

#BEWORTHFOLLOWING

BY DR. JENNIFER BENNETT

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Just this week I saw a quote (online of course) that said, “We used to go online to escape the world and now we go into the world to escape online!” And how true that is! Our lives have slowly migrated from the multi-dimensional world into the flatly-dimensional world that is social media.

Our friends meet in Facebook chat or groups instead of for coffee. Our prayer requests are shared with a status update and acknowledged by clicks, hearts and sad-faced emojis instead of hugs, voices and knowing nods.

Instead of measuring our words carefully to protect our relationships, we use our social profiles as soap boxes and stumps in which to shout our opinion, share our non-fact-checked fake news, rant about politics and brag about our families. We do carefully choose NOT to share the D on the report card, the call from the principal’s office or the broken engagement, unless we are seeking sympathy, therapy or shaming.

Worse yet, we have begun to place our value on how many likes, shares, emojis, comments or new friends we gain. We are in a moment-by-moment race for validation about every decision, emotion, activity, episode or photo. Heaven help us!

What a complex place, social media. It is the most connective and simultaneously divisive medium I’ve seen.

And yet, I have hope. I have hope that we can choose our friends as carefully online as off. That we can carefully choose whom to listen to and who to engage in discourse with. I have hope we can be a light in a dark world and salt in a bland one. I have hope we can use our everyday influence to share product knowledge, hacks and tips, encouraging moments and resources with one another. I have hope we can stay connected with missionaries, military and a mobile work force. I have hope we can share the joy of Jesus, the hope of Christ and God’s sovereign love in a way that transcends the single dimension of the screen’s glow.

Jen knows I’m passionate about social media. I’m connected to people globally whom I seek to encourage, empower and even entertain. I don’t apologize for my convictions, but I don’t seek to debate, either. I choose to focus on positive and show others how to do the same. I save hard topics for folks I have relationship capital with. I use my influence carefully, weighing the cost of each directive. Every day I’m choosing to walk on sunshine, not eggshells. Jesus is the light of the world. It is my job to reflect that light. Online and off.

And because of social media, I met Dr. Jen. Her message is timely, it’s weighty and it’s needed. Women are especially prone to the comparison trap, the gossip gauntlet and the mask-wearing. We are also prone to getting sucked into time-stealers, and social media can literally take your entire day and sleep time too!

This book will help. Dr. Jen’s heart for ministry, for women and for media is woven together beautifully into a message that the Kingdom needs now more than ever.

Read this with a highlighter. Turn off your media for a few days. Pray for wisdom and discernment and trust my friend as the Lord speaks through her.

And then...I'll see you online!

Carrie Wilkerson

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Part I: First Things First

What is meant by laying the right foundation for social-media success? What can social media offer your business or ministry? What do you need to be willing to do for success online? All these questions and more are a great start. Welcome to #BeWorthFollowing!

Chapter 1: #BeSocial

Why Do I Need Social Media?

Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.

Galatians 6:4-5, MSG

Let's get right to the point: Why social media?

I'm taking an educated guess that you chose this book because you either 1) are a leader in business or ministry and want to know how to utilize social media to its highest potential, or 2) you aspire to those goals and want to know how to utilize social media to its highest potential—so you can reach yours.

Am I getting close? Great, we're all in good company. I started from the ground up with social media, and every day I seek to make the most of my online presence so that I can help women thrive in their God-given dreams.

So let's start at the beginning and talk about those dreams. If our point is to make the most of our online efforts, then we first need to understand who we are and what our ultimate goal is.

If we are trying to garner attention or build our platform, well, there may be a nugget of value in starting there. But what makes this book different from advice you'll find from many other social-media experts is the focus on working from a foundation and toward success *based on God and the dreams he puts in our hearts*.

That focus on God makes all the difference for our businesses, our ministries, and the rest of our lives. Keeping God as our primary focus is how we start to #BeWorthFollowing. We'll get to more of that soon, just as we'll cover lots of practical tools for how to make your online investment count.

