

# 30 BIBLICAL EXHORTATIONS

for Technology, Social Media, the Metaverse, and More

## 1. Trust that the Imago Dei will always be better than the Imago Meta (or Imago Anything Else). (Gen. 1:26)

Our highest dignity and greatest joy is found in the identity we have received from God, and no identity customized by us can ever come close to it. In fact, identities customized by us can rob us of the dignity and joy that our Creator has lovingly, carefully, and personally designed for us. We would be wise to see ourselves, and others, as they have been made by God, not as they are projected through social media or the metaverse.

## 2. Insist upon the goodness of our physical bodies, physical relationships, and physical spaces in God's good design for the world. (Gen. 2:15; Gen. 24–25)

## 3. Proceed with extreme caution. (Prov. 17:24; Prov. 29:11; Eph. 5:15–17)

The negative effects of digital and social media are well-documented, both for those who post and for those who consume. Digital and social media often lead to addiction on various levels; the spread of misinformation; the distortion of news; mental, physical, emotional, financial, and other manipulation; increased anxiety, stress, depression, and loneliness; decreased productivity; lower attention spans; diminished listening and critical thinking skills; damaged personal relationships; unhealthy sleep and rest patterns . . . and the list could go on and on. For all these reasons and more, seriously consider limiting (and in various ways completely avoiding) the use of digital and social media in your life. Be wise in every way possible—guarding your heart, mind, and speech in relation to digital and social media.

## 4. Fear God. (Prov. 1:7; Prov. 15:3)

Let everything you see, say, or do on digital and social media be done in the fear of God.

## 5. Cultivate beauty, truth, and wonder in what you say and do. (Ps. 40:5)

Use digital and social media to celebrate the beauty of God's creation, the presence of his common grace, and the many evidences of his goodness in the world around us. Share how God, his Word, and his work in the world are edifying you in a way that edifies others.

## 6. Enjoy and steward opportunities to encourage and connect with other people. (Col. 3:15)

Use digital and social media to encourage and connect with brothers and sisters in Christ, people who don't yet know Christ, family, friends, and particularly people who you are not able to see or interact with on a regular basis.

## 7. Think and pray before you speak or act (send or post). (Prov. 13:3; Prov. 29:20)

Always take appropriate time to consider your words and actions before you say or do anything. And take extra time when you are responding to someone or something else you have seen or heard. Whenever possible, consider waiting 24 hours before responding on digital or social media to anything.

## 8. Always ask two questions:

### (1) Will what I say or do glorify God? (Mt. 5:13–16)

Ask if what you are saying or doing will classify as a good work that brings glory to our Father who is in heaven.

### (2) Will what I say or do adorn the gospel? (Col. 4:3–6)

Because the gospel of Jesus Christ is of primary importance in each of our lives, ask if what you are saying or doing will reflect positively on the picture people have of the gospel and the life of Jesus in you.

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### 9. When in doubt, don't. (Prov. 10:19)

When you are uncertain or have hesitations, don't send, post, tweet or retweet, like or dislike, or say or do anything else on digital or social media. This is especially applicable when deeper discussion of an issue is either warranted or wise, when particular nuance is needed around certain ideas or statements, when definitions of words are not clear, or when what you're saying or doing is not clearly and unequivocally biblical and it's likely to cause controversy.

### 10. Avoid harsh and hurtful speech. (Prov. 12:18; Prov. 15:18)

Harsh and hurtful words are always dangerous and destructive, and they're a lot easier to express on digital or social media than in person. Avoid them completely.

### 11. Avoid quarrelsome, retaliatory, and inflammatory speech. (Prov. 18:6; Prov. 20:3)

Fools quarrel, especially over texts, emails, and digital and social media outlets. Explore God-glorifying, neighbor-loving ways to engage in meaningful dialogue about myriad disagreements.

### 12. Avoid gossip and slander. (Prov. 16:27–28; Eph. 4:29–32)

Make sure that everything you communicate on digital or social media is useful for building up others according to their needs in Christ Jesus. Flee from all gossip and slander in everything you read and communicate to others.

### 13. Avoid grumbling and complaining. (Phil. 2:14–15)

About anyone or anything.

