

# SOCIAL MEDIA

## AND THE APPLICATION OF BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

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*“From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law” (Luke 12:52-53, NIV)*

Jesus quoted this verse concerning the ‘last days’. I think that Jesus could have just as easily been talking about social media such as Facebook.

Facebook is a 550 billion dollar industry with subscribers representing one-seventh of the world’s population. The majority of all advertising dollars in the world, make their way through Facebook. The founder and CEO of Facebook (who is 36 years old) has a net worth of over 100 billion dollars and growing.

The primary objective of Facebook is not to entertain you with curious videos of pets, or to provide a convenient social method of communication. The objective of the developers of Facebook is to invade your privacy in such an insidious manner that Facebook knows more about you than your spouse does. This mountain of private information about you and your spending habits is then sold to advertisers to target more ads directly to you. In other words, Facebook’s objective is to make money off of its subscribers, mountains of money! If you do not have to pay for your ‘product’ or use of social media, it means that you are the product.

The ability to visit with friends around the world on the screen of our mobile devices has been really nice. It is really pleasant to be able to wish someone a happy birthday instantly on social media, without the effort of having to write a memo on a card and mail it. In fact, Facebook will remind you when your friends have a birthday! Facebook is ingeniously designed, programmed, and built to keep you

looking at its addictive bright colorful screen. The longer we look at the screen, the more money goes into Facebook’s bank account.

Unusual psychology has taken root in the use and dependency on social media, that perhaps few could have predicted. On social media, members find it easy to speak in demeaning, angry, derogatory terms to those who have different viewpoints from theirs. Unfortunately, it also includes even their friends. If hypothetically, four friends shared a friendly social cup of coffee physically, their conversations might wander from one thought to another. For instance, our four friends might talk about the goodness of God with one another. They might talk about their children, their parents, schools, and other things. Sitting physically across from one another, these four friends would not find it necessary to attack one another or to berate one another over beliefs that are not in common with theirs.

Why is it that on social media, these same four hypothetical friends can find it easy to verbally attack, demean, and insult the same friends because of the things they have shared? Jesus told us when speaking of the last days that there would be divisions among families, father against son, mother against daughter, and more, as quoted in Luke 12:52-53. Is this not what happens on social media?

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, his words echoed the practice that often takes place on social media, *“For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder” (2 Corinthians 12:20, NIV)*

Brothers and sisters that share the same faith, that attend the same church, that worship the same God, that read the same Bible, somehow find it acceptable to insert their unwelcome opinions and express their

anger and disagreement with their brother or sister when they disagree with one another concerning a world view. This should not be so. This is a sign of the last days.

Another dangerous unpredictable psychology is that when something is posted on social media such as Facebook (or other social media), multitudes automatically believe it as truth! This may be because we have come to such a day when we can no longer believe the evening news, and people are hungry to hear what they think might be the truth.

When a constant barrage of lies, misstatements, and distortions are posted unchecked to one billion social media subscribers, there is the potential for literally revolutions to be inspired. Think about it, if a distorted lie is posted to one billion people, and if only one percent of the viewers believe that lie, that is 10 million people who were deceived! There is power in numbers.

Let me be honest, I use social media. I find that it has its place and is a great tool of communication with the church and friends at large. I use social media *for my benefit*. I try not to let social media use me *for its benefit*.

The social media that the Apostle Paul experienced was by way of writing letters, having conversations, and hearing rumors that could not easily be proven. Paul must have noticed in his day that we, as Christians, have a responsibility for how we conduct ourselves in the 'social arena' of the day. In fact, Paul gave some of the best guidelines to use when considering posting or speaking about others as follows:

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things"* (Philippians 4:8, NIV).

Using this scripture, as well as taking a little poetic license, permit me to offer some common sense suggestions on how to use social media, like Facebook, from a biblical mindset:

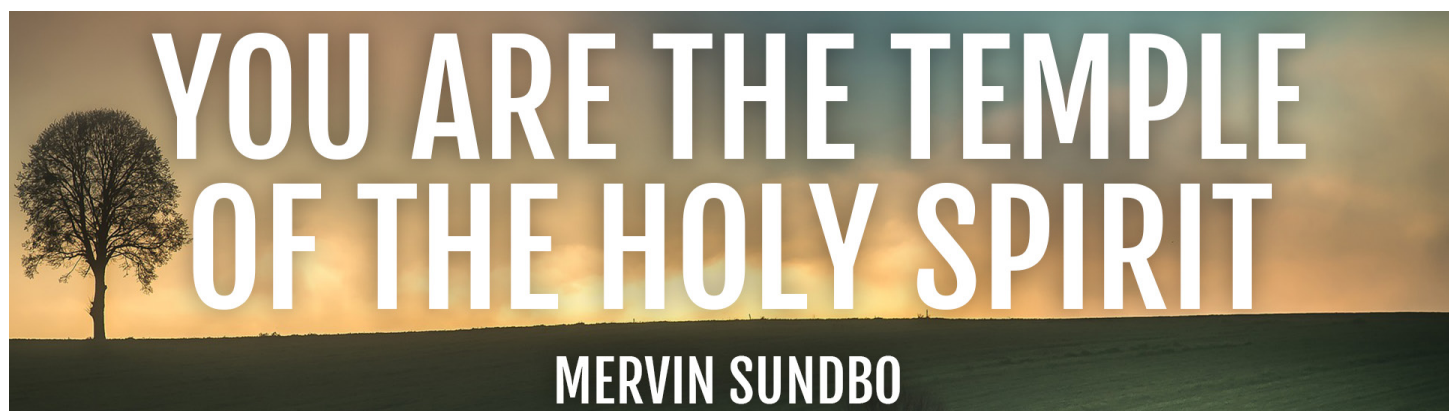
1. When making a post consider what Paul said in Philippians 4:8. Is it true, noble, pure, admirable, and praiseworthy?
2. United States radio host Bernard Meltzer in 1967 said, "Before

