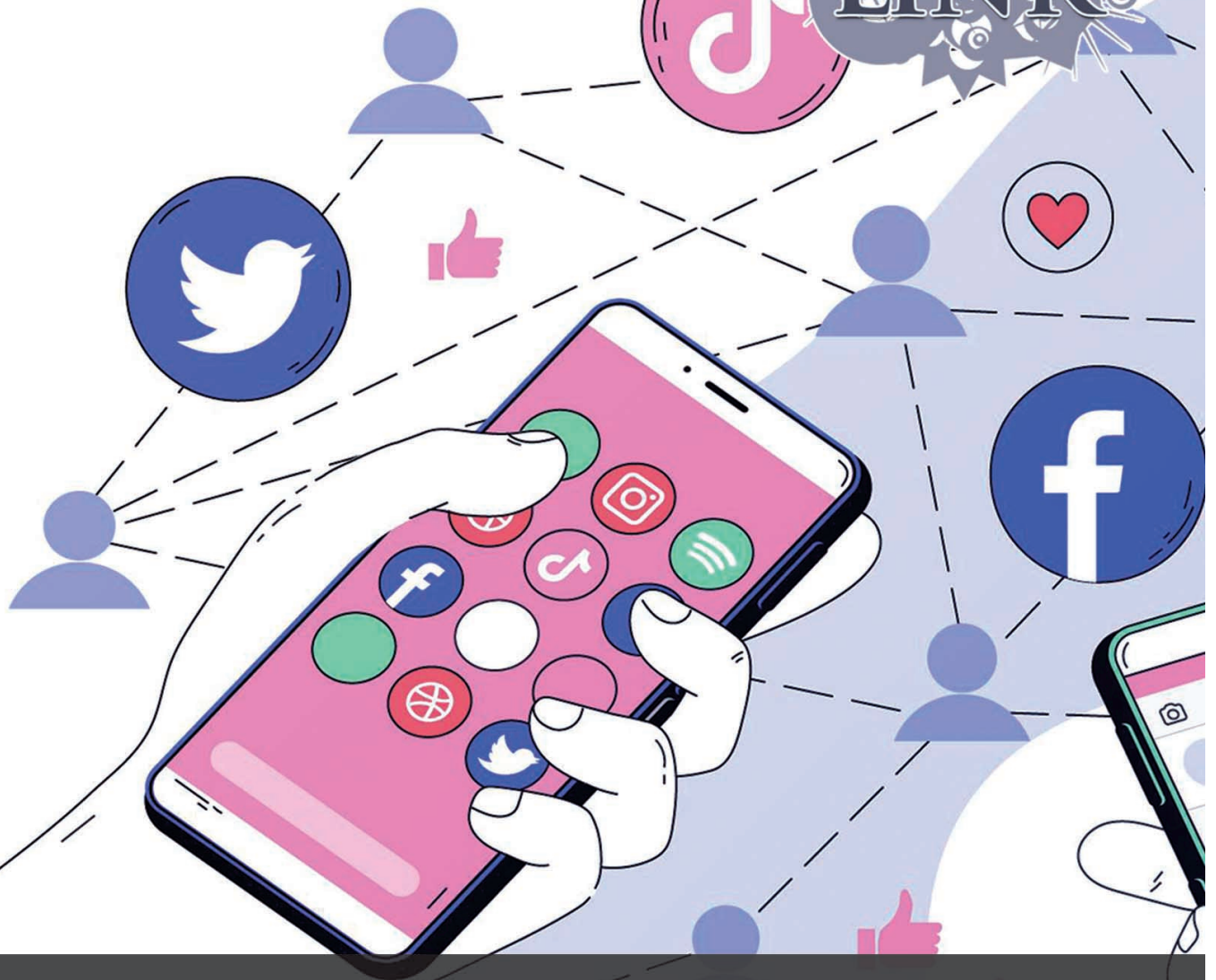


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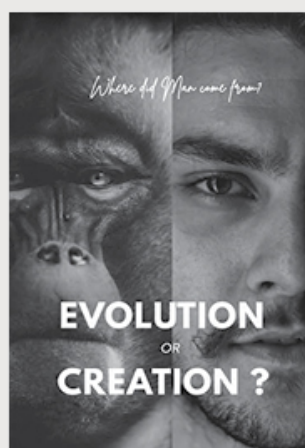


Impact of Social Media



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Digital Explosion

Information and communication technology have changed rapidly over the years, with the emergence of digital media. It has made the world smaller; you get connected with any part of the world with one click! You can travel anywhere, virtually with lightening speed while sitting in your own comfort zone. The FIFA world cup 2022 was cheered by people all around the world holding their breath to see the climax! In earlier days people had to wait for the radio/ TV /newspapers to get the updates! The development of mobile technology has a great impact on digital media as most people from vegetable vendors to CEOs own a smartphone. People spend a lot of time on their devices for information explosion, entertainment, connecting with people, building relationships, acquiring knowledge, finding courses or jobs, addressing social and ethical issues, or even leisure. The Insta stories, WhatsApp statuses, FB posts, likes, and comments catch people's attention. You get plenty of virtual friends all over without even seeing them or knowing them. Covid has added to the already existing phenomenon.

With all the advanced technology where communication should have been improved, there is a tendency to cocoon yourself inside the four walls spending hours together with the virtual world yet feeling lonely. It is like 'water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink!' People can fake behind the screen by appearing to be successful and happy. Pornography, games, gambling, etc. are easily accessible behind closed doors, taking a toll on studies and the future, and even on families as gadgets have taken over face-to-face conversations which resulted in strained relationships between spouses, parents, and children. Mental health issues and suicides increase day by day. Cybercrimes are on the rise hacking our personal and private life.

"Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial (1 Cor. 6:12)." As good stewards, being wise and productive, discerning what's beneficial and what's stealing our time and life is a hard choice. Making a covenant with ourselves not to indulge in stuff that is damaging us with a conscious 'NO' is the need of the hour.

I invite you to read more about the impact of digital media in different spectrums of life, as you unfold the pages!



