

Announcement Regarding SBL and Social Media: Facebook

6/12/15

Many SBL members are familiar with a Group on Facebook called the Society of Biblical Literature, though this group was not limited exclusively to SBL members. While it had not been an official social media channel of SBL, it clearly met a felt need. Membership in the group reached 5,700 users, with regular requests for new admission to the group. The volunteers who had administered the Facebook group deserve our appreciation for their efforts.

However, without sufficient resources, clear guidelines, and simply time, the administrators faced the task of Sisyphus. Those who participated in the group know that it was spammed and trolled, discussions sometimes strayed from SBL's academic focus, and last week it received a posting of obscene content. We recognize that any medium, official or not, bearing the SBL name reflects indirectly on all our members. We want to do our best to represent on behalf of our membership the values that we believe characterize the SBL.

Social media present new challenges with which we are still coming to terms and have not yet completely mastered. We are working to develop a Facebook presence that is a safe place that reflects our common values of shared respectful discourse. *As we develop the methods and means to do this, it was determined to temporarily close the SBL Facebook Group, and we did so on June 10.*

SBL's mission is to foster biblical scholarship—inclusive of informal and online conversations. SBL websites are designed to advance its mission among members and the general public. Facilitating conversation amongst SBL members and between members and those interested in our work is core to SBL's mission. Our members and the leadership of SBL recognize that social media is a powerful tool to advance our work.

It is our responsibility, too, to manage and moderate actively such media in order to ensure that discourse stays focused on [SBL's academic mission and core values](#). Those core values, we believe, demonstrate the value of our field to the general public and higher education.

SBL will continue to manage its resources and look for ways, Facebook included, to foster biblical scholarship and advance the professional interests of SBL's members in sustainable ways. We encourage your input and patience on how to do this responsibly.