



DEATH BY SOCIAL MEDIA:: *The Instagram Effect*

"There are things that people say that hurt my feelings or whatever, especially with social media right now. It can be the most amazing thing, and it can also be the most negative and detrimental thing."

--Zendaya

BYU just opened Pandora's Box with the results of a ten-year study on the effects of social media, especially on teenage girls.

Girls who used social media for at least two or three hours per day at the beginning of the study—when they were about 13 years old—and then greatly increased their use over time, were at a higher clinical risk for suicide as emerging adults.

BYU's findings support a growing concern about the deadly effects of social media on our children and grandchildren.

I'll be back in a minute to talk about DEATH BY SOCIAL MEDIA, and what the Bible has to say about the danger IT poses for us all, no matter what age we are.

Social Media and Teen Suicide

As teens' obsession with social media has grown, so has the suicide rate. Suicide is now the number two cause of death among Gen Z's and Millennials, those who are age 10-34—our children and grandkids.

The longest and most exhaustive study on social media use and suicide was conducted by BYU from 2009 to 2019. BYU's ten-year study

tracked the media use patterns and mental health of 500 American teens as part of the Flourishing Families Project.

They discovered an interesting phenomenon: social media use had little effect on boys' suicidal risk. For girls it was a different matter. Why are girls so much more vulnerable? BYU professor, Sarah Coyne, the lead author of the study, said, "Research shows that girls and women in general are very relationally attuned and sensitive to interpersonal stressors, and social media is all about relationships."

Professor Coyne continued, "At age thirteen, girls are just starting to be ready to handle the darker underbelly of social media such as FOMO (fear of missing out), constant comparisons, and cyberbullying. A 13-year-old is not developmentally ready for two to three hours of social media a day." She suggests that a wise parent will not allow a young teen to be on social media for more than twenty minutes a day.

But the blockbuster takeaway from the BYU study is the correlation between social media and suicide. This is particularly striking when we realize that the suicide rate among girls (especially older teens) has doubled in the past decade.

We hear a lot about school shootings and the opioid crises, but not many people are talking about teen death by social media. However, we want to go beyond suicide and talk about the many other ways that social media kills—not just our young, but people of every age.

We argue that social media poses a great many dangers, especially for Christians. Like fire, social media can be a useful tool. But, like fire, it can also get out of control and destroy lives.

Let's talk about its dangers, and how we can teach our children and grandchildren to use social media responsibly. And how we older folks can do the same. Though social media never appears in the Bible, the principles for how we deal with it do.

1. Social Media as a Predator.

[I Peter 5:8] Satan has no greater weapon than social media.

Guarding our Children [Proverbs 24:11; I Timothy 5:8; Proverbs 29:15]
Here are several dangers inherent in social media:

1) The Dopamine Effect

2) Inappropriate Content

3) Risky Oversharing

4) Health Risks

5) Cyberbullying

6) Fake Reality [John 14:6; John 8:32, 44; John 10:10]

- **Competing & Comparing** [2 Timothy 3:13]
- **Fake Relationships Replace Real Community** [Matthew 28:20; Proverbs 18:24; Proverbs 17:17; Hebrews 10:25]
- **Oversexualization Replacing Modest**
- **Sleep Deprivation**
- **A Great Time Waster** [Ephesians 5:16]
- **Decreasing Empathy** [Psalm 17:19]
- **Intellectual Laziness** [I Timothy 2:15; I Thessalonians 5:21]

7) A Simple, but Effective Solution [Philippians 4:5; Proverbs 25:28]

2. A Few Rules for Adult Social Media Use

[Taken from the Christian Coalition and modified by Legacy Imperative]

- 1) **We won't instigate Quarreling** [Titus 3:1&2]

- 2) **We won't be impulsive** [Galatians 5:22-23; James 1:19-21]

- 3) **We won't be Disrespectful** [2 Timothy 2:23-25]

- 4) **We won't gossip or slander** [Proverbs 20:19; 1Timothy 4:7]

- 5) **We will not seek attention** [Ephesians 4:29]

3. In Conclusion