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## How to Help God's People Steward Their Online Life



We have all probably lit fires on social media platforms. It may have been intentional with your BBP (Big Blasting Post), or unintentional with a slight comment that created a firestorm with both friends and enemies. People may have said some hurtful things causing others to unfriend you. In this polarized society we need wisdom in how we use

social media.

**1 Corinthians 6:20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body (and your online platform).**

One thing we need to remember about our walk with God is that we are stewards of the life God has given us. A steward is a manager, not the owner. Jesus described this in the Kingdom parable of stewardship (Matthew 25:14-30). In the parable each laborer was given a talent to manage. This means we are given various capacities. We are not judged by what others do with what they have been given but will give an account of what we do with what we have been given. We manage what we have been given with the interest of our owner in mind who is Jesus Christ.

This is why Paul says that faithfulness is an important trait of stewardship. We must faithfully steward our life, not in fits of reactions, but faithfully doing what pleased God.

*1 Corinthians 4:1-2 "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful."*

As God's people we are to live out our stewardship online as well as offline, digitally as well as on Sundays. A question we need to ask is, "Are we stewarding our online life to the glory of God?" Words are powerful. They can bring good or harm. As the Bible says, "Life and death are in the power of the tongue" (Psalms 18:21).

With online communication there are not the same filters of feedback we have in face to face communication, and that creates a propensity towards bad stewardship of our words, especially when we are stirred up by things we read. That can destroy relationships and hurt our testimony.

It doesn't mean we must avoid weighing in on things we see, but it is how we weigh in that makes the difference. We can disagree with things while still showing the fruit of the Spirit. We can reach out privately rather than being contentious and plastering our thoughts for all to see. This is how Jesus instructed us to handle personal disagreements caused by sin, as privately as possible (Matthew 18:18-20).

**Social media in a polarized world no longer performs an envisaged function of creating a positive communication link among friends, family and professionals. It is a veritable battleground, where insults fly from the human quiver, damaging lives, destroying self-esteem and a person's sense of self-worth.**

## **6 Thoughts to Help Steward Online Engagements**

Leaders need to lead the way in demonstrating and helping God's people be good stewards of the online part of their lives. Help God's people consider these questions in God's presence before weighing in online the next time a social media feed becomes a long or contentious dialogue about the latest hot button social issue.

### **1. Why am I doing this?**

Motives are everything in good stewardship. When we live for the glory of the owner, God, it changes the way we approach things. We no longer give knee jerk reactions to

blow off steam or make ourselves feel better. Doing a motive check in the presence of God allows Holy Spirit to speak to you about the “why.”

In the great love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, it shows us all the big things to which Christians aspire: sacrificial love, moving in spiritual gifts and miracles, and mountain moving faith, but if the motive of love isn't behind them, they are worthless and do no one any good.

Remember the warning about motives in Romans 8 before responding on social media, “If you are in the flesh, you can't please God.”

## **2. Does my approach and words reflect the fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of flesh?**

The Bible is not fuzzy about this. Paul says the fruit of the flesh and of the Spirit are obvious in Galatians 5:18-24. If it is “perverse, full of hate, rude, producing rivalries, jealous, angry, selfish, or promoting factions or tribalism,” it is the flesh. If it comes across mean, hateful, or passive aggressive, it is clearly the flesh. On the other hand, if it is “Full of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, if it's gentle, and under self-control,” it is likely of the Spirit.

If you can answer “yes” to the fruit of the Spirit test, then you can engage without compromising your faith.

## **3. Do my words come from and lead to Philippians 4:8?**

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”*

Before you tweet, share, or post, ask yourself, in the presence of God, if these words promote Philippians 4:8. Never say anything online that you wouldn't say face to face.

## **4. Does my response express a love for all people who are made in the image of God?**

Even unbelievers in whom God's image has been disfigured by sin still bear His image. Because of that fact, we should express dignity to others. This is part of what

Jesus said, “Love your enemies and do good to those who spitefully use you” (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27, 35). The Biblical perspective is that we show respect and honor to all people who are made in the image of God (Galatians 6:10, 1 Peter 3:15).

C.S. Lewis expressed the idea that everyone bears the image of God in his magnificent sermon “The Weight of Glory.”

“... it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. **There are no ordinary people.** You have never talked to a mere mortal... But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit...” C.S. Lewis

## 5. Does this post please God or just me?

**Hebrews 13:20-21** *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, (21) equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. (Philippians 2:12-13, Colossians 1:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:1).*



How does your interaction with other Christians look in front of a watching world? God designed His house to demonstrate the gospel solution to a polarized world who needs Him. Therefore, are we careful how we interact with God’s people before a watching world? For Christians to argue and fight on social media before people who need Him is a great defeat for the cause of Christ.

Paul echoed a warning when Christians were suing fellow believers in secular courts. He was shocked that they were appealing to the world to determine how they treated each other. Paul said an alarming thing; it would be better to be cheated and robbed by your brother than argue with him in secular courts. *1Co 6:1-7 When one of you has a complaint against another, do you take your complaint to a court of sinners? Or do you take it to God's people? (2) Don't you know that God's people will judge the world? And if you are going to judge the world, can't you settle small problems?... (4) Why do you take everyday complaints to judges who are not respected by the church? (5) I say this to your shame... (7) When one of you takes another to*

*court, all of you lose. It would be better to let yourselves be cheated and robbed.*

## **6. Before reacting, remember that everything you read and hear is spun.**

Everyone spins things based on their inner worldview. Christians do this. We believe Jesus is the only way to God and we don't promote other ways. The same is true for anyone on media.

We are not getting all the facts to make an impartial judgment, so be careful when you criticize or defend people based on information you receive from the media. They are all relaying selective information.

It's not a matter of whether the next social media debate will strike, but when. When it does, remember that you're stewarding your words and your online presence for Christ. Putting everything you do on social media through that filter will help ensure that you represent Christ—and your faith—well.

**Check it out and sign up**



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***Colossians 3:17 Everything you say or do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.***

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