

What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Social Media?

(Compiled and edited by Paul R. Blake from lessons by Phillip Robertson in Gainesville, FL titled: "Disconnect to Reconnect" and Kent Heaton in Brooksville, FL titled "Social Media and the Christian," and a lesson: "When Facebook Meets the Good Book" by Zeke Flores, and on my own experiences and study)

Introduction:

- A. 1Cor. 6:12 - "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."
- B. The first part of this class is going to be interactive; I need everyone to participate by opening a comment box on this stream post and type either "y" for yes or "n" for no.
 - 1. If you have a cell phone or a smart phone, please type "y."
 - 2. If you have a Facebook account, please type "y."
 - 3. If you have a Twitter, Snapchat, or other form of social media, type "y."
 - 4. If you have used your smartphone, iPad or electronic device at the dinner table, please type "y."
 - 5. If you have ever taken a selfie, please type "y." Please don't get the urge to take and post a selfie of yourself during Bible class.
 - 6. If you have texted while driving, please type "y." You will now need a lawyer and you can Google their numbers.
 - 7. If you have ever used your smart phone or iPad for something other than a Bible program during worship services or Bible study – please DO NOT type "y." – I really do not want to know how many of you are doing that.
- C. Welcome to the world in which we live. There was a time not long ago:
 - 1. When phones were found in every home and very few had multiple phones, and they were all attached to long cords that tangled.
 - 2. When children read books and played outside for hours.
 - 3. When you wanted to know how many feet were in a mile, you went to the Encyclopedia Britannica and looked it up.
 - 4. When the popular gathering place and research center was a building called the library.
 - 5. When we never had to announce during church services: "Please Silence Your Electronic Devices."
 - 6. Cars were used for what they were designed for: transportation. Now they are places where we watch digital movies, play video games, have 25 cup holders and 8 consoles for eating meals, talking on the phone, and putting on makeup.
 - 7. When we seldom had to beg the brethren to read the Bible.
- D. We live in a tech world. Nearly everything we do is facilitated by technology
 - 1. This is the world we now live in. It is not going to change back into the 1960s because we miss the old days or are afraid of the new times.
 - 2. There are so many good things technology has brought to us:
Medicine – Transportation – Communication – Information – Utilities

3. At Trilacoochee, we have audio and video recordings in several formats, PP for sermons and songs, wifi, webpages, social media presence, voice call emergency announcements, color copying machines, wireless microphones, and state of the art climate control.
 4. But like so many things that are good by themselves, there are unique problems that come as part of the price.
 5. We have become a society addicted to our technology.
- E. Be clear about what I intend to do with this study. I am not advocating that technology is sinful; I'm teaching that addiction to and misuse of technology is
1. And like the substance abuser denies he has a problem; many will dismiss this study with the same defense mechanism

I. OUR ADDICTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. What do you see?
1. Family sitting around texting.
 2. Folks walking down the street.
 3. Is this what Thanksgiving is going to look like for you?
- B. Social media consumes an inordinate amount of our time and energy
1. As families, we have all become consumed by the smartphone, iPad, computer, internet, WiFi, mobile devices, the apps, etc.
 2. It is a national passion almost without limits. Statistics regarding our obsession with mobile device access to social media:
 3. The average American with a smartphone or mobile device will spend an average of more than four hours a day on their device (this is conservative). They are constantly checking it several times per hour, touching the screen in response to constant notifications. This comes to 28 hours per week, 120 hours a month, and 1,460 hours per month; and, if one watches movies and TV on their phone, double that amount.
 4. College students will spend an average of five to six hours per day; over 40 hours per week, and 1,800 hours per year.
 5. While on a smartphone, where does the average person spend the most time? Talking on the phone, playing video games, research on the Internet? 90% of adult activity is social media and entertainment.
 6. If this pattern continues, the average person will spend more than 12 years of their lives on their mobile devices.
 7. This picture (crowd at movie premiere with one lady looking). This picture went viral – a movie premiere in Boston. Photo by Boston Globe photographer. Why was it so popular? Only one person was enjoying the premiere. The caption read: Radical – someone who knows how to be in the moment and enjoy the moment.
 8. How many important moments have we missed because of our fixation on our technology?
- C. We all (including me) struggle with our technology.
1. "It's the smartphone that has turned adults and children alike into tech-addicted zombies, dumbly swiping and jabbing at their screens, oblivious to the world around them. It's the smartphone that has trapped people in this constant, hamster-

wheel of updates and notifications and self-destructive comparisons with friends and celebrities, and the virtual demolition of any remaining barriers between work and personal life. It's the smartphone that is responsible for one of the most depressing – and increasingly ubiquitous – sights of the modern age: a family sitting together but totally detached from one another, engaged with their screens rather than the people closest to them.” (Kent Heaton)

