

Quarreling on Social Media

I belong to this group called Next Door that allows neighbors to share information that is pertinent to our local community. Most of the posts are about lost dogs or cats, our warnings about break-ins, or asking for recommendations for some service needed. I don't keep up too much with what goes on with this site, but this is what popped up today: All the ongoing discussion, rants, and opinions regarding political correctness dilute the real value of Next Door. There are other forums for this type of banter. At one time I thought Next Door was for helping each other in the neighborhood with referrals, local items regarding safety, items for sale or free, lost and found, neighborhood events, and generally good neighbor stuff. Let's put some of this unfiltered energy to good use and just be a good neighbor. I thought it interesting that someone in Next Door was having such a reaction to their neighbors' post.

Many are having the same reaction to social media. It is certainly a toxic environment on many levels. It is a shame that what can be used for good gets coopted by those who just want to quarrel. Yes, much of what we see is not information sharing, encouragement, or even healthy persuasion. It is pure and simple, quarreling. That is what the Bible calls it. Though social media did not exist in the first century, there were people, and people are the same then as they are today. We are warned in the Bible about promoting controversies, gossiping, slander, bearing false witness, causing division, and stirring up trouble. The reason these are so harmful in a Christian context is that they are contrary to the Good News of the Gospel, in substance and tone. Christians, like other citizens of this great country, have first amendment rights to free speech. But just because can say something does not mean I should. Paul warns: "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak." (1 Cor.8:9) Paul talks about his rights in 1 Cor.9 but then says: "But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ." (9:12b) Again Paul says, "Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial." (1 Cor.6:12) A Christian is called to a higher standard of conduct

in the world. We do not represent ourselves, but the one who bought us. “You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.” (6:19b-20) In the days to come, I will be exploring the teachings of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:22-26 that could not be more applicable to today’s social media world.