

BEING JESUS ONLINE

Biblical Wisdom for a Wired World



Dennis Moles



introduction

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So much has changed in the last 25 years. We now communicate via Twitter rather than letter. People spend more time on Facebook than in face-to-face conversations. No one drops off film for developing any more. We share life one picture at a time on Instagram.

Much has changed but much has stayed the same. Communication is still difficult. Relationships

still take work. And followers of Jesus still have a mission to share God's love, mercy, and grace wherever they go—even online.

The Bible has important things to say about how we communicate and relate to one another. Never has it been more relevant than in the immediacy of today's wired world. In the following pages you won't find a manual full of dos and don'ts, but timeless principles that will help you reflect Christ in your online spaces.

Dennis Moles

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one

What Would Jesus Tweet?

Every Wednesday an American TV talk show host tweets out a hashtag¹ with a category like: #iusedtothink, #worstgiftever, and #misheardlyrics. When viewers see that week's topic, they tweet funny stories back to him based on that theme.

Here are a few examples from some of his fans:

***#iusedtothink** the asterisk on the phone dialing pad was a snowflake my parents used to call Santa to tell him when I was being naughty.*

#worstgiftever a \$25 Starbucks Gift card... The balance was only \$10

When I was young, I thought The Lion King started with "PENNSYLVANIA!" **#misheardlyrics**

↗ A **hashtag** typically consists of the hashtag itself and the word or phrase that follows it. The hashtag helps identify messages that relate to a specific topic. This TV host is using the hashtag as a prompt to his followers to join in the conversation via Twitter.

There's no denying it; social media is everywhere. And it is really fun! My kids tweet constantly. My parents are on Facebook[™] more than I am. Thanks to my smartphone I spend most of my waking hours plugged in to a steady flow of information and commentary. Many of us check in each morning shortly after our eyes pop open and sign off every night just before we fall asleep. Social media has become a primary means of communicating and sharing life.

↗ The Pew Research Center says that the **fastest growing group** on Facebook is those over 65. In the US, more than half of this demographic is on the Internet.

These powerful communication tools haven't merely changed the way we connect and communicate; they've changed the way we experience community itself. With the touch of a button, at any time, from almost anywhere, we can share information. We can relate thoughts and experiences with people who may be hundreds or even thousands of miles away.



These powerful communication tools haven't merely changed the way we connect and communicate; they've changed the way we experience community itself.

Trading a pen and paper for a smartphone, tablet, or computer has certainly made communication quicker and easier, but such convenience isn't always helpful. Like everything, social media has its own set of problems. Sometimes words and images are not carefully thought through before sending them out for the whole world to see.

The good and the bad of social media were on display recently when a peaceful, but snowy evening at our home was suddenly thrown into chaos by two screaming teenage boys. What caused their emotional eruption? This tweet from our

school district's superintendent:

Joe Superintendent @joesupertweets • Jan 26

*Due to the continuing extreme winter weather conditions
***** Public Schools will be closed tomorrow. Enjoy yet
another day off of school!*

With all the running around and shouting one would have thought this was the first time school had been cancelled . . . ever. Several minutes later, after the snow-day euphoria had ebbed a bit, our phone rang with a cancellation notice. That was an eye-opening moment.

In the time it took a computer to call our house with an automated message, Twitter had already shared the information simultaneously with hundreds of people and spawned hundreds of additional tweets from students:

#joesupertweetsistheBomb this had better trend

No clean pants...no school...no problems **#pjday**

No school? Yus. **#extendedwinterbreak2k15**

This is the great side of social media—sharing a moment together. Building a community, a cyber-community. Social media is just that, social. Through it we build and strengthen (yes, even begin) relationships by sharing the moments of our lives with each other. We can laugh and cry with friends and loved ones, even if we can't be together in person.

Most of these tweets were clever, timely, and fun. They did exactly what social media is supposed to do. But not everyone seemed to remember that twitter is a *public* forum. Many tweets that night were not fit for public viewing. Many were laced with profanity. Others questioned the intelligence of the administration for canceling school. It was the good and the bad of social media.

↪ Many people tend to feel that their usage of social media is somewhat **anonymous** because they are not face to face with other individuals. This tempts them to say things they would never say to someone in person.

