



Should We **CONFRONT** Fellow Christians on Social Media?

■ by Laura Goossens, MSW, LCSW

Between COVID-19 and current politics, social media seems to be a breeding ground of tension and division in our society and between fellow Christians. As Christians, we know that we are supposed to be in this world but not of it, so how do we do this in light of our current social media climate? What if we see a fellow Christian clearly in the wrong? Should we confront them or just keep scrolling? How do we handle this in a godly way that looks much different than other confrontations that are taking place online?

Opinion vs. Biblical Truth

Before we dive into if or how we should confront each other, we need to talk about the difference between opinion vs. biblical truth. There are many different opinions you can have where there isn't a clear biblical answer. If it's a matter of opinion, there is no reason for confrontation. There is nothing wrong with discussing or challenging each other on differences of opinion, as long as either party doesn't allow themselves to get caught in slander, resentment, or pride. When it comes to having these conversations, it's important to tread carefully and remember what 2 Timothy 2:23 says: "Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights."

Our Focus: Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

As we consider confronting, we need to keep in mind the priority of loving one another. "Jesus replied, 'The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these'" (Mark 12:29-31). The Bible says loving your neighbor as yourself is equally as important as loving God. I can only speak for myself, but I often struggle to make this the priority that God is commanding me to. Loving others as yourself means genuinely listening to them instead of just focusing on your response. It means looking past the surface issue to see the pain or hurt that is hiding underneath, and then making a choice to respond back to them differently. Loving your neighbor takes a great deal of humility. It's going to also mean asking yourself, "Could I be wrong about this?" Oftentimes, we don't fully understand things until we experience them ourselves. For example, how many times have you made judgments about someone else's parenting, until you became a parent yourself and suddenly found yourself doing the same things? It's so easy to make judgments when you are not in someone else's shoes and not seeing things from their perspective.

Letting Go of Offenses

We are all messy, emotions can run high, and there will be plenty of opportunities to offend one another in person or online. There is a time and place to choose to forgive and let go of an offense when you are hurt by something a fellow Christian said to you online.

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When reading responses typed out, much of the context can be missed, and we need to try to focus on the person's intentions instead of getting caught up in how something was said in the wrong way. If we feel we need clarification on something said by a fellow believer, it's best to take it offline with a phone call — or maybe even meeting up face-to-face, if possible — and make sure our heart is set on peace.

A Time to Confront

There will be times you do see a brother or sister directly going against the Bible online, and it's not just a matter of opinion. In these times, how do you handle this? I believe we are called to encourage each other to live the way the Bible called us to live. Hebrews 10:24 says, "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works." In Proverbs 27:17, the Bible also talks about how Christians are supposed to be like iron sharpening iron, which means that we need other believers in our lives to help challenge us to grow. One iron alone can not sharpen itself; instead, it needs another iron to cause friction, just like we need the friction of other believers to help point out areas of struggle or sin that we might not be seeing in ourselves. We are so often making excuses for ourselves or are in denial. Just like we need to be upfront with other believers who are not living biblically on social media, we need others to do the same for us.

Confronting in Private

The Bible states that we should point out each other's sin in private. Matthew 18:15 says, "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back." I look back at times I have felt passionate about other Christians acting in the wrong on social media and how I would challenge them right then and there instead of doing so in private like the Bible instructs me to. I can see now how much wiser it would have been for me to message, text, or call them to confront them on the issue instead of making it public. This would have been the more respectful way, the way that shows my aim isn't to embarrass them but that I am genuinely for them.

When we approach a fellow Christian with love and kindness in our confrontation, it will create far more of a place for peace in the relationship. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare." Remember that the world is watching you, and right now, as Christians, we have an opportunity to shine such an incredible light to a dark and weary world. They will know we are Christians by our love, right? What if we show the world our kindness, respect, and graciousness toward each other online and off? Could this kind of unity point the world to a Savior who provides perfect peace in this world of unrest? ■

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