WHAT WOULD JESUS TWEET?

Flourishing Communities in a Social Media Age

Participant Guide

Social media holds a pervasive influence on our lives and in our culture today. Much of this influence has been good—revolutionizing how we communicate, transforming how we get our information, and helping us to connect with one another like never before. Yet, social media has also fundamentally changed how we experience life and has impacted our attitudes, relationships, and sense of community.

As a result, how Christians interact with social media and navigate its dangers and pitfalls is crucial. How can we thrive in our media-saturated world while helping to nurture and shape our families and friends to healthy interactions that bring about God's intention of flourishing communities?

Please consider the following outlines, Scripture, references and questions for further discussion as you listen to our presenters and extend the conversation with your family and friends.

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Professor of Church History and Mennonite Studies

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Associate Professor of Theology

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Registered Clinical Counsellor, Experience Change Counselling

NAVIGATE is MB Seminary's medium for engaging in topics of faith and life relevant to our churches and community. As we seek to open dialogue on critical issues that intersect church and culture, we invite you to explore alongside, enter into the conversation, and become empowered and equipped to make a difference in the world around you.

Dr. Guenther's presentation is expected to introduce a methodology of cultural analysis, guide us in understanding how social media has fundamentally changed the way we experience life, and encourage us as to how our Christian response can build flourishing communities.

*If you have questions for our panel, please direct them to **Keith Reed** in the chat feature*

Reality and the Forces that Shape It

- We don't consume social media; we are the product.
- Both quantity and quality are influential.
- What are the effects on Christian discipleship?
- How do 1 Cor. 15:33 and Prov. 22 shape our thinking?

Conversations and How We Have Them

- A shift of expectations.
- A curious dichotomy: increased personal detachment, yet increased public engagement.
- A worthy goal: To communicate as Christ would communicate (Phil. 4:8-9).

Community — What It Is and Isn't

- How has our awareness of community shifted?
- Increasing polarization impacts connection, breeds isolation.
- The Christian community as a healthy alternative.

Integrity and Accountability in a Social Media Culture

- What may be private to us is not private to God.
- Online is forever. Is what you say honourable? Is it true?
- What do you want people to remember about you?

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Additional Resources

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/26/whatsapp-phone-calls-smartphone-messaging-millennials

https://wearesocial.com/ca/2021/04/21/60-percent-of-the-worlds-population-is-now-online/

https://wearesocial.com/ca/2020/01/30/digital-2020-what-you-really-need-to-know/

http://publicservicesalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Teens-Social-Media-Technology-2018-PEW.pdf

https://careers.workopolis.com/advice/14-canadians-who-were-fired-for-social-media-posts/

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-search-self/201801/digital-depersonalization

Extend the Conversation

What message does social media convey to users about the world? How does this compare with what biblical texts imply about the world – for example, Paul in 1 Cor. 15:33, and in Rom. 5:1-5; 12:1-2?

What is your response to objectionable views you see on social media? What would you say to the person responsible if s/he were standing before you? Why? How does this compare to what Jesus says about conflict in places like Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-20?

What is the purpose of material that you post on social media? Cf. Phil. 4:8-9.

Henri Nouwen once wrote: "Community is not easy." Somebody once said, "Community is the place where the person you least want to live with always lives." What does this say about the nature of Christian community? How does social media contribute to Christian community?

How can social media use cultivate integrity in her/his online presence? How might Ps. 26 relate to this question?

Implications of Being Created by God and Its Impacts on Mental Health

Health defined

- God made man as healthy and whole (Gen. 1-2)
- Mental health definition: physical, mental, spiritual, and social well being. This is not just the absence of disease.
- Psychological implications
- Theological implications

## How Social Media Impacts Our Health (Research)

- Biological impacts (brain development, self-regulation, mental health)
- Facebook
- Instagram
- What makes social media so appealing?

Social Media: An Attempt to Meet Our Unmet Needs

- Every human has internal needs that when met meet the definition of health.
- One way to be curious about these innate internal human needs is to explore what every human is yearning for.
- Yearnings list
- What might we be attempting to meet through the use of social media?

How Do We Meet Our Innate/Internal Needs?

