

Voices: Is social media good?

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Social media promised us the world and has taken our soul. Every social media platform promises to connect us to one another, to give us a platform to stay informed, and to help us live our best lives. Instead, social media has distanced us from our physical neighbors, stoked our anger and fear, and kept us from paying attention to God's glory and grace right in front of us.

At this point, it is fruitless to try and convince us to get off of social media—though we probably should. Social media has become too essential for us, a part of who we are, and an integral part of our everyday lives. It has become indispensable, but we can ask hard questions and try to be wise in the way we use social media.

Does social media help us love God?

The first question we should ask of anything we do is: Does this help us grow in love and knowledge of God? Does social media lead us to love God more, to know God more as we absently scroll through our news feed?

The fruit of our lives shows where the root of our heart is planted. What does the fruit of our social media life show us about where the root of our heart lies? What does what we share say about our ultimate love, about who or what we worship?

We can share as many memes as we like, point one another to articles—please share this one—and pass on chain messages, but doing so is no substitute for what really helps us grow in love and knowledge of God.

We have become far too distracted by what matters far too little. We should

be asking ourselves if the time we are spending on social media is keeping us from growing in love and knowledge of God.

Does social media help us love our neighbor?

What worries me most about my own heart and my use of social media is the way it stokes fear, anger and outrage every time I log on. I'm concerned about the way it causes me to see other people simply as objects worthy of ridicule and hate rather than being made in the image of God.

Take a moment, log on and look at the articles and memes shared about politicians who may have a different vision for the country than you do. What do these shares reveal about you?

We will have disagreements about politics, but we don't have to diminish the image of God in others. We are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Does social media help us be faithful to this command?

Before you share a picture you find funny or an article reinforcing your bias, ask yourself if it will honor the image of God in others and if it will lead you to love them well.

Pay attention to how social media forms us

I know the arguments for social media. It helps us keep up with family and friends, and sometimes it lives up to this hope, but more often than not, it pollutes our hearts and keeps us from seeing others as loved by God and bearers of his image.

How social media forms our hearts will be a problem the church will deal

with for generations to come. We have become distracted, quick to scroll past, which forms us not to be still and know God. We have put ourselves on display and found our identity in likes and shares instead of in Christ.

The rise in anxiety and loneliness alongside the rise of social media is not a coincidence. We no longer know how to live in community with those who differ from us.

A call to get off of social media is a tough sell, but at the very least, we can ask essential questions about how we use social media and what it is doing to our hearts.

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