

Be On Guard If Online!

#3030 1204 22A

Living in the 21st century has us using some form of modern technology almost every day; and we are thankful for everything God enables us to use—but certainly *not* misuse! Like anything, it can corrupt, it can defile, it can be dangerous, and it can be addictive if we are not careful. New types of inter-connections to a huge amount of information, opinions, ideas, or entertainment compel serious warnings—*Be On Guard If Online!*

There are countless websites, Twitter feeds, podcasts—videos or Instagram photos we can tag as *favorites* because we like them; we find them interesting, informative, or entertaining. As with any information, there are dangerous areas that we must be aware of and avoid! Online information can be *helpful* if used properly; but very *harmful* if used improperly.

We must pray for guidance every *second*—asking God to show us if our use of social media, Facebook, online games, or anything we connect to online—if it is out of balance with family responsibilities and spending time with the children or with friends. The Holy Spirit is ready to *show* us if our online activity needs to be changed—we just need to *ask* to be *shown!*

Young people need advice, guidelines, limitations, and boundaries in today's dangerous world—with predators everywhere and with millions being online to entice someone into a relationship—a relationship with someone we

know nothing about and have zero information on their religious convictions—if they have any at all. Ezekiel 33:7 “*O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.*”

It is all too *easy* to spend all too much *time* getting too much *information* online, instead of interacting with others and speaking personally with friends—who may need encouragement. Hebrews 10:25 “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting [encouraging] one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*”

Attending church services with other believers gives us the opportunity to encourage someone who may really need encouragement. This type of close community reflects the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—2 Corinthians 13:14 “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion [fellowship] of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*” And the apostle said 1 Corinthians 12:20 We are “*Many members, yet but one body; 27 and each of you is a part of it.*”

Social media can be time-consuming—it is good to be informed but wanting to keep up with everything can be exhausting—and we end up spending more and more time, with more and more connections to some type of social media—instead of spending time interacting. We can be seeking online information more than seeking Matthew 6:33 “*The kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*”

It is not a sin to *use* technology, but it *is* a sin to *misuse* it. The two natures within us need to be fed—and the one we *feed* most is the one that *controls most*—that is, controls our online choices. Everything we *do* and *view* is Hebrews 4:13 “*Open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*”

Being *connected* means being *responsible*—as well as being alert every second to Satan's attempts to *attract* us and then *lure* us onto areas that *defile* our conscience. Matthew 24:4 “*Take heed that no man*

deceive you.” We must live a *holy life* in an increasingly *unholy world*. It is *everyone's* responsibility to be *sure* that every *click* and every *tap*—has God's approval.

A believer today is faced with unprecedented challenges—and being online just offers *new ways* to feed *old sins*. Mark 7:21-23 “*From within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, [fornication], theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God.*” *Being Online means being On Guard!*

The amount of *time* we spend connected is the amount of *time Satan* has to tempt us to read material or look at images that would defile our conscience. Any *time* spent connected, is the *time* Satan has to tempt us to trespass onto forbidden areas.

Ezra prayed Ezra 9:15, “*We are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.*” We would *not* be able to stand righteous before righteous Judge of everyone on the Day of Judgment if we knowingly trespass onto forbidden areas online. We must *think* before connecting and surfing aimlessly—asking why we are doing what we are doing.

We are responsible to *heed* warnings if we are online. The Bible gives many *warnings*—1 Corinthians 6:18 “*Flee fornication*”—don't linger; don't test our ability to resist; just *flee* and *run* from the material; the images, or the website as Joseph fled from a tempting situation. Satan makes it so easy to yield—we *have* to be on guard!

A young member shares helpful thoughts—quote *After reading “The Internet and Eternal Interests!” We are to be wary of what is viewed online; particularly immoral web sites. To list all the sins available online would make a very long list indeed, but some other points could be*

mentioned. I have witnessed much more than just viewing things that could be a spiritual hindrance. What is easily typed or said online—hiding behind our keyboard and screens—can cut deeply into the emotions and feelings of others.

