



What you know can't hurt you

By Ken Satterfield

"People believe almost anything they see in print."

– E.B. White, *Charlotte's Web*

Sometimes it is hard to dismiss facts that come from so-called "common knowledge." Technology allows us to pass along these facts literally around the world. Quickly forwarding an e-mail is the equivalent of speaking before you think.



Who believes this stuff? As P.T Barnum was famous for saying, "There's a sucker born every minute." (Except that he didn't say it; it was actually a banker named David Hannum. Oops.)

Here are some different forms misinformation can take:

Helpful pal. These types of messages encourage you to pas on and "somebody" (Old Navy, Bill Gates, Mars) will give you something (gift certificates, cash, M&Ms). Tracking programs may exist someday, but not now — not even if it is supposed to heal a sick child.

Caring friend. An e-mailed prayer request for a sick or missing child may not be accurate. Some aren't true; many are out of date. Look for facts such as a date, name and way to check on their status.

Alarmed Christian. Atheists are not trying to get the FCC to ban religious broadcasting. In its different incarnations since it originated in the 1970s the message/petition has invoked the names of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, James Dobson and many television preachers. If you ever see petition RM-2493, just discard it!

Concerned citizen. Many of these messages involve something



What you know can't hurt you

By Ken Satterfield

"People believe almost anything they see in print." – E.B. White, *Charlotte's Web*

Sometimes it is hard to dismiss facts that come from so-called "common knowledge." Technology allows us to pass along these facts literally around the world. Quickly forwarding an e-mail is the equivalent of speaking before you think.



Who believes this stuff? As P.T Barnum was famous for saying, "There's a sucker born every minute." (Except that he didn't say it; it was actually a banker named David Hannum. Oops.)

Here are some different forms misinformation can take:

Helpful pal. These types of messages encourage you to pas on and "somebody" (Old Navy, Bill Gates, Mars) will give you something (gift certificates, cash, M&Ms). Tracking programs may exist someday, but not now — not even if it is supposed to heal a sick child.

Caring friend. An e-mailed prayer request for a sick or missing child may not be accurate. Some aren't true; many are out of date. Look for facts such as a date, name and way to check on their status.

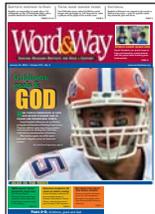
Alarmed Christian. Atheists are not trying to get the FCC to ban religious broadcasting. In its different incarnations since it originated in the 1970s the message/petition has invoked the names of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, James Dobson and many television preachers. If you ever see petition RM-2493, just discard it!

Concerned citizen. Many of these messages involve something

false: HIV needles affixed to gas pump handles, cell phone numbers being released to telemarketers or flyers put on cars as a carjacking ploy.

Others are true but out of date (“Osama captured” virus) or are downright unlikely even if they have a small bit of truth (“scammers are using #90 to bill long-distance calls to your phone”).

Outraged consumer. Many times, these messages involve outrageous claims made on talks shows (Liz Claiborne or Tommy Hilfiger making racist statements) or practices (Target being against veterans, a Swiffer product harmful to dogs). To pass along a slanderous e-mail without carefully fact-checking is shameful.



Partisan politician. Like the ‘outraged consumer,’ just as shameful.

Avoid being part of the problem. Use a rumor-checking site like Snopes.com; search by key phrase. Let senders know their e-mail is incorrect, including your information source, and encourage them to send a correction. Ask if it really worth passing along; if so, take the time to remove other e-mail addresses. Use blind carbon copies (BCC) to keep others’ e-mail addresses from being used by spammers.

While we should be cautious about opening suspicious e-mail. In the meantime, we can be a better friend when we avoid passing along messages that frighten, frustrate or mislead others.

Invest in your faith with a *Word&Way* subscription. 1 year - 26 issues

Word&Way keeps you informed! Since 1896 we have been providing local and international news, features and faith resources to all Missouri Baptists.

Start a new subscription or give a gift subscription for just \$17.50.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Daytime Phone: _____
E-mail: _____



3236 Emerald Lane, Suite 400
Jefferson City, MO 65109-3700
573.635.5939 or subscribe@wordandway.org

- I want to subscribe for a friend.
Contact me by ___ phone ___ e-mail for their name and address.
- I'd like information about advertising options to reach your audience.

Please return the response form and place it in the offering plate.

false: HIV needles affixed to gas pump handles, cell phone numbers being released to telemarketers or flyers put on cars as a carjacking ploy.

Others are true but out of date (“Osama captured” virus) or are downright unlikely even if they have a small bit of truth (“scammers are using #90 to bill long-distance calls to your phone”).

Outraged consumer. Many times, these messages involve outrageous claims made on talks shows (Liz Claiborne or Tommy Hilfiger making racist statements) or practices (Target being against veterans, a Swiffer product harmful to dogs). To pass along a slanderous e-mail without carefully fact-checking is shameful.



Partisan politician. Like the ‘outraged consumer,’ just as shameful.

Avoid being part of the problem. Use a rumor-checking site like Snopes.com; search by key phrase. Let senders know their e-mail is incorrect, including your information source, and encourage them to send a correction. Ask if it really worth passing along; if so, take the time to remove other e-mail addresses. Use blind carbon copies (BCC) to keep others’ e-mail addresses from being used by spammers.

While we should be cautious about opening suspicious e-mail. In the meantime, we can be a better friend when we avoid passing along messages that frighten, frustrate or mislead others.

Invest in your faith with a *Word&Way* subscription. 1 year - 26 issues

Word&Way keeps you informed! Since 1896 we have been providing local and international news, features and faith resources to all Missouri Baptists.

Start a new subscription or give a gift subscription for just \$17.50.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Daytime Phone: _____
E-mail: _____



3236 Emerald Lane, Suite 400
Jefferson City, MO 65109-3700
573.635.5939 or subscribe@wordandway.org

- I want to subscribe for a friend.
Contact me by ___ phone ___ e-mail for their name and address.
- I'd like information about advertising options to reach your audience.

Please return the response form and place it in the offering plate.