

IS BLOGGING DEAD?

*a few dozen Christian
bloggers say no*



*benjamin vrbicek
& john beeson*

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In a series of quick, mindless thumb swipes to the top of my Twitter feed, my eyes notice a tweet of someone I respect—someone who thinks deeply about blogging and journalism and reaching people for Christ via the internet.¹

His tweet declares that blogs have been killed.

I take a deep breath and sit zombie-like on my couch.

I stare out the window for a bit, contemplating why the book about blogging I've spent the last two years working on wouldn't also die as collateral damage. *Who needs a book about blogging if blogging is dead?* Though the first draft of the book is already written, it sure would save my coauthor and me a lot of time and money to cut our losses.

Collin Hansen is the editorial director of The Gospel Coalition, and for several years he co-led the now-disbanded group called "Band of Bloggers." In other words, he knows more than a little about the topic of blogging.

Hansen's tweet identified what, in his opinion, killed blogging: "Social media killed blogs," he writes. "Can't find them any longer, since folks don't browse sites any longer."² His

¹ Cover image by Julian Christian Anderson at unsplash.com.

² Collin Hansen (@collinhansen), Twitter post, September 2, 2019, 4:36 p.m. "Social media killed blogs. Can't find them any longer, since folks don't browse sites any longer," <https://twitter.com/collinhansen/status/1169711035042934784>.

comment sat in a thread discussing the current fad of writers using e-newsletters rather than true blogs.

As much as I respect Hansen, I'd suggest we not order the autopsy report yet. To tweak the words often ascribed to Mark Twain, the reports of the death of blogs have been greatly exaggerated. I agree that today's blogger cannot ascend to the levels of influence reached almost exclusively by those who got into the game ten years ago, if not twenty. But I think we'd be wrong to say social media has killed blogs, just as we'd be wrong to say the car killed the bicycle. For exercise and for pleasure and for social interaction, people still ride—just as people will blog. Think how many Twitter handles still have a link to the person's blog? Lots, I tell you, lots. Admittedly, when I click those links I'm often disappointed by the result: the last post dates from more than a year ago and the post before that is often even further back—hence why we wrote this book. Tim Challies highlights a potential incentive to commit or recommit to blogging as others bail. "With so many people opting out," he writes, "there is lots of room for aspiring writers to work their way in."³

Samuel James is more pessimistic. He writes,

Bloggng is dead, right? At least among the folks in a position to say so, this seems to be the consensus. Many of blogging's most important early practitioners have either abandoned it . . . or else transformed their writing spaces into storefronts that offer "promoted" content in exchange for patronage. The thinking goes like this: Before Mark Zuckerberg and Tweet threads, blogging was a viable way

³ Tim Challies, "Why Christians Blogs Aren't What They Used to Be," *Challies.com*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.challies.com/articles/when-christian-blogs-began-to-change/>.

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of sharing ideas online. Now, though, social media has streamlined and mobilized both content and community. Reading a blog when you could be reading what your friends are Tweeting about is like attending a lecture completely alone. It's boring and lonely for you, and a waste of time for the lecturer.⁴

The full post by James suggests more optimism than that quote belies. For example, after noting many strengths of blogging in our cultural moment, his concluding paragraph states, "Blogging still matters, because it's still the medium that most ably combines the best aspects of online writing."⁵

Twitter doesn't do nuance well, so as I think back over Colin Hansen's statement about the death of blogging, perhaps he only meant that blogs don't have the popularity they used to have or that many obstacles are stacked against their success, as James points out and all of us would likely concede.

Regardless, John Beeson and I are still blogging regularly. And so are hundreds of thousands of others. If you're reading this ebook, we want you to keep blogging or consider starting a blog of your own if you don't have one yet. Bloggers writing for the glory of God have not saturated the market, not even close. Author Tony Reinke spoke about this in an interview on the *Home Row* podcast.

Don't be intimidated by all the books. Everybody is publishing it seems. [But] we have this promise from the Lord in Habakkuk. It says, "The earth will be filled with the

⁴ Samuel James, "Why Blogging Still Matters: Why Dedicated Online Writing Spaces Might Be the Cure for Our Social Media Ills," *Letters and Liturgy*, March 22, 2018, <https://letterandliturgy.com/2018/03/22/why-blogging-still-matters/>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (2:14). Just think about that. Think about that overwhelming tsunami of the knowledge of God. We are far from that saturation point. . . . There is so much work to be done.⁶

I agree with Reinke. We have work to do, books and blog posts to write, and the glory of God to spread.

