

New Rules for the Digital Age

I want you to say this with me out loud: The rules have changed.

Say it again: the rules have changed.

One more time, out loud: The rules have changed. Now more than ever, the church has a mission field that looks different from all previous ones. The digital mission field is every tribe, every tongue and every nation. This mission field requires everyone working together to reach it. And the potential of what God can do is great.

Ten or 20 years ago, no one could have dreamed that the apps and websites we have used to post pictures of family, to show places we have traveled, and to display food we have eaten would become the same vehicle to see souls saved, disciplined, and sent. We could never have guessed that Instagram, Facebook and TikTok would be ways that the gospel would go forth.

Obviously, I cannot predict the future, but I can tell you what I believe is coming by looking back in time. And I want to do that by introducing you to a couple of people who have unique roles in what God is doing digitally. They are faithful, anointed and average people who took a leap of faith and believed that God would do a miracle with their simple yes. Just as the boy in John 6 gave up his lunch of fish and bread and saw the multitudes fed, these two have given up their lives and have seen the multitudes fed the Word of God.

Engaging the Next Generation

In 2021, I had the opportunity of training a few pastors from a church in Dallas called Gateway that is led by Pastor Robert Morris. One of the pastors I trained in TikTok and digital missions was a man in his 60s named Lamar Slay. He had been in ministry for many years, loved God and had a desire to reach

and preach to youth.

He expressed that he would have liked to go into schools to preach or hold youth conferences, but he felt his age limited him a little bit. His humility and eagerness to sit through a training session gave him a voice to this generation. He could never have guessed what God would do as he stepped into the digital mission space.

Lamar came up to me excitedly after we did our training and said, "Brian, I'm going to launch a TikTok page. I'm going to call it 'The Father Guy,' and I'm going to share with kids the different things a father would."

I thought, *Wow. That's cool.* I was not sure how or if this page would grow, but his willingness and simple yes excited my heart. He started his page that day by sharing prayers and truths from the Bible, and he captured the heart of a father by giving his wisdom and love to the next generation. He shot his videos at his home, many times in front of his chicken coop. I thought it was awesome. There was no hype production or fancy cameras—just a genuine heart and a love for God. And that is the very thing this generation needs.

Over the next few weeks and months, I got messages about his videos going viral and his page quickly growing to 40,000 followers. But the statement that touched my heart the most came in a text he sent me one day.

"Brian, I want to thank you," the text said. "I don't get invited too often to preach to youth anymore because of my age, and you have made me cool again. You've made me cool with my grandkids because they now follow me. You've given me a voice to youth again."

Let me tell you again: the rules have changed. Lamar's story demonstrates what I believe God is continuing to do. Evangelism—the proclamation of the gospel—looks different in every generation. It is our job to know what it looks like in

our day and age. You can see that age does not matter, cool clothes do not matter, a bright personality does not matter, fancy cars do not matter nor does a big house matter. What matters is the love of Jesus flowing from your life into that camera onto someone's screen.

Think about the kid who is on the verge of suicide, the kid who has been abused, the kid who is in the middle of his or her parents' divorce, the kid who is strung out on drugs and the kid who feels depressed and alone. They do not care about any of those material things that I just listed. What matters is that God's hand is touching their life through your willingness to obey.

Equipping and Empowering Women

Let me give you a story of someone else who has been faithful to the Lord without caring about the stage or platform. She has mothered her children and stood by her husband. She has lived the Bible quietly and faithfully, prioritizing and allowing God to form in her more than what He would ever do *through her*. This person is my wife.

Marcela truly does not like being in the spotlight. For over seven years, she has stood by my side as the greatest wife and most phenomenal mother. She has championed me in the best of times and the hardest of times. When I pivoted to preaching digitally, although she did not understand it, she supported it. Little did she know that she, too, would be entering the digital mission space shortly after I did.

In September of 2020, God placed a burden on Marcela's heart to equip and empower women. This burden came from a journey that had started in 2019 to see women of God rise up. After gathering together weekly with women in our One Voice community in which they prayed together, read the Word together and grew in relationship together, her desire to see this replicated became evident.

After hearing God speak, and with many confirmations and many dreams, the Lord had my wife's yes. Day after day she would tell me of her desire to equip and empower moms and daughters to help them share their faith and pray. She wanted to see a women's movement raised up in America and the nations—one that would not be fueled by feminism but by faithfulness. She wanted to see a women's movement that would be centered around Jesus and prayer.

A month earlier we had moved from Los Angeles to Dallas, Texas, in obedience to what God had told us. After a month of unpacking and settling in, Marcela and a spiritual daughter of ours, Lauren Bedola, were upstairs discussing what this women's movement would look like and how it would grow. This conversation led to what The Well, which is what my wife's movement is called, would look like as they digitally gathered women to pray.

What if women gathered digitally as the women in the Bible did physically at the well? And what if they prayed instead of just discussing random things?

Marcela and Lauren said we should base it on John 4 and Luke 1. They wanted to empower women to have true relationships like Mary and Elizabeth did in Luke 1, and they wanted to take what Jesus did for them and tell everybody like the woman at the well did in John 4. It would not matter what background women came from, as all were welcome to pray and encounter Jesus.

For about 30 minutes they went back and forth with various names for their Instagram account. I even threw in a few of my suggestions that were quickly thrown out. That is when they decided to call it @womenwellgathering. This name was key, because it described the movement (and also there were not many other names available on Instagram).

When they asked me what I thought, I said, "I'm not sure how

this name will go, but if that's what God is saying, then do it."

"Let's build an Instagram page, go live and post content for women," Marcela said. As lovingly as I could, I told my wife that I did not think anyone grew anymore from Instagram, but to go for it if she wanted to.

I was very wrong. In one night, @womenwellgathering organically grew to over 7,000 followers. I could not believe it. I thought it was a glitch, and told my wife there was no way it could be real.

But it was real. Women from around the world began to gather every day to pray on Instagram lives, and from Oct. 1, 2020, until now, the live videos are continuing. These women have been equipped and empowered to lead where God has called them. The testimonies are wild, including salvations, healings and women receiving their callings. The Well has been a digital secret weapon God has used to reenlist one of the greatest armies that heaven has: moms, daughters and women of all walks of life.

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