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Taming Oneself on Cyberspace



Digital space has become the omnipresent backdrop of everyday life. We live in a world where the world is merged and brought to our finger tips. Gone are the days of outings, picnics, outdoor fun games, family talks, cards, family get togethers, etc- now it is a world of digital space with digital games, virtual dating, a thousand apps, e-study, e-books, e-cards, etc. Smart phones are ubiquitous and is the most pervasive technological device on planet earth. With around 300+ million mobile users in India, the increased use of gadgets is sometimes threatening the very fabric of quality relationships and on the other hand strengthening virtual meets, meetings and

relationships. Smart phones have become an emotional crunch.

The functionalities of digital media are an everyday development. It is a revolutionary technology that keeps getting smarter and smarter. There are over 2 million apps on Google Play Store and also numerous productivity apps available for usage. The GPS allows people to locate addresses and areas around the world. Online education, zoom platforms were made the most available to us during the Covid Era. In one sense, digital space has brought the world closer through a click. There are huge advantages that come with using digital space and just as every

coin has another side to it- digital space has its cons too.

The ramification of clicking on various links may seem slight without knowing that web designers have spent years in finding ways to keep you hooked to the net.

Satan has spun his most eloquent web through all of these. More than a decade ago- the concept of “tempting the click” was articulated. It just means keeping the prospect coming back for more and keeping the viewer nailed to digital space for many hours. The visual stimulants have increased and sexual content burgeoned. Web designers have succeeded in keeping us prey to the cyber world. Dr. Manoj Sharma, Associate Prof. of Clinical Psychology says- “People have become addicted to digital technology without even realizing it”

E-lies and E-messages, dating apps, gaming apps are other traps that lure people into cyber space. E-lies are very much quotidian in the social media. We wallow in the unethical, immoral conduct over social media that subtly eats our time. These gadgets seem to make them euphoric and the absence of them make them miserable. Youngsters spend the wee hours

of the morning in the visual world obsessively playing games, surfing, making reels, chatting, on dating apps, online stores, etc. Around 73% of Indian urbans connect the internet through their smart phones, 63% professionals wake up to look at their smart phone first thing in the morning.

Visual ethics are neither taught to children by teachers, at home by parents or in church by pastors. Our children need to be taught to use proper filters and keep a guard over their eyes(Ps 119:37). Sexual content is huge on internet, pornography is glorified in this world.

A lifestyle of careless viewing reveals the ignorance of the power of temptation. How true it is that- “the mighty doors of change swing on the tiny hinges of discipline”- Ken Windee.

WHO has classified addiction into two main categories. They include substance abuse (drugs, alcohol) and the other being Behavioural addiction (smart phone addiction). The wide prevalence of media addiction causes various symptoms

Some symptoms of smart phone addiction

1. Selfitis- taking more than 20 self-ies per day

2. Phantom Vibration syndrome- a person feels the vibration even when the phone isn't vibrating
3. Narcissism- decreased output at work due to insomnia and overuse of digital media
4. FOMO- Fear Of Missing Out (happens due to low self esteem)
5. FAD, IAD- Facebook, Insta Addiction Disorder
6. SMD- Social Media Addiction
7. Nomophobia (fear of losing one's mobile)
8. Unnatural craving and compulsion (to answer or view immediately)
9. Depressive and manic symptoms
10. Suicidal tendencies
11. Real time relationship issues
12. Porn addiction (83% among youngsters)

Having any of the above symptoms means that humankind is into this trap of addiction. It takes a toll on mental health, nibbles at time, steals real time relationships and lures one away from the Lord.

There is certainly no quick fix solution to this problem. Abstinence isn't feasible. Our fellowships, our relationships, our education, our bank accounts, our lives itself revolve around this device. We need

to wield the authority that God has given over this device and use it for the glory of God.

Steps on monitoring your online lifestyle as a disciple of Christ

1. Match your online life with your offline beliefs
2. Use trusted web training sites (OnguardOnline.gov; staysafeonline.org ; safefamilies.org)
3. Use authorised web filters – high security packages
4. Have accountability partners
5. Take resolutions on online time management
6. Cultivate digital hygiene (time on viewing)
7. Flee from temptation (2 Tim2:2)
8. Read and practice God's word (2 Tim 3:16,17)
9. Make a covenant with your eyes (Job 31:1)
10. If you have sinned, pray and bounce back on walking with God (Ps:51:1,2,5,7,9)
11. Discipline yourself in the area of using this device (Eph 5:15-17)
12. If you feel that you are struggling with addiction, share your struggle with a mentor or a small fellowship group

13. Practice digital sabbath (do not use device one day in a week)

14. Fear the Lord and shun evil (Prov. 8:13)

15. Walk differently from the gentiles (Eph. 4: 17-24)

16. Surf good websites for educational purposes

17. Read good informative E-books, magazines

Excessive use of gadgets brings spiritual ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) distracting us from Christ and the fellowship. It is important to examine ourselves every minute

in the light of His word and use our God given gadgets for His glory alone. As believers we need to be actively engaged in cyberspace and not retreat from it. We need more cyber ambassadors for the Lord in this decaying cyber world of ours.

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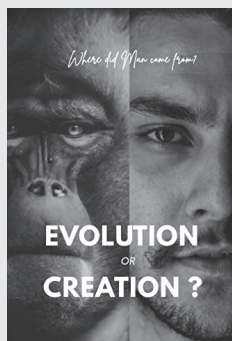
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Being a Believer in Cyberspace

Where did you land when you logged into your smartphone and clicked the button in your app? Did you realize that as soon as you clicked and entered a website or application, you landed yourself in a different world? This world you entered into is known as cyberspace. In this article we would discuss cyberspace and how it impacts a believer and how a believer can behave in cyberspace. Cyberspace gives both opportunities and challenges for a believer to engage. But this article will explore only the challenges. Discussing the opportunities and positives is beyond the scope of this article.

Cyberspace-The word first appeared in 1984 in the science fiction novel *Neuromancer* written by William Gibson. Jeffrey P Zaleski in *The soul of cyberspace* defines cyberspace as “the virtual space created through the activation of a computer [or mobiles, etc]. By this definition, cyberspace is created when, for example, a solo user activates the software adventure game *Myst* on a stand-alone computer or mobile phone, etc], two or more human beings engage in computer-mediated communication, or two or more computers or mobile phone, etc communicate automatically.”

