



How to use

INSTAGRAM

to Spread the **Gospel** Further, Faster



How to use Instagram to spread the Gospel further, faster

Have you ever looked at a church or church leader's social media profile and wondered how they have reached such a massive audience? Or maybe you've dreamt about how you could reach the world for Jesus if you only had thousands of people connected to your own channels?

Well, the good news is you don't need to worry about this. And the better news? There's actually some easy steps you can take right now to start growing your platform and impacting people's lives around the globe.

Ready to start? Let's go!

Lead a Megachurch. Right from your phone.

At Churchpress we have an internal saying that every single follower of Christ on social media can "lead a mega church."

Dictionary.com defines "megachurch" as an independent evangelical church with a very large membership in regular attendance

The Hartford Institute, a center for religious research, defines *megachurch* as a church with 2K people. So that's the number we use to base our social growth strategy! We've created a simple breakdown that you can follow that will allow you to attract more attention and build your ministry reach, all while sharing and declaring the Good News of Jesus.

However, social media can be tricky. Each different type of social media has its own language, and words such as *like, tag, hashtag, follow, tweet, post, friend, status* and *connect* can mean different things for each social media platform. Moreover, each social medium works a little bit differently and has a different main focus. Some focus on general lifestyle, others short snippets of quotes, while others are all about pictures or careers – the list goes on and on! People use different social media for different reasons.

The diversity that social media gives us is great because it provides the opportunity to reach more people than ever before. But wrapping your mind on the HOW TO use it to grow can be daunting!

And... that's where Churchpress comes in! We've created a series of EBooks to teach you how to maximize your social channels. In this series we've created simple breakdowns for each platform, complete with practical tips and tricks to maximize your reach. These are easy to follow and they will teach you how to attract attention, maximize your ministry reach, and share the the Gospel to people everywhere. All while being creative in your approach to attract attention and share the Good News.

There's no "golden secret" to overnight success on social media, so squash any of fantasies you have of **suddenly** achieving social media fame. Instead adopt the Habakkuk 2:3 model where if the vision "seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay."

Growing your social channels takes discipline and a lot of WORK. You'll be tapping that mobile phone, taking photos, sending personal messages, and interacting with people that you might never have known otherwise.

However, if you implement the strategies we talk about, you will unlock the secrets to amassing a following, and most importantly using your social media accounts to lead people closer to Jesus.



How to use Instagram to spread the Gospel further, faster

When you have 2,000 people actively engaged with you and your profile, your attention begins to grow to a new level on Instagram:

1. You get into the Explore Page which is how you gain the most attention
2. You show up in hashtag stories which attracts incredible engagement
3. Your followers interaction with posts and stories increases dramatically

But, let's not get too far ahead, yet. There's so much to learn about Instagram from *likes* to *hashtags*, *insights*, and even *GIFs*. All of these and so many more

allow this platform to be one of the best social media platforms for growth available right now.

Recently, a pastor in Pakistan requested prayer from our team at Churchpress after seeing an Instagram story show up in his feed. His friends had been killed by Muslim extremists and he was feeling overwhelmed. We responded to the pastor who then sent pictures of a small group protesting the government to stop the Muslim extremists from harming Christians! Now we weren't just praying for him, but we understood the conflict and how we could potentially help. All through a direct message on Instagram.

So what exactly is Instagram?

Instagram is a social network that revolves around two major forms of media: **photos and videos**.

The main idea is pretty simple – after [creating an account](#), a person can share a photo or 60-second video and include color filters on both. Anyone can see the photo and interact with the person who posted it, making fun connections possible through your sharing. You can follow celebrities, friends, pastors, local leaders, or even search topics to see what others are posting. And you can comment, love, bookmark, or share those photos and videos leading to some great ways to connect with others.

Instagram sparks conversations with people from all over the world through the sharing of photos and videos.

Cool, right? Imagine if you begin using Instagram to spark conversations about Jesus with people in your own community – or around the world!

Who uses Instagram?

Although created only in 2010, Instagram is one of the largest social networks in the world with [1 billion users](#). Every demographic is on the platform, but young adults and teenagers make up the majority of users. Here are some interesting stats:

- [59%](#) of 18-29 year olds have active profiles
- [76% of teenagers](#) use Instagram making it their #1 social network
- 90% of the users are [younger than 35](#)
- [75%](#) of users are based outside of the U.S.

