

THE FRIEND CONNECTION



6: Friendship not Friending

[Sermon preached on Sunday 13th May 2018]

Resources needed: Bibles, Worship and Prayer activity sheet for each person.

WELCOME

Icebreaker: Discuss - On a scale of 1-10 how important is social media in your life? How much time do you think you spend on social media per day (Social media = Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Messenger, Twitter, Dating sites such as Christian Connect etc.)? Be honest with yourself and the group!

DISCUSSION

1. What positive outcomes can social media have on friendships?
2. "Social media is good if it facilitates human contact, but bad if it replaces face-to-face interaction." Do you agree and why?
3. How can we use social media to improve our friendships rather than promote superficial relationships?
4. What aspects of true friendships need to be carried out in person rather than through social media?

The Issues

A recent article by Susan Pinker, "Does Facebook Make Us Unhappy and Unhealthy?" The Wall Street Journal (5-25-17) said that:

"Researchers found that the more people use Facebook, the less healthy they are and the less satisfied with their lives one study found that social media increased feelings of isolation; another, of 1,500 Britons, found that the websites—image-based sites in particular—exacerbated feelings of anxiety and inadequacy the bottom line is that replacing in-person interactions with online contact can be a threat to your mental health."

5. Why do you think this is? What implications does it have for bringing up our children?
6. What are the negative ways in which people use social media (e.g. people feeling left out and being driven to constantly being online; jealousy of others and needing 'likes'; being fake and trying to create a perfect image; venting criticism, frustrations and problems in an unhelpful way; inappropriately seeking help for personal issues)?
7. What do you think lies behind the need to use social media excessively?
8. How should we as Christians set a good example and respond to negative posts?

Do you recognise any of the following warning signs?

- a. Do you check your Facebook page more than once or twice a day?
- b. Do you spend more than 20 minutes a day on Facebook?
- c. Do you find it difficult to imagine a day without technology?
- d. Have you ever read a text or gone online during a church gathering?
- e. Have you stayed up beyond your normal bedtime because you were on Facebook or playing online games?
- f. Do you use your mobile phone during meals or keep it in the bedroom?
- g. Do you regularly find yourself in a room where everybody is using a device rather than interacting with each other?

Are you in danger of social media becoming an addiction?!

BIBLE FOCUS

Image - Look at Genesis 1:27; 2 Corinthians 3:18

Q. How can we reflect the image of God in us on social media, rather than a self-created image?

Approval - Look at Galatians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 4:3-4

Q. What difference could it make if we only truly cared about God's approval and judgement of us?

Chosen Ones - Look at Ephesians 4:11-16

The Bible says that our most important social circle is the church: the people **God** has chosen to help us mature, rather than the social circle **we** choose to create around us online.

Q. Is social media getting in the way of us engaging with, serving and growing within the body of Christ?

Trivia - Look at Isaiah 40:6-8

Q. Is your social media life characterised by trivial things of no lasting importance, or does it contribute value to the discipleship of you and others? How could it become more worthwhile?

Grace - Look at Titus 2:11-14

Q. Are your needs met in Christ rather than through social media?

Being Like Christ - Look at Ephesians 4:25-32; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Q. How can we live these passages out on social media?

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Use the Worship and Prayer activity sheet provided. You will need to print out a copy for each person to use and take away (please contact the BEC office if you need copies printed for you).

WORSHIPPING GOD IN OUR SOCIAL MEDIA WORLD

Part 1: BE FREE

We can exhaust ourselves by the need to portray an image of ourselves for the approval of others. Jesus wants us to be free of heavy burdens.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28.

Read these statements aloud together and then meditate on them, letting God speak to you.

- **The gospel of Jesus says that Jesus recreates me in the image of God, and Jesus is recreating the world. God’s kingdom is extended as his word is proclaimed.**
- **Jesus recreates me – I am not a self-made person.**
- **Jesus recreates me in God’s image – it is not about my image.**
- **Jesus recreates the world – I am not the saviour.**
- **Jesus recreates God’s world – it is not my world.**
- **Jesus creates God’s world with God at the centre – not me at the centre.**
- **Jesus creates and recreates through God’s word – not through my words.**
- **These truths enable me to be truly human, fit for the purpose for which I was created. And this is what liberates me from self-obsession to enjoy the goodness and grace of God.**

Part 2: BE CHRIST-LIKE

Read and pray through these suggested guidelines and commit to putting in place the ones God highlights as important for you.

1. **Don’t say anything online that you wouldn’t say were the people concerned in the room.**
2. **Don’t say anything online that you wouldn’t share publicly with your Christian community.**
3. **Ensure your online world is visible to your offline Christian community.**
4. **Challenge one another if you think someone’s online self reflects a self-created identity rather than identity in Christ.**
5. **Challenge one another if you think someone’s online self doesn’t match their offline self.**
6. **Use social networking to enhance real-world relationships, not to replace them.**
7. **Don’t let children have unsupervised internet access or accept as online friends people you don’t know offline.**
8. **Set limits to the time you spend online and ask someone to hold you accountable to these.**
9. **Set aside a day a week as a technology ‘Sabbath’ or ‘fast’.**
10. **Avoid alerts (e-mails, tweets, texts and so on) that interrupt other activities, especially reading, praying, worshipping and relating.**
11. **Ban mobiles from the meal table and the bedroom.**
12. **Look for opportunities to replace disembodied (online or phone) communications with embodied (face-to-face) communication.**