Why do we have to define it in the sense of cyberspace? Why not just consider it like any other activity like reading a book or jogging? It is much more than that. We enter into a world of realities with a click. When we are connected, we will not be able to focus on the reality of the physical world but we get immersed in cyberspace. Those who use technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) will realize it more vividly. One key thing is that we enter into this world disembodied, i.e. we live our bodies where we sit and enter into a different world to interact with machines, content, and people connected online.

Why do we need to be careful when we enter the cyber world?

1. It pressurizes people to conform to the patterns of the world

The cyberworld is primarily pushed forward by corporates to accelerate their profit-making interest. Because of this, there is a push for accepting a lot of evil patterns of the world. Attraction to sexual and explicit content is pushed variously. It is surprising to note sometime even explicit contents pop up in advertisements when we use freeware Bible software. Not alone sexually evil content but more and more worldly aspects like consumerism, selfishness, hatred, falsehood, un-

godliness, division, and so on are pushed forward by the cyber world. So, when we enter into cyberspace, we need to be mindful of the Biblical command “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will”. Romans 12:2.

Like Daniel and friends we need to enter into cyberspace with a resolution not to defile ourselves with the pattern of the world of cyberspace. (Cf. Daniel 1:8)

Cyberspace is a world of artificial intelligence

The cyberworld is moving towards automation in all possible ways. Many times when we want a solution, we are interacting with Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered machines and not people. Can AI-powered systems replace people? Humans alone are created in the Image of God (Genesis 1:26). Today automation is preferred in working systems. Even though it has positives, we have to understand how AI is impacting us. AI cannot love. It does not have emotions. It is callous. AI-powered systems usually are a world devoid of emotions. We have to be very careful that our minds are also getting programmed like AI

as we interact with AI. Many times because of this we become callous to the needs of people around us. We find it difficult to relate to people. We have mechanical love and relation towards people. So as we engage in cyberspace we have to take efforts to relate with people who live in real flesh and blood and live in real times. AI-powered lifestyle forces us to be busy with routine work and live a mechanical life devoid of love and concern for others like the Levite and priest in the parable of the good Samaritan. They force us to mind our work and not be concerned about others. We have to understand and apply the model of the good Samaritan and be sensitive to others as we live our daily lives influenced by AI. (Luke 10:29-37). We have to carefully obey the Lord's commandment "go and do likewise".

2. Cyberspace offers a world to escape

People wish to stay in Cyberworld because they feel temporary relief there. Cyberspace tries to offer that everything is beautiful.

The real world is full of sorrows and painful real-life experiences. People do not want to face the realities of life. So they hook into the internet and surf heart-touching stories or those that give pleasure to them. Less are they realizing that they are

withdrawing from their responsibilities and are living in a virtually created world. They become more lazy and waste their time. John 16:33 says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world". But people escape from the realities of the world because they get the comfort of the cyber world. They do not rely on Jesus to live their lives carrying their daily cross (c.f Mat 16:24-26). We must reorient ourselves to heed Biblical advice of facing daily situations with the help of Jesus rather than escaping and finding temporary relief in cyberspace.

3. Cyberspace is a world of choices and alternatives

Cyberworld offers endless choices and alternatives. The advertisement shows something to us and we feel like buying and with a click of a few buttons we order it and get it delivered to our doorstep within a few days. Cyberworld gives the message that we are of worth only if we have everything the world has to offer. It forces to accumulate. But as we enter into the cyber world we have to heed the Bible's call to simplicity as reiterated by the model of Jesus Christ and apostles and the exhortation by Paul, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it

is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want". (Philippians 4:12-13)

Choices are also there in terms of spirituality. After the pandemic people do not prefer to attend the Bible study that they used to attend once. But they like a certain Bible study that gets aired in cyberspace. It may have a good ambiance, good music and so on which is missing in the older one. Cyberspace gives us more opportunities to hear what our "itching ears want to hear" and gives us a pleasing environment. Paul's warning is realized more and more these days. "The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear." (2 Timothy 4:3). It is time that we resort to our basic lively natural fellowship which pro-

fesses sound doctrine and not be attracted by the sugar-coated message in cyberspace.

Conclusion:

Cyberspace has become part and parcel of our life. We cannot escape from it. It also has a tremendous impact on our lives. A story is told of a frog being slowly boiled alive. The fundamental idea is that when a frog is thrown into a pot of boiling water, it jumps out as a result of the abrupt temperature change. The frog, however, does not recognise the danger when it is placed in room temperature water and the water is slowly heated to a boil, and as a result, he is roasted to death. It's the ideal metaphor for expressing our incapacity or refusal to react to threats that cyberspace brings to us. Unknowingly we get influenced by it and when we realize it, we are too late. Let us commit ourselves to approach cyberspace with careful discernment.



Benalin is UESI-UP staff on study leave and is currently pursuing his theological studies at New Theological College, Dehradun. He resides with his wife Selin and two children Jagdeep Habeeb Lin and Kashvik Selva Lin

Readers' Response

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Hon. Editor

Digital Media and our Youth



Today's youth are surrounded by and immersed in a digital environment. It is not the fault of people to indulge in it but it is the trend of the time. There are two types of media, one is Traditional and the other, Digital. Traditional media, such as television (TV), radio, and periodicals are being replaced by new digital technologies that promote interactive and social engagement. They allow people instant access to entertainment, information, visual media, and social contracts. Traditional media were provided to a broader audience for passive viewing or reading. In contrast, the new digital media, which includes social and interactive media, is a form of media in which users can both consume and actively create content. Examples include applications (apps), multiplayer video games, YouTube videos, or video blogs (vlogs). For children and youth today, this evolving integration of passively viewed and interactive media is seamless and natural. The distinc-

tions and boundaries between traditional/broadcast and interactive/social media have become blurred.

Digital media allows information sharing across a variety of media formats, including texting, photographs, videos, and audios. Today's video games, for example, often represent a merging of both traditional and social media, as users can virtually "inhabit" impressively produced worlds and interact with other users in remote locations. Video game participants can even work collaboratively to co-create virtual worlds. Thus, digital media provides an engaging experience in which the media experiences of children and teenagers become highly personalized.

