



The ultimate guide to
SHARE YOUR MESSAGE
with the world—ONLINE!

BY ERIC ELDER & FRIENDS

LET'S GET TECHNICAL! The ultimate guide to
SHARE YOUR MESSAGE with the world—ONLINE!

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Special thanks to my friends who chose to "get technical" as we explored these ideas together. I appreciate your love, friendship, and support!

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Note from Eric:

The technologies and websites mentioned in this book are accurate as of the date of publication but are ever-changing. However, the concepts and principles remain the same! Hopefully you'll enjoy this glimpse into the technical world of "today" even if, in a few years, this book is relegated to a quaint remembrance of "the way things were." In any case, enjoy!

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Preface: Let's Get Technical!

I'd like to share with you how I've been able to reach the world online with my message... which is really God's message: God loves you and has a purpose for your life.

I came to Christ on February 9th, 1987, and ever since, I've wanted to tell the world about Him! I did what I could while working a secular job, sharing my message with anyone who would listen.

Then on February 14th, 1995, I felt God calling me to quit my secular job and go into full-time work for Him. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know where to start.

But I *did* know how to create a website. I had been working in the Advanced Technology Group of a Fortune 10 corporation for nine years, researching everything from virtual reality to speech recognition, from tablets you could write on to maps that could tell you the nearest Chinese restaurant. Basically, everything a smart phone can do today!

It was a dream job for me, meeting researchers in their labs around the country at places like Apple, IBM, NASA, and MIT. I would come back from those visits and share what I learned with my colleagues to see how we might use these upcoming technologies in our business.

My final project before I went into full-time ministry was to create my company's first website using the brand-new (at the time) HTML markup language.

It was exciting stuff, and my visionary eyes lit up with possibilities!

That's when God called me into full-time ministry, to use all these gifts and talents that I had developed for Him.

As I told a reporter from *USA Today*, when asked why I quit my corporate job to go into an internet ministry, I said:

“I have a message I want to get out, and the Internet was made for delivering messages!”

I've been doing this now for over 30 years, and if *you* have a message *you* want to get out to the world, I'd love to help!

I've built more than 100 websites. I've created mailing lists that have grown from 1,000 to 40,000 subscribers. I've built a social media presence to reach 5,000 people. I've created multiple podcasts and YouTube channels, audiobooks, and online classes.

I love using all the tools and technologies at our disposal to reach as many people as possible with the message that God has put on my heart.

And I'd love to share how I did it with you. By the end of each chapter, you'll have practical steps and tools to get you started on each of these things as well. I hope by the end you'll have the confidence to move forward, knowing that you *really can* do this!

Ready to start?!? Let's get technical! (Cue Olivia Newton-John's dance music and let's go!)

1. How to build a website

Your website is your home base. You can put anything on a website that you want to share... like your message, audio, videos, and links to your books or products or courses. It's your one-stop for everything related to *you*.

Choose a domain name

The first step in building a website is choosing your domain name. A domain is like your own kingdom. It's your address where people can find you.

If you choose a free or low-cost website builder, you can pick a domain name that is attached to the company you use, such, as Wordpress or GoDaddy or Blogspot. If so, then your domain could look like this:

- ericelder.wordpress.com
- ericelder.godaddy.com
- ericelder.blogspot.com

Then you can tell everyone they can find you at your domain name, and they'll be able to read all about you!

For just a little more money, though, and not much at that, you can get your own custom address that's shorter just about you and easy to remember, such as these:

- ericelder.com
- theranch.org
- inspiringbooks.com

You can get these by registering the domain with a domain registration company, such as:

- web.com
- godaddy.com
- bluehost.com

There are *thousands* of accredited domain registrars around the world, each with their own pricing and plans. I pay from \$15-25 a year for each domain name I've registered, so the price is relatively inexpensive.

Finding the right domain name can be an art! Many are taken, but many are still available! If you live in the US, you can buy a domain that ends with .COM (most common for companies and easy to remember) or .ORG (for non-profit organizations). You can also buy domains with other extensions like .NET, .ON-LINE, .SPACE or .ME.

Country Codes can also be attached to domain names, like amazon.co.uk for Amazon in the United Kingdom, or amazon.it for Amazon in Italy.

If your preferred domain name is taken, you can add an adjective to make it more meaningful. For instance, for my online bookstore, books.com was taken, so I added an adjective to make it inspiringbooks.com.

Even better! I created that website to cover the range of books that I've written, as they all have some element of inspiration.

Go ahead and take a look! Go to web.com for instance and search for a domain you'd like. If it's taken, they'll suggest others. All the registrars use the same database of names, so you should get similar results at each one. But before you actually buy a domain name, let's look at what you'll do with it next.

By the way, when trying to decide between domains, you can check to see which term you'd like is the most

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popular as far as of what people are *already* searching for. Just go to trends.google.com and type in a word or phrase. There you can compare different words to see which words or phrases have historically had more people searching for them! I also use these trends when trying to think of names for books or podcasts or courses.

Choose a hosting company

A hosting company is where your website will live. It can be a different company than where you register your domain. Most registrars can *also* host your website for you for free or for a fee, but you can host your website anywhere. For instance, at one company, I pay about \$10 a month for hosting my websites. Prices can range from \$2-50 a month, depending on who is hosting your website and what you want to do with it.

I currently use [web.com](https://www.web.com) for both my domain registrations and my hosting, although their pricing is changing, as companies often do, so it all really depends on your needs and your budget.

Choose how you'll create your website

Many hosting companies have their own tools to help you create your websites, and most also offer the ability to use WordPress to create your site, a popular website creation software. I use WordPress for most of my sites, but only because I'm familiar with it and many people use it, not necessarily because it's the best or easiest. You may want to use your hosting company's tools instead! But for demonstration, I'll show you

how I use WordPress here. The same principles apply to most website creation tools.

Choose your theme

First, choose your theme. A theme is the “look and feel” of your website, whether bright and bold or simple and elegant. You can usually change your theme at anytime, but pick something initially that catches your attention and start creating.

Create a page

Add a new page to your website by clicking on “Pages,” then “Add New.” Add a title for the page at the top, then start typing your text and adding other content like pictures, videos, and links.

Create another page!

Next, create another page or two to get a feel for how it’s done and how it looks. View the pages in a browser and see how they look and feel.

Arrange your menus

Once you’ve created a few pages, you’ll see that they will probably appear automatically on the “Menu” of your website. Some themes automatically add every page to the menus while other themes only add pages that you individually specify to be on the menu.

Menu items can be rearranged by clicking on “Appearance,” then “Menus.” Menus can also be nested one inside another, for submenus that display when the main menu item is selected.

To rearrange menu items, you can drag and drop them in the order you’d like, or nest them within other menu items. My flagship website at theranch.org has

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hundreds of pages, posts, images, and videos. I've nested each set of these pages within just a few main menu options. I simply designate every page as either a option or a "Child" menu option underneath a "Parent" menu.

There might also be several menus on your site: one along the top, one along the bottom, or one along the side. You can choose which items appear on each menu.

Add a link

If you want to insert a link into the text on your page, highlight that portion of text and click "insert link" or click the icon that looks like a chain link.

Then type in or copy and paste the link that you'd like the person to reach when they click on it. I'll often go to a webpage in my browser and copy and paste the entire link from the address bar, including the https:// prefix, such as <https://theranch.org>. that page's link from the address bar. If you're new to shortcuts for copying and pasting, you can highlight some text and hold down the "Command" and "C" keys on a Mac or the "Control" and "C" keys on Windows to copy anything. Then to paste, hold down the "Command" and "V" keys on a Mac or the "Control" and "V" keys on Windows.

Once you paste in the link, the words on your page will now be clickable. To test your link, view your page by selecting the "View" option and click the link!

Add an image

To add an image, put your cursor at the location where you want the image to display. Click "Insert

Image” or the “+” icon to upload an image from your computer or choose an image from one you’ve already uploaded.

After choosing your image, you can click on the image to add more features, like adding a link to the image if someone clicks on it, or add a caption below it, or change the dimensions to be small, medium, large, or customized on your page.

Add a video

You can add a video the same way you add an image. Put your cursor where you want to insert the image, then upload a video or paste in a link to a video that already exists on another website, such as YouTube. I like this second option if my storage space is limited on my website hosting company. Instead of uploading the video to my website, I’ll upload it to my YouTube channel (covered in a later chapter), then I’ll link to that video from my web page.

For instance, on WordPress I can choose “Insert Video from Link” or “Insert Video from YouTube,” then copy and paste the link in that field when prompted. The video will appear as if it’s embedded on my web page, even though it’s actually stored and streaming from YouTube.

Add a post

If you want to write a series of articles that are sorted on your website by the date you posted them or by a category you choose for them, you can create a “Post” instead of a “Page.”

Choose “Posts,” then “Add New Post.” Enter a title for your post, then write your content, including links

or images or videos just as for a page. But now your post will appear in a list of posts, sorted by date or category or however you'd like. Posts can also be sent to others automatically on your mailing list if you choose to set up this option.

Add a sign-up form

Most themes include a “Contact Form.” To insert one onto a page, choose “Insert Contact Form” and start from the default that is presented to you. Your website visitors can fill out this form and submit it to you.

Some forms have an option to “require” an answer by checking a box next to that question, such as requiring a visitor’s email address and first name. Other fields may be optional, such as a phone number. You can choose whether a field is required or optional.

You can also add short text boxes for answers, longer-form text boxes for people to write lengthier responses, radio buttons (which lets people choose one and only one from several options), or check boxes (which lets people choose as many options as they’d like from several options).

Include your email address on the form where you want these responses to be sent (it doesn’t have to be displayed to the visitor or to spammers who just search the web looking for email addresses). This is one of the beauties of using forms if you don’t want to share your email address publicly. When a visitor fills out your form and submits it, their responses will be sent directly to your email.

Add a payment button

If you're selling something or asking for donations, you can also create a button that visitors can use to send you money (covered in a later chapter on payment systems).

You can add a payment link or HTML code that your payment system will provide to you on any of your pages or menus. I have a page on ericelder.com that gives people several options to make a donation.

You can see it at ericelder.com/donate.

View your site on multiple devices

Once you've added several pages with your content, see how it all looks on multiple devices: desktops, laptops, phones, or tablets. Some themes automatically adapt to different sizes of displays and orientations (try turning your phone or tablet sideways to see how it may change the way your website displays).

If you like what you see, great! If not, move things around on your page or try a different theme or two to see how they compare.

It can take time to adjust everything, but this is where you can make it shine! Get it just the way you like, or at least GETMO (Good Enough To Move On), and click "Publish."

Submit to search engines

Some web hosting companies will automatically submit your site to search engines once it's published so that it appears whenever someone types something that exists on your website that's of interest to them.

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If your site is not listed automatically on search engines, you can go to your favorite search engines where you want your site to be listed and submit the main page yourself. For instance, to submit a site to Google, go to:

<https://search.google.com/search-console/>

The search engine will then “crawl” through your entire site, indexing all of the text, links, images, videos, and so on. Search engines will do this type of crawling on a regular basis to see if anything has been added, changed, or removed. It may be done daily, weekly or periodically depending on the amount of information on your site and how frequently it changes.

Once your site has been submitted and crawled, do a search on that search engine for something that you know is on your website and see if it displays. It may take time before your site appears high on the results page. But once you see your site is listed, you’re done! Everything is now set for people to start finding you and your message on your website!

2. How to build a mailing list

A website is great for people to come and visit, but a mailing list is a way to take your message to the people!

In this chapter, I'll talk about mailing lists, specifically about a list of email addresses of those you want to reach with your message. There's a time and place for physical mailing lists, but this chapter is about *electronic* mailing lists.

I used to send out a paper newsletter every three months to several hundred friends, family, and supporters. In that newsletter, I included a message of encouragement for their faith, updates about my ministry and life, and an appeal for funding for our ministry.

