

Social Media: Self-worship?

Mike DeBoer

We are all familiar with the first commandment in the table of the law...maybe even too familiar. Those of us who were raised in the Protestant Reformed Churches have heard the law read hundreds of times, Sunday after Sunday. In response to this commandment, we quickly say, "I only worship one God, the true God of heaven and earth. I do not have any idols." However, when you consider what idolatry really is, you might have a different response. The Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 95 states that "Idolatry is, instead of, or besides that one true God who has manifested Himself in His Word, to contrive or have *any other object* in which men place their trust." "Any other object" can literally be anything or anyone, including yourself.

Have you considered that, at times, you might be putting trust in yourself? How do you derive your energy for the day? Where does your food and clothing come from? What is the source of your happiness and contentment? Why are you posting on Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat? Why are you looking at your social media feed? Do you want to know what everyone else is doing and buying so you don't feel left out? Do you want to make sure that you are "liked" by all your friends? Not only is this a good time to examine whether or not you are using your time wisely, but more to the point of this article, what is your motive in making use of social media?

We are warned in scripture of the day and age in which we live. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:1-2, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." Social media is certainly a means by which men have shown themselves to be lovers of their own selves. This is just another display of sinful pride. Social media is relatively new, but the sin of self-worship (or pride) is not, as there are "no new things under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). The sin of pride is the first record we have in scripture of sin: Adam and Eve's willful disobedience to God. There is no question what God says about pride. Proverbs 6:16,17 reads "These six things doth the Lord hate...A proud look, a lying tongue." The words "pride" and "proud" are negatively referred to in Proverbs 13 times. In all of scripture, the words "pride" and "proud" are found 93 times. James 4:6 states "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

I am not condemning social media. There are positive uses for it. Some forms of social media are great tools to stay in contact and share life events with friends and family across the country or the world. The point is to use it intentionally and carefully, and to be aware of the amount of time you invest into it. What is the first thing you look at or think about when you wake up in the morning or before you go to sleep at night? We can waste hours and hours scrolling through our feed to "catch up."

What does scripture say we are to do with our time? 1 Corinthians 10:31 reads "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The question is not, "Is social media wrong?" or, "Is taking selfies wrong?"

Instead, ask yourself, “Am I glorifying God with what I am doing right now?” or, “Is this a proper and spiritually edifying use of my time?”

Another consideration is this: “Am I living as Christ with my use of social media?” Selfie. The term needs no explanation. Never in scripture are we taught to promote ourselves (pride!). We are always taught to do the opposite: deny ourselves, put others before ourselves, and always esteem others better than ourselves.

Does taking and posting selfies show that we are living a life of self-denial? We are called to live a life of service to one another, not a life of service to self. The life and ministry of Christ exemplified and taught us this. Mark 10:44–50 says, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto (served), but to minister (serve), and to give his life a ransom for many.” The world of social media encourages a life of self-indulgence.

But aren’t we supposed to love ourselves? On one hand we are directed to “deny ourselves and follow Christ,” and on the other hand we are called to “love your neighbor as *yourself*.” How do we answer questions like this? How do we answer all of our questions regarding our walk in life? Go to scripture. The answers are all there. 1 John 4:7–11 says, “Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to

love one another.” We love God, ourselves, and our neighbor, because God loved us first.

We love ourselves because God has created us as a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19). We show that we love ourselves by taking care of ourselves; we eat, drink, clothe ourselves, see that we get enough rest, and the like. There is no one who hates his own flesh (Eph. 5:29).

We love our neighbor because we are commanded to do so (Matt. 22:37). We must put others before ourselves. Look at Philippians 2:3: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” We are to live our lives this way because of Christ. He is the ultimate example of servitude, going so far as to lay down his life for the sins of his people.

Remember, we please God by being like Jesus Christ. Romans 8:29 states, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” We call ourselves Christians. This means that we believe in, and are followers of Christ. Think about that when you get ready to take the next Snap. The next time you log into Facebook, Instagram, etc. to check your feed, the next time you prepare to add content to your feed, think to yourself, “Am I pleasing God by posting this? Am I showing that I love, serve, and follow Christ with my content?” Live your life to please God, not to please your followers on Instagram.

So, where do you go to find strength for your soul and words of comfort each day? What makes you happy or gives you strength for the trials and temptations

each day? Is it positive comments from your “followers,” or “likes” from your friends? While God may very well use encouragement from saints to help you get through difficult life situations, keep in mind that God is the sole source of strength and hope each and every day. Friends, family, or followers can and do fail you, or leave you. Your God will never leave you or forsake you (Heb. 13:5). Trust in him, and remember that trust in “any other object” is idolatry.

*Mike is a member of Zion Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

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