New digital and social media facilitate and promote social interactions as well as participation and engagement that involve both viewing and creating content. The effects of media use, however, are multi-factorial and depend on the

type of media, the type of use, the amount and extent of use, and the characteristics of the individual using the media. Children today are growing up in an era of highly personalized media user experiences. Therefore, parents should develop personalized Family Media Use Plans for their families that suit each child's age, health, temperament, and developmental stage. This will ensure that each child can practise and benefit from the essentials for healthy growth and development, such as a healthy diet, good sleep hygiene/routine, adequate physical activity, and positive social interactions.

Both negative and positive impacts of the media are quite a few. Due to the rapid spread of media to all parts of the world, the access to information is easy and fast. Owing to the web technology, almost everyone has access to information from anywhere in the world.

Owing to non-stop technological developments, media is not limited to big cities. It has reached the world's remotest parts, thus spreading the accessibility of information.

Digital media has become such an essential part of life that living without it is becoming difficult. Digital media has become a best platform

to voice our opinions in the world. Blogs are a great way for anyone to express personal ideas. Conversations in the form of comments on social media or blog posts and discussions, in online or news forums, can help in the exchange of vital information or viewpoints. Media often acts as the link between talented people and those in search for such. For example, job portals serve as a link between recruiters and seekers. It is a blessing for us if we use it wisely but it becomes a bane if we handle it unwisely.

While talking about negatives, it is often seen that young girls and boys imitate their favourite celebrities blindly. We have seen their lives and scandals in the news. Then what message is given to our boys and girls. This is the pitiable situation of our society. Social media is bringing negative feelings into young minds. An early exposure to violent films, books with adult content, and news portraying ugly social practices deeply impact young minds. The media in itself is so addictive that once glued to it, you tend to forget everything else. When you are not watching TV, you are surfing the Internet; when you are not on the web, you are reading newspapers; when you are not reading anything, you are listening to something. Thus, all the time, you

are glued to some form of media. It is bombarding you with content, news, information, gossip, rumours. It exposes you to everything it has, some things necessary, some not; some things important, some not, some things you want to ignore, and some things you cannot. Media is all over, affecting every aspect of life.

Social media can be more addictive than cigarettes and alcohol. It has a powerful draw for many people that leads to them checking it all the time without even thinking about it. The negative effects of media on young boys or girls manifest in terms of their changing mental setup and the declining quality of their lifestyle. They should invest more time reading good books, studying, playing outdoors and exercising. The solution to avoiding the negative influence of media lies in limiting media exposure and choosing what to watch. News sources often bombard you with the same negative stories over and over again, in order to increase the impact. Sometimes, small incidents or events in the lives of celebrities and politicians are hyped, in order

to make them more sensational. Refrain from watching such programs or news. Instead, watch good programs that carry healthy content, engage in positive activities, and encourage viewers to do the same.

Why do we need to stop using it? Or, why not? It depends on what we are grasping from digital media. Luke 11:34 says: Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. The use of light and dark to describe good and bad throughout Scriptures and in our culture is common. If you think good thoughts, you are in the light. If you think bad thoughts, you are in darkness. Now the decision is in our hands, as to what we choose. Social media is not bad but our intention is what matters. Are we pleasing God with our lives, or pleasing people? Finally, I want to say that if you find that social media has a negative impact on your life, stop using it. However, if you decide to stay, there are ways to waste less time on social media and maintain a healthy relationship with it.



Amar Nath is presently working as a School teacher in Himachal Pradesh. He writes blogs and takes online and offline teaching classes for needy students. He lives with his wife and two children and is based in Kangra.





Diligence in the Digital World

Technology is probably one of the most incredible inventions made by humankind so far. The internet has made life so convenient, simple, and accessible, it is very easy for us to watch a movie, play songs, surf the web, and so much more. There are limitless things that can be done with the internet. You can order food, and pay for them too with absolutely no cash involved. Social media platforms have brought all of us together. We can be in any corner of the world and still be close to our friends. Google is a big-time help for all of us, whether it be gpay, gcr, or meet, google has outdone it-

self in making our lives remarkably easy and lazy at the same time. One can enroll in institutions and attend classes live from their bedrooms and even graduate and earn a degree with just a laptop and a stable wifi connection. It is exceptional how much we've advanced from the earlier centuries.

During Covid times thankfully we were blessed with technology and the internet we never had to take a break in the academic year because classes were available online. On-line classes cut down fees to half. It made education accessible and affordable.

We also have the advantage of an unlimited amount of current information and data from a variety of sources which helps students to have easy access to subjects/teaching units with enthusiasm thanks to applications, videos, simulations, and digital books that make the learning process much more engaging.

Moreover, this allows us to dig deeper into an area that interests us and allows us to potentially recognize our interests and talents, and maybe even our future profession.

Technology helps us to engage with people. We can engage in conversations with people and check on them and make sure they're doing okay, even if they are miles apart. Earlier there were letters and people used to send telegrams and postcards which used to take a lot of time to reach. People had massive patience back then, imagine having to wait for weeks to know if you're friend is mad at you. We immediately text and talk over a call to resolve issues which is certainly a great thing because it reduces misunderstanding. Phones have now become increasingly hands-on, which leads us to be on the top of the next new trend on the Internet. If we don't then we feel left out of conversations which often leads to Fear of missing out.

As previously mentioned the rise and spread of technology over the past ten years has done a lot of good in the fields of engaging and effective education. It has eliminated many remedial tasks, created new opportunities for connection, and made daily life more comfortable. For all of that, there's much to be thankful for. That being said, people are not necessarily happier now than they were before smartphones, Spotify, and Facebook.

Technological gadgets take time away from our most productive hours. Notifications interrupt the flow, our day starts with reading notifications. Even I don't start my day with quiet time and immediately check my phone to see if our first hour is free and it's downhill from there. The number of things we voluntarily fill our minds with before even leaving our beds is astonishing. Technology is certainly a blessing in more than one way, but from the biblical perspective, technology is a serious time killer. All our productivity and creativity is lost due to the extremely easy access to the internet. Ephesians 5:15 says "So be very careful how you live. Do not live like those who are not wise but live wisely." We ought to be careful with our time on earth as all of it will be accounted for on judgment day.