If you want to have an impact on culture, you have to be immersed in culture. And Instagram is where culture is right now!

Remember that Instagram is all about **visuals**. Because of this, many artists use it to publicize their work. Public speakers post quotes that they love written in fun calligraphy or interesting fonts. Musicians may post clips of their performances or practices. And pastors can post sermon clips or devotionals throughout the week. There is no limit to the amount of content you can share on Instagram as long as it has a video or picture to go with it.

Let's cover the basics

You can access Instagram two ways: through a phone app or on a computer. If you want to post something, it's easier on a phone because all of your photos - which will be the basis of your posts - will be right there for you.

Step One: Download Instagram from your mobile device's app store

Step One: Follow the process to set up a user account.

Note: Your username will be something that everyone sees, so make sure that it's something memorable, like the name of your church or ministry.

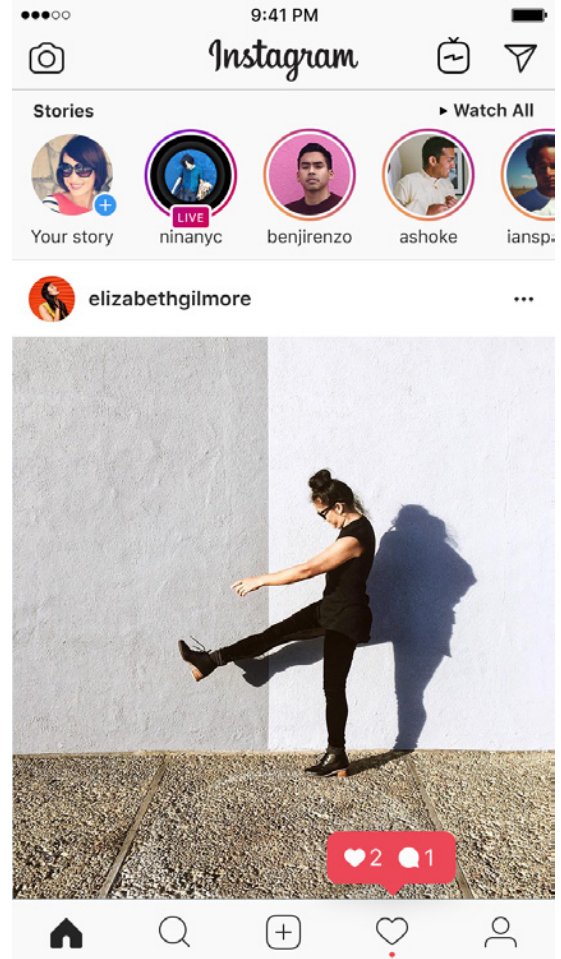
Step Three: Start searching for some people you want to *follow* or upload your contacts to find your friends who are already on the platform.

The Terminology

Following someone means that you see their posts on your feed. You can follow someone by a single tap of the blue button that says *follow* next to their profile picture. On your page, there are two numbers next to your picture. One is *following*, which is the number of people whose posts you want to see. Your *followers* number is how many people follow you, who want to see your posts. To get exposure, people try to get lots of followers. Keep reading for our tried and true strategy for how to increase your followers and build more engagement with your account.

Your feed is where you have the chance to interact with other people's pages and posts.

A page is a collection of posts from a single person or brand. It also can be called their profile.



A *post* consists of a picture or video and a caption. If a post makes you smile, it's a good idea to give it a like by tapping the heart icon or tapping the speech bubble and leaving a comment. You can tap the bookmark icon to save a post (accessed by tapping your picture in the bottom right, tapping the 3 lines in the top right called a hamburger icon, and then tapping *Saved*. All of your bookmarked posts will be here).

A *like*, which is designated by the red heart button, shows that you've enjoyed what a person posted. People can interact with you by liking your posts also. Be sure to post things that are meaningful to you that you would like others to see and like too.

When someone interacts with you on Instagram, you'll get a notification. A *notification* lets you know that something has happened on your profile. Someone new might have followed you, you could have gotten likes or a comment, or someone might have tagged you in a post.

