

Young People and Social Media

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon addresses various questions related to social media use, relationships, and guidance for young people. It emphasizes the importance of not letting social media or everyday life entangle and control us, but rather to use them wisely. It also highlights the need for healthy boundaries in online interactions, especially in developing romantic relationships. The sermon encourages youth leaders to build relationships of trust with young people, showing genuine care and interest in their lives to provide a healthy and balanced atmosphere for growth.

Scripture: Matthew 6:24, 2 Timothy 2:4, 1 Timothy 5:2, Proverbs 4:23, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Social Media Wisdom", "Healthy Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

Hello dear brothers and sisters and especially young people. It's a joy to be able to speak to you this way even though I would much rather be there in person. So these questions that you have asked are all very good questions and I'm especially blessed by the honesty and the sincerity that I sense in the questions.

So I thought I would go through them one by one and just share a few thoughts that the Lord's laid on my heart in response. The first one relates to social media and its use. Is it okay to use and that sort of thing.

And I want to give you two words regarding social media. The first is the word master. You find it in Matthew chapter 6 verse 24.

Matthew 6 verse 24. This is a verse you probably know well if you've been in CFC even for a short time. I'm sure you've heard this verse.

Matthew 6 verse 24 says no one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. So this word master I think of social media in the same category as money, sports, entertainment, fame, etc.

and all of them I think fall into this category of mammon. But it's interesting to note that Jesus didn't say you cannot have God and mammon. He said you cannot serve God and mammon.

So the issue with mammon has to do with rulership. That means does it control you. So just like there's nothing inherently sinful in money itself, the danger with money is that it can have power over you.

In the same way there's nothing inherently wrong in social media as long as what you're looking at or reading is not sinful. The danger in social media is in the power that it can have over you. So if social media is your slave, that means you have control over it, then you're putting it to good use.

Just like if money is your slave, then you're putting it to good use. But if social media is your master, that means it has control over you and you find that you're always responding to the pull of social media, then you must seek to be free from that power, just like you want to be freed from anything that has power over you except God himself. I've heard it said that one way to know what your idol is, is by looking at what is the first thing you think about in the morning.

It's an interesting way. I don't know if it's entirely accurate, but I've used that as a test for myself. So for example, as soon as you wake up in the morning, if you find that you're getting on your phone or your computer to check social media, perhaps that is your master.

The second word I want you to think about is the word entangled. Entangled. That's in 2nd Timothy, no 1st Timothy chapter 2. No, it is 2nd Timothy chapter 2 verse 4. 2nd Timothy chapter 2 verse 4. Paul writes to Timothy, who he refers to as a young person, as a young man.

So there's lots of good advice in 1st and 2nd Timothy for young people. Here he says, 2nd Timothy 2 verse 4, No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. So here again, he's not talking about sinful things.

He's talking about everyday life in the affairs of everyday life. So it's clear that it is possible for normal everyday life things to entangle us. And social media can be like that as well.

Think of entanglement like a heavy ball and chain attached to your leg. If you had a heavy ball and chain attached to your leg, you can survive. It won't kill you, but it's going to be very difficult to live your life.

Every time you have to get up from the chair, it's very slow. If you have to go to work, it'll take you a long time. If you have to catch the bus, you may miss the bus because it'll take you such a long time to get on the bus.

So everything is very sluggish. And it's the same thing spiritually as well. If the everyday things of life become an entanglement, that means they're attached to you in some way that you can't get your mind off of it or you can't stop yourself from always checking your phone or looking on Facebook or Instagram, then it's become an entanglement and it will slow down your spiritual life.

Remember the spiritual life is a race. So all the more reason that we have no attachment, nothing that slows us down. Another picture that has helped me is think of it like a bottle of very expensive perfume that you have, but there's a hole at the bottom.

And over a period of time, that hole will drain the bottle of everything that's in there, all that precious perfume. And think about those little moments during the day where if you're not careful, they can become

like little holes at the bottom of your bottle of perfume. And that bottle of perfume that you have, dear young people, is your time.

Very, very, very precious. There's no amount of monetary money value that you can put on that time that you have. And these things, social media, if you're not master over them, can become like little holes at the bottom of this precious bottle of perfume that you have.

And one day you'll wake up in your 30s or 40s and wonder where did all that time go through these little holes at the bottom, drain that time. So another one thing you can do perhaps, I'll be honest, I haven't done this myself. I haven't felt the need to do it, but I'll just share it as an advice to consider if you feel like you need to do it.

That is, maybe to satisfy your own curiosity. I've always thought about doing it, maybe I will do it. Before you look at on your phone at something, whether it's Facebook or Instagram or whatever, start a little timer on the phone.

And then once you're done looking at it, stop the timer. And then throughout the day, every time you go back on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram, start the timer again. And I keep track of it.

And at the end of the day, add up the total of all the time that you spent, you may be surprised how much time you actually spent on those things that you thought, ah I'll just check it real quick. And those real quick moments add up to a lot of time. So if that helps you, consider doing it just as an exercise, maybe for one day, just to get a feel for how much time you actually spend on social media.

