

Social Media & The Christian

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Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Should a Christian use social media? Facebook, Instagram, twitter?

You don't have to use social media, but it is a part of life now. Some rail against it as nothing but evil. However, social media is nothing more than a new way to communicate that society must learn to adjust to, and we, as Christians, need to learn to adjust to it, also. Social media is no different than the automobile, telephone, computer, and many other innovations that changed how we live and how we interact with each other. With each of these innovations some of the changes were good and some bad. In the 1920's some railed against the automobile as a terrible invention that will ruin the family and bring down civilization. Organized crime used the Model T for all sorts of crimes including murder, robbing banks, and human trafficking! Businessmen complained that the telephone was the worst invention ever because people should talk face-to-face. And the telephone has been used to perpetrate every crime imaginable!

Today is no different. Rather than fight against the inevitable innovation of smartphones and social media because some will use it for evil, we instead need to consider the negatives and the positives and use social media wisely. What are the dangers of social media? How can social media be used for good? How can social media be used for Christ?

Technical How-To

Facebook is what I know. I have Instagram & twitter, but do not use them. Whatever you use, you need to KNOW HOW IT WORKS!! There are privacy settings. You can be private, you can limit who you are friends with and you can limit what you see and what others see. You can even hide what some family members post that you don't like, if needed. My advice is to NOT be public, limit your information to friends or friends and their friends, unless you are doing a business or ministry. But then keep the business and ministry separate from your personal information. The congregation has a public Facebook page that anyone can see. And so do many Christian organizations including PCC and Manatawny camps. Many families have private groups only those invited can join. Also, there are private groups for youth groups, Christian ladies, study groups, encouragement, etc.

There are many sources of information on how to control your, or your children's, social media. Please use them, educate yourself, then take appropriate actions!

Why do you want or have a social media account?

Why do you want a social media account? To connect with your friends? Great! Keep close to family, church, and a youth group? Wonderful! To encourage and lift up others? Fantastic! To find new friends? That's not such a good idea. Do you use social media to get validation and to feel better about yourself because you get a bunch of likes or comments? This is a real problem on Facebook that can be unhealthy and actually contributes to negative feelings. Do you post selfies to get people to like how you look? This is also a problem, especially for young women.

You need to prayerfully consider what you really want to achieve with social media. Parents, discuss it with your children when you decide they can participate in social media.

NEGATIVES

Let's talk about some of the negatives and then we will talk about the positives. There are legitimate dangers in social media. I recommend that you visit the site of an organization called:

The Organization for Social Media Safety: <https://ofsms.org/>

This, and other organizations, are out there trying to educate and protect young people. Please look for information with which to educate yourself. It will help you protect yourself and children from all types of issues and possibly lifelong embarrassment or even harm.

The Organization for Social Media Safety specifically deals with the following dangers:

- Cyberbullying,
- Hate speech,
- Harassment,
- Human Trafficking (through catfishing* and other means),
- Democracy tampering,
- Privacy Invasion,

*Catfishing is when a person creates a completely fake persona online for devious purposes. Some use it to lure those who can be easily manipulated and robbed. Some use it to become fake friends with young people and then lure them into terrible situations.

Other Negatives

- **Sharing too much** and sharing too much of the wrong things, Would you be comfortable with your current or a future boss, your grandmother, your church leaders or other family seeing what you posted? One way to combat these problems is to be friends with you parents, grandma, people at church, and then act accordingly. Again, think about your purpose in posting.
- **Comparing** It's tough to not compare our lives with others, especially when everything is posted online. For teens, social media quickly becomes a show, to make themselves look cool. This can encourage embellishment, a subtle but powerful form of lying. When we lie

about who we are, our real sense of self is weakened. This is something most teenagers are developing. Focusing on creating fantasy, instead of embracing their true self, stunts their maturity. It is hard not to compare ourselves with others. In reality, Christ is who we should compare ourselves to - and come up short - yet he lifted us up and made us worthy. Now we can have both humility and self-worth and can lift up and put others first.