Any gossip associated with texting and blogging is as serious as any other type of gossip, and it is so easy to do behind someone's back. With this vast array of communication possibilities at our fingertips, it is very easy to become ensnared by worldly people who do not share our spiritual interests—or to have friends that we would rather others not know we have.

There is also the potential of addictive online games that can take us away from the family, or from time with the Lord and the reading of His Word. Even safe movies and good literature online are as addictive as anything else; and the advertisements on just about any website are as potentially dangerous as the commercials on TV. ¹ Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant [on the alert]; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: ⁹ Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished [going the same experiences and temptations] in your brethren that are in the world.”

It is a battle for the control of the mind—Satan seeks our attention; then steals our mind; and later he can eventually destroy our soul if we are not on guard! ^{John 10:10} “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

If God has our mind, then He has our desires and our time. The one who has our mind, has the advantage—because the mind is where we decide. Satan has caught mega-millions of people off guard through the social media—a source of information, ideas, opinions, images, and unscriptural attitudes that overflows like the waters of a raging flood.

Today, there is what is called: *moral drift*—meaning: Do those things that once *offended* us, now *entertain* us? Do we find ourselves tolerating programs, videos, or reading material that once offended us—but now are accepted by us? We should ask ourselves and be ready to give honest answers. Social media has *reset* the shock threshold—violence and profanity have no limit today!

The prophet Ezekiel reminds of the need for confession and repentance—^{Ezekiel 23:21} “*You longed for the lewdness of your youth.*” It is a call for a spiritual awakening and asking for God to help us. We can conduct our online activities and viewing preferences scripturally. ^{Psalms 101:3} “*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.*”

Young teens need guidelines set by the parents and family—whether to be online or not; whether they can make voice calls; if they should text and at what age to have online capability—all are issues to deal with today. Many now have cell phones or Tablets that connect through Wi-Fi—giving access to many types of social media—photos, blogs, fashions, and attitudes.

The problem is that most of the individuals with whom we can connect, have no desire to follow Bible instruction. This is obvious from the words written by many on social media, or what photos they post—many giving evidence they have no desire to dress modestly to set a scriptural example or even to quote Scripture verses to encourage. It seems that most only want to *impress* those who view their photos or to *influence* those who read their blogs.

Everyone who has a device capable of connecting to any type of social media, is responsible for the *choices* they make; the *images* they view; and the *blogs* they read—not to mention that we are *all* responsible for what we *say*, *write*,

or *post* that would affect someone—the affect should always be positive—not negative!

The apostle says ¹ Thessalonians 5:8 “*Since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled [or be responsible when online], putting on faith and love as a breastplate [of protection against being enticed onto forbidden areas by the devil], and [putting on] the hope of salvation as a helmet*”—of protection against innumerable temptations facing us all—especially young people today.

The devil has millions hiding behind the mask of a screen; he has influenced millions to say things that tear down someone's reputation; he makes it easy to *say* or *write* or *text* something that should *not* be said, *not* written, and *not* sent. ¹ Thessalonians 5:11 “*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing*”—if we are doing.

This is the *connected generation*, so we are *responsible* for our words, comments, and opinions. Before tapping “*send*,” let us consider what we just wrote and ask: Would I want someone to say *this* about *me*? Is this going to *build up* or *tear down*? Maybe I, and everyone else, would be better off if it is left unsaid and unsent! We need to tap “*delete*” many more times than “*send!*”

We are all *responsible* and we are *obligated* to the One who paid a huge price for our soul. ¹ Corinthians 6:20 “*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God*”—when we are online! Eternity is far too *long* and horrors of Hell way too *horrible* to be wrong about the seriousness of deliberately *defiling* our conscience or *corrupting* our thoughts by being online—the warning keeps reminding over and over: ***Be On Guard If Online!***

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