Each newsletter generated about \$300 in donations. But guess what it cost for all the paper, envelopes, ink, and stamps to send out those quarterly mailings? About \$300!

As email began to grow in popularity (remember, the internet was in its infancy when I began my internet ministry), I switched over completely to sending email newsletters instead.

The problem with sending dozens or hundreds of emails, though, is that you can only send to about 40 email addresses at a time. Some email service providers block your emails if you try to send more than that simultaneously. If the number is under 40, you can use the “Carbon Copy” (“CC”) field and in-

clude everyone's email addresses there. Or you can use the "Blind Carbon Copy" ("BCC") field to hide each person's email address from everyone else's on the list. (The terms CC and BCC were from the days when people would place a sheet of physical carbon paper between two or more sheets of paper in a typewriter to create an exact copy of the original while typing out their letters.)

If you want to send 40 or 50 or 100 or more emails at a time (depending on your email provider limits), you'll want to use a mailing list company that is dedicated to sending out emails in bulk.

Here are a few mailing list services I've used over the years:

- Mailchimp.com
- ConstantContact.com
- aWeber.com
- CampaignMonitor.com

Many of these companies let you start for free while your mailing list is (relatively) small. (I say relatively because anytime you can reach anyone with your message, that's great!) For instance, Mailchimp's free plan includes up to 500 contacts and 1,000 sends per month, with a daily send limit of 500.

At the time of this writing, I'm using Campaign Monitor and paying \$190/month, at their discounted non-profit rate, to send an email four times a month to 17,000 subscribers, which adds up to nearly 70,000 emails a month (or nearly 800,000 per year!).

I have a friend who is currently using aWeber and pays \$112/month to reach 13,000 subscribers, five days a week, which is 260,000 emails a month (or 3.12 million per year!).

So you can start for free, but you can plan on paying more over time as your mailing list grows. Hopefully, the benefit to you and/or your readers will outweigh the cost, so don't be afraid of the cost... growth is good!

You'll notice I'm reaching way more people now than when I was doing a physical mailing, and much more frequently, for less than the cost of sending my paper newsletter by paper mail—and now almost half of my subscribers are in countries all over the world!

Gutenberg would have been jealous of us!

Building your list

I started my list first by sending paper newsletters to as many of my friends, family, and others who I thought might be interested in hearing about what I was doing. I gave them the option to let me know if they *didn't* want to be on my list. If I didn't hear back from them, I kept sending them my newsletter.

People don't usually mind being contacted once. But they do appreciate permission to be contacted repeatedly.

When I switched over to email, I did the same thing. I continued to send my updates to those who were already on my paper mailing list, and from time to time added new people I thought might be interested in hearing from me, too.

I also added a sign-up form on my website for people who visited after finding it from a search engine or a friend. As more people started signing up for updates, I grew my list to about 1,200 subscribers.

A major boost came when I partnered with a man I met at an Internet Evangelism Conference, which was

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hosted by the Billy Graham Training Center. I sat by this man one day at lunch at the conference, and he told me he had an online ministry of sending out a daily Christian quotation, five days a week, to about 1,000 people. When he heard I had some tech skills, he asked if I might help him, and I did!

His list grew exponentially as his readers loved getting these short, daily, “seeds of inspiration” for their Christian walk. My new friend, Greg Potzer, started advertising on Google for \$100 a month, and his signups shot up dramatically every time he did so. People were searching for the type of content he was offering, and they subscribed when they found it.

At one point, Greg added a Sunday sermon from guest pastors to his weekly offerings. I was also writing and sending weekly messages by that time to my list when he decided to feature my messages *every* week in his mailings.

Now, instead of reaching a few thousand of my own people, I was reaching tens of thousands of people through his list! Over time, we merged our lists and grew it to about 40,000 subscribers. We were shooting for 100,000 as our next goal, but about that time, social media began to rise, and email subscriptions slowed.

We began adding these new ways to connect with people, but the shift also fragmented our approach. Still, we have found that email is the most reliable way to reach those who really want our content. By the way, natural attrition eats away at any mailing list. About 20% of subscribers fall off of mailing lists automatically each year because of changing email addresses, changing jobs, or technical glitches or acciden-

tal spam triggers. So any growth has to outpace attrition to keep a list growing over time. It's hard work! But this is reality, as it is in anything worth doing.

We've since gone back to having our own mailing lists for our different purposes and ministries, but we had a much larger start than we would have had on our own. There may be some partnering you can do to grow your list!

For our lists, we've mostly collected addresses organically, sending to people we personally know or letting them sign up on their own, whether through a search engine or on a paper sign-up sheet when we give talks or hand out business cards.

You can also buy mailing lists for your target demographic, which could be good for certain uses, but we simply haven't done it for economic reasons as much as any other. Apart from occasional advertising on Google or on other mailing lists, we have stuck to word of mouth or search engines. You might find a better approach for your lists!

Now, let's get technical!

Now, let's look at how to set up your mailing list. I'll use my current company, Campaign Monitor, as an example.

If you already have a list of email addresses to start with, you can add them one by one or upload the entire list all at once.

For me, I go to campaignmonitor.com, login, then go to "Lists & Subscribers," then "Create a List." I'll give the list a name, such as "Let's Get Technical," then I'll create a list only of those people who are interested in a class like this.

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Then I select “Continue to Import,” and I can start typing in the subscribers, one by one such as:

- john@xyz.com
- talitha@abc.org
- spencer@lmn.net

If I want to include more information with each subscriber, I can use a comma between those pieces of information, like this:

- john@xyz.com, John Cooper, Louisville, KY
- talitha@abc.org, Talitha Abbed, Cairo, Egypt
- spencer@lmn.net, Spencer Stout, London, UK

When finished, I hit “Next” and I’m prompted to name each “field” that I’ve just included using those commas, and I name them “email,” “full name,” “city” or “state/country.” You can add any fields and name them as you’d like.

Then I click “Save and Continue” and I’ve got my list started!

I usually enter some test emails before adding real subscriber addresses, then I send myself some tests messages.

To create a message email, I go to “Campaigns” and then “Create a Campaign.” I give my campaign a name, such as “Book Announcement.” From there, I select “Design Email” to choose a layout or theme for my email. I pick one and start writing my content and adding links and pictures of videos, just as I do when creating a webpage.

Then I send my message to my test mailing list, which you’ll remember I called “Let’s Get Technical.”

Once my test looks good, I know I’m ready!

I add my real subscribers, either one subscriber at a time, or I can choose to upload a list, which is a simple

text file or spreadsheet containing several dozen or hundreds or thousands of subscribers and their information, separated by commas or by cells in a spreadsheet.

Now, each time I want to send a message to that group of subscribers, I just create a new “Campaign,” write my heading and content, and send it to the “Let’s Get Technical” list that I’ve created!

Add a sign-up form to your website

For every mailing list you create, your mailing list company will give you a link or some HTML code that you can add to your website to make it easy for website visitors to sign up. Copy and paste this link or code and that’ll make it easy for people to get on your list by themselves!

If you have multiple lists, your mailing list company will give you a link or code where people can choose to sign up for multiple lists as well. Also, having a mailing list company and these links allows people to easily change or remove themselves from your list by clicking a link, rather than having to bother you with all of those requests.

So start with CC or BCC if you want, then grow to a free or eventually paid mailing list service over time. Then have fun reaching more and more people with your message!

3. How to build a social media presence

“Facebook saved my life.” That’s what my friend said to me as we were talking a few months ago on the anniversary of his son’s death. My friend was down and spiraling further downward.

So he posted about it on Facebook. He told me that as the reactions and comments started pouring in, he felt strengthened again. We were at a worship service that night, and he had a huge smile on his face as he told me the story. “I mean it, Facebook literally saved my life today.”

I told him I agreed. I got on Facebook in the beginning at the request of my daughter who was going off to college, and she thought it would be a good way for me to keep up with her life there. It was great seeing her posts and pictures, then I began uploading my own.

I discovered friends I hadn’t kept up with in years. And I learned much more about people that I thought I knew well, but only on Facebook did I see some of their hurts and pains and particular proclivities that I had never seen in person!

I began sharing parts of my life, too, that some of them had never seen before either: including my faith.

When I think about building up a social media presence, I think first and foremost about building up my community... those people I’m walking through and want to walk through life with. For me, it’s not a plat-

form to sell things, or to convince people of things, but to live life together.

When my wife Lana passed away after 23 years of marriage, there were days I wanted to reach out to someone, but I didn't know who to call. I didn't want to bother anyone in particular. And I didn't want to necessarily even have a conversation about it. I just wanted to express what was on my heart. Doing so felt cathartic.

As I mentally scanned through a list of my friends that I could call, I didn't have it in me to do it. I needed someone to "be there" on the other end of the line, someone who could share my burden.

Those are the times I would turn to Facebook. I would share some of my deep emotions, whether "I'm having a bad day" or "I'm missing her" or "I keep crying, and I know it's supposed to be good for healing, but still it hurts."

Then, like my friend who had lost his son, people began sharing their comments and reactions. "Same," they'd say, for they had lost a friend in Lana, too. "We're here for you." "We're with you." "You're not alone in this."

Just typing those words again now brings tears to my eyes, just as it did then.

What a blessing to have a community to share our burdens, our grief, our loneliness, our pain. What a gift. What a way to lift our spirits. What a way to "be the body of Christ" for one another.

Years later, when I traveled to Italy, I shared my pictures. I shared my videos. I shared my stories. I went live on Facebook from various locations. And people followed me all along my way! "We'll never get to

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Italy,” they said, “so it’s nice to see it through your eyes. We feel like we’re there with you.”

People might complain about social media. But for me, it really is *social* media. It’s a big part of my social life! I check it daily to see what people are up to and to share what’s up with me. I live and work at home, so it’s nice for me to have another way to connect with people through the week. It’s life-giving to me! And, when I share my own ups and downs and how God is walking with me through them, it can be life-giving to others, too.

Now, when I make new friends, we connect on social media. When I’m out speaking, I’ll share my contact information. When I write a book, or do a podcast, or send out a message to thousands, I’ll include a few links where I can stay in touch with people who want to stay in touch with me.

For me, it’s not marketing to people, although it can have that effect. It’s not selling something to someone, although it can sometimes turn into that. Social media is a community. Where friendship happen. And on the deepest level, where love takes place.

Real-life evangelism involves walking through life together with others, celebrating joys and sharing hardships, and sometimes “one beggar showing another beggar where they found food.”

There are lots of ways to build a social media presence! There are lots of tools and techniques to help you sell your product or service or idea to others. But for me, there’s nothing like an organic approach. It fits my style, my personality, my heart, and my own needs for social and spiritual encouragement.

With that in mind, let's get technical! Here's how I've built my own social media presence... through love!

Be real

Rick Warren has said that people clap for your successes, but they connect with your failures. It can be easy to share only your joys and high points on social media. But when you share your struggles, too, you can connect even deeper.

I shared one day on Facebook about something God was teaching me about divorce. I had never been divorced, but I watched several of my friends go through them. I thought I was being kind when I told one of them that I was still praying that she and her husband would be reconciled. She replied, "You can pray that, Eric, but what I really need is prayer that I would be able to love him, even if we never do reconcile." That gave me a whole different perspective, and a whole new sensitivity to the topic.

I shared this insight on Facebook, and one of my childhood friends was so touched, he asked if we could get together. We went out for dinner at a local restaurant where I began to share with him, at his request, more stories about how God had been working in my life. That one Facebook post opened the door to a much larger conversation with a friend I hadn't connected with in years.

And to underscore Rick Warren's point, at the end of this conversation, it wasn't the high points that my friend was touched by as much as when I told him about one of my own failings in my own family life.

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He said he had the same thing happen, and it was his best takeaway from our hours long conversation.

I've found the same as I've addressed other topics, inviting input and feedback along the way. Not trying to just "sell" my idea or product, but to be real about my life and what's working and not working for me, and they share about their lives.

