Becoming A Digital Disciple

Checklist & Resource ╎ Jamie Domm ╎ JDIM.digital

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Content creation, engagement, and distribution are not limited to the official church brand and accounts. If you're a leader, make it a point to reach out to lay members, especially young people, and let them know that their talents in this area are highly valued even if they are not part of the core team. Some people just need permission and a little mentorship to realize their talents and passion for personal ministry. Everyone has social influence through texting, messenger applications, email, and social media. Encourage and inspire them to use it to build God's kingdom.

The Bible tells us to become and make disciples. God calls us all to serve in unique ways. Ellen White encourages us to:

"Let every worker in the Master's vineyard, study, plan, devise methods, to reach the people where they are. We must do something out of the common course of things. We must arrest the attention. We must be deadly in earnest. We are on the very verge of times of trouble and perplexities that are scarcely dreamed of." – Ellen White, Letter 20, 1893

Identify people in your church who can be digital disciples, all on their own, as a means to further the mission of your church. This allows and empowers members to engage in ministry and discipleship in ways that aligns with their passion, spiritual gifts, tools of preference, and personal style. There is a spiritual void online because we are not doing enough individually as members or collectively as a Church. The mission field is wide open, it's our duty to share the gospel through the tools available to us.

The Great Commission given to us by Jesus Christ states, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of **all the nations**" (Matthew 28:19). An easy and free way to reach the nations lies in the palms of our hands. When we hesitate to make the gospel message more available, we allow our own human weaknesses and fears to get in the way of our mission. How can we justify this resistance to boldly declaring our faith online? We live in an era of religious freedom with minimal persecution in North America (in contrast to what is happening in other parts of the world). However, the predominant perception among the Church body is that evangelism is an event run exclusively by a specific set of people.

In Exodus 4:2, God asks Moses "What is in your hand?" and tells him to lead the children of Israel to the promised land. To Moses, his staff is simply a tool for directing sheep, but with God's direction, it becomes an instrument through which miracles are performed. If God spoke to each of us today, we would answer, "a phone," a "laptop," or an "iPad." Most of us have a smart phone that can be used either for distraction or for positive impact. The responsibility of every disciple is to utilize every available resource for God so at the end of the age, when we face our Master, we will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant!..." (Matthew 25:23). We must commit to work diligently online to share present truth, regardless of who we are and what our official role may be in the Church.

The Role of Leadership

Empowering our members begins with the vision we choose to cast whether you are on your own or serve in an official leadership position in your local church.

As leaders, elders, and individuals, you can:

- ☐ Include digital discipleship in short- and long-term visions and goals for yourself and/or ministry.

- ☐ If possible, dedicate personal funds for social media promotions and digital content creation or request support from the church budget.

- ☐ Dedicate and encourage time for training you and others.

- ☐ Identify talented people who could take on social media as a personal ministry.

- ☐ Invest in young people; give them space to utilize their skills in this area for the Church. Encourage and uplift them and their efforts as digital missionaries.

- ☐ Legitimatize digital discipleship as a form of ministry that everyone can be involved with.

- ☐ Cultivate a culture of creativity and sharing in digital spaces.

- ☐ Get out of the way and let innovation happen. Encourage, don't criticize others' efforts.

- ☐ Form a digital discipleship team who can share their ideas and experiences.

- ☐ Take advantage of all the free resources, classes, and case studies on **SDAdata.org** or get the Digital Discipleship & Evangelism book at **JDIM.digital/book**

Encourage a Culture of Sharing & Content Engagement

Empower yourself and others to be a reach vehicle for souls through the following three commitments:

- ☐ **Commitment #1** – Agree to engage with and/or share church social media content weekly.
- ☐ **Commitment #2** – Agree to forward emails/texts and/or links to opportunities, videos etc. weekly.
- ☐ **Commitment #3** – Agree to share your faith through personal experiences via digital tools and technologies as much as possible.

Empower People

Reframe how you and others view time spent in the digital space so that they can:

- ☐ Be intentional online with how they spend their time & what they share
- ☐ Pay attention to the posts of their friends/contacts
- ☐ Proactively reach out to friends online or via digital tools
- ☐ Take action in appropriate and timely ways

Tips for Equipping Others in Your Faith Group

A congregation that understands the value of participating in ministry this way could serve as a powerful reach vehicle for souls. To realize this potential, they must be equipped and encouraged.