- **Oversexualized Clothing or Beauty Pics,**
Teenagers, especially girls, find out quickly that their newly discovered beauty and sexuality can be used for attention, even manipulation. It can be very easy and popular to post something risqué or sexy for the purpose of attention. This is dangerous and sends a very wrong message.
- **Viral Video Attempts** often are dangerous or just plain stupid. Young people have died from planking, jumping cars, swallowing questionable things. Simply, don't be stupid and get injured or killed.
- **Humiliating or Publicly Shaming Others**
Many people, even Christians, like to deride and laugh at various groups, Walmart people, stupid behaviors, etc. Rather than denigrate and laugh at others, how about we instead pray for them since Jesus died for them and God loves them. I'll talk more about Walmart people in a minute.
- **Human drama** can be magnified often without context or correct information.
- **Unkindness** is easier when we are not face to face and many become mean,
- **Meaningless Conversations** can be quick, immediate, and huge timewasters. A little fun is fine, but how much time are you devoting to what amounts to nothing?
- **Fake News & Confirmation Bias** can make Christians look bad. Confirmation bias is when someone is very quick to accept as true any story or news item that appears to confirm their beliefs. When Christians do this with a false story, it gives believers a bad name. Some fake stories that appear to support belief are shared by groups that intentionally want to embarrass believers. This has been true in the last several years with fake stories about Noah's ark being found and supposed proof of the Israelites crossing of the Red Sea. Both stories were easy to debunk. This also happens a great deal in politics. PLEASE investigate and verify by other reputable sources before sharing! Or just don't share that story at all. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

NEGATIVES SPECIFICALLY FOR CHRISTIANS

As Christians in the public arena – and Facebook and other social media are having a microphone at the mall – what we say and post inappropriately is magnified! We must be very careful and wise so that we model Christ to the world.

- **Wrong source of self-worth.** Christians should not get their self-worth, joy, or sense of appreciation from likes and comments on Facebook. Christians get our self-worth from Christ and our value and sense of being loved and appreciated from the Body of Christ! Come here to be loved and appreciated, not Facebook!
- **Airing your opinion on every subject** and winning each argument isn't that important.

Proverbs 18:2

Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.

- **Folly rather than righteousness**, Do your posts, memes, and words show righteousness or folly? Do they lift up Jesus before others or embarrass him?
- **Wrong judgments** are easy to make based on incomplete information. We need to be careful to not join in when others start to criticize and don't have all the facts. Even if you have all the facts, it probably would be better not to air your judgments on Facebook.
- **Anger, Confrontation, and Battle in the Public Arena** Anger is unfortunately common on social media, even among Christians. Either avoid anger or avoid social media. Both together are a recipe for sin.

James 1:19-20

9 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Ecclesiastes 7:9

Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

Colossians 3:8

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

- **Not all your opinions need to be shared!** It is not necessary to win the battle or argument. It is only necessary to love others and show Christ and hopefully plant seeds and win souls.
- **Don't argue**

2 Timothy 2:23-25

23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

We say many things we shouldn't, but when we walk up to a microphone in front of many people we are very careful and (hopefully) plan what we say. Remember, before you post or share, social media is having a microphone in the mall.

We need to be peaceful, kind, gentle, patient, etc., etc.!

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Colossians 3:12

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Walmart People

It is a popular pastime to laugh at, deride, and look down on those that dress and behave inappropriately. We, even here in the body, will talk negatively about others outside our church, and sometimes in a deriding, condescending, and/or unkind matter.

Those disgusting abortion supporters. Those stupid drug addicts. Those shameful bums. Those ridiculous and embarrassing Walmart people. Those liberals, those... whatever group it may be.

There are a million photos and memes of stupid people, Walmart people, rednecks, liberals, conservatives, etc. Do not initiate, participate in, or share this behavior!! Is it love? Not in the least.

