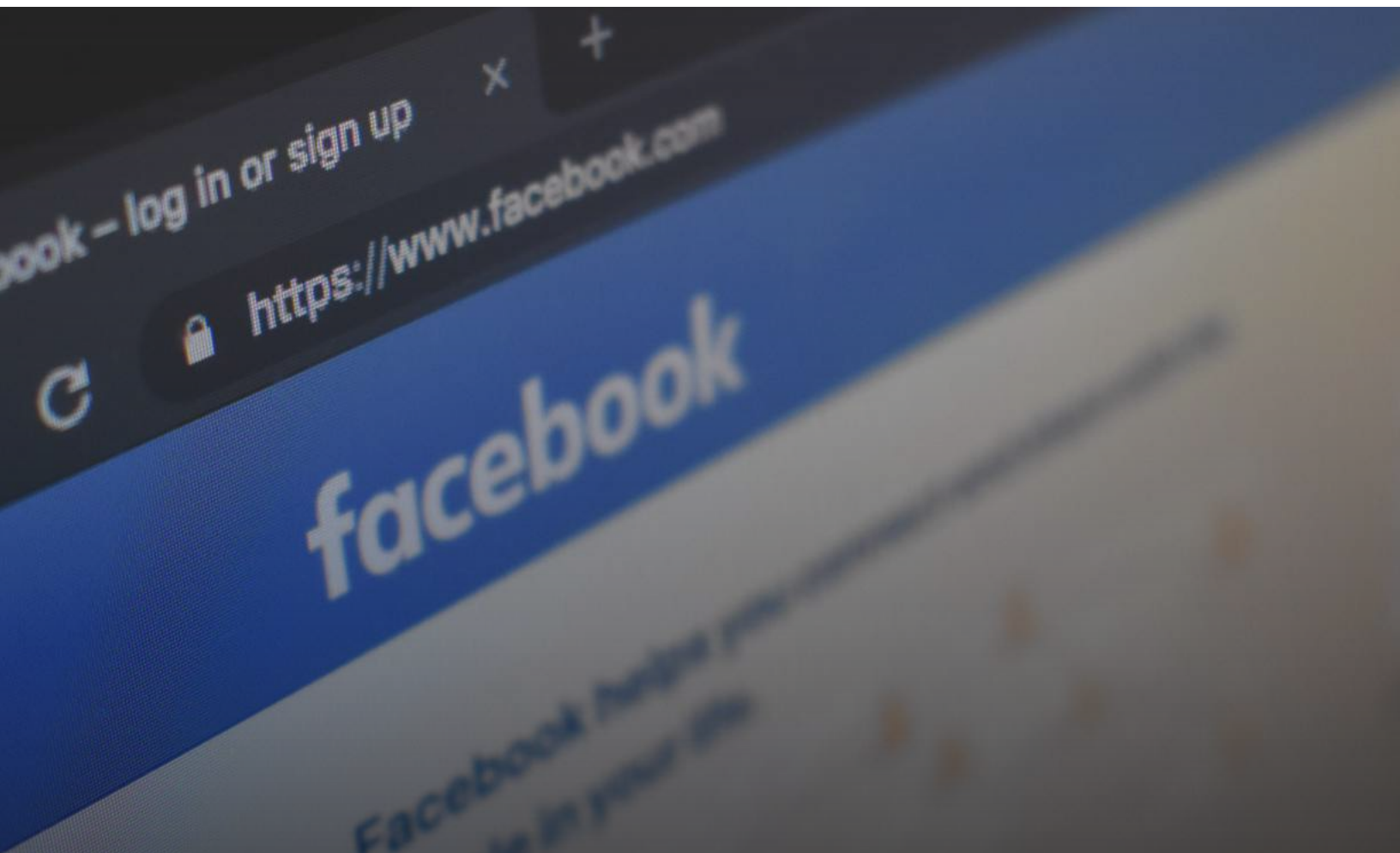


stuff you wish they taught in seminary



3 Reasons

Your Church Shouldn't Be Running Facebook Ads This Easter

RICH BIRCH



Your team had done all this work and is ready for the big day: your musicians have held extra practices, your folks in children's ministry are excited to welcome larger crowds than normal, and your sermon has been polished and perfected. There's no doubt that various teams in your church spent the past few weeks working hard in order to prepare for Easter.

After all that hard work, you lean back in your chair and think *"what can I do to ensure that we have a large crowd with us on this Sunday morning? Are people going to come?"*

Easter really is the biggest of big days as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. With that in mind, Easter also happens to be one of those Sundays where your people are more likely to invite their friends, and their friends are more likely to attend. It's an incredibly important day as we are inspired to impact our communities. For this reason, people tend to wonder if there's some last-minute trick they can pull off to increase their Easter Sunday attendance.

Some leaders tend to think about advertising on Facebook at the very last minute with a view to help boost their attendance. Now, Facebook has made the interface super easy to use, and it is amazing how quickly they can get money out of your budget into their coffers!

However, I think most churches should refrain from advertising on Facebook at this time of year. Sure, Facebook can provide a way of reaching new people, but there are at least three reasons why I

think your church shouldn't be running Facebook ads for Easter.

Churches grow because your people invite their friends

A recent study found that only 2% of people in most churches invited a friend last year. [\[ref\]](#) **Is it any wonder then that the vast majority of churches in our country aren't growing?** The fact remains that the difference between churches that are growing and those that aren't is that growing churches simply have more people inviting their friends to attend.