Rather than creating a *highlight* reel of your life, *be real* with your life!

Post pictures (not just text or links)

Facebook (and other social media platforms) give extra credit to photos... photos of food, people, scenery... anything.

A picture is not only worth a thousand words, but it makes for a higher ranking on social media algorithms, too. If you just post text, it can get buried and skipped over. If you just post links, it doesn't get as high a rating from your friends or from the algorithms. To get the most bang for the buck, the most attention, post a picture. Tag someone in it. Add a location. Add a hashtag, like #howtowriteabook! By adding these extra details, your post will get extra credit with the algorithms. The platform will reward you by putting your post in front of more people.

I've learned that if I include a link anywhere in my post, that link is automatically turned into my "picture" that accompanies the post. While that's good because it adds a picture, it doesn't actually work as well as if I had shared a picture directly. Why? Because a link takes people off of the social media site, and because of that, the algorithm gives you a lower rank-

ing, showing it to fewer people. They want people to stay on their site!

So even when the *main* goal of my post is to share a link, I try to upload a picture first, maybe even a picture of whatever I'm sharing. By doing this, the picture is highlighted, rather than the link. Sometimes I'll include the link in my post, but other times I'll include the link in the comments. My post gets more views, and the link is still there for those who want to click it.

Upload videos directly (not just links to videos)

If you want to share a video, upload it directly to each platform, not just a link to the video on some other platform. This is for the same reason as when posting links... the platform wants you to stay on their platform. So I usually try to upload a video directly to Facebook or Instagram or LinkedIn or TikTok if I can. If I can't and really do want people to watch the whole thing on YouTube, I'll upload a picture from the video first, or a short clip from the video, then include the link to the longer version. This seems to get more traction for my post than if I had just shared the link to the video. Plus, people can grasp quickly what I'm sharing, rather than having to decide if they want to click over to watch the video when they don't even know what it's about.

Tell stories

One way to tell people about what's important to you is to tell them what you want them to do, like "Go watch *The Chosen!*" But there's another way, and that's through storytelling. Here's one of my most popular

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posts, which struck me as odd at the time, but which somehow resonated with people.

"I was taking care of my daughter's snail this month while she was out of town. I thought it was doing fine until it stopped moving. For several days. After ten days, I was going to pull it's bubble maker and tell her I was sorry, I had killed it. But the night before, I was was watching an episode of The Chosen where Jesus prayed for a little girl who had died and brought her back to life. I thought it was unlikely to happen in this case, but I really felt bad for this little snail. I prayed that God would raise it back to life. The next morning, I saw the little snail, clinging to the top of the bubble maker, with fresh bubbles flowing over it! It was alive! I couldn't believe it. I fell to my knees and praised God, not knowing if this was my prayers, or if the snail had just been resting those previous days. But what I do know is I had been inspired to pray, and I prayed. And now the snail's alive. Praise God!"

That one story got more reactions than most of my posts for the whole year. People commented about how it gave them faith to pray for situations in their own lives. Some people asked me to turn it into a children's book. Some people told me about their experiences watching *The Chosen*. And the more people that commented and reacted, the more frequently the post was displayed to others who then also commented and reacted.

How did a show impact you? Share it! How did a message touch you? Share it! How did a Bible passage speak to you this morning? Share it! Not just a link to a show or a message or a Bible passage (which you can still post, possibly along with a picture related to it). If

it spoke to you, then it might speak to others. Sometimes it's okay to just share a simple "thought for the day." But many times, people are wanting to hear how that thought impacted you.

Ask questions

One of my friends gets interactions on almost *every* post he makes. I couldn't figure out why until I realized he was often asking others what *they* thought about an idea. He would share his thoughts, but then he would ask for their input... a key to being "social"!

One of the questions I've posted online has been simple but still surprising every time: "How can I pray for you today?" I don't do this to win social media points. But I do this when I really have some time and want to pray for those who are needing prayer in their lives.

I was at an all-day prayer retreat one day, and our group was praying about everything that came to our minds. We then decided to go to social media and ask people what was on *their* minds and offered to pray for them as well. We had set aside the whole day to pray, so we were glad for the responses. And people starting pouring out their prayer requests. The more people who posted, the more people saw the post, and those people then added their prayers. The prayers came in all day long, and we prayed all day long.

This wasn't a trick. It was a natural outgrowth of what we were already doing and wanted to keep doing for others, just as we knew we would want others to do for us. Can the golden rule be as simple as that? It can!

Like and respond to others

For me, social media is not a one way street, although others sometimes use it that way. Being social means liking and commenting on other's posts at time, too. Get to know people. Care for people. Love people! What a great way to meet new people and enjoy lifetime friendships! If you use it this way, I believe everyone will be happier, including the algorithms. :)

Create Reels, #hashtags, and change profile and background pix

Trends tend to rise and fall. Reels, short videos, adding music, adding hashtags can all help or detract, depending on the platform and period in history.

Take time to experiment, see what others are doing, give it a shot for yourself!

By the way, whenever I change my profile or background picture, social media seems to think that's a big deal. So if I have a really big announcement, and a picture of me or an event I want to highlight, I feature it on my profile or background picture.

Adding features like @feature or @highlight or @followers can also boost a post, but like all boosts, if you boost all the time, people don't know what you think is really important. Sometimes save the big stuff for the big stuff!

The moral of the story

Social media can be a horrible, ugly place. But it can also be a place of life, of life lived well and in community.

There's a story about a traveler who was about to move from one village to another. As he walked on the road between the two, he met an old man.

The traveler asked the man what the people were like in the village ahead. The old man asked, "What were the people like where you came from?"

The traveler said, "They were awful, rude people. I had no friends; people were trying to cheat me and insult me at every turn. I was miserable."

The old man said, "I'm sorry, the people in this village are just like those people. You will not be happy here, either." The traveler nodded and continued on.

Later that day, another traveler approached the same old man and asked, "What kinds of people live in this village? I'm leaving my old village, and I'm looking for a new home."

The old man asked, "What were the people like where you came from?"

The traveler said, "They were wonderful people. I had many good friends, business was strong, and it was a most hospitable village. I wish I didn't have to leave."

The old man said, "You'll find the people just like that here, too."

What's the moral of the story as it relates to social media? I'll let you work that one out for yourself. :)

Remember: "If you don't make time for friends, you won't have any."

4. How to create a podcast

When I talk about podcasting, I'm talking about using audio or video to get your message to as many people as possible. The beauty of this method of sharing your message is that there are so many ways to do it!

One of the easiest ways is to go live on Facebook and share whatever's on your heart for as long as you'd like. Your Facebook friends and family will be alerted that you're going live, and they can click and watch you as you talk in real time, or you can save your video for 30 days or permanently so they can go back and watch anytime.

These options weren't available back when the iPod first came out and people were still listening to recorded radio-style programs on their music players. Even though the iPod has since come and gone, the word "podcasting" is still used to share your message via audio. And now video. And now live!

Here are a few ways you can use podcasts.

Where are your people?

Your first goal is to determine where your people are currently listening to their music and messages. If they're on Spotify, go for Spotify. If they're on YouTube, go for YouTube. If they're on Apple podcasts, go to Apple podcasts. Or if they're on Facebook, as I said earlier, go to Facebook!

Spotify has a nice way to upload podcasts that they will then distribute to all the other podcasting services, such as Apple or Amazon.

One of the podcasts I upload to Spotify this way is called “Using Your Gifts with Eric Elder and Friends.” In this video podcast, I use zoom to interview my friends who are using their gifts in cool ways for the kingdom. I record and edit the videos (covered in later chapters), then upload the podcast to Spotify.

You can find it by searching for “Eric Elder.” I have another podcast called “Harry Potter: Lessons in Friendship,” where I talk to two other hosts about each of the Harry Potter books and what makes the friendships in the book work, what breaks them, and how all of us can make our friendships better. Again, this is a zoom recording, which I later edit and upload. Just search for “Eric Elder and Harry Potter” to find it.

A current limitation on Spotify’s distribution is that while I can upload and offer video podcasts on Spotify, they only distribute the audio portion to the other services. Alternately, I could upload all of my videos directly to Apple or Amazon or any of the other podcasting platforms, including YouTube.

Recording the podcast

For these interview-style podcasts, I don’t have special equipment. I simply use the microphone that’s built into my laptop, then I hit “record” on zoom to save the video to my computer.

I edit the video by trimming off the front and back ends of the podcast at least, and sometimes trim out some of the video within the podcast. Sometimes I’ll

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add some intro and outro music and a graphic at the beginning or end of each episode using a few tools that I've downloaded for free, such as Audacity for audio or iMovie or DaVinci Resolve Final Cut. More about those in later chapters!

I also sometimes simply record a video or audio on my phone, using the free camera app or the audio recording app. You could buy a USB microphone to plug into your system, but that's usually more than I need for these interviews.

Now, for another podcast I do, usually a series that I upload to YouTube, it's just me at a microphone sitting by my piano, which also has a microphone. Since I'm often singing and playing the piano on these episodes, these external microphones help to create a very listenable experience.

With all of my podcasts, I usually run the audio portions through a website at auphonic.com to level out the volume throughout my entire podcast, whether it's variations in people's voices, or between music and speaking. This is an extra touch that's not necessary, but I've found it can bring everything up to an even level so listeners don't have to turn their volume up and down throughout the podcast to hear better.

Defining your podcast

It's easy to start a podcast. It's also easy to stop a podcast after only seven or eight or fifteen episodes because it can turn out to be more work to think of content, create, edit, and upload it! Knowing this going in it's best to have not only an idea of what you'd like to talk about, but to plan out at least 30 topics on that subject that you'd like to discuss over 30 episodes.

If you can make it to 30, you'll have better luck continuing beyond that!

Your podcast could be interviews, monologues, a Bible study, a book discussion, or whatever message you're wanting to get out. But up front, make a list of not only the subject but 30 topics you'd like to discuss.

Go ahead and brainstorm them just like you were brainstorming the chapters of a book. Each topic will become an episode. If you shoot for 30, you could go for 50 or 100 or 300. But if you shoot for five or ten, you might give up after only a handful.

You can also think in terms of seasons or years. Maybe you have 10-12 episodes one season, and 10-12 the next, and 10-12 the next. This can help you break down the process into manageable chunks, but still give you enough momentum to keep going after a season break.

Recording your podcast

Here's a sample of how I record using Zoom.

Zoom is a free download that allows you to have an online video meeting with one or more people. You could also use Teams or Skype to do the same.

When I open Zoom, I have an option to record the meeting using the "Record" button. If it doesn't appear on your screen, you might have to click the three dots to open an extended menu. Click Record, then click either "onto this computer" or "onto the cloud." I use "onto this computer" as my cloud storage is limited. (Your situation may be the reverse, as you have more storage in the cloud!)

Tip for musicians: One option I use when recording music at my piano is to turn on "original sound for

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musicians.” This uses a better quality audio tool to preserve all the music that I’m playing. For normal meetings, I don’t turn on this option, as the normal mode filters out background noise, making it better for normal speech.

When my meeting is over, I simply turn off the recording by pressing the square “Stop” button. Or I simply end the meeting and the recording stops as well. Important: keep Zoom open after stopping the recording or ending the meeting so the recording has time to save to your computer or the cloud. This may take from a few seconds to up to a minute or two.

Now you can access your recording and upload it as is, or do some trimming or editing using the tools I mentioned in the chapter on editing audio and video. That’s also where you can spice things up and add intro and outro music, graphics, text, and more to your podcast.

Uploading your podcast

Here’s how I upload my podcast to Spotify.

First, I create a free account on creators.spotify.com.

Next, I create a podcast, adding a title, description, and some cover art.

Then I create an episode, adding an episode title, description, and other information, such as a season number and episode number. Perhaps start with season “1” and have 10-12 episodes in that season, then the next year call it season “2” and have 10-12 episodes in that season. For my current podcast, I have planned out 25 episodes for the year, so I call it season 1 and number each episode accordingly.

