

# Symptoms

of Social Media Addiction



In using social media networks, how often is too often for one to be considered addicted? The symptoms can vary from mild to severe. Some skip meals; others forget meals outright till they faint. Then we have people who can't even go to sleep without checking their profile "one more time". Basically, there are three major telltale signs of social media addiction.

## Overuse

Firstly, there is overuse – this is evidenced by an increasing appetite for worldly things and activities in the Christian's life. There will be more fellowship with the world than with God's Word; more time will be spent on Twitter and Facebook than on God's Book, namely the Holy Scriptures. Spiritual things gradually get neglected and in no time, ungodliness takes over his life.

## Misuse

Secondly, there is misuse – we obviously misuse social media if we play along with their game of vanity, profanity and obscenity. There is also another kind of subtle "misuse". Let us be honest. Do you enjoy taking pictures of your meals more than actually taking your meals? Would you rather record them in your phone's storage system than "input" them in your body system? Many precious moments are ruined because we would rather spend time uploading them than taking stock of and enjoying those very moments. Incidentally, how many of us really take the trouble to dig out and view those uploads ourselves? In the end, all our efforts would just be in vain!

Before you post a status update or a photo, it is good to check yourself and question

your motive: are you just trying to show off something or engaging in some kind of self-glorifying exercise and going on an ego trip? Ask yourself: is this the umpteenth time you have posted a picture of yourself lately? Must you post all those various "angles" of your face on your profile? In not a few instances, many allow themselves to expose so much skin and appear in immodest attire. That is not something to be taken lightly or brushed off casually – it is tantamount to "indecent exposure"! Didn't the Bible warn us to "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22)? The Christian's honour and testimony will certainly be brought into disrepute by such offensive images and misuse of social media.

## Attention Deficiency

Yet another symptom of social media abuse is what they call "attention deficit disorder". There is a lack of sustained attention; attention spans of social media "addicts" are woefully and worryingly short. According to studies at Microsoft Corporation, there have been findings that the average attention span of a human being has dropped from 12 seconds in year 2000 to 8 seconds in 2013, apparently the result of wide usage of and high dependence on digital media. (Shockingly, the goldfish has a better average – an attention span of 9 seconds!) It is thus not surprising to read reports that Facebook users are said to garner significantly lower GPAs (grade-point averages) in academic performance than their non-Facebook classmates. To take the matter further, could this be also one reason why we have people in the pews who have great difficulty sitting through a Sunday sermon? Do all these symptoms describe you and me?

## Do Not Rationalise Away Symptoms

Some may say, “So what if I am obsessed with social media networks? Anyway, there is not one Bible verse that explicitly tells us to keep away from these!” This so-called controversial issue arises because most people see nothing wrong with spending hours upon hours scrolling chunks of tweets and profiles and news-feed. But they conveniently forget that all sexual sins, as well as sins of covetousness, the sin of pride, the sin of ungodly friendships – and more – are lurking around those web pages that they have been staring at all along. They fail to realise that they are making themselves very vulnerable and exposing themselves to their souls’ enemy’s “line of fire”, which can effectively weaken their spiritual defence. In unguarded moments, everything that is of the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – will be in plain view on these social media sites for them to see, read and consume (and ultimately, be consumed by).

Really, often the difference between spiritual victory and defeat comes down to

just one single “mouse-click” or “screen-touch”. Why subject ourselves to such undue, intense temptation and undesirable influence that inevitably come with obsessive and compulsive social media usage, if we can help it? A strong, flourishing spiritual life or a thwarted, defeated Christian existence may well hinge very much on this vital step (made even in the quietude and privacy of our room)!

Christians, beware! Be aware of the symptoms of social media addiction; if you see any of these exhibited in fellow Christians, “ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Above all, if you yourself are struggling with any of these symptoms, know that “now it is high time to awake out of sleep ... The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; ... not in chambering and wantonness ... But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:11-14). May we be diligent to escape “the corruption that is in the world (of social media) through lust” (2 Peter 1:4b)!

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