A COUPLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PEEVES

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One of the things that I find fascinating about social media is the way in which people often act in a completely different way to how they would in real "offline" life. There are a couple of things in particular which are increasingly common and which I find rather frustrating.

Spreading Facebook Hoaxes

There have always been people who are happy to spread unfounded and possibly malicious rumours without worrying about their veracity. However email and more latterly Facebook have raised this sad tendency to a whole new level. What is worse, normally sensible and sane people get involved in spreading rumours, something they would be unlikely to do if they weren't in front of a computer screen.

There are all sorts of different hoaxes; many of them feeding the feeling that Christians are being persecuted in the UK and the US. Others slander individuals or commercial companies; often for no apparent reason.

The problem with these hoaxes is not simply that they are a waste of effort and electrons, but the more rubbish that is spread on the Internet, the less likely we are to believe things that actually are true and which are worthy of our attention. When people spread false rumours about Marks and Spencers, we are less likely to believe the true criticisms of NestlÃ©.

It is easy to check whether or not the rumours that circulate on Facebook are true. You can either visit snopes.com and type some of the details in the search box or you can run your own Google search like this one.



"Aren't I Wonderful" Tweets

I don't think I've heard anyone above the age of six or seven say something along the lines of "*my friend thinks I'm really clever and that I did a really good thing*". However, on twitter this is apparently perfectly normal behaviour. Perfectly normal and well balanced people will 'retweet' compliments that people have paid them. Person X makes sure that we can all see that person Y thinks that X is the best thing since sliced bread. Â Am I the only one who finds this strange - especially from Christian leaders?

This is a complex area and we need to recognise that. The etiquette of Twitter is in its infancy and there must be a place where it is possible to draw people's attention to how others have commented on your work. However, there is a line that shouldn't be crossed - even if it is a bit fuzzy - and a lot of people spend a significant proportion of their Twitter lives across that line.

I will admit that I have probably been guilty of both of these at some point in the past - though I try very hard to avoid both temptations.

On a related note; this is an excellent overview of how Christians should interact with technology.