



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

***Question: There have been several problems created in the lives of people because of the social networking media like Facebook and Twitter. What do you think Jesus would say about this?***

The use of technology for social networking can be a blessing or a curse, depending upon how it is used. Who can deny the benefits of instant communication with family and friends from around the world? The availability of up-to-date information and ability to share ideas and greetings via technology is amazing.

However, the nature of our technological communication has at least one inherent danger: isolationism. Some people spend entirely too much time emailing, blogging and texting while sitting alone with their computers and cell phones. Although other people are out there in cyberspace, our technology does not place us in the presence of a living, breathing flesh and blood person. Continued impersonal contact can hinder the development of social skills and fail to satisfy the human need for warmth and encouragement that help us feel valued as persons.

Such isolation can lead to diminished skills in our interpersonal communication. Sitting there alone, we tend forget that it is the real world of people who may read our words, and we may neglect the same care in selecting words and framing thoughts in instant media as we would have used in other forms of writing. In this neglect, we often write hurtful things—things that we would not say if we were looking the person in the eye. Written words lack the fuller communication that tone of voice, facial and bodily expressions can add. Angry words are more easily written through impersonal media than spoken in person. Some things need to be said only in a person's presence where there can be questions and personal interactions that more fully explain our intentions.

This is why I believe Jesus would point out that we were created to be social beings in personal contact with other living beings. God himself has demonstrated this social quality in the biblical picture of him as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. When man was created, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Thus, God created woman. Jesus also said that the two greatest commands are to love God and love your neighbor.

In addition, Jesus would warn us of the danger of speaking too quickly and carelessly. He would remind us of the words of scripture: “Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 29:20; cf. James 1:19). The apostle Paul also stated: “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).

Because there are problems does not mean we should never communicate by modern social media. However, this need for direct contact with people does suggest that we need to spend as much time in personal contact with others as we spend in isolation with our computers or texting devices. These same principles apply to what we write as well as to what we speak. When using the current social media, we should slow down long enough to re-read what we have written before we hit the send button. Before we write criticisms and accusations that might be misunderstood, we should go visit with the person or at least call him on the phone. Jesus told his disciples to go to their brothers alone if they had a problem with them. Others are to be included only if the problem cannot be resolved in private (Matthew 18:15).

We can enjoy our social media of today’s world, but we need to balance our technology with personal relationships and interactions in person. Nothing can take the place of this kind of caring for and loving our neighbors.

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