



Do you recognize the logo at the left? It's the logo for *Wikipedia*, the Internet-based free encyclopedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). I use it all the time, and, while it's sometimes hard to verify all the information, *Wikipedia* is pretty carefully monitored and refereed. Even with its shortcomings, *Wikipedia* is much better than trying to carry the *Encyclopedia Britannica* around in my car or briefcase!

While not generally thought of as “social media,” *Wikipedia*, as a “crowd-sourced” website, meets its own definition of social media, which is “a blending of technology and social interaction for the co-creation of value.”<sup>1</sup>

Social media sites are proliferating, with *Facebook* the leader by far, with more than 750 million unique viewers every month. *Twitter* is a distant second, and *LinkedIn* is third.

The use of social media is pervasive in our culture, as illustrated by the survey data that appears at the end of this essay. While many of us may feel pretty up-to-date because we use email at least occasionally, social media and texting are really where much of our culture—especially those under 40—are to be found online.

I was impressed in talking with Mark Wakefield over the weekend by his statement that “If you want to keep up with me, *Facebook* is the place to do it. That’s where I post most things, with newsletters and email being used much less often.” This photo, which I took of him during last Sunday’s service, was posted on his *Facebook* page the next morning.



In the current issue of *Baptists Today*, professor Susan Codone notes that “Social media has long surpassed being a trend and is now a force in society we need to embrace. As an online way to communicate, it offers a great opportunity to follow others who can help build our faith and in turn to share our faith with others who might be seeking God.”<sup>2</sup>

Citing a study by the Kelly School of Business at Indiana University, which identified seven purposes for which people use social media, Dr. Codone takes each of these purposes and offers suggestions for how followers of Jesus might participate in social media with Gospel Purpose. Here are her suggestions:

1. **Put your Christian identity out there.** Identify yourself and your beliefs on *Facebook* and other social media platforms. Be authentic about who you are.

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media). Want to see how social-media savvy you are? Then take this quiz: <http://dsc.discovery.com/tv-shows/curiosity/topics/social-networking-quiz.htm>. I only got 11 of 20 answers right.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Codone, “7 Ways Christians Can Use Social Media,” *Baptists Today*, September 2013, 14.

2. **Share information about what God is doing in your life and church, and how others can have such experiences.** Social media applications such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* are great applications for sharing faith. More than 20 million people follow the “Jesus Daily” *Facebook* page, so sharing one’s faith on social media has a solid precedent.
3. **Build relationships with others.** Using your favorite social media tools, whether common ones such as *Facebook* or niche tools like *Goodreads* (a site for book lovers), interact with others and create relationships in which you can share your common interests and your beliefs.



4. **Maintain your presence.** If you’re going to use social media, stay engaged by maintaining a consistent presence. If one million people pay attention to Rick Warren every day, might a few pay attention to you? And if the time you spend nudges the Kingdom forward just a little, isn’t it worth it?

5. **Engage in conversations.** Many of us are lurkers on social media. We read what’s going on in others’ lives but never contribute to the conversation. Jesus asked us to go and tell. We have an open microphone in the social media world. Others are certainly using it, and we can, too.
6. **Join or create groups.** Many social media applications are built around interest communities. *Pinterest* allows you to share pictures of your hobbies and link to others with shared interests. Many social exercise tools offer you the chance to link with others for accountability and motivation. We meet in small groups at church. Why not through social media? Go ahead, create a *Google+* circle and invite some friends and see what God will do.
7. **Build your reputation by making thoughtful, wise and consistent posts.** People follow and connect with social media users who use social platforms with wisdom and discernment. Rather than posting about how bad an experience was for you, write instead about how you learned through it. Millions of others are seeking the kind of reputation you have to offer.

Well, what do you think of those suggestions? **It occurs to me that social media provide an avenue for global Christian ministry that is independent of age and of most infirmities that come with age.** And social media are travel and expense free (once you’re online in the first place).

Social media offer opportunities for mentoring and blessing persons, not just next door, but literally around the world! For what it’s worth, you can find me on *Facebook* just by searching for “Dave Stancil”; and you can access many other things I write (such as sermons and these *Laptops*) at [www.dcastancil.com](http://www.dcastancil.com).

Dave



**Postscripts:**

- Please remember the families of those killed at the Naval Sea Systems Command yesterday.
- Please plan to come to dinner tomorrow evening at 5:30 and then stay for *Movement in the Spirit* with Kinderman!
- Our Strategic Planning Team requests your presence at two listening sessions that will help us sense God’s direction for our next seasons of ministry here at CBF. More sessions will be announced soon:
  - Wednesday, September 25 (next week) during our regular Wednesday Gathering;
  - Thursday, October 3 at 7 p.m. here at OMI in conjunction with PATH (People Acting Together in Howard)



**Who uses social networking sites**

*% of internet users within each group who use social networking sites*

	<b>All internet users (n=1,895)</b>	<b>72%</b>
a	Men (n=874)	70
b	Women (n=1,021)	74
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>		
a	White, Non-Hispanic (n=1,331)	70
b	Black, Non-Hispanic (n=207)	75
c	Hispanic (n=196)	80 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Age</b>		
a	18-29 (n=395)	89 <sup>bcd</sup>
b	30-49 (n=542)	78 <sup>cd</sup>
c	50-64 (n=553)	60 <sup>d</sup>
d	65+ (n=356)	43
<b>Education level</b>		
a	No high school diploma (n=99)	67
b	High school grad (n=473)	72
c	Some College (n=517)	73
d	College + (n=790)	72
<b>Annual household income</b>		
a	Less than \$30,000/yr (n=417)	75
b	\$30,000-\$49,999 (n=320)	72
c	\$50,000-\$74,999 (n=279)	74
d	\$75,000+ (n=559)	71
<b>Urbanity</b>		
a	Urban (n=649)	74
b	Suburban (n=893)	71
c	Rural (n=351)	69

**Source:** Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=1,895 adult internet users ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for results based on all internet users is +/- 2.5 percentage points.

**Note:** Percentages marked with a superscript letter (e.g., <sup>a</sup>) indicate a statistically significant difference between that row and the row designated by that superscript letter, among categories of each demographic characteristic (e.g. age).