Finally, upload the audio or video file that you've created and edited. You'll have a chance to preview your podcast before publishing it live. Choose a publication date, whether it's the day you upload it or a date in the past that it first aired elsewhere or a date in the future when you want it to become available. I have a friend who does a daily devotional. He can queue up several podcasts to be released each day, whether it's going to be days, weeks, or months in the future.

Hit save and watch your podcast go live when you've chosen it to go live!

Distributing your podcast

Pick the platforms where you want to send your podcast. You can choose from the options Spotify partners with such as Apple Podcasts or Amazon Podcasts. You'll want a title and description for your podcast, plus keywords and episode titles. Numbering your podcasts in the title isn't necessary as the number will appear automatically next to each podcast.

Monetizing your podcast

Oftentimes you can just offer your podcast for free to anyone who wants to listen. But there are some options to monetize your podcast, such as charging a subscription fee, such as \$2 or \$7 or \$10 a month.

As a podcast listener, I have never paid to listen to a podcast, so I wasn't too surprised when I didn't have any takers when I tried offer a podcast for a monthly fee. But just because I don't pay and I couldn't find takers to pay doesn't mean you can't (or at least try!).

You can also make money by offering a "tip jar" for listeners to help you out, buy you a coffee, or buy

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some merch that goes with your podcast. Spotify and others offer this kind of “donation” option as well as a flat-rate fee.

A friend of mine makes money on his podcasts by finding sponsors. He has certain products he likes to use, so he contacts them directly and asks if they'd like to sponsor an episode or series. He's been able to make \$500 a month on sponsorships, and he gives the product or company a plug somewhere within his podcast, whether at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end.

And finally, if your podcast gains popularity, the platform itself might start sending you a portion of their listener fees or ad revenue. I have a friend whose YouTube podcast has become so popular, she makes enough income to support missions projects globally.

The truth is, someone's going to pay for you to do your podcast, whether it's you or others. So if you can find a balance that's a blessing to everyone, that's a win-win all around!

Sharing your link with the world!

Once your podcast is set up and running, share it with the world!

Send texts, emails, make social media posts, using the seven-touch rule to let people know about your show at least seven times in possibly seven different ways. (My advertising and teaching friends tell me it usually takes seven attempts to get someone to take action on something you're promoting or teaching.)

You can also post your podcast link on your website or on your business cards (which is covered in a later chapter).

Next, we'll talk about one of the most specific and popular ways to post your messages online: through a YouTube channel.

5. How to create a YouTube channel

Why create a YouTube channel? For starters, YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world, only after Google (which also happens to own YouTube).

More so, YouTube is the go-to platform for all things video. If you have a message to share, and you can turn it into a video, try YouTube!

How to create a "channel"

YouTube lets anyone upload videos for free. If you've ever watched a video on YouTube, you're just a step away from creating your own YouTube channel. YouTube uses your existing email address to track the videos you watch, so that becomes your YouTube account by default.

To create a channel, simply open YouTube in your browser or in the YouTube app, then click on your account profile—usually the picture of you or an icon of a default person in the upper right of your browser.

Next click “Create a channel.”

You can now begin customizing your channel by adding a display name, a handle (which begins with the @ sign, such as @ericelder), a description, and links to your website or sites. For me, my YouTube channel is at youtube.com/@ericelder.

Upload a video

Next, upload a video! Click the “Create” button or the + sign in the upper right corner, then click “Upload videos.” You can drag and drop or select a video or several videos from your device.

While your video is uploading, you can choose a title, a description, and set various settings, such as adding the video to a particular playlist (create a new playlist by clicking “new playlist” if you don’t have one) and add the video to it. You can also choose whether you want the video to be “public,” “unlisted,” “private,” or schedule a date when it will go public.

Once your video has uploaded, you can edit the video using YouTube’s editing tool, such as trimming off the beginning, end, or even segments within the video.

Once posted, you can copy and paste the link to your video and share it with others!

The more videos you add, the more likely your YouTube channel will grow, both organically (because you have more content), and algorithmically (because YouTube rewards users who upload lots of videos by increasing their rank and showing them to more people).

Invite others to watch

YouTube rewards creators who promote their channels and gets lots and lots of subscribers. They make their money by keeping people watching on their platform! So if you get more people watching your channel, it makes YouTube very, very happy! And you get your message out to more people! That’s a win-win!

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There are incentives for every level you hit in terms of subscribers.

For instance, when you get 1,000 subscribers, you can begin to share in the profits that YouTube makes on ads that are displayed on your videos (before 1,000 subscribers, YouTube keeps all the profits). So there's a big incentive to get to 1,000. As of today, I have 692 subscribers after several few years of posting over 200 videos. So don't be discouraged if you don't hit those levels right away. Then again, do all you can to bring people to your site and you could reach those levels much more quickly than me.

The main thing for me is to get my message out to as many people as can benefit from it. So by creating and uploading videos, I trust that God will use those messages to reach the people He wants to reach. Can God do it without your help? Sure! But can He also use you and your wisdom and the wisdom of others to reach others? Of course. So I still try to do all I can to reach people, and I trust God to do all I can't.

"Subscribe and hit the bell!"

It can feel awkward promoting yourself or your own channel. But sometimes people just need to know what to do to help you reach more people. So when telling others about your channel, encourage them also to "subscribe and hit the bell." When someone subscribes to your channel, your videos will appear on their YouTube homepage. When someone hits the bell, that will send them a notification whenever you post new videos, rather than simply appearing on their homepage.

Creating playlists and podcasts

You can group your videos together by creating a playlist or a podcast. They're really similar things, just known by different terms.

Click “Create,” then “New playlist.” Give your playlist a name and add some videos to it that you’ve uploaded!

In my case, I have a playlist for all the videos in this book from when I taught it as a zoom class. The playlist is called “Let’s Get Technical.” I also have a playlist called “Using Your Gifts” where I’ve put all my video interviews that I’ve done with friends who are using their gifts in cool ways. I also have a playlist of music videos I’ve created featuring piano music of my own or my sister’s, Marilyn Byrnes, called “Mesmerizing Music Videos.”

To create a podcast, simply choose “Create,” then “New podcast,” and start adding videos to your podcast. I’ve created a podcast of my videos based on the Harry Potter books called “Harry Potter: Lessons in Friendship.”

Tips for growing your channel

Here are a few tips from my friends and the developers at Youtube to grow your channel:

- Post on a regular schedule, such as the same time and same day of the week or month.
- Create both shorts (under 60 second clips) and longer segments from your podcast for highlights, then include links to the full episodes in the description. My “shorts” sometimes get hundreds of views while my full-length videos (20-60 minutes) some-

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times get under a hundred views. The short clips help get my message out, but also help to promote my longer clips if people are interested.

- Add music to your video. Music helps the listener and can also attract people who like the music you play. Note that if you use music that you don't own, it can send royalties to the owner of the music every time someone watches your podcast... but you can't monetize that episode for yourself.

- Customize your "chicklet," that initial graphic that people see when deciding which video to watch. Attention-grabbing text or headlines or a carefully selected shot from your podcast can help with those clicks. When uploading your podcast, you can also upload a custom graphic, or you can let YouTube choose a still image from your video. If you don't like the one YouTube chooses, you can ask it to generate a couple more, and choose the one you like best.

- For titles, use verbiage with an "itch" that needs to be scratched. Humans are curious and gravitate towards questions, controversy, or something interesting or unresolved so they can try to resolve it.

- Go live with your podcast, either directly through YouTube's live features or from within Zoom if doing interviews. Going live notifies people that something is happening right now if they'll click on it, so it can bring more viewers who are curious.

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We live in a crazy age that we can reach people in countries all over the world instantaneously. Make use of it! For God and for good.

6. How to create an audiobook

If you've written a book, it's a fairly simple next step to create an audio version for those who like to listen to your content. And many people do! It's nice to be able to listen to a book while driving, working out, doing yard work, or other times when picking up a book is either inconvenient or impossible.

Historically, when selling my own books, about 80% of my readers have bought paperbacks, 15% eBooks, and 5% audiobooks. But those numbers are changing as more and more people are listening.

And if you don't have an audiobook, it's like leaving money on the table... and missing out on reaching people who might benefit from your content. So here's your guide to creating an audiobook.

By the way, I've included a BONUS chapter at the end of this book to use AI—artificial intelligence—to help you create your audiobook in your own voice or someone else's. So if after reading this chapter, you'd like a little assistance, check out the BONUS chapter at the end!

Where to put your audiobooks?

I've put my audiobooks on several platforms:

- I put them on Amazon, using ACX.com (owned by Amazon), which feeds content to listeners who use Audible (also owned by Amazon).
- I put them on Spotify, using findawayvoices.com (owned by Spotify) to upload the audiobooks and

distribute them to several other platforms, including ACX if you want.

- I put them on my own website (owned by me!) at inspiringbooks.com. So when I upload the audio files to my own website, I can offer it for sale directly to my readers as a download and keep nearly all the proceeds, minus the online payment fees (covered in a later chapter on payment systems).
- The fourth platform I'll describe more in the BONUS chapter, as I've used Google Books to create and distribute "auto-narrated" books from my typed versions of my books.

Creating your audiobook for Audible

Creating an audiobook on ACX.com is very similar to creating a paperback or ebook on KDP (Amazon's print and ebook website). First, create a free account on ACX.com. Then "Claim your title" if you already have a paperback or ebook on Amazon.

For this example, I'll be creating an audiobook for my book called *My Stories of Faith*.

I simply click "Claim my title" then search for my book. Once I see it, I claim it! All the information about the book (title, keywords, descriptions, etc.) is pulled from my previously uploaded book so I don't have to retype. Plus, the audiobook will then be linked to the other versions of the book so readers can choose whichever format they like when they find it on Amazon.

Recording your audio

I already own some nice microphones for recording my piano music so I use those (AKG Perception 200), but they are much higher end than is necessary for audiobooks. You can use software to enhance your voice and add special effects to make it sound more rich.

A simple USB microphone can work just fine for recording an audiobook. There are hundreds of such mics, but here's one that's currently good for a good price: the FIFINE USB Computer Microphone for \$30 from Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09241VBTP/>

For software, I use GarageBand, which is free on my Mac and for any Apple app stores (desktop, laptop, tablet, phone). I also use Audacity from time to time, which is free for both Macs or Windows computers from audacityteam.org.

To record, I simply open GarageBand, select my input as "mic or line," then create a new project. I'll usually test speaking into the microphone to see how close or far from the mic I should be, see if I should turn up or down the volume on the input device (either on the microphone itself or in the audio input setting in software). I want to keep my voice in the green, seldom in the yellow, and never in the red, or it will begin to break up or crackle if the input level is too loud.

When I'm ready, I press the "record" button and start reading a chapter! I'll usually record one chapter at a time. If I make a mistake or stumble over words, I'll just keep recording and start that sentence or

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paragraph again, waiting till I finish my chapter to stop the recording and do my edits.

After recording

After I record my audio, I usually “filter” my voice a bit to enhance it. For me, I often use “Male Narrator,” which deepens my vocals and reduces background shooshing sounds.

I also like to use an external website when I’m all finished to level out my entire audio file (if my voice drops too quiet or raises too high, Auphonic can level everything out so listeners don’t have to strain to hear me or be overwhelmed by a sudden increase in volume).

I record each chapter in one file, so when I’m done recording, I’ll have one file per chapter, plus a file for an intro or conclusion, and a simple recording stating the title, the author, and the narrator, like this:

“You’re listening to *My Stories of Faith*, written and narrated by Eric Elder.”

I’ll also record one sentence at the very end of the book, usually as the last sentence of the last chapter, that says, “Thanks for listening to *My Stories of Faith*, written and narrated by Eric Elder. You’ve reached the end.”