Tagging someone in a post means that you have put their username in a picture. You might do this if you post a picture of the person, or something that makes you think of the person. You can access this feature after you've taken or uploaded a photo and chosen a filter. Then tap *Tag People* and choose someone you want

You can also add locations to posts. *Appearing right above the photo, Locations* mark where you took the original picture. It can be helpful in collecting photos from the same place across different users, or attracting attention to your feed if people search for photos from a specific place.

Hashtags (#) are another important element to a Instagram post. *Located in the caption of the photo, hashtags* are short sayings without any spaces between

words, such as *#Godsgotthis*. Hashtags, much like locations, let pictures appear in feeds that concentrate on the same words.

- For example, if you search (using the magnifying glass) for *#beach* photos, you'll get thousands of beach pictures. Hashtags and locations are powerful tools in attracting attention to your Instagram page.
- You need to include a minimum of 25 hashtags if you want to gain more exposure and show up in searches! Also, you can't include apostrophes in hashtags - so just leave them out!

If you want to talk to someone personally on Instagram, you can DM them. *DM is short for direct message, and it refers to sending messages one-on-one.* To initiate a direct message, tap the paper airplane icon. No one will see these messages except the person who you are sending them to.

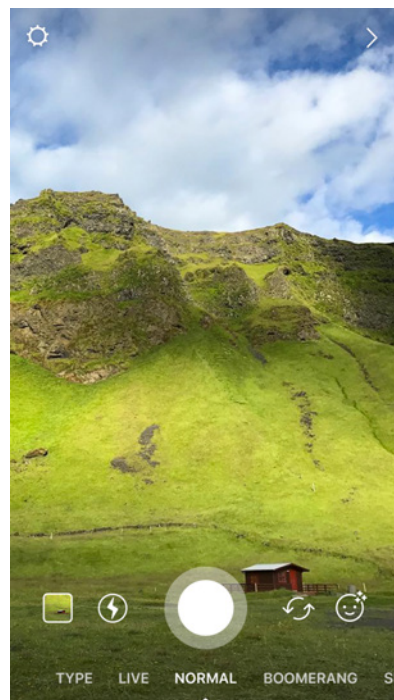
Instagram TV (IGTV) is accessed by tapping the television icon in the top right corner (next to the paper airplane. *IGTV is where channels, which are made by Instagram users you follow, can post longer videos up to 10 minutes.* Users can search for particular users and watch their videos there. In fact, this is becoming so popular there is even a separate IGTV App now as well!

What's the deal with Stories?

Overwhelmed yet? Well, there's more! In addition to posting pictures to your profile, you can post Instagram Stories for everyone to see for a 24-hour period. *Stories are 15-second posts or videos that your followers can see at the top of their channels when your profile highlights with a red ring around it.* Instagram Stories have some of the best engagement of anything on Instagram because they have several additional features that allow you to add text, GIFs, hashtags, location tags, and more to create your content. *You can also save*

your favorites stories, called your highlights, to your page in case you want them to be available indefinitely.

You can share posts in your stories to attract attention to anything new that you have added to your profile. After you'd made a post on Instagram, tap the post on your profile to bring it up. Now tap the paper airplane and tap *Add post to your story*. Now you can move your post around, making it bigger or smaller and add more content to it by swiping up.



There are lots of great features that you can add to your story on Instagram to really make it capture attention! Here's the breakdown:

Activate Instagram Stories by tapping the camera icon in the top left when you are on the Home of Instagram.

Once in story mode, add a photo by tapping the white button in the middle or you can also post a photo from the saved pictures on your camera, which are accessed by tapping on the far left button that shows your most recent photo.

To post text only, swipe to the left twice until you get to **type**. There you tap to type the text you want to display on your story. There are many fonts you can use for this.

- Classic
- Modern
- Neon
- Typewriter
- Strong

Start your text by tapping in the middle of your device once you've chosen or taken a photo. Then type something but before you tap the **Done** button in the top right, choose a different font in the top middle to see all the variations. We recommend **Classic**, **Typewriter** and **Strong** the most.

You can also add color added behind the text. Do this by tapping the A icon in the top left. Typewriter and Classic can also justify text left, center, or right.