- ☐ Take time in meetings, during service or choir rehearsals to prioritize technology.
- ☐ Take time to show them how to participate with hands-on training.
- ☐ Ask them to take out their phones and take action right in the moment.
- ☐ Empower a designated person to post about key events to community apps like Next Door.
- ☐ Encourage others to mark going or interested in Facebook events.
- ☐ Encourage members to invite others to events on Facebook or via email/texting.
- ☐ Encourage others to like, wow, or love important content on your Facebook profile (increases organic traffic).
- ☐ Tell them when to expect emails and ask them to forward to their contacts.
- ☐ Send out weekly emails with links to content to want others to share/engage.
- ☐ Keep them posted on how their efforts are working and create a sense of team-work.
- ☐ Get them excited about digital discipleship through your excitement.
- ☐ Always over communicate (be consistent and persistent)

Tips and Ideas for Individual Digital Disciples

Adapted from growingfruitfuldisciples.com

- ☐ **Share your faith through daily digital activities** (texting, Instagram, group chats, Snapchat, Facebook posts, blogging, etc.).
- ☐ **Invite your online community to join you** in learning more about knowing, loving, and serving God.
- ☐ **Be willing to humbly share the story of your life as a Christian.** For example, share how you've felt God's presence even when you've made poor choices. Honestly tell how you deal with specific challenges with God's help. Explain what guides your choices. Describe the joy and comfort loving God gives you in today's troubled world.
- ☐ **Pay attention to what your friends share with you directly and online.** Listen with care. Follow up and see how they are doing. Respond to requests for help. Rejoice over their personal victories. Assess and respond to their expressed needs. Remember, God has called us to serve without judgment.
- ☐ **Offer to pray with and for others.** Record audio prayers and send them to the person throughout the week. Keep track of prayer requests, check back with the person for updates, offer ongoing encouragement, and celebrate God at work in their life.
- ☐ **Go out of your way to include and uplift friends and followers** who are shunned, ignored, or bullied online.
- ☐ **Support your church's ministries with personal resources** (time, talent, and finances). Offer to help with online content creation, updating the website, or funding a community outreach social media ad.
- ☐ **Reflect the character of Christ in all your digital and in-person interactions** with others. Being a disciple involves all of your life, including your life lived online.
- ☐ **Pray for guidance to detect where God is calling you to serve**. Support those with digital callings.
- ☐ **Evaluate the culture of the platform through which you feel called to serve** to more effectively reach people within your sphere of influence.

Digital Discipleship Commitments

Grow God's kingdom by:

- ☐ Building networks for friendship, fellowship, and support through your digital influence
- ☐ Looking for physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs within your community
- ☐ Responding mercifully to the discovered needs in a relevant way
- ☐ Acting compassionately on behalf of people who are disadvantaged or at risk
- ☐ Praying for the Holy Spirit to prepare you to reach others for Christ
- ☐ Using your social influence to help tell the world the story of Jesus
- ☐ Being able to give a reason for your faith when asked
- ☐ Using your social influence to share the story of your personal relationship with Jesus
- ☐ Being willing to be humble and honest when sharing your personal spiritual journey

By living out our mission online and exemplifying the character of Christ, we can become social media ambassadors for the gospel, impacting not only our local communities, but the world.

Practical Tips for Digital Discipleship

Worksheet & Checklist | Jamie Domm | JDIM.digital

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How to build community online and use your digital influence to share the gospel and improve the well-being of others.

#1 - Define Your Purpose for Going Digital

then frame your strategy according.

Many efforts are unable to succeed because they lack clear direction. I highly recommend if using your digital influence for ministry is new to you, choose one purpose, and then think creativity about how to use your influence, available tools, and time spent online to fulfill that purpose.

Your purpose(s) may include: (check what applies to you)

- ☐ **Create awareness –** Let people know about Bible studies, services to the community, and opportunities to help.
- ☐ **Share the gospel and spread hope –** Use your digital influence to engage in digital door-knocking to help spread the gospel and lead people to wholeness.
- ☐ **Minister to those in need –** Use digital tools to improve the well-being of those inside the church and members of the broader community
- ☐ **Grow participation and community –** Use digital tools and technologies to better connect with community members and grow participation in Sabbath School groups and Bible Studies.
- ☐ **Other –** Fill in the blank below.

#2 - Connect with Others

Be intentional about connecting with church and community members through digital tools and technologies. Every opportunity to connect is an opportunity to advance the kingdom of God. You can't reach others, share the gospel or minister to their needs, if they are not connected to you. Build a network of ways to connect with people.