But don't just take our word for it. We asked a few dozen other bloggers to give us their hot take on the future of blogging, because offering hot takes is all we bloggers do. Right? We hope you'll be encouraged. Blogging may have changed, but it's certainly not dead.

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It seems unlikely that blogging will ever be as popular as it was in the late 1990s, but people continue to want to read blog-like content. The form it takes may be different (people, for example, seem to want to turn platforms that were not designed for blogging, such as Instagram, into blogs), but the blog-like intention behind the content persists.

Abby Farson Pratt, abbyfp.com

Although it's easy to think that blogging has already had its heyday, the demand for long-form content, while tempered by market forces, will always be a factor. Search engines like Google assign more weight to long-form content. While those less serious about writing turn to social media to express

⁶ J. A. Medders, "Interview with Tony Reinke," *Home Row: A Podcast with Writers on Writing*, April 11, 2016, <https://jamedders.com/home-row-tony-reinke-writing/>.

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themselves, more opportunity now exists in the blogging arena for those committed to persevering in their craft and doing the hard work of building an audience over time.

Alex Kocman, alexkocman.com

Bloggers are in a unique position to inform people that they wouldn't be able to reach otherwise, and they have the benefit of being able to speak on any topic. If blogs are being used correctly, to build people up in their faith and inform believers for God's glory, then I believe they will always have a place.

Alistair Chalmers, achalmersblog.com

In my opinion, blogging is not dead. Although the word "blogging" might sound outdated, just call it an "article," or a "writing," or even an "essay," and voila! You're back to blogging.

Alisa Childers, alisachilders.com

I think that blogging has shifted. Where we used to sign up to follow blogs, we now follow accounts—Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. With the inundation of information, I wonder if we've become lazy—wanting our social media to vet our posts for us and to make it easier and quicker to decide what we will spend time reading. I don't think blogging has disappeared. There are new blogs every day. I think the way that people view and interact with blogs has shifted. I think it affects the reader and the writer at the same time, and it's a phenomenon that new writers and blog owners will have to deal with. In order to get followings, you will feel the push to promote, promote, promote. That being said, I do wonder as Facebook, Twitter, and

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others all come under fire for their filtering, if more and more people will start to take control over what content they want to see. To be honest, and perhaps this is more cynical, but I see the majority of people complaining but then continuing on with what is easiest.

Brianna Lambert, lookingtotheharvest.com

Not at all! Social media has its place, and I know microblogging is on the rise on those platforms, but I think they serve different purposes. First, there's the issue of space—you simply cannot flesh out a nuanced idea in the narrow confines of social media in the same way as a longer blog post. Second, your reach on social media has become so dependent upon algorithms. We see what the platforms want us to see, and we don't have control over that. Blogging allows us to curate our own sources and see every post by visiting specific sites or using an RSS reader. Blogging occupies a crucial space between social media and books, and we'd be poorer without it.

Cassie Watson, casswatson.com

I think a website is still essential, and including a blog is a helpful way of demonstrating commitment and credibility. But a blog no longer seems to be enough. Podcasts and YouTube are becoming more important platforms because they possess greater attention.

Chase Replogle, chasereplogle.com

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Blogging is still an incredibly important means of communication, especially in the Christian space. Its day is not over, even if it looks a bit different.

Chris Martin, chrismartin.blog

Blogging has a future, though like many mediums in this age, it may need to find new iterations. Even in the short time blogging has already experienced, we've seen a transformation of style and presentation—some that have been helpful and others less so.

Chris Thomas, ploughmansrest.com

Blogging is dead in terms of the early blogs that primarily curate info available elsewhere on the internet. Blogs that did that well are still alive and well but they own the market. Those who own that lane do enough research and reflection to also give a lot of insights into any number of topics. Blogging isn't dead in terms of writers who are able to give thoughtful insights and perspectives on important issues. The newer brand of blogging isn't for people who merely want to air their opinions but for those who possess the time, skill, and energy to produce something unique and helpful. There's always a space for committed authors who want to help others. But like most things, it takes hard work and anyone wanting a fastlane to "success" will likely drop out long before they get enough traction to make a lasting contribution.

