and tone that are warm, confident, winsome, mature, and real	Have a non-distracting voice and tone	Have voice and tone that are inappropriate: cynical, immature, stern, etc.
	Have minor deviations from style guide	Have moderate, non-distracting deviations from style guide	Have major or distracting deviations from style guide
	Use accessible vocabulary	Use mostly accessible vocabulary	Use alienating insider vocab or religious jargon
Audience	Understand audience well	Understand audience	Understand audience little
	Speak to audience in ways they find interesting	Speak to audience in ways they find intelligible	Speak to audience in ways they find confusing, weird, boring, etc.
Timeliness	Anticipatory—appear before people perceive the need	On time—available when people ask	Too late or missing entirely
Comprehensiveness	Omit no essential information		Omit some essential information
Concision	No irrelevant or redundant material	Minimal irrelevant or redundant material	Much irrelevant or redundant material
Accuracy	Completely accurate	Virtually completely accurate; any inaccuracies are accidental, trivial, and not due to sloppiness	Many or prominent inaccuracies, inaccuracies that compromise clarity or honesty, or inaccuracies due to sloppiness

	EXCELLENT COMMUNICATIONS	EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS	SUBSTANDARD COMMUNICATIONS
Pitch	Executed around a strong pitch—which, if explicit, is memorable and compelling	Executed around a general selling point or points that are sound and generally consistent	Executed with no thought to "making the sale"
Vividness	Use creativity and specificity to be striking and memorable	Functional or basic	Unchallenging, bland, platitudinous, vague
Clarity	Well explained, precise, and hard to misunderstand	Understandable	Take too much work to understand; easy to misunderstand
	Legible		Illegible
Organization	Have an intuitive hierarchy or flow	Have a rudimentary hierarchy or flow	Hierarchy or flow are unsound, confusing, or absent
	The relationship of each part to the whole is obvious	The relationship of each part to the whole is discernible after reflection	The relationship of some parts to the whole is unclear
Errors & Review Language errors (e.g. grammar, wording) and technical errors (e.g. blurry photos)	Virtually error-free—any errors are hard to spot and insignificant	Errors, if present, are minimal, not distracting, do not compromise clarity or endanger credibility	Many, prominent, or distracting errors
	Usually reviewed by more than one person, including someone knowledgeable enough with the medium to notice technical errors	Usually receive at least a cursory review	Not reviewed
Repetition when applicable	Repeated often enough to be familiar	Repeated often enough to be noticed	Not repeated

	EXCELLENT COMMUNICATIONS	EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS	SUBSTANDARD COMMUNICATIONS
Consistency when message is repeated	Send the same message every time, regardless of the channel or angle, with core elements (e.g. pitch) identical	Send a similar message every time, varying little due to channel or angle	Send different messages at different times or in different channels
Variety when message is repeated	Use many different angles and channels to send the message	Limited in use of different angles and channels for the message	Very limited in use of different angles and channels for the message
Follow-through	Continue reliably until all loose ends are resolved, especially outcomes of campaigns	Waver in reliability at times or leave minor loose ends unresolved	Unreliable, leave major loose ends unresolved

Communication Policies

LIBEL AND SLANDER

In the unlikely case that you have a legitimate need to write or speak something about another person that has the potential to damage his reputation, use great caution. Make sure that it is completely true. Do not open yourself to the charges of libel or slander.

COPYRIGHT AND PLAGIARISM

Be above reproach regarding copyright and plagiarism in your work.

When you create a piece of media, do not borrow too much from someone else. A good rule of thumb is that if you need to borrow, borrow only one element. For example, if you see graphic design you like, borrow the color or the typography or the layout, but not all three.

When using media created by others, ensure that you have the legal right to share it. Don't use any media downloaded from the internet (images, audio, video, etc.) unless you're certain its license allows you to use it as you intend. If an image requires attribution, include it.

MEDIA REQUESTS

Media requests from journalists, bloggers, etc. should be handled by the church and the director of communications.

If contacted by journalists, bloggers, etc., instead of offering comments, reroute the request to your associate or lead pastor. Don't offer comments (even informally or off the record) unless you've been authorized to do so.

When speaking to external media sources, our communication standard is excellence (see **Quality Standards →26**). Everyone who speaks to or in external media channels must meet this standard—especially in building up the credibility of Sojourn, in communicating the right information, and in maintaining the right voice and tone.

PRIVATE INFORMATION

Be careful not to share private information you do not have explicit authority and reason to share. This includes information about
• Giving
• Counseling and pastoral care
• Church discipline
• Sensitive discipleship and accountability details

In addition, be careful not to reveal identifying details that could lead to "indirect gossip." For example, if you tell someone that a member is under church discipline for having an affair on a Chicago business trip, and someone already knows that John takes Chicago business trips, he may inadvertently connect the dots. Better not to share any such private information.

LIVE STREAMING AND LICENSING

Our stream license by CCLI covers the broadcasting of a live-recorded worship service, including CCLI licensed songs, on the Sojourn website, podcast, and some other streaming services. If a song is not covered by CCLI, it cannot be streamed legally. Video clips of licensed content cannot be streamed online.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Use caution in sharing controversial information via the web and social media, since those channels are especially prone to misunderstanding, unkindness, and time-wasting debates. Sojourn staff and leaders always represent Sojourn, whether they mean to or not.

Criticizing Sojourn

Criticism is a welcome part of a healthy culture. Historically, Sojourn has benefited immensely from people willing to criticize it. We need criticism. However, we also need criticism to be constructive. Unconstructive criticism has power to do great harm.

Here are guidelines to follow when criticizing Sojourn, its staff, and its decisions.

One partial exception to these guidelines: at times of conflict, hurt, or frustration, there is a way of disclosing your painful feelings to uninvolved parties that is asking them to bear your burdens rather than gossiping with them. The line between this healthy disclosure and gossip is not always clear, so act wisely.

	CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM	UNCONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM
Audience	Whenever possible, taken directly and only to the other people involved Otherwise shared privately, on a need-to-know basis only, with as few people as necessary	Shared publicly or on social media Shared to people who aren't involved or who can't do anything to improve the situation
Tone	Loving and gentle, even when expressing anger or frustration	Harsh, bitter, or cynical
Humility	Says, "I may not know the whole situation" Usually starts by asking questions	Assumes full understanding of the situation Usually starts with accusation or complaint
Goal	To deal with anger, hurt, fear, or shame by finding resolution To help the church grow To right wrongs	To deal with anger, hurt, fear, or shame by acting out against others
Honesty	Plain and direct	Oblique or couched in sarcasm
Openness	Given in a way that invites discussion	Given in a way that discourages discussion
Stance toward leaders	Still treats leaders as leaders, even in the midst of disagreement	Uses disagreement as license to be disrespectful
Charity	Assumes that others will be helpful and listen, unless they act otherwise Assumes the church can improve	Assumes others will be difficult, unless they act otherwise Assumes the church will not improve
Process	When applicable, follows the process of church discipline laid out in Scripture	Sidesteps church discipline process to seek mediation from outsiders

RECOMMENDATIONS

Executing Projects Under Our Brand

Planning & Promotion Tools

More Quality Questions for Self-Review

These questions are intended to help you audit your own communications projects. Use them as a tool to spark ideas and identify areas you may be overlooking.

MISSION

- How is God presented? Is he hero, king, and star of the show?
- How does this make the Church look?
- Is my project anchored in one or more of our reach-build-send mission elements?

VALUES

- What desires are we appealing to in hearers?
- What would be the most helpful way to pray about this? Are we praying smart, non-generic prayers?

VISION

- Do I have a measureable goal? What does success look like?
- Do we have clarity on vision and goals?

LEADERSHIP AND BUY-IN

- Who are all the leaders and communicators for this project?
- Are we really sold?
  - › Do we believe in the project?

- › Any pangs of conscience we should attend to?
- › Do I believe enough in it to defend it to someone outside of work?
- › Am I excited about it?
- › Do I think it will work? That it matters? That it will make a difference?
- › Do I believe God cares about this project?
- › Do I have a hard time feeling gratitude, trust, and joy toward God about this project?
- › Do I feel unresolved anxiety, guilt, or shame that I have not processed in prayer?
- › Is there any difference between the way I talk to myself (or my best friend) about the event and the way I talk to others?
- › Do I believe in it so much that I would promote it from my personal social media accounts?
- › Do I believe in it so much that I would participate if I were not required to?
- Are we leading by example? Are the leaders behind the communication its number one champions in practice?
  - › Is this as visible as it should be?
  - › Any ways we might appear inconsistent or hypocritical?
  - › Are we operating in anxiety, fear, hurry, stress, anger, confusion, obligation, pride, etc.?
- Have I announced "internally" (i.e. to insiders—staff, pastors, key volunteers) before I announce externally?
  - › How much buy-in do I have from them?
  - › Do they really believe in the project?
  - › Will they participate enthusiastically?
- If I asked these insiders about key details of the project (purpose, pitch, time and date, goals), would they answer correctly?
- Who is speaking to the audience?

- Is this the right person?
- Does the audience know him?
  - › If not, how will he or she be introduced?
  - › With what hard or soft credentials?
  - › By whom?
- Does he or she demonstrate his or her credibility somehow, if needed?
- Are we being truly honest and accurate in our communication?
- Will this build trust with people?
- How are leaders (staff and non-staff) being equipped to repeat the message to others, especially the people they lead?
  - › Do I need to give them talking points?
  - › Do I need to highlight opportunities for them to promote (in their meetings, to their serving teams, in CGs, etc.)?
  - › Do we need to coordinate our content in any way?

SOJOURN IDENTITY STATEMENTS

- Are we correctly using all Sojourn identity statements? See **Identity Statements → 6.**

SOJOURN VISUAL IDENTITY

- Is the Sojourn visual identity required for this project?
  See **Implementing our Visual Identity → 20.**
- If so, do we have the resources to implement it well? Consider
  - › Color
  - › Typography
  - › Use of logos
  - › Overall look and feel

SOJOURN VERBAL IDENTITY

- What voice and tone are being used? See **Voice & Tone → 23.**
- Does the urgency of our delivery match the urgency of the message?
- Are we expressing (and truly feeling) a balance of emotions appropriate for this specific message? Consider
  - › Joy, triumph, rest
  - › Gratitude, admiration
  - › Compassion
  - › Hope
  - › Anger, frustration, disgust
  - › Sadness, disappointment
  - › Fear
- How much of a sense of humor do I need here? How does my humor come out?

AUDIENCE

- What different groups need to be considered?
  - › Supervisors and pastors
  - › "Need-to-know" parties
  - › Staff
  - › Deacons
  - › Planning team
  - › Volunteer coordinators, volunteers, security
  - › Existing serving teams (Kids, Connect, etc.)
  - › Church body
    - › Members
    - › Attenders
    - › People new to Midtown
    - › People who've been at Midtown for several years
  - › Event participants/attendees

- Registrants vs. walk-ins
- Target audience
- Vendors
- Emcees, speakers, performers, and guests of honor
- Neighborhood, city, or other authorities; nearby businesses or neighbors; community leaders
- Sponsors/donors
- Cheerleaders
- Outside experts/consultants
- Promoters (including Sunday liturgists)
- Anyone else impacted
- What do they need to know, and when?
- How do they need to be involved?
  - In on planning
  - Consulted or asked permission
  - Asked to buy in
  - Given an early/internal announcement
  - Part of target audience
  - Reminded at certain times
  - Followed up with
  - Part of an internal review afterward
- In what order do different groups need to be let in to the message?
  - Is any part of the message confidential, perhaps at an early stage?
  - Have I clearly communicated what is confidential, for whom, and until when?
- What does our history communicate here?
  - As a culture?
  - As a church?
- What are we bringing with us from the past?
  - Any positives—strong legacies, stories?
  - Any baggage or sore spots?
  - Any liabilities or misunderstandings?

- How have we and others handled this in the past? What was effective/ineffective?
- Are any parties uninformed about our historical context (positives or negatives)? To what extent should this be addressed with them?
- Have we effectively followed up about past events? Especially regarding campaigns—have we communicated the outcome of giving, sending, prayer, etc.?
- What is in the recent past (~6 weeks)? Have we had a healthy period of rest after big campaigns and events were finally wrapped up and celebrated?
- What audience are we picturing as we plan and write? Have we developed the right personas? See **Developing Personas → 45.**
- Have I made any "audience assumptions"?
  - Demographic assumptions (e.g. that all are married)?
  - Cultural assumptions (e.g. that all have disposable income)?
  - Spiritual assumptions (e.g. that all are believers)?
  - Assumptions about theological or biblical literacy?
- Are we actually targeting our target audience? Does our message apply to a majority of our hearers?
- Does our audience trust us? How much?
  - Do we have sufficient relational capitol for this message?
  - Are we borrowing relational capitol that will leave us in debt if an urgent need arises soon?
- Do we know our audience's obstacles to buy-in?
  - Wrong beliefs
  - Lack of clear direction
  - Fear, worry
  - Busyness
  - Logistical limitations
- What are we doing to address obstacles? Is it important to explicitly speak to the obstacles?
- Do they have the bandwidth for this right now in light of all our other communication with them?

