

Internet Social Networking (Facebook & Myspace)

Facebook and Myspace (along with the one or two other social networking websites available on the internet) are a means by which today's younger (and some older) people communicate with each other from their computers. To understand these social networking sites we need first to understand the hunger that today's Generation Y (today aged 9 to 27) have for frequent communication with their friends. Where a Builder (today aged 64+) or Baby Boomer (today aged 45 to 63) would typically place much more emphasis on their job for self worth, for various reasons, Generation Y place a much greater emphasis on their network of friends and being in constant communication with them.

A Generation Y mind is forever moving from one interest to another. Their focus is generally short term and what takes them at the time. Plans are made only for these to be superseded by something that they find more appealing. This often arises when their friends tell them of an alternative via SMS, Facebook or "snail mail" (believe it or not this is email, no-one would dare write a hand written letter today).

Long distance communication is not done today via spoken word, far more is done by written text, more often using the cut down language of today (eg "c u l8r" for "see you later"). Everything is on an instant basis with the ability to coordinate events across cities, regions, states and even internationally involving often large groups. Generation Y saints made their plans for the 2009 Revival Fellowship convention through this means – who's staying with who, who they'll be catching up with, what they will be doing and so on. That said, much of it will change as plans evolve and new ideas come forward through the time of convention. As plans change, SMS and in some instances Facebook through mobile phones will be the means of communication in many instances.

There has been a shift in the past 6 months from Myspace to Facebook and most saints today use Facebook as the preferred means of communication. Facebook is somewhat simpler in presentation and easier to use, where Myspace allows more individuality in design of the person's home page including use of artwork, extended commentary on the person (likes, dislikes, favourite music, movies and the like) and use of a favourite song playing to anyone reading the page.

There are many positive benefits to the use of social networking as our young people grow in the Lord. Some benefits of social networking include:

- Easy means of communication both on an individual and group basis, readily available in every home with a computer connected to the internet. Similarly it is readily available through internet cafes and on internet enabled mobile phones (especially the recently released 3G phones);
- Contact through social networking can make people in smaller or remote fellowships feel much more included in the bigger fellowship at large;
- Providing a forum where responsible young people can encourage one another;
- Providing an ability to plan events and let others know of events and subsequent changes;
- Witnessing to old friends – Facebook in particular has become a medium used by some 30+ year olds to establish contacts with old friends.
- Young worldly friends can be included in communication with a group of saints and be encouraged to get involved. In many cases the tone of saints websites is moderate and therefore provides a less intense introduction;
- Communication can be both public and private; and
- Some, like Facebook, includes a moderator to curb bad language, inappropriate photo's and the like. This no doubt contributes to the saints preferring Facebook over Myspace which doesn't have such regulation.

By way of example, positive use of Facebook includes:

- A saint established contact with an old school friend from years ago and successfully witnessed to them. This resulted in several people being saved;
- A young person taken to hospital was prayed for by a large network of saints throughout the world as the message spread almost instantaneously;
- News of baptisms, healings and the like are quickly spread;
- Good memories of camps are posted for all to see. Comments often support the pictures as others tell of how much they enjoyed it;

Disadvantages of social networking include:

- Time wasting – today's young people can and in many cases do spend hours every day sitting at their computer when time could be used more constructively;
- Much of the communication is mostly trivial in nature, it is more likely to be worldly rather than spiritually based;
- Someone out of fellowship is not out of communication – Facebook and Myspace facilitate communication and support of those out of fellowship, particularly when many young people do not understand nor necessarily support the Scriptural purpose of putting people out of fellowship for a time;
- Offence can easily be caused by inappropriate comments or pictures, posting pictures against someone's will, excluding someone or even cyber bullying;
- Many saints pages look little different from their worldly friends, absent the use of bad language, references to drugs, drinking, night clubbing and the like. Saints and non-saints pages alike are available through friends;
- Many saints have continued contact with worldly friends where this may otherwise be curtailed (after leaving school for example). This can have disastrous consequences as the pull of the world is maintained;
- Ex members can easily keep or establish contact with saints and through such mediums prey on disenchanted members;
- Flirting can continue readily between the opposite sexes while not together.

In many cases the negative effects above can occur through other means. What makes social networking so powerful is its availability, appeal, large numbers of users and the immediacy of communication (both public and private).

Recommendations to aid the successful use (and minimal harm) of social networking:

- Understand the needs of today's young people including instant communication with friends (1 Corinthians 9:20);
- Become familiar with the use of the social networking on the internet. Encourage the following:
 - Good edifying communication (Proverbs 15:4, Ephesians 4:29, 1 Corinthians 10:32);
 - Maintaining a testimony to all (1 Timothy 4:12, Philippians 2:15, Matthew 5:16);
 - Caution against contact with ex members and the draw of the world (2 Timothy 2:15-17, 1 Peter 4:3-4).
- Have a group of responsible and respected peers keeping an eye on communications and encouraged good use of their pages. This doesn't need to be from your own fellowship if circumstances don't permit;

On the following pages are screen prints from Facebook and Myspace. Names have been removed for the privacy of the individuals.

