Session 04.02 - Social Media Content Creation

Lab: Hope Lab 2: Social Media Content Creation
Date: Wednesday, 7 October 2026, 16:30–18:00
Room: Teuta
Facilitator: Matthias Boehning
Expert contributor: Deborah van der Bij, Christian content creator
Note-taker: Matthias Boehning
Approximate number of participants: 20

1. Purpose of today's session

Explore how Christian content creation can share the gospel, encourage discipleship and build community. Identify practical approaches for ministries, while considering authenticity, sustainable working patterns and the responsible use of influence.

2. Starting point

Session 1 explored gaming communities as places for intentional, relational mission. Session 2 applied this perspective to social media: people encounter content, form relationships and seek guidance within digital spaces.

Deborah introduced her *Faith Talks* podcast, lifestyle vlogs and short-form videos. Her central challenge was:

Is your ministry present where the people you have been called to reach are actually present?

She framed content creation as stewardship of a God-given opportunity. She reported approximately 268,000 YouTube subscribers and 78,000 Instagram followers at the time of the session.

3. Key insights

- **Social media can extend traditional ministry.** It offers opportunities to reach people internationally, support existing ministries and invite audiences into physical gatherings.
- **Authenticity and vulnerability create connection.** Honest discussion of struggles and questions can meet needs that people do not feel able to express in their churches or communities.

- **Faith can be communicated through everyday life.** Bible reading, church attendance and personal reflection woven into lifestyle content can introduce Jesus to people who would not search for explicitly Christian material.
- **Storytelling makes faith approachable.** Personal testimony, biblical narratives, humour and shared interests provide different entry points.
- **Online audiences are people, not merely metrics.** One person's growth in faith can be a meaningful outcome, even when overall reach remains modest.
- **Healthy content encourages personal discipleship.** Deborah sees viewers beginning their own Bible reading and relationship with Jesus as more significant than dependence on her next video.
- **Public reach brings responsibility.** Creators need humility, accountability and awareness of the limits of their knowledge and role.

4. Challenges identified

- Social media can reinforce excessive consumption, comparison, superficial presentation and unhealthy dependence.
- Sensitive topics—including lust, negative thoughts and struggles with faith—may remain insufficiently discussed in Christian communities.
- Ministries can struggle to communicate clearly when addressing very different audiences or pursuing several goals.
- Filming, editing, administration and audience engagement require time and can blur boundaries between work and rest.
- Negative comments, unwanted personal attention and threatening messages place emotional and practical burdens on creators.
- A large following may confer perceived pastoral or theological authority beyond a creator's training.
- Political organisations may seek access to creators' audiences and influence.
- Pressure for growth can encourage discouragement, self-promotion or artificial methods such as buying followers.
- Participants raised concerns about algorithms. The session did not establish whether religious content is systematically disadvantaged.

5. Ideas and possible solutions

- **Clarify the audience and purpose first:** whom should the content reach, what should it communicate and what response should it encourage?
- **Choose a suitable storytelling format:** personal testimony, street interviews, devotionals, narrated footage, animation or content built around a shared interest.

- **Use a recognisable focus:** Deborah recommended consistent themes and relevant hashtags to help audiences and platforms understand the content.
- **Adapt and test material:** repurpose existing content across platforms and learn from differences in response.
- **Start with available equipment:** a phone and a clear message can be sufficient to begin.
- **Build sustainable routines:** Deborah described roughly three filming days, one editing day and one administration day, while acknowledging that boundaries remain difficult.
- **Create accountability:** trusted peers, group conversations and regular meetings can reduce isolation and help creators recognise unhealthy directions.
- **Maintain personal and professional boundaries:** distinguish testimony from claims of expertise and encourage audiences towards Jesus and wider Christian community.
- **Combine practical experimentation with prayer:** Deborah encouraged ministries to bring their frustrations and creative decisions to God.

Deborah described the platforms from her own experience:

Platform	Approach discussed
YouTube	Longer storytelling, podcasts, documentaries and sustained community
TikTok	Short, immediate and often less polished videos
Instagram	Short-form content and ongoing personal engagement
Facebook	An audience she associated with more polished content and active comment discussions

These were practical observations, rather than universal rules or independently verified platform guidance.

6. Examples, projects and useful resources

- **Organisation/project:** Deborah's *Faith Talks*, lifestyle vlogs and short-form videos
  What can be learned: Honest discussion of difficult topics, everyday demonstrations of faith and personal storytelling can encourage viewers towards

their own relationship with God. Comments can also become spaces for prayer and mutual support.