But first, let's take a look at some key answers to that very first question: Why social media? No matter what kind of business or ministry you're in, social media is a necessary component of your marketing strategy. More and more businesses and ministries are realizing how important social media is to their online success.

A 2015 Pew Research poll showed that 65 percent of adults use social networking, which is ten times more than the previous decade. And as of 2014, the gap between statistics of women and men users has been closing, with 68 percent of women and 62 percent of men utilizing social media.

It's not a question of *if* but *when* you should start getting social. Here's why.

8 reasons to focus on social media

1. You can connect with your ideal client.

More and more people are getting active on social media, and what's even better is that these active users are providing a plethora of information about who they are, what they like and don't like, and what they need. There has never been a better time to find and connect with your ideal client.

2. Your tribe wants to connect with you.

Yes, your tribe wants to connect with YOU! They want to get to know the face behind the business and ministry. They want to know you as a person. They want to be in community with you! The more you build this and allow them in, the more they will want to connect and engage with you.

3. Social media provides solutions.

Have you noticed that people are asking questions on social media? Not only are they Googling their questions, they're also asking their social networks for recommendations, ideas, and referrals. Their questions give you tremendous insight into the needs of your tribe. The more active you are on your platforms, the more likely you are to see those questions and understand your audience—and as a bonus, you're more likely to be recommended as the answer to someone's question.

4. It's cost effective.

Social media gives you the opportunity to build brand awareness and influence like never before. Prior to social media, businesses and ministries had to pay a pretty penny for advertising in magazines, newspapers, TV and radio spots. But today, for just a few dollars a day, you can create a brand awareness with the potential to reach millions. You have the opportunity to reach large numbers of people by simply being active on social media!

5. Social media is a source of referrals.

I don't know about you, but when I'm looking for someone who can help me with a question or issue, I always ask for referrals on social media. Need a house cleaner? Let me ask my social-media friends who they've used and recommended. Need a pediatrician? Who have my friends used and loved? Social media will provide referrals for your business—all you have to do is ask. When your clients know your character and who you are as a person, they will be more likely to refer more clients to you.

6. Customer service is everything.

People are increasingly looking to social media to have their customer service needs met. And many businesses are not doing it well. Why? Because they're still using social media as a broadcaster. They post when they feel like it and it's all about their products and services. Even worse, they never check back to see if anyone has engaged and is asking them questions that they can answer. But you have a unique

opportunity to shine online as you help current and future clients with their questions about you, your products, and your services.

7. Social media is a research tool.

Social media can help you learn more about your tribe. Not only can you ask questions on your platforms, but you can see how your tribe interacts with your competitors and how your competitors are responding. It's never been easier to gain a solid understanding of what makes your tribe tick.

8. You can learn about the influencers in your niche.

Do you know who your competition is? Do you know what they're doing right? What they are doing wrong? What you can improve so that your business shines online? Social media gives you this opportunity to see, learn and improve upon what your competition is doing.

Sounds promising, right? We understand why we need to polish our social-media strategies. But we also need to ask some preliminary questions of ourselves to assess our readiness for the consistent and determined work it takes to build our presence online.

Soul searching

1. Why do I want to use social media? There has to be a bigger reason than just making sales and making money. Deep down inside, why do you want to be social and why would people want to be social with you? What is your bigger *why* for social media?

2. What does social-media success look like to me? This is where you have to really think through and write down what success looks like to you, not what it looks like to everyone else. What does success on social media look like for you in the next six months? Year? Three years? Five years? Don't be afraid to create a success plan that fits with who you are and your personal goals. God has given each of us a different path, a different journey, which means our definitions of success will look different.

3. Do I have time for social media? If so, how much time? Social media takes time; it's not a post-and-leave-it kind of platform. It requires daily commitment and interaction. This is where you have to get really honest with yourself. If you don't have time for social media, do you have the income to hire someone to help you? If you don't, then what one platform can you commit to (remember, you don't have to be on every platform)?

