



HOW TO TAKE A SOCIAL MEDIA “PURPOSEFUL PAUSE”

By Walt Mueller

Two of social media's most negative effects are 1) How it can become a time waster for both those who post and those who are consumed with reading posts, and 2) how social media is uniquely suited as a playground to indulge our sinful natures in ways that lead to glorification of self rather than glorification of God.

In Proverbs we read these wise words: “Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 29:20) and “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise” (Proverbs 10:19).

While I am far from consistently hitting the mark, I endeavor to follow the wisdom of Proverbs whenever I'm using social media. Here are some steps that you might find helpful as you take a “purposeful pause” before hitting “send”, “post”, “tweet”, or “reply.”

First, decide whether or not to post.

Cultural commentator Alan Jacobs is particularly helpful here. Jacobs suggests we adopt eight standards/guidelines as we are thinking about posting on social media.

- I don't have to say something just because everyone around me is.
- I don't have to speak about things I know little or nothing about.
- I don't have to speak about issues that will be totally forgotten in a few weeks or months by the people who at this moment are most strenuously demanding a response.
- I don't have to spend my time in environments that press me to speak without knowledge.
- If I can bring to an issue heat, but no light, it is probably best that I remain silent.
- Private communication can be more valuable than public.
- Delayed communication, made when people have had time to think and calm their emotions, is almost always more valuable than immediate reaction.
- Some conversations are more meaningful and effective in living rooms or at dinner tables, than in the middle of main street.



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Second, decide what to post.

I’ve adopted a filter of several successive questions through which I take time to allow my potential posts to pass. You’d be surprised how much time, effort, and social media noise you could save by eliminating posts by using these questions!

1. Does this matter?
2. Is this a faithful and truthful representation of me (my family, my life, etc.)? Or, is it a fabricated lie?
3. Is this useful to others? Or, am I wasting other people’s time?
4. Does this promote and reflect Kingdom of God living and human flourishing?
5. Does this promote and reflect the kingdoms of the world, the flesh, and the devil and undermine human flourishing?
6. Does this glorify God? Or does this glorify me?
7. Come on. . . why am I really doing this?



Finally, establish your own personal posting parameters.

I’ve adopted the following standards for what I post on social media. These guidelines have served me well, allowing me to gain time and refocus my mind on what really matters, while helping me to develop the habit of pushing back on what my sinful self would love for me to do on social media.

- Don’t post about me.
- Post to inform.
- Post to educate.
- Post to encourage.
- Only post humor that is appropriate.

DR. WALT MUELLER,

President, the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding



PHONE: (717) 361-8429

EMAIL: DIGITALKIDS@CPYU.ORG

For additional information on the digital world of kids, visit the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding’s Digital Kids Initiative at digitalkidsinitiative.com.

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