THE ETHICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CHRISTIAN SPEECH

(Ephesians 4:29)

by Daniel Idogar

The topic before us is a very interesting one as it centers on communication.

How we communicate matters a lot both within and outside the church.

The concepts of Truth, love, and hope can be communicated not just by spoken words. Sometimes by sight, feelings, body language, etc.

Now this is where social media comes in.

Social media are online platforms that allow individuals to create, share, and exchange content and information.

They serve as a medium for communication, networking, and sharing ideas.

These social media platforms include Facebook, X, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tiktok, etc.

Social media has transformed the way we communicate. With a single post, photo, or video, we can reach family, friends, and even people across the world in seconds.

Social media serve various functions nowadays:

- **Communication -** Social media has made it easy to communicate with people in different time zones and locations in real time.
- **Information -** These days, information is easily spread through these social media platforms.
- **Marketing -** Gone are the days where you had to rely on word-of-mouth to sell your product or service. If you can tap into the social media space, one can sell faster than usual.
- **Empowerment -** Social media has become so effective that some platforms now pay users that are active and have fulfilled certain conditions. So yes, people now make a living off these platforms.

As much as social media is a tool to be used, it is also a tool that can easily use us.

It is a two-way street. It is not only able to create, it can destroy.

It is not only able to connect, it can disconnect.

It is not only able to popularize, it can demonize.

Social Media has led to many vices such as gossip, slander, cyber bullying, addiction, suicide, comparison, etc.

So for something that is a two-way street, I can deeply understand why

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the church wants us to know the ethics of Social Media.

Ethics simply refers to the code of good conduct for an individual or group.

In this case we are looking at the code of conduct for Christians on social media.

Now, this is very important, because the reason many are abusing this tool is because they never understood the rules of engagement. They just engaged.

This will help us to know that Christianity is not suspended when we go online.

A Christian's identity should be evident not only in how they behave physically but also in how they communicate digitally.

Before we dive into the ***Ethics of Social Media,*** we have to understand what the Christian Speech is all about.

CHRISTIAN SPEECH

Ephesians 4:29

Words are powerful instruments that can shape attitudes, influence decisions, strengthen relationships, and affect destinies.

If only we understood what we speak. ***Proverbs 18:21***

A single word of encouragement can restore hope to a discouraged person, while careless speech can wound the heart and destroy years of friendship.

God has given us the ability to communicate, He has given us platforms to communicate, and He expects us to use this gift wisely.

As Christians, we must stop treating speech as an insignificant part of our spiritual lives. We must learn to speak with awareness of the influence our words can have.

CORRUPT WORD

Corrupt translates from the Greek word ***sapros***, which means rotten, spoiled, or decaying ***(like bad fruit).***

- Apostle Paul is saying here, that speech can get so bad that it is rotten, it smells, it contaminates, it kills.
- What really makes them corrupt is that they have no intention to build or encourage the hearer.
- Examples of such corrupt speeches include: Gossip, slander, insults, profanity, abusive language, angry arguments, and destructive criticism.

BUILD OTHERS UP

The Christian speech is to be good for building others up.

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- Building people does not mean agreeing with everything they do.

  Building others up could actually mean to encourage, motivate, spur to action (or to push), to correct, and speaking the truth.
- Encouragement does not mean flattering people or pretending that everything is perfect.

  It means recognizing what is good, reminding people of truth, and strengthening them to continue.
- It actually emphasizes speaking the Truth in Love ***(Ephesians 4:15).***
- Truth and love belong together. Love without truth may allow harmful behaviour to continue, while truth expressed without love may create unnecessary wounds.
- Sometimes love requires correction, warning, or instruction.

  However, correction should be aimed at helping people recognise the truth and make better choices, not at humiliating them.
- The difference between destructive criticism and godly correction often lies in the motive, manner, and purpose.
- So our speech must be able to build others up by encouraging, motivating, correcting, pushing to good works, and speaking the truth in love.

AS THE NEED MAY BE

The phrase as the need may be matters a lot, because it means Christian speech is context sensitive.

- The same words can build up one person and crush another depending on timing, tone, and what that person is carrying.
- A rebuke may be the most loving thing in one moment and a wound in another.

  The standard is not that we only say pleasant things, but that we say what actually serves the hearer's good.
- But that requires attention. It requires knowing the person in front of us, not merely delivering our own thoughts.
- If our speech is meant to build others up as the need may be, then we must first know what the need is.
- That requires listening.
- Christian speech is not always about talking, listening is as active as talking in this context. ***James 1:19-20.***
- Many of our failures in communication are not failures

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of vocabulary but failures of attention.

We are preparing our reply while the other person is still speaking.

- If we listen first, we are less likely to answer a matter before we understand it.

  We are less likely to respond to an imagined insult.

  We are less likely to repeat information that should have stopped with us.

GRACE TO THE HEARER

Our words are meant to carry grace to others. That does not mean every sentence must be explicitly theological.

