

Social Media: Opening and Closing the Gate

Social media has given us the great advantage of connecting with people we would otherwise never be able to. Geographical limits are no longer an issue. Communities are no longer built around proximity but around “friendship.”

This gateway of interacting with others has its advantages but also its share of challenges.

Few people understand protocol, yet it is one of the most powerful relational principles that can impact your life. Protocol is what allows access to you. No one has an inherent right to your life.

When you open the gate and allow someone into your life, you are inviting his or her influence, his or her possible request or demand, and perhaps his or her instruction. Every person you allow into your life will have an affect on it, but not every relationship will be a positive one.

It is important to establish a standard of protocol for your personal community. The information you share is being broadcast throughout the community, so it is important that you are very careful what you share. It is also important that you monitor your community for those who qualify to stay in your community.

Access is first a reward, then a continual test. Remember, not everyone has a right to be in your life. If you determine someone no longer warrants access, close the gate.

Access authorizes a person to assess your true value. Access is a two-way street. While you should carefully monitor what you allow into your life, remember that others will be doing the same with the access they have granted to you.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Eph. 4:29)

Access is a gift, not a right. You must monitor the line of respect and familiarity. If a person crosses that line, you must either push back or eliminate the gift of access.

I recently had someone boldly rebuke something that I had posted. My statement was not just an opinion but also a scriptural principle. This person's exclamation points and abrasive words were incredibly out of line. (His sloppy misspellings didn't help his case either.) After attempting to reason with him, I realized he was not looking for wisdom but for a fight. I simply unfriended him. No more access. Gate closed. Problem solved.

The restoration of access must follow protocol. If a person offends you, it is important that you honor the system of forgiveness; however, most people are flippant when extending forgiveness. They simply say, “Well, I must forgive.” Forgiveness should also follow a process of protocol.

A former employee who had stolen from me called me out of the blue, apparently thinking a trivial phone call would gain my forgiveness of his trespass. When I answered the phone, he said, “Neil, I am in the hotel lobby, and I have a few things I need to say.”

He was expecting me to drop my schedule and grant him immediate access. That wasn't going to happen.

I replied, “No, you do not have access to me. You need to practice protocol. Write me a formal letter expressing your request and I will read and reply in kind.”

When this gentleman wrote the letter, I was able to reply with a complete release of his debt to me. Few people understand this level of protocol, but it is vital to operating in true

forgiveness.

So, as you enlarge your community, realize that access is a gate that must be opened and closed. For a biblical example of allowing and restricting access, study John 10, where Jesus said, "I am the gate."

*For the original article, visit . Fivestarman was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. Kennedy has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Kennedy has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.*