

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). Solomon exhorts, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl. 9:10). 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). Accordingly, let us redeem the time, making the most of opportunities, recognizing that the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-17).

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). Sinful men engage in sinful speech (Rom. 3:13-14). All forms of corrupt communication must be put aside (Col. 3:8-10). Christian speech must be gracious and appropriate to the needs of the hearers (Col. 4:5-6).

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

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). One can be captivated by another in a variety of ways (Prov. 6:24-29). We must also recognize the dangers of sinful entanglements (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Evil companions inevitably corrupt good morals (1 Cor. 15:33-34).

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)!