

To my friends in Christ,

This is a big email that has been on my heart for some time to send out to those in Christ concerning the increasingly popular and prolific use of social networking sites. Please take the time to digest it... it will be worth your while.

Can I share with you a few of my thoughts about the use of Facebook?

I hope this doesn't seem too heavy but it is realistic and must be given consideration. This is not directed to anyone specifically but to Christians in general.

Facebook is not evil or wrong, just as a knife or a gun is not evil or wrong... however it does need some careful thought how it is to be used. If used without careful thought, just like a knife or a gun, it has the potential of great damage to us personally, to those we love, and especially to our Christian witness and testimony in the eyes of this world and, more importantly, in the sight of our Creator.

First, there is so much content on Facebook that is simply pagan to the core. You don't have to look very deep to see people boasting in posting pictures of themselves drunk, drinking and getting drunk... and usually while engaged in other sinful activities. The foul language that is on Facebook is also extremely offensive... but we are increasingly de-sensitized to it to the point of thinking that it is harmless and acceptable. It doesn't take much poking around on Facebook to see just how worldly, lascivious, and sensual the content on it is. From boasting and openly showing off drunkenness, and sexual innuendos, and promiscuous poses, and body piercings, and 'body artwork' tattoos... the question we need to ask ourselves is, "What influence and effect does all this have on Christians seeing it and participating in it?" The answer I suppose may depend upon the strength of that Christian but the reality is that seeing much of the godless content and or even mindless and pointless postings has an effect of viewing the sinful actions of others as very, very easy to tolerate/digest... and also can appear very glamorous and almost desirable the more we participate.

Think of it like this: Would you, as a parent, ever tolerate your teenager coming home and boasting of drinking and fornicating (sex outside of marriage) at the top of their lungs in your living room? Then why is such a thing permissible on Facebook? Why are we not brought to absolute disgust when seeing such content? Is the Holy Spirit bringing any form of conviction to you when your eyes see this? Remember, the follower of Christ is called to be very different from how this world acts and what this world says is ok.

<u>Rom 12:2</u>	And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what [is] that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
<u>2 Cr 6:14</u>	Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

Second, Facebook can feed Narcissism. The oldest sin in the Book is pride and self-centredness. Although it's not wrong to show a picture of yourself to family or friends or to tell someone about your day at work.... it does not take a microbiologist to see that Facebook promotes a 'look-at-me' mentality. Users are encouraged to tell everyone what you are doing right now, where you are right now, what inane thought has just gone through your head right now. Seriously, does anybody really care that you're headed to the Hyperdome? Or that you're just about to brush your teeth? Or that your shoelaces are untied? More importantly, what does it say about you if you think other people want to know these itty-bitty details about your daily life? In addition, there are many who have an unhealthy pursuit of gaining more and more 'friends' on Facebook primarily to boast of numbers in order to demonstrate popularity or to feed a self-centred longing of being wanted. This clearly runs against clear advice of Scripture which states that "*a man of too many friends comes to ruin...*" (Prov. 18:24a), with the danger of having of having too online friendships that speak a lot of noise and provide much spiritual confusion but yet not a real friend who is willing to sit with you to give you good, clear, and sound counsel that you will actually hear. We are to seek out that "*...friend who sticks closer than a brother*" (Prov. 18:24b).

<u>Pro 8:13</u>	<i>The fear of the LORD [is] to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.</i>
<u>1 Jo 2:16</u>	<i>For all that [is] in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.</i>