- Healthy ways
- Unhealthy ways (attempts that cause harm to self and/or others)
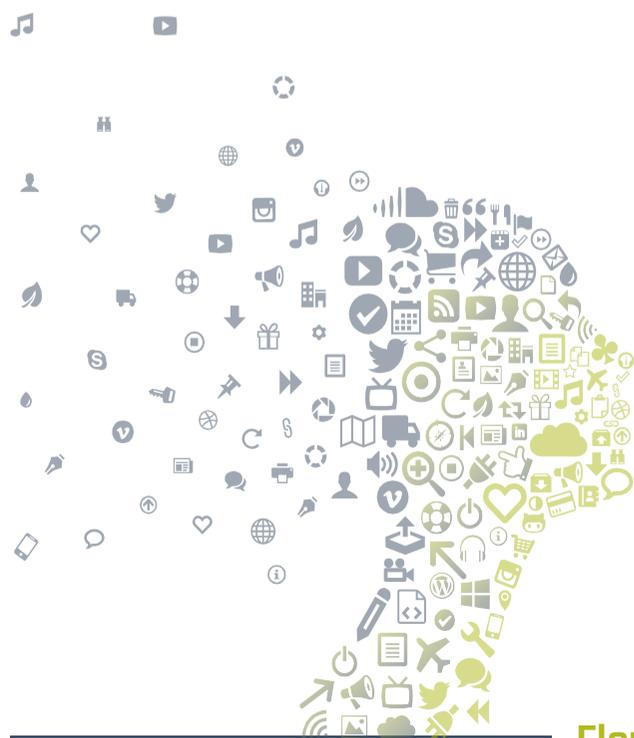
The foundation of how we get our needs met is oriented around our identity formation. Identity is what informs how we attempt to meet our internal needs (yearnings).

1. **Identity in Family** (collectivistic cultures)
   - Family of origin collective identity

2. **Identity in Self** (individualistic/westernized cultures)
   - Selfie use
   - Attempting to meet unmet needs:
     - Social belonging - social pain
     - Worth - self objectification... leading to dehumanization

3. **Identity in God**—Who does God say I am?

   - I am blessed (Ps. 1:1-3; 2 Cor. 9:8)
   - I am appreciated (1 John 3:1; Zeph. 3:17)
   - I am saved (Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 5:25)
   - I am reconciled (Rom. 5:10; Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32)
   - I am heard (Jer. 29:12-13; 1 Pet. 3:12; 1 John 5:15)
   - I am gifted (Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 4:10; Rom. 12:4-8)
   - I am made new (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 4:22-24)
   - I belong to God (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 3:26–29; Eph. 1:4-5; 1 John 3:2)
   - I am loved (John 15:9; Rom. 8:37-39; 1 John 4:7-11; Eph. 2:4)
   - I am beloved of God (Rom. 1:7)
   - I am rooted and grounded in Christ's love (Eph. 3:17)
   - I am strengthened with the power through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:16)
   - I am accepted (Eph.1:6)
   - I am chosen (Eph. 1:4)
   - I am a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19–20)
   - I have purpose (Eph. 2:10)

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Additional Resources

ExperienceChange.ca
See https://experiencechange.ca/resources/
- To access tips and guides on how to parent the online world
- To book a workshop to support your church families and staff teams
- To connect with one of our therapists

Apologetics Canada Podcasts:
- https://apologeticscanada.com/?s=alisha+stobbe (with Alisha and Dr. Andy Steiger)

NeedHelpNow.ca
Needhelpnow helps to remove sexual videos or images from the internet, addresses cyberbullying, and provides information for parents on supporting teens.

Cybertip.ca
Canada's tip line to report the online exploitation of minors. Operated by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

Internetmatters.org
Provides online safety guides you can download for parenting youth online and practical recommendations for conversations between parents and children.

Safekids.com
Online safety quiz, family contracts for online safety, talks that need to be had with our kids, and social web safety tips.

Extend the Conversation

What takes me away from true health as defined by Scripture and supported in psychological research?

How do I engage in social media in ways that enhances my identity in Christ–in ways that affirm who I am and who I am called to be?