2. Do not be like the man in Luke 18:10-14 - “I am not like other men”

II. THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY IN OUR LIVES

A. It is designed to be addictive.

1. Anonymous co-designer of the Apple iPhone 6 some time ago that was so thin that it broke when put in a pocket said there were two purposes behind that design: to keep the phone in people's hands rather than put away, and to make it light enough so that people won't mind keeping it in their hands all of the time. Designed to keep you looking at the phone
2. Tristan Harris worked for GOOGLE as a design ethicist. His job was to design things in a way that defended “a billion people's minds from getting hijacked.” He wants all of us to know there are men and women sitting in rooms right now in huge technology driven companies whose whole purpose is to find ways to make people stay on their phones.
3. How do they make our phones addictive? Newsfeeds and videos that never end. What did we do with newspapers, magazines, or books when we finish reading them? We put them down because we are done; this is not the case with social media.
 - a. There are notices that need our approval. Likes, comments, tags, Facebook, email, gaming app notifications every few minutes, numerous choices per page, designed to keep you on the page. Push notifications constantly remind us, bubbles constantly telling you something has happened.
 - b. The appeal to keep you emotionally stirred is constant. Get angry because someone said something to which you had to respond. Periodically stimulating your feelings until you need constant, regular fixes; like a patient on pain meds pushing the button on the morphine drip.

B. Quotes from the social media crack dealers:

1. “Social media connects us to those far away but disconnects us from those next to us. On engagement, we're already seeing that mobile users are more likely to be daily active users than desktop users. They're more likely to use Facebook six or seven days of the week.” (Mark Zuckerberg, Founder, Facebook)
2. “When you've got 5 minutes to fill, Twitter is a great way to fill 35 minutes.” (Matt Cutts, software engineer and former head of Google's web spam team)
3. “Don't say anything online that you wouldn't want plastered on a billboard with your face on it.” (Erin Bury, Sprouter community manager)

4. "Privacy is dead, and social media holds the smoking gun." (Pete Cashmore, Mashable CEO)

III. WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

- A. We have an obligation as people of God to be wise and morally clean
 1. Col. 4:5; James 1:27
 2. Almost all of us are on our smartphones from time to time for good reasons. This is not a lesson to call electronic devices evil. This is a lesson to warn you against an addiction for which there are clear signs it has taken hold in many professed Christians
- B. To understand it is a matter of good and godly use of time - Eph. 5:15-17
 1. Our phones can become kleptomaniacs, thieves of time.
 2. Good things can be bad when they take our time away from the Lord.
- C. To recognize the signs of addiction - 2Tim. 3:1-5
 1. How much has this taken over my life? How much has this become a necessary part of my mental state? What are the signs?
 2. Do you panic without it? (Nomodephobia) Or when in a dead zone?
 3. Do you get phantom pulses?
 4. Do you have to check it late at night?
 5. Have you checked it in the last 20 minutes?
 6. Are you are on your phone while eating with others?
 7. Do you have text neck?
 8. Do you surf or text while driving?
 9. Have you answered a text or call while talking with someone in person?
 10. Has someone tried to talk with you about your smartphone habits?
 11. Addiction - 1Cor. 6:12
 12. If I did a lesson on drug abuse, no one would question its relevancy
 - a. Preaching about things that harm our children would be timely.
 - b. Warning about danger of addictions would be accepted quickly
 - c. All of these describe the potential dangers in social media.
- D. To avoid what is worthless - Psalm 101:1-7
 1. C. S. Lewis wrote in his book *The Screwtape Letters*: "You no longer need a good book, which he really likes, to keep him from his prayers or his work or his sleep; a column of advertisements in yesterday's paper will do. You can make him waste his time not only in conversation he enjoys with people whom he likes, but in conversations with those he cares nothing about on subjects that bore him. You can make him do nothing at all for long periods. You can keep him up late at night, not [partying], but staring at a dead fire in a cold room. All the healthy and outgoing activities which we want him to avoid can be inhibited and nothing given in return, so that at last he may say, as one of my own patients said on his arrival down here, 'I now see that I spent most of my life in doing neither what I ought nor what I liked.'"
- E. To seek true and healthy communication - 2John 12; 3John 14
 1. Reference lesson: What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Conspiracy Theories? May 14, 2020
 2. Reposting without verifying is a form of lying.
- F. Only important connection we will make in this life is with Jesus - Mark 6:34