So I hope that answers, helps answer that question a little bit. Okay, the second and fifth question in the order in which they were sent to me relate to whether you can use social media to find a partner, life partner or having potentially romantic relationships that begin through social media. The only thing I'll say here is to be especially careful of interactions on social media because social media allows you to develop a personality and a world of imagination, as it were, that is artificial.

Because online you can make yourself out to be somebody that you're not in real life. And that's, that's dangerous. Ultimately God intended for us to be people who interact with each other face to face.

And even if you're, the relationship with somebody you end up marrying begins long distance or over social media, eventually when you get married you have to be face to face with that person. That's how God intended our lives to be on this earth. So getting too caught up with how things are on social media or on the internet can not only lead you into a lot of temptation and sin, but it can end up in heartbreak.

You may, you may make that online interaction to be more than it actually is and more than the other person thinks it is. And your imaginary world could someday come crashing down. And I know of people who have been deeply hurt by things that were just a relation, an interaction on online.

So that is why it's best to, the best way to know whether you are in that safe area is by having people in your life who are spiritually minded and have your best interests at heart. And they will speak the truth to you. And they can guide you in these things.

If the person that you're interacting with on social media is not a believer and not somebody that you know would be good to be married to because they're not really interested in spiritual things perhaps or for some other reason, then you ultimately if you pursue anything with them, even online, it's just another form of

lust and it will never satisfy you. You will end up being more hurt and heartbroken. If the person that you're interacting with or trying to interact with is a believer and is somebody that you think you could be married to, then the best thing you can do is to include spiritually minded people like your parents or your elders or youth leaders in your thoughts and conversations about this person so that they can help you see if this is healthy and help you move it in the right direction so that eventually it can become a face-to-face thing and eventually if it is God's will marriage.

So think about those things. Be careful of the artificial nature of online interactions and it's okay if it starts there as long as it's guided by spiritually minded people that God has placed in your life and that it ultimately evolves into something that's healthy, personal and face-to-face. The third question had to do with mixed group chats and if they are healthy and advisable.

Also I think there was a question about how to handle a situation where an acquaintance or a friend keeps trying to develop something or interact or ping you with text or something like that. First of all, with regard to mixed group, co-ed group chats, as long as the conversation in those chats is not sinful or flirtatious, then I don't see anything wrong with it because for most of us, if not all of us, our school or workplace environments are co-ed. There are boys and girls, men and women there and so likewise those group chats are okay as long as the content and the purpose of that group is not sinful or flirtatious in any way.

If as far as how to deal with somebody who tries to contact you and is constantly trying to draw you or lure you, read Proverbs chapter 7 sometime and look there on the dangers that are there when someone of the opposite sex persistently tries to draw you. It's a very good chapter to read and the warning that's there applies today for these types of online situations. The fourth question that was given to me was this what was called a dichotomy or a separation of how relationships are in the workplace, in the world and in the church, where you can feel perhaps that in the workplace there's a casual friendly atmosphere of interaction between the opposite sexes and the church may not be that way or may not feel that way.

The first thing I'll say is that just because it feels more free in the workplace doesn't make it better. Most of the so-called freedom in the workplace is actually fueled by lust, by sexual lust. That is why the workplace is full of sexually sinful behavior so much so that even the world recognizes it and companies have to train their employees on how to be appropriate.

Such a thing must never even be heard of in the church which is why we must be very careful but sadly the result of Christians seeing that apparent freedom in the world and trying to bring it into the church as well saying that's how it should be has resulted in churches also becoming like that where there is harassment and inappropriate behavior within so-called church within Christendom and that's sad. You must also keep in mind that what you think of as a level of comfort of interaction between the opposite sex may not be a level of comfort that the other person of the opposite sex is comfortable with and feels free to have just because you think it feels free or feels comfortable may not be something that the other person feels comfortable with so it's important for us to find that healthy balance. That said the other extreme is where there is an unhealthy awkwardness between boys and girls or men and women.

Now some of that is natural. There is a natural awkwardness or maybe natural carefulness that God has built into us for our own protection and the devil is keen to rid us of that inhibition between men and women and make it so free and that you must be careful about. But there is a healthy balance and a verse that has helped me in this regard is in 1st Timothy chapter 5. Again another verse in 1st Timothy or in the letters to Timothy.

1st Timothy chapter 5. We read in verse 2 Paul tells Timothy how to treat the women that are his peers because he is a young man and so in 1st Timothy 5 verse 2 Paul says treat the younger women which is your peers Timothy or women that are younger than you as sisters in all purity. So there's two words there that are helpful as a guide for us. First is the word sisters the second is the word purity.

So I think of it like this to treat every other young person single person or person your age as if they were your brother or sister which means that you're interacting with them doesn't lead you into lustful thoughts about them because you would never think a lustful thought about your own brother or sister and you can do that with purity. If you had a sister and you're a man or a boy and you look at that sister there's no lust there you can interact with them that way. If you're a girl and you have a brother you can interact with your brother in a way that doesn't lead to lust so this is Paul's advice through the Holy Spirit to Timothy to seek to live out this way and so in doing so you can seek to have that relationship with boys and girls men and women of the opposite sex being watchful that it doesn't cross the line and you'll know that it's crossed the line if you feel within you if you're honest with yourself a lustful thought or some attraction coming into place and then you must step back and be watchful over that and be aware of that because that otherwise that will lead you into sin or an unhealthy situation.

