

Social Networking and Sound Doctrine

Introduction:

- A. Based primarily on a lesson: "When Facebook Meets the Good Book" by Zeke Flores, and on my own experiences and study
- B. What is social networking?
 1. Something that has existed since human beings started communicating in the Garden of Eden; it has grown with technology
 2. Social networking began with face to face conversation, progressed to writing, a reliable postal service, telegraph, telephone, email, bulletin board discussions, cell phones, texting, multimedia texting, blogging, MySpace, Pleonast, Facebook, and Twitter
 3. A social network is a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called "nodes", which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige. (Wikipedia)
- C. A few things are certain:
 1. It will continue to grow with the technology
 - a. I started out in 1991 with the local college freenet where surfing the net had to wait three more years for the universal use of hypertext, and pictures were rare, the main browser was Lynx, and everything was plain orange text on a CRT
 2. The rules of courteous behavior will not change (see Netiquette)
 3. Christians must conduct themselves as Christians regardless of the setting they are in
 4. God's will for Christians has not changed with the technology
- D. Social networks are relatively the same
 1. You construct a public profile outlining some info about yourself (hobbies, preferences, tastes, activities, etc.)
 2. You add "friends" with whom you share a connection who can see your posts, pictures, shared links, etc.
 3. You view and interact with their list of "friends" and add them to yours.
 4. There is a constant running "chatter" of posts and updates that range from the silly and trivial to important news about loved ones.
 5. Conversations and discussions follow "threads" which can be informative or wander all over the map
- E. For good or ill, information and influence can travel across the globe in nano seconds and remains there forever
 1. Many members here at TR are part of a restricted TR Facebook group of friends. I get invitations weekly.
 2. With care, it can be a pleasant and effective means of interacting and keeping involved in each other's lives.
- F. But what happens when social networking clashes with sound doctrine?

I. RIGHT REGARDLESS OF THE VENUE

- A. Thoughts: keep them clean – Phil. 4:8; Prov. 4:23
 - 1. Wherever we are, our thoughts are bombarded by sinful influences.
 - 2. Our minds were created to be kept holy by dwelling on holy things
- B. Words: keep them proper – Eph. 4:29-32, 5:4
 - 1. Controlled speech not only indicates a controlled mind, also indicates the influences on that mind.
- C. Eyes: keep them guarded – Matt. 6:22-23; Job 31:1; Psalm 101:3
- D. Activities: keep them Holy – Col. 3:17
 - 1. Not necessarily religious, but set apart from sin. Whatever we do must not be something we would be ashamed to tell the Lord and our grandmother
- E. Friends: keep them godly – 1Cor. 15:33-34
 - 1. Those who are closest to us are those whom we become most like.
 - 2. Your closest friends ought to be those who will help you please God and help you get to heaven.

II. OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED

- A. Evangelism – Matt. 28:18-20; 2Tim. 2:2
 - 1. In Bible times, evangelically-minded people went from door-to-door, house-to-house personally.
 - a. This represents an opportunity to do the same across the country
 - b. Bible correspondence courses, our website; 20 years of emails answering thousands of Bible questions
 - 2. You can: post links to sermons/articles, e-mail friends and invite them to worship/study, post Bible verses as status updates
- B. Encourage – Heb. 3:12-14
 - 1. Discouragement is powerful; some find it easier to post their fears in cyberspace than to tell someone personally.
 - 2. This is a good opportunity to: let others know what's bothering you, read what is troubling other people and respond encouragingly
 - 3. Rom. 12:15
 - 4. It is not limited to a few times each week in the building
- C. Educate – 2Tim. 2:24-26
 - 1. Often what many people and some Christians post indicates they're not thinking clearly, or spiritually minded.
 - 2. We can: Be a real "friend" - Send a private message to help;
 - 3. Send links to articles/sermons that addresses their problem
 - 4. Correct them when they act improperly

III. DANGERS DELINEATED

- A. Wasted Time - Eph. 5:15-17
 - 1. Same can be said of anything - TV, hobbies, sports, etc.
 - 2. An occasional peek into what others are up to can be good; what is bad is when it becomes addiction that robs us of time we should devote to other, more important, things.

3. Ten minutes a day can be a good thing; ten hours a day is a sinful waste of time
 4. Put a man in room with reward, gift, treasure, and bullhorn. Tell him pick 1, leave 3. When it comes to the Internet, he may ignore the reward of a good wife; the gift of children, and treasure of God's word for the bullhorn of telling cyber world how much he hates job, etc..
- B. Wasted Speech – James 3:2, 5-6
1. There are things posted that people would never say to their Christian friends or anyone else face-to-face.
 - a. Topics they would never bring up, reactions they would never voice, emotions they would never show.
 - b. But internet communication lowers inhibitions and people act and write as if no one notices
 2. Torched relationships thru anger expressed, torched reputations, and a tainted gospel.
- C. Wasted Influence – Phil. 2:14-16
1. Cyberspace can be a treasure of information or wasteland of immorality
 - a. You make the difference
 2. If people know you're a Christian, show them that it matters to you by your behavior and conversation, especially online.
- D. Photo Foolishness – 1Tim. 4:12
1. Photo foolishness is when Christians post pics of themselves in places where no Christian ought to be and wearing or doing what no ought to wear or do.
 2. Don't post a picture that you wouldn't bring to services and show the elders before worship begins

Conclusion:

- A. This is not really about social networking; it is about how Christians conduct themselves in every place and time.
 1. This is about keeping ourselves unspotted from the world and making the most of our opportunities.
 2. Who you are on Sunday evening in services ought to be who you are on Sunday night on Facebook.
 3. Rom. 13:12-14