4. Who is my target audience? If there is one thing I want you to remember, it is this: You can't be all things to all people. When I first started out, this was a trap I soon found myself in. And because I was trying to be all things to all people, my messages, my posts, my stories never resonated with the right people. Knowing who

your target audience is (your dream client) will help you cater everything you post on social media to them. And when you have a clear understanding of *who* they are, your messages will connect with them because you are writing to their hearts, to who they are as individuals.

5. What is the main message that I want to share through social media? I'm a big believer in that every leader, every entrepreneur, should have one main message that aligns with their mission, their business, and their values. This one message is what you will share on a regular basis. It's the message that you will become known for. This message could be your story, which we'll get to, or it could be a part of that story. The key here is that you have a main message that you share on a regular basis on social media.

As you already know, my main message is all about #BeWorthFollowing. Everything I do, post, and say revolves around this message. It's what I've become known for. And it's the same thing that you want to do for yourself, your business. What are you most passionate about? What moves you? What one big message do you want to share with the world? Your answer to these questions will help you create that one main message that you will share on social media.

We've got a good start—let's build on it! Speaking of building, any construction project that weathers the tests of time and the elements must have a good foundation. And so the case is with building our platforms, specifically online.

Tips from the front line

If you only have time to be on one social-media platform, then I recommend that it be Facebook. Why? It's the biggest and most popular social-media platform with over one billion active users. It's also the one platform that you can do the most with and the one platform that the majority of people feel the most comfortable with. The key here is that you have a Facebook Business Page. According to Facebook's Terms of Service, you cannot use a personal profile to conduct business. The advantages to having a Facebook page include:

- advertising capabilities that allow you to really target your ideal clients;
- access to insights that include how many people your posts are reaching, age range of your community, where your likes are coming from, your most popular posts, etc.;
- the ability to include a call-to-action button that leads people to your website and gives you the opportunity to grow your list;
- the ability to sell from your page;
- unlimited "friends." Personal profiles are limited to 5,000 friends, but a Facebook page is unlimited in how many people can like it;
- the ability to run a Facebook Offer that allows you to promote a product, service, downloadable, etc., to your audience;
- the ability to assign a variety of roles to your page. These include an admin, editor, moderator, advertiser, analyst and a live contributor;

- the ability to schedule posts ahead of time using the Native Facebook Scheduler.

Questions to consider

1. What dreams has God already brought to fruition in my life?
2. What dreams has He planted in my heart that He's been telling me it's time to move forward on?
3. What is my goal for social media?
4. What challenges do you see ahead of you on social media?

Tweetable moments

"Focus on God makes all the difference for our businesses, our ministries, and the rest of our lives." ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

"Keeping God as our primary focus is how we start to #BeWorthFollowing."
~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

"When your clients know your character and who you are as a person, they will be more likely to refer more clients to you." ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

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Chapter 2: #BeGod's

The Cornerstone of the Foundation

*More than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants.
Matthew 6:33, CEV*

You already have an idea that social media should be a foundational part of your promotional strategy if you want to increase your brand awareness and influence. Taking a proactive approach is key, meaning we need to go where the people are. My friend, they are on social media.

If you long to make an impact offline, begin by making it online.

However, let's back up one important step. If we long to make the most influential impact *period*, we must begin with the right foundation. Let's see what that means.

Maintaining a God-focus leads to the health of everything else in our lives, including our business and ministry. Looking to God for our definition of success before we dive into building our platform (our tribe) makes all the difference in how we view our goals and how we will know what sort of impact we're making.

We'll talk more about true success later on, but for now let's invite God in to our ultimate purpose in life. Matthew 22:37-39 (NLT) says, "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Notice how the primary commandment is to love God, even before loving others? Yes, He deserves our greatest love. That's the main point. But from that order, we can also see a second truth: When we love God first, we *are able to love* others, to focus on others. God must be first if we're to be rightly related to anyone or anything else in life.

One important question to ask ourselves every day is *Whose platform am I really building, my own or God's?*

Whose platform am I building, my own or God's?

Write it on a Post-It for your computer monitor. Make a selfie video on your phone so you can visually ask yourself this question every day. Set a consistent tone for your life by committing to make your business or ministry about building the Kingdom instead of creating your own kingdom, and watch how he brings opportunities your way to glorify him—and to provide for you and through you.