2. This may mean that we will need to disconnect with the world in order to reconnect with Jesus
 3. We must not be so attached to the world that we endanger our connection to the Lord
- G. Consider: television began with the best of intentions, but was eventually polluted by vulgarity.
1. Smartphones began with the same intentions, but have become a means of creating an addiction that is robbing us of our Lord and our families.
 2. It is an addiction, and the designers are the dealers
 - a. They make money every time you look.
 - b. They want you on your phone to look at everything they create.
 3. Christians must be aware of the dangers in the world and that includes the tech world in something as simple as a communication device
 4. Christians must understand why this is important
 - a. 1Cor. 6:12; Matt. 5:29-30, 16:26 (going viral a million likes)

Conclusion

- A. What can we take home from this media storm, rather than self-righteously storming about the social media?
1. It will not always be here. There will be another techno-fashion to take its place in a few years.
 2. We can use our technology for good purposes and glorify God in its use
 - a. Matt. 5:16; 1Peter 2:12

Part Two (Mark 6:34)

V. GENUINE CONCERNS REGARDING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Last lesson considered the dangers of social media:
1. Designed addiction with newsfeeds and videos that never end, notices that appeal to our need for approval, numerous choices per window to keep us on the site, push notifications constantly barrage us with checking 150 or more times a day, leading to users spending years of their lives on social media. Signs of addiction, such as: panic without it, phantom pulses, checking it in the middle of the night or while eating with others, text neck, texting or surfing while driving, and someone has talked to you about it. - 1Cor. 6:12
- B. Threats to personal moral purity - James 1:27
1. Posting selfies or photos of family and friends in immodest clothing
 2. Posting political rants or conspiracy theory nonsense
 3. Posting suggestive, puerile humor; using un-Christlike speech
 4. "Liking" the above when posted by others
 5. "Friending" and "liking" the posts of clearly and openly immoral people
 6. "Friending" and "liking" the posts of unrepentant, disciplined Christians

7. Supporting or participating in the tantrums of the ungodly and erring when they whine about the Lord's Church and criticize the sound doctrine of Christ
8. If we choose to "share" with the sinful in this world, we can expect to share an eternal destination with them in the life to come.

C. What does the word of God say?

1. Matt. 6:19-21 - Where is your heart?
2. Luke 8:4-15 - The parable of the sower
3. There are only four types of hearts. You have one of those hearts. Your children will develop one of those hearts. Note the third soil - v. 14.

D. Daily usage can create self-imposed problems:

1. Anxiety -- feeling nervous and apprehensive
2. Mood swings - if you are away from it for long, you begin having withdrawal symptoms
3. Isolation -- facilitates estranging one from those near him so that he can connect with others at a distance
4. Reduction in ability to talk with others -- loss of ability to empathize and relate to others
5. Shortened attention spans -- quickly bored; needs constant input of the new and exciting
6. Staying indoors and sedentary -- no one goes outside anymore.
7. Narcissism -- it is all about me (selfie) and my thoughts, opinions, words and actions. What is the first thing you check on FB? What others have commented about your posts. "It's about me, me, me!"
8. NOMODEPHOBIA (new word) -- the fear of losing ones' cell phone, social media access, or internet reception. No Mobile Device Phobia.

E. Endangering our children. Children are learning how to use cell phones and receiving their own at younger ages than ever before. They have grown up in an era where mobile phone use has been embedded in them at an early, vulnerable age; they are very susceptible to developing an addiction to their smartphones and/or social media. The human brain isn't finished developing until around the age of 25 years old. Research has revealed that there are a few adolescent personality traits associated with internet addiction which is closely related to smartphone addiction.