- Are we speaking to felt needs?
  - › Are we communicating what is actually of perceived value to them, rather than what we think they should value?
  - › Will they think what we're saying is worth their time?
- Is our audience saying anything to us that we need to "hear" before we speak?
- Are we asking too much of our audience? Too little?
- What's our audience's "temperature"? How receptive are they?
- How are people reacting?
  - › What questions are they asking?
  - › Any areas where we are unexpectedly getting *no* feedback? Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
  - › Are people making any wrong inferences or assumptions?
  - › Where are people getting stalled or confused?
  - › Where are people worried or objecting?
  - › When our message is received well, what reasons are people giving for their buy-in?
- How well do people participating together know each other?
- Do they know where to go for help?
- Do they know where to get supplies and resources?

TIMELINESS

- When will people want this information? Do they need to get it before they start asking or when they start asking?
- What upcoming opportunities are already available to begin promoting this information? See **Channels → 57.**

COMPREHENSIVENESS

- Has my project been explicitly announced, or does all communication start from the assumption that people already know about it?
- Is my promotional information comprehensive, or have I left out any details? See **Details Checklist → 51.**

CONCISION

- Is it short and sweet?
- Is anything over-explained or over-articulated?
- Is anything redundant?
- Is anything irrelevant?

ACCURACY

- Is my material appropriately fact-checked?
- Am I making any assumptions?

PITCH

- Do I have a pitch? See **Developing a Pitch → 49.**
- Is it memorable?
- Does it accurately capture the most compelling reason people should buy in?
- Does it try to do only one thing?
- Do other key leaders in this communication with me know the pitch?
- Are we leading with it as often as we can?

VIVIDNESS

- Is the message vivid?
- Is anything vague?
- Anything we are "telling" that we should be "showing"?
- Any abstractions that can be made concrete?
- Anything tired that can be made novel?
- Anything impersonal that can be humanized?
- Any unchallenging or obvious examples that can be made challenging and arresting?
- Any truisms, catchphrases, or platitudes that need to be reworded? Check action items especially for this.

CLARITY

- What is made explicit?
- What is assumed or implied?
- Any potential ambiguities?
- What is considered obvious—not even worth saying?
- Anything that needs to be disclaimed or disavowed?

ORGANIZATION

- Is there a logical flow? Consider these conventions:
    › Problem → solution
    › Definition → example
    › Theory → application
    › Story → moral
- Any sudden shifts in topic?
- Anything that seems shoehorned in?
- Is my vocabulary consistent throughout?

- Are points of tension resolved?
- Anything that simply stands out more than it should? This may indicate awkwardness that needs reworking.
- Are the most important things the most prominent?
- Are like items presented in parallel ways?

ERRORS & REVIEW

- Anything that needs to be proofread? See **Recommended Proofreading Steps → 52.**
- Do I need a medium-specific expert to review? Consider
    › Writing
    › Photo
    › Video
    › Graphic design
    › Fine art

REPETITION

- What number of exposures to this message do I want my target audience to have? Consider both
    › Active exposures—stage announcement, personal invite, etc.
    › Passive exposures—slide, poster, social media post, etc.
- Is this number accounted for in my planning?
- Have I taken into account factors that may cause some exposures to be "missed" entirely by some members of my audience?
    › Irregularity in attendance
    › Inattention and distraction
- How sufficient is my repetition in light of other communications also vying for peoples' attention, either from my ministry or from others?

› How many communications am I trying to send to my audience (either presently or in recent memory)? Is it too many? Am I creating "split focus"?

CONSISTENCY

• What elements of the message should be consistent at each repetition? Consider especially
  › Key details (name, time, date, location, etc.)
  › **Pitch → 39.**
• Are they actually consistent? Or is the message fluctuating over time? (Fluctuation among different leaders may reveal weak buy-in.)
  › Do we give the same message "from the stage" that we do "off the record"?
  › Is our wording consistent no matter what channel we're using? See **Channels → 57.**
  › Do handouts match slides match spoken words etc.?
• When we repeat the message, are we missing any opportunities to display promo art (if it exists)?
  › Stage announcements should have slides in the background
  › Email, web, and social media should include art, if there is art
• How consistent is the promotion coming from other people on my team, such as coworkers or volunteers under me?
  › Does our messaging match in wording?
  › Does our messaging mostly match in tone?

VARIETY

• What angles and channels am I adopting for the message? Are they varied enough? Am I leaving any good angles or channels unused? See **Angles →55** and **Channels → 57.**

• In all the repetition and consistency of my message, do I vary it enough to avoid monotony?

FOLLOW-THROUGH

• What follow-up communication is needed? Consider especially outcomes of people's efforts (giving, sending, prayer, service).
• Have we effectively communicated any postponements, cancellations, or changes in plans?
• How will we celebrate if things go well?
• Who do we need to collect feedback from?
• How will we communicate if we don't meet our goals?
• Who needs to be thanked? How will we thank them?
• How will we tell the story about the outcome? Are all leaders on board with that story?
• How will I follow up in prayer?

High-Level Communication Project Outline

This outline encompasses the main steps involved in most communication projects at Sojourn. It's designed to help you plan to plan a project.

All projects are unique, so this outline is just a starting point. Customize it by adding, removing, and reordering steps.

This outline applies most directly to promotions that are time-bound, like events. However, it can easily be adapted for other times of communication, like implementing a social media presence, revising curricula, or promoting evergreen priorities (baptism, giving, evangelism, etc.).

VISION

1 **Develop a vision proper:** why does this project exist at all? Developing a vision usually happens automatically. If you're thinking about starting a project, you probably already have a vision for it. If you've inherited the project from someone else, though, or it has been assigned to you, you may need to get clarity on the vision before moving ahead.

2 **Get permission.** If needed, get sign-off from your supervisor or other team members.

3 **Research as needed.** Share your vision with others to get their feedback about your overall direction. If a project like this has been attempted before, learn about what went well and what didn't. Make sure you know your audience. Consider **Developing Personas →45.**

4 **Develop your goals.** Goals should be specific and measurable, so you'll know whether you've met them or not. Don't set too many. You may only need one.

5 **Read through our Quality Standards →26 and More Quality Questions for Self-Review →36** to generate ideas about how you may want to shape your project.

TIMELINE & RESOURCES

6 **Think through what's already on the calendar.** Consider
   › Your personal life
   › Your to-do list for the next few months (and your team members' to-do lists)
   › The church calendar, including big events and holidays.
   › Other events that will keep people busy (like finals week, Superbowl Sunday, etc.)

7 **Build a high-level timeline** for your project. Factor in
   › How much time you need to develop all your content
   › How much time your creatives (designers, writers, videographers) need to produce their material
   › Team members you may be working with and what you'll need to do together
   › How much time you want to spend promoting
   › Any time needed for printing, shipping, etc.
   › Time for follow-up and debriefing afterward
   › Time to thank volunteers

In addition, keep in mind that some steps may need to begin before other steps are finished. For example, you will likely need

to begin doing some internal promotion before your creative production is done.

8 **Consider using a** Production Calendar → 48 once your timeline is developed.

9 **Book the resources you will need,** including
› Budget money you need to set aside
› Facilities (rooms, tables and chairs, etc.)
› Promotion bandwidth (i.e. make sure no other major promotions will be competing with you at the time you need to promote)
› Creatives to produce promotional material
› Photographers or videographers to work during an event
› Time from your team members or volunteers to complete their parts of the project later on (like helping with social media promotion)

DEVELOPMENT

10 **Begin by** Developing a Pitch → 49.

11 **Write your content—**instructions, stories, scripts, FAQs, rationale, devotional material, etc. If you're writing promotional copy, consult our best practices for **Copywriting** → 66. Use the **Details Checklist** → 51 to make sure you're not leaving anything out. Use the **Recommended Proofreading Steps** → 52 when you're done.

12 **Plan your promotions.** Use the **Content Matrix** → 53 to generate ideas. Use a **Promotion Calendar** → 58 to plan out what you will post and when. Consider that you may have multiple audiences, who may need different promotional approaches. At minimum, you will probably need

› Internal promotion (to other leaders, staff, or deacons)
› External promotion (to your main audience)

Consider as well how your promotion will flow over time. For many time-bound projects, you will probably want
› Some simple early announcements
› A ramp-up in frequency, volume, and breadth as your event approaches
› "Firing on all cylinders" during the most critical week or two
› Recap, thank-you, and photo posts afterward

Some of these promotions will probably come from you, while others will come from people on your team. Make sure they're in the loop on your plans.

CREATIVE PRODUCTION

13 **Communicate your vision, pitch, goals, and creative requests to your creative team.** Share all of your completed content with them, if possible. Always avoid delivering content or requests piecemeal, since this can cause backtracking.

14 **Complete rounds of review and revision** with your creative team. When you get a draft from them to review, regardless of the type of project, try to reply with a complete list of all known needed changes. Don't save any feedback for later.

15 **Aim for no more than two or three rounds of revision.** If more than three rounds are required, take a step back and look for the bigger problem. The project may have been rushed, the goal may have been under-communicated, or the creative team may lack the skill for your vision.

PROMOTION

16 Execute your promotion. Make it an ongoing conversation with your audience. When they speak to you over email, in person, or on social media, engage with them. Use this as an opportunity to gather more research.

17 Improvise on your strategy as needed. If some kinds of promotions are getting lots of attention and others are getting ignored, you may want to pivot—as remaining time and resources allow.

DEBRIEF

18 When the project is over, ask yourself how it went. Review your results with your team and ask others for feedback.

19 For a deep review,
› Gather all the communications you sent for this project. Use the list of Topics from **Content Matrix → 53** to make sure you've collected everything.
› Then reread the **Quality Standards → 26** and **More Quality Questions for Self-Review → 36** to evaluate yourself and make notes for the future.

Developing Personas

Personas are profiles of imaginary people who represent large segments of your target audience.

Writing personas is a brainstorming exercise intended to make it easier to visualize you audience, talk about them with your team, and evaluate engagement strategies. Once you develop your personas, you can ask questions of each one, like
- What are their felt needs?
- What are their spiritual needs?
- What approaches will resonate with them?
- What media will reach them best?
- What else is vying for their attention?

Get an editable personas template:

Access Template
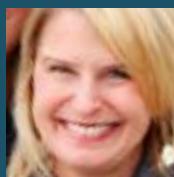
MEMBER · 3 YEARS
Charli
46 · MARRIED, 2 KIDS

Overview: Lives in the Highlands. Busy. Works at a non-profit.

Spirituality: Committed believer. She and her husband have just joined a CG.

Motivated by: Anything social.

Turn-offs: Anything time-consuming.

Reached by: Facebook, bulletin inserts.

ATTENDER · 2 YEARS
Gary
67 · WIDOWED, 4 GRANDS

Overview: Retired and lives alone. Started attending when grandson was dedicated.

Spirituality: Churchgoer but not saved.

Motivated by: Thoughtful preaching, discussion at men's Bible study.

Turn-offs: Talk about giving.

Reached by: Email, stage announcements.

MEMBER · 6 MONTHS
Abel
20 · SINGLE

Overview: College student. Lives on campus. Lots of free time.

Spirituality: Eager to serve. Relatively new believer. Iffy on community.

Motivated by: Requests for volunteers.

Turn-offs: Small groups and deep discussion.

Reached by: Stage announcements.

ATTENDER · 2 WEEKS
Cassie
31 · SINGLE

Overview: Works in retail. Has come to church twice with roommates.

Spirituality: Calls herself "spiritual but not religious." Parents were nominal Catholics.

Motivated by: Coming with friends.

Turn-offs: "Churchy stuff."

Reached by: Personal invites, Instagram.

Event-Planning Checklist

This list is designed to be paired with **High-Level Communication Project Outline → 42** and **More Quality Questions for Self-Review → 36.** It adds additional questions specific to event-planning (duh).

GENERAL

- What's the budget? Who has access to the money?
  - › Do people need credit cards for purchases?
- Will there be special decor? Balloons, tablecloths, etc.
- Will we have medical/security plans, supplies, or workers?
- Will there be a sound system?
- What is the day-of timeline? Consider:
  - › Site access for early arrivers like volunteer coordinators (building access, parking)
  - › Delivering supplies to site
  - › Distributing supplies to volunteers
  - › Setup
  - › Volunteer huddle
  - › Cleanup
- Outdoor events: is there a rain plan?
- What needs to be incorporated into the registration process to minimize day-of work?
- Will there be a sales or merch table?
  - › When and how does merch need to be acquired ahead of time?
  - › How will we take payment?
- Will there be any special activities or moments that take place during the event itself? What is the schedule?
- Will there be gifts, awards, or prizes?