Colossians 4: 5-6 says, "Behave yourselves wisely [living prudently and with discretion] in your relations with those of the outside world, making the very most of the time and seizing the opportunity." We cannot conform to things of this earth, that includes time foolishly wasted on the internet. Anything misused can turn into a trap and destroy our lives, so much accessibility has ruined the minds of young men and women as they misuse unwanted sites on the internet. In this time and age, you don't need to seek trouble, it's all around us and if we don't have the discernment of God we will surely fail and get trapped in this endless loop of sin and guilt. It might seem pleasurable for a moment, but afterward, guilt surges in your heart, and you are far away from God. During covid, the use of unwanted sites saw an increase as compared to the previous years, resulting in increasing bad habits and addictions. It is truly sad to see young men and women struggle with depression, anxiety, and many other psychological issues due to

the increased usage of the internet. In the last days, we need to be extra careful with our time here on earth, we must be productive in the kingdom of God, and fulfill God's divine purpose in our lives.

John 10:10 says, "the thief comes only to steal kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy; our joy, hope, faith, and belief. He comes to steal our time and our peace of mind, but on the contrary, God wants to give us life, to the fullest. Time and technology are blessings, we need to learn to use them wisely to glorify God's name and walk in His ways. Through this article, I want to encourage you to use all the talents and opportunities that God has bestowed upon us to lead a fruitful and purpose-driven life, for the expansion of His kingdom. Remember technology has the potential to either make you or break you.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy Youth"



Sherly is pursuing her Bachelors in History at Madras Christian College and is actively involved in MCC EU. She lives in Chennai with her family. Her passion includes reading and writing.

Influence of Social Media on Society



Social media is a channel of communication that uses the internet. Users can engage in conversations, exchange information, even produce content for the web via this platform (Reference: University of South Florida, Marketing Department). Social media comes in different avatars, such as social networking (Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn), messaging apps, blogging and publishing sites, photo and video sharing websites, interacting apps (Snapchat, TikTok), discussion forums, curating content and bookmarking, podcasts, anonymous social networks, and more.

Humans are social creatures; hence the rise of social media was hailed as a blessing in previous decades with the good intentions of connecting people and sharing information. Well over past years, Communication and Information Technology have undergone fast transformation, with the introduction of social media becoming a significant advance. For

instance, social media's influence has been greatly shaped by the advancement of mobile phones. In terms of overall time spent online, mobile phones rule the world. They give everyone access to the ability to connect at any time, from any location, using any device. The world is ruled by online relationships.

Some of the many advantages of using social media are they are the fastest expanding platforms for delivering news, knowledge, and general awareness to a broader audience in a shorter time frame. The social medias like Facebook, twitter, Instagram and others allow collective interactions among individuals enabling them to develop has a community even from rural areas. Even while there may be a significant majority with a differing viewpoint on a certain subject, the internet lets minorities with the same opinion to form a wider "majority". People with divergent viewpoints can engage,

network, and produce novel works such as publications, memes, and collaborative global works that collectively challenge dominant viewpoints.

The key benefit of social media is the visibility it gives the public in relation to diverse social, religious, ethical, political, and environmental scenarios, conclusively gathering the numerous viewpoints of those shedding light on various concerns.

This visibility is no frivolous game, and it helps to alter the equilibrium by transferring power from a selected few to a majority.

Many people have benefited from platforms like YouTube that enable knowledge sharing, whether it is through practical hacks or in-depth videos on various scientific topics. Sharing our profile in LinkedIn application is a fantastic method to launch a career.

Nowadays, it's uncommon to come across a business that doesn't use social media in some capacity to connect with its clients and potential clients. Social media is important for businesses to engage with customers and increase sales. Businesses have come to recognize they can utilize social media to gather data, increase demand, and develop specialized brand portfolio

especially e-commerce industry which can aid in more brand awareness and brand reputation.

These are only a few of the numerous applications for social media, and its potential is virtually endless. Our lives are steadily coming under the grip of social media. As humanity progresses into the virtual world period, there are downsides on the flip side of the coin. Social media is a "new age drug" that is addicting for both young people and adults alike. Its use skyrocketed during the COVID 19 virus outbreak, when it was social media that saved the day. Face-to-face encounters, which are essential for acquisition of social and communication skills as well as personality development, have been mostly eliminated from people's lives, particularly those of younger generations. Overuse of social media platforms has hampered true emotional connections by making it difficult to interact with others, limiting "actual social life," and fostering more virtual friendships.

Social media gives you a dopamine rush right away. Social media has made it simple to compare one's life to others' "happy lives." People have problems with depression, fear of missing out (FOMO) and low self-esteem as a byproduct of being unsatisfied with their existing

situation. The viewers are unaware that this is only a small portion of the lives that people are broadcasting, and that most of it may be fake. Over community, allegiance, as well as self-acceptance, many are placing a higher value on wealth, popularity, and appearance. A whole generation has been transformed into shallow narcissists by social networks, from false photo angles that are intended to make people look and seem appealing to manipulating the Facebook feed to appear as though we are enjoying more than we genuinely are.

Cyberbullying is a criminal offense affecting people, especially youngsters, by readily trapping them in blackmail, scams, as well as other harmful behaviors. False information, trolls, online predators, viral trends which are dangerous, adult content and rumors are easily propagated, which might result in suicide and depression. The fragility of social media has also highlighted how simple it is to collect anyone's credentials. To prevent such circumstances, privacy settings must be regularly updated but also profiles must be locked. Social media has also been

used to promote misinformation and falsehoods online, which has increased the number of violent crimes reported in society. With the advent of social media, avoiding bad news and its detrimental effects on our lives has practically become unavoidable. This may have long-lasting psychological effects, including thoughts of our world collapsing, distress, and anxiety.

Due to our hectic lifestyles, social media has replaced the organic family time spent together with everyone glued to their smart device screens. It is a bitter reality that spending time with loved ones and forming relationships in the real world cannot be substituted by social media. The concerns mentioned cannot be solved by restricting access to social media. Instead, it can be instructive to adopt a fresh perspective and consider both the advantages and disadvantages that social media contributes to society. The wise course of action is to be cognizant of the benefits and drawbacks of social media and to utilize our time and skills responsibly for both individual and societal advancement.



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Engaging and Effective Education through Digital Media

A great transformation happened along with the storm of Covid -19 - Online education and work from home. During the lockdown period, we realised that digital media has an important roles in effective education and employment also. Many became video creators during this period. Now you can see the boom in online courses. You can find several online paid or

free courses on YouTube and other websites.