For example, those Walmart people you've snickered at when you saw the photos. Do you know the circumstances? Did you know that some of them have been raised in horrible circumstances of abuse. Some haven't been raised by their parents at all and were never taught any better. Some are special needs or have other issues of mental and emotional health.

Imagine how God feels when you snicker or look down on a mentally ill or special needs person or a person in difficult circumstance! Even if you only do it to yourself.

That "Walmart person" may very well be the woman at the well in John 4, the woman with bleeding in Luke 8, the children that wanted to come to Jesus in Luke 18, the tax collectors and sinners in Matthew 9. And we may very well be the Pharisees. Shame on us, not them. Shame on me and I want to repent publicly for the times I've done this. Shame on me TEN-FOLD when I've done this in the public arena. I am sorry. And if you catch me doing this on Facebook or elsewhere, rebuke me! It's wrong. I am going to try to never do it again. And please don't do it around me or on Facebook.

Proverbs 11:12

Whoever derides their neighbor has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue.

Proverbs 17:27-28

The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered. 28 Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.

Proverbs 10:19

Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

Christians need to hold their tongues more on social media!!

Matthew 12:36-37

But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Ephesians 4:29-30

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

So build Walmart people up according to their needs.

POSITIVES

While there are a lot of negatives to social media there are greater positives!

- **Photo Album & Journal** Keep track of your past activities and positive experiences (It is our vacation photo album),
- **Find valuable information** on any one of thousands of topics,
- **Connect!** Facebook is a fantastic tool for connection with others! Connect with family, especially those that are distant. Connect with friends, past and present, Especially connect with those that are infirm, homebound, bedridden, or cannot join us,
- **Keep up on each other's lives,**
- **Share life in a good way,** good humor, wisdom, and even fun.
- **Have fun** in a positive way,
- **Get to know each other** more,
- **Show love to others,**
- **Share wisdom,**
- **Share important info** that can help others,
- **Share good messages** and positivity,
- **Share life's difficulties** to get help. There are lots of groups, posts, and uplifting memes to help those struggling with various issues, diseases, and conditions, Christians are to support each other and you can find a lot of support being provided by other Christians on Facebook,
- **Give thanks and show public appreciation to others.** Facebook is a great place to publicly say thank you and show appreciation to many people including our police and soldiers,

Proverbs 18:4

The words of the mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a rushing stream.

Strive to be a wise presence online. Let your words and the things you share be refreshing and life-giving. Words are so powerful. They can either heal or they can destroy. Choose your words wisely.

POSITIVES SPECIFICALLY FOR CHRISTIANS

- **PRAY continually!** What a great place social media is to gather and share prayer.
- **Encourage!** Be positive in a spiritually uplifting way,
1 Thessalonians 5:11
Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
Hebrews 10:24-25
And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
- **Share scripture** and spiritual sayings,
- **Keep the Youth group connected,**
- **Find scriptural help,**
- **Keep up with church calendar and events,**
- **Connect with Missionaries and other ministries,**
- **Conduct Bible studies,**
- **Share the positivity of this congregation,**
- **Love and reach out to outsiders** and with grace give a good answer to everyone,
Colossians 4:5-6
Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.
- **Put on, display, and encourage, the Fruits of the Spirit**
Galatians 5:22-24
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
- **Be a Peacemaker** among all the negativity and discord,
Romans 14:19
Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.
- **Be the Light of the World** in a public forum,
Matthew 5:14-16
You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
- **Love your enemies** publicly and openly!
Luke 6:35-36
But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.
- **Let people see Christ in our posts, pictures, and words!**

In closing I want to encourage you to use social media's powerful reach to do good and promote Christ. Be careful of and prepare for the dangers, and ask God to help you use it wisely.

Here is a good prayer for you whenever you are going to share online:

Psalm 19:14

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

And whether you use social media or not, remember our scripture reading for this lesson;

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

If you have any needs, the elders are waiting in the back or you can come forward.