

# GOD & FACEBOOK

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## INTRODUCTION

40 years ago on 5<sup>th</sup> March I met Gladwyn. There was no internet, no mobile phones and no computers. Just snail mail. And I got to know him by writing letters, reading his – over about 11 months until we met again. We got to know one another very well with handwritten letters every few days.

When TV came to Australia in 1956, in my church in Adelaide, it was very bad. TV was the ‘new evil’. My cousin, whose family were not believers, had a TV. At around 4 o’clock in the afternoon, nearly everyone in her street, including my sister and me, gathered in her lounge room to watch the Mickey Mouse club. Well since then, TV has perpetrated a lot of evil, that’s so true. It has been the medium for broadcasting generations of programs that have majorly contributed to lowering moral standards, increasing violence and murder....But TV has also been used for good – some of the time. The comparison can also be made with computers and internet.

Tonight we are talking about God and Facebook. God first....

## 1. JESUS, THE CENTRE

Let’s talk about God first – in the beginning **God**....He is the centre of the Universe – He upholds it all by the Word of His power.

*Col 1:16-18 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

He is the measuring stick, the judge. Jesus is the Cornerstone, by which we tell all that is true and right. Does *it* line up with his measure? Tonight, we are looking at this subject from the point of view of children of God. He is our centre, our point of reference. How does a fully devoted follower of Christ view this? So, let’s look at what happens when we first decide to make Jesus Lord of our lives?

## 2. I AM A NEW CREATION

*2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Here we have old things passed away, all things become new. When we are ‘born again’ – we become a new creation. What is a new creation? My body? No. My soul – mind, will, emotions – no. It is my spirit which is born of the Spirit. God puts His life seed in me, and it is a spiritual birth – a new creation – **my spirit is made alive**

**to God**, when it was dead to God. At that point, old things have passed away, all things have become new. **Yet, my old nature is still there** – our mind, will, emotions try to dominate us, and our human flesh desires fleshly things....The process of **growing in Christ**, of becoming ‘in His image’ is allowing our ‘new creation’ spirit to rule our flesh and mind...a process of **putting off our old self, our old identity, our old nature, and putting on God’s new nature... put off the old self, and put on the new self, created after God’s likeness in true righteousness and holiness....**

### 3. ‘NEW SELF’ QUALITIES – LIKE JESUS...

What are the ‘new self’ qualities we need to put on....

***Eph 4:22-5:14 ESV ...put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.***

***25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.***

***5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.***

***3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous ( that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not associate with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.***

**The new self we must put on:** in summary... speak the truth, no corrupt talk, talk that gives grace, don’t grieve the Holy Spirit, no bitterness, anger, slander, be kind, forgiving, no foolish, crude talk, imitating God, try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord....

#### 4. HOW DOES FB COMPARE?

**So, how does Facebook, or more directly, the way we use Facebook, measure up against the guideposts from the Word of God?** Let's look at some basic foundations of Christian life....

**Be holy – 1 Peter 1:15-16** *He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."* Holy = pure, separated to God. **Eph.4:24 - put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Eph.5:1 - be imitators of God, as beloved children.** We are supposed to **be like Jesus**. Who am I? - I am a child of God, not my own, I have been purchased. Who defines my identity? With FB I must make up my own identity. I can be what I want to be. I can invent and change my identity. This gets very wobbly when we line it up with the '**be imitators of God**' family likeness that God puts on us when we decide to follow Jesus. If I was arrested for being a Christian, what evidence would my FB identity provide?

**Part of the body of Christ** – Jesus followers are part of the body of Christ, a living, spiritual body throbbing across time and space with the life of the very Spirit of God. In this body, we have a part, and work together where He places us, **submitting to one another** in the fear of God (**Eph 5:21**). There is **accountability, mutual responsibility**, relationship, forgiveness, compassion. With FB I am a free agent; I can do, say what I like – who am I accountable to? There is FB '**community**' – virtual community, not real community, real fellowship. Anyone can be excluded at the click of a button. Yet how easy it is to let FB become a substitute for the 'fellowship' we are supposed to have across barriers of age and background, in the body of Christ. Also – the Word of God warns us (**Heb.10:25**) **not to forsake assembling ourselves together**, so much the more as we see the day of Christ's return coming. We need actual fellowship, need to be where the life of Christ, His Spirit, flows when we gather and worship Him.

**Prayer & worship life** – the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much. We are told to pray without ceasing. The prayers of the saints rise up before the throne of God in heaven, like incense. Jesus said we should always pray and never give up, like the persistent widow story He told. How is our devotional life? What if the time that was put into FB was put into prayer and reading the Word? What if it was put into helping someone or encouraging someone. **Be a true worshipper** – Jesus said Father God is seeking true worshippers. He said that true worshippers were ones whose mouth and heart matched up – not those whose lips said one thing and whose heart said another thing. Who, what are we worshiping? Do we go to church Sunday, but our FB, our life, says another thing.

**Personal life – our thought life:** We need to ask ourselves about **what we are feeding our mind on** – the tv shows, what we listen to, and our social networking – do they **pass this test?**

*Phil 4:8-9 whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.*

*Eccl 7:29 God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes.*

Human minds can work overtime figuring out ways to be devious!

**Relationships** – relationships for children of God are supposed to be ‘each esteeming the other better than themselves’, ‘love as Christ loved’ – giving sacrificially, forgiving one another. FB (and/or online) relationships are often virtual friendship, not real. They can be click on/off friendship; it is often a place of gossip, where people say things they ought not. FB relationships are often based on ‘my wants, my terms’. Relationships are too easily broken - click on, click off. Also – people who find it difficult to relate in face to face real relationships, can often have fertile online relationships, but in real life be isolated and emotionally starved. You can find acceptance online by joining a group – there are so many...you will find one that caters to your niche, however unusual! **Addiction** – for many, Facebook is a new type of addiction – enough said. It can be a chain you need to break. A false ‘centre’ for our lives.

**Our values: truth** – *Eph.4:25*, **having put away falsehood**, *let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.* The enemy is called the deceiver, the Father of lies. With FB (and online relationships) it is too easy to hide the truth, hide reality, and create a new fantasy. Deception is inherent in the medium. We don’t need help to be deceptive –

*Jer 17:9-10 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind,.*

We don’t even know our own heart. We need to live and walk in an environment where we can be accountable, walk in the light (**1 Jn 1:9**), pray for one another and talk to one another about the values, the lifestyle that befits children of God. We need help in the heart area since we don’t even know our own hearts. How easy it is to be influenced by ungodly thinking and values.

**Be an example to the believers....**

*1 Tim 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

Most of us have minors as FB ‘friends’. We have just held a ‘child protection’ course. We have a policy designed to create a safe environment for under 18s trusted into our care. Yet how easy is it to have a social networking environment where they see the sort of things older ‘Christian’ young adults are talking about and doing, outside of ‘church’ – and if these things don’t line up with Bible values, what message is that conveying? Could we be doing harm for which we are accountable? (**Matt.18:6**).

## **CONCLUSION**

Are there **good ways to use FB?** I believe so. We can encourage, build up. Yet, it is a **minefield**, with very little accountability, addictive, and can **rob us of valuable time we could invest in helping others**, in **prayer, in service** to the Lord. Let’s live in fellowship, prayer, accountable.