Dan DeWitt, theolatte.com

Yes and no. Yes in the sense that the newness and buzz of blogging probably will never be what it once was. I also say no

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because I don't think blogging will die anytime soon. As others have pointed out, the name "blogging" might change. But the format of writing words in article form to post on the internet to promote edification isn't going away soon, so I think blogging has a bright future.

David Qaoud, gospelrelevance.com

Blogging as a thing "everybody does" is gone, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Writers who want to test a message, have unedited freedom in voice and style, hone their craft, and develop a body of work will keep plodding. Although not always the most efficient way of getting a piece to the masses, those who stick around will hopefully make blogging about the value of truthful words and vibrant stories.

Emily Jensen & Laura Wifler, risenmotherhood.com

I work with young writers every week, and I firmly believe blogging is not dead. How blogs are curated and shared has shifted and evolved over the years, but blogs' power and purpose have not. Blogging is still a medium that changes lives and contributes to the kingdom, one post at a time.

Jaquelle Ferris, jaquellecrowe.com

I'm late to the game and can't say for sure. It does seem like things like YouTube are taking over. But, I still read others' blogs, and other people still read mine, so I think there's still a small space for it in the world and in ministry.

Jen Oshman, jenoshman.com

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The original kind of blogging is done and gone. Few remain. More collective groups are writing better content with editors, and that is far superior in my opinion.

Jeremy Writebol, jwritebol.net

Yes and no. Blogging has certainly peaked because, as many people discovered, it's easy to start a blog but hard to maintain interest in writing for one on a regular basis. But blogging is still essential because the low barrier to entry allows undiscovered talent to flourish.

Joe Carter, thegospelcoalition.org/profile/joe-carter

Bloggging is *definitely* dead!!! (Actually, it is a pet peeve of mine to see the headline formula, "Is _____ dead?" The subject in question never actually dies; it just changes. Unless you're talking about VHS or Laserdisc players, then they're dead alright.) Blogging isn't dead, but it has changed due to podcasts, YouTube, and Twitter. A certain type of bloggging has had its day. But there is still room for thoughtful and well-written bloggging.

Kevin Halloran, kevinhalloran.net

I don't believe so. These days, Twitter and Facebook have reduced our attention spans to only be capable of digesting small, bite-sized pieces of information before moving on to the next thing, many times without critically reflecting upon the tweet or post we've just read. Blogging provides a great platform for more rigorously interacting with and explaining ideas in a way that is still open to community and peer feedback without as much distraction. I hope that our society, as time

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goes on, will become disenchanted with shallow information grazing, and come to appreciate this medium more and more. This will be more likely if the blogosphere is already filled with quality, Christ-centered content once the rest of the world comes back here.

Kris Sinclair, krissinclair.com

Nah. Especially since social media is stupid and people are becoming more suspicious of its integrity. I think more people will transition from social media to blogs and email communication.

Kristen Wetherell, kristenwetherell.com

I think the world of blogging has certainly changed. But, I don't think that the medium is going anywhere. I do think that it looks different, and maybe the day of the mega-blog is passing us by. Bloggers are going to have to be satisfied with smaller audiences, with more of a niche following, because there is so much out there that distinguishing yourself as a big blog that everyone checks constantly is getting more and more impossible. This is especially true of Christian blogs because, let's face it, the Christian message is getting less and less appealing as our culture steps further away from Jesus. I write things that people tell me they agree with but are afraid to share because of the inevitable backlash from their friends and family. In that way, Christian bloggers are certainly operating in the land of Jesus's words about what the gospel does: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a

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daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matt 10:34-36).

Melissa Edgington, yourmomhasablog.com

Blogging is not done yet. It has a few and new competitors along the way. As long as the passion is there, we don't have to throw in the towel yet. We just need to find new and exciting ways to be heard.

Nitoy Gonzales, delightinggrace.wordpress.com

No, because it will continue to play a role in supporting the mission of the local church. It may begin to look different, e.g., smaller circles of influence, more local writing, etc. But if we see the role of blogging as falling in line with furthering the mission of the church and building up the saints for the work of ministry, then it will continue to have purpose because it falls in line with God's mission.