VOLUNTEERS

- Think through areas of volunteer coordination
  - › Role assigments
  - › Recruitment
  - › Scheduling
  - › Training
  - › Communication
- Do we need special identification for certain people at the event? (Perhaps not limited to volunteers.)
  - › Badges
  - › Lanyards
  - › Name tags
  - › Vests
  - › T-Shirts

FOOD

- When and how will we purchase it?
- Do we need any "food accessories"? (Do we have any of this on hand from a prior event?)
  - › Silverware, plates, cups, napkins
  - › Serving utensils
  - › Pitchers, ice
- Do we have food storage plans before, during, and after?
- What do we need for food prep?
- What do we need to do to follow FDA food safety guidelines? (Food should not be between 40° and 140° for more than two hours—either needs to be chilled or heated.)
- Will we need grills, ovens, etc.?

- How will we set up food service?
  - › If possible, set up tables so people can walk on both sides of them at once.
  - › Put food in a logical order (e.g. plates first, dessert last).
- Will we have tables or chairs for sitting or eating?
- Are trash cans accessible?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- Do people need travel directions?
- Will parking options be obvious? If not, how will they be communicated?
- What are people's first impressions on walk-in?
- Will we have greeters or a welcome table?
- Will there be check-in?
- Will we need signs, wayfinding, or maps?
- What do we need to do to make sure the space is clean and uncluttered?

GUEST EXPERIENCE

- Are bathrooms accessible and findable?
- Are people comfortable?
  - › Temperature
  - › Noise level
- Do we have a plan to engage non-Midtowner visitors at the event to get their contact information, tell them about Midtown, or give them a gift? (For example, a free books table staffed with friendly people).
- Do all attendees know about all features? (Don't want anyone to walk away going, "Wait, they had cotton candy??")

Production Calendar

Communication projects often involve multiple assignees and many steps, but many of them follow a fairly predictable sequence.

A helpful tool for this is a simple production calendar. Production calendars like the one at right can work for multiple projects that overlap but have different end dates.

Production calendars are an excellent way to automate project planning and reduce the odds of a missed deadline. They also provide you the opportunity to schedule in "best practices" (like an early start and deliberate follow-up) that might be forgotten otherwise.

In a spreadsheet, the dates can be made to calculate automatically by the number of days relative to the project end date. **A template with automatic date calculating is available here:**

Access Template

Who	Task	Days Out	Project A	Project B	Project C
Leslie	Begin brainstorming	60	Wed, Jul 8	Wed, Aug 12	Wed, Sep 23
Leslie	Develop pitch	56	Sun, Jul 12	Sun, Aug 16	Sun, Sep 27
Ron	Announce at staff meeting	48	Mon, Jul 20	Mon, Aug 24	Mon, Oct 5
Ron	Announce at pastor meeting	48	Mon, Jul 20	Mon, Aug 24	Mon, Oct 5
Tom	Start securing photographers	47	Tue, Jul 21	Tue, Aug 25	Tue, Oct 6
Anne	Start planning kids activites	47	Tue, Jul 21	Tue, Aug 25	Tue, Oct 6
Chris	Start planning music	47	Tue, Jul 21	Tue, Aug 25	Tue, Oct 6
Leslie	Put in design request to Comm Team	41	Mon, Jul 27	Mon, Aug 31	Mon, Oct 12
Leslie	Get designs back from Comm Team	20	Mon, Aug 17	Mon, Sep 21	Mon, Nov 2
Jerry	Print and post posters	19	Tue, Aug 18	Tue, Sep 22	Tue, Nov 3
April	Social media push 1	17	Thu, Aug 20	Thu, Sep 24	Thu, Nov 5
April	Social media push 2	13	Mon, Aug 24	Mon, Sep 28	Mon, Nov 9
April	Social media push 3	9	Fri, Aug 28	Fri, Oct 2	Fri, Nov 13
Jerry	Print bulletin inserts	9	Fri, Aug 28	Fri, Oct 2	Fri, Nov 13
Anne	Stage announcement	7	Sun, Aug 30	Sun, Oct 4	Sun, Nov 15
Tom	Include in weekly email	6	Mon, Aug 31	Mon, Oct 5	Mon, Nov 16
April	Social media push 4	5	Tue, Sep 1	Tue, Oct 6	Tue, Nov 17
April	Social media push 5	2	Fri, Sep 4	Fri, Oct 9	Fri, Nov 20
Anne	All kids' rental gear delivered	1	Sat, Sep 5	Sat, Oct 10	Sat, Nov 21
Chris	Set up music	0	Sun, Sep 6	Sun, Oct 11	Sun, Nov 22
	End date		**Sun, Sep 6**	**Sun, Oct 11**	**Sun, Nov 22**
Leslie	Staff debrief	-2	Tue, Sep 8	Tue, Oct 13	Tue, Nov 24
Jerry	Save meeting notes for next project	-3	Wed, Sep 9	Wed, Oct 14	Wed, Nov 25
Tom	Deliver photos to April	-3	Wed, Sep 9	Wed, Oct 14	Wed, Nov 25
April	Share best photos on social media	-4	Thu, Sep 10	Thu, Oct 15	Thu, Nov 26

Developing a Pitch

WHAT IS A PITCH?

One of the most important tools in communications is pitch. **A pitch is a winning summary that captures why something matters and why hearers should want in.** It is essentially a pithy expression of your vision, crafted in a way that expresses your number one selling point and gets others on board.

A pitch can be developed for anything you need to communicate about, including values, beliefs, events, campaigns, and service opportunities. For example:

- A pitch for Trunk or Treat: *Trunk or Treat is the biggest and best outreach opportunity we have all year.*
- A pitch for membership: *membership means going from friend to family.*
- A pitch for a building campaign: *our goal is to be ready to welcome the next 250 people into our church.*
- A pitch for serving on the communion team: *serving communion is about bringing Jesus to hungry people.*

QUALITIES OF A GOOD PITCH

A good pitch is short. The shorter it is, the more memorable it will be.

A good pitch is focused. A pitch can only do one thing—no subpoints. It's a catchy sales blurb, not a mission statement, and certainly not a dictionary definition.

A good pitch speaks in terms that appeal to your audience. While it truthfully captures your vision for the project, it does so, ideally, by speaking to what hearers find important, in language they know. It articulates an opportunity for them, *not a need you want them to meet.*

A good pitch is designed to persuade, not merely to inform.

A good pitch never changes, no matter who's saying it, how long it's used, or what channel it's repeated on.

HOW TO USE A PITCH

Once developed, your pitch should shape all other communications for your project:

- Your pitch should be one of the first things out of your mouth whenever you tell anyone about the project for the first time
- Involved staff and leaders should know your pitch well
- Written communication should be shaped by it
- Design and visual communication should be inspired by it in some way

As hearers are exposed to your communications and hear the pitch repeatedly, they will also start to learn it, buy in, and repeat it to others. It will shape the way they communicate.

As you can infer, a pitch should be developed very early on in the planning process (see **High-Level Communication Project Outline** You should have a firm grasp on it before you even begin communicating internally to staff. Wait too long to develop your pitch, and your communication will become unfocused—some pieces,

media, and leaders saying *A* others say *B, C,* and *D.* This unfocused communication is a credibility killer.

In addition, nature abhors a vacuum, and without a pitch, people will find their own ways to summarize and describe your project—and they may not be favorable. Give them your pitch first, and drive it home—*prove it*—with every piece of communication that follows.

Just as you should believe in your project and the vision behind it, you should believe in your pitch. Write something you get excited to share with others—something that tumbles out of your mouth at every opportunity. If it gives you goosebumps, makes you grin, or brings you to tears, even better. Your genuine emotion will help make the sale.

DISCLAIMERS ABOUT PITCHES

Some pitches do vary by audience. For example, when we promote Trunk or Treat to the neighborhood, we obviously pitch it to them as a fun family event, not as an outreach opportunity.

Some pitches are implied in an event's title or description. For example, an "Outdoor Movie Night" event is self-explanatory and probably needs no pitch.

Details Checklist

When drafting promotions, it's important not to accidentally exclude important details. This applies to the way we promote almost anything: ministries, events, service opportunities, giving opportunities, worship opportunities, sermon series.

Not all of this info is needed on all material. For example, social media posts will usually have just the basics, while print graphics will have more. Think through what makes sense for each medium.

NAME

- **Name** of thing being promoted.
- If it will not be obvious in context, add **a subtitle** or **explanatory text** showing what kind of thing this is (e.g. retreat, Bible study, album launch, sermon series, etc.).
- If this thing is limited to a certain group (men, students, kids volunteers, etc.), add text to **specify the audience.**

DATE AND TIME

- **Day, date, time,** and **location,** maybe including a **room.**
- Occasionally you may want to specify the **length** of an event.

CALL TO LEARN MORE OR REGISTER

- Usually, you'll want a **web address** for more info and/or a **contact person's name and email address.**
- Occasionally you'll instead have other **next step instructions,** like "visit our table in the lobby for more details."
- Is registration needed? **Tell people to register** by the **registration due date.** Add the **registration web address,** if it's different from the general web address above.

OTHER INFO

- If relevant, list any **costs.** Sometimes it's good to say **"free"** if people might not be sure.
- If relevant, say whether there is **childcare.** Add any **childcare instructions** (registration, dropoff, cost).
- If relevant, say whether there will be **food.** Add any **food instructions** (menu, how to place orders ahead of time, allergy info, cost).
- If relevant, add what **supplies to bring** and/or **what supplies will be provided.**
- If relevant, **parking or travel instructions.**
- Any **requirements** like signed forms.
- Consider what other questions people might have and try to answer them ahead of time.

Recommended Proofreading Steps

The reason we proofread is to build trust. Typos and errors cause you to look ignorant or sloppy, which calls into question your reliability in other areas.

A recommended process for thorough proofreading:

1   **Use a software spellchecker** to catch any simple typos.

2   **Double-check**
    › Links and web addresses
    › Dates, times, locations, and any other essential info
    › Spelling of any unfamiliar names
    › (If you're writing an email) your subject line, from address, recipients, and attachments

3   **Print your text, then read it aloud slowly,** starting with the last sentence, and going backward, one sentence at a time. Mark any errors on your page rather than relying on your memory.

4   **Correct any errors you found,** and repeat the process until you find no more errors.

5   **Have another person repeat steps 2–5.**

Content Matrix

Every communication consists of
- a **topic** you're talking about
- an **angle** or way to discuss that topic
- a **medium** for discussing the topic
- a **channel** where communication takes place

For example, we could communicate about **the topic of a Mens Retreat** via **the angle of a personal testimony** in the **medium of spoken word** in **the channel of a Sunday stage communication.**

Or we could communicate about **the topic of an upcoming sermon series** via **the angle of reveal announcement** using **the medium of graphic design** in **the channel of an Instagram post.**

This big list is intended to help you
- Identify topics, angles, media, and channels that are over- or underused
- Brainstorm new communication ideas
- Brainstorm new topic-angle-media-channel combinations

There is some fluidity among some of these areas. Certain topics may actually function as angles at other times, and so on.

TOPICS

Beliefs
   by Category Bible, theology, philosophy, apologetics
   Policies may be included
   Statements e.g. positions on hot topics
Campaign capital, special giving, EOY, vote, other (e.g. member renewal)
Discipleship & spiritual growth
   Emotional health
   Spiritual disciplines
Events, opportunities, & resources
   by audience members only, all church, community-focused, multichurch
   by demographic Men, Women, Seniors, Parents, Singles, College, Students, Kids
   by ministry focus Mercy, Sending, Music, Care, etc.
Facilities construction, decor etc., relocations, flow, parking
Finances annual reports, giving update (weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)
Guest experience explanations of liturgy and custom, where to find the restrooms, etc.
HR job openings, announcements/policies, promotions or changes in responsibility, new hires, departures
Identity mission, values, vision
Installations new members, deacons, or pastors
Liturgy including the church calendar
Member services care, PMC, funeral, prayer, weddings, church discipline
Membership commitments attendance, CGs, giving, mission, prayer, serving

Needs
   by time 1-time, ad hoc, seasonal, evergreen
   by type servants, materials, money, prayer
Next steps baptism, find a group, serve, connect with a pastor, membership
People introductions/backgrounds, roles/duties, updates
   Staff, staff pastors, interns
   Non-staff pastors
   Deacons, servants
   Sent Ones
Resources music, devotionals, past sermons, guides, workbooks, training material, FAQs, annual report
Sending church planters, trips, partner ministries, sent ones
Sermon series Upcoming, current
Sermon content
SERT security policies, security procedures, emergencies
Teaching and class material Bible & theology, apologetics, evangelism, etc.
Trainings e.g. volunteer team onboarding
Testimonies redemption stories, salvation testimonies
World community needs, local news, social & political statements, PR statements

TOPICS SUBCATEGORY - EVERYDAY LIFE UPDATES

One special subcategory of **topics** is **everyday life updates.** These are usally only appropriate for the **media of photos and videos** in the **channels of social media.** (And they would usually be classified as the **angle of fun fact, story,** or **update.)** The list of possibilities is endless. Just bear these stipulations in mind:

- Most of these posts make more sense coming from a personal account rather than a faceless church account. However, it's great to have the church account quote you or share your personal post.
- When possible, tag others, tag the church, and/or post onto the church's page (Facebook).
- Be cautious about displays of wealth, piety, or personal talent.
- Major in updates that involve other people either explicitly (featuring them in some way) or implicitly (inviting viewers in to enjoy something). Don't be in the spotlight much.
- Major in updates that are positive and fun. Keep the heavy stuff to a minimum. Beware of anything that could appear critical or grouchy.
- These posts should humanize you and reveal ordinary church life. Don't do anything polished or manicured—it will seem fake.
- Similarly, avoid updates that simply focus on Super Cool Experiences you've had. Don't make your life look fancy.
- Avoid clichés. No pictures of food, no cats, no coffee photos, etc.
- Always double-check photos before posting. Make sure the subject is in the shot, not blurry, etc. For videos, make sure subjects are audible.

