

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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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 be 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

All On The Same Team

Much of our failure to reach others with the gospel is due to the great gulf between us. The unconverted senses an aloofness on our part, and we on his. His problems (we are convinced) are foreign to us; and our solution (he is convinced) is for the birds. We widen this gap by housing our solution in a plant in which, should we drag him there with a bulldozer, he would feel totally out of place. Sometimes we seem to think our citizenship is strengthened because he is alien.

And yet, success in reaching our fellow man (a goal we avow) depends largely upon establishing rapport -- a sympathetic relationship that encourages communication. We must convince him that we sincerely desire for him the blessings we *both* sorely need. In a very real sense, we are on the same team -- sinful creatures in a great survival drama.

I know there is no fellowship between darkness and light -- we can enter no sharing relationship with the world's sin. But the desire for a one family relationship should strongly motivate our reaching out for every living soul. Can we be less interested in

sinking neighbors because we have managed to find some solid footing? If, in our smugness, we refuse to extend a helping hand, we need to restudy Luke 15.

And if there is a sense in which we are on the same team with aliens, how much more is this true with respect to erring brethren. What attitude would we that they should show toward us, should we be found in like position? (Matt. 7:12; 2 Thess. 3:14-18)

I know of no single attitude that could save more souls, or do more for the cause of Christ today, than the proper development of love for all sinners. It would not keep us from preaching truth or fighting error. It would not cause us to share evil, but it would increase compassion and concern for the sin-enslaved. Our efforts would proceed from an open heart, rather than from a clenched fist. For we have known sin, and but for God's grace would yet perish. And we would long to make our brother in Adam, our faithful brother in Christ.

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, Aug., 1972

Smugness – [Miriam Webster] having or showing the annoying quality of people who feel very pleased or satisfied with their abilities, achievements, etc.; showing a superior attitude; having an attitude of being highly self-satisfied; scrupulously correct.

Synonyms: assured, biggety (or biggity) [Southern & Midland], bigheaded, complacent, conceited, consequential, egoistic (also egoistical), egotistic (or egotistical), important, overweening, pompous, prideful, proud, self-conceited, self-important, self-opinionated, self-satisfied, stuck-up, swellheaded, vain, vainglorious

Antonyms: egoless, humble, modest, uncomplacent

Matt. 7:12 -- "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

> "On the whole, God's love for us is a much safer subject to think about than our love for Him!" - C.S. Lewis

> "People are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges!"

> "You do not need references in order to borrow trouble!"

> "The man who has a right to boast does not have to!"

> "When you flee temptation, do not leave a forwarding address!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"David's Charge to Solomon!"* (Text: 1 Chron. 28:1-10); Sunday evening: *Bearing Fruit for the Lord!* (John 15:1-11).