

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

As the people of France struggle to come to terms with the violence that recently rocked their nation and killed more than 125 people, much of the world has used social media to express their sympathy and show their support. From peace symbols containing images of the Eiffel Tower to vacation photos taken in Paris to inspiring quotes about light overcoming darkness, people have reached out in many ways to share their grief, sympathy, and hope with people they will never meet. One of the most widely used tools for this message has been the Facebook temporary profile picture, which overlays a French flag onto users’ photos. Hardly anyone is questioning the intentions of the millions of Facebook users who have shown their support through the temporary profile picture. But many *are* questioning the attention from mainstream media—and from Facebook itself.

“Dear Facebook,” a user in Pakistan posted, “I’d appreciate your effort if you created [each nation’s] flag when unarmed civilians are killed anywhere in the world. When the people of Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, Nigeria, Kashmir are killed, you stay shut.” Eston Nyakiay, a Peace and Hope Ambassador in Africa asked: “What did western media magnates do when Boko Haram kidnapped over 200 school girls in Nigeria? More than 250,000 people have been killed in Syria in less than four years. What have they done about it? What have they said or done about Libya?”

Another tool that Facebook provided in response to the Paris attacks was Safety Check, which allowed users in Paris to let their loved ones know they were OK. Within 24 hours, 4.1 million people marked themselves as safe, and 360 million people received notifications that their “friends” were accounted for. Safety Check initially debuted in 2011 when Tokyo, Japan was hit by a tsunami and suffered a nuclear disaster. Since then, it has been used in response to earthquakes in Afghanistan, Chile, and Nepal—as well as tropical storms and typhoons in the South Pacific and the Philippines. But not until Paris has the system been used for a non-natural disaster. But that’s about to change.

“Many people have rightfully asked why we turned on Safety Check for Paris but not for bombings in Beirut and other places,” wrote Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on his personal Facebook page. “Our policy was to only activate Safety Check for natural disasters. We just changed this and now plan to activate Safety Check for more human disasters going forward as well. . . . We care about all people equally, and we will work hard to help people suffering in as many of these situations as we can.”

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

What do you think about Facebook’s response to this tragedy?

What are some other ways that you’ve seen people show their support and concern for Paris—and victims of terror around the world?

How can you support and encourage hurting people both next to you and those you will never meet?

This discussion reminds us that the same goal can be accomplished in many ways! Paul’s goal was to present the gospel. He used different methods to reach different types of audiences. Let’s take a look at how Paul tailored his delivery of the gospel to his audience.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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