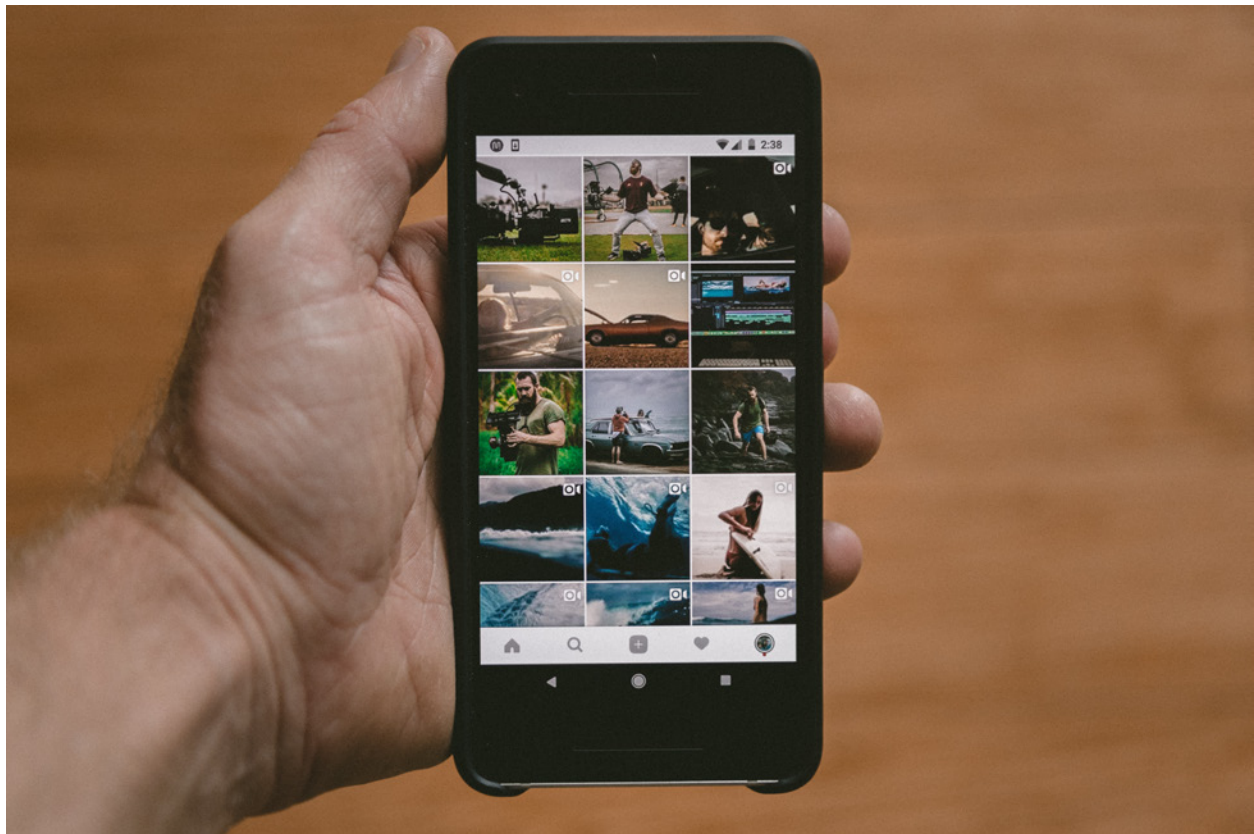
If you are posting a video, you can record it in a number of different ways. When you open stories, you can slide to the left or the right to get a few different options.

- **Normal** - this is the basic setting, providing 15 seconds of video.
- **Boomerang** - this plays a few seconds of video over and over again, going back and forth (like a boomerang!)
- **Super zoom** - this takes a video that is very close up
- **Focus** - this takes a video that is great for videos of yourself speaking, focusing on faces
- **Rewind** - this is a 15 second video that plays backwards
- **Hands Free** - this works the same as the normal setting, but instead of holding the button down during the 15 seconds, you can let go and it will stop automatically or when you press the button again
- **Live** - you access this option by going to the left. Your followers will be notified that you are live and they can interact with you during the broadcast through comments and reactions. You can save your live video, and the entire broadcast will appear in your story for 24 hours so that others may watch it.