The predicament with Facebook ads is they typically target an unknown audience, or at least two or three relationships removed from people that actually attend your church. The algorithm is specifically built in order to find people who are similar to those within your church. It might sound like an interesting method for reaching out to people who may want to attend your church—but **when was the last time you saw someone make an important, life-altering decision based off an ad floated by while they were scrolling through a feed on Facebook?**

Facebook advertising is essentially about interrupting and attracting the viewer's attention. Let's face it: Facebook users are looking to be entertained. **The choice to visit your church probably doesn't fit into that campaign when approaching / targeting people's decision-making matrix.**

As opposed to searching for a new audience of people who have no connection to your church, **most churches should be focusing on the people right in front of them and finding a way of engaging them to invite their friends.** Give your people the tools they need to invite their neighbor, friends, and families to attend. You'll see larger dividends in growth as well as in spreading the message of Jesus when you actually help people invest in their closest relationships.

Facebook advertisers would love the access you have.

Sometimes we miss the forest for the trees. We see a "new" tool like Facebook and wonder how we can leverage it for reaching our community. While I do think that impulse can be beneficial in many areas, most churches aren't making the most of the opportunities being presented before them.

Businesses in your community spend money on Facebook because they don't have the same kind of regular access to people that you have. Every seven days, your community gathers, and you have an opportunity to talk to them about what's important in your church. How many other businesses advertising on Facebook have that opportunity?



Rather than going out of your way to try to open up a new channel, **I encourage you to take full advantage of the channel you already have, which is largely the face-to-face engagement that you have as a church leader.** How have you utilized your church lobby over the weeks leading up to Easter? How have you used your regular activities to talk about what's happening on the Big Day and encouraged your near/dear ones to invite their friends?

A prevailing church will spend at least some time during Lent weeks talking about the importance of inviting friends to church. That church relays that it's important for each of us to engage in the

mission of spreading the message of Jesus into the entire world. **Just the ability to ask people face-to-face if they have invited a friend to come is a level of engagement that most advertisers would love to be able to have.** Forget about the shiny new objects of tools of the moment. Make sure you're leveraging the opportunities presented right in front of you today in order to invite people to come to your church.

There is no church growth silver bullet

Many years of research and hundreds of interviews with prevailing church leaders reveal that growing churches benefit from a wide variety of approaches to increase their appeal.

Churches that will see their largest attendance this year on Easter Sunday didn't suddenly put up a Facebook ad a few days before the all-important occasion. So what did they do? They started preparing for Easter days, weeks—even months ago. **They found ways of developing communication that would capture their people's imaginations and hearts. They found different approaches of engaging the people of the church in the mission of inviting friends to come to church.**

Easter is just one opportunity to reach out to people in your community, but there are certainly more opportunities coming this year. Instead of scrambling at the last minute and throwing resources at a faulty tool like Facebook ads, I encourage you to take the pain you might be feeling at this point, wondering if you've done everything you can, and focus on how you can work towards maximizing future opportunities and have your church reach more people than ever before.

Easter is a holy day in the church calendar; it's a day where the folks who otherwise are not regular attenders of church are more likely to come. **However, big attendance numbers on Easter won't pay the growth dividends you're looking for without a broader and long-term strategy of reaching out and connecting with new-here guests.**

There is no silver bullet that you can use to see your church grow, and while Facebook ads may indeed look like a shiny new object that takes just a few dollars for a return, it just doesn't suffice.

Here are 3 things you can still do before Easter.

I don't want to leave you feeling down as if you might have missed an opportunity this year. There are still a few things you could do right away for free and could encourage your people to invite friends. At the end of the day, your entire church growth strategy needs to be built around the idea of increasing invitations. Here are a few things that you should try, even in these last few days, before we get to Easter:



- **Email your complete list.** // Your church surely would have some sort of email list. Take some time off to email everyone on that list and give them the rundown on what's happening at Easter this year. Invite them not just to come, but also to invite their friends and family to come with them.
- **Make a free Facebook live video** // I'm not opposed to the Facebook platform; I absolutely do feel that you should use it—but just use it wisely. I encourage you and a few of your core team members to create a free Facebook live video showing some behind-the-scenes of what to expect at your service this year. Create this video with a focus on what people can expect when attending the service. People want to know what's going to happen so that they can invite their friends more clearly. Be super clear about what's happening and be sure to remind your people to invite their friends as well.
- **Ask 10 people who they're inviting between now and Easter Sunday** // Make it a regular part of your routine to ask folks who they're inviting to come over with them on Easter Sunday morning. Ask people who you can pray for that might be coming. Just continuing to turn up the volume on the culture of invitation in the form of one-on-one interactions can make a dramatic difference, even during a short period comprising of a few days leading up to Easter. It is a known fact the majority of our guests will make their decision to come on Easter Sunday 48 to 72 hours before the actual service. That means you still have lots of time to

ask your people who they'll be inviting for Easter Sunday morning.

I love Facebook in so many ways. It helps our ministries reach out to new people in all kinds of new and interesting ways. However, I really do opine that you shouldn't be putting money into Facebook ads in order to try and artificially boost your Easter attendance. Instead, use that energy, impulse, and momentum towards motivating people who are right in front of you.

An Invitation for After Easter to Help Your Church Grow

After you settle out from the Easter push at your church, I invite you to take our [free three part video series on church growth](#). Are you worried that your church isn't attaining its full potential? Have you wanted to reach more people in your community but aren't sure where to start? Do you look out and get disheartened by seeing too many empty seats every weekend?

Each video is packed with "ready to implement" ideas to help your church reach more people this year!

- Video #1 // 5 Keys to Church Growth They Didn't Teach You Seminary
 - Video #2 // 3 Church Growth Myths Debunked
 - Video #3 // 5 Questions Church Leaders Are Asking About Church Growth
- [\[Click here to sign up now for the FREE video series.\]](#)

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