### 14. Avoid saying or doing on a screen what you wouldn't say or do in person. (2 Cor. 10:8–11)

It is so much easier to do something or say something to or about someone in an email, post, message, text, or in the metaverse that you would not do or say if you were physically with that person. Actually, it's usually cowardly and selfish to do or say such things through digital mediums because we are intentionally avoiding any discomfort we might experience when we do or say hard things in person. We actually need to see and feel others' physical responses when in these situations. Therefore, avoid actions or conversations over digital or social media that need to take place in person. Even if you conclude for wise and good reasons that something needs to be done or said on digital or social media, still do or say it in person (physically) first. Don't be a lion behind a technological device and a lamb in front of actual people.

### 15. Avoid communicating to "that" person or group of people at "that" time without considering "every" person and group of people at "any" time. (Heb. 10:24)

When using digital or social media, we often have a particular audience in mind, including a specific person or group of people at a specific time. However, once we release something into the digital world, it may be observed by far more than "that" person or group of people at any time. Always consider how every person or group of people may perceive what you're saying and how you're saying it at any time (either now or in the future).

### 16. Conduct yourself honestly. (Prov. 16:2; 1 Cor. 4:5)

Digital and social media can be used as a mask to present a false persona to other people in ways that we start to believe we are that person when we are not. Conduct yourself honestly and resist the temptation to put forward a false image of yourself. This doesn't mean we must share every struggle we experience or all the details of our lives. Some things in our lives are better shared when physically present with people who are close to us.

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#### 17. Cultivate humility. (Jn. 3:30; Prov. 11:2; Prov. 27:2; Prov. 30:32)

Approach digital and social media with a mindset that says, "Jesus must become greater, and I must become less." By all means, rejoice in God's grace in your life in ways that point to his glory. At the same time, at least be cautious of the humble brag, describing how "humbled" or "grateful" you are to achieve something if you are actually desiring exaltation in others' eyes. Don't base your identity or mood on how many likes or follows or retweets or whatever you have. Our focus on these things exposes our desire for people's approval, while in Christ, we already have the approval of God. Ultimately, use digital and social media to point people to him, not you.

#### 18. Have accountability. (Prov. 19:20, 27; Prov. 27:17)

We all need others in our lives who have access to our digital and social media. For email, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and other accounts, allow a spouse or a trusted brother and sister in Christ to provide accountability and counsel. Moreover, if you have any question about something you are seeing or sending or doing, then discuss it with another brother or sister in Christ first. In the end, don't trust yourself. Instead, trust the Spirit of Jesus in you and in other brothers and sisters in Christ around you.

#### 19. Don't let digital or social media control you. (1 Cor. 6:12)

Is your phone a constant pull in your life? Does a quick check of your phone turn into lost time of scrolling and searching? Whenever you have a free minute, do you default to your phone? Are you present in conversations and interactions with family and friends, or are you regularly pulling out your phone to check your digital and social media? Does a notification take precedence over whatever else you are doing in that moment? Resist the control that digital and social media can demand. Instead, walk in step with God's Spirit. Let him be the only one who can speak into your life at any moment, not your phone, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, email, or any other media outlet.

#### 20. Don't let digital or social media deceive you. (Col. 2:8)

More friends, likes, or other affirmations on digital or social media do not mean that you are better known, more social, well liked, or that you have a strong, healthy community filled with meaningful human connections. These indicators in digital and social media can actually mean the opposite, for the use of digital and social media often leads to less meaningful human connections, decreased attention spans, depression, mental instability, and much more.

#### 21. Guard your heart from envy, jealousy, pride, and ambition. (Prov. 4:23; Phil. 2:3–4)

Digital and social media can be a contentment killer. Observing *this* person who has *that*, or *that* person who has achieved *this*, can subtly, almost unknowingly, start to fuel covetousness, insecurity, and discontentment. This can also cut in prideful ways, fueling thoughts of superiority. In all of this, guard your heart. Rejoice with others who are rejoicing, hurt with others who are hurting, and keep your eyes on Jesus and what he says to and about you.

#### 22. Guard your mind from falsehood, filth, and frivolity. (Rom. 12:2; Ps. 101:3; Prov. 12:11)

Is your use of digital and social media conforming you to the pattern of this world, or transforming you by the renewal of your mind? Make sure that these media outlets are instruments in God's hands for your sanctification, not instruments in the adversary's hands for your destruction. Beware falsehood, including lies about God, others, you, and the world that spread so easily on digital and social media. Beware filth, which is available at your fingertips at every moment of the day. And beware frivolity, filling your mind with an endless drivel of the world that leaves no room for what matters most according to God's Word. Consider wise ways to limit and/or avoid sources of falsehood, filth, and frivolity.

