

Meredith Gould. *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2013. 133 pages. \$13.18.

Since the late 1990s, times have already been transformed with the invention of social networking services (SNS) in the context of globalization. In general, those who were merely passive receivers of the mass media played a significant role in one-way communication in the past, are transfigured as dynamic senders, who create unique media content by one's own and keep watch over the mass media by actively using social media platforms. That is, the hierarchical one-way communication structure between one sender and multiple receivers is no longer working in current society. It also challenges that the one-way communication-centered churches are no longer quietly relevant for a ubiquitous social media world. Without doubt, the secular and sacred lives of individuals are living in, with, and through social media platforms.

In this sense, Meredith Gould's book written in 2013, *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*, is a valuable basic resource for those who want either fully or partially to be in charge of digital ministry or for users who are quietly interested in this inevitable social media-entered ministry. In this book, as the digital strategist and communications consultant, Gould's understanding of the positive relationship between digital ministry and social networking services (SNS) or social media platforms (SMP), such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Blog and so on, has fully engaged her sustained intellectual, spiritual, professional exploration, as well as her abundant experiences, based on her personal social media platforms. Therefore, one can easily recognize the author's ultimate intention to present the readers with practical and action-oriented guidelines of these extraordinarily powerful communication tools (58-82). These instruments are not toys or simply interesting things for just making fun, but are tools inclusively to fulfill digital ministry, within mature communities of faith, while enhancing interactive relationships with those who do not and those who cannot attend the church on a regular basis (52-54, 105).

This book is especially distinctive for users in digital ministry, who want sociologically to comprehend participants' characteristics on social media platforms. As a sociologist, her analysis on participants' gender, race, ethnicity, age (13-17), learning styles/preferences (18-21), personal types (22-26), social behaviors/attitudes, and the Social Technographics Ladder developed by Forrester analysts, Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff (39-41), such as Inactives, Spectators, Joiners, Collectors, Critics, and Creators, enable users to comprehensively understand their own particular digital ministry context and participants' general tendencies. As Gould introduces her book on YouTube (<http://youtu.be/iXxzunf-Sfk>), this book demonstrates well that the author's passion is transparent in that she is eager to introduce social media platforms as valuable communication infra structures while, at the same time, critically articulating their pros and cons (108), based on the usage of social media platforms.

From my observation, Meredith Gould's book arouses a two-fold curiosity because her guideline about "the symptom of social media burnout" is intensively introduced, though not in depth (108). First, in her book, Gould recommends that church leaders' effective time management for digital ministry is required in order to avoid burnout (106-109). However, as Gould comments, if a virtual community is a real community in real life (27-31), it is not as easy to maintain it through one's sheer determination as she suggests. One may spend one's time as a time-killer by being fully immersed in social media platforms. In terms of time management, if one cannot timely control the usage of social media platforms, there exists the danger of it

becoming addictive, much like internet-game addiction. From the perspective of the scope of pastoral care, these are uncharted waters. In addition, one needs to be seriously concerned with the potentially dangerous psychological impact from it and its aftereffects. We encounter various responses based on one's personal opinion regarding social media platforms (102-105). It has been reported that numerous participants have suffered from severe depression and even have committed suicide due to cruel and unlimited negative social commentary toward individuals. This tragic phenomenon has been really happening in countries throughout the world among all age groups. Serious social issues have occurred as a result of this lack of civility. Therefore, it demands that the time-management issue for digital ministry and the reality of negative psychological impacts, caused by the improper use of social media platforms, need to be continuously monitored with appropriate guidelines established as discussed by Gould.

Second, nowadays, participants inside and/or outside the church are so worried about their private information being hacked within social media platforms that they are reluctant to use them and it limits their access to the public conversation. Recently, Apple, Twitter, and Facebook have been hacked by hackers. The companies frankly reported this serious hacking issue to their registered customers. This phenomenon has caused a kind of social media phobia in relation to the issues of confidentiality and security that Gould briefly mentions in her book (117). Therefore, in terms of security issues, they need to be reviewed in every way to determine whether social media platforms are truly safe zones for an effective digital ministry and communication system.

Gould's text paradoxically indicates that digital ministry is still in its infancy, even though the social media stream has already been swept into Christian life over the last decade. Yet, how it will best be utilized, is our new challenge. The potential for immediacy in response allows the Church to become a living body of Christian doers. In addition, as a new form of Christian discipleship, the Church can serve as the creator of new civil discourse, which is our ongoing prophetic responsibility.

Leonard Sweet posted his fresh insight into social media on his Twitter account (#lensweet) on May 6th, 2014: "Social media should never become a substitute for living, or an escape from living, but a resource for living." In this respect, this book, dealing with social media revolution, is well worth reading and a significant resource for the living digital ministry.

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