

Question: Should a Christian use social networking tools (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, blogs, etc.)?

Answer from Got Questions.org: Hundreds of millions of people are running toward social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to participate in the relational components of the Internet. Are these networks the next big mission field or an enormous waste of time? Should a Christian participate in social networking? The answer to these questions should be determined by whether we can honestly ask God to bless and use our actions for His own good purposes. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). If we are willing to let God use our participation for His glory, we have freedom to participate.

Christians who choose to participate in social networking should be aware of the negative aspects of social networking. It should be remembered that not everyone on the internet has pure motives, and we should use safety precautions, utilize the privacy settings, and be selective as to who is accepted as a 'friend' or 'fan.' Parents should regularly interact with their children and be active participants in their child's use of social networking sites. In addition, Christians should be aware of the danger of narcissism (excessive self-love and preoccupation with self) inherent in self-oriented sites. Studies have shown that overuse or wrong motives in social media participation can breed narcissism. When we rely on social media sites primarily to promote ourselves or draw attention to ourselves, it is time to take a step back. It's wise to utilize accountability, encouraging spouse, family members, and Christian brothers and sisters to view our social networking activity and hold us accountable. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens his friend's countenance."

It's also important to understand the impact our status, photo, comments, or blog posts may have in the future. It should be remembered that social networking sites involve publishing to the entire Internet, including family members, current and future employers, college admissions personnel, etc. The ramifications of any statements, both now and in the future, should be considered. It should be assumed that everything written is permanent and viewable by everyone. Furthermore, while maintaining relationships is important and healthy, addiction is not. Limiting the amount of time we devote to these social networking sites is both healthy and wise.

On the other hand, there are definitely positive aspects of social networking. For the Christian, social media sites can be an enormously productive mission field. Reconnecting with old friends and increasing our sphere of influence can lead to evangelistic opportunities unavailable elsewhere. Social media allows us to reenter the daily lives of people we may have lost contact with and open up new avenues for sharing Christ. As such, we can influence the views of others by what we post, bringing encouragement and spiritual guidance to others and using friend's lists or Facebook status updates to pray regularly for friends and their needs. "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Finally, social networking sites can engage spiritual seekers on the Internet, meeting those seekers where they are. Just like face-to-face evangelism, we can establish credibility and authenticity in the seeker's natural and comfortable environment, and then build on that foundation and share the love of Christ with new online friends.