Broad categories and examples include:

Day-to-day
   before and after reorganized my office, new piano, new paint color, powerwashing the sidewalk, satisfying repairs
   business as usual office tour, planning meeting, writing, reading a book
   natural beauty at the church (in moderation) trees, flowers, weather
   out of the ordinary fire drill, bring-your-puppy-to-work day, power outage, bird in the office
   WIP post-meeting whiteboard, music practice, prepping crafts, stuffing 1000 envelopes, sanctuary chair setup timelapse

Endorsements and celebrations art, movies, food, books, quotations, current favorite album for driving into work

Events, opportunities, projects, and resources

  getting ready collecting supplies, setting up, supply run, decorating

  participating personally registering, waiting in a line, counting down the days, making plans in some way

  swag any Sojourn-branded clothing, gear, media, etc.

People staff, leaders, members, attenders, people in community, recognizable faces from other churches

  accomplishments and celebrations birthdays, fantasy football winners, activites completed, talents, ways they serve the church, admirable attributes

  creations (real or silly) art, doodles, decor, mind-map, writing

  enjoying their company getting to do an activity with them, meeting them somewhere unexpectedly

  funny disasters (keep them cheery) dumped coffee on shirt, got rained on

  personal events marriages, workiversaries, graduation, babies, trainings & certification, recognitions & awards, things published

  pranks and surprises as long as they're funny and not mean

  silly trivia stupid human tricks, funny things they said/texted, cool outfits, celebrity doppelgangers

  talk about gift received video of anything smallish (t-shirt, book, music, etc.) given or recommended to you by another—along with why you love it and the giver

Reading List

Reviews taste-testing new food from another culture, trying the new coffee shop in town, summarizing your colleague's new book

Shares share (good) posts from people in your community (presumably members) and add friendly commentary

Spiritual experience being extremely careful not to appear too pious or self-promoting, carefully help set an example for people by showing them aspects of your everyday spiritual life—what it looks like pratically

Community
Disciplines Bible reading, serving, Sabbath, etc.
Sunday gathered

ANGLES

Announcements

  basics teaser, reveal, kick-off, reminder

  details/changes date, time, location, etc.

  time-related deadline reminders, registration capacity limits

Application application idea, direct question to audience

Appeal

  to specific profile person, group, demographic

  by human need significance, security, control, competence, affirmation

Attention-getter something startling, cute, delightful, intriguing

Audience mass questions surveys, votes

Audience "pick one" style questions e.g. your favorite worship song, your favorite book, one thing you will pack for upcoming retreat, your dish you will bring to potluck, word to describe your spiritual journey, name of friend you challenge to fast and pray with you, one piece of advice for freshmen

Best practices

Celebrations of goals met, commitments made or followed through on, nearly any kind of effort or participation

  Anniversaries

  Milestones

Claims assertions, promises, opinions

Counterarguments to expected objections list of misconceptions

Expressions of emotions toward God or others congratulations, compassion/sympathy, validation, gratitude, admiration, confusion, hurt, plea for help, confession/repentance

Fun fact or feature

How-to video

"How it's made" staff systems and processes, lesson planning, sermon prep, etc.

Illustrations from culture, arts, music, hymns, movies and TV, history, books

Invite by call to action save the date, attend, register, serve

Joining existing conversations social media trends and hashtags, pop culture (movies, music), holidays, traditions, special occasions, news

Minigames quizzes, sweepstakes, contests/competitions

"Post-Game Analysis" talk about completed events, resources, opportunities, and discuss how they went

Lists countdown, top X items/reasons

Prayer extemporaneous, prepared, historical/liturgical, prayed Scripture

Questions
   rhetorical questions
   literal questions (soliciting feedback)

Quotations Scripture, sermon, commentator/theologian

Presence a guest speaker or preacher, someone's making an appearance somewhere (e.g. pastor at team huddle), celebrating event participants

Rationale for something
   appeal to authority Scripture, our mission, tradition, church history, etc.
   desire for emotional expression joy, sorrow, reverence, lament, relaxation, etc.
   human needs community, identity, discipline, vision
   aesthetics & design
   logistical needs time, money, location
   counterarguments reasons not to do something, high associated costs

Reviews recaps, evaluations, post-shows, behind-the-scenes

Speaker (that is, the person delivering the message can be the angle)

Statistics counts, changes over time, PEW surveys

Stories and testimonies
   by level of formality extemporaneous, prepared
   by level of reality true account, fiction, hypothetical
   by style first-person narrative, interview
   by type origin stories, endorsements, commentaries, "behind the scenes" story, impact story, glimpse into daily life, transformation story

Tours facilities projects, mission trip locations, event setups

Updates about campaigns, projects, trips, sending, etc. welcome, started, progress, time remaining, completed, outcome

Viral hooks "Don't make this mistake," "What most people don't know about X," "The most interesting fact about X," "Am I the only one that didn't know X?," "Everybody's looking for [basic human need]," "This is the secret to X"

MEDIA

Art fine visual art, decor

Graphic design

Graphic downloads
   Phone wallpaper

Music

Photos of a place or thing, selfie, group shot

Prayer extemporaneous, prepared, congregational responsive

Spoken word

Written text

Videos informal hand-held, slightly edited, fully produced, live, livestream recap clips

CHANNELS

Care conversations pastoral care, lay care, church discipline, PMC, funerals, marriages

Classes New member, baptism, other discipleships/studies

Class handouts and take-home resources From adult classes, from Sojourn Students, from Sojourn Kids

Conversations New member interviews, pre-baptism conversations

Door-to-door handouts

Email
   by scope mass emails, group emails, individual emails
   by frequency ad hoc, regular update, newsletter

Events announcement during, handout

Giveways swag, gift bags, prizes

Mail letters, postcards

Meetings Trainings, team and volunteer huddles, staff meetings, meals and coffees, elder meetings, board meetings, member meetings, CGs

Livestream
   main stream content
   bumpers

Personal phone call, text message, formal note, informal note, letter

Podcast feeds
   main stream content
   bumpers

Resources   music, devotionals, past sermons, guides, workbooks, training material, Q&As, annual report

Social media
   Bios Facebook pages, Facebook groups, Twitter, Instagram
   Posts, stories, reels, etc. Facebook pages, Facebook groups, Twitter, Instagram

Signage yard signs, decor proper, permanent signage, posters

Sunday
   bulletin back graphics, back text, bulletin insert, inside text
   sermon pre-sermon announcement, sermon proper, preached announcement
   service liturgy, inter-liturgy addresses, passing of the peace, stage communication, stage dressing
   other chair-back insert, indoor posters, lobby attention-getters, slides

Website normal pages, event pages, special banners and graphics, landing pages

Word of mouth among leaders, from leaders to non-leaders, among non-leaders, personal social media posts

Promotion Calendar

A promotion calendar is a schedule of what's being promoted and where. It can help you make sure you're using all the channels available to you, following through on your promotions over time.

It's also a good way to audit yourself: are your biggest communication priorities actually getting the most promotion?

Once you develop a template that shows all your slots for one week, you can duplicate it and fill it in for several weeks at a time.

The example at right includes some channels that are only available at the church level, but your template could easily be customized for only channels available at the ministry level.

Access Template

Sep 5 Sunday Service		Sep 6 Monday Email		Sep 7 Tuesday Social		Sep 8 Wednesday
Slot	Content	Slot	Content	Slot	Content	Slot
Stage - Offertory 1	VBS	Email Headline	VBS	Facebook	VBS	
Stage - Offertory 2	Men's Retreat	Email Event Block 1	VBS Volunteers needed	Instagram	VBS	
Stage - Sermon	VBS	Email Event Block 2	Men's Retreat			
Stage - Benediction 1	VBS	Email Event Block 3	Women's Bible Study			
Stage - Benediction 2	Women's Bible Study					
Slide 1	VBS					
Slide 2	Men's Retreat					
Slide 3	Women's Bible Study					
Slide 4	Clothing Drive					
Slide 5	Discipleship Class					
Slide 6	Prayer Team					
Slide 7	Missions Meeting					
Poster - Hallway 1	VBS					
Poster - Hallway 2	Men's Retreat					
Poster - Hallway 3	Women's Bible Study					
Poster - Hallway 4	Clothing Drive					
Poster - Atrium 1	VBS					
Poster - Atrium 2	Men's Retreat					
Poster - Atrium 3	Women's Bible Study					
Poster - Atrium 4	Clothing Drive					

Best Practices

Style

In writing, a style guide is a list of standards. Entries look like this:

> **entry** Optional description, sometimes including right examples in green and wrong examples in red.

If you have difficulty distinguishing green from red and would like an alternative, please → contact Communications.

SOJOURN NAMES & PLACES

Sojourn Collective, the Collective, a collective, the Collective churches, Sojourn Community Church—avoid

multichurch not **multicampus** or **multisite**
church not **campus**

a Sojourn church, Sojourn churches
never **Sojourn Church** by itself

Sojourn Meridian Building
St. Vincent's

Sojourn Kids
not **SojournKids**

sojournmidtown.com

Staff names and titles are listed online. They should always be written the way they're displayed on the church's website. If you see an error here, please notify HR.

COMMON WORDS

baptism
Bible, biblical
Christian, Christianity
church Capitalized only as part of a specific church or denomination name.
email
gospel The good news about Jesus.
Gospel The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
heaven
kingdom, kingdom of heaven, God's kingdom
pastor Only capitalized as part of a title.
Scripture, scriptural
Word, Word of God, God's Word, God's words

God's pronouns (he, him, his) are not capitalized.

PUNCTUATION

ampersand (&) Fine in titles or fragments, but avoid in full sentences.
apostrophe (') Never used to pluralize (as in many picture's and GIF's).
comma Do use before the second-to-last list item (this is the "Oxford Comma").

dash and hyphen
- **hyphen (-)** Used to join words together, as in **five-year-olds.**
- **en dash (–)** Used in a range, such as **9am–5pm.** Type with `OPTION + HYPHEN` (Mac). Some web and email programs struggle with en dashes. If this happens, use a hyphen instead.
- **em dash (—)** Used for a break in thought, as in **my friend—the missionary—is on furlough right now.** Do not put spaces around em dashes. Type with `SHIFT + OPTION + HYPHEN` (Mac). Some web and email programs struggle with em dashes. If this happens, use a space-hyphen-space instead.

ellipsis (…) Do not create a fake ellipsis by hitting the period button three times, since they may get divided over a line break. Instead, type a real ellipsis with `OPTION + SEMICOLON` (Mac).

exclamation points (!) For statements that express joy, surprise or eagerness (like **Don't miss the ministry fair in the lobby!**) not for making statements of fact sound friendlier (like **The ministry fair is open until 12:30pm!**). Don't use more than one at a time.

hyphen (-) See "dash and hyphen" above.

space Only one between sentences.

FORMATTING

all caps Don't use for emphasis. Use bold or italics instead.

bold Extend to adjacent punctuation, as in **she yelled a big "Welcome!" to everyone,** with bolded quotation marks and exclamation point.

capitalization of titles and headers Be consistent: either capitalize all major words (title case) or only the first word (sentence case).

colons Not typically needed at the end of a header.

email addresses All lowercase.

italics Always extend to adjacent punctuation, as in **Who's watching *What about Bob?* with us?** with an italicized first question mark.

phone numbers The less punctuation, the better. Ideally use just spaces, as in **555 867 5309,** or hyphens, as in **555-867-5309.**

titles Books, movies, and sermon series should be italicized.

underlining Always looks bad and should be avoided if possible. Use bold or italics instead.