- **Organisation/project:** The Way
  What can be learned: Street interviews can invite genuine opinions about Christianity. A video reporting 5.8 million views retained negative responses; Deborah interpreted this openness as a source of credibility.
- **Organisation/project:** Ben's storytelling content
  What can be learned: A testimony connected with the lost sheep passage in Luke 15 illustrated the power of biblical storytelling. A simple, humorous presentation added personality.
- **Organisation/project:** Ballers in God
  What can be learned: Football provides a shared-interest setting for Christian witness and conversation.
- **Organisation/project:** Fruitful Work and Christians for Impact
  What can be learned: Partnerships with creators can introduce audiences to Christian career initiatives and encourage participation in physical events.
- **Organisation/project:** JC2033 — presented by Olivier from Switzerland
  What can be learned: A global initiative needs a clear explanation of its purpose. Deborah suggested a short narrated or animated video introducing the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus' resurrection and the opportunity for locally shaped celebrations.
- **Organisation/project:** Compass Europe — question from Pavel, Bulgaria
  What can be learned: Concerns about distribution should prompt reflection on audience, focus and consistency. Deborah questioned the assumption that Christian content is generally suppressed but did not provide evidence settling it.
- **Organisation/project:** Participant's weekly Bible-story reading and Q&A
  What can be learned: About 40 simple weekly broadcasts supported an isolated woman who later joined a church and was baptised after moving city. The participant had obtained permission from the book's author.
- **Organisation/project:** Church devotionals and Polish media projects described by participants
  What can be learned: Regular devotionals, short evangelistic messages and varied programmes can reach people beyond their original audience. Production and editing demands need realistic planning.

7. Opportunities for European collaboration

- Match Christian creators with ministries whose purposes and audiences align.
- Connect experienced leaders' stories and knowledge with younger communicators' production skills.
- Share examples, workflows and lessons across countries and languages.

- Develop peer support and accountability networks for Christian creators.
- Build pathways from online encounters to local churches, events and ongoing discipleship.
- Explore shared campaigns while allowing national and cultural adaptation.

8. Decisions and points of agreement

- Deborah advised against purchasing fake followers; the questioner expressed agreement.
- Several participants affirmed that reaching and supporting one person can justify sustained effort.
- Deborah described an existing accountability group involving fellow creators and experienced ministry contributors.

9. Open questions or different perspectives

- How can ministries serve leaders and younger audiences through appropriately differentiated content?
- How should audience reach be assessed alongside discipleship, relationships and spiritual growth?
- What practical steps help online audiences connect with local Christian community?
- What should accountability involve when a creator begins addressing theology or politics beyond their expertise?
- How can creators recognise the reputational effects of attending and publicising political events, even when intending neutrality?
- What boundaries and support help creators manage hostility, unwanted attention and constant audience demands?
- How should ministries distinguish legitimate spending on production or promotion from purchasing fake followers?
- Which creator–ministry partnership models are sustainable and mutually beneficial?

Matthias raised the risk of religious influence becoming linked to political advocacy. Deborah distinguished her role from that of a pastor, described peer accountability and explained her personal decision to avoid political commentary outside her competence. Her account of attending a Downing Street event illustrated the complexity of these boundaries.

10. Three key takeaways

1. **Be present and authentic:** communicate faith through honest stories and the interests people already engage with.
2. **Create with purpose:** understand the audience, choose suitable formats and encourage personal discipleship.
3. **Steward influence responsibly:** value people over metrics and sustain humility, accountability and healthy boundaries.

11. Message to the wider HOPE community

As a HOPE Lab, we believe that social media offers opportunities to share Jesus, encourage faith and connect people with Christian community. We encourage ministries and creators to communicate honestly, collaborate thoughtfully and steward their influence with humility and accountability. Behind every view is a person, and even one life strengthened in faith matters.

12. Handover to the next session

The third session was announced with **Chris Goswami**, addressing artificial intelligence and its opportunities and challenges for the church.
Suggested connections arising from this session:

- Apply questions of audience, purpose, authenticity and accountability to AI-supported communication.
- Explore how AI might assist production while retaining human judgement and responsibility.
- Consider how technology can strengthen relationships and discipleship.

Additional follow-up questions suggested by the Plaud summary, rather than discussed conclusions:

- What specific tools and workflows help creators manage production and comments?
- What warning signs should prompt intervention by an accountability group?
- What are the first practical steps in a creator–ministry partnership?
- How should legitimate paid promotion fit within an ethical ministry strategy?