Let's talk about how the use of digital media enhances our education system. But before that I want you to know this fact about social media. These data are taken from the internet.

(<https://www.demandsage.com/whatsapp-statistics>)

Digital Media products	No. of user in world	No. of user in India
Smart phone user	6.6 billion	800 million
WhatsApp	2 billion	550 million
Facebook	2.85 billion	349.7 million
YouTube	2.29 billion	467 million
Instagram	1.38 billion	230.25 million
Zoom	300 million	--
Google Meet	100 million	--

More than 800 million people use a smartphone in India. Around 2 billion people use WhatsApp in the world and more than 550 million users are from India. Two-year kids to senior citizens also use YouTube for entertainment, information and education. Zoom and Google played a very significant role during the Covid lockdown. We all attended our online classes by using these Apps. We have seen a boom in the online education sector. Thus we can say today's society is becoming a digital world.

Engaging and effective education through digital media

Our traditional teaching methods are also changing and becoming digital.

Digital tools enhance our learning and teaching. We learn and engage easily through some digital tools if used properly. Many colleges/schools upgrading their classrooms into digital classrooms.

Benefits of digital media in education

(1) Student engagement increases - If digital tools are used properly then it increases the student engagement in class. We can ask questions, raise hands, show our emotions through emojis and even participate in polls.

(2) Multiple resources to solve difficult concepts - Digital tools help us to solve difficult concepts through multiple resources. There are hundreds of resources available in the internet like - Solved questions, design, research papers on the same topic, video explanations, etc.

(3) Easy to understand a difficult concept - Digital tools like illustration, images, design, Google Map, Cartoon character with stories, etc helps us to understand lessons easily.

(4) Increases interest - If you are learning and getting rewards as encouragement then it increases your interest in learning. We pay full attention to learning.

(5) More engagement and interactions - Digital tools help us to engage and interact also during class. Digital tools provide us with a platform to communicate. We can send assignments and conduct online tests, quizzes, and games also.

If a teacher shares his/her knowledge by properly using digital media then it increases the active participation of students, makes concepts easy to understand, and enhances their learning and experiences.

Opportunities and challenges

Hundreds of online courses started by famous institutions and individuals. There is competition in the digital market. You may be getting a lot of advertising emails and Ads in your Social Media applications.

I also created online courses - Discipleship Training Course and Christian Doctrines Course. I see a lot of opportunities and experienced some challenges also in digital media education. I as a Youtuber (Digital Educator) would like to share with you the importance and some challenges of the digital education sector.

Importance of digital media education/online courses

1. Teach or reach millions - We can teach 1000 students by using paid Zoom Application but if we make the class live via a YouTube channel then we can teach the same to millions at the same time. We can reach thousands of people right from our homes.

2. Lifetime video availability - If you are recording your live class videos then your recorded videos become digital assets. It remains a lifetime in the internet publically or privately. You can use those videos to create online courses.

3. Flexible class - Most of the online courses are made by recorded vid-

eos. After enrolling in the course you are free to decide when to watch video lectures. Whenever you want, you can get access and revisit the course.

4. Engaging - You can use different tools or images for illustration purposes. Images and illustrations help us to teach lessons easily. We can play online quizzes or interactive games also.

5. Easy & catchy - Visual effects are more catchy than traditional board teaching. We use only our textbooks in a traditional classroom but when we use some visual effects then we teach effectively. Visual aids are more catchy than traditional board teaching.

7. Cost efficiency - Traditional classroom requires an infrastructure (building), tables, chairs, blackboard, staff, fans, etc. So it becomes costly. But digital classroom teaching and learning requires lesser investment and thus it becomes low-cost efficiency.

8. Automate - Some tools can make your courses in automated mode. Bots AI system will work on your behalf 24/7 and your courses will run automatically without you.

9. Short & sweet - Traditional classroom teaching takes longer than social media teaching. Now because of the excessive use of social

media short-form videos, our concentration power is decreasing day by day. So most people like to watch 5 to 7 minutes videos. Therefore online teachers are also trying to keep their lessons short and sweet.

10. New Education Policy - NEP encourages us to use digital tools for education. So this policy also encourages us to upgrade all schools/ colleges digitally and involve ineffective education by using digital tools.

Challenges & limitations

I started a YouTube channel (Life HTA) in October 2017. I have gone through a lot of challenges and still facing some. I would like to share my experiences with you.

1. Virtual world - Online learning is purely virtual so it reduces physical interaction and exercises. Extreme use can reduce your interest to meet people in person.

2. Privacy at stake - There are several applications for digital learning. They have access to our photos, videos, contacts, location, etc. Our privacy is in their hands. I got threats from Hackers but thank God everything is fine now. As a creator, I try to hide my current location.

3. Time Killer - Most of us get bored in an online class and tend to use Instagram, Facebook, and other

entertainment applications during class. It kills our time.

4. Rural population left out - Still a large number of people not using a smartphone because of some reasons. Mostly rural and economically weaker people are not having the privilege to use Internet-connected mobile phones. They are still unreachable.

5. Editing skills required - To create online courses or a video you require video editing skills. If we are not camera friendly then we hesitate to make videos. It stops us to impact digital society.

6. Some equipment required - Some of us are camera friendly and willing to create online courses but not having enough digital tools as a camera stand, lighting, space, microphone, and a good mobile phone. So many of us are not able to create online courses.

7. Lacking teamwork - If hundreds of participants respond to questions and answers then it becomes difficult to check all of them. We fail to do proper follow-up also. It requires a big team also.

8. Lack of upgradation - We need to constantly upgrade ourselves and our methods of teaching and learning otherwise we will be outdated. Most of us still find it difficult to adjust with new digital gadgets.



9. Chances to be addicted - If anyone spends a lot of time in social media then there are chances to be addicted. Extreme use of digital education can cause social media addiction also.

10. Limited & focus - Many people create online courses on various topics and fail to gain the trust of the audience. It would be better if we focus on any specific micro niche. We should select a very specific area or topic and create online courses around the same topic.

