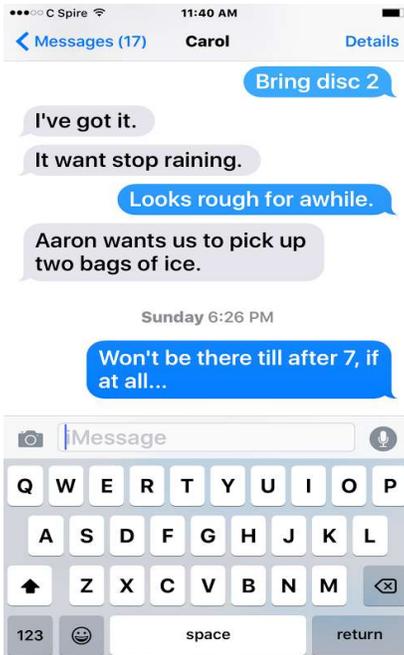


15 Guidelines for How a Christian should interact on Social Media



What IS "Social Media"? Any electronically transmitted interaction **between people**. Includes email, texting, facebook, twitter, snapchat, Instagram, as well as posting in response to articles, websites and applications enabling users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. 8 in 10 adults in America participate in some form of social media interaction; over 70 million photos and videos uploaded every day, and growing. 72% of access to websites is from cell phones and/or Ipad.

Is "Social Media" a blessing or a curse? YES! Interaction, similar interests, connection with other people [pictures, news & information spreads quickly (60% of news travels via social media), buying & selling [Amazon], job hunting, real time news, pinterest, communication with church members (announcement email saves \$\$), photo sharing, Bible & lesson sharing. **DISADVANTAGES / ISSUES...** lies and major relationship problems, bullying, cyber stalking, crimes against children, "hate" and 1st

amendment issues, ...but also a string of hurt from comments, broken hearts, backlash from jokes, ruined reputations, hurt feelings, anger, breakups, even murders connected to social media posts, not to mention addiction and loss in productivity. Social media can make people very ANTI-social, and can detract from attention and actual personal interaction. Murders, suicides, issues leading to counseling, "de-friending", recruitment tool for good AND evil, (i.e. recruiting for Isis), a way to research/stalk someone, not to mention scams, hacking, identity theft, (public wifi). **WE'VE ALL REGRETTED THINGS WE'VE SAID ON SOCIAL MEDIA.**

Where does the Bible deal with how we should interact on "Social Media"?

In the book of Proverbs we have much to learn about how to use our tongues, as well as how to use our fingers as we type strongly-held opinions in a super-charged political AND SOCIAL climate of "Social Media".

... While Facebook and the "comment" section of online news articles can be a good place to air out ideas and to expose yourself to different views, there's at least 15 insights the Bible can teach us about how to interact on social media is a way that will set us apart as a people who have not bought into a fallen world's way of communicating on "Social Media".

Proverbs has much to teach us about how to use our tongues, as well as how to use our fingers as we type strongly-held opinions in a super-charged political climate. While Facebook can be a good place to air out ideas and to expose yourself to different views, there are at least 15 things the Proverbs can teach us about how to interact well on social media:

1. Use FEW words. "Be Brief, Brother, Be Brief!" = 5 "B's" of effective communication.

Proverbs 10:19 (13:3; 17:25; 21:23)

"When words are many, transgression (stepping of a boundary line of some kind) is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent."

Keep your posts SHORT. The more you write, the more likely you're going to say something UNBALANCED or downright FOOLISH. You don't find JESUS piling up words; just the opposite: Jesus uses an ECONOMY of words. WDJJ (What did Jesus DO?)!

2. Never INSULT others.

Proverbs 11:12

"Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent."

The temptation is to belittle someone created in God's Image and just as valuable as you are. When tempted to belittle, think of God's grace, AND how it's easier to catch bees w/HONEY than with vinegar! When you are tempted to make some insulting comment, that's when you know you're in a bad place. Disengage. Find something else to do for a while.

3. IGNORE it when others insult you.

Proverbs 12:16 (19:11)

"The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult." "Fool" is a morally deficient person... You might commit yourself to being considerate and respectful in your Facebook dialogues, but that doesn't mean others will do the same. Some folks are just jerks. So, when you feel insulted, just put it aside and act like it didn't happen. (Easier said than done, I know.) & remember: Your security and self-esteem are NOT determined by that person, but by what God has done for you in Christ.

