

2. How am I really using social media?

As we begin to consider how social media is forming and shaping us in very particular ways, it is natural for us to evaluate some of the reasons that we use these tools in the first place.¹

Years ago, it was made clear to me that my habits with technology were not in a very good place. I distinctly remember playing in the living room with my toddler son one afternoon and intentionally leaving my phone in another room in order to focus on him without the distractions of social media and my device. At one point, he got up to go in the other room unannounced and returned with my phone saying something to the effect of 'here Daddy you need this.'

While there could have been countless reasons why he did that, I can't shake the feeling that my kids are growing up watching

¹ For an evaluative tool and action steps, see Appendices B and C.

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me be distracted by my phone and unable, or unwilling, to disconnect at times. They watch me fixate on the things I post, or worse, get upset at something that happens online. It has become a normal part of my life and will be a default for their lives as they grow up as *digital natives*, someone who never knows a day without these tools. That moment caused me to start to re-evaluate my technology habits and even though they are not perfect today, I have tried to make big changes to how I use these devices especially around other people.

STEPPING BACK AND SLOWING DOWN

As we talked about in the last chapter, technology is a tool that we interact with in complex ways that is radically discipling us in the ways that we see God, ourselves, and the world around us. One of the primary ways this happens is the speed in which we live our lives. We are constantly being pushed to go faster and faster in every aspect of our lives. We use technology and social media in order to be more efficient in many ways, as we connect with friends, family, and others. We routinely turn to our devices when we have questions, are lost, or simply have some extra time on our hands. We often feel like we can be more productive or at least more connected through these tools.

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But one of the main paths of wisdom in our digital age is countering that speed by seeking to slow down. We need to slow down in order to ask hard questions about our technology. *Are our technology habits strengthening our relationship with Christ or are they actually at odds with what we say we believe (Rom. 2:1-2)?* By slowing down and stepping back, we can often gain a greater and clearer perspective on all of life, including our use of technology.

ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS

Part of seeking wisdom is not just gaining additional information but reflecting on your own life and the things you do. Often in the church, we can fall into two equal and opposite ditches on the path to wisdom. For some of us, we have been taught that having the right information, teaching, and beliefs is all that is needed for a godly lifestyle. And there is much truth to that assertion. The Christian faith is a faith rooted in the truths about who God is as the Creator of the world (Gen. 1), the realities of how God made each of us in His image with immeasurable worth and dignity (Gen. 1:26-28), and how He created the entire world for us to take responsibility under His reign as God (Gen. 1:26).

The Bible tells us that God made us in His very image and likeness as well as how we are to then take 'dominion over the fish of

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the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth' (Gen. 1:26). These beliefs help form the foundation of the Christian worldview, or the framework for how we interpret the world around us. The gospel message itself is another set of beliefs that radically alters our entire life as the central component of the Christian worldview. As Christians, we believe that God sent His own Son to pay the price for our sin and rebellion in order to restore our relationship with God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:16). These beliefs undergird the entirety of our faith.

But Scripture also makes clear that Christianity isn't simply about just having the right beliefs – but that these beliefs must lead to action (James 2:14-26). We also see this in Matthew 22:37-39, where Jesus tells His followers that they are to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' and to 'love your neighbor as yourself.' This double love command, known as the Great Commandment, reminds us that our beliefs in God are to lead to the action of loving God and neighbor.

While some may lean toward simply having the right beliefs or information, the opposite pitfall is to simply focus on loving others and having the right actions, no matter the beliefs.

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We see this love detached from belief running rampant through the church and broader culture today. This watering down of the Christian faith to simply focus on what we do, while noble in purpose, fails to account for the fact that we must know who God is in order to love Him and others as ourselves. If we don't know or believe in God, how are we to love Him?

This intricate relationship of belief and action is at the core of biblical wisdom. Wisdom isn't simply concerned with knowing the right things (theology) or even acting the right way (ethics), but the beautiful combination of the two in a life that has been radically changed by the gospel message.

So, what does all of this have to do with social media and our technology habits?

Remember back to how my son brought me my phone without me asking because he assumed I needed it. I could say I believe all sorts of things about God, the Bible, how to live as a Christian in our digital world, and the need to navigate these questions in light of my faith, but what were my actions or habits revealing about what I truly believe? Is it possible that others can see things in our actions that we miss or overlook? What might your habits with social media be telling you about what you truly believe about God and the things that you truly want in life?

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We all need to be reminded that the decisions we make each day are more than just having the right information or even the right intentions in our actions. This includes how we use social media which has become such a fixture in our daily lives. We need to be aware that our habits with technology reveal something about what we believe, including what we believe about God, the Church, and the importance of discipleship in our digital age.

Wisdom reminds us that while our beliefs inform our actions, our actions also reveal what we truly believe. This means that the things we do each day and the habits we have cultivated can show us the things we truly believe. While we may say one thing with our mouths, our actions reveal something much deeper about what we really believe.

If our actions reveal the things we truly believe, what might your habits with social media be telling you about what you truly believe?

Personally, I realized that my social media and technology habits were in an unhealthy place when my son brought me my phone. If you would have asked how I was doing at that point in my life, I would have said I was doing pretty good, but my son's actions showed me that I was much more tied to my device than I thought I was. What about you? What are your interactions with social media and technology revealing about your life?

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Main Point

Before we can forge a pathway of wisely using social media, we need to get real with ourselves about what our social media habits reveal about what we truly believe and how these tools are shaping our view of the world.

Questions for Reflection

As we begin this journey and guide to social media, take a few minutes to honestly evaluate how you are using these tools and some of your reasons for your habits:²

- What are the primary social media apps you use each day and what is appealing to you about them?
- Do you find yourself more or less anxious using social media?
- Do you find yourself more or less distracted using social media?
- What are some things you might want to change about your habits in light of what you have learned so far?

² For more questions to help you evaluate your relationship with technology and social media, see Appendix C.