Conclusion

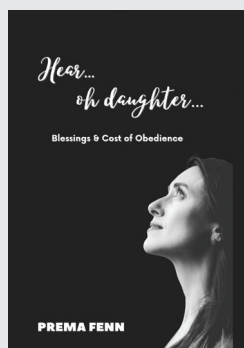
Our God is creative so why not we...? We should be creative enough to communicate His words through our life and digital media also. Digital media tools can make our education better, enhanced, and engaging, but we should remember that there are some challenges also. We should use digital media wisely for His holistic mission. Let us upgrade ourselves first.

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John Tirkey, serving among college students with UESI in Jharkhand, lives with his wife Priscilla, a School Teacher. They are active in social media - Life HTA

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Digital Media: “Right to Privacy”

Concerns about privacy have grown in recent years as a result of an apparent impending loss of privacy. Every new device that makes the world a more networked place creates new opportunities for loss of privacy. Information technology has dominated recent business examples with privacy ambiguities. Cloud computing and information storage place vast amounts of personal data in a location where, even if data collection and storage are privacy-protected, the data can be processed and linked to be very revealing. Personal information is collected and revealed via social media.

Online health records are a convenience for health care workers and a treasure trove for medical re-

searchers, but their economic value makes them an appealing business resource for either targeting customers for product marketing or denying service to potentially high risk clients. Personal robots (once the stuff of science fiction films) hold the promise of extending health care services to underserved communities like the remote or the elderly, but they also collect vast amounts of personal behavior data. Companies market products designed to collect information from target individuals who may be unaware of it, such as parents, employers, young adults.

One generation of technology creates a method to protect confidential information, while the next generation of technology discovers

a method to identify its source. As science and technology advance, the anonymization cycle continues indefinitely. Surveillance of all kinds is becoming easier, less expensive, and more pervasive; personal information is collected in nontransparent ways through remote data gathering. Big data collected robotically can be used to extract private information with monetary value. Because social media spreads information quickly, private information becomes irreversibly public.

Cameras in public places and chips in a wide range of products can track almost any movement. Without permission, and sometimes even without knowledge, information can be easily reused. The lines between public and private life are becoming increasingly blurred; carrying smartphones from place to place makes it difficult to separate one from the other. Often, the collection of information enabled by technology comes before the development of technology to protect that information.

Transparency is key; it should be clear to the person whose information is being collected which information is collected and what will be done with that information.

Data can be useful or anonymous, but not both at the same time. Even

when data is “anonymized,” some outside data can be combined with it to reveal its source, thereby “deanonymizing” it. In fact, the term “anonymized” is misleading; such data is merely confidential and can be discovered. The only way to truly protect data is to never reveal it in the first place. In this case, opting in to data sharing is preferable to opting out. Personal data storage is preferred over cloud storage, which is inherently insecure.

We cannot completely avoid the intrusion of big data and big government into our lives, given the rapid increase in the number of cameras, satellites, smart phones, and the internet. Certain actions, such as only using cash and not using UPI on your mobile phone, will reduce the amount of data collected about you, but such options are becoming less and less effective. If you want to get away from it, you’ll have to go off the grid and become a hermit, or do what Tom Cruise did and get yourself some new eyes.

The problem with going off the grid is that it is motivated by fear rather than faith. This is a biblical non-starter because God repeatedly commands us not to be afraid.

Some Christians respond by saying, “I have nothing to hide, so who cares?” “Do you want to have no fear

of authority?" says Romans 13:3. Do the right thing, and you will be rewarded."

This passage illustrates after all, if the first response is motivated by fear, this is the Bible's prescription for overcoming that fear. That doesn't tell us anything about the so-called "right to privacy."

So, where does this right to privacy originate? It began in the garden when God created clothing for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:21). Noah confirmed it when he cursed his son Ham for looking at his nakedness and discussing it with his brothers (Genesis 9). In other words, we not only have a right to privacy, but also an obligation to protect it.

Admittedly, privacy is a difficult topic to define. Modesty requires you to conceal your good deeds rather than proclaiming them on the corner (Matthew 6). Modesty also requires you to cover your body rather than flaunt it (The Bible).

The question of whether the concept of private domain should be extended from one's home to one's electronic data storage devices is currently being debated. But who is entitled to enter these electronic domains and see what private information is there?

You no longer have control over something once it is made public. This is especially true of internet information.

In the Bible, privacy is interpreted as a deeply held value, a right that is difficult to ensure.

Bible does not take any invasion of privacy, whether intentional or unintentional, lightly. The Bible instructs us to avoid invading another's privacy, understanding that everyone expects his or her privacy to be respected.

Thus, the Bible takes a two-pronged approach to privacy: it is understood to be fragile and easily violated, but it is also recognised as a valuable right. (Proverbs 25:9-10)

For example, Mordecai, while simply sitting "at the king's gate," becomes aware of a plot against King Xerxes by Bigthan and Teresh (Esther 2:21). He uses this information which he happened upon by chance to blow the whistle on the conspirators. Their plot's privacy was fragile, and an inadvertent invasion of their privacy led to their executions (Esther 2:23). These biblical stories all involve situations in which information thought to be private was inadvertently made public, with disastrous consequences.

The moral lesson that runs through these biblical scenes is that the individual deserves to be protected from public intrusion into the personal domain. In contrast to this expectation, every individual and organization has an obligation to respect the privacy of others.

Even before laws are enacted to protect individuals' privacy, everyone from a passerby on a public street to a corporate executive to a government official should respect their right to privacy. One failure to uphold the ethical obligation to protect another's privacy rights, no matter how minor, could have irreversible consequences and invade the affected individual's personal domain.

Conclusion:

Nonetheless, privacy is not absolute in the biblical mind; it is understood that God is omniscient. Attempts to hide from God are futile, as recorded in the Bible. Because all of us stand before an omniscient God, the Bible does not recognise a state of absolute privacy. The demand for community life is a balance between the openness of the family and the impersonality of society. In such an environment, one is aware that proper behavior in public is required, as the public is the domain of communal eyes. In private, however, the biblical approach recognises only God's ever-vigilant eyes.



Othniel is from Mumbai, working at Colgate as a Data Engineer, he has been involved in EU since college and was part of ICEU committee. He enjoys cycling, outdoor adventures, music, designing, and coding and through it, he is passionate to explore creative ways of evangelism.

Themes for Campus Link

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Is a Steady Stream of Social Media Diet Good for us?

“You are what you eat from your head down to your feet”.