And finally I would say ask your youth leaders and your elders and your parents they're spiritually minded for guidance on how to practically live out this verse in the context of the church setting or even in your school or workplace. God will give you wisdom and give them wisdom to guide you in that. This next question has to do with the use of social media to vent frustration or to speak out against something.

You have to be careful about that because if you if the sole purpose of posting something on Facebook or tweeting about something is to vent that frustration that's inside it's never healthy if it comes out if the purpose of it is to just get it off your chest especially if you're doing it about somebody else where you're speaking about somebody or some group of people it would first of all be a form of gossip or slander which the Bible forbids but as I mentioned earlier social media allows you to hide behind your phone or your computer and speak or act in a way that you would never do in person and you must be careful about that because there are a lot of people who type or post or write things that they would never never say in person and there's something unhealthy about that. The answer is really in the question and that is to meditate much on God's love for you. I think the question specifically pertained to a sense of fear of your leaders or your parents or whatever situation you're in the authorities that God has placed over you meditate much on God's love for you like the question said and ask him also ask God also to show you the genuine love of your elders and your godly parents and you will find that that perfect love casts out fear 1 John 4 verse 18 perfect love casts out that fear and once that fear is removed because you've received God's perfect love you will be able to find healthy avenues a healthy way to express and to bring come and to find healing for that hurt or that bitterness that wants to find a root and you can deal with it in a healthy way.

Instead if you just post about it on Facebook or write an email to somebody about it it's just a form of gossip really it's not only forbidden it will also just end up being a weight in your soul a heavy weight in your soul that will drag you down it's not healthy. The healthiest way to deal with hurt and offenses is to receive God's perfect love to find security in God's love for me and allow God's love for others around me to flow through me as well okay the last question relates to again thank you for asking these questions I it has been an opportunity for me also to search my own heart to guard my own heart Proverbs 4 verse 23 guard your heart with all diligence for from it come the springs or the issues of life guard your heart so it's been a good reminder for me also to check my own heart as you've as I've thought about these questions

that you've asked including this last one which relates to how youth leaders can help guide and leaders of children can help guide the children and the youth and provide a healthier atmosphere or a healthy atmosphere and a balanced atmosphere for the young people to grow I want you to know that for me growing up in CFC I had one of the I had probably the healthiest atmosphere I could think of now I didn't realize it at the time and it wasn't perfect I don't think anything is perfect on this earth but it was much healthier than anything else I've seen in the world elsewhere that's for sure and when I was young a child and a young person growing up in the church I'm sure that I can't remember exactly but I'm sure there were thoughts that came into my mind little forms of complaints perhaps towards my parents or somebody else in the church and I made a big deal out of it in my mind perhaps but when I left home and got to see a little bit of what else is there in the world I realized what a wonderful thing it is to have a new covenant church where there are brothers and sisters that genuinely care for you it is a precious thing so I hope you never lose sight of it or if you have a hard time seeing it I hope that the Lord takes you somewhere to see what else is out there in the world and you recognize it's a precious thing to have what you have there in CFC I still remember it deeply and fondly I'm very thankful for that and so much so that it has become the passion of my life in the last 10 years to create the same atmosphere the same spirit here in Colorado for my children I want them to have that same atmosphere so for youth leaders one of the things that I've tried to do is to build a relationship with the young people and the children so when you see them let's say after the meeting you see them there instead of just walking by maybe stop and have a conversation with one of them or a few of them ask them some casual questions about their everyday life without super spiritualizing it and I know I've fallen into that trap a little bit where I think everything must have a verse attached to it or some sort of super spiritual language just talk about everyday life find out what their interests are and try to establish a relationship with them on that topic or on that subject and if it's cricket or motorcycles or clothes or whatever it might be find that that thing that they have an interest in if it's not a sinful thing obviously and use that as an opportunity to develop a relationship with them also you could organize games or activities for them and play with them don't just be the organizer get in with them and let ask them if they'll let you play with with them as part of the game and I think you are already doing that you youth leaders so continue to do that what it will do is it will develop a relationship of trust with them where they realize that you're not just there to tell them what they should do and what they shouldn't do but that you're there to listen to them and to take an interest in them to love them to walk alongside them and that will lead them to feel comfortable to open up to you about their struggles and about their journey and and it'll take time but if you invest in them you'll bear it will bear rich dividends I can think of many older older young youth leaders in CFC who were there for me when I was growing up and I'm very very thankful for them and that the Lord used them in my life to sow seeds that are bearing fruit now and if they and it wasn't always spiritual or religious language it was just them taking an interest in me and praying for me and showing me that they cared about me without an agenda so all that to say I believe you all there in CFC are doing a wonderful work you are ahead of us as an example to this day you continue to be all of you there I'm thankful to the Lord for you all and I look forward to the next time I get to see you all may the Lord bless you and encourage you and strengthen you in all things

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