

# Dangers of Social Networks

By Mark Mayberry

4/3/2011

## Introduction

Through the widespread use of computers and smart-phones, we are able to communicate more easily today than ever before. Many Christians keep in touch with friends and family using Pleonast or Facebook. Others correspond via email, Twitter, IM (instant messaging) or SMS (text messaging). Some prefer to pick up the phone. A few of us still value face-to-face conversations.

In recent years, social networks have exploded in popularity. With more than 500 million active users, Facebook is the most popular social networking site in the world. 50% of active users log on to Facebook in any given day. The average user has 130 friends. Collectively, people spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook.

Social networks have obvious benefits, keeping us in touch with friends, family, and fellow-Christians. Technology can diminish the distance that sometimes separates us. However, we should also be mindful of certain dangers that come from the use of modern social networks.

## Improper Expenditure of Time

Social networks may result in an improper expenditure of time. Surfing the internet in general, and the use of social networks in particular, can become addictive.

Avoiding sloth and slumber, we should consider the ant as an example of industrious and timely activity (Prov. 6:6-11).

*Proverbs 6:6-11 (NASB95) — 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, 8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest. 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest”— 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.*

Solomon exhorts, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl. 9:10).

*Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NASB95) — 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.*

Jesus said, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4).

*John 9:4 (NASB95) — 4 “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.*

Accordingly, let us redeem the time, making the most of opportunities, recognizing that the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-17).

*Ephesians 5:15-17 (NASB95) — 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

## **Improper Expression of Speech**

Social networks may result in improper expressions of speech. Online communication is often crude and vulgar, harmful and hurtful. The impersonal nature of the medium removes inhibitions that would otherwise restrain uncivil speech.

We must not take God’s name in vain, either directly or through the use of acronyms, such as “OMG!” (Exod. 20:7).

*Exodus 20:7 (NASB95) — 7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.*

Sinful men engage in sinful speech (Rom. 3:13-14).

*Romans 3:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 “Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The poison of asps is under their lips”; 14 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”;*

All forms of corrupt communication must be put aside (Col. 3:8-10).

*Colossians 3:8-10 (NASB95) — 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—*

Christian speech must be gracious and appropriate to the needs of the hearers (Col. 4:5-6).

*Colossians 4:5-6 (NASB95) — 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*

## **Improper Exhibition of the Body**

Social networks may result in the improper exhibition of the body. Modesty and proper decorum are lost virtues in today's decadent society. Christians sometimes exercise poor judgment in the pictures they post to their websites, Facebook pages, photo-galleries, etc.

Immodesty is part of a broader problem of sexual immorality, reflecting either naiveté or knowing rebellion (Rom. 13:11-14).

*Romans 13:11-14 (NASB95) — 11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

The deeds of the flesh include sexual immorality [sinful actions], impurity [sinful thoughts], sensuality [sinful indulgence in things that produce lusts] (Gal. 5:19-21).

*Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB95) — 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Let us resolve to not put stumbling-blocks before one another, especially in this area (Rev. 2:14).

*Revelation 2:14 (NASB95) — 14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.*

Let us also recognize the Biblical prohibition against all forms of nakedness, i.e., the improper public exposure of the thighs, buttocks, midriff, and chest/breasts (Rev. 16:15).

*Revelation 16:15 (NASB95) — 15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")*

## **Improper Encouragement of Relationships**

Social networks may result in improper encouragement of relationships.

According to researchers, Facebook, which connects old friends, and allows users to make new ones, is being blamed for an increasing number of broken marriages. Online flirtation tempts

people to cheat on their partners. Additionally, other problems may arise, such as having “friends” who have been disfellowshipped, or are otherwise out of duty.

Affairs may occur when one goes too near the door of another person with whom they have no rights of intimacy (Prov. 5:7-14).

*Proverbs 5:7-14 (NASB95) — 7 Now then, my sons, listen to me And do not depart from the words of my mouth. 8 Keep your way far from her And do not go near the door of her house, 9 Or you will give your vigor to others And your years to the cruel one; 10 And strangers will be filled with your strength And your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien; 11 And you groan at your final end, When your flesh and your body are consumed; 12 And you say, “How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof! 13 “I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to my instructors! 14 “I was almost in utter ruin In the midst of the assembly and congregation.”*

One can be captivated by another in a variety of ways (Prov. 6:24-29).

*Proverbs 6:24-29 (NASB95) — 24 To keep you from the evil woman, From the smooth tongue of the adulteress. 25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, Nor let her capture you with her eyelids. 26 For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life. 27 Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned? 28 Or can a man walk on hot coals And his feet not be scorched? 29 So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.*

We must also recognize the dangers of sinful entanglements (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

*1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NASB95) — 6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Evil companions inevitably corrupt good morals (1 Cor. 15:33-34).

*1 Corinthians 15:33-34 (NASB95) — 33 Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” 34 Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.*

## **Conclusion**

Communication technologies enrich our lives in many ways, making the world smaller, providing opportunities for teaching, keeping us in touch with those whom we love, etc. However, these tools can also become a stumbling-block, involving slothfulness and sinful speech, immodesty and immorality, improper associations and evil entanglements.

Regardless of your age, gender, or position in life, be an example (Titus 2:1–8). Let your light shine (Matt. 5:13–16)!

*Titus 2:1–8 (NASB95) — 1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. 6 Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.*

*Matthew 5:13–16 (NASB95) — 13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. 14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*