As my phone announced each tweet and post via an assortment of beeps, chimes, and whistles I found myself

wondering: *What would Jesus tweet? Would He have social media accounts? And if He did, what would He say and share? How would He relate to his “friends” and “followers” and to those who disagreed with Him?*

Pondering questions like these led to other questions—questions about *my* tweets, posts, and comments. If Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God, then shouldn't His actions and attitudes serve as a guide and example for every area of my life—even my use of social media?

When responding to questions like these, it's easy to slip into rules-and-regulations mode, into viewing everything as black and white. We may be tempted to make blacklists and set up moral walls to keep the “good” in and the “evil” out.

But we're not trying to write a manual to govern social media behavior. Behavior management never produces real and lasting change. Rules may work for a while, but they don't change who we are, and eventually, who we are will show up on our wall or in our feed. We need to get to the heart of the issue.

We're attempting to paint a picture of representing Jesus well in our digital spaces.

Some might object that this effort is purely based on conjecture. After all, Jesus never owned a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

You're right! And if this were only about technology, we would have a problem applying Scripture's wisdom to our Facebook posts and Twitter feeds. But the struggles we face with social media are not new. They are ancient problems showing up in new ways. Every time a new



Every time a new technology comes along, followers of Jesus have been forced to think about how best to interact with and use those advances.

technology comes along—whether television or radio or the printing press or even writing itself—followers of Jesus have been forced to think about how best to interact with and use those advances. So while it's true that Jesus said nothing about technology, He had quite a bit to say about how people relate, communicate, and love.

Even though the Scriptures might not provide specific answers for questions like “What would Jesus tweet?” and “How would He use social media?” they offer us something far better. They give us a clear view of Jesus. They tell us who He was, why He came, what He did and taught, and how He changed everything.

That is what this booklet is about. The Christian's participation in social media is not a technology issue, it is a communication issue and ultimately a heart issue. It's about relationships, not smartphones. And the Bible has a great deal to say about relationships—and about our hearts.



two

The Heart of the Matter

Our Words Matter

Most of us are quite careful about how we communicate in public. While some have no trouble engaging in a spirited debate behind closed doors, most of us don't think it's appropriate to publicly berate someone for holding a contrary political view. Even fewer would actually do it. Neither would we obnoxiously question the

intelligence or faith of someone whose doctrinal views don't align *precisely* with ours.

Even when the disagreement is significant, people are rarely willing to make a public spectacle over it. Yet impolite, even rude interactions take place countless times each day on Facebook walls and Twitter feeds all around the world. And sadly the perpetrators of such graceless communication are often Christians—followers of Jesus.

When God created human beings He gave us special gifts and a unique place in creation. 📖 Dr. Michael Pasquale points out that human language is one of those gifts from God that significantly sets humanity apart from the rest of creation.¹



But just because we can create and use language doesn't mean that we always do it well or that communication is easy.

📖 *Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." As image bearers we have a unique capacity to create and appreciate art and music. We can conceptualize, speak, read and write, and worship God—or choose to reject Him.*

But just because we can create and use language doesn't mean that we always do it well or that communication is easy. Sometimes we don't communicate what we intend to. Other times what we intend might be harmful rather than helpful. Add in factors like the absence of facial expression

and body language and the potential for misunderstanding in social media grows dramatically.

Our Intentions Matter

Part of the reason for this difficulty is that our ability to communicate has been damaged by sin. Jesus dealt with this corruption after a group of religious people² had just accused Him of doing miracles through the power of Satan (MATTHEW 12:22–24). After exposing the error in their accusations, Jesus went to the heart of the matter by telling a story about good trees bearing good fruit and bad trees bearing bad fruit (vv. 33–34). He summed it up by saying, “The mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (v. 34). Words aren’t the real problem, but they do expose the problem. That is why rules about what to post or tweet don’t solve the problem.

² *The **Pharisees** were influential from the second century BC to the first century AD. Today they have a bad reputation, but some of them warned Jesus of a plot to kill Him (LUKE 13:31), and some even believed in Him, including Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. But the Pharisees emphasized external law-keeping while ignoring the problem of their own sinful hearts.*

The Pharisees had just lied about Jesus, essentially calling Him a son of the Devil. But Christ did not simply correct their false information or try to change their bad behavior. Rather, He showed them that the problem was deeper. It was the content of their hearts.