The statement “You’ve reached the end,” or some other wording that says “the end” is required by Spotify and ACX to let listeners know there’s no more!

I’ll share more about recording and editing your audio in the next chapter, “How to edit your audio.”

Creating your audiobook for Spotify

When you're finished recording all your chapters, you can create a free account on findawayvoices.com, which is owned by Spotify and used for their audiobook services.

Findawayvoices can also send your audiobook to other platforms, such as Audible, which is convenient, but currently costs a 20% cut to Spotify from your profits on Audible for this option. So it's up to you if it's worth it to upload it yourself to ACX for Audible customers, or just have Spotify send it to Audible for you.

Creating your audiobook for your own website

If you're the main person pointing people to your books anyway, you can keep more control and keep more of the revenue by simply uploading the audio files to your own website and eliminate those in the middle! Those in the middle are great when they're also helping you find readers for your book, but if you're doing all the work anyway, you can do this yourself, too!

Just upload your files to your website, for instance using the "Media Upload" link inside Wordpress. Then create a page that is private except to those who have the link.

Next, create a payment button, such as from PayPal or Venmo, which I'll cover in a later chapter. Then when people pay for their audiobook, you can either display a confirmation page that has a link to your au-

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diobook or you can send them an email yourself that includes the link.

We'll look at editing audio next.

7. How to edit audio

I love editing! Why? Because I can present my best possible self to those I'm trying to reach!

It's not that I try to make things look like they're real when they're not. It's that I like taking what I've already got and making it as pleasant and listenable as I can for my audience.

I've learned from experience, listening to my own recording and the recordings of others that bad audio discourages listening, whether I've stuttered, coughed, stumbled over words, or had odd background noises. But with a little editing, I've been able to clean up those messes and make something presentable!

Recording in Garageband

I often use GarageBand on my Mac for recording and editing, which is available for free on Apple devices. I've also used Audacity, which is also a free download and works on both Mac and Windows computers.

For the example in this book, I'm going to use a simple USB microphone that I mentioned in the last chapter, called a FIFINE USB Computer Microphone for about \$30 from Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09241VBTP/>

The microphone comes with a USB cable that I can plug directly into my computer. I also use an adapter to convert the larger size USB 3 to the smaller USB-C which my computer uses.

When I plug in the cable and adapter, an option pops up on my MacBook asking if I'd like to use this

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new microphone. I select “Use.” Then I can test it by opening GarageBand and recording something.

When I open GarageBand, it asks me which project I’d like to open, so I choose an “empty project.”

Next it asks what type of track I’d like to create, and I choose “Mic or line,” then select the input microphone from those available, in this case, my USB microphone.

A new track is created, and I can see a little green bar showing me the sound that is coming into that track. When I talk into the mic, I can see the green bar rise and fall with the amount of sound coming into the system. The microphone I’m using has a dial on it so I can adjust the input volume. I test it by talking into the mic in the same way I plan to record, and adjusting the volume as I test to try to keep the green bar near the top of the green or sometimes yellow range, but never hitting the red range. If it hits the red, it’s too loud and will “clip” the sound, making the sound crackle or pop at those points, and there’s no easy way to fix that after recording. So it’s always better to record with the volume staying in the green and yellow range.

Next I can press the red “record” button and start talking, doing a test of just a few words or phrases, then pressing the record button again to stop recording. Then I press “play” to listen to the sound.

If I like it, I’m ready to record! If I notice something that needs to be changed, such as being too close or too far from the mic, or hearing pops when I say words with the letters “p” or “t” or “ch.” Some adjustments may include adjusting my distance from the mic, or adjusting the volume dial, or by using a circular

nylon “popper stopper” between my mouth and my mic.

I bought a popper stopper online for cheap, but you can make one yourself by putting a nylon stocking over an embroidery hoop! (I’ve done that, too!) By speaking through the nylon, with the mic on the other side, it cuts down on the amount of breath that gets through to the mic.

Trimming audio

If I like what I hear, I sometimes simply trim out the silence or dead space from the beginning and end of the audio and I’m done!

To trim out a segment in GarageBand, I make sure the recording is selected (in this case, the recording will have a white bar at top and bright blue for the track). I move the playhead (the vertical line that shows where the track is currently being played) to where I want to make the trim by grabbing the top of the playhead and dragging it to where I want, or by tapping in the timeline area above the recorded segment. I make the cut in the audio by using the Edit menu and selecting “Split regions at playhead.” I also use the shortcut that is shown next to that option, which is to press the “Command” and “t” keys at the same time.

Once split, I can select the entire clip to be removed by tapping on the white bar at the top and deleting it with the delete key. I do the same to cut out the silence at the end, using the same sequence: I tap to put the playhead where I want the split, I press “Command” and “t” together, and I tap on and delete the extraneous segment. If nothing splits when you take that ac-

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tion, you might need to be sure to select the track again that you want to split.

When cutting off the beginning and end, I usually leave about one second of silence at the beginning, and several seconds of silence at the end. This makes for a smooth listening experience when listening to one track after another.

I then listen to the whole segment again using the “play” button. If I like what I hear, I’m ready to export the track to a file by selecting “Share,” then “Export song to disk.” I name the file and choose the file-type, such as MP3, and click “Export.”

Then I’ll find the file on the computer, open it, and play it back to see how it sounds.

Recording in Audacity

Here’s an example doing the same thing in Audacity, a free software program that works on both Macs and Windows available for download from audacityteam.org by going to their website and clicking “Download.”

To record in Audacity, open the app and click the “AudioSetup” button to make sure your microphone is connected and recognized. In my case, I’ll choose my USB microphone from the “Recording device” menu. I also check to make sure my “Playback device” is selected properly so I can hear the playback, for instance, “MacBook Speakers.”

Now I do a test recording by pressing the red “Record” button.

As I record, I’ll see a green bar showing how loud or soft my input is. I adjust the input level if needed on my microphone or in the software so my recording

stays in the green or yellow range, but never the red. I then press “Play” to listen to my recording.

If I like it, I just trim off the silence at the beginning by clicking directly in the track where I want the split to start, then dragging my cursor to the left across the region all the way to the beginning which I want to split off. That section will then be highlighted, and I press the “Delete” to delete that section. In Audacity, the entire recording will shift to the left to automatically close the gap created by the deleted section. I do the same to trim off the end.

Then I press the “Play” button to see how it sounds. If I like it, I save it by choosing the “File” menu, then “Export audio.” I give the file a name and press “Export.”

Adjusting volume

If I find the volume is too loud or too quiet in my exported file, I can adjust the volume for the whole track, or adjust it section by section within the recording.

To adjust an entire track in GarageBand, I can slide the volume slider, which is to the left of the track, to the right or left while playing the track. I aim for the top of the green bar, no higher than the yellow, and never touching the red.

In Audacity, I adjust the same way, using the slider that shows up as green when playing back the audio, and stay within the green and yellow, never red.

Another option in both of these programs to automatically increase the volume of the entire track to the maximize the volume is called “Normalization.” I’ll sometimes just use this setting when exporting a file to

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save the file with the fullest volume possible. Here's how.

In Audacity, I select the “Effects” menu, then “Volume and normalization,” then “Loudness” and click “Preview” to hear how it sounds. If I like it, I click “Apply.”

In GarageBand, I choose “Settings,” “Advanced,” then I check the box for “Auto Normalize” to export at full volume.

One final step I like to take with all of my audio is to run it through a different type of “normalizer” on a website auphonic.com. I use this especially for interviews where two speakers are using different microphones or have different speaking volumes. By uploading my exported audio file from GarageBand or Audacity to auphonic.com, I then click “New Production.” I choose various settings here, such as creating a “mono” file from a stereo file, especially for just people talking, and I can click boxes to filter out background noises or hums. Auphonic especially helps me to level out the volume of each speaker to be at the same level. For my podcasts that include live music, this produces a nicely leveled out track for both my speaking and my singing or playing. I also save my files with music as “stereo” files if I've used two or more mics to record.

If you'd rather have more control and adjust the volume manually *within* each track, such as where you notice just a few spots that are too quiet or too loud, you can adjust those spots on your own using the “Mix” menu, then “Show Automation” in GarageBand.

Once you turn on the “automation,” you can click anywhere on the yellow volume line that now appears on the track to make a “dot.” Click another spot to make another dot. Then select and drag the dot or section where you want to raise or lower the volume. I use this technique especially for my music when I want to increase or decrease the volume for the best possible effect.

Adding effects

Finally, you can add special effects to your track to give your recordings some extra “punch.” GarageBand and Audacity include several default effects, such as “Male Narrator” or “Female Pop Diva.” You can experiment with these different effects to see how you like them. If the defaults are good, you’re done and you can export your file! If they need some additional tweaking, you can go to the “Track Controls” or “EQ Settings” and adjust the dials to make your voice sound more “present” or “distant,” reduce irritating tones, or bring out the best of your voice.

When you’re happy with the sound of your entire track, export and save the file!

8. How to edit video

Let's take a look at editing a video.

First, we'll explore iMovie for Apple devices, which is available for free. Second, we'll look at DaVinci Resolve, which is a more advanced, professional-grade video editing software that works on both Apple and Windows devices, and is also free.

Either way, the concepts are similar whatever software you use, so I'll share how I edit videos in DaVinci Resolve.

Editing with iMovie

Let's start with iMovie. For those of you with Android devices, you can do a quick search for "iMovie alternatives" to find similar apps for Windows or Android devices.

I'll start by using iMovie on my iPhone. To begin, I'll open iMovie on my iPhone. When I open the app, there's an option to start a new project and select either "Magic Movie" for a quick automatic edit or "Movie" to create one from scratch. I'll chose "Movie" so I have more control.

Then I open a new project and select a video from my gallery. This is a 40-minute video of my testimony and a song that I shared at a recovery group meeting.

I can trim off the beginning and the end of the video by swiping to the desired points, tapping on the video, and selecting "Split" to cut the unwanted sections. I simply tap on the sections I've just cut off and click "Delete" to delete them.

Adding titles

Next, I'll add a title to the video.

I tap on the video timeline, select the "Title" option (the "T" icon), and choose "Reveal style."

Then I tap the text box, edit the title to say what I'd like, such as "Eric's Testimony," and adjusted its position on the screen by dragging it with my finger.

The title automatically fades in and out, which adds a nice touch to the video.

Adding music and adjusting volume

iMovie allows you to add background music, which can enhance the mood of your video. Here's how I do it.

I tap the "Gear" icon to add a theme soundtrack and also select fade-in and fade-out effects.

To control the volume, I tap on the video and adjust the volume slider to increase the level of my voice.

Then I can add background music by tapping the "+" button, selecting a track, and adjusting the volume so it doesn't overpower my voice.

Adding photos and transitions

I can also add photos for additional punch.

I click the "+" button and choose a photo from my library.

iMovie will automatically add a transition between the photo and the video. I can tap on the transition icon (which looks like a bowtie), then I can change to different effects like "Slide" or "Wipe."

Finalizing and sharing

Once the editing is done, I click “Done” at the top of the screen, and iMovie allows me to rename the project and export the video by tapping on the “Share” icon, either saving the video to my files or sharing it directly via email or social media.

Editing with DaVinci Resolve

For more advanced projects, I use DaVinci Resolve. It's a powerful, high-end video editing software available for both Apple and Windows devices. While the learning curve is steeper compared to iMovie, it offers incredible precision for professional work.

I've used DaVinci Resolve to edit feature-length films like ballets and musicals and puppet operas! But I also use it for simpler projects like YouTube videos.

You can download DaVinci Resolve from blackmagicdesign.com. Click on “Products” and search for DaVinci Resolve and click “Download.”

To edit a video, open Resolve and click “New Project.”

Name your project. For this example, I'll name it “Eric's Testimony.”

Click the “Edit” icon at the bottom of the screen, then drag and drop a video file into the “Master Clip” section. When prompted, choose whether to match the project's frame rate to the frame rate of the video, and your filename will appear. Drag it down to the timeline to begin trimming and cutting the video.

