



Anglican Church in North America

A Christian Code of Ethics for Using Social Media

Five Questions to Ask Before I Press Enter

Archbishop Foley Beach

Most of us have done it!! We have posted something on the Internet when we had thought “incorrectly” that we had heard all the facts. Or we have written something slamming a brother or sister in Christ without talking to them in person first. Or we have written something when we were in the flesh and not in the Holy Spirit which caused heartache and pain to some innocent victim of our written words. Or we have spoken prophetically only later to have wished we had shared the comments in person.

The following is a simple code of ethics (5 Questions) for the follower of Jesus to consider before one clicks the “enter” button. It is intended for the follower of Jesus to remember that even in cyber-space we are witnesses (either for good or for bad) for Jesus Christ modeling a life which is supposed to emulate him.

1. IS IT THE TRUTH? Or is it gossip, slander, or unverified hearsay? Our responsibility is to speak truth (the truth), yet speak it in love (Ephesians 4:15). Why is it my responsibility to speak this truth, or to be judge and jury? What gives me the right to write this or post this?

2. Have I TALKED to THE PERSON BEFORE I TALK about THE PERSON? It is easy to speak out of our own anger and emotional needs without going to the person first. We have no right as Jesus’ followers to say anything about another person unless it is flowing from God’s love within us, and he has given us a process to do this – Matthew 18:15-20.

3. WILL IT BENEFIT ALL CONCERNED? This is what love does. Speaking truth to another can bring benefit and repentance, but slander, hatred, and meanness bring destruction, hurt, and divisiveness in the Body. The Scriptures exhort us to avoid these kinds of things. Colossians 4:6 – *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt;* Ephesians 4:31 – *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

4. DO MY WORDS REFLECT WELL ON JESUS CHRIST? As followers of his, this is what our mission is about – sharing Jesus Christ so that others may worship Him, too. Can people see Jesus in my comments, pictures, and online activity? Do they see the fruit of the Holy Spirit being manifest in my words? 1 Corinthians 5:14 – *It is the love of Christ which compels us.* Am I reflecting the aroma of Christ?

5. WILL I HAVE TO CONFESS WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN AS A SIN? If so, then why write it or post it? Flee the temptation to sin.

Note: The Rotary International Four-Way Test served as a model for these questions.

THE FIVE QUESTIONS

1. Is it the truth?
2. Have I talked *to* the person before I talked *about* the person?
3. Will it benefit all concerned?
4. Do my words reflect well on Jesus Christ?
5. Will have to confess what I have written as a sin?