

## **The Christian Social Media Experience**

by Everett Hornbostel

I must preface my statements here with a disclaimer, I dislike social media. I miss the days when a person had to have a .edu email address to have a Facebook page. Social media has become a source of distraction and division among its users. However, as I often consider the elimination of my own online presence out of frustration, I see a glimmer of anticipation for a positive use of social media.

At the SBC annual meeting in June, the following resolution was passed:

### **On Baptist Unity and Maintaining Our Public Witness**

WHEREAS, The Scriptures charge the Church to “walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1–3); and  
WHEREAS, The Scriptures likewise command the church to “be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble” (1 Peter 3:8); and  
WHEREAS, Our utmost devotion and supreme allegiance—including, but not limited to, political, cultural, ethical, and societal allegiance— should be to the kingdom of God and not the kingdoms of men (Joshua 24:15; Matthew 6:24, 33); and  
WHEREAS, The Church’s mission, as defined by the Great Commission, is to spread the gospel and make disciples of all nations, language groups, and ethnicities (Matthew 28:18–20); and  
WHEREAS, The Christian’s public witness is of utmost importance for the sake of Christ and His gospel (1 Timothy 3:2, 4:12; Titus 1:5-7); now, therefore, be it  
RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, June 15–16, 2021, pursue holiness, act with the aim of love, engage others with charity, and consider one another in how we represent ourselves, our churches, our Convention, and, above all, the gospel of Jesus Christ in our speech and conduct at all times and in all places; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That we will not permit our personal, social, theological, or political interests to supersede the urgency of evangelism and distract us from the task of the gospel’s advancement through the whole world; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That we exhibit Christ-honoring patience and kindness upon those with whom we disagree; and be it finally  
RESOLVED, That we protect the witness of Jesus Christ before a watching world by wise use of all forms of communication, whether in verbal speech, written word, or social media, so that others may see Christ in us and desire to know Him personally.  
(<https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-baptist-unity-and-maintaining-our-public-witness/>)

Even in that glimmer of anticipation, I failed. I made a very negative and divisive comment on a Facebook post about restaurants removing play areas. My wife lovingly reminded me of the above-mentioned resolution, and I adjusted the comment to speak only facts and removed any

personal bias/opinion expressed in the comment. It is frustrating to see the state of affairs that we live in, and I have my own political and personal ideas about that. While I am free to express those, it doesn't necessarily mean that I should. The word "ought" implies can, not the other way around. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:23, *"All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up."* Just because I CAN do something, doesn't necessarily mean I SHOULD do it.

My opinions on various things are irrelevant compared to the urgency of evangelism and using the platforms available to me to be able to share the Gospel with folks. Let us resolve to set aside our self-focused interests and opinions for the sake of the Gospel. Let us move forward in making social media a place where people can engage with the Truth of Scripture and the Love and Freedom only found in Jesus. It will be tough not to throw in our own two cents about a topic. I think social media will be a better place when we don't engage with negativity but seek to promote the Gospel at every turn. Yes, we will face opposition. Scripture lets us know that. Be encouraged by the words of Jesus in John 15:18 and Matthew 10:22. We will be hated because of our love for Him; but know that the world hated Him first.

As Hebrews 12:1-2 exhorts us, *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*

***Everett Hornbostel is pastor of Cornerstone Church in Mobridge, SD, and a Church Relations Missionary for the Dakota Baptist Convention***