How to make a story more interesting

Once you have your picture, text, or a video, you can spruce it up using lots of cool features! Swipe up on your phone to reveal lots of options.

You can select your **LOCATION**, use a **@MENTION** to tag someone, a **#HASHTAG**, a **GIF** (a very short silent video, often funny) add **MUSIC**, or show the time of day. You can also add **stickers** (by scrolling down), which sound exactly like what they are! They are little pictures that you can add to your story content. You can also include **links** to your IGTV episodes (or websites if you have more than 10K followers). You can include the **current weather**, add a question poll, add an emoji slider for people to let you know how much they love your story, and even add another photo to go on top of your photo or text.



Interact with followers on stories

- **Polls** – using these, you can ask a question and provide two potential responses. Followers tap on a response to select theirs, and then they will see the percentages of people who voted for each option
- **Emoji Slider** – this is a simple sliding scale that followers can move back and forth to indicate how strongly they feel about a question you’ve asked. You can also leave the question field blank and you can change the emoji from a heart to any emoji on your phone!
- **Questions** – these are more open-ended than the other two. Your followers’ answers to the questions will be shown privately to you when you replay your stories or view in your comments. You share their responses anonymously as well by tapping **Share Response** when viewing a comment.

These three offer lots of options for customization. You can change the color background of the question box, change the fonts, and adjust the size of the words. But what about the practical side?

Ask people for prayer requests!

Questions are a great feature to utilize for asking people to share their prayer requests. People can DM you a response back or share in the answer box and later, if you want, you can share responses on a new story anonymously along with your response or message them back and forth. This (combined with the right hashtags) is one of the best ways to grow trust for your account and help spark gospel conversations with people all over the world.

If you want to add your own design to your story, you can use **brushes**. Access these by tapping the brush icon, the second from the right when you go to

create a new story. There are many different colors to choose from, and you can paint with different brushes:

- Felt
- Dry erase
- Glow
- Erase
- Chalk

Each of these provides a unique look. It's a good idea to stick to a certain aesthetic on your Instagram so your users can identify your page when they see it in their feeds. Experiment with all these different options and have fun. Once you figure out your preferences, stick to those so you become more easily identified on Instagram!

Okay, so now that you are up to speed on Instagram and hopefully learned a few things, there's one more thing...

Now that you have a strong understanding of the purpose of Instagram and its terminology, let's get into some strategies for building your account up so it can be used to reach people with the gospel. It will take work, but the payoff can be eternal as you embark into the world of being on digital mission as an ambassador for Christ!

It's the moment we've all been waiting for...

**WHAT IS THE SECRET TO GROWING
INSTAGRAM AND REACHING THE WORLD
WITH THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS** 

Get followers

It is useful to have lots of followers on your page. That means that you are reaching more and more people, and having a greater impact! Having followers means more likes and comments on your page - which means that more people are being engaged.

There are several different strategies that will help you gain followers.

1. Make your posts as effective as possible

- **Post on Instagram twice a day at the same time during peak engagement**

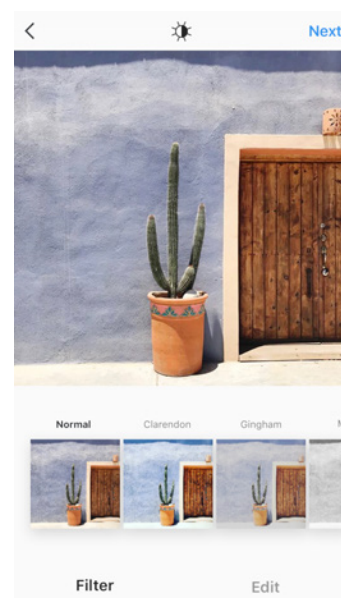
Be sure to check our [Instagram Insights](#) if you have a Business Profile and find out the times when yours get the most traction (usually 6-9am and 6-8pm).

Make sure that every 3rd or 4th post has an action statement in the description or image. This is to remind your followers of your goal and vision. And make sure to ask people if you can pray for them! Prayer works offline AND online.

- **Post great photos and compelling content**

Use an app like [VSCO](#) or [Lightroom](#) to give your photos a cinematic filter. There are tutorials built into the apps that show you how to use them well!

