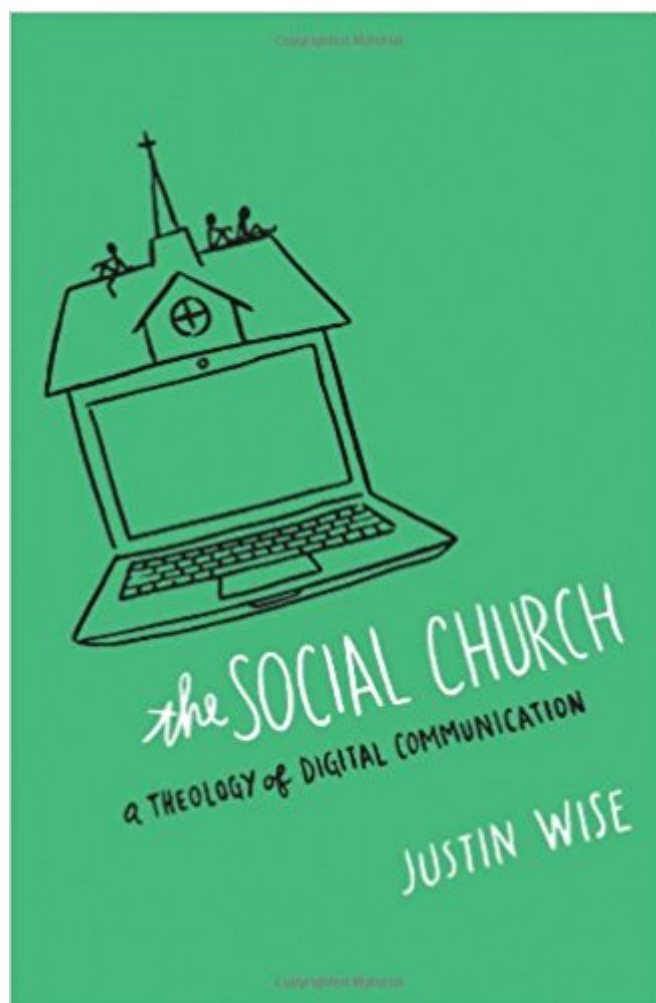


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# The Social Church: A Theology Of Digital Communication



## Synopsis

Did you know you can read online reviews of your church? How often have you talked about reaching people where they are—and realized that much of the time, they are on the Internet? We've been living in a digital world for quite a while now. Justin Wise speaks about social media as this generation's printing press—a revolutionary technology that can spread the gospel farther and faster than we can imagine. It's time to take what we know (and admit what we don't know) and learn together how to move forward as the church. Are you ready to think theologically about this digital age and reach people in a new way?

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## Customer Reviews

Justin Wise connects the power of social media with the potential for life-changing ministry in a completely fresh, easy-to-understand, and relevant way. His energy and wisdom bleed through the pages. He gets it. He totally gets it and now you can too. The Social Church is a must-read for all Christian leaders called to serve in this time and space. Tami Heim, president and CEO of Christian Leadership Alliance, coauthor of @stickyJesus: How to Live Out Your Faith Online The rumors are true: Justin Wise knows his stuff. Not only does he ask the right hard questions in The Social Church but he boldly challenges the status quo, encouraging churches to embrace digital communications with vision, strategy, and purpose. Carrie Kintz, Digital Communication Strategist, Focus on the Family Justin is a knowledgeable and accomplished practitioner of social media strategy and tactics as well as a practiced speaker on the subject. He consistently creates and

publishes useful content that goes beyond mere thoughts and opinions to include the tools he uses for success and the tactics and techniques for others to become successful. Chris Giovagnoni, Social Media Marketing Program Manager, Compassion International Justin Wise is the real deal. He is passionate about local churches and assisting them in connecting with a new generation. He brings creative and innovative thinking to each training, but more than that, you'll find in him a genuine heart of service with a purpose. Haley Veturis, Social Media Manager, Saddleback Church Justin has handled social media for both our SCORRE and Platform conferences in the last year and we couldn't be more pleased. He understands the power of social media and the benefits that come when it's used correctly. Most importantly, he accomplished our goal: people who weren't at the event felt like they were and were encouraged to sign up for the next one. Michael Hyatt, New York Times bestselling author, former CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers

Did you know you can read online reviews of your church? How often have you talked about reaching people where they are and realized that much of the time, they are on the Internet? We've been living in a digital world for quite a while now. Justin Wise speaks about social media as this generation's printing press—a revolutionary technology that can spread the gospel farther and faster than we can imagine. It's time to take what we know (and admit what we don't know), and learn together how to move forward as the church. Are you ready to think theologically about this digital age and reach people in a new way?

