

Blogging 101

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Opening

Welcome to Blogging 101. During this time, you will learn what a blog is, why you might want to start one and how to do it. At the end of our time together, I hope that you will begin reading blogs and will consider starting a blog. If you decide that you want to start a blog, you can access resources at my blog that can walk you through this process.

I would like to first provide an overview of blogs and blogging.

Closing

Do you have any questions?

I invite you to visit my blog to access this presentation, links to blogs in which you may be interested and a document which will walk you through starting a blog on your own. Make sure and download resources from my blog.



Blogs in Plain English Common Craft

<http://www.commoncraft.com/blogs>

This video is produced by <http://www.commoncraft.com> and provides a great explanation of a blog. You can find this particular video here - <http://www.commoncraft.com/blogs>. Let's take a look.

Transition

Now that we have a better idea about what a blog is let's think about why you would want to blog at church.

Why blog at church?

- Changing lives - Connect with people inside and outside the congregation.
 - Personal Discipline
- Transforming the community - Tell stories of transformation.
- Renewing the church - Teach and learn from leaders from across the denomination, nation and world.

Why blog at church? Because blogging helps fulfill our vision as a congregation – to change lives, transform the community and renew the church.

Changing Lives – A blog can be a front door to the church. It may be create a first impression for non and nominally religious people.

* “The Internet is our parish”

* Blogging can also be a positive personal spiritual discipline. Scott suggests that you can use it as an online journal and go back to reflect on the changes in your life. It can also help you articulate your thoughts.

* Bart suggests that blogging may be used for daily accountability.

Transforming the Community – A blog is a relational medium for transformation.

* Stories of transformation may be through pictures. For example, pictures of mission trips may be effective in telling the story of God’s work.

Renewing the Church – A blog could be an ongoing Leadership Institute platform with much lower cost and potentially much higher impact.

Transition

Whether or not you decide to start writing your own blog, you may want to begin by reading blogs. Reading blogs is also the first step to take before beginning your own blog.

Step 1: Read Blogs

- Blogs: Authors and Content
- Finding Blogs
 - Search - blogsearch.google.com or www.technorati.com
 - Blogrolls
- What type of posts do you enjoy?
- What blogs will be useful for you as models?

Blogs: Authors and Content

There are many different types of blogs which contain a wide variety of content.

- * Authors – individual, community or team
- * Content – behind the scenes at church, photography, personal, ministry and internal.
- * Personal – life stories for friends and family
- * Ministry – ministry content and reflections on ministry
- * Internal – spread ideas and receive feedback, need a password.

Finding Blogs

- * Blog search – Do you wonder if a particular person or topic is being blogged about? Search for it.
- * Blogrolls – bloggers will often link to other blogs. You can use these links to find other blogs.

What type of posts do you enjoy?

- * What are some of the characteristics of posts that you enjoy reading?
- * Are they short, long, include humor, information, stories?

What blogs will be useful for you as models?

- * What blogs do you enjoy?
- * Learn from other bloggers.

Transition

Once you have started reading blogs, you may feel a desire to start your own. Ask yourself, am I ready to start blogging?

Step 2: Am I ready to start blogging?

- What will I blog about consistently?
 - Who is my audience?
- How often am I going to be willing and able to post?
- Do I recognize that my blog can be read by any one at any time?

There are several key questions to which you will need to have answers before you begin to blog.

What will I blog about consistently? Who is my audience?

- * Where is my area of expertise?
- * What will go unsaid if I do not say it?
- * To whom am I writing? Congregation, community, other leaders, deeply committed Christians, non or nominally religious persons?

How often am I going to be willing and able to post?

- * Blogging can take a lot of time, if you let it.
- * Blogging can also be quite effective with a minimal amount of time.
- * Your schedule will help determine whether you will be able to blog.

Do I recognize that my blog can be read by any one at any time?

- * Confidentiality – Have I asked permission to tell the story?
- * Humor – Is it funny for everyone involved?
- * It is nearly impossible to blog anonymously.

Transition

Once you have responded to all these questions you are ready to get started with your own blog.

Step 3: Getting Started

- Start and setup a blog
 - <http://www.wordpress.com>
- Naming
 - <http://yourname.wordpress.com>

So you are ready to start a blog, what do you do next?

Start a blog

- * Two of the main platforms for blogging for free are WordPress and Blogger. There are many other blogging platforms, but these are two of the most prevalent. These platforms are free.
- * Use follow up documents for a guide through the WordPress start up process.

Naming

- * You may choose to use your name – this gives you flexibility to write about whatever you want and change the focus over time.
- * You may choose a particular title – Make sure that it is flexible enough to be used over time for the purpose which you intend.
- * It is far better to stay at the same blog site over a period of time – consistency, increase in search ranking, incoming links, etc.

Transition

Once you have set your preferences and written your first post, you are a blogger.

Step 4: You are a blogger

- Post regularly
- Tell your story
- Spread the word about your blog

So you are reading a few blogs, you have started a blog and even made a few posts. What is next? Keep going.

Post regularly

- * Not every post has to be deep and well written, putting personality into your blogging can help people get to know you and your personality.
- * A blog can break down barriers to relationships.

Tell your story

- * Be authentic and show people who you are.
- * There are a lot of blogs and content out there, people want to read what you have to offer.

Spread the word about your blog

- * Tell anyone and everyone who may be interested.
- * Email signature
- * Specific invitation to people who may be interested in reading it.
- * Personal conversations

Transition

One of the great things about blogging is that it is relational. As you start your blog you want to make sure that you participate in community.

Step 5: Participate in Community

- Listen to your readers
- Link to other blogs
- Comment on other blogs
- Comments on your blog
 - No comments
 - Moderated comments
 - Open comments

As a blogger you have the opportunity to be in community with persons at your blog and within the blogosphere.

Listen to your readers

* If someone mentions that she has read your blog, you may ask what she would like to see you blog about or if they have a particular question about which they would like to read your response.

Link to other blogs that you enjoy

* You may include a blogroll – a list of blogs that you enjoy reading.
* You may provide a link to particular posts or blogs that you read in a post. This allows you to continue the conversation

Comment on blogs

* Adding good comments to other blogs can help drive traffic to your site.
* Make sure and include your blog address when you leave a comment so that others will be able to find your blog from a comment that you write.
* Check resource for good comments
* Include a link to your blog

Comments on your blog

* No comments – You can choose to allow no comments on your blog
* Moderation – All posts have to be moderated, they need to be moderated for the first time, no moderation
* Responding to comments may be something that you choose to do or not do. It can take more time to respond to comments added to your posts. However, it can be a valuable place of community to respond to comments.
* Be ready to have others disagree with you – particularly if you state a strong opinion.