Purchase a social pack from [creativemarket.com](#) to create a cohesive brand style.



- **Write a great caption**

Include a - or • in between all paragraphs (otherwise the content won't stay separated)

Keep your captions memorable

Think about your caption as giving a story behind the post - you want to show why it is meaningful to you

- **Add a maximum 30 hashtags to the end of your posts**

Some people add all their hashtags in the photo description and some add 5 in the description and 25 on the first comment. Either way is fine.

Make sure one or two hashtags is truly unique to your church or mission.

Make sure the first hashtags are global in nature such as #Godisgood #Prayer #Church #Gospel #Evangelism

2. Establish relationships with other Instagram Users

1. Find relevant hashtags and view their stories and explore posts to discover people you want to follow you

Visit the profile of each person and like a few photos and write a comment or two on some. Preferably NOT just an emoji - you want to make it personal! Read what they say and engage with them!

2. Search your location or some locations you want to target for more growth by tapping into search and choosing the Places tab

Visit the profile of each person you want to follow you and like a few photos and write a comment or two on some. Once again, preferably NOT just an emoji. Read what they say and make your comments meaningful!

- 3.** Target 100-200 people a day that are a part of your ideal audience and focus on getting them to like your profile

Instagram has limits to prevent SPAM so you may hit a following stop order. This is just temporary so wait a few hours and try again.

- 4.** Once your following numbers are exponentially larger than your followers number, it's time to unfollow people that haven't engaged.

Some people think this is a bad practice, but it's simply not pursuing more relationship with people that don't want one. It also helps build trust to have a following number that is lower than a follower number so you don't seem so desperate ;)

3. Use Instagram Ads

Instagram ads show up on the user's home page or in their stories, depending on how you want the ad to show up. They say "sponsored" at the end.

When making an ad, be sure to: make your photo or video really stand out - that's what going to grab the attention of future followers! Also, write a catchy caption.

To make an ad:

1. Make sure that you are using a business profile. If you aren't, then you will need to go to your Settings and convert yours to business.
2. Go to the ads manager, where you can select your target audience and the type of ad that you want to publish.

When choosing your target audience, you'll notice that you have lots and lots of options for customization! You can select an audience based on location, demographics, interests, and behaviors. It's a good idea to make an ad relatively specific to the type of person that you want to reach, so keep that in mind. If you're advertising an event at your church, make sure to keep it local!

You can track your ad's progress through the application, and so you can learn over time the most effective types of ads you can do!

Interact with your followers

So, now that you know how to gain followers, what do you do with all of them? There are lots of other strategies for useful ways to maximize your impact.

1. Take prayer requests

Taking prayer requests – and actually praying for them! – shows that you care about your followers and their relationship with Jesus.

There are several ways that you can do this:

- Post an Instagram Story. In the story, make a question box and write something like: How can we pray for you? Followers can answer the question by typing in the box. Always be sure to follow up with

people in the DMs even though you have to manually do this. People that need prayer are often going through something difficult and are simply looking for some attention.

- Post to your page. Post a picture and caption it with something like: How can we pray for you? Tell us in the comments! This is a great way to get followers engaged with each other too.

2. Encourage Bible Engagement

Encouraging people to read the Bible together or to study it is a great way to keep your feed centered on Jesus.

1. Do something like a Scripture Memory Challenge

Post a story of yourself reciting a particular Bible verse. At the end, encourage other people to memorize the verse. Suggest they tag a few friends in their Instagram stories, challenging them to also learn the verse and post a video of their recitation.

2. Encourage people to post reflections about their Bible reading.

Make a commitment to make a post everyday (or any other interval) on your page or your Instagram story where you talk about what God is teaching you through your Bible reading. Again, tagging other people to do the same thing can be a great way to multiply the number of people getting involved in the Word!

3. Do Research

You can also make polls in your Instagram story. Use this feature to figure out what people like. Not sure if they want to memorize something from

the Psalms or Romans? Ask in a poll! Curious about anything that would make them engaged more? Ask questions or make another poll! People love attention and love to play games or vote so use that human need to your advantage.