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### **23. Guard your life from ungodly influences, unhealthy friendships, and unhelpful associations. (Prov. 4:14–15; Prov. 12:26; Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33)**

Who and what you're doing, seeing, hearing, following, liking, and associating with on digital and social media will inevitably affect you and others' perceptions of you. Personally, influences on social media will either push you toward godliness, healthy relationships, and helpful connections or pull you away from these things. Do not assume that media content has no impact on your life, and do not intentionally or unintentionally yield moral authority in your life to anyone but God and his Word. Even with a healthy desire to be aware of how other people think who believe differently than you, be aware of their influence upon you and others' perception of you (especially as "likes" or "follows" can often be viewed by others as endorsements). Remember that social media is continually influencing and shaping your life as well as the lives of those around you, especially as people are watching and listening to anything you do on digital and social media.

### **24. Flee sexual immorality. (1 Cor. 6:18–20)**

Digital and social media provide countless temptations to sexual immorality, which includes any sexual thinking, desiring, or acting outside of marriage between a man and a woman. So flee all sexual lust—do not view or send or do anything that provokes sexual immorality in your own life. Flee sexual immodesty—do not say, send, or do anything that might provoke sexual immorality in others. Flee sexual allurements—do not say, send, or do anything that in any way leads to inappropriate physical or emotional attachment. And flee viewing or sending or doing anything that exalts, glamorizes, jokes about, and/or makes light of any kind of sexual immorality.

### **25. Be cautious in one-on-one interaction with someone else's spouse. (2 Pet. 3:14)**

Don't interact with someone who is married through digital or social media in a way that you would not interact with them with their husband or wife present. In order to be blameless and above reproach, consider appropriate times to include either that person's spouse or another adult. Similarly, if you are married and interacting with someone who is single, avoid interacting in a way that you would not do so with your spouse present.

### **26. Avoid one-on-one interaction with minors. (Mt. 18:5–6)**

In order to promote safety for minors (anyone under the age of 18), adults should always seek parental consent before directly interacting with a minor through digital or social media, and then include an adult on that personal interaction with a minor.

### **27. Be open, honest, and up-to-date in interaction between minors and parents. (Eph. 6:1–4)**

Children and teenagers, be open and honest with your parents or guardians about all your interactions online. Parents and guardians, love and serve your children and teenagers by learning about technology, exploring technology with your children and teenagers, introducing them to technology in helpful ways, promoting open communication, providing healthy boundaries, and staying up-to-speed on current technological resources and social trends, apps, lingo, etc.

### **28. Make the most of every opportunity. (Col. 4:5; Rom. 15:20)**

Our lives are a mist in this world, and every moment counts. God has given us the ability to communicate with people around us and around the world through digital and social media, so let's maximize these means at every moment for the glory of God and the spread of his gospel. Let's especially explore the limitless opportunities available for using digital and social media for the spread of the gospel among the unreached.

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### 29. Make sure not to neglect other priorities. (2 Thes. 3:11–12; Ps 127:2; 1 Thes 5:17)

Even as we leverage digital and social media for good, let's also LIMIT them for good. Consider other priorities in your life that are more important. For example, God has created us to work hard for his glory, and if we're not careful, digital and social media can hinder our productivity. Or consider God's call for us to rest. How easy it is for us to think that when we have a free minute, we don't want to waste it just sitting there, so we might as well look at digital or social media. But what if God has designed those moments for us to simply rest our minds and be present in that moment instead of being preoccupied on a screen? Consider also your time physically with other people. Don't let digital or social media replace personal, physical interaction with family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and other people God sovereignly brings into your path. Above all, consider your time alone with God. Scripture calls us to pray without ceasing, not text or email or post or game without ceasing. What if prayer was a more automatic reflex in your life than checking your phone? How might that change not just your prayer life, but your entire life? Prioritize your time with the God who loves you and who alone is worthy to be the dominant influence in your life.

### 30. Do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

Many opportunities exist to bring glory to God through digital and social media, so to paraphrase 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you text, send, post, tweet, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."