To trim the video, scroll through the timeline using the red slider bar. You can zoom in or out with the plus and minus buttons.

Then use the razor blade tool to cut sections of the video. For instance, if I want to cut out the introduction, I find the location where I start speaking, select the razor blade icon, and click on the video to make a split. Then I right click on the part I want to delete and click my “Delete” key. To delete and also shift the video to the left to close the gap that’s been created at the same time, I click the “Shift” key and the “Delete” key. This is called a “Ripple Delete.”

I can continue cutting out segments of the video using the razor blade tool to trim off the end, and to trim out stumbles or stammers or long silences.

Adding titles and effects

To add a title, I place the cursor where I want the title, such as at the beginning of the video.

Then I click the “Effects” button, click on “Titles,” and choose the title style (for instance, a scrolling title).

I drag the title to the timeline above the video, then edit the text of the title in the “Inspector” panel on the right. I can position the title to the left, right, or center, and adjust its size and scroll speed.

Adjusting audio levels

To adjust the audio track, I simply tap on the segment of the video I want to adjust, hover over the audio bar (below the video bar), and drag the volume line up or down.

If I find my voice is too loud or soft throughout the video, I’ll usually use an external tool like Auphonic at auphonic.com to normalize the audio levels and remove background noise.

Saving the video

To save the video, I export it using the “Deliver” tab (the icon that looks like a rocket ship). I’ll usually choose YouTube for the format, as I like its defaults, then I name the file and select where to save it.

I click “Add to render queue,” then click “Render All” to finalize the video.

Uploading to YouTube

Once the video is ready, I’ll usually upload it to YouTube, which we looked at in an earlier chapter. I’ll review again here how I upload it.

First, I go to YouTube Studio by visiting youtube.com, then, if I’m not already signed in, I’ll click “Sign in.”

I can then click the “Create” button at the top right corner, and then select “Upload a Video.” From there, I drag and drop the video I just exported from DaVinci Resolve onto the upload window, give it a title, write a description, and choose how and when I want to share it: publicly, privately, or unlisted.

Watch some examples

DaVinci Resolve has allowed me to create pro-length and quality movies, allowing me to mix camera angles, adjust color quality, add graphics, blur backgrounds—everything necessary for a high-end production.

If you go to my YouTube channel you can see hundreds of videos I’ve created just like this! They’re organized into music, messages, podcasts, and shows I’ve produced. I’ve taken my movies to local movie

theaters and held screenings for my family and friends. It's so cool to see a movie you've created on the big screen! But it's also just as cool to share a link to it on YouTube and know that viewers all around the world can watch with just a click. If you'd like to see my YouTube channel and all the videos I've created, just visit: youtube.com/@ericelder.

9. How to create business cards

I love creating print products to promote my outreaches, whether books or music or musicals.

I've used Vistaprint to print business cards, bookmarks, postcards, notecards, flyers, banners, and display stands. I love their quality and their price. They're fast and efficient, and they even have mailing services so I can upload a mailing list and have them print and mail my cards to others.

Let's look at several types of products and how to create them.

Creating business cards

For example, I have a business card that says, "This is your ticket," and it's shaped like an actual ticket. It directs people to my website, ericelder.com, where they can access my books, videos, music, and more. It's a fun, memorable way to leave my information with people. On the back, it shares additional resources like my flagship website theranch.org, where people can find inspiring faith stories.

Here's how I create them.

First, I go to VistaPrint at vistaprint.com and browse their designs or upload my own.

I'll choose one of their templates and customize from there. I can choose a paper type, like standard, deluxe, or even plastic, choose the types of corners I'd like, whether rounded or square, and choose the finish, whether matte, glossy, or raised foil. I can also upload

my own logo, artwork, or images that align with my branding.

Currently, you can print as few as 100 cards for about \$18. The more you order, the lower the cost per card, for example 1,000 cards for less than \$50. Depending on the price you pay, you can have your cards printed and shipped within a week.

I can continue filling out the information I want from the template, such as my name, organization, phone number, website, and email address, then adjust the layout as needed. If I want more text or images, I can click onto the template, then change the fonts and colors, then preview the card before finalizing.

I can also add text or graphics to the back of the cards for an extra fee. Some people prefer blank backs so they can write personal notes, while others opt for more information or artwork. Also keep in mind that glossy finishes can add punch, but they can be harder to write on.

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Mock-up cards for books

Now that we've looked at one example, the others are variations of the same process, but for different purposes. For instance, I have sometimes created mock-up cards for my books—cards featuring the front and back of my book's cover. They're the same as a business card, but they look like my book! Instead of lugging around cases of my books, I can hand out these mock-up cards with my book's cover, tagline, and a link where people can buy them. This is a convenient way to share your book and keep the conversation going.

Bookmarks

Another great idea for authors is to create bookmarks featuring their books. One of my writing students created a beautiful bookmark that features her book's cover on one side and the book's description on the other. It's a practical and affordable promotional tool, perfect for slipping into a book when you hand

a copy to someone, or for promoting your book when you don't have a copy. This keeps your book's cover and title in front of readers as they enjoy your book, plus it's another marketing tool that they can then use to share about your book with others.

Postcards

I've sent out Christmas postcards for years, featuring a picture or two on the front and a brief update on the back. In recent years, I've used VistaPrint's mailing service as well, so I can upload my entire spreadsheet of names and addresses, and VistaPrint does the mailing for me.

I'll still have VistaPrint ship a few dozens postcards directly to my house so I can first write a personal note on the back and send them out myself. I've really loved using their mailing list feature so I can reach as many people as possible with these cards. I care about every person I mail my cards to, but sometimes the process of hand printing, addressing, and mailing out my cards doesn't get done until February or March! This speeds things along and still helps me share updates with those I care about. People tell me they put the cards on their fridge or other places where they remember to pray for us, which I really appreciate!

I recently printed and shipped 185 postcards for an event for \$150—less than a dollar each! The current price of a postcard stamp alone is \$.56, and a first class letter is \$.73. For about \$.25 more, I can have all the cards printed and shipped, too, by using a service like this!

Flyers

I've also used VistaPrint to create flyers for my ministry, from 8.5"x11" newsletters to 11"x17" double-sided, glossy fold-outs to raise money to make a movie. While I often use email to send out this kind of information and links where people can watch videos, sometimes I like to be able to hand someone a flyer or newsletter so they'll have it when they get home and be reminded about my project. I'll also print extras and ask if people would like five or ten to take with them to share with others. It's a great way to use word-of-mouth to share about your activities.

QR Codes

VistaPrint also offers free QR codes for anything you'd like to link to. I've included these codes on cards and flyers, such as links to my website with all my books listed for sale, called inspiringbooks.com, or links to my donation pages or video trailers about my current or upcoming movies.

To generate a QR code, I click on the "QR Code" option, then I enter a URL, such as <https://inspiringbooks.com>. I can customize the look and feel of the QR code to change corner styles, the size of the dot sizes, or add text to it so people will know where they're going when they click, such as "Scan the barcode to visit inspiringbooks.com."

Once designed, I can add the QR code to any of my printed materials.

Endless possibilities

The list seems endless of possibilities of things you can print.

I've printed banners as large as 8'x3' to display the name of my upcoming musical His Name Was Nicholas on a horse-drawn wagon for a Christmas parade carrying singers from the production. Some of the cast also walked alongside the wagon handing out cards to invite people to the show.

One of the items I really love is a table-top stand featuring the book cover of my Christmas book called St. Nicholas: The Believer. This display rolls up into a little container, then can be unrolled and displayed on my table of books where I offer and sign copies of my books after my shows based on it.

Get creative! Enjoy the process! And share your message in multiple ways. Every touch helps people connect more with you and the message you're trying to share.

10. How to set up a live online class

I've taught more than a hundred classes online using Zoom. I've found it to be a great way to interact with a group on a topic I'm trying to share, wherever the participants may live, anywhere in the world!

I've also used other group chat technologies like Skype and Teams, but when Zoom came along, I fell in love with its features and for me, ease of use.

Here's how to do it.

Create a Zoom account

First, if you don't have a Zoom account, go to zoom.us to create a free one. Enter your email and other information, and you're ready to go! Your participants don't have to set up a zoom account to join your meeting. You simply send them a link to your meeting and they can use the Zoom app to connect with you.

Scheduling a Meeting

Once logged into Zoom, look for the option to "Schedule" a meeting.

Give your meeting a name, choose a date and time, and choose whether your meeting will repeat or take place just once. If you want, you can just press "Save," and you're set!

But let's take a look at some of the options you get when you press "Options."

Here is where you can have Zoom generate a Meeting ID automatically or use your personal meeting ID. I like to have Zoom generate an ID for me automatically, as I don't like giving out my personal meeting ID, which is more like my phone number and anyone could join any meeting I'm having if they have my personal ID.

I also set up a passcode to access the meeting. I usually choose a simple passcode related to the meeting, like "writers" or "me."

I usually uncheck the "Waiting Room" option for most of my meetings so users don't have to wait to enter my room. They can enter the room even if I'm not there and chat with the other participants beforehand.

For a class setting like I used for this "Let's Get Technical" class, I'll turn on the "Video" option for the host (me) and for the participants so their video appears automatically. I also check the box that lets people connect their audio via "Telephone and Computer Audio."

There's still one more "Advanced" tab that I check that says "Allow participants to join anytime." If I have a large group or a special event like a wedding, I'll choose to "Mute" participants upon their entry so their voices can't be heard accidentally when they enter the room. I also often check the box that says "Automatically record meeting" so I don't forget to record it once I get going. I like to record my classes for students who can't attend live, or to turn the class into an online course, like I'm doing with this one.

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For repeating meetings, like a 12-week class, I'll use the same link every time to make it easier on myself and my students.

When I'm done with these options, I'll press "Save," then copy the invitation link and send it out! I press "Close" to go back to the home screen.

When it's time to start my meeting, I open my Zoom app (or go to zoom.us in my browser), then look for my "Meetings."

When I find the meeting that I scheduled, I click "Start."

Interacting

Now comes the fun part!

Once in a meeting, there are multiple ways to participate. I like to start by choosing how I want to view the attendees. I usually select "View," then "Gallery" if I want to see all faces at once, or if I'm on a smaller device, this option lets me swipe left or right to see more participants that can't fit on one screen.

If I want to highlight whoever is speaking, I can choose "View," then "Speaker," and Zoom will switch to the current speaker when it detects their voice.

I can share my screen or invite others to share their screen with the group by hovering over the Zoom window and choosing the green "Share" button. I select the default window to share everything on my screen, or I select a particular window or app from those that are open on my device. Then I click the blue "Share" button.

If I haven't set the option beforehand to record the meeting, I can begin recording by clicking the three dots, the "More" button, and choosing to record the

meeting to my computer or to the cloud. I usually record wherever I have the most storage space available.

There's a chat room on the side if you click the "Chat" button where you can type text or links or other material, or where anyone can have a private conversation with anyone else in the room. Sometimes I use this feature to have people ask questions when they think of them, and I can look over their questions and answer when I get a moment.

Breakout rooms

One feature I especially like for small group discussion is called "Breakout Rooms." These allow you to split up a larger group into smaller groups for more personal discussions.

Look for the three dots, the "More" button, and choose "Breakout Rooms." Then choose how many groups you want based on how many people are in your meeting, such as three groups of four people in each group based on a meeting with twelve people. Zoom can randomly assign people to each group, or you can rearrange people into specific groups on the next screen.

When ready to break out, click "Open All Rooms" and each person will be asked to click "Join" to enter their breakout group. Now the group members can chat on their own within their rooms.

As the host, you can click "Join" to become part of any group that has been created. You can also "Move" people or yourself from one group to another.

