



Douglas S. Bursch

Posting Peace



Why Social Media
Divides Us and
What We Can
Do About It

Sermon Series Ideas

Dear Pastor or Ministry Leader,

I've provided this simple guide for pastors and ministry leaders desiring to preach a sermon series inspired by *Posting Peace: Why Social Media Divides Us and What We Can Do About It*. I have pastored for over 22 years and I am aware of the sacred nature of the pastoral calling. I'm also aware that pastors should never simply copy or reproduce someone else's work when preaching. Good preaching requires pastors prayerfully and thoughtfully develop messages that authentically express the heart of God for the congregations they faithfully serve. With this in mind, I am simply providing suggestions that might help pastors and ministry leaders in the formation of their own unique messages and sermon series inspired by *Posting Peace*. I've provided a possible way to preach through *Posting Peace* in a 6-week sermon series format. One could obviously spend more or less time on the book, depending upon congregational needs. Regardless, I do believe that *Posting Peace* is an invaluable resource for any congregation trying to navigate our social media landscape. May this guide and my book meet your desire to faithfully serve God and the congregation entrusted to your care.

Peace,



Pastor Douglas S. Bursch, D.Min.

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Sermon 1

Chapter Focus

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Main Scripture

2 Cor 5:17-20

Secondary Scripture

Rom 5:6-11

Jn 3:6-21

Sermon Talking Points

-Social media communication is tremendously divisive: Pick examples from the book and your own examples that communicate this truth. Have listeners think about divisive interactions they've experienced.

-We are all called to the ministry of reconciliation: Demonstrate how scripture calls us to pursue the ministry of reconciliation.

-We sometimes forget about the ministry of reconciliation when online. Why is this the case?: Focus on Marshal McLuhan's idea of "the medium is the message." Talk about how social media is changing what we communicate and how we communicate. Talk about how we are going to spend the next few weeks focusing on the ways technology changes us and what we can do about it.

-Let us commit to becoming online peacemakers: Ask people to go on a journey with you to really examine their online witness. Talk about how this is important for us and for those we influence. Even if we are not online, the online world is impacting how our culture views relationships and what we expect from relationships. Ask people to go on this journey regardless of how little or how much they use social media. Everyone's perspectives, insights and participation are needed for us to find a better way to communicate online.

Sermon 2

Chapter Focus

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Main Scripture

Jn 1:1, 14

Secondary Scripture

Jn 14:9

Col 2:9

Mt 1:23

Sermon Talking Points

-Jesus is the word become flesh: Read scripture and expound upon the incarnation

-We are called to embody or incarnate the will of God: Give examples of how people experience the truth of God through people, the example of Christ made flesh in the witness of others.

-The internet works against incarnate communication: Give examples from the book of how the internet is a discarnate platform. Talk about the problems that arise from the internet being a discarnate platform.

-We must find ways to work against the discarnate reality of social media communication: Give examples from the book or your own examples of ways people humanize social media to make room for God's reconciling presence. Have people think of ways they can develop more than arguments, but genuine Christ-motivated relationships.

-Let's commit to having an online presence that looks similar to our in-person presence: You might want to have everyone in the congregation take time to truly look at each other. Remind them that every person online should be truly seen and respected at least in the same way we would see or respect someone sitting next to us in church. Obviously, focus your sermon or message on what seems most important to you and the congregation's needs.

Sermon 3

Chapter Focus

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Main Scripture

Rom 8:38-39

Secondary Scripture

Heb 1:1

Gal 5:15-26

Jn 4:14

Jn 7:38

Sermon Talking Points

-The social media story is frequently a story of division, segmentation, and political polarization: Depending upon the needs of the congregation you are serving, either focus on political segmentation or a more general understanding of how social media segments us into angry, polarized groups. Use examples from chapter 5.

-Our story is a story of reconciliation: Demonstrate how Scripture calls us to pursue the ministry of reconciliation. Talk about how God loved us while we were yet enemies. Examine how nothing can separate us from accessing God's reconciling love.

