



The Greater Purpose of Social Media

By Rachel Visintainer



One thing I love about social media: It's a timeline. Each profile has its own history. My profile has my history. I love updating that profile and looking back on past posts and photos. A lot of things I posted at thirteen on Facebook I will forever regret, but having a Facebook at such a young age did have a positive: it inspired me to take pictures. I wanted to capture my life and share it. I took my camera with me everywhere, and posted said pictures on Facebook. So thank you, Facebook. I will cherish such photos of my youth forever.

However, as I've gotten older, my social media experience has changed. The teenage experience on social media can be, and is, quite different from the older generations' experiences. From the past snippets of articles I've read about social media in the Dove, I take it that (most) older adults use social media to its obvious purpose, and not much more — to communicate with people they know. As a teenager,

however, social media is much more than that. It's a creative outlet. It's a way to record my life for myself, as well as make it look beautiful and exciting for my friends and followers to see. I can be whoever I want on social media ... and most teenagers settle for something a little different than themselves.

We settle for the ideal image of ourselves. An example: I want to be seen as creative and talented, and I've just mastered a cool plucking technique on my guitar. I may only know this single technique, but by taking a cool video, adding the right filter, and creating a clever caption, I can make it appear to my social media friends that I'm actually a hidden gem in the infinite number of guitar players out there.

The point I'm trying to make is: Social media can be used for deception. And whether we know it or not, a lot of us are giving in to this facade by believing the mirage others set up,

as well as deceiving others ourselves. I often find myself looking at other people's profiles and subconsciously making the assumption that this person's life is exciting, pretty, and cool, with none of the troubles or disappointments any normal person would face ... which is obviously NOT true. We all have trials and doubts. None of us is certain about what will happen tomorrow. None of us has all the answers or have a perfect life.

But social media allows us to leave behind these thoughts by entering into a digital realm — a completely different world — where reality can be perfected, edited, filtered and re-defined.

Are you shocked by what I'm saying? This is a large part of the teenage social media experience, especially in the secular world. Some of my friends might disagree with my opinions on this subject, but I've found it true for myself and observed it in others

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Social Media

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much more often than not.

Now, I'm not saying we should all post pictures of ourselves in our worst states so that the pathetic reality of our lives can be known (that would be unpleasant for everybody). But perhaps instead of using media to celebrate ourselves, we can use it to celebrate others — with them and for them. We can use it as prayer lines. Want to find something to intercede for? Open up Facebook. Scroll Instagram. There's loads of stuff.

Almost every social media post can be viewed as a cry out for prayer, care, or celebration. Wow, does that notion completely change the way I view my media feed!

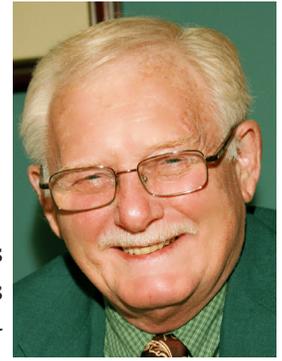
Social media is meant to connect you to others, but ironically, it tends to isolate. For teenagers, a Smartphone can be a wonderful tool for remaining occupied and perhaps unapproachable in a boring or awkward social setting. For example, Bob goes to a family reunion once a year, which consists mostly of people over the age of fifty and no kids his age. The most likely thing Bob will end up doing is listening to his crazy Uncle George tell stories from WWII. So to hopefully avoid this undesirable situation, he finds a corner to hide in and scrolls down Instagram all day.

We can use social media for the purpose of being anti-social. THE IRONY!

What is a solution to this? We can use social media as gateways for real, person-to-person, in-the-flesh interaction — or at least a talk over the phone. I love that Facebook reminds me of people's birthdays. This is an invitation for an in-the-flesh reaction! I can call up that person, walk

Forgiveness and Love

By Larry Stenger



We are about to enter a time of reconciliation at the Full Covenant Retreat. And what is reconciliation? To put it bluntly, it's an act of love.

