

Voices: Be careful, little fingers, what you type

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I love living at the start of the Internet age. I don't think we tend to appreciate how world-changing and culture-shaping the Internet is, or how recent its development is. We're living in a time that's not unlike the invention of the printing press in the 15th century. Human communication has been completely revolutionized, seemingly overnight.



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I have no doubt the beginning of the 21st century will be remembered as one of the most important moments in human history for this reason. What a time to be alive!

As amazing as the Internet is, it unfortunately also tends not to bring out the best in people. The Internet, and social media in particular, can pose a real spiritual danger if we do not use it wisely and interact with it with our Christian convictions in mind.

We have the ability to speak to people we've never met and likely never will meet face-to-face, and we often use that ability poorly. If someone voices a left-leaning opinion on healthcare issues, we call them a "leftist" or

“Marxist” and ignore what they’re saying. If someone voices a traditional view on marriage and sexuality, we call them “bigot” or “on the wrong side of history” and move on in a feeling of superiority.

Clouding discussions



Online, insults and partisan statements too often cloud important discussions.

Would we do these things face-to-face? If I were talking to someone and they told me they supported a single-payer healthcare option, I can’t imagine calling him a “Marxist” and walking away. I was raised better than that!

Why is it OK for me to do this on the Internet, then? The World Wide Web seems to bring out less than our best in everyone, Christians included. There’s a spiritual danger to the way we treat one another online, one that goes even further than rudeness and lack of civility.

The real spiritual danger of the Internet age is that it can encourage that oldest and greatest of sins—pride. When we dismiss and belittle the opinions of others without listening to them or considering their actual merits, we imply our own opinions are so obviously correct that no other ideas merit consideration. This amount of self-certainty is not allowed to Christians, who are called to humility and awareness of our fallibility.

More than rude

When we reject someone’s views by belittling them, we’re doing more than

being rude: we're rejecting the Bible's admonition to "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry," and we're rejecting the idea we need to listen to others because we ourselves could be wrong.

It's easy to toss out a random insult or degradation on an article we disagree with or a Facebook status we don't like. But doing that has bigger implications than we realize. Calling someone a "leftist" or a "fundamentalist" implies our side always is correct, and we can reject any idea from someone who doesn't think the same as us.

It essentially is claiming we are perfect. A perfect person is cannot be taught, cannot learn, cannot grow. Mistakenly claiming we or our group is perfect cuts us off from the opportunity for these things.

Called to challenge

A person who doesn't think they need improvement or correction is a person who isn't following God.

The church is called to be a challenge to the world, showing it a better way to live under Christ's leadership. Our current culture is hyper-partisan and encourages us to reject anybody who doesn't think or act like us.

The church should be an alternative to that, teaching the world how to have productive, mature conversations and to disagree with grace and consideration. We don't all have to agree, but we do have to work together respectfully as members of Christ's body.

Be careful what you type; the spiritual danger of Internet outrage is real.

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