Facebook

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook profile page from 2009. The page layout includes a top navigation bar with 'facebook', 'Home', 'Profile', 'Friends', and 'Inbox'. Below this is a search bar and a 'Write something...' text box with a 'Share' button. The main content area is the 'Wall', which contains several posts with photos and text. On the left side, there are sections for 'Information', 'Mutual Friends', 'Friends', and 'Photos'. On the right side, there are advertisements and a 'Become a Cartoon' section. A red circle highlights the 'Wall' area, and a red oval highlights the 'Friends' list. Callout boxes with lines pointing to specific areas provide the following explanations:

- Publicly posted comments on the "Wall" viewable by all friends**: Points to a comment on a post.
- Place where personal information of the individual is posted**: Points to the 'Info' tab.
- Place where photos can be posted to be viewed by all friends**: Points to the 'Photos' tab.
- Other Facebook users mutually agreed to be "friends"**: Points to the 'Friends' list.
- The "Wall" area. Shown here are public postings by saints (one out of fellowship at the time) viewable by all friends.**: Points to the main content area of the profile.
- Private chat area – one to one private conversations between friends. Multiple conversations can be ongoing at any one time.**: Points to the chat icon in the bottom right corner.

Myspace

Below ad on the next page are the top section of typical 20+ saint's home page on Myspace. Pages vary greatly and it is often difficult to see whether or not the person is a Christian. The first page below makes no reference while the page following is very clear.

<p>Contacting</p> <p> Send Message Forward to Friend Add to Friends Add to Favorites Instant Message Block User Add to Group Rank User </p>	
<p>MySpace URL: www.myspace.com/ <input type="text"/></p>	
<p>Interests</p>	
<p>General</p>	<p>Drawing, Videogames, Comics *cough*-nerd-*cough*, Rock, Motorbikes, Guns, Swords, Convertibles with pop up lights. Basically anything a kid from the 80's was down for...oh yeah ninjas!</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Bit of Metal. No I'm-gonna-thrash-my-head-till-my-eyeballs-start-to-bleed stuff. More so the stuff that's a bit more melodic and has awesome instrumentals like Iron Maiden, Megadeth etc. Bit of 50 Grinspoon RATM The Darkness Does anyone actually care?</p>
<p>Films</p>	<p>Hero, Any Bruce Lee you care to mention, Ghost in the Shell (just cos it's a cartoon it's still a film) Ninja Scroll, The Departed (oo baby) Dunno...I love movies. I like all the 80's and 90's beefcake action hero stuff from Van Damme to Stalone... Also I saw the Scorpion King just cos it had the Rock in it...I stand by my decision.</p>
<p>Television</p>	<p>Sopranos, Deadwood, Seinfeld, Nip Tuck n a few others. No reality TV thanks...I have a life that involves real reality. And enough with the Law and Orders and CSI's already.</p>
<p>Books</p>	<p>Don't read anything other than comics really. I got into some of the SAS books from Andy Mcnab n they were awesome.</p>

About me:
 About me...Well...I'm awesome. That pretty much sums it up. Simple maths really. being alive = Awesome. Oh and I'm really really modest as well which gives me extra points pushing me further up the scale on the awesomoter. And oh yeah i like to draw. Check me out at

Who I'd like to meet:
 God. Jesus. Jerry Seinfeld. Mr.T. Dolph Lundgren. Bruce Lee. David Hasselhoff. David Hasselhoff's car 'K.I.T.T' Mr.T's awesome van from the A-Team. Macgyver.

Friend Space (Top 7)
 has 30 friends.

3/05/2009

View My: [Pics](#) | [Videos](#)

Contacting	
Send Message	Forward to Friend
Add to Friends	Add to Favorites
Instant Message	Block User
Add to Group	Deny User

MySpace URL:
www.myspace.com/

Interests	
General	Family, Friends, Church, paintballing, weights, Brazilian Ju Jitsu, cycling, Kickboxing and just having a good time.
Music	Anything that sounds good

Details	
Status:	Single
Here for:	Dating, Serious Relationships, Friends
Orientation:	Straight
Hometown:	Perth
Body type:	179cm / Athletic
Ethnicity:	White / Caucasian
Religion:	Christian - other
Zodiac Sign:	Taurus
Smoke / Drink:	No / No
Children:	Someday
Education:	High school
Income:	\$60,000 to \$75,000

About me:

I have a professional career, I enjoy extreme sports and really enjoy anything physical. I go to church about 4 times a week, yes 4 times, cause God rocks!! Family is the most important thing to me! (apart from God) I have a younger brother and sister who mean everything to me, my parents are awesome and I love them to death!!! I live my life for the lord because he gave his life for me...

Who I'd like to meet:

The Lord when he returns :c)

Friend Space (Top 4)

has 53 friends.



[View](#)

Friends: [All](#) | [Online](#) | [New](#)

Friends Comments

Displaying 25 of 56 comments ([View All](#) | [Add Comment](#))

	<p>7 May 2009 08:57 AM</p> <p>Hey you =] Happy Birthday! xxx</p>
	<p>28 Apr 2009 12:37 PM</p> <p>hey how you going hows</p>