1. High harm-avoidance: these individuals tend to be worrisome, fearful, pessimistic, and shy.
2. Altered reward dependence: the teen becomes dependent on rewards associated with the internet or cell phone as opposed to natural rewards received from spending time with friends and family, getting good grades, or partaking in hobbies.
3. Low self-esteem from endless and endemic comparison structures in social media
4. Truncated cooperation, increased resistance to authority, lack of ability to interact with others in a healthy manner

F. Our attachment to our mobile devices is impacting our homes and changing our behavior - Prov. 23:29-35 - Emphasis on vs. 35

VI. CHRISTIAN FAMILIES IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. We have obligations to our families - Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:4-9
- B. How much time do we spend on social media versus how much time we spend teaching our children without screens?
 - 1. Do we set guide lines for our family? The American Academy of Pediatrics (2016) set the following guidelines:

AGE	SCREEN TIME
0-18 months	Zero
18m to 3yrs	20-30 minutes
3-5yrs	1 hour max
6 and up	Limited and monitored
 - 2. This lesson will not win the favor of the young people, but I am not sorry
 - a. We do not allow our young people to get behind the wheel of an automobile until they reach the legal age.
 - b. Without signed parental consent;
 - c. Without the required proof of traffic law and substance abuse education course
 - d. Without passing a vision and hearing test
 - 3. Giving them a smartphone and unlimited access to the Internet will do more harm to their eternal souls than what they can do to their physical bodies behind the wheel of the car; and, yet so many parents give this to their children at young ages, so that they can be accepted by their peers and be popular.
 - 4. What happens on teenage smartphones when they are unmonitored and unlimited? Sexting, viewing pornography, bullying, body shaming, selfish, arrogant behavior, ungodly language, and disrespect and disobedient to parents and anyone in authority.

VIII. DOING WHAT IS RIGHT REGARDLESS OF THE VENUE

- A. Thoughts: keep them clean – Phil. 4:8; Prov. 4:23
 - 1. Wherever we are, our thoughts are bombarded by sinful influences.
 - 2. Our minds were created to be kept holy by dwelling on holy things
- B. Words: keep them proper – Eph. 4:29-32, 5:4
 - 1. Controlled speech not only indicates a controlled mind, also indicates the influences on that mind.
- C. Eyes: keep them guarded – Matt. 6:22-23; Job 31:1; Psalm 101:3
- D. Activities: keep them Holy – Col. 3:17
 - 1. Not necessarily religious, but set apart from sin. Whatever we do must not be something we'd be ashamed to tell the Lord and grandmother
- E. Friends: keep them godly – 1Cor. 15:33-34
 - 1. Those who are closest to us are those whom we become most like.
 - 2. Your closest friends ought to be those who will help you please God and help you get to heaven.

IX. OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO CHRISTIANS BY SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Evangelism - Matt. 28:18-20; 2Tim. 2:2

1. In Bible times, evangelically-minded people went from door-to-door, house-to-house personally.
 - a. This represents an opportunity to do the same across the country
 - b. Bible correspondence courses, our website; 20 years of emails answering thousands of Bible questions
 2. You can: post links to sermons/articles, e-mail friends and invite them to worship/study, post Bible verses as status updates
- B. Encouragement - Heb. 3:12-14
1. Discouragement is powerful; some find it easier to post their fears in cyberspace than to tell someone personally.
 2. This is a good opportunity to: let others know what's bothering you, read what is troubling other people and respond encouragingly
 3. Rom. 12:15
 4. It is not limited to a few times each week in the building
- C. Education - 2Tim. 2:24-26
1. Often what many people and some Christians post indicates they're not thinking clearly, or spiritually minded.
 2. We can: Be a real "friend" - Send a private message to help;
 3. Send links to articles/sermons that addresses their problem
 4. Correct them when they act improperly

VII. GOD'S WORD OVERRULES SOCIAL MEDIA

- A. Share joy and gratitude - Col. 3:17; Psalm 105:1
- B. Be an encouragement - Rom. 12:10
- C. Speak with grace - Col. 4:6
- D. Promote good things - Phil. 4:8-9; Isa. 52:7
- E. Build stronger friendships - Rom. 12:10-13
- F. Encourage spiritual things - Matt. 5:14-15
- G. Seek to comfort and aid the weak - Rom. 12:15
- H. Overcome evil with good - Rom. 12:21
- I. Take advantage of teaching opportunities - 2Peter 3:17-18

Conclusion:

- A. People, not social networks, are good or bad
 1. This is not really about social networking; it is about how Christians conduct themselves in every place and time.
 2. This is about keeping ourselves unspotted from the world and making the most of our opportunities.
 3. Who you are on Sunday evening in worship services ought to be who you are on Sunday night on Facebook.
- B. A few things are certain:
 1. This issue will continue to grow with the technology
 2. The rules of courteous behavior will not change
 3. Christians must conduct themselves as Christians regardless of the setting they are in
 4. God's will has not changed with the technology - Rom. 13:12-14