We'll discuss lots of practical tips for building our online presence. But first, let me tell you about the most practical step you can take each day. Keep an open mind, because at first glance it may not seem very practical at all—but that's short-sighted thinking.

Proactively meeting with God every day is the most practical step we can take toward a productive day and a social network that's as wide reaching as God

desires for the work He gives us. You may already have a habit of daily quiet time with the Lord, or maybe you've heard of it and want to know its worth.

Why is a daily meeting with God so practical? Because it reminds us each day that we are working on his platform. We need his direction to keep him first, because our human nature is to promote ourselves more than him. Even the trend to be "on mission" can be warped into focusing on how much we want to do for him instead of seeing our weaknesses and limitations, our talents and successes in light of Him.

John 15:1-2 (MSG) says, "I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing."

That's pretty straightforward! Think about the image of a branch growing from the vine. The vine provides the resources the branch needs to grow. Ah! We need to look daily to the Lord, to remain connected to Him, if we (and thus any of our efforts) are to grow strong and productive.

Our dreams come from the Lord. We may have lots of dreams for our lives, so how do we know which ones He wants us to run with? Well, through time in His Word, prayer, and rubbing shoulders with others who have the same main focus, eyes and hearts on Him.

Psalm 37:4 (ESV) says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." It might be tempting to read that as if He will grant us every dream we ask Him for. But with some adjusting of our priorities to align them with His, we can read the verse's meaning to be that if we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will put His desires for us into our hearts—*He'll plant the desires into us that He wants to fulfill through us*. God dreamers don't trust their own voice and ideas; they trust the voice and ideas of God.

That truth is nothing short of miraculous—and He wants that personally for you and for me. He wants to work through us. Amen!

When you live and work keeping God as your focus, doors will open. Seek Him with every fiber of your being, continue being faithful to Him and opportunity will seek *you*. As it does, remember God brought you here, and He'll help keep you accountable for what you do with what He's given you.

Building a solid foundation

I want you to last. I want your business to last. I want your ministry to last. I want you to build a life and business/ministry that is not only pleasing to God, but one that that will last, even when the obstacles and challenges come your way.

But when it comes to being social on social media, we tend to come to it with the wrong mindset, a mindset that will not last.

Our initial thought is that social media is all about selling and making sales. The more we can push, promote and broadcast what it is that we have to offer, the more sales we will get, and in turn, the more successful we will be. But if this is the way we approach our businesses on social media, we will not last.

We have it backwards. Yes, social media allows us some great opportunities to connect with our dream clients, who in turn will want to do business with us. But the reality is, that comes much later.

All of this goes back to #BeWorthFollowing. Before we can even think about making a sale, we have to be someone who is worth following. And the way we become someone who is worth following is by building a solid foundation on social media, a foundation that will last.

So, how do we do this? We have to go back to our purpose for life—to glorify God—which drives every other purpose, including for being on social media. We have to start by having a clear vision of what our goals are for social media, and truthfully, this is a step many leaders overlook. If we just jump into social media without having a clear understanding of our why and our purpose for it, we'll end up spending a lot of time doing things that will not get us the results we were hoping for. When obstacles inevitably come, our frustrations can take over, and if we don't stay steady in our clear purpose, eventually we'll give up on social media.

From the time I was eighteen, I knew God had called me to full-time ministry. As I went through college and then on to seminary, God opened some incredible doors for me. While living in Texas I had the opportunity to fulfill my dream of working in youth ministry full-time, and God also allowed me to fulfill my dream of public speaking by allowing me to speak at several events. Things were looking great! I had my entire life ahead of me, and I knew God was going to use me in the church as a full-time ministry leader.

Unfortunately, that dream ended quickly as I felt multiple setbacks to those dreams. However, I still had this little nagging feeling inside of me. I still questioned why the dreams I had as an eighteen-year-old were not coming true. Why would God send me to seminary to then work in education? What happened to the speaking opportunities? What happened to the visions that God had given me?