Ryan Williams, amicalled.com

Blogging isn't going to go away, but the influence and reach of individual bloggers will probably never be what it was ten years ago. There's so much content out there right now, and ways to curate that content through algorithms, that only people with specific kinds of day jobs can afford to "build" a blogging profile.

Samuel James, letterandliturgy.com

Blogging is not dead because Jesus is not dead. Christians have always looked for ways to share the gospel and to share what

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they are learning about how the gospel shapes our lives. As long as we have the internet and the opportunity to post on the internet, Christian bloggers will write about this best of news. It is why I have blogged for over nine years, and why I plan to be blogging nine years from now.

Tim Counts, hemustbecomegreater.com

No. It's just transformed for some into the micro-blogging of Twitter and Facebook. It's still a kind of blog, just smaller and easier to digest. Long-form blogging isn't dead. When TV was invented, people thought movie theaters would die out. They didn't.

Tom Terry, tomthinking.com

No. It's true that the season of early blogging, in which upstart bloggers could build a platform by quality writing on a large variety of subjects, has come to an end. For a new blog to gain traction today, one needs either an already-established platform or excellent insights that focus on a narrower sliver of topics. But blogging itself—which is really just one form of writing articles, similar to newspaper columns from a hundred years ago from good writers—is still and will remain a relevant form of communication. Social media has grown in importance for blogging, as most readers interact with writers by following social media accounts and not blogs. But this doesn't mean that blogging has died, only that the entry point to these articles has shifted.

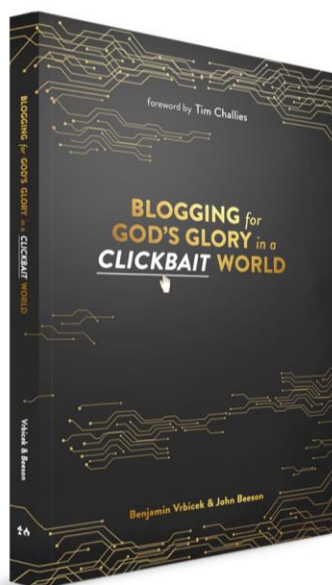
Trevin Wax, thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax

FREE SAMPLE

Blogging for God's Glory in a Clickbait World

The ebook *Is Blogging Dead?* is an excerpt from an appendix in the book *Blogging for God's Glory in a Clickbait World* by Benjamin Vrbicek and John Beeson.

On the following pages, we hope you enjoy the first chapter of the book, included as a sample. You can get both the ebook and paperback editions of *Blogging for God's Glory* at [Amazon](#).



ALIGNING OUR MOTIVATIONS

What Does It Mean to Blog for God's Glory?

Daddy, I painted this for you," says my daughter Izzy. Closing the door behind me and setting my work bag on the table, I bend over to look at the paper she's covered with splotches of primary colors in the shape of people. The paper is still wrinkly from liberally applied paint. She places her artwork in my hand.

"That's wonderful," I say, trying to figure out which way is up and which is down. I've learned from experience not to ask, "What is this?" Instead I say, "Tell me about your picture, sweetie."

"It's a doggie in our backyard, and all of our family is eating pickles," she says.

"Oh, I see. May I hang it on the fridge?"

Izzy smiles wide. Her two front teeth are missing.

We hang her wrinkly artwork on the front of our refrigerator along with all the others.

People tend to mark the stages of life. We save the paystub from our first paychecks, mount diplomas on walls, celebrate a marriage and a first mortgage. I'm in that stage of life where my fridge hides behind artwork from my children. They hand me watercolor paintings when I leave for work. They hand me colored-pencil drawings when I come home from work. They

come to work to hand me colored macaroni glued to construction paper. It's wonderful. I don't want it to end.

What I love most is the innocence of their gifts. My little Izzy doesn't have a clue there is such a place as The British Museum housing works of Rembrandt and Rubens. Izzy doesn't know anything about the Louvre in Paris that displays da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* for ten million visitors each year. All Izzy knows is our fridge: the two sides of the fridge and the front side of the fridge. I guess we could call them three sides our art galleries. The front of our fridge—or the main gallery, if you will—receives nearly ten visits a day, or maybe one hundred visits in the summer when our children enjoy vacation and standing in front of an open fridge. But no one in our family visits the fridge necessarily to see her artwork. That's the child-like innocence Izzy has when we mount her paintings. If an adult were to possess this kind of ignorance of the great works of art, especially an adult given to producing her own art, we'd called it something other than innocence; her ignorance would take on the pejorative, culpable sense of the word. In a child, however, the ignorance is admirable.