- It means our speech should leave people better, not smaller, and should reflect the generosity God has shown us.
- Do you know that there are people you speak with, and you feel refreshed after the discussion?

  Do you know that there podcasts you watch and listen to online and you feel better thereafter?

  Does your word carry grace or brings disgrace?

THE ETHICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

TRUTHFULNESS

Proverbs 12:17

- Christians should value honesty over popularity. Be Authentic.

  Don't pose to be what you are not. There are too many fakes online. Don't be one!
- Cultivate the habit to verify information before posting.
- Even sharing false information unintentionally can harm others.
- Avoid Gossip and slander.

SPEAK AND CONVERSE WITH LOVE

- The internet encourages instant reactions. Fast-paced conversations. And such culture can easily lead to words and conversations that lack love and empathy.
- The Bible encourages thoughtful words.
- Think before you post. Think before you react. Proverbs 15:28
- Before posting, ask:
- Is it helpful? Think of the emotions of others. Don't be selfish.
- Is it necessary? That thing you are about to say or comment, is it worth it?

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- Will this strengthen someone? Be your brother's keeper. How would you feel if your post broke someone's spirit?
- Will it point people towards hope? The world is too hostile these days. Why not be the one who radiates hope?

DISCERNMENT.

Philippians 4:8

- Discernment is knowing what to post, say, share, and content to consume.
- Not everything that can be posted should be posted. Some posts can benefit you, but destroy the truth of the gospel.
- Some posts can benefit you but kill the love people have believed we shared.
- Wisdom knows when to speak and when to remain silent. It is not every comment that must be replied to.
- Be discerning enough to evaluate the content you consume.
- This is necessary to protect your eyes and mind. Everything we consume shapes our thoughts.

  Psalm 101:3
- Set Boundaries on what you watch and people you follow.

TIME MANAGEMENT.

Ephesians 5:16

- Social media can quietly consume hours each day.

  A healthy social media user is one who understands the importance of time.
- Establish healthy boundaries for your social media usage, including time limits and content restrictions, to prevent overindulgence.
- Proper time management helps us remain focused on what matters most.

  Don't let social media encroach into your prayer sessions, meditations, personal Bible study sessions, and even corporate assembly of the saints.
- There is time for everything.
- Don't use social media in church. It is a bad code of conduct.
- Don't use social media in meetings, whether church meetings or secular meetings, it shows disrespect.

DON'T CHASE CLOUTS

Galatians 1:10

- We must seek God's approval before human applause.
- Social media often measures success by likes, followers, shares, and views.
- These numbers can easily become our identity.

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- Our worth is determined by God's love, not online popularity.
- Chasing clout comes from strong desire to be seen, popular, and recognized.
- It makes you feel you need the media's approval to feel fulfilled.

GLORIFY GOD. Matthew 5:16, 1 Corinthians 10:31

- You do not need to hold a Bible online before you glorify God.
- You do not need to post a scripture or make a video of you preaching before your social media presence glorifies God.
- Your works are enough.
- Your works involve your thought patterns, the opinions and views you hold, your moral compass, your empathy meter, the people you follow, etc.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL MEDIA. Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16

There is a high tendency that Churches that are on social media can communicate and reach their members and even non-members more easily than those that only stick to traditional forms and offline methods.

Now, why are we bringing this up?

The church is charged with the responsibility of the great commission, of spreading the truth to the world, of demonstrating love to the world, and giving hope to the despairing.

The church was never meant to be hidden, after all, we are the light of the world. If there is one thing the church must do, it is to be seen – **VISIBILITY**.

It is good enough to counter a lie or falsehood. That is called defense. Defense is good. Defense is solid. But defense is stressful.

The best form of defense will always be attack. Speak your own truth. Publish your own books. Make your own videos.

We are in an era where people are seeking earnestly for truth more than ever before.

Meanwhile, the devil is more active than ever before.

But where is our truth? Where is the love we profess?

How much hope are we spreading in the world today?

The church cannot do this effectively when we are not in the right places.

You have to be where the people are to make a difference, because:

- People spend a lot of time online these days
- People engage on different platforms

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- This goes to show that using the media of door to door and radio may not be enough.
- People are on several platforms.
- More people are online today than ever before
- Fellowship after Fellowship
- After our physical fellowships, some of these social media platforms can serve as virtual fellowship opportunities, like WhatsApp.
- It creates avenue for thoughtful conversations, questions, and information.

CONCLUSION

The ethics of social media is very important in this day and time. This is because abuse is on the rise, and Christians shouldn't be found in such categories.

We must take this serious because social media is a double edged sword.

You can use it, or it dominates you. Much of the ethics of social media is anchored on our speech mannerisms.

If we can work on how we communicate, we would be better custodians of social media.

And finally, the church must rise and be seen. There is no better time to take the gospel to all nations than now.

May God bless us all in Jesus Name. Amen.

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