

# **FIRST PERSON: Facebook is deleting older live videos. How do I respond?**

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In recent decades, churches have continually taken a ride on the digital wave to add tools for ministry. Now, this moment finds us in another point of transition, riding a new wave. This particular wave finds us in the ocean of Facebook, which can be a continual love-hate relationship for ministry leaders.

An announcement mid-February on Facebook's press release site states, "Any new live broadcasts can be replayed, downloaded or shared from Facebook pages or profiles for 30 days, after which they will be automatically removed from Facebook."

At first reading, many quickly started to find their most-wanted Sunday services or special services to download. Fortunately, the announcement also lists an extended grace period.

"Before your archival live videos are deleted, you will be notified by email and in the app, and from then you'll have 90 days to download or transfer your content."

Users of your Facebook pages/groups should have an email or notification within the app to download the old content.

To help us navigate this change let me breakdown the news in three thoughts:

**Start by downloading your older content you wish to keep.**

Naturally, first dig into your archive and find the live

videos you wish to save. Facebook has setup a few different options for you to do this: Individual downloads, bulk downloads, and transfer to cloud storage.

For individual downloads, select the video you want to save and click [...] (More Options) and select download video.

For bulk downloads and cloud storage, click on the Facebook notification about deleting videos and click download live videos or transfer live videos. Follow the prompts to select location from there.

I would suggest carving out a block of time to grab as many things as you can in one sitting. When requested, there is a chance Facebook will delay deleting your videos for even up to six months, but I would not feel comfortable with the unknown once we move past the 90 day mark. Download the videos while you have a chance.

### **Should I be concerned about this change?**

At first glance, this may seem like a drastic change that negatively impacts your Facebook feed, but this change aligns with analytical studies showing videos are primarily watched within the first 30 days.

I would not be concerned with this hurting your Facebook presence, but I would try to find another avenue to also stream.

Honestly, Facebook live streaming has always been an unpredictable platform. Viewers lack long watching patterns given they are distracted by so many other notifications within the platform. To avoid this, many churches opt for other platforms that are meant to hold an audience for a longer time like Youtube or private streaming pages and/or companies.

Facebook is making this change primarily because of the cost

savings. They reportedly spend hundreds of millions of dollars on live video storage, which will be drastically cut back with this change. Their decision to delete after 30 days seems generous for most viewing habits.

For instance, your church Christmas special may be live streamed in early December with a larger audience watching, but after January 1 your community is ready to move past Christmas. You may see some views trickle in after the start of the year, but most of your viewers care for the content during the holiday season.

The same can be said about each Sunday. By God's grace we can come together weekly for worship and preach the Gospel truths, which means our congregation and community sits with the weight of the message for a week before we come together again to hear a fresh word. After 30 days you have four weeks of new content for your viewers to digest, which I consider a healthy amount to keep on-demand.

### **Where do we go from here?**

In a way, this reminds me of similar thoughts back in 2021 when Facebook experienced its largest outage in company history. For hours, ministry leaders wondered how to communicate without the social media avenue available.

Take a moment to consider how you can spread your online content over multiple platforms to avoid any future platform issues. As mentioned above, YouTube is a good option, but maybe Vimeo can be considered for uploading a long archive video gallery. Vimeo has long been known as a "cleaner" video gallery to store content for on-demand and even simple website embeds, but YouTube's ties with google make it more search engine friendly.

Ultimately, consider where you as a church need to be online. I continually consult with churches and encourage everyone to stay within a structure that is comfortable for

you as the leader and for your volunteers. Do you need an online presence? Yes, but do not make it complicated. Make sure the folks that need the content can get the content, but do not feel pressured from what other churches may be doing.

If you need help navigating the changing online climate for your church, please feel free to reach out to me at [tcade@mbcb.org](mailto:tcade@mbcb.org) to start a conversation.