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Helping people avoid online drama

It is hard to imagine a world without social media. It has become such an important part of our lives that even our culture almost forces us to become part of the online world. As beneficial as this is, the online world can be a seedbed for hostility and chaos. One need look no further than the effects of the President's insensitive, unfiltered tweets. The hostility that often gets stirred up is what Bill Murray recently called "the clash of clans." I like to say that social media is the place where you

can make pseudo friends or real enemies real fast with just a click of a button.

Social media can be a world without guidelines, and where guidelines are absent, chaos is inevitable. We hear accounts almost weekly in which important people lose jobs or positions of influence because of insensitive tweets or online remarks. Countless others never get hired as potential employers check what is posted on the job candidate's social media walls.

*Luke 6:45...an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth the evil. **For out of the abundance of the heart he posts on social media (2018 Translation).***

*Matthew 15:11 ... but **what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.**"*

The challenge with social media is that the filters and feedback that normally come in face to face interactions are removed. We are in front of our phone or computer screen as controllers of our universe. We are fee to put forth whatever bubbles up in our hearts. We don't have to take people into account. It is just us, our heart, thoughts,

and feelings, and our ability to express them any way we deem appropriate. We have all seen major fussing and fighting in media posts that make them look like center stage for a WWE event. The unfiltered, online rants cause much harm. There is a better way for God's people.

Passive aggressive, online posting is in complete contrast to how Jesus instructs us to walk relationally. We need to help ourselves and others keep away from online warfare. We need to fight the devil through prayer (Eph 6:10-18), not fight others through online postings.

The Biblical perspective on how to respond in the face of evil communication.

- *1 Peter 3:9* *not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead...*
- *Proverbs 15:1-2* *A gentle answer turns away rage, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (2) The tongues of wise people give good expression to knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out a flood of stupidity.*
- *Proverbs 15:28* *The heart of a righteous person carefully considers how to answer, but the mouths of wicked people pour out a flood of evil things.*

> **Remember that if you wrestle with a pig in the mud you both get dirty and only the pig liked it.**

We are never to repay evil for evil with online posts. Leaders need to help others avoid this and live above reproach themselves. Never stoop down to other people's level with online posts or pugnacious counter-punching. **Remember that if you wrestle with a pig in the mud you both get dirty and only the pig liked it.**

Questions God's people need to ask before posting

- **Will this glorify God?**
  God's people are to live by a higher standard, His. We must ask ourselves these questions in the presence of God before posting, "Does this reflect God? Will it point people to God? Does this reflect love, truth, and purity?
- **Will this really help any conversations?**
  We may have the right to comment on every post, but that doesn't mean we should. Paul says it well in 1 Corinthians 10:23 "All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful, but not all things build up."
- **Would I say it to people face-to-face?**
  Social media gives a lot of power to cowards. Cowards with power are dangerous to relationships. If we are following Jesus, there is no place for cowardly behavior. Sitting behind a screen with no accountability empowers people's sin

nature to be bullies and manipulative. You no longer have to look your victims in the eye.   It is the essence of unfeeling, uncaring hurtfulness.

- **Is my online comments simply an easy way out of real responsibility?**
There is a thing called "click activism." That means we can have the feeling that we are really doing something significant if we sign a petition, hit the like button, or share. Social media is a great place for the illusion of good intentions, but God is into real action. Action is what makes changes, not good intentions. We are not called to be avatars in a virtual world. Behind every post is a real person created in the image of God. How about taking some real action and have real conversations face to face.

- **Is this post creating or amplifying my frustration?**
 Remember some of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) and attributes of God's love (1 Cor 13) are patience, kindness, gentleness, and self control. The lusts of the flesh are the exact opposite, frustration, hostility, and quick tempered reactions and reactionary posts. These often amplify the flesh. Am I allowing social media to create (or amplify) frustration? A good spiritual rule of thumb is to stay off social media if we are discontented, frustrated, or upset because it will only help amplify those things.

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