

We Live in the *Information* Age, Unfortunately in the *Misinformation* Part

What an incredible time in which to live! The amount of information and computing power available at your fingertips through your cell phone or hand-held device dwarfs what was utilized to land men on the moon back in 1969. We can “Google” virtually anything and have hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of pieces of information instantly available. What used to take a trip to a University or major city library, and then hours of searching within it, is now accessible within seconds or even milliseconds from just about anywhere we happen to be. Even for someone my age- who began life in the pre-personal computer era of corded “party-line” phones (if you don’t know what that means, ask someone with gray hair or false teeth, or both!), but spent our entire adult life with computers and technology, it truly boggles the mind!

But (and there always seems to be one, doesn’t it?), there are also definite *downsides* to this readily available plethora of information...

For one thing, it is not all true. In fact, A LOT of it is either misleading or downright false. The ease with which information can be made available or transferred also means that it is much easier to “put out” untested or unproven data, or even masquerade opinion as fact. I’m not suggesting that books and libraries are necessarily better- certainly books have been published containing falsehoods, but it was much harder for half-truths, pseudo-science, and other forms of “bad” data to reach and be expanded by the masses in the pre-information age.

Additionally, not only is much of the “information” actually “misinformation,” it is deliberately so. While men have always been guilty of being way too much like the devil, of whom Jesus said that he “*does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him*” (John 8:44), it seems that more of us have become much more like him in these regards recently. Some folks will deliberately put out false information just to see how many people they can mislead. It is like some sort of game to them, and winning certainly comes at someone else’s expense!

The realm of religion and spirituality is certainly not exempt from these problems of information vs. misinformation. And like the domains of science, academia, and even social media, we too have those among our ranks who will not only mislead others, but some that will do so not from ignorance but intentional malice.

Jesus said on one occasion, “*You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures...*” Matthew 22:29. We are currently awash with religious “misinformation” that stems from *not knowing/understanding the Scriptures*. The ability to “self-publish” makes it easier to proclaim and promote God’s Word, but it also means that the *strait and narrow way* of Truth may be camouflaged or overgrown with the *thorns* and *thistles* of false teaching, cf. Matthew 7:13-23. Indeed, Truth and teaching that promotes it is readily available, now perhaps more than ever in history. But it is also quite possible that *false teaching* and its *promoters* are at all-time high. Our times may well be the fulfillment of the predictions regarding *apostasy* Paul had in mind in 1Timothy 4:1-3 and 2Timothy 3:1-6 (note especially “*holding a form of godliness, although they have denied its power*” and “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”)

And worse yet, the impetus to learn more or do better is not even present. Many churchgoers are well content to have the Bible be but a small garnish to a feast of self-indulgent services aimed at entertaining and validating attendees rather have it be the main course of spiritual education and worship that we might “*learn what is pleasing to the Lord,*” Ephesians 5:10. Thus, the Scriptures are sprinkled in a little here and little

there merely to add the *flavor* and appearance of spirituality to the pageantry of paganism and pluralism that now passes for “worship.” Such “*lack of knowledge,*” uncorrected, will surely destroy us as it previously has God’s people (cf. Hosea 4:6). It has already rendered many completely clueless as to how to “*distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and the one who does not serve Him*” as it did 400 years before Christ, Malachi 3:18.

“Yes,” we live in the information age- and many are the benefits and opportunities of it. But also multiplied are the *pits* and *ditches* into which *the blind lead the blind*, Matthew 15:14. It doesn’t have to be this way- especially for you. “*So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth,*” Ephesians 4:17-24. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)