4. Avoid RASH (impulsive, thoughtless, reckless, careless) words.

Proverbs 12:18 (29:20)

"There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Rash words offered impulsively and quickly, without consideration of how they might be misunderstood or whom they might offend. (A problem not usually present in "face to face" communication). WAIT before you hit the "send" button.

5. Check your FACTS.

Proverbs 14:5 (19:9)

"A faithful witness (a person of FAITH) does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies."

Be careful about throwing out inaccurate or misleading facts & figures [Mark Twain, "Figures don't lie, but liars figure!"; also, "A lie can make it around the world 3 times before the truth even gets her shoes on."]. And just because you happen to include a link to some academic study doesn't mean you're telling the truth. We are NOT to bear false witness but re-present the One Who is the Truth. Better to preface what you say with, "According to these facts by this person..."

6. Be willing and ready to TERMINATE the discussion.

Proverbs 14:7 (18:2; 29:9)

"Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge."

[Theologian Kenny Rogers, "You gotta know when to hold em, know when to fold em . . ."] There are times when it will dawn on you that the person you are interacting with is not really interested in

gaining knowledge, but only in spewing his/her opinion and being a spoon, stirring it up. You are his/her audience. In that case, better find something better to do with your time.

7. Do not be quick to ANGER.

Proverbs 14:29 (15:18; 16:32; 29:11)

"Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly."

There is a time for righteous anger, for sure, but there is a big difference between righteous anger and a hairtrigger temper. Some people just "blow up," and it's over. So does a bomb, but look at all the damage it does!

8. Answer SOFTLY.

Proverbs 15:1

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

This is how it almost always works — someone writes something you don't like, so you respond in a curt or dismissive tone. Now there is coldness in the exchange, and the relationship is soured. Ensuing words are bitter and terse. Now you don't even want to be in the same room with the person. All of this can be avoided with a simple soft answer.

9. Value the APT (fitted, appropriate, suitable, & not awkward) answer.

Proverbs 15:23 (25:11)

"To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!"

There is a difference between a post that has a lot of accurate information, and a post that qualifies as an "apt answer" or a "word fitly spoken" (25:11). Only experience, discernment (getting the context), finding the right word, and the wisdom of God's Spirit can help you know the difference. And remember the idea of building up or edification. The "New York Times" principle: DON'T write ANYTHING you would not want printed or posted on the front page of the New York Times. That includes Texts.

10. SLEEP on it.

Proverb 15:28

"The heart of the righteous (mentally, emotionally, what you desire to do) ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things." You don't have to send a rebuttal the moment you read someone's objectionable post. Don't text-bomb. Let a few hours pass. Maybe even sleep on it. Then reread your answer to see if that's what you really want to say.

11. Watch your TONE.

Proverbs 16:21 (16:24)

"The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness."

What will convince people of your viewpoint, or at least what will get them to listen, is not so much your brilliant, irrefutable debating skills, but a posture of kindness, gentleness and overall sweetness, or pleasantness. Social media will always seem harsher than face to face.

12. Remember, you might be WRONG.

Proverbs 16:25 (21:2)

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

Just because you're convinced of your position, and you "feel" you're right, it doesn't mean you ARE right. In all of your pontificating, keep in mind, "I could be wrong." If we were not wrong, and often, we would NOT need Jesus! We are fully capable of self-deception, plus God alone has all the facts and contexts and is incapable of being wrong.

13. Don't start a FIGHT.

Proverbs 18:6 (20:3)

"A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating."

Name-calling often escalates into physical violence. "Yo' Mama!" Some wear their Facebook battles as a badge of honor, reassuring themselves that all the people they have offended are simply the price one has to pay for standing for the "truth". Proverbs says such a person is a fool. Dogmatic Ignorance & Pious Stupidity are to be avoided at all cost.

14. Don't ANSWER before really LISTENING.

Proverbs 18:13

"If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."

[Art Garfunkel said the song "The Sound Of Silence" was about the inability of people to communicate and connect w/each other, especially emotionally. "Sound of silence" *And in the naked light I saw Ten thousand people, maybe more People talking without speaking People hearing without listening.* Are you listening to what the other person is saying, or just planning your answer while you hastily rush through his/her post? Don't answer before you hear it out and can say, "I understand". You may have to ask for more clarification. Good communication takes time!

15. Be willing to LEARN.

Proverbs 19:20 (12:15; 13:10, 18; 15:12)

"Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future."

Could it be that you might learn something in a Facebook exchange, rather than being the fount of all knowledge? And besides, Christians are committed to being lifelong LEARNERS (which is part of discipleship). Be willing to admit you're wrong if you stand corrected. You will only be better equipped for future discussions.