Don't know any non-Christians? Not connected to people outside our Adventist faith?
Start by connecting with:

- ☐ Neighbors
- ☐ Coworkers
- ☐ Non-believing family members

Choose 3-5 people you would like to reach through your digital influence. Pray for them daily and check their profiles regularly. Write their names in below.

#3 - Build Relationships & Trust

Go online with the intention of investing in the lives of others as part of a holistic approach to ministry. Use this checklist to guide your efforts to connect with your 3-5 chosen people.

Build community online and scale up friendship evangelism by:

- ☐ Being connected through social media and other digital tools

- ☐ Learning more about people's lives through social media in addition to socializing in person

- ☐ Taking the time to engage and show interest

- ☐ Using digital tools to inform and invite friends to fellowship opportunities/events

- ☐ Taking advantage of opportunities to serve people by responding to their expressed needs

- ☐ Starting meaningful conversations

- ☐ Listening more than you speak

- ☐ Utilizing digital tools to follow up and stay in contact with people

Build trust
Building trust starts with transparency, integrity and authenticity.

- ☐ **Be open, objective & honest** about your faith, causes, and involvement in ministries.
- ☐ **Respect other's privacy** and model that behavior in all you do and post.
- ☐ **Be vulnerable** to show you're human and that you can relate.
- ☐ **Be consistent** so people always know what to expect from you.

#4 - Improve the Well-being of Others

What prayers can you answer by simply paying attention? Set aside time each day to engage with your community's posts, pay attention to cries for help, and search for ways to practically help.

Practical tips for improving the lives of others:

- ☐ ask questions
- ☐ respond in meaningful ways
- ☐ seek to understand the felt needs of every individual.
- ☐ pray for and with them (send recorded prayers)
- ☐ take action
- ☐ follow up as long as necessary

Scroll through your social media feeds, are there any felt needs you can identify? What actions can you take to improve the well-being of someone?

#5 - Be Accessible & Responsive

Treat each digital conversation like you were speaking to the person face-to-face. Be the voice that answers back.

Tips for being there when people reach out:

- ☐ **Give options –** Text, DM, email, phone number, Snapchat, even snail mail or a simple "like this post" for prayer, no strings attached and easy.
- ☐ **Check daily –** Develop a habit of checking your comments, messages and emails at least once a day. Keep your inbox tidy.
- ☐ **Respond quickly –** Even if it's just acknowledging that you received their message. Download relevant apps for on-the-go engagement.

Consider your own accessibility. Where can improvements be made?

#6 - Share the Gospel

Social media allows us to share our faith and engage with our community when it's most convenient for them. It allows our audience to self-select whether or not they want to engage. Digital door-knocking is when you share spiritual content on your social media profiles or through messaging and email to create an opportunity for people to engage with you about your faith. The spiritual content can be anything (a picture, text, video, blog, etc.); just be sure to include with it a personalized message about how it impacted you. There's a lot of opportunity right now for us to share and reach people everywhere using digital technologies.

Digital ways to distribute faith-based content:

- ☐ Forward emails.

- ☐ Text invitations with an info link to contacts or send invitations via messenger apps.

- ☐ Share content from a church's or ministry's profile and add a personalized message.

- ☐ Live-stream events, sermons, Bible study groups, etc., from an individual's social media profiles.

- ☐ Hit "like," "love," or "wow" on ministry Facebook posts to increase organic reach.

- ☐ Post to community groups or apps like Next Door about upcoming events.

- ☐ Find digital ways to connect with neighbors and community; then share your faith with them.

- ☐ Follow, friend, or join online Christian groups to help increase their digital influence.

Using the checklist above, take a moment to fulfill as many as you can. Make time to do this weekly. Use the space below to make notes about what specific actions you can take on a weekly basis to distribute faith-based content.

#7 - Evaluate success differently

Success can no longer be measured only by counting people in a building but, rather, we must consider whether or not we're building a kingdom. Digital Discipleship is a long-tail game. Many efforts fail because people give up too soon. We'll never know the full impact of our efforts this side of Heaven, but we must be consistent and persistent. This means we need to evaluate success differently.

Here are some questions you can ask to check your progress as a digital disciple:

- How many times did you share the love of Christ?

- How many conversations did you start or engage in on social media?

- How are you painting a more authentic picture of yourself, faith, or the church?

- How are you building relationships?

- Do you better understand the needs of those you are connecting with online? Yes or No. Give examples.

- Have you found meaningful and practical ways to help people? List examples.