When the time's up for the breakout groups, click "Close Rooms" and all the participants will be given

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an option to return to the main meeting, either at the time they click the option, or automatically after 60 seconds.

I often use this option in the middle of a meeting, after sharing some information with the whole group at the beginning, then breaking into smaller groups, then coming back together again at the end to share what was learned in the small groups.

Go live!

One final option I'd like to highlight is the ability to go live with your Zoom meeting on Facebook or YouTube! Click the three dots, the “More” button, and choose where you'd like to send the live stream.

I use this option for sharing group events, or for interviews when I want others to watch the interview live. For interviews, I set up a Zoom meeting with the person I want to interview, then click “Record on the computer,” then click “More” to go live on Facebook or YouTube. This is a great way to do an interview, save and record it, and share it live, all at the same time!

Saving your recording

If you've recorded your meeting, you'll be able to save it after you end the meeting. When you press “End Meeting,” you'll see a screen that says it is saving your meeting. Don't close Zoom until this process is done, which could take a few minutes. When the processing is done, a window will display showing you the file that has been saved. You can use this file to share it with others as is, or use your video editing software to edit, and then later share your recording.

If you'd like a more detailed, fast-paced, and fun video about how to use Zoom, you can watch one I recorded on my YouTube channel called "How to Zoom" at youtube.com/@ericelder.

11. How to set up a payment system

Setting up payment systems might seem tricky, but there are free ways to do it. Services like PayPal, Venmo, and Square take a percentage of the sale, but the initial setup is free. For example, if you have a PayPal business account, they typically charge around 3.49% per transaction plus a fixed fee—around 50 cents.

If you're selling goods and services, setting up a business account is essential. With a personal account, you might pay slightly less, and with a nonprofit account, the fees are reduced even further. Personally, I pay about 30 cents plus 2.3% as a nonprofit.

You can set up payment buttons, links, QR codes, or simply provide your email address for people to send money directly to your PayPal account. When using PayPal and Venmo, users can also pay via major credit or debit cards. I set up all my payment buttons on PayPal, then allow users to choose how they want to pay.

How I use PayPal

You can see examples of PayPal buttons on my website at ericelder.com, as I have a Donate tab for donations to my ministry. When they click the PayPal link, they see a prompt that says:

“Thank you for helping us share the good news of Christ. Please type in how much you want to give.”

When someone makes a donation, they also have the option to cover the PayPal fees by adding that fee

to their donation. This feature has been beneficial since it's been added, as many donors choose to cover the fees, which helps especially for larger donations.

Additionally, donors can check a box to make their donation a monthly donation, ensuring a steady stream of support for my ministry. This is just one example of how you can structure payment options for your services or products.

Setting up a PayPal account

If you don't have a PayPal account yet, it's straightforward to set one up. Visit [PayPal.com](https://www.PayPal.com) and select "Sign Up." You'll have the option to create either a personal or business account—both are free, but a business account is recommended for selling products.

If you already have a personal PayPal account, you can easily upgrade it to a business account. Just remember that you can't link two PayPal accounts to the same bank account.

When setting up your account, you'll be asked for your banking information, including your routing and account numbers, which can be found on your checks. PayPal will verify your account by making small deposits or withdrawals (under \$1), which you will need to confirm.

Creating a payment link

Here are the steps to set up a payment link for people to make a payment. For me, I'm creating donation links rather than sales links, so I navigate to the "Sales" section and select "Donations." This is where I manage my donation buttons. The current link for this section is at paypal.com/donate/buttons/manage.

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I click on “Get a Link” to create a simple fundraising link. I enter my project name and can add a logo or an image related to my cause.

Next I type a message I’d like to display to potential donors, such as “Make a \$15 donation, and I’ll send you a paperback of my latest book about recovery.”

I can then specify some example donation amounts, whether a single amount, such as \$15, or multiple amounts, such as, \$10, \$15, \$20, or “Other.” This allows donors options if they’d like more of their donation to go to the ministry.

I also tick the boxes to allow the donor to make their donation recurring, to collect the donor’s address for end of year tax statements, and to allow the donor to include a note to me with their donation.

Then I click “Publish” to create a link. I can copy and paste this link into an email or onto a webpage, or there’s an option to use some HTML code to insert a button directly onto your webpage.

I can also have PayPal generate a QR code for my donation link by clicking on “Get a QR code.” PayPal will generate a QR code that you can download to use on your website or printed material. Anyone can scan this QR code with their phone, which will take them directly to the donation page.

Setting up a Venmo account

Venmo is actually owned by PayPal, so creating a Venmo account follows similar steps! Some people prefer one over the other, so I offer both. You can get started by going to venmo.com and setting up a free account. As with PayPal, Venmo takes a percentage of the payment to run their business.

Setting up a Square account

I use PayPal and Venmo to offer links for people to make donations in emails or on my website, but I use Square to accept donations when I'm selling books or other products in person.

For example, during a book launch, I'll use Square to take credit card payments in person, as I can swipe, tap, or type in someone's credit card information. It's a nice way to receive payments when people don't have cash or I don't have change.

You can sign up for a free Square account at [square-up.com](https://squareup.com).

Square offers several options for processing payments, including a free magstripe reader that connects to your device with an adapter. For newer devices without headphone jacks, Square provides Bluetooth readers for a small, one-time fee.

On Square, I can simply type in an amount and receive a payment, or I can set up my products and prices and inventory ahead of an event.

When I do my live shows, I can give access to my Square account to any of my volunteers to receive payments, and they can use their own phone, tablet or laptop to login and take payments.

All of my books and products are pre-defined within Square, as I've set them up beforehand with pictures of each item and default prices. This way, my volunteers simply tap the picture of an item someone is buying, and the price pops up. The volunteer can change the quantity or continue adding products for a final total.

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When the final total appears on the screen, the person making the payment can simply tap or swipe their credit or debit card and sign the screen. They can then enter their email address for a receipt. If the person has used a Square reader before with that same credit or debit card, an email will be automatically sent to them using their previously stored card information, even if they've never done business with you before.

Square also lets you sell products from a web store based on the products and prices you've entered. I've used this for selling products that I don't normally sell on Amazon, such as show-specific shirts, sweatshirts, and ornaments. You can see a sample of my Square online store at this link:

<https://ericelderministries.square.site/shop/this-name-was-nicholas>

Creating subscription plans

Now that we've covered payment links in general, I want to show you one more option, and that's creating a subscription plan on PayPal.

I create this option similar to creating a regular button, but I set a start and an end date for recurring payments.

For example, if I offer a monthly class on Zoom, I can create a button with a fixed price of \$97 per month for three months. This spreads out the payments for the payor, and I don't have to send out reminders for people to pay each month.

Three options

I like to offer three options for things like classes because people do really like to have choices and deals!

For instance, if I offer a three-month class, I'll offer one option at one price for all three months, another option for a payment plan of three payments spread over three months, and an option to pay for just one session over all of those months. And I've had people choose each of those three options! It allows people to take classes and pay for them at budgets and time-frames that make sense for them.

I hear from expert marketers that three options also gives people a better feeling about their payment as they have a choice in how and when they pay. It's not only convenient, but it gives a better payment experience, both practically and perceptively.

12. How to set up a coaching calendar

As people find out about your expertise, they'll want to talk to you. Setting up a coaching calendar can make this process as easy and painless as possible, and make you money!

If you're like me, you may not like asking people to pay for your expertise. But allowing people to pay to meet with you can make *them* feel better about taking your time, and make *you* feel better about giving it. With a coaching calendar, all the transactional steps can be handled for you without your input.

The steps involve setting up your account on a service like Calendly, then creating a publicly available calendar. By adding a payment page to the calendar, this makes it easy for people to pay you without having to personally ask them for money. By letting the technology handle these transactions, you can focus on your expertise, rather than having to be a secretary and a sales person!

Set up Calendly

One product that does this well is called Calendly. Just go to calendly.com and sign up using your name and email address and other info needed.

The free option lets you create one calendar. I pay \$120 a year to set up multiple calendars that people can book: one for a 1-hour session, one for a 30-minute session, one for a 15-minute session, and one for a free chat, which I use for catching up with

friends or meeting with potential clients without charge.

Define your office hours

Choose the days and times that you're usually available. You can block out specific days later by using your own calendar on your phone or computer.

Connect your calendar

You can connect your Calendly calendar to your personal calendar, such as iCloud calendar on your phone. This way, whenever you add an event to your personal calendar, your Calendly calendar will block out those dates and times so people cannot book you when you're already busy.

Add a payment option

Calendly offers a payment option for an extra fee, but there's a workaround if you want to simply send people directly to your PayPal or Venmo or other payment system.

Remember to enter all your events!

The biggest thing I had to remember when I started was to make sure I entered my events, and blocked off plenty of time before and after those events so I wasn't too tightly booked.

I've learned a rhythm over time so I can be flexible with people wanting to chat with me, and not feel I'm too constricted by their appointments. It's been a great win-win for me and for those who want to tap into my skills.

An example

On my website and on my business cards, I let people know they can book appointments with me at ericelder.com. On that page, they can click on a link that says, “Book a Time with Eric.” When they click it, currently they’ll see options for different lengths of appointments and prices: a one-hour session for a suggested donation of \$65, a 30-minute session for \$35, or a 15-minute session for \$25.

I’ve priced these sessions to give price breaks for longer bookings, but I’m happy to accommodate shorter sessions depending on their need and their budget. After they select a date and time from my calendar that works for them, they enter their name, email address, and any specifics they want to discuss during our meeting. The confirmation page then guides them to make their payment.

After they book a date and time, both they and I receive an email with a Zoom link for our upcoming meeting. This process eliminates the hassle of scheduling and talking about payments! I love it! I just need to keep my calendar up-to-date, which I do on my phone using my normal calendar app. Calendly has an option to connect my calendar with my public calendar, and people visiting my site only see the days and hours that I’m available (but nothing else on my personal calendar).

I’ve also set up a second calendar for chatting with friends and family, making it easy for them to find a date and time that works for them from my available dates and times. I can use these for personal conversa-

tions or sometimes for introductory chats with new clients, but without a payment option.

Setting up your Calendly account

To set up your calendly account, go to calendly.com.

You can choose a free account with one calendar or a paid account with more calendars and options. I currently pay about \$10 per month, paid annually.

One of the first things I do is to set up my availability. I can choose my normal “office hours,” such as between 9-5 each day, with a few options for evening and weekend sessions for those who can’t do my normal hours. I don’t feel confined to these hours, as I can also block out dates or times either in Calendly, or as I do, in my own calendar on my phone, which is synced with Calendly. But I like to specify some general days and times each week that I’m generally available.

I then customize when I want the meeting to start, such as only at the top of each hour, or every 10 or 20 or 30 minutes throughout the day. This allows people to fit meetings in when they’re able to meet, not just at the top of every hour.

Once I set my availability, I set up my booking page. This is the page people will see when they want to book a meeting with me.

For example, I created a link for my normal “Office Hours” that shows people when I’m available. You can see this link at calendly.com/eric-elder.

Then I customize the booking form to ask for specific information from my invitees. The default includes their name and email address, but I also add a

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question asking, “What topics would you like to discuss?”

To collect payments for your sessions, Calendly offers integrated payment options for a higher paid subscription. I found a bit of a workaround, where I’ve created a PayPal button that links directly to my payment page. Then I include that link on the confirmation page of the Calendly screen with a note that says “Click here to make a Payment.” Although it’s not as polished as the integrated payment solution, it serves my needs!

I then customize what information is included in the confirmation emails, such as a cancellation policy—making it clear that cancellations must be made at least 24 hours in advance to receive a refund.

I also set up email reminders for my invitees, having automatic reminders sent 24 hours before our meeting. This helps to prevent people accidentally missing appointments.

Once I finish setting up a meeting, I “Clone” it to create similar meetings, but with different durations and payments. For instance, I’ve created three different calendars for one-hour, half-hour, and fifteen-minute sessions by simply cloning the original event and adjusting the duration and pricing for the meetings.

