

Social Networking:



A Blessing or a Curse?

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Looking for ... our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:13-14

The Christian life is not just a little bit of “receiving Jesus as my Savior,” and then going on to live my own life the way I want. It is being delivered from—separated from—all iniquity and from “*this present evil world*” and the spirit of the age of this present evil world. Glory to God!

I believe in the doctrine of separation; but we had better get it straight. We must have separation “unto God” first, or we will get all confused in trying to work out our being separated from the world. If we do it in man’s wisdom, our separation will come out weird. Then those around us will say, “Those people are weird, and what they are doing in the name of Christ does not make any sense.” And that is sad, but this happens sometimes.

But I want to hasten to say that in the day we live in, when we are separated unto God—in a society that is rejecting God—we are weird in their eyes! And we are indeed peculiar in that sense of the word. The world says, “You people look like you came from another century.” Well, praise God! We DO belong to another kingdom! And we have another king, and His name is Jesus! And we live by His law, and we love His law, and His commandments are not grievous. Rather, they are joyous, and a blessing, because God has hid-

den in those commandments, “... *to do thee good.*” (De. 8:16) Oh, what a joy to be a child of God!

Let’s consider, first of all, the following words, which speak to me as a minister:

Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. (Ez. 33:1-7)

“For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” (He. 13:17)

I want to be, as it were, a father in this article. Pull up a chair, and let’s just have a little “fireside chat.” Hopefully we can gain some wisdom from the Word of God, and look at our present day and age and make some applications, so that we may be delivered from the snare of the devil.

Today we live in a world where there are many things clamoring for our attention, in a society where there is a lot of “noise.” Many things cry for our attention, and the advertisements are getting bolder. The “noise” level is rising, demanding our attention, trying to move us away from the simplicity of the Gospel. The song says it well,

*My soul be on thy guard,
Ten thousand foes arise,
The hosts of sin are pressing hard,
To draw thee from the skies.*

Perhaps you are saying, “OK, it says ‘the hosts of sin.’” Well then, let me speak plainly: “The hosts of *entertainment* are pressing hard.” Or, “the hosts of *pleasure*.” Or, it could be summed up by saying, “the hosts of *other things*.” Today, we could also say that the number has increased from when the hymn-writer penned the words. We could easily say, “My soul be on thy guard, a hundred million foes arise ...”

There are literally millions of websites and multitudes of social networks, all of them clamoring for our attention. What I see as the greatest danger for the child of God is the call of these things for the control of our mind, thoughts, and emotions—in short, our heart. They are striving to gain the upper hand of our meditations.

I am jealous over you, brethren, with a godly jealousy. “*I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*” Now, there may not be a lot of evil in some of the things I will be addressing, although I truly

believe that there is an almost inherent evil in certain cases. And the bottom line is, anything is very evil that draws us away from a sincere, wholehearted devotion to Christ. The devil is very subtle. He will not come to throw a bunch of things in our face and say, “I want you to forget God, and I want you to lose your fervor for the Lord Jesus.”

We would respond, “No way!!”

But he is more astute than that, and holds forth to us something that can seem to be a comfort, joy, or blessing. We look at it and say, “Oh wow!” We are enamored and amused and curious about all this new technology.

I want to warn us and exhort us. I have had the privilege of hearing some testimonies of people who have “been there, done that,” but who are now leaving those things behind and are conforming their life to the example of Christ. It would do us well to sit up and take notice, and not remain ignorant and naive and say, “Wow ... all these new things! I can connect with everybody, everywhere. I can have all kinds of interaction and relationships!”



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Well, some people I know who have gotten saved have said, “This thing has got to go. My Facebook page, my MySpace page—I now belong to Jesus!” So much so, that they felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit when they tried to log back on. They felt within themselves, “If I am going to be a sold-out servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have to lighten my load. I must lay aside the things that beset me and hinder me in my walk with Jesus.”

2 Timothy 3 starts off with, “*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves ...*” A lot of social networking and blogging is focused on whom? Me! I! The way it works is that you set up *your* personal profile, who *I* am, what *my* personal hobbies are, what *my* interests are, what music *I* listen too, what videos *I* am watching, what activities *I* enjoy. It is essentially all about *me, myself, and I*. “*Men shall be lovers of their own selves*”, just like the Bible says.

In other words, they will be utterly self-centered in the last days. This is exactly opposite and diametrically opposed to the life of a Christian, who is to deny himself and take up the cross and follow Jesus. This whole thing goes straight against a holy life and robs us of what belongs to God. Psalm 1:1 starts off by saying, “*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.*” I am telling you, there is a lot of ungodly counsel in the social networks! Those places are full of people who do not love Jesus, and people who are deceived and who teach another gospel and another Jesus.

On these networks, you can be the “cool dude” and flow with the “in” crowd, and have barrels of fun. Then add, “Oh, by the way, I am a Christian.”