In today's world, we think of love as that fluttery-heart emotion. But love is not that. Rather, love is a choice. Yes, I said love is a choice. When Jesus said, "Thou shalt love your neighbor as yourself," He knew that many times we must choose to love our neighbor. It isn't always easy, but it must be the first step in real forgiveness.

Col. 3:12 tells us to forbear one another, to forgive one another. Yet, what does forbearance mean? Web-

ster describes forbearance as self-control, patient restraint.

In other words, choose to love, choose to forgive, choose to ask forgiveness. We don't need the emotional pull. We need to do God's will and choose to love our neighbor.

I once heard a priest say, "We love God as much as we love the person we least want to be with." I'm in trouble, but I can choose not to be in trouble by actively showing love to the person I least like to be with.

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over to their house, or next time I see them tell them happy birthday. Whatever — you get the picture. I can use what I've learned from my social media feed about others to interact with them in person — start a meaningful conversation that can lead to a deeper friendship.

To most teenagers reading this, it's #corny #WhoCares #iLikeSelfies-Better. (These phrases are something called "hashtags" that my generation often uses on Instagram posts. I'm guilty of using them. I'm not really sure what their function is.) But guys, listen! I think we, as the next generation of America, can do a little better with this. Social Media, a construction of man often used for the immoral intentions of this secular, apathetic society, is actually a God-given gift that has a greater purpose.

Pope Francis says so himself:

"In a world like this, media can help us to feel closer to one another... to know one another better, and ul-

timately, to grow in unity. The walls which divide us can be broken down only if we are prepared to listen and learn from one another. ... A culture of encounter demands that we be ready not only to give, but also to receive. Media can help us greatly in this. ... The internet, in particular, offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God."

The thing is, social media is not a bad thing in itself; it is, like most things, simply a tool that can be abused if not used in a godly way.

Social media is a gift from God. We can use it for His glory. If we can't use it for His glory, why even use it?

Rachel Visintainer, the oldest of three siblings, is the daughter of Full Covenant members, John and Becky Visintainer, and a high school senior in the Alleluia Community School. The family attends St. Joseph Catholic Church in Augusta, Georgia.

Unity: On Earth as in Heaven

Review by Joanne Paulos



I loved this book! When I finished the book, I shot off an email to Dan thanking him for writing his book and expressing my personal sadness that anyone would be disappointed or unchallenged by his message. Being a Catholic, I was especially thankful for Dan's many quotes from Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis. One quote I want to mention is from Pope Francis which says, "If we really believe in the abundantly free work of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another." (Evangelii Gaudium) And we have but there is more yet to discover.

Love Our Neighbor

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Several years ago, there was a brother that would stop in my office on many occasions and talk for long periods of time about his life. (He isn't with us anymore.) It was difficult for me to sit and listen to him, especially when I was in the middle of some financial report. At times, I would cut him short by giving him some lame excuse that I had to go check something. Then, God told me that I wasn't loving my neighbor as he commanded me. So, I began to slide away from my computer when he came in and listen to him patiently. It wasn't always easy, but it was what our Lord wanted me to do. The brother wanted to share, and I needed to show him love.

To be honest, there were even some occasions where I questioned whether I loved our God. I even felt that He didn't love me, but I still made the choice to get up early and

Dan presents a brief history of the work of the Holy Spirit in the 20th century beginning with the Protestant minister Charles Parham in 1901 to the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement in 1906, Protestant missionary conference in 1910, to the Second Vatican Council in 1964 when the Catholic Church issued the Decree on Ecumenism. This document is a call to unity for all Christian people but particularly to Catholics. "Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a more perfect realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church." (Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism)

The chapter on unity being a choice was especially enlightening. Dan mentions Pope Benedict XVI statements which say, "manifestations of good sentiments is not enough..."

pray and to get down on my knees at night and thank Him. My choice was to love Him in spite of my feelings and through this, He showed His love to me.