The idea here is that you want your Instagram page to develop with your followers. As you learn what they like, you can adjust your strategy and make sure that you are giving them content they enjoy while also staying true to your mission centered on Jesus!

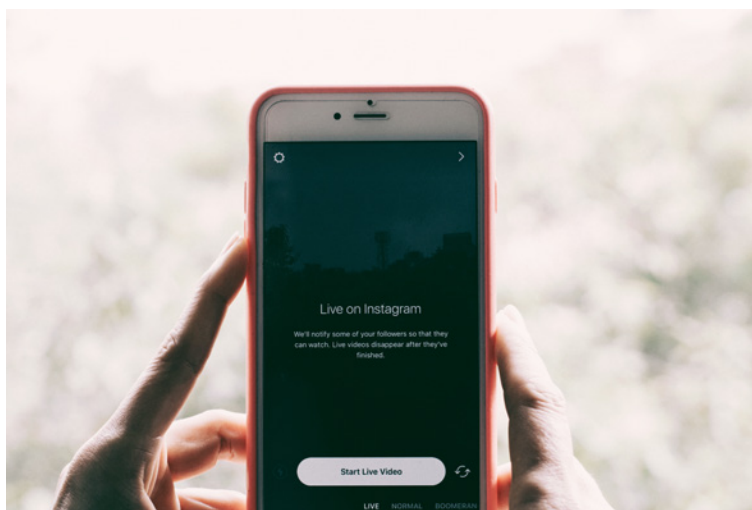
Spread your message

1. Condensed Sermon

You can post longer videos up to 10 minutes through IGTV - Instagram TV. If you want to post a longer, easily accessible video of a condensed sermon, this is the place! Here, you can post many videos over time, making a channel that people will return to over and over.

2. Go LIVE on Instagram!

Going live is another excellent way to spread your message. Followers will get notifications that you are live, and can watch and interact with you during a longer video. This is a great opportunity to lend



words of encouragement, challenging your followers to go deeper spiritually and devotionally.

It's a good idea to announce when you're going live beforehand so people know when to tune in. Even deciding on a regular time weekly to go live can help attract more viewers.

Raise money for a Cause

Because it can attract large audiences, Instagram can be used to raise money for a Cause. Sponsoring charities, giving back to your community, or raising funds for a new building are great ways to get participation on Instagram.

1. Donations

You can ask for donations by providing a link for Instagram users through a story or a post to your page. The best practice currently is to tell people "Link in Bio" and include that link in your profile bio found in **Settings**.

2. Sell products

Instagram has lots of unique ways to sell products! (*Note: you must have a Facebook Shop for these to work*)

1. Create a Donation Product to help send a child to camp, a youth to youth camp, or raise money for missions.
2. Set it up with WooCommerce or Shopify + a [Stripe.com](https://stripe.com) integration
3. Create a post or story and use the link feature to tag the product which will create a shop icon that people can tap on and give.

You can also use this to sell merchandise like shirts, curriculum, etc. too!
(*Note: you cannot use these to sell tickets to events. Only Instagram or Facebook Ads are allowed for that.*)

REMEMBER all of these ideas, tips, tricks and suggestions are simply a tool to help you find some useful ways to engage culture and present the gospel to a world that desperately needs Jesus. Don't be afraid to read blogs, books, or do research to help you figure out ways to reach more people. The world of social media is ever-changing with new tools being released all day long. These tools create a wave of attention that church leaders like yourself can ride to help spread the gospel. It's no different than the mediums of TV, Internet, ships and planes. But the mission always remains the same - Love God, Love Others, Make Disciples among the nations.

Well, there you have it!

Your Instagram profile is off to the races and has the chance to finally start getting listed in explore pages, which are where the majority of people find new friends and influencers.

Still have a question? Want to learn more about using social media and spreading the gospel? DM us on [Instagram](#) or email us at hello@churchpress.co and get notified when we release an update to this Ebook or finish up our coming soon *How to use Facebook to Spread the Gospel Further, Faster*.

Feel free to join our team on Slack by visiting churchpress.co/fam to get access to us as we share more ideas and creative ways to engage culture. Also be sure to follow [@churchpress](#) and [@officialjoshbrown](#) on Instagram to stay up to speed on all the latest experiments we are testing!

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