Honestly, I lived with these questions for years. In 2011, I resigned from education to come home to be with my son and to finally go after the dreams that I felt God had placed in my life. I no longer wanted to work for someone else; I wanted to be an entrepreneur who changed lives.

Little did I know that God would lead me to social media. Little did I know that God would intertwine all of the hopes and dreams I had as an eighteen-year old and apply them to this new field. Little did I know that God was going to use me and the gifts He had given me, after all. Oh, how little I knew!

In my quest to find answers, to hear from God about why my life looked so different from the one I envisioned years ago, I came across some timeless truths that have encouraged my heart at times of despair, confusion, hurt, and anger. With eyes wide open and a heart longing for peace, I came to realize that God has always had my dreams in mind and that He is using them in ways I never imagined, in ways that are greater and bigger than what my little mind ever could have hoped for.

So this is where we start on our journey to social-media success. We start with some basic life lessons that will be the foundation for learning how to #BeWorthFollowing. Here are the truths I've learned that underlie everything we're going to discuss.

Trust God, even when you don't have all the answers.

“By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home. When he left he had no idea where he was going. By an act

of faith he lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger camping in tents” (Hebrews 11:8 MSG). Let’s say it again: God dreamers don’t trust their own voices and ideas; instead, they trust the voice and ideas of God. So many times, God doesn’t give us the full picture all at once. Instead, He gives us the dream and shows us the next step and simply wants us to obey. And once we obey, He then gives us a glimpse of what He has next for us. Clarity comes through the obedience.

Despite the hurt, confusion and anger I’ve felt through my ups and downs, God has been leading me all along, just as He’s been leading you. Every experience I have been through has prepared me for where He has me right now. The dreams I had of being in ministry full-time, reaching people around the world, speaking and encouraging the hearts of women—He has brought about. In my role as a social-media/communication specialist, I have the opportunity to be a part of everything I dreamed of when I was in seminary. Every hurtful word that was spoken to me has prepared me for where I am right now. And I have to believe He is doing the same thing for you too.

He knows what we can handle in every season of life, because seasons change. Other realities and responsibilities and life lessons ebb and flow, and so does our work. Consider where you are in life and what God is saying to you today. Sink yourself into right now, with Him at the helm, no matter whether that strategy seems unconventional compared to what others are telling you about success.

Let God build your platform.

My pursuit of social media as a career started in 2012. I knew in order to gain expertise in the field and to be seen as a “specialist,” I had to get likes and follows. I initially wondered, *How in the world am I going to get more people to follow me on Twitter and “like” me on Facebook?* I had no idea what I was doing. I just knew that my entire focus needed to be on increasing my numbers because I needed to be a legitimate expert in the field if I was going to be a social-media manager. I remember looking at all the other social-media gurus with their big numbers, asking, “Will I ever get there?”

As I learned how to navigate the world of social media, God showed me a way to gain a following that is outside of the current norm. A way that is not common talk amongst the social-media influencers.

“Don’t worry about building a platform. If you listen to God, people will listen to you because you will have something to say.”

~Mark Batterson, *Draw the Circle: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge*ⁱ

I was taken back when I heard this at a social-media training: “See what’s working for them and duplicate it.” What this speaker was saying is that the best way to grow your numbers and expand your reach is to be a copycat. While it can be important to watch the experts, copying is not the best road to travel. Unfortunately, the thinking behind this is flawed. The emphasis is on copying and numbers, but there is *so much more* to social media than just the numbers.

Here is the hardcore truth: The impact you can make on social media has nothing to do with your numbers. There is no secret number that you need to attain before you are successful, before you can make a difference in someone's life.

Look at what *The Message* version of Romans 9:27 says:

If each grain of sand on the seashore were numbered and the sum labeled "chosen of God," They'd be numbers still, not names; salvation comes by personal selection. God doesn't count us; he calls us by name. Arithmetic is not his focus.