Third, the issue of idolatry. It is not hard to see that many have their lives increasingly wrapped up in being on Facebook. It honestly has become the centre of their lives. In fact, untold numbers of users have what can correctly be called an 'addiction' to Facebook... they are constantly checking it, staying up late to use it, and even missing sleep in order to stay on. The moment a message comes through, they feel obligated that they must see it and reply to it, and feel that they are missing out if they don't check-in constantly. Friends and friendships on Facebook have become more and more important, and soon the real important issues in life... family, marriage, children, home-life, service to God, Scripture reading, faithfulness, activities that honour and bring glory to God, witnessing of the gospel of the Saviour to the lost, and pursuing 'clean hands and a pure heart' (Ps. 24:4)... then tend to become eclipsed. The seeking of God's kingdom and His righteousness first (Mat. 6:33) is placed in second position and Facebook takes the place of importance... despite our statements that would deny that in our self-defence. Seriously, think about this. Haven't I just given the definition of idolatry? If my connection to my friends listed on Facebook and socialising with them on it is the most important part of life, then isn't that taking the place that is only reserved for the Lord? Why not try this little test to reveal how dependant you are: Have you checked Facebook today? Now, have you read God's Word and prayed today and heard what He said to you? Makes you think, doesn't it? An interesting recent statistic regarding Facebook is that the average user spends an average of 6 hours and 35 minutes per month on the network (before jumping to the assumption that this doesn't sound like much, this is only from home computers... not including access from mobile phones, etc). Of those claiming to be Christians, I wonder how much time they devote to reading God's word and prayer? For many, even 6 minutes and 35 seconds a week of prayer time is a struggle let alone the reading of God's holy word.

<u>1Cr 6:12</u>	<i>All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.</i>
<u>1Jo 5:21</u>	<i>Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.</i>
<u>Col 3:1-3</u>	<i>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.</i>

Finally, many are airing their dirty laundry on Facebook for all to see... destroying the testimony of a Christ-changed heart. When our feelings get hurt, when we're angry, or feeling betrayed, or when relationships get fouled up... what is the biblical way to handle this? Scripture teaches us clearly that we must go to the person themselves that we're unhappy with and get it worked out. However, all too many Christians are dumping their anger and unhappiness on Facebook for everyone to see... or there are two people slugging it out on Facebook. Or so-called Christians are using language that is foul, deplorable and unbecoming of those claiming to be Christ's disciples that have been born again. These are those who attend a church on the Sunday to sing the praises of God and then during the rest of the week they allow statements and words that bring dishonour to God Almighty to not only leave their lips, but be plastered on Facebook which is designed so many eyes can see what you have said. How destructive and potentially irreparable is this of your personal Christian testimony? And, more importantly, how damaging is this of the reputation of our Lord and Saviour? Remember that we are "*Christ's ambassadors*" (2 Cor. 5:20)... you represent Him here on earth. Then there is also the aspect of non-Christians writing something on your Facebook wall that is inappropriate or even downright sinful... and it remains there until you delete it (that is, if you even delete it).

<i><u>Mat 18:15</u></i>	<i>"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.</i>
<i><u>Rom 2:24</u></i>	<i>For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.</i>
<i><u>Mat 12:36-37</u></i>	<i>"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."</i>
<i><u>Rom 14:12</u></i>	<i>So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.</i>

To wrap it up....

As you can see, these are not criticisms of Facebook but rather how one uses Facebook (particularly for the born-again Christian)... that is what matters. These issues, problems and abuses could also apply to other sites like MySpace or Twitter. May every Christian that uses Facebook have this knowledge to use it well, wisely, and for good purposes... instead of letting it become a stumbling block. Always ask yourself, "Would I post this up if Jesus Christ was looking over my shoulder?" or "Would I spend this amount of time on Facebook if Christ was physically present in my room?"

Heb 4:13 *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

I know that there are many who will scoff at these thoughts listed above, but for those of you who have read this through to the end... thanks for hearing me out. It has honestly grieved me to see how some of those who are called by Christ's name have been using this social medium in a way that has not brought God any glory whatsoever... and I think you do realise that I am speaking the truth in this matter. Please give this some serious thought and I pray for the Lord to strengthen you always and give you wisdom in all your circumstances for you and your family. *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and **may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**" (1 Thess. 5:23).*

Your brother in Christ,
Johnny.