you speak ask yourself if what you are going to say is true, is kind, is necessary, is it helpful. If the answer is no, maybe what you are about to say should be left unsaid (or unposted)."

3. Be mindful, friends on Facebook are not necessarily real friends. There may be many names in your friend list that should be removed.
4. Facebook or social media unfriending is not the same as no longer being friends with a brother or sister. It is not a crime nor is it morally wrong to unfriend those that bring division. *"I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them"* (Romans 16:17, NIV).
5. Refrain from posting angry, condemning, controversial comments as well as political posts, or anything that causes people to have to pick or defend a viewpoint.
6. Be aware that when you have ongoing social media arguments back and forth, Facebook loves you! The more screen time you are engaged, the more money social media makes off of you!
7. Remember on social media, you are entitled to your opinion but you are not entitled to tell others what their opinion should be.
8. Resist the practice of trolling, which is purposely posting material that is controversial for the purpose of causing debate and division.
9. Be responsible.

These are common-sense suggestions, not commands, for consideration when using social media. If social media becomes too great of an addiction for you and me, it is very easy and appropriate to simply deactivate and step away.

"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colossians 3:17, ESV). †



The Scriptures referenced in this article are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

When the tabernacle in the wilderness was built according to the pattern God had given to Moses, *"the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"* (Exodus 40:35). Similarly, when Solomon's temple was complete in all of its splendour and everything and everyone

was in place, *"the glory of the Lord filled the house of God"* (2 Chronicles 5:14). Let us read verses 13 & 14 of this chapter, *"It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a*



*cloud, even the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God."*

These two Old Testament temples were made with human hands. God gave the pattern for them, they were built according to the pattern and they served His purposes at that time. They are types in the Old Testament that point to what God had in mind and revealed in the New Testament. Ultimately, He wants a church (a corporate body) that will be directed and moved upon by His Holy Spirit. The church building is only a physical structure. The church is the many-membered body of Christ wherever the gathering takes place. Sometimes the assembly may be few and other times many. Matthew 18:20 says, *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."* Today, God is interested in living stones, as we see in 1 Peter 2:5, *"You also as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"*.

Here is the point that we must never lose sight of; it is the vision that we must never allow to grow dim, and it is this, we are the living temple that God by His Spirit has chosen to dwell in. This is the temple that He does not want to be defiled in any way. He wants it to be holy, sanctified (set apart) for His special purpose.

The presence (Spirit of God) cannot be confined to a single man-made structure or to one physical location, for He dwells in mobile temples. Where the temple goes He goes. The tabernacle in the wilderness was portable, so when Israel moved, under God's direction, they took the tabernacle (the presence of God) with them and the tabernacle was erected wherever they camped. What a beautiful type of God dwelling in human mobile temples today! We take the Spirit of God with us wherever we go. Now, it is possible in our fleshly state to go where the Spirit of God does not want us to go. Thus the importance of being led by the Spirit that dwells within. Psalm 139:7 asks the question, *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?"* The question is answered as we read on in that chapter. There isn't anywhere we can go where the presence of God is not there. Verses 8-12 say, *"If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You."* These scriptures reveal the omnipresence of God who can be present everywhere at the same time. However, just because God is everywhere does not mean that we should throw caution to the wind and go where He does not want us to go. There are temptations to be avoided in many places, and it is the Spirit of God that gives us discernment in knowing what is evil and what is good; where we should go, and where we should not go. *"Let him turn away from evil and do good"* (1 Peter 3:11).

*"Don't you realize that you yourselves are the temple of God, and that God's Spirit lives in you? God will destroy anyone who defiles (corrupts) His temple, for His temple is holy - and that is exactly what you are"* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, PHILLIPS). The scripture in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 speaks about glorifying God in our body. *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's."* *"We have this treasure in earthen*

*vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us"* (2 Corinthians 4:7). *"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13).