This whole thing is more subtle than if it were straight poison. The best way to kill someone slyly is not to give him a whole cupful of straight poison. You only put about three percent into his juice, hiding it so that he cannot smell it nor taste it. Then when he unsuspectingly drinks of it, the poison does its sinister deed. And so that old serpent the devil is inserting his poison into a lot of things that are presumed to be good.

And sad to say, a lot of mainstream “Christianity” is drinking it. Then we wonder why we are so anemic in our walk with God, and why we do not see more of the glory and power of God in our life.

Perhaps you are saying, “Brother Aaron, this is radical ...” Well, Jesus said, “*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*” Mt. 5:29

Social networking very easily leads us into self-exaltation. No, it doesn’t have to. But it makes it easy. The sly part of the whole thing is that it doesn’t happen immediately and we think we are getting away with it, “doing pretty well.”

Next, we will look at the aspect of scorn. A lot of scornful speech is found in the social networks. Back in Psalm 1:1, we find the following phrase: “*nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*” Shall we purposely hang around scornful speech?

Moving on to another dangerous aspect, we come to addiction. It is so easy for networking to become a habit. Ev-

ery day, I just *have* to log on and see what my friends are doing. They are all posting new things every day, and I *have* to keep mine updated, to keep up with the crowd. So these things become an avenue that Satan uses to rob us of our heartfelt devotion to Christ. Paul said, “*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.*”

Perhaps some of you are saying by now, “Come on now. There is nothing wrong with these things. All things are lawful. You are making a law out of it. There are a lot of good things in the social networks.”

Yes, all things are lawful. But, we will finish that verse: “*all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*” Many people testify that they have been seduced by the power of social networking and the blogosphere. It indeed may be lawful, but ... is it drawing me closer to Jesus?

Jesus said, “*These are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.* (Mk 4:18-19)

I did a little study on “lusts of other things.” This phrase means “the distractions of the age.” What is one of the major distractions of our age? Internet! The World Wide Web. Millions upon millions of websites with oodles of information, and people are sitting at their computers, wasting away their time. Other things are indeed choking the Word of God so that it doesn’t bring forth fruit. How tragic!

Can we not take an honest look at what we are facing in our age? “*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*” (He 12:1) This means, let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance and unnecessary activity. Why? Because we are running a race!

If I can behold the face of Jesus, and be changed from one glory to another, why would I want to sit and gaze into the “face” of a computer? Are we selling ourselves out cheap?

It may seem contradictory to say that I used the Internet to gather some of the information in this article. Yes, the Inter-



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net can be used in a good way. But I tell you, that the spirit behind a lot of the social networking, blogging, and even e-mail and texting is not good.

Consider what Albert Mohler has to say:

Facebook marked its fifth anniversary on February 5, setting a milestone for social networking as a cultural phenomenon. Just five years ago Harvard undergraduate Mark Zuckerberg launched the site and service. Just as Facebook celebrated its fifth anniversary, it passed rival MySpace in registrations.

Together, MySpace and Facebook report over 280,000,000 registered users. Those services, first popular among high school and college students, are now joined by Twitter, a micro-blogging service. Together, these represent nothing less than a major social movement.¹

We as the church of Jesus Christ have to take a look at these “major social movements” and new technologies and use God’s wisdom to discern how these things are going to affect us. How are we going to handle these things? The generation coming on knows nothing of life before texting, e-mail, blogging, and other new phenomenon of the 24/7 social networking. Some people take the stance that we need to set all kinds of checks and balances in place and proceed forward.

But I am not too sure about that approach. The question is, do I really need these things at all? Will it make me a better Christian? Will it make me a truer disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? Shall I try to control the monster, or would it be better to shut him out completely?

“It’s an everlasting source of entertainment,” exclaimed one author. “Everybody is on it. ... It is so easy to just bounce from page to page, photo to photo. It is mindless and distracting.” These words are from an author who takes the position that we need to put some safeguards in to control it. He continues, saying, “It has the potential to drain the vitality out of our relationship with the Lord.”

What should our posture be concerning something that has a strong potential to draw me away from God and fill my mind with other things?

I have to wonder just how many people can we have a meaningful, deep, heart-to-heart, Christian relationship with? I fear people are substituting modern social networking for real relationships. They are indeed, “logged on,” but “spaced out” to their common brother/sister who is sitting right next to them. We were created for real person-to-person relationships; to meet together as brothers and sisters.

¹ <http://www.albertmohler.com/?cat=Blog&cid=3248>



Brethren and sisters! Warning!! I see a serpent!

The Bible says, “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.*” (He 10.25)

Think about it! For thousands of years, the only way to have social interaction was to meet together. We talked with our neighbor over the fence. We knew who they were. We loved our church family. We loved sitting around the living room and sharing family time together ... before everybody had their own text message coming in on their own cell phone, and their own little thing to do and their own networking accounts.

