

A weekly resource to spark biblically-centered conversations with your kids about the issues they face in today's youth culture.

SOCIAL MEDIA & GOD'S GLORY

BY: WALT MUELLER, CPYU President

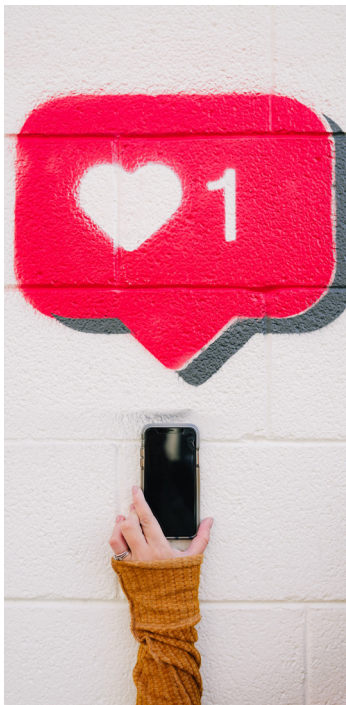
Social media and technology are good gifts from God. But like all other good gifts from God, we need to think seriously about how the Bible and our faith should shape the way that we use social media and technology.



What is Happening?

Two of the biggest ways that social media is undoing all of us – teenagers and adults alike – are these: 1) It is an addictive time-waster, and 2) it is a playground where we can indulge our sinful natures in ways that lead to glorification of ourselves rather than glorification of God.

- According to the latest Common Sense Media Survey, average daily entertainment screen use is 5 hours and 33 minutes a day for tweens (8-12), and 8 hours and 39 minutes a day for teens (13-18). According to research from the National Institute of Health, about a quarter of adolescents are social media addicts. Other research says that 45% of our teens report feeling addicted to their smartphone devices.
- Social media feeds narcissism and self-centeredness by telling us “It’s all about you!” Since you are the center of your universe your life is ultimately about pursuing self-fulfillment and personal happiness.
- Social media convinces us to do whatever it takes to re-make and re-package yourself in order to advance yourself. If your achievements, real or made-up, will catch the attention of others, then put them out there. You need to advance yourself through curating and promoting a persona that will win you likes, followers, friends, and status in the online world. Don’t be the real you, but your idealized/desired self. Your value and worth hinges on what others think of you.
- This desire to be seen, liked, and followed is feeding the growing tide of teen anxiety, depression, body dysmorphia, and other mental health issues. When your online depiction of yourself isn’t good enough, anxiety increases. And, when you can’t let down your guard and allow people to see your real self, anxiety increases even more.



8 HOURS 39 MINUTES

Average daily entertainment screen use for teens.



WORD

What Does God's Word Say?

While the Bible says nothing directly about smartphones, social media, and technology, it does give us a lens through which to look at how to live to God's glory in a world saturated with smartphones and social media.

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell into sin as a result of giving in to the temptation to take control of their own lives and become like God (Gen. 3:1-7). They bought that lie that we still fall victim to: "It's all about you!" Ever since, human beings have been bent toward taking the place of God, seeking to *be worshipped* rather than *to worship*. The Scriptures from start to finish remind us of our default setting to forget God and put ourselves first. However, it's not and never should be about you.

Seeking to find your identity in anything other than who you are as someone created by God in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), and adopted by God into His family as a son or daughter through your union with Jesus Christ (John 1:12-13; Romans 8:14-17), is absolutely futile. It will undo you and destroy you. Peace, freedom from anxiety, and purpose will only come when you rest your identity in who you are as a beloved child of God through the work of Jesus Christ.

God values and commands honesty. When we are dishonest through our online portrayals, we are actually engaged in telling lies. The Ten Commandments tell us, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exod. 20:16). God demands that His followers be truthful and honest. No half-truths. No exaggerations. No attempts to shield our true selves from others. No manipulated selfies. Any attempt to tweak the truth and deceive others is wrong. The beauty of this lies in the fact that we find freedom in telling the truth about ourselves, as we allow ourselves to be truly known rather than expending time and anxious energy to keep ourselves masked!

Time is a gift from God. We've only been given so much. . . 24 hours in each day. We are to steward the gift of our time just like we do everything else. . . to the glory of God! Time is not to be wasted, but invested in doing God's Kingdom work. Remember, we are living now in Chapter 3 of God's Story. Our place in this world is to represent Christ by engaging in the work of advancing His Kingdom priorities. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are to "look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:15-17). It is not wrong to use social media. But it is wrong to use it in ways that waste time.





WALK

*“Look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
(Ephesians 5:15-17)*

Conversation Starters and Questions:

- Before addressing the issue with your teenagers, begin with a parental self-assessment. Take stock of how much time you spend on your smartphone and social media during the course of an average day. Ask yourself these questions: Am I spending too much time? Am I addicted to my smartphone? Am I constantly engaging with social media? Posting updates? Counting responses and comments? Do I find my value, worth, and identity in what I look like to others?
- Ask your teenager, Do you think people can spend too much time engaged with their smartphones and social media? If so, how much time is too much time? Do you have friends who are addicted to social media? What do you think the signs of social media and smartphone addiction might be? How do think social media and smartphone addiction effects a person in their day-to-day living and relationships?
- In Proverbs we read these wise words: “Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov. 29:20), and “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise” (Prov. 10:19). With that in mind, talk about what it would mean to pause before posting anything to ask these questions:
 1. Does this matter? If the answer is “no”, don’t post it.
 2. Is this a faithful and truthful representation of me (my family, my life, etc.)? Or, is it a fabricated lie? Only post the truth. Ditch the lies.
 3. Is this useful to others? Or, am I wasting other people’s time? It’s bad enough that I struggle with wasting my own time. I don’t need to help other people waste theirs!
 4. Does this promote and reflect Kingdom of God living and human flourishing? If it advances God’s kingdom agenda to recover shalom, by all means, post it!
 5. Does this promote and reflect the kingdoms of the world, the flesh, and the devil and undermine human flourishing? If this helps the wrecker of this world to wreck it even more, well, walk away from it.
 6. Does this glorify God? Or does this glorify me? You know what to do here!

For further reflection: Social media and technology are a good gift from God. Don’t ditch your technology. Rather, learn to use it as a tool to advance God’s Kingdom.



Phone: (717) 361-8429
E-Mail: CPYU@CPYU.ORG
Web: WWW.CPYU.ORG

Mail: PO BOX 414,
ELIZABETHTOWN
PA 17022, USA