After our salvation experience, there is a measure of the Holy Spirit that comes to dwell in us, and as we walk with Him in this new experience, the Spirit grows within us. That growth comes through important spiritual experiences, including water baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, sanctification (being set apart for a holy purpose), and the laying on of hands of the presbytery for spiritual gifts. It is through the receiving and operation of the gifts that God reveals Himself. When the gifts are exercised under the anointing of the Spirit, Christ is speaking, and His nature is demonstrated. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27). *"He that has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6).

I would be remiss if I did not warn that there is a very real possibility of regression to the old fleshly way of life out of which the Lord has saved us. This means avoiding sin (we live in the world, but we are not of the world). 1 John 2:16 speaks of three lusts (sins) that are prevalent in the world, *"For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh* (refers to desires for sinful sensual pleasure), *the lust of the eyes* (refers to covetousness or materialism), *and the pride of life* (refers to being proud about one's position in the world)." Let me name a couple of sins that are very current in our present world.

### **Sexual Immorality or Sexual Sin**

What is sexual immorality? It is a broad term, encompassing any illicit sexual activity. God approves sexual activity in only one place and that is between husband and wife in the marriage relationship. It is not sanctioned in any other relationship. Regardless of what society accepts or approves, it is incumbent on us to be obedient to what God has ordained. *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification* (set apart for God's special use): *that you should abstain from sexual immorality"* (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Someone said, *"We live in a society that makes sin look normal and righteousness look strange."* The Bible puts it this way, *"Woe* (bitter grief) *to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight"* (Isaiah 5:20-21)!

In other words, the thinking of man is the very opposite to the thinking of God. What God calls sin is sin, regardless of how man might sugar-coat it or what the majority finds as acceptable. Jesus said, *"Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:28). In 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, Paul gives sound instruction on this topic, *"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* A good example of fleeing sexual immorality was Joseph when he fled from Potiphar's house. He did not entertain the possibility of immorality with Potiphar's wife. He fled the scene in order that an immoral act would have no chance to develop. David, on the other hand, yielded to the temptation of sexual immorality in his relationship with Bathsheba. This scripture seems to imply that sexual sin is in a category of its own because it is a violation of the dignity and sacredness of our own bodies; these bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We are admonished in scripture not to defile the temple for it is sanctified for a holy purpose.

It should be noted that God forgives sin when there is sincere repentance by the sinner, as was in the case of David. We can read David's prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. However, the consequence of sin may remain. Promiscuity may result in venereal disease, pregnancy, mental or emotional instability, or the fracturing of family relationships. Impaired driving can have disastrous consequences if injury or death results. Except by the grace of God, these things can have a lingering impact on human lives.

### Alcohol, Smoking, or Drugs

The use of alcohol, drugs, smoking, or any other substance that does physical, mental, or emotional harm. We have a choice of what we take into our bodies. Recently vaping has become popular and the medical profession is beginning to see how harmful this practice is on human health. The fact that something is legal does not make it right or acceptable in the sight of God. There was a time when alcohol and marijuana were illegal but just because man-made laws have changed, it does not change God's laws. The Word of God says, *"Do not defile your body for it is the temple of the Holy Spirit."* Both our physical health and spiritual health are important to our well-being.

Then 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 speaks of the unequal yoke and of the purity that God desires in our bodies. *"Do not be unequally yoked together (in partnership) with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? (Satan) Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore, 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" We know that we cannot live in this world without having associations with unbelievers in such places as classrooms, workplaces, and businesses. However, we do not have to speak as they speak, do as they do, or think as they think. In fact, our good example may influence them to consider changing their lifestyle. What we need to be careful about is not allowing their pattern of living (behaviour) to influence us. The church does not need the deception and degradation of the world creeping into it, but the world needs the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. What the world needs is Jesus! One of the early brethren said, "One of the saddest sights in all the world is to see the church, the bride of Christ, walking with the world (taking on the thinking and behaviour of the world)."*

We are also well aware of the scripture in Romans 12:1-2 regarding our bodies being living sacrifices and not conforming to this world. *"I beseech (beg) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world (age), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* "Presenting our bodies" means being totally committed or giving God our all. "Not being conformed to this world" means not living according to the style and manner (behaviour) of this present age. "Being transformed by the renewing of our mind" means being changed from the dictates of the fleshly mind to being under the control of the Spirit of God. Make no mistake about it, the only way for our minds to be renewed is by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

As we go about our daily lives, we all encounter different people and different experiences. These are not by accident, but rather are designed for a purpose. The rough places, the valleys, the temptations and trials, and the adversity, if taken in the right attitude, build into us what nothing else can. It is during these times that we learn to seek the Lord and invite Him to possess the temple so that we can cope with the circumstances in our lives. It is the beauty of Jesus that we want to radiate from us, and it is His nature that we want to manifest as we commit our lives completely to Him.

The songwriter expressed what should be the desire of every Christian's relationship with Christ in the following lines:

"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,  
All His wonderful passion and purity.  
Oh, Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,  
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me." †

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