Brethren and sisters! Warning!! I see a serpent! I see a subtle serpent with an evil motive; a motive of stealing my heart away from my Lord and also from my wife and my children and my brothers and sisters in Christ. By what manner? By being connected online with someone off in another state or even country. Danger! Danger!

Yes, in the “old days” we wrote letters to faraway friends. But it was different. You took time to write a letter, then you had to wait for the reply. It was generally a serious thing in which you put some effort.

So just what other pitfalls are involved in social networking?

The number one danger is that it robs God of your heart devotion and love. So some think, “OK, if I can balance this thing properly, it is fine.” I would suggest such a person to go on a “fast” for a month, and take all the time spent on social networks, and invest it in reading the Word of God and reaching out to real people (not their profiles) in face-to-face relationships. See what happens! See if at the end of the month you find yourself saying, “I was blinded!” Or, “I was deceived!”

For another thing, it distracts us from true brotherhood. It is so easy to pose as someone on a network somewhere; somebody different than what they are in real life. It is so easy to post up a profile that does not really represent who you are. Someone from the other side of the world may look at that profile and have no idea that it is not really who you are. And, they can then build a profile that is not real. By viewing each other’s profile, both sides begin living in a fantasy world.

Next, we have to come to terms with the foolishness. “*Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk? Or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.*” (Job 15:2-4) Should a man fill his belly with the “east wind”, that is, empty vanity? Should we partake of the foolish, childish aspects of the social networks, like “Johnny just threw a snowball at Freddy! Would you like to snowball him, too?”

Another pitfall of social networking is that some folks seem to try to fill a void in their life by “connecting” to all kinds of people. The more they connect with others online, the more they “zone out” with the people right next to them. There is less accountability that way.

Next, we need to consider how it draws us into other things, just like we do when reading the news on CNN. First we just read the headlines, then we click on the link to the story, and soon we are thinking all day long on how terrible the world is, instead of meditating on how beautiful my Jesus is and how He can save souls.

How do people get started on these things? Curiosity and peer pressure have a lot to do with this. You know, “every-

body is doing it.” It’s the current “cool” thing to have a cell phone on your belt and a Facebook account.

But consider what one author says: “Facebook is a loaded gun when it comes to temptation.” Flirting, sensual photos ... and you have no control over what others upload. They are “evil communications”, and they “corrupt good manners!” And all so accessible!

Should we just try to tame this monster? Or should we make application to the verse that says, “*make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*” (Ro 13:14) And, “*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.*” (Psalm 101:3)

Another man—who I think claims to be a Christian—said the following: “I have not figured out how to control this thing. I wrestle with it all the time.” Then he continues, “But should we abandon it for all the good that is in it, all the potential?”

That same man probably has a TV in his house, and would likely say, “We control it. We watch good programming, we limit the amount of time we watch it; and, yeah, we are offended at the

commercials—sensual, wicked, and defiling commercials—that pop up, even in the “Christian” programs. But we control it.”

I don’t think that is the correct approach. I don’t think we will like the fruit of that. As fathers, we wrestle with these things every day, trying to keep up with who are my children’s online friends, and what are these friends putting into my children. And dad is “up to here” trying to keep up with several children and all their accounts and “friends”. Is it possible? Then the children start getting ruffled, “Pop, you are acting like a policeman, looking into all our networks and chat rooms!”

But we do not trust the flesh, so we have to say, “I love you son/daughter, but I don’t trust the wicked flesh; neither mine nor yours. And I don’t trust the medium of this age; the spirit of this age is permeating through this whole online atmosphere.”

Yes, it is ensnaring its millions. Isn’t it about time that the church of Jesus Christ awakes? “*Awake to righteousness, and sin not.*” (1 Co 15:34) This whole thing is a design by the master deceiver to fill our minds so full that we have no time to meditate on God. No time to talk face to face with



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each other. So many of this generation now growing up are growing up retarded. Pardon me for being frank, but, they are. They do not know how to hold a meaningful conversation with a person. They do not know how to really bare their heart in a relationship. They wander aimlessly, without a purpose; they are confused, drifting along in neutral ... and log on, to let come what may. TV, Internet, games, and movies by the scores. And not just simple movies; but evil, demonic, witchcraft movies: movies straight out of hell! And the games are sometimes worse than the movies. The current American generation is growing up with these types of things as their prime source of learning.

Well, what will this technology do to us? What will it do to my family and our relationships? I urge you, fathers, please take warning. May we each watch jealously over our relationship with our heavenly Father.

This article is based on a message preached by Bro. Aaron Hurst at Charity Christian Fellowship (Note: it is not an exact transcription). You can receive a free copy of this message on cassette or CD by writing to Charity Gospel Tape Ministry, 400 W. Main St. Ste. 1, Ephrata, PA 17522, or calling 1-800-227-7902. Ask for message #4201. Or it can be downloaded in mp3 format at <http://www.charityministries.org/audio/4201.mp3>