

Balancing Digital Mission Work & Spiritual Health

Resource | Jamie Domm | JDIM.digital

Inspired by Dee Casper, *Director*, CORE at Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”

– Mark 6:31–32 NIV

For digital missionaries who spend significant time online working to further the gospel, it’s important that we learn to safeguard our own spirituality as well as develop a healthy work-life balance. Another way to frame this is to make sure you are fed spiritually before you minister to others.

This can be a huge challenge because when you work for a religious organization, EVERYTHING seems important because of the eternal impact of the work. And there seems to be no end to the work that needs to be done. Those of us who have chosen this type of career are self-driven but also driven by the expectations (or perceived expectations) of others. How do we prioritize? How do we set boundaries that enable us to get the job done, while taking care of our own spiritual health?

We’re not in this alone. God knows our limitations, and He doesn’t want us to work so hard that we work ourselves away from Him—the relationship that matters the most. This is why He has given us the Holy Spirit. After we’ve given it our all for the day and go home to rest, the Holy Spirit keeps working.

He also doesn’t want us to dive so deep into the mission field that we become corrupted by it. There are a lot of toxic conversations and content on social media, just as physical mission fields have their dangers and temptations. If the early missionaries of our Church had stayed away from the mission field because of the dangers, the Seventh-day Adventist Church would

never have become a global movement. We must go where the people are and minister to their needs, while simultaneously guarding the avenues of our own heart.

Here are four tips for digital missionaries to help balance digital media and spiritual health:

- 1. Guard the edges of your day.** Start and end the day *without* social media. I can easily become consumed by social media; it's my job at least eight hours a day. If I don't set healthy boundaries for myself, the negative aspects of social media start to drag me down and prevent me from really resting. Rest can take many forms, but I cannot rest by spending hours on personal social media when I work all day on those same platforms. What many consider pleasure just feels like more work. When I'm not working, I consume media and information the old-fashioned way by reading magazines and books, etc. Also, in the morning, I make it a point to follow Jesus' example and begin with solitary prayer and Bible study...with a physical Bible.

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” – Mark 1:35 NIV

The peace of the morning enables me to think clearly and connect with God. I know that the moment work begins, I will be connected on multiple platforms for at least eight hours, so this “analog” devotional time is sacred. When the day is done, I disconnect and again turn to print material, exercise, and face-to-face conversations to help me wind down. Staying connected online throughout the evening can [disrupt your sleep and result in depression](#). If you browse social media to stave off loneliness and pain, you will find the exact opposite of what you're looking for.

- 2. Structure your digital evangelism/discipleship and personal life like a missionary outpost center.** A physical outpost center is a place outside the city where you can get away from your daily work and connect with God. It's a missionary community that provides education, restoration, and preparation for work to be done in the city, where missionaries will return to win people's trust and friendship with the intention of winning souls for Christ. Social media is a similar means of building bridges and relationships with people to create a positive influence within the community. Use the connective power of social media to share your faith and show your friends that you care about them. Social media is a center of influence for discipleship and friend evangelism. But remember to maintain your outpost center, a distinctly separate part of your life where you can recalibrate and then go back to your mission field stronger than ever. Don't live in social media, and don't let your world be controlled by it.

“When duty calls us to this, we should be doubly watchful and prayerful, that, through the grace of Christ we may stand uncorrupted.” – Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* 419.1

- 3. Digital missionaries must have a clear purpose for getting on social media.** My friend Dee Casper (Director, CORE at Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) asks us to treat social media like a post office. Typically, at a post office, you enter, pick up mail, and drop off outgoing mail and packages. Most people don't hang out all day in a post office. That would be strange. If we go online with a plan, this helps prevent us from getting distracted from our original purpose and mission. Go on social media to drop off some content, pick up some content, connect with your friends, check performance stats, and then leave. Don't move in. We've all had the experience where we intend to watch one video, and two hours later, we don't know how the time got away—never accomplishing what we actually set out to do.
- 4. When you're lonely and have nothing to do, don't try to fill the void by going online.** It's like going grocery shopping when you're hungry. Temptation will always take you further than you want to go when you're vulnerable. Social media is a tool; don't let it use you. Go there to serve, not be served.

“We may be placed in trying positions, for many cannot have their surroundings what they would; but we should not voluntarily expose ourselves to influences that are unfavorable to the formation of Christian character.” – Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* 419.1

God has not called us to live in social media but to influence people through social media. Our influence online can stretch much further than we imagine with the help of the Holy Spirit.

God has called us to use our digital influence for Him, whether we have an audience of four or 40,000. We plant the seeds; God grows the seeds. People pour out their hearts online. We can be there in their moments of crisis with love, hope, and truth. But in order for them to listen to us, we must carefully cultivate and use our digital influence purposefully.

By setting boundaries and sticking with them, we can be better equipped to help others.