



**#RULES  
\_OF\_  
ENGAGEMENT**

**PARISH  
DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# AN INVITATION

You have likely already been part of many different conversations concerning social media: What kinds of information should social media platforms be able to glean from users? Should employers be able to hold employees accountable for what they post on personal accounts? What laws should be in place to keep vulnerable persons safe from online predators? What responsibility do platforms have for stopping the dissemination of false information?

These larger societal conversations are important and ongoing. But the discussion you are now being invited to participate in will not focus on any of these questions. Rather it will give you the chance to reflect on your own use of social media as a follower of Christ. Many of us were taught as youth to do a regular “examination of conscience” that touched upon the various areas of our life—how we treated our siblings and parents; whether we went to church on Sunday; our behavior on the playground. We never dreamed that someday we would be asked to do an examination of our behavior on social media. We would not have even known what the term meant! But now the average American is spending two hours and six minutes a day on social media and has six to eight different social media accounts. We are living a sizeable part of our lives online and so here, too, we need to look at our actions through the eyes of faith. How are we showing up on social media? Is it how we want to show up?

Using the book *#Rules\_of\_Engagement: 8 Christian Habits for Being Good and Doing Good Online* as a launching point, you are being invited to join in a very different sort of “examination” suited for the time in which we now live, and you won’t be alone. You’ll be with fellow Christians who are wrestling with the omnipresence of social media in their lives as well—friends who are also trying to figure out: How do I align my social media use with my Christian values? There are no easy answers and much remains unclear, but in the company of others, we hope to find a way forward.

Because there is so much to talk about, the group reflection will be spread over three sessions. You are asked to prepare for each session by reading and completing the exercises found within the following pages of the book:

- Session One: Introduction through Chapter 3 (pp. ix-34)
- Session Two: Chapter 4 through Chapter 6 (pp. 35-64)
- Session Three: Chapter 7 through Epilogue (pp. 65-94)

When talking about something as contentious as social media, it’s possible for group conversations to become lively, even heated. It doesn’t mean that anything has gone wrong. People naturally have a lot of passion about topics that impact their lives! But, as a way of ensuring the conversation remains constructive, everyone participating will be asked to abide by the general discussion guidelines provided by Columbia’s Center for Teaching and Learning: [learninginnovation.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ITF-H1-discussionguide-17h5iob.pdf](https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ITF-H1-discussionguide-17h5iob.pdf). At the start of the first session, your group facilitator will introduce a couple of additional strategies for keeping the conversation moving while giving everyone a chance to talk.

Thank you for being willing to be part of these important conversation. Social media is clearly here to stay. Together let’s figure out how to engage it in healthy and holy ways.



ANN M. GARRIDO

# SESSION ONE

## Preparatory Reading: Introduction through Chapter 3 (pp. ix–34)

### Discussion Questions:

#### ***Questions Related to Participants' Personal Experience***

1. On pg. 6, Ann M. Garrido lists some of the effects researchers have associated with social media usage. Have you experienced any of these in your own family? Perhaps in your own life? Which ones concern you most?
2. Share the Personal Social Media Purpose Statement you arrived at on p. 10. What did you discover when you compared your purpose statement with your actual posts/tweets? Did they seem aligned?
3. In Chapters 2 and 3, Garrido makes a distinction between assessing news stories for accuracy vs. assessing news stories for bias. How do you understand this distinction and why is it important? What tips have you found especially helpful for determining the accuracy of a story?
4. In your assessment of your own feed, were you able to find examples of stories that were inaccurate / from sources without journalistic credibility? Does this surprise you? (p. 24)
5. In your reflection of your own reading patterns, do you notice that you tend to read from sources that lean in a particular direction? (p. 33) What do you do to try to widen your perspective while still valuing accuracy of reporting?

# SESSION TWO

## Preparatory Reading: Chapter 4 through Chapter 6 (pp. 35–64)

### Discussion Questions:

#### ***Questions Related to Participants' Personal Experience***

1. It is commonly observed that people treat others online in a much harsher fashion than they treat others in person. Garrido offers a couple of hypotheses as to why this might be, but what do you think? Do you see yourself treating people online differently than you might in person? To what do you attribute that difference?
2. Do you tend to engage in conversations on social media or do you tend to be more of a “scroller” (reading, but not participating in conversations)? If you tend not to engage, why? If you do try to engage, what have you experienced as the pros and cons of trying to have actual conversation on social media?
3. Can you describe a situation in which somebody posted something that really offended you or you were negatively impacted? Did this change the way that you thought of the other person and their motivations?
4. Can you describe a situation in which you posted something that others took offense to? When they let you know, how did you react to their negative response? Did it change the way that you thought of the other person or their motivations? How do your answers here compare to your answers in Question #3? What conclusions would you draw from the comparison?
5. What did you discover in doing the exercise “Where Am I On the Outrage-O-Meter” (p. 62–63)? What have you found to be the best strategies for managing your experience of anger/offense on social media?

# SESSION THREE

## Preparatory Reading: Chapter 7 through Epilogue (pp. 65–94)

### Discussion Questions:

#### **Questions Related to Participants' Personal Experience**

1. Do you have any family practices around the presence of devices in the home? At the dinner table? Before bed? On a scale of 1-10, how well are they working for you/your family?
2. What did you discover in completing the exercise “Where Is This Relationship Headed?” (pp. 71-73) What did you notice about the number of “strong-tie” and “weak-tie” relationships in your social media circles? Did you choose to cull any? On what grounds?
3. What did you discover in completing the exercise “How Much Time Do I Spend? How Much Time Do I Want to Spend?” (pp. 84-85) Are you content with the amount of time you spend on social media? Did you try to do anything different in time spent on social media leading up to this session? How did it work?
4. Garrido notes that 5-10% of social media users show signs of serious addiction-like behavior related, but that 40% of social media users admit to “feeling addicted” some or most of the time. (p. 80) Do you identify within that group? Is it something that you worry about within your family?

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**NOTE:** As part of closing prayer for the evening, you will be invited to sign the “#Rules\_of\_Engagement Pledge” on pp. 98-99 of the book. Use the following QR code to take you to the appropriate site.

