

# IN THE MARGINS: Truth telling in a digital wilderness

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*Editor*

Today, let's dive into a topic that's increasingly relevant in our digital age: discernment. With the rise of social media, it's easier than ever to share information with just a click. But as Christians, we have a responsibility to exercise wisdom and discernment, especially when it comes to the things we post and share online. In full disclosure mode: there have been some posts concerning the Olympics that are blatantly false ... and I got suckered. There was a photo of Israeli swimmers forming the words "bring them home" while in the water. Seems that the photo was real, but it didn't happen at the Olympics. There are plenty of other examples I've seen floating about. As believers, especially, we don't need to be found guilty of spreading falsehoods, intentionally or not.

## **The Temptation to Share**

We've all been there. You're scrolling through your social media feed and come across a post that resonates with your beliefs. Maybe it's a political statement, a news article, or a quote that aligns perfectly with your values. The urge to hit the "share" button is strong. But before we do, let's pause and consider a few important questions:

### **1. Is It True?**

It's crucial to verify the accuracy of what we're sharing. In an era of misinformation, it's easy to fall into the trap of spreading false information. Proverbs 12:22 reminds us, "The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy." As bearers of Christ's light, we should be committed to sharing the

truth, even if it means holding back on a post that seems perfect for our narrative.

## 2. **Is It Kind?**

Ephesians 4:29 advises, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” Before sharing, consider if the information will build others up or tear them down. Our words have power, and we should use them to encourage and uplift, not to sow discord or harm.

## 3. **Is It Necessary?**

Just because something is true doesn't mean it needs to be shared. Philippians 4:8 gives us a good guideline: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Our focus should be on sharing content that enriches and edifies.

## **The Danger of Gossip**

Spreading false information is not just a harmless mistake—it's a form of gossip. The Bible is clear about the dangers of gossip. Proverbs 16:28 states, “A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.” When we share unverified or misleading information, we contribute to a culture of mistrust and division. As Christians, we are called to be peacemakers, not troublemakers.

## **Developing Critical Thinking Skills**

To navigate the sea of information on social media, we need to develop critical thinking skills. Here are a few practical tips:

- *Check the Source:* Before sharing, verify the

credibility of the source. Is it a reputable news outlet or a random blog? Look for signs of bias and consider the author's intentions.

- *Cross-Reference*: Don't rely on a single source for information. Cross-reference with other reputable sources to ensure accuracy.
- *Fact-Check*: Utilize fact-checking websites to verify claims. Websites like Snopes (be a little wary of this one) and FactCheck.org can help you discern truth from falsehood.
- *Reflect on Bias*: Acknowledge your own biases and how they might influence your perception. Are you more likely to believe and share information that aligns with your views, even if it's not fully accurate?

## **Exercising Wisdom**

James 1:5 tells us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." Wisdom is a gift from God, and we should actively seek it in all aspects of our lives, including our online interactions. Pray for discernment and wisdom to navigate social media responsibly.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, let's strive to be Christians who show discernment in our online presence. By verifying information, considering its impact, and exercising critical thinking, we can contribute to a more truthful and edifying online community. Remember, our goal is to reflect Christ in all we do, including what we share on social media. Let's be known for our integrity, kindness, and wisdom, shining a light in the digital world.

Stay blessed, and see you next week!