The purity of her gifts strikes me too. "Daddy, I painted this *for you*," she says. Izzy paints not for fame or money or from the overflow of competition with her siblings, but *for you*, she says. When I say purity, I mean this kind of singlemindedness, the kind of joy that is captivated by and treasures only the smile of her father. No mixed motives, no duplicity. Only pure, single-minded devotion.

I'm not saying children are innocent and pure and full of rainbows and bubble gum. I believe in original sin because I read of it in the Bible and also because I see it in the mirror and

in the eyes of every one of my young children who—if their little arms were strong enough—might kill me rather than not get their way. Children are not pure and innocent in an absolute sense. As those downstream from our father Adam, we are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners. As David writes, “In sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps 51:5).

Still, I think about my children’s artwork often when I blog. I like to think of God printing out my blog posts and hanging them on his heavenly fridge, which I’m sure is huge and made of stainless steel and has an ice dispenser that always works. I like to think of God stooping over to smile and say, “Tell me about this one, Benjamin.” I like to think God has a big big house with lots and lots of room and a big big fridge where he can host my blog.

Again, I hope these sentiments don’t betray my foolishness or ignorance or even my arrogance. I know my blog posts are only feeble and flimsy collections of words, while J. I. Packer’s book *Knowing God* has gravitas. I know that though the internet keeps a record of all my blog posts, should the Lord tarry, Augustine’s *Confessions* will still be read in AD 3020 while my posts will be long forgotten. I know that as I blog about some suffering that feels weighty to me, Corrie ten Boom’s Holocaust survival story makes my problems appear as they really are: light and momentary. From jails, Bunyan and Bonhoeffer wrote masterpieces. And I, from my dining room table, have the gall to expect my internet-published words should hang in the heavenly gallery?

A Mixed Bag of Motives

It's so difficult to know our own motives because they are always layered and mixed. When the mother of two disciples asked for her sons to sit at the right and left of Jesus in his kingdom (Matt 20:21), I'm inclined to think the request had less to do with wanting to be close to Jesus and more to do with being seen as close to Jesus—a subtle but significant difference. It's not clear whether the two sons of Zebedee saw their own motives. Perhaps, to them, the request seemed less worldly. Jesus, however, saw in their eyes lust for exaltation.

Jesus then asks if they will still follow him even when they must drink his cup and undergo his baptism. The baptism and cup referred to in that passage were the way of suffering, the way of the cross, the way of honoring God when no one applauds and everyone maligns you. Will they still want to be close to Jesus when he must drink the cup of the cross before he wears the crown? There's a bloody baptism before the resurrection.

What about us? Would we still invest two hours, or even ten hours, in a blog post when the post is for God and God alone, the God who is in secret and who sees in secret (Matt 6:6)? Would we work to get a post exactly right if we knew the post would get zero traffic and zero likes? Or, maybe instead of zero traffic, what if the post gets tons of traffic and comments and shares but only by those furious with us? I'd like to think I'd still blog, but I don't know.

In his book *The Prodigal God*, Timothy Keller tells a story about our sometimes-pure and sometimes-selfish motives.¹ A gardener once gave his king his most prized carrot. “My Lord,” said the gardener, “this is the greatest carrot I’ve ever grown or ever will grow. Therefore I want to present it to you as a token of my love and respect for you.”² The king discerned the good in the man’s heart, gladly received the carrot, and rewarded the gardener handsomely. An onlooker took note and gave the king his best horse, thinking if a carrot is thus rewarded, how much more the gift of a beautiful horse. But to the surprise of the horse giver, the king gave him no reward. Perplexed, he inquired why. “That gardener was giving *me* the carrot,” the king said, “but you were giving *yourself* the horse.”³ In other words, it looked like he was honoring the king with his gift, but giving his gift was more like throwing a boomerang; he only threw it so he could catch it. Again, our motives are layered and mixed.