God is interested in people more than numbers. Sure, He cares about the whole population, but He also focuses on each person in the world. And He has certain people He wants to reach through you and your social-media presence. High or low numbers, that's not the top priority. How well we reach the ones He sends our way is what matters most.

Unfortunately, in our social-media-crazed world, all we hear about are the numbers: How many followers you have, how many likes a post got, how many comments you received, how many people retweeted your tweet, how many people are talking about your posts, what is your organic reach. Focusing on these items creates a tremendous amount of stress, and the emphasis is in the wrong place.

Does this mean we set social media to the side and do nothing because hey, God will write across the sky what we're supposed to post at what time? No. What it means is that once you start to focus on what's important and what matters, the other things will fall into place—specifically, your platform, your message and your numbers.

Take a deep breath and know that your numbers are not the measure of your effectiveness on social media. Your effectiveness is measured by the positive impact you're making. That's what social media is all about.

With a foundation based on pursuing God's dreams for you in order to primarily further His Kingdom purposes, and by letting Him build the platform, you'll be well fit to face the challenges.

"You don't have to seek opportunity. All you have to do is seek God. And if you seek God, opportunity will seek you."

~Mark Batterson, *Draw the Circle*ⁱⁱ

Tips from the front line

Want to connect, engage and be successful on Twitter? Here are some pro tips:

- Don't be afraid to follow people. Many times Twitter requires that you take the first bold step in connecting with someone. Connect and then engage with their content. This opens the door for future engagement.
- If you are using Twitter for business, DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT "protect" your tweets or make your Twitter profile private. The harder you make it for people to connect with you, the less people will connect with you.
- If you are going to use a prescheduled direct message (a message that

automatically goes out to your new followers), do not make your message about you. Don't ask people to follow you on another platform. Don't try to get them to download your eBook or even worse, purchase your book, product or service. Instead, ask an intriguing question that 1) they will want to answer (make it about them) and 2) will help open the doors to future conversations.

- Be sure to follow people back. Nothing looks worse than having thousands of followers without following anyone back. When you do that, it gives off the impression that you just don't care about the people who are following you.
- Be sure to use hashtags in your tweets when you can. It's been said that tweets that contain hashtags are more likely to get retweeted. Using the right hashtags helps you and your content get found.
- Post images with your tweets as often as you can. Again, research has shown that tweets with images get a much higher engagement rate.
- Try to keep you tweets between 80-110 characters (since the limit is 140 characters). Why? Because you want to give people the opportunity to directly retweet your tweet, without having to change things up.

Check out the insights that Twitter offers you. You'll get insight that includes your engagement rate, what tweets got the most engagement, your top tweet, the number of retweets, likes and clicks your tweets have received and your top follower and mention.

Questions to consider

1. What do you need to ask God for help with?
2. What do you want to see God do for you? through you?
3. Right now, write down when you will have your "business meeting" with God each day. What time and where?
4. Will you ask God to help you entrust your numbers to Him, and ask Him to guide the building of your dream?

Tweetable moments

"Seek him with every fiber of your being, continue being faithful to Him & opportunity will seek YOU." ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

"Maintaining a God-focus leads to the health of everything else in our lives, including our business and ministry." ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

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"Social media is about impacting the lives of others & your numbers have NOTHING to do with that impact" ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

“Make your business or ministry about building the Kingdom . . . and watch how he brings opportunities your way to glorify him—and to provide for you and through you.” ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

“There is no secret # that you need to attain before you can impact the life of someone on social media.” ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

“Your effectiveness on social media is measured by the positive impact that you are making! ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

“God-Sized Dreamers don’t trust their own voice & ideas, they trust the voice & ideas of God.” ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

“Before we can even think about making a sale, we have to be someone who is worth following.” ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

“Clarity comes through the obedience.” ~@DrJenBennett, #BeWorthFollowing

ⁱ Batterson, Mark, *Draw the Circle: The 40-Day Prayer Challenge*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 136.

ⁱⁱ Ibid, 19.

#BeWorthFollowing: How To Be Different And Influence People In A Crowded Social World, is available for purchase on Amazon. You can find it here:
<https://amzn.to/2H7clh6>