URLs Take out the **http://** and **www.**

SUGGESTIONS FOR TIMES, DATES, & LOCATIONS

These are a matter of personal preference, not right and wrong. Below are some attractive conventions. If you prefer other styles, just be consistent.

am/pm No periods, capitals, or spaces: **9am.**

date
- Format as **October 23** or **Sunday, October 23.**
- Avoid abbreviating if possible. Otherwise, leave off the periods and abbreviate everything, as in **Thu, Oct 12.**
- Never use ordinal indicators, as in **March 1st, 2nd, and 3rd.** Just write **March 1, 2, and 3.**

location with room Put the building first: **Sojourn Meridian Building, 4th floor.**

time Only include the colon and minutes if needed, so **8pm** but **8:30pm.**

time and date
- Date first, then time, as in **Sunday, May 23, at 8am.**
- Swap the order for recurring dates, as in **Mondays, 7–8:30pm, from February 4–April 15.**
- When times and dates are presented as graphic elements, instead of prose, replace "at" or "from" with a midpoint (`SHIFT + OPTION + 9` [Mac]) and take out all the commas, as in **May 23 · 8am.**

time range Use only one am or pm (**8–9am**) unless your range spans

from am to pm (**9am–5pm**).

time, recurring

- Normally format as **Mondays from 7–8:30pm.**
- When recurring times are presented as graphic elements,
  instead of in prose, replace "from" with a midpoint
  (`SHIFT + OPTION + 9` [Mac]), as in **Mondays · 7–8:30pm.**

Email Signatures

The best way to design an email signature is in HTML. HTML signatures maximize compatibility across different browsers and email clients.

The following pages have instructions for using the HTML email signature at right.

If this signature isn't an option for you, consider designing a simple text signature with minimal formatting.

Avoid taking a picture of text and using it as your signature. Pictures-as-signatures are liable to break or display incorrectly for your recipients and are not considered a best practice.

neque. Donec faucibus elit sit amet libero iaculis fermen tempus nisl ut enim tincidunt blandit. Sed eget aliquam s faucibus orci. Ut quis mi in elit molestie varius ac at dian dolor imperdiet eros dictum consequat nec vitae justo. Ir aliquet a consequat vel, accumsan id est. Integer sodale nunc, ultrices hendrerit dui scelerisque eget. Proin vulpu sed dictum libero gravida vel. Maecenas in gravida est. elementum eros. Nam placerat lobortis viverra. Aenean

Gratefully,

Kate Duncan
Director of Mercy Ministries
Sojourn Church Midtown

—

502 459 8989 cell
sojournmidtown.com web

CUSTOMIZE THE EMAIL SIGNATURE

1 You can adapt the signature on the previous page by **→ editing the template here on Codepen.** You'll need to know basic HTML or to grab someone who does. Obviously, you can customize the signature as needed. At a minimum, change these items:

› Your information
  › Name
  › Title
  › Email
  › Phone
› The hyperlinks in the text
  › Email
  › Phone

2 In Safari (required) on a Mac, click in the white portion of the CodePen window on your name. Press `COMMAND+A` and then `COMMAND+C` to select all and then copy.

IF YOU USE GMAIL IN SAFARI

1 In Safari on a Mac, load **→ Gmail.com.** Note that these steps must be completed in Safari, but afterward your Gmail signature will work in any browser.

2 At the top right of the page, click the **cog icon.** Click **Settings.**

3 Scroll down to **Signature.** Click into the signature field. Press `COMMAND+A` and then `COMMAND+V` to select all and then paste.

4 Scroll to the bottom of the Settings page and select **Save Changes.**

5 Send a test email to a communications staff member to proofread your results.

IF YOU USE THE MAIL APP ON A MAC

These instructions assume your Sojourn email account has already been added to Mail. If not, do that first.

1 Open the Mail app on your Mac.

2 In the menu bar, choose **Mail > Preferences.**

3 In the Preferences window, choose **Signatures.**

4 Select your Google Sojourn account on the left side.

5 At the bottom, press the **plus button** to add a new signature.

6 **Uncheck** the box reading "Always match my default messages font."

7 Click into the far-right pane. Press `COMMAND+A` and then `COMMAND+V` to select all and then paste.

8 At the bottom, change **Choose Signature** to the selected signature. You can simply close the window and your changes will be saved.

9 Send a test email to a communications staff member to proofread your results.

ADDING YOUR SIGNATURE TO APPLE MAIL ON AN IPHONE OR IPAD

1 After email is set up on your Mac in Gmail or Mail, email yourself a message using your new signature.

2 Open this message on your iPhone or iPad in the Mail app.

3 Select and copy the whole signature.

4 In the **Settings** app, go to **Mail > Signature.** Paste the signature. You'll see the colors change.

5 Trigger undo by doing one of the following
› Shake your device. When the alert opens, confirm **undo.**
› Double-tap with 3 fingers and then press **undo** button.
› If you have a keyboard attached, press `COMMAND+Z` .

6 The colors in your signature will correct themselves.

7 Send a test email to a communications staff member to proofread your results.

Copywriting

Copywriting is composing promotional text (not to be confused with "copyrighting," which means securing legal rights).

The goal of good copywriting is to paint such a compelling picture of your opportunity that readers are sold on the spot.

The best practices below are intended most for medium- and long-form copy (like an email or stage announcement), but could be applied to any copywriting scenario.

EARN ATTENTION WITH YOUR INTRO

Your first order of business is to make people want to pay attention to you. Say something intriguing, vivid, and meaningful, but don't be gimmicky or cheesy. In addition, don't open with a mission statement or definition.

Areas to consider:

email subject lines Avoid generic subject lines like Updates or This Week. Instead, take something salient from the body of your message and work it into the subject line. For example, It's Time for Family Movie Night!

headlines and opening sentences (in written text) Drive your audience down the page—don't let them bail. Instead of stating facts, show them what's interesting about those facts. For example, a bad headline / opening sentence would be New Sermon Series / This week we will begin our study of the book of Job. A better alternative would be Why won't God answer? / Is God silent in the midst of your suffering?

opening sentences (in spoken text) Confidently hook your audience. Don't merely state facts (There's a Men's Bible Breakfast on Saturday)—instead, create interest. For example, introduce tension you will resolve a moment later (As many of you men know, sometimes it's hard to meet other men at the church...).

Often, an effective introduction is one that chooses the right angle (see **Angles →55)**. The goal here is to make your message more specific and concrete, which makes it more engaging.

A great angle to use is a story. You can speak from your own experience, tell about what happened to someone else, or even paint a picture of a hypothetical situation. For example, you could easily tell people, Guests at our church sometimes feel lonely when we don't introduce ourselves. That's true, but it's vague. It would be better to say, Becky Johnson once told me that on her first Sunday here, she felt totally alone. She was about to leave until the MacDonalds came up and introduced themselves.

CAST A VISION

Often, but not always, you should segue to your vision. Most of the time, the best way to do this is to state your pitch (see **Developing a Pitch →49).** For example, after the story above, you could say, We want everyone who comes in this building to feel wanted.

Remember, your pitch is your punchline. Make it stand out. If it's spoken, slow down and enunciate well. If it's written, make sure it starts or ends a paragraph.

In some types of communications (especially recurring updates), you may not want to repeat your pitch every single time you communicate. Even so, do repeat it often. Use different angles to set up your pitch each time, teaching your listeners the thoroughness of your vision. Repetition is how you drive home your pitch: you are "proving" it again and again.

USE YOU-FOCUSED LANGUAGE

Ultimately, you don't persuade people by talking about you; you persuade them by talking about them. So throughout your copy, check for opportunities to speak to your audience directly in second person.

For example, **We're launching a Bible study on the themes in Genesis** is not a compelling promotion. ("Who cares what *you're* doing?" a listener might think). Instead, involve your audience: **Come learn about the themes in Genesis at our new Bible study.**

Similarly, translate your copy into your audience's language. For example, don't say **Learn to read Genesis** if the words already bouncing around their brains are, "I wish I understood the Bible." In that case, say **Learn to understand Genesis.**

It follows from this principle that you should speak positively, not in terms of your need, but in terms of their opportunity. Don't lead with **We're looking for 25 families to donate to our food drive.** That's true, but makes primary narrative about filling up slots, which doesn't align with your vision. Instead, say something like: **Help provide for families who don't always get three meals a day.** If you want to mention your 25-family goal, make it secondary.

ADVERTISE THE OUTCOME, NOT THE PROCESS

In the same vein as the previous principle, highlight what people will enjoy, not what they'll have to do to get there. Don't say **we'll be doing some exercises to get to know each other better.** Instead, say, **you're going to meet someone you want to hang out with again.**

LET A GOOD PRODUCT SELL ITSELF

While using these calls to action, resist the urge to persuade too much. You want to win over the people who can be sold on the opportunity, not the people who can be cajoled. Watch out for coaxing phrases like **you've gotta check it out,** which add pressure without articulating value.

Instead, try speak out of your confidence in your vision. If you can honestly say **I believe this weekend could be a major turning point in your prayer life,** great! Use that phrase instead.

CLEARLY COMMUNICATE KEY DETAILS

Make sure key details, like dates, time, and location, are clear. (Catch any other essentials using the **Details Checklist → 51).** If you are speaking, speak key details slowly and loudly. If you are writing, make key details easy to spot.

HAVE A BIG, HONKIN' CALL-TO-ACTION

End by telling your audience what their one next step is. Tell them to **Learn more** or **Register now.** Be clear and emphatic—this is the one

thing they can't miss.

In a spoken promotion, your CTA should ideally be accompanied by visuals of some kind (like a slide or handout).

In a web context, your CTA should be a button. On your button, avoid uninspiring phrases like **Click here** or **Go here.** Instead, use a verb related to the action, like **Give now** or **Claim your table.**

USE IMPERATIVE SENTENCES

When possible, form your call to action with imperative sentences. Instead of saying **You can join a community group,** simply say, **Join a community group.**

Sometimes you need to qualify your statement to target a certain group. For example, you may need to say, **If you haven't yet joined a community group, then visit the info table after the service.** Qualifications are fine. However, beware of qualifications that reveal that you don't really believe in your message. If you say, **If you're interested, then visit the info table after the service,** you're suggesting that even after all your persuasion, a thinking person could simply be uninterested. Try not to arm your audience with excuses. If anything, make the implied excuse their problem—e.g., **If you're ready to take the next step, then visit the info table after the service.**

USE A SIMPLE STRUCTURE

The ideal piece of communication is about only one thing: your one main idea and subsequent call to action. However, in the real world, you may have to have multiple main ideas (maybe each with its own

call to action!).

Unfortunately, the more complex your structure, the more likely you are to lose your audience. Therefore, use multiple points if you must, but avoid subpoints. Think *bulleted list,* not *outline.*

SHORTER IS BETTER

Shorten your text ~~as much as you can~~ by ~~going through it and making sure you're~~ eliminating ~~any and all~~ redundacies ~~you can see~~. You'll ~~honestly~~ be surprised at how much ~~superfluous wording~~ you can cut ~~out of your text~~!

Copy Design

1 **Avoid long blocks of text.** Anything monotonous will scare most readers away. Use elements to add rhythm and variety. Make the text more scannable. Consider:

- Paragraph breaks
- Headers
- Emphasized text (bold, italics)
- Lists
- Dividers
- Special text callouts (when available)
- Other graphics (see next page)

Think of your text as a rock wall readers have to scale. You want to provide as many little hand-holds and alcoves as possible.

Consider as well that only some people who see your text will read it, and even fewer will read the whole thing. Add variety to keep people engaged.

Don't forget to use the text styles already built in to the Sojourn website and email templates. This will keep your designs consistent with everyone else's.

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READERS MAY FEEL OVERWHELMED
This is not very inviting.

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READERS HAVE MANY JUMPING-IN POINTS
This increases your odds of engagement.

2 **Add photos and graphics.** They are always more interesting than text.

There are three primary places to draw graphics from.

- When you're speaking about something that already has a custom design created, show that design. For example, when you mention an upcoming sermon series, show the sermon series art.
- When you're speaking about something we have a photo for, like a Sojourn event or missionary, show the photo.
- You may be able to find stock photos on unsplash.com. Just err on the side of caution in avoiding anything hokey or irrelevant.

If you have the resources to make custom graphics, illustrations, graphs, or more, those will also add value to your copy.

Don't worry about the length extra graphics add to your content.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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✖

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES
Graphics would stand out more.

✔

MEMORABLE
Readers will latch on to these photos.

3 **Make important links unmissable.** Links are especially important in your web and email copy, since they are the next actions you want your readers to take. (Many times, links are the *entire purpose* of writing the copy, and if readers miss them, the copy is wasted.)

Make your important links easy to find by using some of these techniques:
- Use a button for your *most* important links (but don't overuse this)
- Use more words in the link
- Give links their own lines

If you have a graphic, make the graphic a clickable link, too

In addition, give some thought to the call to action text in your link. Avoid uninspiring phrases like *click here* or *go here.* This is an opportunity to command attention. Use an imperative verb related to the outcome of the action, like
- Learn more at [website or page title]
- Give now
- Claim your table
- Register
- Talk to [name]

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BURIED LINK
Did you catch the link? Many readers will fly right past without ever seeing it.