I fear too many times I’ve tricked myself into saying I’m blogging for the glory of the King of kings when I’m blogging for my own glory. I write a post for God, but deep down I’m giving myself a horse. I want God to print my post and hang it on his stainless-steel fridge but only so long as it sits in a more prominent place than the posts of my siblings. I can’t have brothers and sisters ranking higher on the fridge than me.

¹ Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 60–62.

² *Ibid.*, 61.

³ *Ibid.*, 61–62, emphasis original.

Why He Should Increase and Our Blogs Decrease

We need to slow down and back up. I've begged the question. That phrase—to beg the question—used to be understood differently than most understand it today. Now, when a person speaks about begging the question, they most often mean that something said naturally leads to a follow-up question. But historically, to beg the question meant to assume the truth of something by not actually arguing for that truth. For example, if you argue that running is the best exercise for your body because it burns the most calories, you have begged the question. You have assumed that what constitutes the best exercise is the exercise that burns the most calories. But *is* burning the most calories the only way we decide the best exercise? No.

What does this have to do with anything? John and I don't want to beg the question that a blogger *should* aspire to blog for God's glory. We don't want to assume what should be argued. Now, we expect that the audience who might buy this sort of book would probably track well enough with us even if we didn't explicitly argue for this aim of blogging. But still, we don't want to write a book about blogging for God's glory without actually giving time to exploring that this is what we *should* do. So, consider the way Paul begins his letter to the church in Ephesus.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose

of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:3–6, emphasis added)

Those long and lofty sentences span God’s plan from eternity past to eternity future. God’s aim, Paul writes, in all that he has done—blessing Christians with spiritual gifts; orchestrating the plan whereby we might become holy before him; lovingly choosing us to be his children through adoption in Jesus; the whole plan of redemption—is “to the praise of his glorious grace.” Everything about redemption—the beginning, middle, and end—aims to exalt the glory of God’s grace.

Consider also the way Peter puts it. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). In the first movie of the *Toy Story* franchise, Andy signs his name on the bottom of Woody’s foot. He did this to indicate his possession of and his love for Woody. Peter writes that Christians are special to God, as though he signed his name on our feet. God treasures blood-bought Christians. And all this, Peter says, is so that we might become those who “proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

This is similar to what Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount. “Let your light shine before others,” Jesus said. But why? Why should we live in the light of God’s goodness in a dark world? Jesus continues, “so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16). The point of our shining is that others would see that the purity and power and pleasure of following God does not

originate with us but from God, and in seeing God's light in us, they might praise him.

Perhaps one of the most emphatic verses about God's passion for his own glory comes from the prophet Isaiah. He writes,

For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. (Isa 48:9–11)

Don't miss the repetition: *For my name's sake . . . For the sake of my praise . . . For my own sake, for my own sake . . . My glory I will not give to another.* David wrote a similar line in our beloved Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd . . . He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (23:1, 3).

In light of all these passages and the many others like them, I hope when I write about God smiling over my crop of published "carrots," that the predominant desire of my heart is the innocence and purity of a child creating art for Abba. I hope deep down my work and toil is not in order to self-promote or, in Keller's words, give myself a horse. I hope all my striving aims to obey Paul's admonition to work at everything as unto the Lord, not men (Col 3:23). I hope that more than any other motive, whether I eat or drink or blog, I do all for God's glory (1 Cor 10:31).

The Unhelpful Magnetism of Metrics

In all honesty, though, this book is going to disappoint some of you. We're sure of it. So we might as well address it sooner than later.

We're not writing so you'll learn the secrets to "10x-ing" the number of sales on your blog—or "7x-ing" your blog since seven is, after all, the biblical number for completeness. This book won't give you the exact email copy we used to get key influencers to endorse our work. We can't help you monetize the moment, identify your brand niche, grow your readership on trees, or make pigs fly. We're not going to do this because, quite frankly, we don't know how. I wish my email list grew like bamboo, but it doesn't.