When we use our words to hurt and belittle each other, we expose the condition of our hearts. When we use our

blogs or our social media to bully, ridicule, or misrepresent another person, the problem isn't with the words. What we write exposes a piece of our broken and sinful hearts. Don't misunderstand, our words matter, but even honest and true words can be used in harmful ways. Jesus addressed both our harmful words and our ill intentions during His public ministry.

Jesus's first followers were mostly Jewish, so they were deeply concerned about obeying the rules and regulations outlined in their Scriptures, what we know as the Old Testament. They took great care to make sure they ate the right foods, wore the right clothes, and offered the right sacrifices. Their lives were disciplined and their behavior was strictly managed. 📖

📖 *The more orthodox Jewish religious leaders were so conscientious about keeping God's instructions that they included an oral tradition with numerous **regulations** to serve as a protective hedge around **the Law**. Their logic was that if a person could keep these extra regulations, they would not break an actual law. This oral tradition was called the Torah and later was written as the Mishnah.*

They would have nodded in eager agreement when Jesus said in His famous Sermon on the Mount:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished (MATTHEW 5:17–18).

These words would have sounded just right to the religious people of Jesus's day. But He wasn't done. The punch of His message was coming with "the turn." The turn occurs when Jesus, having drawn the audience in, makes an unexpected move to drive His point home. He first uses a standard rhetorical device: "You have heard that it was said . . ." But then the turn comes as He follows it with an unexpected ending: "But I tell you . . ." He said, "You have heard that it was said, . . . 'You shall not murder . . .' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment" (MATTHEW 5:21–22). And again, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (vv. 27–28).

Six times He used a variation of this pattern. He even went so far as to say, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (vv. 43–44).

Jesus's audience had heard the commands since childhood. They were people of the Law, and the devout among them would go to great lengths to stay religiously pure. Yet this young teacher from Nazareth stood before them proclaiming that the outward application of the Law was not



Rules and regulations may manage our behavior to a degree but they cannot change our hearts.

enough. His desire was that His listeners understand the heart of the God who established the Law.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus communicated timeless truths that hold significance for those of us living in digital space. Rules and regulations may manage our behavior to a degree but they cannot change our hearts. Remember, the real problem is inside of us.

Before You Post

This is *not* to say that safeguards and standards are bad or unhelpful. After all, Jesus said He had not come to abolish the Law. Yet He taught that the deeper problem behind our threatening words is a murderous heart. Jesus did not come to simply keep us from killing, committing adultery, or seeking vengeance. He came to rescue every part of us—to heal murderous, adulterous, and vengeful hearts, and so He must confront the source of our destructive behaviors.

Let's look again at Jesus's conversation with the Pharisees in Matthew 12. Jesus responded, "Everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (vv. 36–37).

What words do I use when I post, tweet, or share information? What do my words reveal about my heart? And what responsibility do I have to others when I share this picture or comment? Let's look at some life-affirming principles to consider before we post.

¹ Pasquale, Michael and Nathan L. K. Bierma, *Every Tribe and Tongue: A Biblical Vision for Language in Society*, Pickwick Publications, Eugene: 2011.



three

Turning On the Right Filters

Be **Truthful.** Sometimes we have good intentions but neglect to think things through well enough. Recently, a Facebook friend posted one of those this-is-too-shocking-to-be-true stories. So I checked it out. With a quick Google search I discovered that the story she shared had been circulating in different forms since 1998 and was completely untrue.

The story put someone of a different religion in a negative light. But the incident had never occurred. This well-intentioned woman was spreading a *lie*. So why did

she post it? Perhaps she was misled; perhaps she wanted to believe it. We simply don't know. But we can say that the story should not have been circulated.

Why do stories like this get wide circulation via social media? One reason may be that we often take to social media to make a point, not to seek or represent the truth. Sadly, truth sometimes takes a backseat to what we want to say.

In John 14:6 Jesus tells His followers that truth is not rooted in ideologies or propositions, but in *Himself!* "I am the way and the *truth*[¶] and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

¶ The Greek word translated **truth** is ἀλήθεια—**alethia**. This New Testament word refers to things (content) that conform to reality.