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BETTER
Harder to miss. This is a good technique for less important links.

DUNTIUNT UTE NUS NON ESTIST

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aborro voluptio

BEST
This is a must for your most important links. Plus, it's a good opportunity to repeat your call to action.

4 Don't use literal addresses for links.
Addresses are ugly. Hide them in prettier text. This has the added benefit of making them easily clickable for users.

ESTHER BOOK STUDY

Buy Cosper's book, *Faith Among the Faithless,* on Amazon at https://www.amazon.com/Faith-Among-Faithless-Learning-Esther/dp/0718097475/Eref=sr_1_3. If you have questions, please email sojourn@sojournchurch.com.

UGLY ADDRESSES, DULL TITLE
Help your readers out!

ESTHER BOOK STUDY

Cosper's book is called *Faith Among the Faithless.* Get your copy here on Amazon. If you have questions, please email us.

BETTER
Prettier and more inviting.

Presentation Design

1 Go ultra-simple on your slide design.
Most slide templates are not super attractive, and the ones that are are still distracting. You want to make sure you are supported, not upstaged, by your presentation.

(Skip all the animations and transitions, too.)

September 6, 2020

Teaching the Gospel to Kids

BEN BELFORT

Slide 1 of 28

DISTRACTING
People will notice this more than they'll notice you.

Teaching the Gospel to Kids

CLASSIC
This keeps eyes on you.

2 One thing at a time. As a rule of thumb, bullet points are dull and businesslike. But more importantly, showing more than one thing at a time is distracting to your audience. When you are moving on to point number three, you don't want points one and two still up there, diverting people's attention away from you. And you definitely don't want points four and five already visible and stealing your thunder!

This same principle applies to photos, charts, and other graphics—just show one at a time.

SCATTERED
This slide is out of sync with you, saying five things while you're saying one.

- **We care about kids**
- **We want them to know Jesus**
- **We want them to grow up in the church**
- **We want them to know that they matter to us**
- **We want them to feel safe in our classrooms**

FOCUSED
This keeps listeners in the moment.

We care about kids

+ Four more slides for the next four points

3 Less is more.

Ideally, the real content of your presentation should come from your spoken words, while your slides only serve as illustrations. Shortening your slides is an effective way to do this.

Not only does this make your points more memorable, but it (again) ensures that the focus stays on you, not on the screen behind you.

> More than 175 kids come into our classrooms every Sunday morning.

✕

WORDY
People will always tune out temporarily to read the slide. The more they have to read, the longer they tune out.

> 175+ kids

✓

CONCISE
This packs a punch.

4 Show, don't tell. Although photos and graphics will draw people's eyes away from you, when they support your words, they can drive your point home even more powerfully.

Show your graphic full-screen for maximum impact.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY
This slide is fine, but lacks *oomph* compared to the option below.
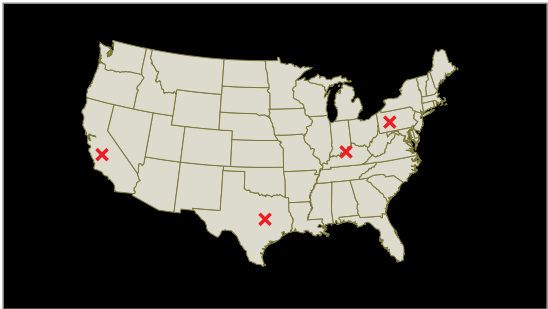
STRONGER
Imagine showing this slide while *speaking* the text from the slide above.
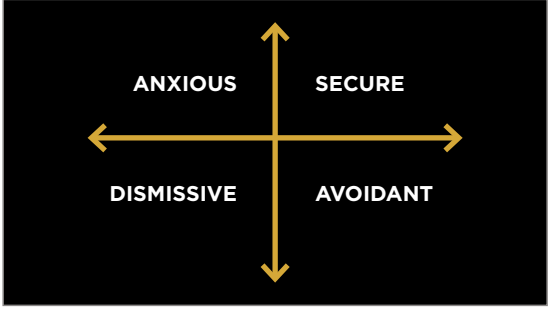
Mission · **Vision** · Values

ABOUT ME

ADULTS EACH SUNDAY

20-30
30-40
40-50
50+

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:5

ANXIOUS   SECURE

DISMISSIVE   AVOIDANT

Community
Brad House

Pew Research Center
pewresearch.org

SOJOURN
CHURCH
MIDTOWN

When (Not) to Use PDFs

When sharing basic text content with a wide audience, be cautious about doing it via PDFs (and other document formats like Google Sheets, Microsoft Word, etc.).

PDFs should pretty much be used for only a few things:
- Content that is intended for download
- Content that is intended for print
- Content that requires very precise text formatting (like this book) that you can't achieve on a webpage

In all other cases, it's best not to share content via PDFs. Here are a few reasons why it's not a best practice:
- It adds more steps for users to access
- It's frustrating to read on mobile devices
- It's harder to update later if we find an error (anyone who's downloaded a copy will not receive corrections)
- It's harder for users to share with each other
- It imports print design principles into a web/mobile design context, which can make us look "tech illiterate"

It's preferable instead to put your text content directly onto a webpage or app.

Collaborating with Non-Sojourners

When collaborating with non-Sojourners to produce or promote events, publish resources, provide training, etc., our collaboration is a de facto endorsement. Consider what measures need to be put in place to accomplish the following:

- To avoid any collaboration that could endanger our people or our communities—physically, financially, or spiritually
- To avoid any collaboration that could harm Sojourn's reputation or open us to financial loss
- To be above reproach regarding our arrangements
- To have clarity about details, including a clear paper trail, if something goes wrong
- In the event of a worst-case PR scenario, to be able to quickly and fully clear Sojourn of any wrongdoing

GET CLARITY ON

- The name of the person or organization
- Their contact information
- The exact arrangement we have with them
- All deliverables
- All times and dates
- Any incentives offered or received
- Anything that may look to the public like an incentive

ASK QUESTIONS LIKE

- What kind of reputation do they have? What are the optics of our associating with them?
- What are their beliefs? How much do their beliefs need to align with ours, if at all?
- Are they reliable? Will they deliver on agreements we make?
- Are there any safety and security factors we need to consider? Liability concerns? Other legal issues?
- Do they need to be credentialed or licensed? Do we have hard proof of their credentials that we can furnish quickly to authorities or the press, if needed?
- Are there authorities or experts who should be consulted or informed first?

Managing Email

When managed well, plain ol' email is a great opportunity to serve others and create strong positive impressions about our brand. Even our staff-to-staff email practices have real culture-shaping power.

Consider some of these best practices:

WHEN WRITING EMAIL

- **Be brief.** The longer your email is, the more you should ask if email is the best medium. Most long emails should be supplemented with (or replaced by) phone calls or in-person conversations.
- **Be specific.** Make concrete requests instead of just stating needs. Don't make the other person do your thinking for you. For example, this is too vague: **"I'm trying to think through the best plan?"** A better ask would be: **"Can you meet Friday at 2pm to brainstorm a plan?"**
- **Avoid empty words.** If something doesn't add value, remove it. Chit-chat that is pleasant in person can be a drag over email. For example, this is friendly but too long: **"I've been meaning to ask you this. What time is our event on Friday? It would really help to know! Looking forward to seeing you."** A better (and equally warm) message would be simply: **"What time is our event on Friday? Looking forward to seeing you."**
- **Use descriptive, meaningful subject lines.** A subject line like **"Question"** isn't very helpful.
- **Make each email about one thing.** If you need to discuss multiple topics, send separate messages.
- **Quickly reread your message for clarity before you send.**
- **Give people 24–48 hours to respond.** If you need an answer faster, call or text.

WHEN RECEIVING EMAIL

- **Check your email only once or twice a day.** Protect yourself from constant interruption.
- **Read emails in the order you receive them.** This helps you avoid skipping to easy emails and procrastinating about hard ones.
- **Don't use your inbox as a to-do list.** You will never be able to keep up. Instead, identify task requests and extract them to a real to-do list. There, you can sort items by priority.
- **Don't not reply.** Though people who know you may graciously assume you're simply busy, people who don't may think you're unreliable. Try to reply to all emails within 24–48 hours, even if only to say, "Thanks, I'll get back to you about this later."
- **If you fail to reply within 24–48 hours, begin your next message with a simple mea culpa.** Something as simple as "Sorry for the slow reply" is great. It tells recipients you value them.
- **After dealing with an email, don't leave it in your inbox.** Once you've taken action (by replying and/or adding a task to your to-do list), archive the email. This prevents old emails from getting buried under new ones.
- **Move conversations out of email when needed.** If you get a long, rambling, or frustrated-sounding email, consider responding with a phone call.
- **Use "reply all" sparingly**—only when all recipients need to see your response.

Photo Permission

Sojourn does not have an official policy about when to get permission from people before using photos (or videos) of them. Consider these guidelines:

- When an adult's face appears, use caution before publishing anything that might upset or embarrass someone.
- Avoid using photos of people who have been removed from membership.
- If a child's face appears in Sojourn media, ask a parent before publishing.

Social Media

Speaker Strategies

Let's say you're launching a cool new local coffee shop called Bean Canteen. You're eager to promote the new flavors that just arrived for the season, and you decide this would be a great time to kickstart your (probably overdue) social media presence.

You hop on to Instagram, where you've been squatting on the **@beancanteen** handle for a few months. You're ready to give a voice to your brand and let the store start speaking to its customers.

But wait, you think—maybe it would be better if you did this promotion not as the store, but as yourself, the owner **(@beancanteenking).** That would give you the opportunity to speak in your own voice. You could explain personally about how you went about sourcing your new flavors. It would feel less official, but it might be more real.

Then again, you realize, there's a third option—you could make a group account that all your social-savvy baristas share (looks like **@beancanteenteam** *is* available). They can post as themselves at work, signing posts with their own names or appearing in videos to talk about the new flavors. That way you can have multiple voices—including your own, from time to time—all meeting your audience online.

In addition to all this, of course, you could combine all three strategies into a hybrid approach.

So, what should you do? It's probably obvious that there's no one right answer. Each strategy has pros and cons.

At the same time, your choice will hugely impact how you show up online. After all, *what is said* and *how it is said* are significantly affected by *who is speaking.* That's why your "speaker strategy" should be one of the first questions you answer when you start thinking about social media.

Let's think through the four speaker strategies mentioned above.

STRATEGY 1: SPEAKING AS YOUR BRAND

Speaking as your brand means that rather than talking like an individual person, you take on the identity of your brand, putting words in its mouth. You're trying to imagine what personality it has, and talk as it would talk. Someone viewing a post composed this way would have no way to know the true author, since there would be nothing in it to identify you. The avatar and account name would be the brand's.

In writing, this strategy resembles how many of us learned to compose school papers—no first person singular. For example, rather than saying, "I'm inviting you to a member meeting this Sunday," you'd say, "You're invited to a member meeting" or maybe even "We're inviting you to a member meeting." This is how most websites are written (and how this brand book is written).

In video, this strategy usually positions the brand as the uncredited writer and off-camera narrator for everything onscreen. If people appear to speak to the camera, they do so in the style of an TV announcer or news show host.

This strategy feels official and professional, which is exactly how many of us want to come across online. It's what many leaders choose

automatically for their social media. It's generally the safest way to speak, being more about facts and less about opinions.

In general, speaking as your brand is a good strategy to employ when you are not personally trying to establish a relationship with all the members of your audience. Your goal is for them to be informed, not to get to know you. Therefore, the larger your audience is, the more likely you may want to speak as your brand rather than yourself.

(If you're speaking on behalf of the church brand as a whole, not just one ministry or department, you should almost certainly use this strategy.)

| **Smaller audience** | **Larger audience** |
| Speak as self | Speak as brand |

←——————————————————→

Even when you're addressing a large audience as yourself (see the next strategy below), you may want your normal voice to take on more formal, brand-like qualities (see **Voice & Tone → 23).** This is exactly the same as it would be outside of social media: you speak differently in front of the whole church than you would in a team huddle.

Speaking as your brand does have a few risks:
• It can become bland and cold. Because you are speaking as a business rather than as a person, you can hide behind formality and fake it. In a worst-case scenario, it becomes platitudinous, stilted, or glib.
• It gives you the ability to put words into the mouth of your department or church. That's a lot of power. Your own preferences and opinions can get conflated with your brand's. Plus, a judgment

you might make casually from your own lips can sound more "official," and therefore less gracious, coming from a brand.
• It can make you miss opportunities to build a personal relationship with your audience.

Although speaking as your brand is a legitimate strategy with appropriate uses, it is also overused. In most cases, the strategies below will do more to connect you with your hearers.