Connecting your calendars

Calendly allows you to connect to different calendar systems such as iCloud and Google Calendar. This feature makes it easier for me to keep just one calendar up-to-date on my phone, and I can tell what I’m doing on any day and time, but the public has access only to my publicly available times.

Connecting your calendar with Calendly will depend on which calendar you're using already, and there are good tutorials and help screens to walk you through this process.

The note I will make here is to ensure when booking things on your personal calendar that you want blocked off on your public calendar, put those personal events on the right calendar! I have a calendar on my phone that I share with my family, another that has birthdays, and now one that I share with Calendly. It can take some mental acumen to remember on which calendar I've put different things, but after a few weeks, I was quickly on my way to booking sessions properly, and not showing myself as available when I was already booked personally for something else.

BONUS: How to create an AI audiobook

I'm adding this chapter at the end because while creating this book, a few companies have released AI (Artificial Intelligence) products to help people create audiobooks using their own or other people's voices. I'll talk here about two of those products.

The first is Google Play Books, which allows you to upload your ebook and have it automatically translated into an audiobook for free. Google Play is a platform where you can play games, read books, and access ebooks. While I don't use it much personally, I do have some of my books available there.

Recently, they've been offering the ability to upload your own ebooks and choose from various voices for the narration. They have five American male voices, five American female voices, and options for British, Spanish, and other languages. I've uploaded several of my books and found a few voices that I like, both in English and in Spanish.

You can see a demo of my books by searching for "Eric Elder" at play.google.com or go directly to play.google.com/store/search?q=ericelder&c=books.

Using Google Play Books

To create an auto-narrated book, you have to first upload an ebook containing your text and making that available for sale. Once you've done this, a button will appear to "create an auto-narrated book."

To start, create a free account at play.google.com/books/publish/autonarrated/

When I log in to my account, I can start by uploading an ebook version of one of my recent books called *Breaking the Power of Unhealthy Attractions*.

First I click on “Add a Book” and select the option to sell an ebook. When it asks for a book ID, I enter an ISBN for this book that I already own for this book. If I didn’t have an ID yet, I could let Google create one for me.

I then proceed to fill in the title, subtitle, and description. Next, I enter the publisher name and other relevant information, including the format of the book and the page count.

Now, I’ll select the genre. For this book, I’m choosing Christian Men’s Issues and Christian Self-Help.

Next, I add my name as the author, and I copy and paste my bio from previous books.

I then upload the .EPUB file for my book, which I previously created using Pages on my Mac by choosing File, Export as EPUB. I also upload a cover I’ve prepared for the book according to the requested dimensions.

I set a price and “Publish” the book! It can take a few hours or a day or two for the book to appear as published. Once it’s published, I log in again to my Google Play account, look for the EPUB version of my book in my account, then click “Create an auto-narrated book.”

The screens are similar to creating the EPUB version, with much of the information already filled in. If you already have the book divided into chapters and chapter titles, that makes this process very easy, as you

can see the text of each chapter attached to that chapter title. You can also rename the chapter titles, and edit the text at any point.

I usually edit the first line of the book to specify that this is an audiobook, typing something like: “You’re listening to Breaking the Power of Unhealthy Attraction, written by Eric Elder.”

In the final chapter, I’ll include a line that says, “Thanks for listening to Breaking the Power of Unhealthy Attraction, written by Eric Elder. You’ve reached the end.”

As I mentioned in my chapter on creating audiobooks, opening and closing lines like these are required by audiobook platforms like Spotify.

Next, I can choose an English speaking voice for the book, such as Matt or Mike. I also have Spanish translations of some of my books, so I choose from the Spanish male voices for those books. This is one of the beauties of auto-narration, as I would not be able to pronounce the Spanish words as well as the Spanish auto-narrators!

Once I’ve made the changes to my text and chosen a voice, I can click “Save” to save my book, then continue through the screens to set a price for my book. I like to set the prices for all my books so I earn at least \$5 in royalties per sale. In this case, I’ve chosen \$10 as the selling price, as Google keeps a percentage for their service, and I get the remainder.

Once I’ve clicked “Publish,” I just wait a few hours or days for the book to appear on their website. I can also then download a copy of the entire book, separated into different files for each chapter, and upload

them for use on my own website or to another distributor like Spotify.

Using ElevenLabs

The second I'd like to show you is from a startup company called ElevenLabs found at elevenlabs.io. The benefit of this option is you can upload your own voice samples and have your books narrated using your own voice!

I used this technique for a short recording I created of my late wife Lana reading Psalm 20 from the Bible. I had wished I had had her record it for me as it was a special one for us, but I didn't do it while she was alive. So I took a recording of her reading another Psalm, Psalm 119, and I uploaded it to ElevenLabs. At the time, you could use samples from other people's voices, but now they restrict use for only your own voice, as verified by a text sentence they ask you to read when you register with their service. But at that time, this worked!

I uploaded her reading of Psalm 119, then typed in the text of Psalm 20. Within 30 seconds, I heard Lana reading Psalm 20 in her own voice! It really was her own voice, just rearranging the sounds to speak a different passage. I loved it so much, I recorded a piano track of the song "My Heart Will Go On" from *Titanic* to go along with it. It came out beautifully!

For myself, I wanted to test reading my new book using a recording I had done of another book a few years earlier called *Fifty Shades of Grace*, written under my pen name Nicholas Deere. I had five hours of myself reading that entire book, which I uploaded to ElevenLabs. They like to have at least three hours to

create a good vocal model of your voice. Then I waited a few days for their computers to process my voice and create a new voice model that could read any other text.

I then uploaded an EPUB of my newer book, *Breaking the Power of Unhealthy Attractions*. I ran the new book through their process with my voice model, and the result was uncannily just like myself!

The settings allow for alternate pronunciations in case words or names are mispronounced, plus a plethora of options to provide different readings to make your voice sound more dynamic or more smooth. I began by testing the settings one paragraph at a time, regenerating the paragraph if I didn't like a particular sentence or phrase. Once I was pleased with the results I was getting, I pressed the Convert button to do the entire book, which took about five minutes to convert 100,000 characters! I then had the option to download my MP3 files or other formats to keep for my own use or for uploading to platforms that accept AI voices.

Once finished and saved, I uploaded the files to my website to offer as the official audiobook for that newer book.

The cost was about \$22 a month for 100,000 characters (that's characters, including spaces, not words), plus an extra cost for every block of characters over that. My book was just 82,000 characters, so it was doable and cost-effective for that project. But to convert all of my books would cost several thousand dollars. So for now, I'm using the free auto-narrated voices from Google Play Books for the rest of my books.

Note about platforms

Not every audiobook platform allows the use of AI voices, such as Audible from Amazon. This is likely because they are working on their own auto-narration option that they will debut in the future.

But for now, several platforms, such as Google Books and Spotify allow and encourage AI narrations. These companies still have certain requirements to meet, such as sound quality and using only auto-narrated products. But that will change soon, I'm sure!

This is still the wild west for AI technology, so have fun experimenting and perhaps even selling your new audiobooks... whether you record them in our own voice or use a voice model of yourself or of someone else!

For me, the main thing is reaching the world with your message! And this is just one more wonderful way to do that.

Conclusion: The best time to plant a tree

Now you have about a million new ideas and practical ways to reach the world with your message. The question is, which one do you want to try FIRST!

It might seem daunting, but skim back through this book and pick one. Really, just pick one and start there! The only bad choice is to not start anywhere at all.

Do you know when is the best time to plant a tree? Twenty years ago! Do you know when is the second best time to plant a tree? Today!

I have a lot of trees in my yard—about 80. I've planted about 70 of them myself; the rest were here before I was born. I heard this advice about planting trees a long time ago, so I began planting a tree or two every year.

Looking at the trees I planted twenty years ago brings me such joy. I didn't have to plant a tree back then, and it didn't seem like that big of a deal. But now I'm so glad I did. I'm still enjoying apples from an apple tree I planted with my mom when I was in high school, and my kids made a couple apple pies with the apples from that same tree! My mom's been gone since 1990, but the tree we planted together is still going strong.

As with many things in life, the seeds we plant today can bring a harvest in the years to come. That's why I'm encouraging you to pick a place to start with any of these techniques, and start planting!

I've also lost many trees over the years, and I never know which one will produce the most fruit, the most shade, or the most fragrance. So I also like to plant several new trees to see which ones will flourish.

I have a friend who people say has the "Midas touch," meaning everything seems to turn to gold for him like in the story of Midas from mythology. But my friend says, "No, not really, but I do touch a lot of projects!" And some of his projects do turn into gold!

So, plant some trees today! Take one of these ideas for a spin! See what bears fruit, if not right away, maybe someday down the road.

I appreciate you coming on this journey with me. I'm excited to see where it leads. I'd love to hear how it goes! If you need help or want to chat, you can connect with me anytime at:

ericelder.com

P.S. And if you haven't gotten them yet, you can also get my other books on writing including *Write With Me! The ultimate guide to WRITE & SELF-PUBLISH that book on your heart!* and the *Write With Me! NOTEBOOK!* Both are available from inspiringbooks.com.

P.P.S. For my audiobook listeners, thanks for listening to *Let's Get Technical! The ultimate guide to SHARE YOUR MESSAGE with the world—ONLINE!* You've reached the end. :)

Endorsements

A few words from my writing friends...

“Eric Elder is my ‘go-to-person’ for all things technical. Eric has the ‘know-how.’”

Tim Wilkins

“Thanks for helping me with my writing. You give me the confidence to do the hard things.”

Crystal Balas

“Eric has been a blessing to our ministry in so many ways...his technical expertise and assistance have meant everything!”

Greg Potzer

“Eric has played a crucial role in getting my novel published. He has been the all-important bridge between my unpublished manuscript and my published dream-come-true.”

Cammie Quinn

“I learned so much from this course, and I look forward to implementing these new skills (with help from my own notes from the course, and the accompanying book) in the future.”

Donna Brooks-Mason

“Eric’s a great communicator... he makes hard things easy to understand. I deeply trust Eric’s expertise.”

Kirk Billiter

More by Eric!

DEVOTIONALS

- *Two Weeks With God*
- *Exodus: Lessons In Freedom*
- *Acts: Lessons In Faith*
- *Jesus: Lessons In Love*
- *Ephesians: Lessons In Grace*
- *Nehemiah: Lessons In Rebuilding*
- *Romans: Lessons In Renewing Your Mind*
- *Psalms: Lessons In Prayer*
- *The Top 20 Passages In The Bible*
- *Israel: Lessons From The Holy Land*
- *Israel For Kids! Lessons From The Holy Land*
- *The Inspiring Thoughts Collection*
- *Water From My Well*
- *365 Daily Devotions With Eric Elder*
- *My Stories Of Faith*
- *Living Life With A Capital 'L'*

HISTORICAL FICTION

- *St. Nicholas: The Believer (with Lana Elder)*
- *San Nicolás: El Creyente (Spanish Edition)*
- *San Nicola: Il Credente (Italian Edition)*

MUSICAL

- *His Name Was Nicholas (with Lana Elder)*

PIANO BOOKS

- *Clear My Mind*
- *Soothe My Soul*
- *My Favorite Classics*

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JOURNALS

- *A Personal Journal With 101 Quotes On Prayer*
- *A Personal Journal With 101 Quotes On Faith*
- *A Personal Journal With 101 Quotes On Love*

SEXUALITY

- *What God Says About Sex*
- *Fifty Shades of Grace (under pen name, Nicholas Deere)*
- *Loving God & Loving Gays*
- *Cómo amar a Dios y a los gays (Spanish Edition)*
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- *Write With Me!*
- *Write With Me! Notebook!!!*
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- *One Life (a ballet with Cynthia Dewar and Erin Morton)*
- *His Name Was Nicholas (a musical with Lana Elder)*
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To learn more or order, visit:

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