

# Faith And Folly On Facebook

**Introduction.** Believe it or not, about 13% (900 million) of the world's population is on Facebook. A lot of our congregation is on Facebook. Facebook is a pretty good mirror of the heart, so as with anything else, Facebook can help or hinder your spirituality.

I have three objectives for every person in this room. First, I want all of us to go to heaven. Second, I want all of us to have pure hearts. Third, I want all of us to be good influences. I have fervently prayed that this lesson will be considered carefully by every person in this congregation who is on Facebook.

Facebook is useful because if you want to find out about a fellow brother or sister in Christ, all you have to do is look at their Facebook wall. You can get a good idea of who they are away from worship services. Regardless of how they dress, talk, and act at services, they may have a different life away from the person you think you know. You may be surprised and shocked. Would your Facebook account reveal that you are Christ's friend (John 15:14)?

## I. **Faith**

- A. Brethren are using Facebook as an effective tool to advance the gospel of Christ. I know brothers and sisters in Christ who post daily scripture readings, spiritual songs with comments, and regular Bible study articles and other material.
- B. There are good Bible discussions on Facebook too (Proverbs 27:17).
  - 1. I have seen members of this congregation stand up for the truth in a public way that I know would cause them tremendous amounts of grief.
  - 2. Efforts like this are extremely commendable. There have been so many times when I have been thankful for something like Facebook.
- C. Part of the good element of faith I am seeing on Facebook is brethren who are willing to offer rebuke when it is necessary.
  - 1. There have been lots of young gospel preachers who are drifting from sound doctrine encouraged to return to the old paths by older, sounder men (Jeremiah 6:16).
  - 2. More and more churches are having problems with members who are not godly on Facebook. I am seeing our own members posting inappropriately, and I am definitely hearing about it from other members, and from people in other churches.
  - 3. If you are a person with inappropriate posts, the big question is how will you accept correction?

- a) The wise listen to rebuke that is lovingly offered (Proverbs 9:8; 13:1; 28:23). On the other hand, you most certainly can “unfriend” someone who tries to help, but that is childish and will not help the issue. The only way to help is to change your heart and the content of your Facebook postings.
  - b) Whatever your response, I publicly encourage my faithful brethren to keep it up, exposing wickedness and trying to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28). It is our job to “... save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23).
- D. Before we look at instances of folly, it is worth saying that the great majority of brethren are using Facebook for these purposes. Thankfully, the instances of folly are few.

## II. **Folly**

- A. Sadly, there is also sin and danger on Facebook, and Christians are not immune to its temptations. Pride and arrogance, anger and hate, gossip and backbiting, immodesty and crude language -- all these and more can be observed and participated in on Facebook.
- B. Examples of the folly on Facebook.
  - 1. Facebook presents a false sense of freedom from accountability.
    - a) Instead of carefully choosing words (Proverbs 25:11), Facebook makes it easy to post before you think, and that gets you into trouble. Typing away on a keyboard can lull you into thinking that whatever you write and post is just “keeping it real” and that you are “just being yourself” -- and “that’s always good.”
    - b) However, it is not good if your words and your heart are not acceptable to God (Psalm 19:14). Some thoughts should not be expressed, either vocally or in Facebook postings.
    - c) God will hold you responsible for your Facebook content, just like He will other areas of your life. You will be judged for words and deeds (Matthew 12:35-37; Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
  - 2. Facebook offers an apparent removal of moral restraints.
    - a) Facebook is a tempting “escape” from the morality imposed by the gospel, and it reveals that some Christians are failing to use moral restraint in word and deed, and the result is sin and public disgrace, both for them and for their congregation.
      - (1) Photos of Christians immodestly dressed in swimsuits or clothes that are too short or tight proves a weak profession of godliness and good works (1 Timothy 2:8-10). If you are on Facebook, make sure your photos or the photos in which you are tagged are decent.

- (2) Others write of their interest in sexually suggestive movies, television programs, websites, music with vile lyrics, school dances, and other activities. Some are "fans" of companies, celebrities, slogans, etc., that are inconsistent with godly principles. Delete unrighteous postings and remove "friends" who are not decent. Guard your influence (Philippians 2:15).
  - (3) For those of us who are married, Facebook has become the impetus for many extramarital affairs. People who are reconnecting with old classmates, girlfriends, or boyfriends are encountering increasing temptation to forsake their marriage vows (Proverbs 5:15-20; Malachi 2:14-16).
- b) The Corinthians were reprimanded by Paul for their approval and gloating of sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-8). The contributing comments from other Christians who seem to approve of others' worldly behavior is disturbing. Romans 1:32 says that we should not show approval of sin. Do not let your Facebook account demonstrate your love for the world (1 John 2:15-17). Instead, repent and deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:12).
3. Facebook provides the perfect venue for those without tongue control.
- a) Facebook makes it easy to exercise "loose lips" (or in this case, loose fingers). Facebook (along with other social networking sites and email) contains a lot of thoughtless writing without considering the consequences.
- (1) If you ridicule someone you have become arrogant and unloving (Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 16:5). If you post profanity or crude language and join in off-color joking you have lowered yourself to join the world in its vulgarity (Ephesians 4:29; 5:3-4). If you post unfounded rumors, malicious gossip, and tale bearing, you have left the land of brotherly love and crossed over into the land of bitterness and malice (Ephesians 4:31-32).
  - (2) Unfortunately, all of this means that these sins have already found their way into your thinking, attitudes, language, and conduct. Great forest fires begin with a small spark (James 3:5). So, do not light the match; post the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
- b) Additionally, some of the subjects on Facebook are, frankly, completely crude and/or unnecessary. Who in the world is interested that I just had breakfast or am headed to bed (Proverbs 17:27-28)? I have even seen a Christian post a crude description of using the restroom for hundreds of their friends to see. Brethren, that is vulgar and ridiculous.

- (1) Narcissism is a genuine temptation on Facebook. Narcissism is an extreme selfishness coupled with an excessive need for admiration. Facebook users can easily convince themselves that others are interested in all the details of their lives.
- (2) But Christians should esteem others better than themselves, and encourage humble service (Romans 12:3; Philippians 2:3; James 4:6, 10; 1 Peter 5:5-6). If you are going to spend your time on Facebook, then be a good steward of your time (Ephesians 5:16). Try to enrich and bless others by being a great influence and encouragement.

**Conclusion.** Parents, do you know what your child is posting on Facebook? If not, find out. Do not be naïve, do not make assumptions; get the facts. This knowledge is vital to train your children (Proverbs 22:6). They may be old enough to drive and old enough to vote, but they still need to be raised godly.

Someone once told me that Facebook is the work of the devil, but using Facebook improperly is not the real problem. It is only a sign of a heart problem, and there are several ways to overcome a heart problem. First, do not participate in activities that promote lewdness and lust (Roman 13:13). Second, think on what is pure, lovely, virtuous, and of good report (Philippians 4:7-9). Third, walk in the spirit and not after the flesh (Galatians 5:16-26). Fourth, do not participate in sinful activities that will choke your spirituality (Luke 8:13-15). Fifth, do not use ungodliness to bear fruit unto death (Romans 7:5-6). Sixth, remember that Christians cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

If the heart were not corrupt, Facebook would not be filled with compromising Christians who are conformed to the world (cf. Romans 12:1-2). Get the wickedness out of your heart, and the purity of your Facebook account will follow. God knows every sparrow that falls and the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:28-31). He knows our Facebook faith and folly too.