STRATEGY 2: SPEAKING AS YOURSELF

Speaking as yourself is the opposite of speaking as your brand. You're free to be you—informal, personal, and more opinionated. You use the first person. You speak about things as they are from your perspective. People can see that you're the poster because the avatar and account name are yours.

This strategy is riskier because it's more present and more vulnerable. It also doesn't have the weight of the brand behind it. Instead, you are leveraging your reputation and your authenticity to lend credibility to what you say. It feels more real, and it will have a different kind of impact—narrower and deeper. But it introduces questions about how much to share, and in what ways.

The following chapters in this section on social media go into much greater depth on this strategy. Spoiler alert: this is a strategy ministry leaders should absolutely employ, though maybe not exclusively.

One question that arises when speaking as yourself is whether you should use your personal social media accounts. There are a few "account approaches" you can consider:

1   **One account approach is, yes, to use your personal social media account on your own profile.** On Monday you cheer on your favorite football team, and then on Tuesday, from the same place, you remind people about the upcoming missions meeting. This has a few risks:
    › It blurs the line between your personal life and professional life in a way you may not be comfortable with.
    › It can inappropriately add your leadership authority to your non-church posts. If you make a casual pronouncement about why you like yoga better than Crossfit, it may take on the color of a moral judgment even if you don't intend it that way.
    › It invites people to scrutinize your character at a new level. Although hopefully we are all as honorable from our personal space as we would be anywhere else, this approach opens you up to an audit.

Despite these significant risks, there is a whopper of an advantage to this approach: it demonstrates just how much you buy in. No one posts about something work-related from his personal space unless he believes in it. If you're comfortable using this strategy very rarely, it can pack a punch.

2   **A second account approach is to post as yourself, but use your brand's spaces.** On Facebook, you could make ministry posts as yourself, but only on your brand's page and/or groups. On Instagram, you might post from the brand's account, but appear personally in photos and videos, and sign captions with your name or initials. This is an excellent "happy medium" option. For most ministry leaders, it's a great default approach.

3   **A third account approach is to post from your own account, in your own spaces, but share it from the brand account.** This is a bit of a weird option since you're effectively quoting yourself, but if you're going to go through the trouble of posting in your own space, sometimes you might as well maximize the mileage by having the brand share it. This is a tactic to use sparingly.

4   **A fourth account approach is to have two personal accounts.** To return to our coffee shop analogy, in this case the owner would post his coffee announcements from his **@beancanteenking** "work personal" account and his vacation photos from his **@jacob_thornfield** "personal personal" account. If this unconventional strategy works for you, great. But it comes with a few risks:
    › It may be confusing for followers if both accounts are public.
    › It's easy to accidentally post something from the wrong account.
    › It could make you look insincere or divided, like you're a different person when you're not in ministry mode.

STRATEGY #3: SPEAKING AS A TEAM

Speaking as a team means that you have many people, probably including yourself, who are all contributing to your social presence. This the prior strategy of "speaking as yourself," but multiplied: it is several people all speaking as themselves.

This strategy can function with any of the four "account approaches" above, with the second (people posting as themselves, but in the brand's spaces) again being the obvious best choice most of the time.

If this isn't an option for you right now, consider aspiring to it. This strategy is about as good as it gets. When you have other leaders who are reliable online, getting them in the social spotlight with you is a terrific asset. Not only do they gain visibility to develop more relationships, but you have a chorus of voices with you to reinforce

your messaging and demonstrate buy-in to your vision. The value of this public support is hard to overstate.

Even more significant is when leaders appear together and talk about each other, revealing over time that are friends who care deeply for each other. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Your social presence is not just about casting the vision of your ministry, but showing what your ministry's culture is like. Let people see you and your leaders and long to join the community you have. After all, a community is one of the main things you're inviting them to.

This excellent strategy does have risks of its own:

- Everyone from your team has to be above reproach in everything they do on social media (not just for your ministry, but elsewhere, too).
- Again, it's possible for someone to post something from the wrong account. When this goes wrong, it *really* goes wrong.
- Unless someone carefully manages account access (it should probably be you), people may start sharing logins and passwords. This is a ticking time bomb. Make sure your team follows excellent password hygiene.

STRATEGY #4: A HYBRID APPROACH

It's not crazy to imagine using all of the three previous strategies at once. Maybe you have a brand account that posts big announcements formally. Then you post as yourself sometimes to give your own personal side of the story. And in addition, you also have team members who contribute from time to time. If it works for you, go for it—just don't spread yourself too thin.

Invitational Social Media

For many ministry leaders, social media is not fun. Maybe you've heard about the great ministry potential of social media, and feel you should be doing more online. But it's hard to know what "more" is. Maybe you hop on Facebook every few days to promote some headlines, but you're not sure if it's working. What's the point of likes and comments? Plus, let's face it—a lot of what's out there on social media already is unappealing: narcissism, negativity, and pointless diversions.

You need a way to sidestep that junk and connect to people in ways that matter. Fortunately, ministry leaders have a game-changing advantage when it comes to social media...

INVITATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

Most social media is either **promotional** or **relational.** Usually, these two categories are mutually exclusive:

- **Promotional stuff can't also be relational.** Promoters (like artists, advertisers, activists, and journalists) can shamelessly pitch their own agendas, openly trying to sell you, because you expect it. It's their job. What they can't do (at least not convincingly) is pretend to be your friend. That would be fake. You and they both know that at the end of the day, they're don't want you, they want something from you (even if it's a good cause).
- **Relational stuff can't also be promotional.** Ordinary people can freely be friendly. They can also post personal stuff like family updates, vacation pictures, and DIY projects. When they just want to connect with friends, that content is fun to see. But as soon as their "personal" content turns out to be a sales pitch, it's fake and gross. Have you ever seen a personal post that turned out to be a promotion in disguise (like an MLM bait-and-switch)? Yuck.

So usually, what's promotional can't also be relational, and vice-versa. But there is a tiny, magical sliver of overlap in the middle. That sliver is where you come in:
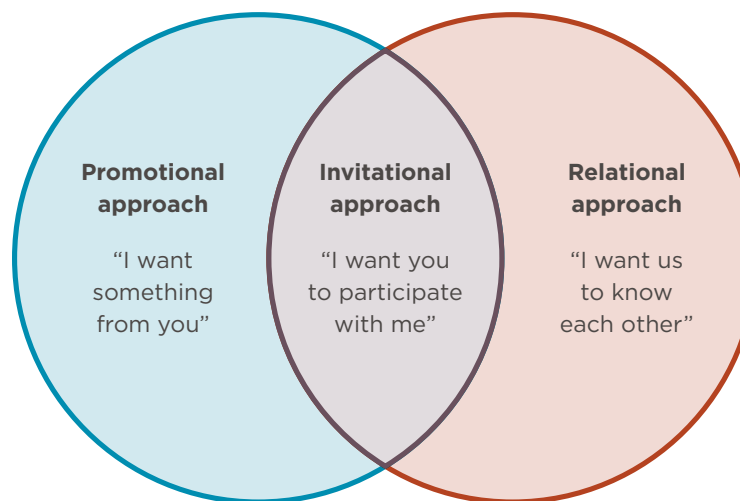
Your social media can be **invitational:** both promotional and relational at the same time. Here's what that means in a nutshell: **your job is to tell the story of your experience of your own ministry, urging others to join you.**

You can shamelessly employ the tactics of both promotional and relational social media:

- You can be **promotional,** asking for people's time, attention, and money, because a huge part of ministry is calling people to participate. You can enthusiastically bang the drum for events people can attend, resources they can use, opportunities to serve, and more. It makes sense for you to talk about these things. It would be weird if you didn't.

- But you can also be **relational,** inviting people into life with you (and other leaders), because a huge part of ministry is forming and deepening relationships. You can openly share your own life and the lives of your team, in a down-to-earth, fun way. After all, as leaders, you are modeling the very life you're calling others into, and you want them to know about your experience. Part of your role is forming relationships with the people you care for. It makes sense for you to talk about yourself. It would be weird if you didn't.

Both approaches give you true outlets for your passion, too. They express why you got into ministry in the first place—to (a) draw people in to your mission and (b) get to know them more deeply.

This invitational approach isn't novel—it's what Jesus did. He had no qualms about delivering a straightforward *promotional* message, telling people about the kingdom of God and why they should get on board. He asked explicitly for their attention, time, and money (to name a few things). Yet an equally important part of his approach was *relational,* asking people to see him and know him. He won people over by inviting them to take up space in his emotional world, and vice-versa.

DOES EVERY SINGLE POST NEED TO BE PROMOTIONAL AND RELATIONAL?

Nope. Although the paradigm of invitational social media is to be both promotional and relational at the same time, that doesn't mean every single thing you do needs to be both promotional and relational. Some things will be just one. That's fine. For example:
- If you are in charge of hospitality and so you post a stock photo of a donut and a simple reminder that donuts will be served on Sunday in honor of Father's Day, that's merely promotional.

- Or if you post a short video talking about a song you sang last Sunday and why it's meaningful to you, that's merely relational.

However, *almost every post that would have been merely promotional or merely relational could be more effective by being a mix of both.*
- For example, the donut reminder above would probably be more engaging if you ask people to vote for their favorite donut shop, make a case for your shop of choice, and explain that the winner of the vote is where Sunday's donuts will come from. (Those are relational additions.)
- Or if you post a short video talking about a song you sang last Sunday, why it's meaningful to you, and then find a natural segue from that to discussing a current vision or discipleship priority and how you're hoping people will respond. (That's a promotional addition.)

Notice that in both of the examples above, when "relational" and "promotional" happen at the same time, the result is automatically some form of an invitation. "Invitational" is not a separate thing, it is what happens naturally when you blend the promotional and relational.

Typically, the best way to make something promotional more relational is to check in with your feelings. What are you passionate about? What matters to you? What do you find personally important or moving? What's funny? What's interesting to you? What relates to your story?

And, typically, the best way to make something relational more promotional is to take a step back and remember your vision and priorities, and think about what opportunities you may have to reinforce those. Hopefully you are reinforcing your vision at all times, but the informality of a relational post makes it an uncommonly effective platform for vision. After all, *promotional content can't demonstrate buy-in. Only relational content can do that.*

THE FOUR BUCKETS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Let's get practical. What does invitational social media actually consist of? Think of drawing from four buckets.

1 **Promotion proper.** These posts highlight specific events, opportunities, and resources. Sometimes they will address longer-term items like campaigns and vision. Usually, they come with a call to action. For example, inviting people to attend an upcoming book study. (Most churches who do social media draw only from this bucket, and usually not in a relational way.)

2 **Daily life updates from you and your team.** These posts put your ministry lives (not your whole lives) online for people to see. Your goal is not to be a celebrity, but to be appropriately self-disclosing, showing people who you really are, and priming the pump for offline relationships. You can also demonstrate what "life on mission" looks like—setting an example while being a real human being.

3 **Stories.** These posts are accounts of God's work in and around your ministry in others' lives. This is effectively promotion after the fact: sharing ways that people involved with your ministry have experienced something as a result. For example, sharing a baptism testimony from someone in your ministry who just came to faith.

4 **Conversations.** Social media is great as a dialogue. Solicit replies from people. Leave comments. Reply to comments. Share the best stuff. Tag others and invite them to respond. Be generous with likes.

As you can imagine, much content is a mix of two or more buckets.

Consider how only ministry leaders can pull from all four of these buckets:

	Promotional social media Advertisers, activists, journalists, artists, etc.	Invitational social media Ministry leaders	Relational social media Everyday people
Promotion proper	**Works** This is their meat and potatoes	**Works** Of course you would announce what's going on	**Doesn't work** What does a normal person have to "announce"?
Daily life updates	**Doesn't work** Some promoters try this, but it usually comes across as manufactured	**Works** An easy way to "bring people in" to your ministry	**Works** This is normal social media content
Stories	**Kinda works** This works to a limited extent as "testimonials," but those can also seem fake	**Works** Great way to tell people what God is up to	**Kinda works** This works for some stories but can seem attention-seeking for others
Conver-sations	**Doesn't work** "Cool" brands do this, but it still smells like marketing	**Works** Fun and friendly	**Works** This is normal social media content

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER—
THE SOCIAL MEDIA PIPELINE

Let's zoom out and look at the big picture. What's the point of all this effort? When your invitational social media machine is purring along smoothly, here's how it can move someone from an internet stranger to a growing disciple:

- **First, they notice you more.** Your social media presence causes people to expect to see and hear from you regularly. You take up space in their mental landscape.
- **Second, they know you more.** As they see you online, they increasingly start to know you as a human being. As you authentically share your ministry life (and the lives of other people on your team), they get interested in you and what you're doing.
- **Third, they begin to form a relationship with you.** People learn you are warm and inviting toward them personally, since you are warm and inviting toward everyone online. They may want a part of the mission and vision you're holding out for them, or long to be a part of the community you display. They may start interacting with you online.
- **Fourth, they show up in person.** They probably won't get here by social media alone, but social media can help. Even more, social media can ensure that when someone does show up in person, they already know you and your team, not to mention your vision. They will have already completed the crucial first steps of connection.
- **Fifth, they grow into disciples,** as their spiritual perspectives, priorities, and activity become increasingly aligned with the ones you are working to teach and demonstrate through your ministry.