The Social Church: a Theology of Digital Communication by Justin Wise Wise states his thesis as follows: "This book will help you discover your why and answer the question now what? that I see so many churches asking when confronted with the shift toward social." (Kindle loc. 103) Wise establishes the thesis through cause-and-effect relationship. First, A needs to happen, which is the base. Then B, C, and finally D, are added. If there is trouble at B, C, or D, it's because A was not firmly established. Wise also traces historical connections, pointing out that communication was first oral, then written, followed by broadcasting, and now digital. Because the church transitioned through the first three stages, they must again move forward into the digital age to retain relevancy. Wise offers three qualifications about the book: 1) it is not a "how to," 2) it offers more questions than answers, and 3) hard work is involved. Churches must recognize that social media engagement is necessary, is focused on interactive values, and must be based on a Big Idea. Wise helps churches understand

why they need to risk emerging into social media. Methods can change without changing the message. Churches need to engage with the culture like Jesus did. Wise labels people heretics if they are willing to move their church forward, like Martin Luther did. Today's culture values interactivity, customization, connection, and sharing. These values are different from previous generations. The Church must be willing to honor each person's voice, but first they must care. Wise pictures a church's social media strategy at the top of a pyramid. At the bottom is the Big Idea, the most important thing. Everything a church does ties into the Big Idea. It is the foundation and must be solid. The Big Idea supports three upper levels. Resting on the Big Idea is content, all print and digital items. A church's website rests on the content level. At the top of the pyramid is the social media strategy. Problems at any level come from a Big Idea that is not solid. With the advance in technology, churches have the opportunity to expand their audiences. Courage and skill are needed. Not only must communication happen outside the church building, it must also happen within as younger and older generations learn to work together. Technology continues to advance. Standing still is not an option. Wise believes churches must become part of the digital culture or they will fade away. Wise assumes the reader and their church are unfamiliar with social media. I found some of the author's ideas and comments to be dated. The book is best for someone struggling to understand the need for digital communication. The author's style is very casual. He uses catchy titles that create curiosity. The few illustrations presented are helpful. The book is well organized and easy to read.

This book contains "high level" information that would suit those seeking academic reading material, but it also has plenty of stories and narratives that keep it interesting for the average reader. The Social Church assumes that the reader of this book has already built a foundation regarding how to use social media websites such as Twitter or Facebook. Wise states this (which is most likely his thesis statement for the book), "This book will help you discover your *why?* and answer the *now what?* that I see so many churches asking when confronted with the shift toward social" (Kindle, Loc. 104). Wise builds this book around the premise of the need for social media and gives advanced tips to utilizing it effectively, tips beyond your typical suggestions such as posting X times daily and make posts at this time each day. Understanding this "why" behind the "what" is, in my opinion, what should be the foundation in every church or organization wanting to start a social media account. Wise does a good job backing up his point to move churches into the social media generation through historical evidence. For example, he points out that until Martin Luther took the Bible to the printing press, the lay reader could not read a Bible

because it was written in Latin. Martin Luther utilized the technology of the printing press to get the gospel out to the many instead of the few. "Luther's dream, aided by technology, became a vivid reality. He had done it. He bridged a widening gap between the clergy and the laity. Boundaries were shattered and new stories could be written. All of this from a German monk with digestive problems" (Kindle, Loc. 209). Right from the beginning of the book, Wise lays out a strong argument to support his idea that churches should evolve with technology. The one critique I would point out is that there is a lot of information in this book and Wise does little to display that information visibly. In most book that are as information rich as this one, there is a chart or diagram (usually at the end of each chapter) showing how everything fits together. The assumption of each chapter being that you have read and understand the material so now it can be presented in a nicely organized image or chart that helps a person fit together the pieces of this information jigsaw puzzle. What Wise does very well is two things. 1) He throws a joke in here and there, usually based on personal mistakes and experiences, that are a delightful little break in the information rich dialogue. Plus he displays vulnerability (as Brene Brown would suggest) that demonstrates he is a normal guy like the rest of us... a normal guy with something to offer the rest of us. 2) What Wise lacks visually on paper, he helps you to imagine in your head what a social media strategy might look like. He gives little tips such as, find the Big Idea, don't come across as the creepy person that only talks about your spouse on social media with no other life (referring to those that only post Jesus as if that is the only thing happening in their lives), getting the attention quickly, like, within seven seconds (the average time that a user visits a website and then backs out if it doesn't seem appealing). The tips throughout the book are little golden nuggets to take to heart when building your social media strategy. Wise even talks about the generational difference and the stubbornness of both generations trying to get what they want and ignoring the desires of the other. Wise does an excellent job supporting and sticking to his thesis statement throughout the book. He doesn't tell you how to set up a social media page and he does not tell you when to post or what to post. He sticks to building a strategy and understand "why" you're posting in the first place, or why you shouldn't post, depending on the situation. Wise shares many success stories of churches that have sat on the fence regarding social media and then decided to make a go at it. He proves his point throughout the book but does it in a way that would not offend those that wish to deny social media. He takes in consideration those that either blatantly do not wish to use it or that are afraid to use it. If you've been sitting on the fence, this book will give you some great insight and make you ask questions that you perhaps had not thought of yet.

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