All of us here in community live under a covenant that tells us to "Love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ." We are all from different backgrounds, from different upbringings; yet, we have been brought to this wonderful, God-filled life by our Lord Jesus. We can do nothing less than to choose to forgive one another, to be open to ask forgiveness, to love one another.

Love is the cement that holds us together as a people. We must never let our emotions get in the way of forgiveness. Satan will always try to

The pope goes on to say that we will all stand before God and be accountable for our action on how we promoted unity in the Body of Christ. As Dan says in Chapter 3, unity is a choice and the time for excuses is over. In this chapter, Dan also shares obstacles to unity that all Christian can relate to.

The need for deeper conversion is mentioned many times as one of the most important answers to the problem of disunity in the Christian churches. In speaking about how members of the Alleluia Community attempt to live out ecumenism, Dan says that "our primary motivation is not to bring about unity by persuad-

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control our emotions, and we must not allow him any place in our lives. Jesus told us to love one another as He has loved us. Since He died so that we may be forgiven, we must be open to seek forgiveness and to forgive. I love you all, and if I have offended you, please approach me so that I can make it right. God bless and be with you, my dear brothers and sisters.

Larry Stenger, a retired engineer, is an Elder of the Alleluia Community and the Administrator of Alleluia Christian Service Center, responsible for overseeing the office and service teams, and a Pastoral Coordinator. He and his late wife Sue have been Full Covenant members of Alleluia since 1981. They have six children and eight grandchildren and attend St. Joseph Catholic Church in Augusta, Georgia.

Alleluia: An Example of How Ecumenism is Possible

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ing everyone else to join our particular religious affiliation." I'm sure some people will gulp at that statement, but I found it most freeing. My job is to bring people to Christ not a particular denomination.

As the book begins to draw to a close, Dan highlights our "mutual giftedness." The call to see and understand the gifts the Holy Spirit has given to Catholics and Protestants is a stepping stone toward unity. Dan does a good job of pointing out these gifts and calls us on to celebrate them. He closes Chapter 6 with the analogy of two young lovers who marry and begin to try and change each other

as soon as they say "I do." He says, "Rather than recognizing the gift that each other represent, they reject the gift and subtly or not so subtly are always trying to change the other. This will not lead to the two becoming one" Amen! This most assuredly does not. The question that begs to be asked is, "Are we doing that to one another in the Body of Christ?"

Dan ends the book with the full prophecy from Kansas City in 1977:

"Mourn and Weep, for the body of my Son is broken. Mourn and weep, for the body of my Son is broken.

Come before me with sackcloth

and ashes; come before me with tears and mourning, for the body of my Son is broken. I would have made you one new man, but the body of my Son is broken. I would have made you a light on a mountaintop, a city glorious and splendidous that all the world would have seen, but the body of my son is broken.

The light is dim. My people are scattered. The body of my Son is broken.

Turn from the sins of your fathers. Walk in the way of my Son. Return to the plan of your Father; return to the purpose of your God.

The body of my Son is broken."

Dan spells out how to "return to the way of our Father." The path is unity.

Dan uses our life in Alleluia as an example of how ecumenism is possible. He says we are not perfect in every way but we have learned a lot about loving and learning from one another. This book made me proud to be part of God's work on the earth.

In my email to Dan thanking him for writing this book, I also mentioned it would be good to give this book to anyone wanting to join the Alleluia Community. It is an easy read but not frivolous. I never once became bored or bogged down. I read it cover to cover in two sittings. Please, if you haven't read it, do yourself a favor and read it. In this day of so much turmoil, unity in the Body of Christ is more important than ever. AMEN.

Save the Date

October 31



**11th Annual Alleluia
Glory Run**

October 31



**Annual Alleluia
All Saints Party**

November 14



**Annual Alleluia
Fall Fare**

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