Authenticity

One remaining vital component of effective social media is authenticity. If you're going to post as yourself online, authenticity is a must.

(Note: this section is intended mainly for ministry leaders posting as themselves, not as their brands. See **Speaker Strategies → 83** for more info. If you're posting as your brand, the ideas below will apply only partially.)

Much of what's touted as "authentic" these days is still fake, just on a different level. So before we talk about what authenticity is, let's talk about what authenticity isn't.

WHAT AUTHENTICITY ISN'T

1 **Authenticity doesn't mean putting your entire personal life on display.** Share your ministry self, not your whole self. For example, it could make for great content to talk about the art on your office walls and how it inspires you to do your job. But what about the art on your living room walls at home? That's iffy. It depends on how it relates to your ministry. Do what makes sense given that social media happens "in public."

2 **Authenticity doesn't mean total transparency.** Just as there are some things you wouldn't share with an average Joe on a Sunday morning, there are some things you wouldn't share online. For example, it's probably not a good idea to weep, rage, or complain on camera. In addition, any bad habits you're trying to kick in person (such as being too sarcastic, hot-headed, self-conscious, or inconsistent), should be resisted online, too. You may want to read Sojourn's policy on **Voice & Tone → 23** for some tips.

3 **Authenticity doesn't mean negativity.** Don't talk primarily about shame, suffering, or failure. Authenticity has plenty of positives, like joy, hope, humor, passion, and success.

4 **Authenticity doesn't mean sloppiness.** It's not fake to plan out what you're going to say and how you're going to say it. Don't be so spontaneous that you become unclear or your filter slips. Do think about how you're coming across.

5 **Authenticity doesn't necessarily mean humor.** Don't feel any pressure to ham it up, as if the real you should be entertaining. (You probably are entertaining, but there are no expectations.)

6 **Authenticity doesn't mean disregarding norms.** Every social media channel has its own set of unwritten rules. Most of these are obvious if you keep your eyes open and watch how other people communicate: what posts are met with positive reinforcement from others? What posts are met with silence?

WHAT AUTHENTICITY IS

Think about the people reading or viewing your social media content. How would you interact with them in person—before or after an event? In a small group? At a cookout? Serving together? Broadly speaking, that's how you want to interact with them online. Authenticity is being who you are offline online.

For most people, authenticity is not an issue of integrity; it's an issue of not accidentally assuming a different persona online.

Here are some guidelines for putting this into practice:

1   **Speak as a person, not a business.** Practically, for most ministry leaders, authenticity boils down to being less formal and speaking in the first person. If you only remember one thing about authenticity, remember that. Don't be a disembodied voice, like an airport PA announcer. Instead be like a personal tour guide for a group of your friends. You are not speaking on behalf of someone else; you are speaking as yourself.

2   **Don't try to be interesting. You already are interesting, so just be yourself.** Why did you get into ministry? What do you love? What gets you fired up? What is your ministry vision? These things describe your passion. And your passion is what makes you interesting.

Imagine you lost an extremely weird bet and had to prepare and lead a small group study about French mercantile economic policy under minister of finance Jean-Baptiste Colbert from 1665–1683. Not only would you hate it, but everyone at the study would probably be bored to tears. You can't inspire people when you yourself are not inspired. That kind of communication is life-

draining. Even worse, it lacks integrity.

Now imagine preparing and leading a Bible study about one of your favorite topics—something you desperately want people to "get." Maybe it's about the Great Commission, apologetics, hospitality, or grace. The study will probably write itself. And when you lead, you'll find yourself eager and urgent. You'll be way more persuasive, and everyone else will be way more interested.

What's the difference between these two scenarios? In the first one, you were doing what you had to do, not what you wanted to do. That made you boring. In the second, you were leading with your natural passions. As a result, the study came alive.

The same logic applies to what you do online. When you post something, think, *why do I care?* And then let that shape your approach.

For example, imagine it's time to promote an upcoming retreat with an informal Instagram video. You may be tempted to say something generic like, "It'll be great! We'll play games and have a campfire. You should be there." But does that really excite you? Are you personally electrified by the thought of "a great time" (whatever that means), games, and a campfire? Perhaps not. What if instead you could say something like this: "Guys, I've been planning this retreat forever. There are so many logistics to figure out. It's a ton of work. I'm pooped. But it's totally worth it for me. Honestly, I can't wait—because I've seen people show up to this retreat feeling alone and leave having found the community they were looking for."

Another way to say this is *sell them the same way you got sold.* Whether it's an announcement, a story, devotional material, or even something silly, share it in a way that interests you. Post stuff

that you would want to see if someone else had posted it. Let your passion steer you.

Here are some other "personality assets" you can use to be interesting without trying:
› Your beliefs—why does it matter that Jesus was divine?
› Your opinions—are marshmallow peeps good?
› Your motivations—people who only interact with you online should know why you do what you do
› Your quirks
› Your experiences—be self-disclosing
› Your personal brand of humor
› Whatever kind of enthusiasm is organic to your temperament

3   **More specifically, demonstrate buy-in to the vision you promote.** It's good to promote your vision when you're speaking to people in a formal capacity, like from the stage or in a mass email. But here's a dirty secret: it's also *easy.* That's when you're supposed to promote your vision. That's when people expect it.

What they don't expect is for you to promote your vision when you don't have to. They don't expect your vision to slip out in everyday circumstances. They don't expect you to start talking about your ministry dreams and desires just because you want to. That will catch them off-guard—in the best way. It will show that you're really bought in.

So, assuming you do believe in your vision, let your light shine before men. Don't be embarrassed to sound too enthusiastic. Don't clamp down on your joy. Preach it loud and clear.

4   **Don't post anything that you don't believe in.** In the same way that you should never preach or teach something you don't believe in,

you should never post something you don't believe in, either. If you're about to put something on social media and you realize it doesn't excite you, stop and check in with your emotions. Ask yourself the questions listed under **Leadership and Buy-In** →**36.** This goes for everything from major announcements to insignificant posts.

5   **On a very similar note, watch out filler content.** Some days you may feel pressured to post *something,* so you grab a random Gospel Coalition article or "inspiring" quote. (Even a Bible verse can be misused in this way.) This is a short-term solution and a slippery slope. Eventually, other people will notice that your posts lack vitality.

If you're having trouble deciding what to post, ask yourself what's really on your mind and heart. For example, if you feel like you're supposed to be promoting your new kids curriculum, but you can't focus because of your allergies, maybe the actual best thing you can post is about how you're trusting in God today when your ragweed allergy is making it hard to get your work done. You can inject a little bit of humor and vulnerability. People will find it relatable.

Obviously, you can't share everything on social media, but you can share a *version* of just about everything. Think about how to bring your real experience in to your life online.

6   **Feel free to buck trends.** Here's an awful truth: the average social media post is not very interesting. You know this from personal experience. You probably have a few people or groups whose social media presence is interesting to you. Everything else is noise.

Fortunately, your job is not to follow the crowd, participate in

fads you secretly don't care about, or to be an entertainer. That's what lots of other people are trying to do, and it doesn't work. It's not cool.

But there's good news: you don't have to post stuff like that. In fact, if you don't, your social media will not look like average social media. It will be better than average.

7   **Authenticity means specificity.** The truth is specific. So if you want to be authentic, go into more detail. Let's consider a few examples.
> I wrote this devotional because I want to support people who are struggling in this season vs I was motivated to write this devotional because I keep meeting people who are struggling with stress, anxiety, and depression.
> I want to encourage you to be welcoming toward guests vs My honest desire is that after the benediction, every member would meet one new person.
> PMC was helpful for my husband and me vs Until my husband and I went through PMC, we had never really learned how to get over a fight.

8   **When you want to do something staged, use it as a trigger to think about opportunities you may have to bring the audience in.** Suppose you'd like to record a short announcement video from your office, but you realize your desk is a mess, and you're embarrassed for it to be seen on video. You have one terrible option, an okay option, a good option, and a great option.
> The terrible option is to Mari Kondo the heck out of your desk, making it artificially perfect, arranging some books so they can be seen on camera, and bringing in a flower from the next room.
> The okay option is simply to clean your desk a little bit. No harm done, but a bit of a missed opportunity.
> The good option is to clean your desk, then throw a simple line in your video like, "I'm here in my office where I just had to clean my desk, cause it was pretty gross and I was embarrassed to let you guys see it. It's looking better now." Then smile and simply move on. Don't be self-conscious, just let people in. Little disclosures like these are disarming and fun.
> A great option is to record a video *about* your messy desk. Give people a tour. Remove anything confidential first, but then, tell them about all the stuff that's there and where it came from. Every item has a story, and every story ultimately has a place in the big picture of your ministry. This is an easy opportunity to show people how the most day-to-day things are ultimately tied to your vision. Some items will cause different emotions to surface for you—great. Talk about it.

9   **Know that authenticity is something you are well suited for already.** You would not be in your current role if you were not sociable, bright, and motivated. This kind of personality is just what you want to bring into your online presence. It is what makes you winsome in person, and it is what will make you winsome online. Congratulations: your authentic self is God's gift to the internet.

How to Get Started

FIGURE OUT WHAT TO POST

Start by consulting the **Content Matrix** →53 to generate ideas. However, keep in mind that the goal is not simply to drum up content for the sake of content (that's a one-way ticket to Fakeville). The goal is to remember the great things already going on in your ministry—your vision, your people, your events—and come up with fresh ways to talk about them.

Ideally, think of social media as a way of life. Social media isn't something you stop your life to do a few times a week, but an capturing or articulating of the life you're already living. Keep your eyes open to what's going on around you and what's happening to you (and in you). There's plenty that's worth talking about.

DON'T OBSESS ABOUT THE TECHNICAL STUFF

Years ago, it mattered what day or time you posted. Nowadays that's not such a big deal. Mark Zuckerberg's robots are always shuffling content around to try to give people what they'll like the best, not necessarily what's most recent.

Focus on quality, then consistency, then quantity—in that order.

Have a trial-and-error mentality. Some things you post will get zero traction. Others will be crowd-pleasers. That's fine. Pay attention to that stuff, and be smart when you can, but don't worry about it too much. Numbers are not your goal.

PLAN IT OUT

Decide how much you want to engage online and stick to it. If you're not much of a planner, maybe all you need is a recurring phone reminder. If you love planning, a **Promotion Calendar** →58 may help. Either way, follow through with your goals.

A good minimum starting point would be 1–2 posts per week, along with check-ins to like and reply to others.

PICK YOUR CHANNELS

As of this writing (fall 2021), the two social channels most worth your time are Facebook (primarily middle-aged and older adults), and Instagram (primarily younger adults). TikTok can also be a good choice for twenties and below.

If you have the resources for it, customize what appears in each channel rather than sharing the same content in every channel.

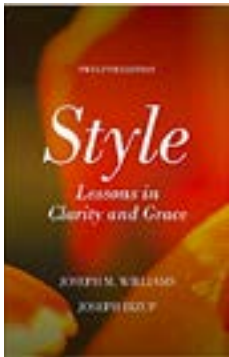# For Further Reading

Writing & Promo Resources

THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE
William Strunk Jr. & E.B. White
A short, simple guide to punctuating and phrasing things clearly.

Get on Amazon

STYLE: LESSONS IN CLARITY AND GRACE
Joseph M. Williams
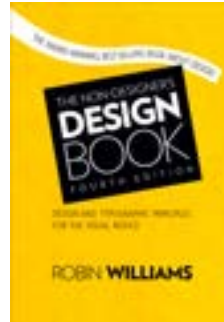A advanced guide to constructing smoother prose. Technical and thorough.

Get on Amazon

MARKETINGEXAMPLES.COM
Harry Dry
Extremely practical real-world examples for copywriting and marketing.

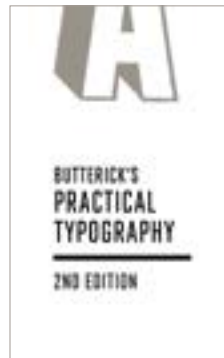Read more

Design Resources

THE NON-DESIGNER'S DESIGN BOOK
Robin Willams
A fun introduction to design that explains why layouts succeed or fail.

Get on Amazon

PRACTICAL TYPOGRAPHY
Matthew Butterick
A witty and concise overview of typography, along with other elementary design considerations.

Read online

LYNDA
Free via the Louisville library: Excellent software tutorials on Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator, and everything else imaginable.