

How to be wise on social media



1. Think: What do you want to do with social media?
2. Think about where you want to set your privacy settings. There are security issues here as well wisdom and discernment. A completely open access personal Facebook timeline is generally unwise. Then work out [how to set the right privacy settings for all your social media](#).
3. Be aware that, even with strong privacy settings and even with 'anonymous' handles, "As we increasingly live out our social and professional lives online, **we are creating a digital footprint that will linger long into our futures**. Conversations and photographs intended for the moment may become distorted when looked at through a retrospective lens. We all need to regularly review the information about us that is publicly available and consider what our online presence may say about us, both now and in the future." ([Source](#)) Once something is online it is out there. Even if it is later deleted there is a record somewhere. [Assume that everyone, everywhere will read what you write and see what you post](#). Think before you post.
4. Do we need to be regularly posting pictures of ourselves? Do we need to challenge the 'selfie' culture? Where is the line between warm communication (it may be useful and nice for people to see an up-to-date photo of you every so often) and vanity? [Girls particularly be careful here](#).
5. We need to be particularly careful about posting photos of ourselves with a member of the opposite sex (when we're not married to them) for four reasons:
 - a. Misunderstanding – there could be no romantic relationship going on at all but someone viewing the image might assume there is.
 - b. Causing a weaker brother to stumble – (i) perhaps an *mzee* or more conservative brother who feels that being pictured standing very closely with a member of the opposite sex (PDAs of any sort) are wrong and would take offense, or (ii) someone struggling with being single who is made jealous or discouraged, or (iii) a young believer who respects you and is encouraged by the image to be more intimate with his own girlfriend.
 - c. Over-commitment – the photo is expressing (even without words) a commitment: "we are in a relationship". That is fine if you are actually committed – i.e. engaged / families have been formally introduced / negotiations begun. But if there isn't a strong commitment we must be careful in our words and non-verbal signals to one another and to others that we are not saying more than is the case. We need to guard our hearts.
 - d. Record – as noted above, there is a permanent record of what you post. How will your future wife-to-be feel about that picture of you with a former girlfriend? So we come back to the issue above about over-commitment and waiting till the relationship is definitely going to marriage.
6. Think very carefully about how you comment on political and contentious issues. Is it the best place for debate?
7. Don't live your life on social media. We don't need to give a running commentary on our lives. We don't need to constantly seek to be affirmed. We don't need to publically air the 'dirty laundry' of our family or share every moment of our private lives.
8. Remember: You are always a child of God, online and offline. Integrity.

More resources:

- [How to engage on social media like a Christian](#)
- [18 ways to ruin your reputation on Facebook](#) - not all 18 are right but most are very helpful.
- [Tim Chester's *Can I be your Facebook friend* - summary](#) – great on thinking about social media from a gospel perspective [available from iServe Africa Bookstore]
- [Facebook: Friend & Foe? \(Natalie Print\)](#) – how social media use should be controlled by love.
- [4 benefits of social media](#) and [7 dangers of social media](#) (Richard Perkins)