When Jesus says that He is the truth, He is not merely saying that His words are true—that what He says is real. By calling himself *the* truth rather than a *truth-teller* He is saying that His character reveals the heart of God.

This is the essence of what Jesus said when Pilate asked Him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (JOHN 18:33). Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.

. . . You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me" (vv. 36–37).

In this exchange Jesus gives us a perfect example of what it means to focus on the deepest truth. He did not concern Himself with pointing out the theological errors of the religious leaders who were clamoring for His death, nor



Jesus demonstrated that sometimes facts get in the way of the truth. Many things are true but not everything is of equal importance.

did He complain about His unjust treatment under an oppressive government. Instead, He focused on the fact that His kingdom is other-worldly. His primary concern was His mission of rescuing humanity from their sins. Jesus demonstrated that sometimes facts get in the way of the truth. Many things are true but not everything is of equal importance.

Presenting accurate information is important. But insisting on the truth means much more than just making sure our digital communication contains correct

content. It means that we measure our communication against the standard of Jesus Christ. In practical terms, that gives us pause to ask ourselves: Does this comment, post, or tweet reflect the truth and character of Jesus Christ?

Be Wise. I am seldom out of reach electronically. 📱 Even asleep I'm only a few feet from my phone and all my social media accounts. Day or night, rain or shine, for better or for worse, social media gives the ability to communicate with the world via a few quick thumb strokes.

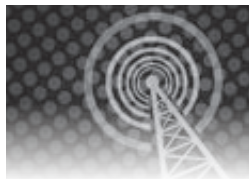
👉 *To combat what many see as an overdependence (or even an addiction) on social media, some Christians purposefully and prayerfully go on a “**social media fast**,” where they abstain from any form of electronic communication for a specified period of time.*

It's all very convenient—perhaps too convenient.

It's convenient because I'm always available. My kids, spouse, and my friends can reach me no matter where I am. I can share the moments of my life with those I care about—tweet my meal selection while dining at my favorite Greek restaurant, update Facebook while waiting at the doctor's office, post a photo to Instagram while riding a bus or playing golf.

Sure, photos of dinner, golf, or the doctor's office are great, but not all moments that can be shared *should* be shared. We're so used to our wired world that we can hit send without giving it much thought. Sometimes a moment to think is exactly what we need. Accessibility brings its own unique challenges.

One of the things that can make our use of social media confusing and difficult is the perceived anonymity of online communication. Looking at a screen instead of into the eyes of another person can fool us into thinking that our comments are simply shouted to the digital world. Because social media is treated as a stage instead of a conversation, we may write or post things that we would never say in person. But Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram are not anonymous. They are



Those screens are not walls that hide us; they are projectors that display our thoughts, ideas, and opinions to the world.

public forms of mass communication. Those screens are not walls that hide us; they are projectors that display our thoughts, ideas, and opinions to the world.

As followers of Christ the spotlight of scrutiny is on us in a particular fashion. We represent Jesus with our words and actions. With today's technology, our lives are plainly visible to the watching world. In our connected world, we don't just show Christ when we deliberately share the gospel with someone. Whether we remember it or not, we are *always* representing Jesus.

When Jesus first sent out the twelve apostles His final instruction to them was this: "Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves" (MATTHEW 10:16 NLT).

Just like the first disciples, we have been sent out into the world to spread God's message of hope and life. This requires wisdom. Because the world sees our lives and doesn't just hear our words, it is our responsibility to think twice before hitting send.

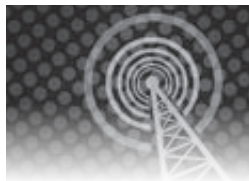
Long gone (mostly) are the days of three-page handwritten letters where every sentence was meticulously constructed and every paragraph carefully crafted. With global communication at our fingertips, a poorly timed tweet, an unclear Facebook post, or a thoughtless share can literally change lives, others or our own. Consider these examples:

- In 2013 several teachers in the United States lost their jobs after berating and mocking students on social media.

- A teen in Great Britain attempted suicide after being bullied on social media.
- Several healthcare professionals in Michigan were fired for liking or commenting on inappropriate photos that had been taken of patients and posted on Facebook by one of their co-workers.