Cal Newport, in his seminal book *Deep Work*, cites the writing of Winifred Gallagher to show that “our brains construct our worldview based on what we pay attention to... Who you are, what you think, feel, and do, what you love – is the sum of what you focus on.”

For Christians, this is nothing new of course. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes, *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”* (Gal 6:7-8)

What do we become by feeding ourselves a steady dose of algorithm-curated social media content? What do we reap when we constantly sow content from social media? The old argument in favour of social media was that it gave us more agency and autonomy over what we consumed as opposed to traditional media, which had gatekeepers of content.

Given where we are, we must ask: is this true?

Shelly Banjo and Sarah Frier wrote an [article](#) back in March in which they showed that TikTok actively chooses which content goes viral.

“Company executives help determine which videos go viral, which

clips appear on the pages of personalized recommendations, and which trends spill out from the app to flood the rest of the world,” they write.

The journey from seeing “recommended content” on social media a few years back to TikTok or Instagram Reels today where users don’t even actively select what content to consume may be indicative of the increasing role that Algorithms are playing in our lives.

Is this increasing role positive or negative? Below are a couple of angles to consider.

Social Media and Outrage

because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. (James 1:20)

Science Advances recently published the findings of a study that monitored the social media experiences of various people.

Their conclusion? Social media tends to make people increasingly outraged over time.

Though their data set was largely American-based, it might not be too much of a stretch to generalize their findings to an Indian context too. What is surprising is not that negative content draws more engagement on social media. As Brady, one

of the researchers says, “There’s a lot of data now that suggest that negative content does tend to draw in more engagement on the average than positive content.” What has now been confirmed is that the way social media platforms are built helps amplify outrage. To put it more bluntly, social media platforms positively favour outrage.

Social Media and Self-Image

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)

On March 21, 2021, Jesselyn Cook published an article on HuffPost which spoke about the Facetune epidemic. She details how young people across the USA are facing the never-ending pressure of having to reach the unrealistic beauty standards that Instagram influencers actively promote. It’s damaging to one’s mental health, resulting in “body dysmorphic disorders,” where individuals obsess over minor or imagined defects in their appearance. Cook writes, “The extraordinary lengths that an untold number of young women are going in a desperate effort to look flawless on the platform are indicative of a mental health crisis – one fueled in no small part by Facetune and other apps like it.”

What is the Solution?

Governments around the world are trying to answer these same questions and regulate online platforms. Although I fear a lot of these regulations are aimed at suppressing dissent, we do need some kind of regulation (although I'm not sure what kind). When cars were first invented I assume there weren't too many codified traffic rules. However, as more and more people started using them, we had to codify such rules for the safety of all. I assume a similar set of rules needs to exist for social media.

Beyond what the governments do, as disciples of Jesus, what solution do we have?

In my earliest EU Bible studies, one of the ideas that were constantly emphasised was how Paul in his epistles very rarely gives a *don't* command without also giving a *do* command. In the text from Galatians quoted above, Paul writes "*whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*" (Gal 6:8b).

But how do we sow to please the Spirit? We know that we gain God's

favour, not by our works, but by the grace of God. So what do we do then?

We sow to please the Spirit by placing ourselves in the channels of God's grace. And the channels most readily available to us are the Word of God, prayer and fellowship. Or as David Matthis, in *Habits of Grace*, puts it: God's voice, His ear, and His body.

Let's go back to the quote we started from.

You are what you eat from your head down to your feet.

When we "feed ourselves" on Christ (through listening to His voice, having His ear in prayer, and partaking of His body in fellowship), we become Christ-like.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. (2 Cor 3:18 ESV)

Do we behold the glory of the Lord much more than we behold the content of social media?



Jeyapaul Caleb is a middle school teacher from Bangalore, India, who writes on culture and education through the lens of the Christian faith.



Food for Thought

As said in the book of James;

Do not fail to do what you
know is right,
as this is considered sin by
God.

Do not practice partiality,
but love your neighbour as
yourself.

Do not have jealousy or self-
ish ambitions,
but remain gentle and be open
to reason.

Do not be boastful,
but be thankful for all that
you have.

Do not grumble against each
other,
but be compassionate and
merciful.

Do not be proud,
but submit yourself to the
Lord.

Do not just hold on to faith,
but show faith along with
works.

Do not be just hearers of
God's Word,
but be doers of it.

Steadfast faith in every trial
of life
Will help us win the crown of
life.



Anitha John Wesley is a graduate working as a Biostatistician. She currently resides in East Tambaram with her husband John Wesley and daughters Abigail Johanna and Annshel Jochebed.



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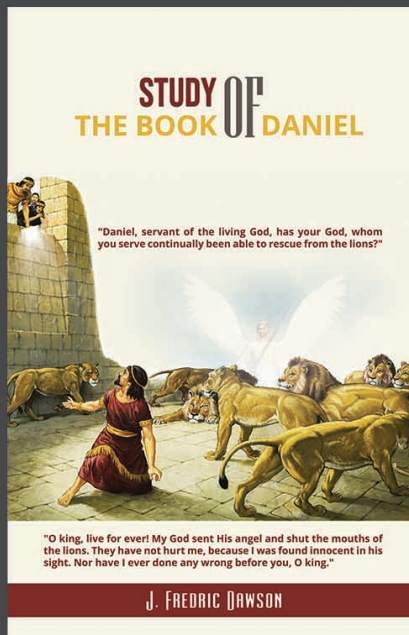
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THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

It is quite challenging and at the same time very interesting. Daniel like Ezekiel was a Jewish captive in Babylon. He was of a royal or princely descent. Because he was handsome, without any physical defects, showing aptitude for any learning, well-informed, quick to understand and well qualified to serve in king's palaces, he was selected to be trained for three years and thereafter entered the king's services. In the polluted atmosphere of the Babylonian and Mede/Persian kingdoms, Daniel lived a life of singular piety.

He followed the Laws of Moses strictly without defiling himself with the royal food and praying to God regularly. He was endowed with wisdom by God to interpret dreams and visions. He excelled in his work and the king was very pleased with his abilities and elevated him to high administrative position in his kingdom. His long life extended from King Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus. He was the contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joshua, the high priest of restoration, Ezra and Zerubabel. He is a role model for any believer in Christ to follow, particularly believers who are working in high positions in government service in our country.

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