Experienced blogger Laura Lundgren shares a similar frustration, specifically how women bloggers tend to describe success. "They all seemed to have a similar storyline: I just started writing, suddenly everyone loved my writing, and then I got a book deal!" Lundgren confesses, "I couldn't figure out how you went from having a blog only your mom read to having a book deal? I still don't know that answer."⁴

I'm not sure if you share my same fascination with the promotional videos in your Instagram feed from authors and entrepreneurs. They cast a spell over me. Often the videos are so bad I find myself unable *not* to watch. And I know how the social media algorithms work: the more I watch, the more I get. But even if you're not sucked in by their power, you've probably seen enough promotional videos to know the standard

⁴ Laura Lundgren, "God Is Doing Small Things through Me," *Little House in the Suburbs*, October 11, 2019, <https://littlehouseinthesuburb.wordpress.com/2019/10/11/god-is-doing-small-things-through-me/>.

trope. Some super successful *authorpreneur*—the ugly portmanteau of author and entrepreneur—stands in some impressive office or on the patio of his mansion or in front of his exotic car waving his book at the camera while talking about how, despite his humble upbringing, he’s now managed to generate streams of passive income that flow like the River Jordan at flood stage. Great for him. I’m glad he learned how to quit the 9–5, become his own boss, and stick it to the man. However, I can’t help you live your life always up and to the right because I don’t know how to do so.

Don’t confuse my inability with the lack of desire, though. Metrics of growth have a magnetism that tugs on my heart as much as the next blogger. I want to see more pageviews this year than last year, more unique visitors, more conversions, and more shares on social media. I want to write guest posts that go viral and have readers grab my lead magnets like catnip. I want a stock-photo life.

Sure, my website has grown. I have more readers this year than the last, as was the case in each of the previous five years. The growth, however, has not been 10x, meaning 100 subscribers this year, 1,000 the next, and 10,000 the year after. My growth has been more like 1.5x with 100 subscribers this year, 150 the next, 225 the following year. After six years of blogging regularly, I only have three or four articles that generate their own Google traffic and, even then, the traffic is only a trickle.

In other words, my blog has grown the way my children do. You look at them from one day to the next and nothing changes. Nothing even changes across the fall and winter. Then spring and summer race by. Here comes fall again, and I send my children off to school on picture day, and I happen to look at their

pictures from the previous year and my, oh my, how time flew and they grew without me even noticing.

The Power to Blog When Blogging Is Slogging

John and I think we know enough about blogging to help you achieve this kind of growth, the kind that is imperceptible when measured across days and most months but not so when measured in years. And if you follow the advice in this book and growth comes quicker, that's great too.

Yet more than achieving numerical growth, we want you to have the character to blog faithfully whether you see any growth at all. We want you to maintain the motivation when blogging feels more like slogging, to borrow the word Tim Challies uses to describe the grind.⁵

But where will this kind of motivation come from?

Pastor and author Zack Eswine raises this question in his book *The Imperfect Pastor*.⁶ Some people conceive of pastoral ministry in a local church as doing large things famously and fast, he writes several times. It's the Western way to see our gospel kingdoms grow like the tiny mustard seed that becomes a tree for all the birds of the air. But, he argues, what if pastoral ministry is more about doing thankless deeds for a long period of time among those mostly overlooked by the world?

Most cities have a church or a few churches that have grown rapidly, just as there are plenty of examples of authors with blogs that have grown rapidly. But the ordinary church and the

⁵ For example, Tim Challies, "Slogging Blogging," *Challies.com*, July 5, 2017, <https://www.challies.com/articles/slogging-blogging/>.

⁶ Zack Eswine, *The Imperfect Pastor: Discovering Joy in Our Limitations through a Daily Apprenticeship with Jesus* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015).

ordinary blog still serve God. John and I believe the only way Christian bloggers will have the stamina to do the kind of slogging that most bloggers do each week—the kind of blogging that honors God and serves a small number of mostly overlooked readers who rarely say thank you—is when we blog for God’s glory, not our own.

But here’s the best thing. Blogging for God’s glory, in fact, doing anything for God’s glory, is actually the way we get the most joy in life. Jonathan Edwards argued for this at length in his long essay called *A Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*. If the title is a mouthful, the book is more so. Edwards argues that, spoiler alert, God created the world for his own glory. To use the language of Paul from the end of Romans 11, we could say the end for which God created the world was that we might know that from *him* and through *him* and to *him* are all things and to *him* be glory forever. The universe exists to display God’s glory. But Edwards also argues that making much of God’s glory is what brings us the most joy. God created us to be most satisfied when we make the most of him. Or to say it the way John Piper often does, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.” God’s aim of exalting the glory of his grace and our highest happiness are not two contradictory passions but one united passion. The theologians who drafted the Westminster Shorter Catechism wrote something similar. The first question in the catechism famously asks, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer, they say, is “to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

The stamina to blog when blogging feels like slogging comes when we find our highest joy in blogging the excellencies of him who called us into his marvelous light.

