

# 18 Ways to Ruin Your Reputation on Facebook

by Paul Steinbrueck



*Facebook has its risks.*

Facebook is a great way for you to build and maintain relationships with people both inside your church and in your community. But Facebook is not without its risks. Every time you post something, you risk hurting, offending or distancing yourself from people. So, here are 18 things you want to avoid doing on Facebook...

First, the ugly...

- 1) Post something out of frustration in the heat of the moment.** We all get frustrated at times. And if you want to engage people authentically, you need to "keep it real." But Facebooking when angry, frustrated, or hurt is never a good idea. Take a few minutes (or a few hours) to cool down, and then think again if you really want to use Facebook to vent.
- 2) Criticize people.** Even if you don't use a person's name, chances are you're Facebook friends with that person or someone close enough to the situation to know who you're really talking about.
- 3) Embarrass yourself.** Expect everyone in your congregation and your community to see everything you post to Facebook. So, don't post anything you wouldn't be comfortable saying or showing from the pulpit on a Sunday morning.

**4) Embarrass your family.** Our spouses and kids say and do funny things all the time. Most of those things can be posted to Facebook with no problem, and they help people to see you're a normal person with a normal family. But be sensitive and when in doubt, ask your spouse and kids if it's OK to share a quote, happening, or pic online.

**5) Criticize other churches in the community.** Every church has a different mission, ministry philosophy, style of worship, and theology. But we all share one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. We should be known for our unity not our division.

The self-absorbed...

**6) Only talk about your church.** Pastors, when people become Facebook friends with you, it's because they want to engage with you – a real person – not a spokesperson for your church.

**7) Share everything posted to the church FB page.** Even if you post personal updates to your Facebook profile, don't repost every church update as well. Some – yes, all – no.

**8 ) Just talk about yourself.** When you go to a social event, do you like hanging around with people who only talk about themselves and never ask you about you? Don't be one of those people online either.

The disingenuous...

**9) Act like your life is perfect.** Nobody is perfect, and everyone knows it. If you act like everything is good all the time, you'll be perceived as inauthentic, wearing a mask. 🚫

The disingenuous...

**10) Act like you're always "joyful in the Lord" Nobody is happy all the time either.**

**11) Act like you have all the answers.** Nobody likes a know-it-all either. Share insight and advice when asked. Be confident but not arrogant.

The offender...

**12) Act like the language/morality police.** Your Facebook friends are not perfect. They are going to swear, post questionable pictures of themselves, and share things you don't agree with. If something is really bad, consider contacting the person privately about it, but don't call people out publicly for what is unfortunately common behavior in our culture.

**13) Roll out the fire and brimstone.** I don't know if preaching about sin and hell worked with past generations, but it's not going to put you in a position to influence people on Facebook. People on Facebook respond much more favorably to hope and love.

**14) Be overly political.** It's OK to take stands on key issues, but unless you want to irk half your church and close the door to half the people in your community (not to mention risk losing your non-profit status), don't tow a party line.

**15) Engage people in debates.** Online (and offline) debates rarely cause anyone to shift their position on an issue. Discussion is great, but if things get heated or personal, it's time to lighten up.

The disengaged...

**16) Post a lot of theological stuff that's over the head of your friends.** It's great for pastors to engage their Facebook friends in spiritual conversations, but avoid posting your doctoral thesis. It's not going to engage anyone, and will put people off.

**17) Login once every week or two. Relationships require consistency.** You can take breaks, go on vacation, and don't need to be on Facebook every day, but you've got to be regular if you're going to build relationships in Facebook.

**18) Fail to respond.** When people send you messages, post to your wall, or post comments to your status updates and links, it's important to respond. Answer people's questions. Thank people for their insight and stories.