Clearly, what we do in cyberspace matters a great deal.

Representing Christ in digital space is a difficult thing to do. What may be common sense, self-evident, funny, or helpful to us, may be frightening, rude, offensive, or confusing to someone else. Wisdom can help us sort out the tension between being shrewd while being harmless as we communicate via social media. "If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless" (JAMES 1:26 NLT).



Wisdom can help us sort out the tension between being shrewd while being harmless as we communicate via social media.

Knowledge deals with information; wisdom deals with application. Wisdom isn't just possessing the correct information. It isn't merely the state of knowing or understanding facts—that's knowledge. Wisdom carefully and correctly applies and presents the truth in a way that benefits others.

The next time we are tempted to fire off a quick post or tweet, let's take a moment and ask ourselves a

few questions: Is it possible I'm not seeing the situation clearly? Is this post or tweet an emotional response? Is this information accurate and easily understood? Do I have the right to say what I am about to say? The answers to these questions will help determine the wisdom of hitting send.

Be Gentle. Disagreements are not new. What *seems* new is the hostility, immediacy, and public way our disagreements take place.

Social media has given everyone a voice in the social, political, cultural, and theological conversations of the day. In the not-so-distant past it took a team of engineers, lots of money, and rooms full of expensive equipment to enter the world of mass communication. Today all it takes is a smartphone and Twitter account.

A pastor uses Twitter to communicate with his congregation. Recently he began a series dealing with difficult and controversial questions that face the church, and he sent out the following tweet to promote an upcoming teaching: "Prince of Peace or God of war? Come find out." In response, one of his congregation tweeted back: "READ YOUR BIBLE!"

This is an example of the good and not-so-good of social media. The pastor was trying to spark interest in Sunday's sermon. Was the response appropriate?

First, there is the usage of ALL CAPS. Generally all caps are used when there is strong emotion, usually anger. Then there is the question of what it actually meant. We aren't sure. Was he mad at the pastor for starting the

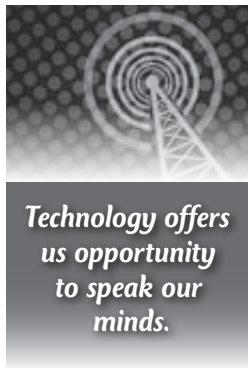
conversation? Did he not want the topic discussed in church? Was he choosing a side? If so, which side? Was he in favor of the Prince of Peace title for Christ, or for the mighty warrior description? Both are scriptural concepts, but it seemed like he didn't like something about one or both of them. And he seemed to accuse his pastor of not knowing the Bible.

Technology offers us opportunity to speak our minds. We can publicly encourage justice, address misinformation, warn wrongdoers, champion causes, declare truth, celebrate goodness, and expose evil. But our zeal for justice and truth can sometimes come across as combative rather than redemptive. And when it does, we cross the line that separates helping from hurting.

In his first letter,[↗] the apostle Peter writes to a group of Christians experiencing suffering (1 PETER 2). Injustice was rampant, and false teachers were in the church. The government was hostile to the gospel, enemies were spreading lies about them, and they were suffering.

[↗] **Peter's first epistle** was written to "God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1 PETER 1:1 NIV84) — all places in what is now Turkey. But the wisdom of the letter applies to believers.

From the middle of this suffering Peter echoes Jesus's



words from the Sermon on the Mount, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." He tells God's people:

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.
On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.
(1 PETER 3:9)

He goes on:

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 PETER 3:15)

Most of us aren't facing the kind of opposition that these early Christians were. Yet these verses give us effective instructions for how to approach our world in ways that make a positive difference.

Notice that Peter does not tell his readers to endure hardship in silence. He assumes that they will respond when questioned and that they will answer truthfully, even if it costs them something. But he also urges them to respond in a way that is reasonable and brings honor to Christ.

It's easy to see how Peter's advice can pertain to our social media use. Many tweets and posts are correct in content but incorrect in heart. They are mean, not gentle. They are degrading and dehumanizing. It's not enough to offer an answer that is merely correct, logical, or theologically orthodox. We need to share the truth in love.

Our online communication isn't just about spreading information, even if it's the right information. We are not called simply to speak about forgiveness, justice, and love as propositions but to practice them. That means posting with gentleness and respect.

