



The West End Encourager

March 12, 2017

How Social Media Posts Can Signal Spiritual Problems

Social media is today's reality, and for whatever it's worth, it appears to be here to stay. It can be a blessing, but it can also be a "Pandora's box" opening up new ethical questions about the way we conduct ourselves online. While it may be easy enough to separate this reality from who we think we really are in person, the fact is that how we approach and use social media can be quite revealing. Sadly, what it often reveals isn't very pretty. Christians, then, as in all other areas of life, need to "watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life (Prov. 4:23). The devil still seeks whom he may devour, and we need to be sober and on the alert (1 Pet. 5:8). This is as true with our time online and in social media as much as anywhere else.

Unfortunately, the use of social media can signal many spiritual problems, even for the child of God who believes in holy conduct. The following areas, for example, can reveal much about our spiritual condition:

The language we use. Anything from innuendo, to OMG, to outright cussing reveals a use of language that is more in line with worldly thinking than with words professing godliness. Are we watching what we say? Do we know what we mean when we say it?

The pictures we show. Suddenly Christians appear, through their pictures online, in clothing (or lack thereof) that may not reflect a mind that first adorns the teaching of Christ and also reflects the "imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (cf. Titus 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:4). The need for modesty (not overdoing it) and avoiding nakedness (not underdoing it) still apply when posting pictures to social media.

The topics we discuss. Social media houses pretty much every topic that anyone can think about, and sometimes it may be best just to move along and avoid some discussions and topics. If we are tempted to post something that we know the Lord would cringe at, we need to pause, reflect, and make a wise choice about what we are about to say.

The attitudes we display when we discuss. This is not just what we discuss, but how we discuss it. It's real easy to allow ourselves to slip into a mode of getting ugly in our responses toward others. This problem is heightened by the fact that we can't hear how someone might say something, and we need to be aware of how others might take what we are saying. Still, kindness needs to be in mind as we discuss any topic that is suitable.

The causes we support. Do we show support for the kinds of causes that are in line with God's word? Even if the cause is secular in nature, we need to make sure we aren't throwing in with something that lends itself to ungodliness.

The links we share. First, are we sharing links that, again, promote what is right? Are we careful about where the links may take us? Second, and this is a major problem in social media, are we sharing what is true? I'm not talking about

obvious humor, which itself needs to be evaluated properly (I'm not against humor). I'm talking about alleged news media sites or other sites that post false information. Then we just run with it and spread the slander. The child of God needs to think critically before sharing. Do your homework before clicking "share."

The pages, photos, and statuses we like. What we like shows up for others to see, and it tells people (get ready), "I like this." Now maybe you don't mean it that way. But these "like" buttons can be problematic if we aren't careful. If it shows up on others' walls that you like something that is inappropriate, then you need to asking yourself what you really wish for others to see about who you are.

At this point, we might expect for some to say something to the effect that what they do on social media is nobody else's business, and that we shouldn't be judging anyone. Mirroring the "don't judge me" mentality of the world, Christians can fall into the trap of thinking that what they do is not open for anyone else to make any judgments about. Unfortunately, that's naive. When we engage in online public activities, we'll be judged by the same. If we don't want to be judged by others online, then we shouldn't be showing our hand (or more sensitive things) to the world.

We aren't so much talking about those times here or there where we know we messed up, though these moments, too, can be an issue. Surely we've all had discussions we are embarrassed about or posts we should have never shared. I'm as guilty as the next guy. We are talking more about continuing patterns that begin to emerge as we post, like, comment, and share. We cannot afford to disconnect our online world from the reality of who we are supposed to be as Christians. This would be like the apostles disconnecting their writings from who they were in person. What they wrote was as much a part of their influence as what they said and did in person. Today, we are on a worldwide platform with social media where what we say and how we say it is out there for the world to see. What we show and how much we show matters. If we don't like that, then we have the option of not using it.

We don't have to post anything on social media sites, but if we do, know that it says something about who we are and what we think—just like anything else we do. It's out there on display for others to see and judge. This is the reality before us, and we need to understand our need to glorify God here as much as anywhere. It is the Lord Christ whom we serve, and if we aren't using social media to serve Christ—that is, it is merely a selfish outlet for a narcissistic world—then it's time to repent and figure out where our loyalties lie.

Posting good content does not necessarily mean we are righteous, but posting bad or questionable content does certainly show a spiritual problem. Let's recommit ourselves to using all of our opportunities, whether in person or in social media outlets, to glorify God and share Christ with a broken world.