What Does It Mean to Blog for God's Glory?

Now comes perhaps the hardest question of all: What does it mean to blog for God's glory? Specifically, what does it mean to blog for God's glory in a world that loves clickbait, those posts with seductive titles and content pumped full of high-fructose corn syrup?

Definitions are difficult but essential. I remember arguing with family members about the definition of a "Christian t-shirt." At the time, my younger sister attended a Christian high school. Each Friday students were allowed to ditch their uniforms for Christian t-shirts. Not meaning to be silly or difficult, I wondered what a Christian t-shirt was. What about certain yards of cotton cut and screen pressed with ink makes the shirt Christian?

The options abound. Is a Christian t-shirt a shirt with a Bible verse? Or maybe a Christian t-shirt is one of those not-so-clever shirts that tweaks a popular brand logo and slogan toward something related to Christianity, like "Jesus is my *LIFE SAVIOR*." Perhaps a Christian t-shirt is a shirt made by Christians? Or perhaps it's a t-shirt worn by a Christian, and thus the unclean becomes clean by contact, as when Jesus touched lepers and made them clean? Jesus did say whoever believes in him will do "greater works than these" (John 14:22). Maybe a Christian t-shirt is one made with integrity and excellence, you know, something sourced from the finest fair-trade, free-range cotton? Not to belabor the point, but perhaps a Christian t-shirt is a shirt that has repented of its sins, put its faith in Christ, and asked God to come into its threads. That's how people become Christians—sort of, anyway.

You might be able to think of other silly or serious possibilities. It turned out, according to the administration at my sister's school, a Christian t-shirt was one with a Christian music band image on it. Of course I wanted to ask what makes a band a Christian band but, for the sake of the relationship, I let it go.

Again, definitions are essential. They helped my sister know which shirts were allowed to be worn on Fridays and which were not. Let me propose the definition of blogging for God's glory that we'll use for the rest of the book. It's a two-pronged answer. Blogging for God's glory means . . .

first, to have our motivations aligned with God's, and

second, to pursue excellence in the craft, including theological precision, beautiful prose, visual appeal, and the edification of readers, all drawing from the best industry practices.

I've talked about the first part of the definition already. To blog for God's glory means to have our motivation aligned with his, namely, to blog for the praise of his glorious grace. He must increase; we must decrease.

As for the second part of the definition, the pursuit of excellence in the craft, we'll need the rest of the book to explore what this means. So, keep going with us. Two pastors wrote a book about blogging for God's glory, and you won't believe what happened next.

[end of chapter 1 and free sample]

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Benjamin Vrbicek and his wife Brooke have six children. Benjamin enjoys reading, wrestling with his children, dating his wife, eating at Chipotle, and riding his bicycle in the early hours of the morning. He earned a degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering from the University of Missouri and a masters of divinity from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He is a teaching pastor at Community Evangelical Free Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He is coauthor of [*More People to Love*](#), [*Enduring Grace*](#), [*Blogging for God's Glory in a Clickbait World*](#), and author of [*Don't Just Send a Resume*](#) and [*Struggle Against Porn*](#). He blogs regularly at [Fan and Flame](#) and has also written for The Gospel Coalition, Desiring God, For The Church, 9Marks, and Christianity Today.

John Beeson and his wife Angel have two children. John enjoys reading, Thai and Sonoran Mexican food, and watching or playing just about any sport. He received his undergraduate degree at Gordon College and his masters of divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. He is a co-lead pastor at New Life Bible Fellowship in Tucson, Arizona. He blogs at [thebeehive.live](#) and has written for The Gospel Coalition, For The Church, and Preach It Teach It. John's first book is [*Blogging for God's Glory in a Clickbait World*](#), and he is looking forward to his second, coming out in 2021, a book co-written with his wife called *Substitute Identities*.