Christ & culture—choice time

Security

The internet and social media—potentially larger forces of cultural change than any in history. Even if we try to stop them shaping us, they'll go on shaping everything around us. Business, education, science, politics, news, entertainment—all of these live in the atmosphere of the internet revolution. But let's clarify. There is in fact a more powerful change-maker in history—the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Spirit. "I am going to be lifted up from the earth. When I am, I will bring all people to myself." John 12:32 (NIRV). Let's live in the atmosphere of Jesus! He's our source of security in dangerously insecure times.

Truth

Social media spreads lies as easily as truth—and it's hard to tell the difference. Some lies spring from malice. Other falsehoods come from prejudice, laziness, or fantasy. Even supposedly reputable news sources can hardly be trusted. We should know this by now. But how easily we pass on reports even in church circles, with no effort to screen for truth. It's a massive problem that delights the dark side. Then there's Jesus. His declaration: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." No lies can change this reality! In our culture, let's pass on the life-changing truth of Jesus, now more than ever.

Respect

To respect someone means to speak and act with regard for that person's feelings, wishes, or rights. This is rare today. If you want to see the opposite—disrespect—peruse any kind of media for an hour, or listen to any casual conversation. Here's a tough question: Do you respect leaders and other people you don't like, and with whom you disagree? *Love your enemies and pray for those who misuse you,* said Jesus. For Jesus' sake, let's come back to personal respect in our culture! It will astonish others. It will honour our Lord. And it will influence our world toward a better way.

Privacy

"If I had cause, I could sit at my desk and find out more about you in 15 minutes than you could imagine." These words came from a detective friend of mine. I've heard similar warnings from people in business and marketing, whose only cause is commercial. But here's a higher perspective. Jesus tells us to let our light shine with goodness. James tells us to live lives of free-flowing holiness, aware of judgement. Peter tells us to witness to the world by living right and doing good. Yes, loss of privacy can be a threat. But let's not be paralysed by this reality. In a world laid flat by evil, let's stand tall and unashamed for Christ.

Focus

A disturbing feature of social media is narcissism. Excessive focus on ourselves. Grandiose views of self. Craving for admiration. Trends in our Facebook posts can give it away. Selfies all over the place. Photos of our accomplishments, possessions, vacations, and so on. No wonder others looking at this stuff—especially the lonely, the displaced, the unattractive, and the impoverished—can become depressed. Let's have a heart—the heart of Jesus. "Blessed are the poor in spirit ... blessed are the sad ... blessed are the humble ... blessed are the pure in heart." We can share good things—but with admiration for God, never for ourselves.

Love

For all its dangers, the internet can be harnessed for extending God's love. We can discover and respond to genuine needs. We can connect with worthwhile ministries and agencies. We can wish people happy birthdays and God's blessings. We can post encouraging scriptures. We can schedule tithes and offerings to our local church. We can praise God for blessings. We can share truth and display respect. "Hate what is evil. Hold on to what is good. Love one another deeply. Honor others more than yourselves." Romans 12:9–10 (NIRV). Sounds like a made-to-order platform for the way God wants us to use social media.