

## Thoughts on Using Social Media and Online Gaming

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### A. Two Key Principles:

#### 1. The Continuum of relationships:

It is important to think and live in terms of a continuum of relationships. On the one hand, there are people that you have a responsibility to help, to be involved in their lives, to nurture friendships with and to spend time with. These are people God brings into your lives for a purpose.

On the other hand, there are people out there for whom you have no obligation or responsibility toward to deepen your relationship with or spend time with. In between these two ends of the spectrum is a continuum of relationships and people, that include more casual friends, acquaintances, people you have only met on the internet, and other strangers more or less.

We must not let the people too far out on the continuum rob us of the time we need to deepen our relationships with people within the first group.

#### 2. The value of discretionary time:

We have only so many hours to live before we die. We can categorize time into two major categories: discretionary and non-discretionary. Discretionary time is time that we have available to use as we wish. Non-discretionary time includes the work-place, in-class time at school, and other requirements of surviving, such as sleeping.

Discretionary time is golden. It is that category of time that we get to decide how to use. It is the category of time that is available to us for enjoying our relationships with other people, for ministry outside the workplace or classroom, for personal development or interests, for times of solitude and contemplation or listening to music and relaxing. It is the category of time that we will be held most accountable for at the end of our lives, simply because it is that category of time that we have the most control over how it is used.

The thing to remember about discretionary time is that your life will pass [much more swiftly than you ever dreamed](#) and at the end of it, you will know what it means to have 'only one life to live; only one life to give'. Make sure you are spending it wisely. The sands of time are running through the hourglass and there is nothing you can do to slow it down. Hopefully, you are investing a portion of your time in eternity. The bottom line is that time, especially discretionary time, is of great value. It is golden and not to be squandered.

## B. Applying the two factors to usage of social media and gaming

A general principle is to think in terms of value returned for time invested.

1. Rank and prioritize different types of social media or gaming in terms of value returned for time invested. For example, if you are an interior decorator, or a professional in a field where new ideas and creativity is important, Pinterest might have a good return of value for time invested. Instagram might have a more limited return and Twitter, because it is limited to posts of 140 characters, or SnapChat, or online gaming, may have very little return for time invested. Twitter and SnapChat may not be worth the interruption of other things to read them or spend any length of time on unless it is highly filtered and important information. Keep in mind that time invested is not merely the time you spend inputting into these media options, but the time you use to follow or read what other people have posted.

Once you have ranked the media and gaming options, you may wish to put the priority for the use of your limited and valuable discretionary time on those that offer significant value for time invested and allocate little or no time to those that offer little of value.

2. Before posting something on social media, or tweeting, ask yourself if what you are about to post is worth interrupting someone else's activities and worth their time reading. Even if you think that it will only take the other person one second to read, I have observed a recipient engaged in study and homework when interrupted by a 'Snap', for example, become distracted from what they were working on for 10 or 15 minutes as a result of having their focus broken. Make sure that what you post is worth posting.

Jesus had an excellent comment about inane tweeting and SnapChat 'Snaps', "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36). The Greek word translated as 'careless' means 'pertaining to unproductive, useless' (BDAG). The sheer quantity of useless tweets, Snaps and posts made every day is staggering. Ask yourself why someone else should take the time to read your tweet and why you should read theirs. Exercise some quality control here.

3. Do not sacrifice *quality* and depth of relationships for *quantity* of relationships. God has brought certain people into your life for many purposes, from serving and mentoring them to the enjoyment of deep friendships. These people are your priority. Do not let the time you give to other people on social media rob you of the time you ought to be giving to people who are the most important to you or closest to you.
4. When you say 'yes' to one thing you are automatically saying 'no' to something

else. There is always a price attached to every minute you spend on social media or gaming. Before you ever follow someone, ask yourself what this is going to cost you. Be very selective in who you follow.

5. Evaluate the time you spend on social media or, especially, gaming, in comparison with other hobbies that have more long term benefits and more lasting value to show for the time spent.
6. Ask yourself, 'is there something else I should be doing right now?' Maybe it is relaxing with a good, wholesome, productive hobby, or maybe it is meeting with someone, or working on a project, or studying.

### **C. Needing followers and 'like's and gaming rankings for self worth**

For many people, their sense of value and self worth depends upon having the attention of other people. They are depending upon the number of followers they have, or 'likes' they get or their gaming ranking, for their own significance.

1. If you find yourself doing things to get more 'likes' or to get more followers, you need to be concerned. You have misplaced the basis of your value and significance. You are significant because you are created in the image and likeness of God. If you have put your faith in Christ, you are loved as the Father loves the Son (John 17:23) Followers and 'likes' are irrelevant to your value.
2. Many people wake up in the morning and check to see if anyone has sent them a tweet or a Snap or 'liked' something they posted. There is nothing wrong with that but where things start to go wrong is if they feel down if there is no response. Build real, face-to-face friendships that are deep and lasting. A bunch of 'likes' can never replace the fulfillment and enjoyment of one or two deep friendships where you can talk about things in great depth for hours. There is also enormous value in periods of solitude, quietness and contemplation.

### **D. When social media and gaming has gotten out of control**

1. Institute blackout periods each day (and that does not count time in the workplace or classroom where you can't play anyway).
2. Establish one social-media free or gaming-free day per week.
3. You may want to consider permanently giving up a particular social media involvement, such as Twitter or Pinterest, or a year-long cessation of all gaming, to allow you time to experience what life might be like without them, and what new things you can accomplish that may have greater lasting value.

*"Only one life so soon it will pass. Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one chance to do His will so give to Jesus all your days ... The days pass so swiftly, the months come and go. The years melt away like new falling snow. Spring turns to summer then summer to fall. Autumn brings winter then death comes to all"* (Lanny Wolfe, 1973)