Doy Moyer

Readiness of Mind

After the apostle Paul departed from the city of Thessalonica, he left behind a few believers, but the Jews in general had closed their minds to the message that “Jesus is the Christ.” These Jews had access in their synagogue to scrolls of Old Testament scriptures. Paul preached from these scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth died for their sins and arose from the dead to prove He is the Messiah the prophets of their nation had anticipated for centuries. Although a few men of that city believed, a host of rabble rousers closed their minds, refused to countenance such an idea, stirred up persecution against the saints, and forced the apostle to “get out of town” late one night (see Acts 17:1-9).

EDITOR

John F. Maddocks, Sr.
jfmaddocks1@gmail.com
416-669-8717

THE WEST END CHURCH OF CHRIST

145 Evans Ave.
Toronto, ON
M8Z 5X8

www.westendchurchofchrist.com

Meeting Times:

Sunday Bible Study: 10:15am
Worship Service: 11:15am
Tuesday Evening Study: 7:30
All Are Very Welcome!

TODAY'S SERVANTS

Song Leader: John
Reader: Jack (Job 39)
Lord's Table: James O.
Server: Philip
Opening Prayer: Shawn
Closing Prayer: Abraham

NEXT WEEKS SERVANTS

Song Leader: Noli
Reader: William (Job 40)
Lord's Table: Den
Server: Charles
Opening Prayer: Ethran
Closing Prayer: Shawn

Paul made his way some 50 miles down the road to the city of Berea. Again, as was his custom, Paul entered a synagogue of the Jews and began the same process over—alleging and demonstrating from the Old Testament scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. The apostle found among these Jews open and receptive hearts—men who honestly and eagerly examined the scriptures Paul read in their midst. Luke tells us that these men of Berea not only received Paul's teaching, but they daily examined the scriptures to determine “whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

When Luke commends the nobility of these Bereans, he made specific note not only of their study habits but also their “readiness of mind” (Acts 17:11). This attitude was prerequisite and fundamental to their willingness to examine and study the scriptures daily. The word “readiness” combines a preposition “before” and the word “mind” to describe the mindset of the Bereans before their study of the scriptures even began. The “mind” is essential to man's examination or study of the scriptures, but its “before” condition determines whether that study ever takes place. The mind, as the Greek word suggests, must be “ready.”

The minds of the Jews at Berea, as Jews everywhere, were conditioned by scripture to anticipate at some point in their history the arrival of a Messiah—an anointed saviour. Hundreds, even thousands, of years had passed since the first prophecies of the coming Messiah and many Jews had become lethargic and indifferent about its prospects. Others were so misinformed that Jesus didn't fit the pattern of their thinking and was dismissed as perverse and false.

The Bereans, however, were different. They were both excited about the claim and the scriptures that proved it. When Paul unrolled the scrolls of the Old Testament writings and announced Jesus as the Messiah, their minds were “ready,” “eager,” and “prepared” to examine the prophecies and Paul's application of them to Jesus.

Would it not be wonderful today if every one of us who claim to be Christians was this eager to grow in Bible knowledge and Christ-like character? If we were, we would daily open our Bibles, examine verses and chapters, and answer a few simple questions that are designed to prepare our hearts for Sunday and Wednesday Bible studies and our lives for eager service in God's kingdom.

Think, brethren, how much each of us would grow in wisdom and stature with God; think of the knowledge and strength we would gain in preparation for living in an ungodly world of sin; think of the deepened faith we would have in God and in His word; think of the love and care we would begin to show one another; and think of the zeal and enthusiasm we would have to teach sinners.

When Bereans had this kind of mind, God called them “noble”—a word that means of “high rank.” That's who we'd be in God's kingdom. Not only an “elect race,” a “holy nation,” a “royal priesthood,” but also “noble citizens” ranking high in the mind of God. How special would that be, brethren?

L. A. Stauffer

On behalf of Jack and myself, thank you all so much for the many prayers you offered on our behalf, as we were been traveling for the last six weeks. Our trip to Australia was excellent and memorable, for a number of reasons. Much good work was accomplished and many expressed tremendous gratitude for our coming. Lord willing, next Lord's Day, I will give a presentation about the trip. For those unable to be here, I will be video recording it, and will make it available online for any who desire to view it. It sure is good to be home!