-Our witness is the message of reconciliation: Share stories of the power of reconciliation from your own life or chapter 6.

-Our story of reconciliation should motivate our online witness: Talk about how we each can be streams of reconciliation flowing through the toxic stream of online communication. Talk about how we can be living water for people thirsty for the goodness of God. Ask people to examine if others online truly know their reconciliation story.

Sermon 4

Chapter Focus

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Main Scripture

Rom 1:16-17

Secondary Scripture

Rom 3:26

Eph 2

Col 3:15-23

Sermon Talking Points

- **To combat the social media chaos, we need a peacemaking plan:** Talk about how in response to social media trying to form us into divisive people, we need to develop an intentional peacemaking plan. Preach your message on all or some of the questions addressed in chapter 8. Frankly, you could structure a 6-week sermon series based on each of the following questions.

-**Is reconciliation my motivation?:** Share negative examples of arguing that forgot the purpose of reconciliation. Share positive examples of reconciling communication.

-**Are people my priority?:** Talk about ways to humanize every online interaction.

-**Am I communicating truth with love?:** Give examples of how or how not to communicate truth with love.

-**Where is the grace?:** Look at how we can be gracious when dealing with social media conflict.

-**What is the Spirit saying?** Talk about how the Holy Spirit can guide our online communication.

Sermon 5

Chapter Focus

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 9 Scripture

Titus 3:10-15

Eph 5:11

1 Thess 5:22

Gal 5:19-26

Chapter 10 Scripture

Is 58:1-10

Eph 2:14-16

Jn 2:14-16 (see also Mt 21:12-17, Mk 11:15-19, Lk 19:45-48)

Sermon Talking Points

Chapters 9 and 10 can each be preached as separate sermons. The following are sermon talking points for each chapter.

Chapter 9 Talking Points

-What about internet trolls?: Talk about online trolling and what makes it so toxic and pervasive. Point out that sometimes people simply refuse to make peace.

-First, no one is a troll: Give examples from the book on why no one is really a troll. Talk about how using the term troll dehumanizes people.

-Even so, here is how to deal with trolling behavior: Take examples from the book on how to deal with trolling behavior. Share your examples and thoughts as well. Make sure you validate people in their need to set healthy social media boundaries.

Chapter 10 Talking Points

- Sometimes justice demands conflict: Talk about how peacemaking is not the avoidance of conflict but contending for justice with the purpose of reconciling people.

-Sometimes Jesus turns over tables: Examine how Jesus turning over tables is talked about in the book. Give examples of when it is right for us to turn over tables.

-Sometimes we avoid conflict because of our privilege: Talk about how privilege plays a role in what we are willing to fight for or against. Have people examine how their privilege might be keeping them from contending for justice in their social media communication.

-Sometimes we must use the internet to contend for justice: Give examples from the book or other examples that demonstrate when and how to contend for justice through social media.

Sermon 6

Chapter Focus

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Main Scripture

Mt 6:9-10 (see also Lk 11:2)

Secondary Scripture

Mt 19:14 (see also Mk 10:13-14; Lk 18:15-16)

Sermon Talking Points

-It is God's desire to influence our social media communication: Examine how we must intentionally call for God's kingdom to come and God's will to be done in our social media communication.

-We must make room for God to speak through our online communication: Ask people to examine if they are truly making room for God to speak. Share concepts you've learned as you've been processing your social media life differently. Talk about how God wants to lead each of us on a journey specific to our needs, giftings and calling.

-We can all take practical next steps to post peace online: Talk about how we can pray, practice mindfulness, tear down dividing walls of hostility, get involved in local solutions, focus on building and strengthening online relationships, and grow in activating our prophetic imagination to solve the online problems of our age.

-What is God's next step for your online life?: Ask participants to be open to God's specific leading. Challenge the congregation to participate in the 7-Day #PostingPeace challenge. Tell them to use the #PostingPeace hashtag when they post and maybe even a hashtag that includes the name of your church or group. Find a way for people to prayerfully commit to a new way of online communicating.