We might paraphrase the apostle's instructions in 1 Peter 3 this way:

When you face insult and ridicule online, respond with a heart that is bent toward and submitted to Christ. Respond to challenges and questions in a way that demonstrates the hope you have in Jesus. Be gentle with others because Christ has been gentle with you. Be gracious to others because you are in need of His grace yourself.

Be Loving. Obviously we can't know the specific content Jesus would or would not tweet, post, or share. We can't answer the question of what political party He would support (although a strong case can be made that He would avoid political affiliations altogether).¹ Nor do we know where He would shop, what He would drive, or if He would enjoy sports.

¹ *When the Pharisees and Herodians—political enemies of each other—jointly sent representatives to Jesus with a trick question about taxes, He asked them whose image was on the coin used to pay the tax. When they replied, "Caesar," He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." It was a brilliant refusal to be baited into a **political debate**.*

But we can be sure that He would not berate or bully

people who don't agree with Him—even when communicating hard truth. After all, He is Love (cf. 1 JOHN 4:8). He wouldn't spread half-truths or misinformation. He *is* Truth. Jesus would never be unwise or unkind in His communication, and He would know precisely when to remain silent. He didn't come to condemn the world but to save it (JOHN 3:16–17).

The Bible shows us how Jesus conducted Himself when He walked this earth. It is through Scripture that we learn of God's desire for His people—to love Him and each other (MARK 12:29–30). Love means treating one another with gentleness and respect, not because it's the nice thing to do, but because when we love each other we are loving Him too.

When we love others we show them the heart of God. Jesus told His followers that there were two laws that summed up all the rest of the laws. The first was to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And the second was to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves (MATTHEW 22:37–39). This instruction rests on two key ideas. First, most of us actually love and care for ourselves. Second, it assumes that if a person will dedicate themselves to loving God and loving their neighbor they will not need layers of rules and regulations to manage their behavior.

Love[■] is the clearest expression of God's character



*When we love
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(1 JOHN 4:8, 16). When Jesus gave His followers the new command of love, He was not adding one more rule to the long list of Old Testament laws. He was asking us to express the heart of God to others (JOHN 13:34–35).

↗ **Love** is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 CORINTHIANS 13:7-11)



four

Clicking Share

When following the rules is the most important thing in our lives, we lose something important. We lose love. We lose relationship.

Genesis records an event that altered the heart of every human being. At the dawn of history, God created the first man and woman. Adam and Eve were not ashamed to be seen and known as they really were (GENESIS 2:25). They enjoyed God's presence and the presence of each other. But that all changed when sin entered the world. Adam

and Eve ran from the presence of God and hid because they were ashamed of their sin (GENESIS 3:8). One of the devastating effects of sin was a diminished ability to love and be loved.

But that is only the early part of our human drama. Happily, Scripture is the story of God's loving pursuit of humanity. He works relentlessly to restore us to that place of perfect relationship with Him and each other. Rules can never do this for us. Only Jesus can. It was love that drove Him to die on the cross. He gives us the capacity to love as we are loved.

This restored love should not just mark our face-to-face interactions, it should seep into everything we say and do online. Choosing to love each other though our tweets, feeds, and posts will take work. It is easier to criticize those who disagree with us than it is to be gracious with them. It takes more effort to be humble and gentle than it does to be arrogant and aggressive. It takes more time, energy, and patience to engage someone in genuine conversation than it does to preach at them. Listening is harder than speaking. Genuine conversation is more difficult than delivering a lecture.

A quick look at our Twitter feeds and Facebook home pages will tell us how far we have to go. It may seem like



One of the devastating effects of sin was a diminished ability to love and be loved.

an overwhelming task. And in our own strength it is. But what would happen if every one of us decided to actively and daily surrender our digital spaces to Christ? What if we applied Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 10:31 to our social media accounts? What if we committed everything that we eat, drink, post, or tweet to the glory of God?

Let's ask ourselves one simple question before we forward, post, repost, comment, tweet, or retweet anything:

"Can I, with these words, graciously, respectfully, and lovingly represent Jesus Christ, in this space at this time?"

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, may we humbly and wisely reveal the love and grace of Jesus that builds bridges where walls once had been. 🌿



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Reflections



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