



Stewardship Beyond the Screen

Disciples must choose their ground for making real differences, focusing on building rather than constant online denunciation.

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FAITH

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Social media has taught Christians a dangerous half-truth: if you are not using your platform to publicly denounce evil, you are complicit in evil.

I understand that instinct. But in many ways the demand for denunciation does more harm than good.

Sometimes disciples must speak, fight, draw boundaries, protect victims, and use lawful power against corruption. And in some cases, it may even be appropriate to do this on social media.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has boundaries, beliefs, and practices. Members must adhere to them in order to remain in full fellowship. For example, when Alma established the Church, he received those who [repented and removed](#) those who would not.

But notice who did the removing.

The Lord gives pruning shears to gardeners, not spectators. The internet is not a bishop's office. A pile-on is not a membership council. And public humiliation is not church discipline. The loudest person in the room is rarely the person with stewardship.

We see this sometimes when Latter-day Saints confuse the Church's public communications with the Church itself. Imagine the Church is a house. There is certainly a door, represented by baptismal interview questions. And those inside the house can be escorted out. But digital communications is the porch. Its role is to be inviting and welcoming. That should not be the entire function of the house, but that is the function of the porch.

The porch doesn't reproduce the candor of the bishop's office. But demanding the entire gospel in every Instagram post is like expecting to find your bed in the hotel lobby.

And in the ministry of Christ, the function of the porch is clear: to welcome everyone. Yes, He also called people to repentance, and yes, not everyone was fit to be counted among His disciples. But first, everyone was invited.

So how should we use our voices in social media spaces when we feel like boundaries of faithfulness are being broken?

The scriptures present two different paths. I discussed this in [some detail in a 2022 essay](#).

Christ taught the [parable of the wheat and tares](#), teaching that we don't need to pluck out the tares from the wheat. Rather, we should let them grow together until a final

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reckoning. This aligns with Paul's later instructions suggesting that the Lord's servants should not be quarrelsome, but [kind to everyone](#). And the faithful in Lehi's vision did not engage with those in the great and spacious building, but "[heeded them not](#)."

But in another parable, Christ taught that His servants are blessed for [remaining watchful at night](#) to stop a potential thief. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ also told His followers to watch for [wolves in sheep's clothing](#). Paul similarly taught that members of the Church should "mark" those who use "[smooth talk](#)" to create division. And the [Anti-Nephi-Lehies were praised as "more wise" for expelling Korihor from Jershon](#).

The distinction appears to be whether the individual is merely present or attempting to influence others. The tares do not directly harm the growth of the wheat when they mingle together in the field. But the thief does harm the home. And the distinction for Paul appears to be whether the individual is harming the body of Christ or not.

The question, then, is not whether we should fight or be complicit. The better question is: What action is faithful in a given circumstance?

Captain Moroni defended with armies, and Helaman was "[no less serviceable](#)" through preaching. Focusing our attention on building Zion, rather than fighting its enemies, is its own kind of resistance.

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If time and resources were unlimited, fighting every injustice and wrongdoing we come across might have merit. But they're not. And often, the more fruitful work is disengaging from online controversy and focusing on building our families and our wards.

This calculus can become complicated for people who are themselves building platforms and seeking audience engagement and buy-in. In that space, "[stirring up](#)" people is the bread and butter of algorithm bait.

In the Book of Mormon, Satan is forever stirring people up—stirring them up to anger, fear, pride, and resentment. Prophets, on the other hand, spent much less time telling the faithful to panic about enemies and boundaries.

In our social media spaces, we can oppose evil and still become useful to it. We can drive feelings of grievance, division, fear, and anger. Confident disciples can be fierce without being frantic. We can choose our ground where we can make a real difference in the world. We can understand our role and our sphere of influence. And we can refuse to let our enemies dictate the disposition of our spirits.

Roles are important here. The gospel commands mercy and justice, but not always from the same person. When I am insulted, my role is to turn the other cheek, and Christ's is to provide justice. But when I'm responsible for someone's safety, my role may require more direct and immediate intervention. Parents, bishops, congregants, social media influencers, apostles, and Church communications specialists each play different roles in the kingdom of God's larger mission. When we demand that communications specialists act like apostles, or when social media influencers take it upon themselves to act like bishops, we are ultimately making it more difficult for the work of God to move forward.

Paul teaches a similar principle to the Corinthians in his extended metaphor comparing the church to a body. He says that if [eyes were trying to be ears](#) the body wouldn't function. And in his follow-up epistle he explains that we should remain, "[within the limits of the sphere](#) which God appointed us."

In addition to our called roles within the Church, we can choose spheres of influence where our work can do the most good. All the social media quips I made arguing for a temple in my local area accomplished little. Instead, I did far more good by showing up at projects my city councilor put on, introducing myself, and building a friendship with her. Part of the problem with social media is that it makes us all drive-by commentators. If there are issues that genuinely concern you, file a case, build a relationship, petition the government, or build an institution. In other words, put real time, investment, and sweat equity into making the change you want. Sneering at strangers across cartoon avatars costs us nothing, but (or perhaps because) it also changes nothing.

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Evil, for all its swagger, is parasitic. It creates nothing. It steals, corrupts, and consumes. The Gadianton robbers survived only while there were [productive Nephites to steal from](#). Once good Nephites disappeared, so did the robbers.

Goodness works differently. It generates. It feeds, heals, teaches, builds, shelters, ministers, and multiplies. Its most important work is quiet. But it produces the kind of durable realities that evil simply cannot manufacture.

That doesn't mean evil is bound to disappear any time soon. In fact, we know it will disappear only in the end times. And in the meantime, it crushes people. Protection, law, boundaries, and discipline are necessary.

But to come back to our initial metaphor, pruning should be done by a gardener. A wise gardener understands the importance of pruning, but also doesn't overreact and harm the overall integrity of the plant. Most gardening isn't pruning, after all; it's watering, feeding, strengthening, and waiting.

Building the Church is the same.

About the author



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