

7th Day Pentecostal Assemblies (Esreso)

2016 End-of Year Camp Meeting

Special Presentation

By

Deacon Dela Benson
(Accra Assembly)

Date: Friday, 30th December, 2016
(During the 'Family Symposium')

The Effect of Social Media on the Youth

Social media has grown tremendously in the last few years. From the year 2006 onwards the growth rate has been exponentially high. Especially WhatsApp, Facebook, Viber, Twitter, Instagram have grown much faster and captured millions of users in just a few years. The way technology is growing, it is obvious that more and more people are going to grasp its benefits. This is stated in the scriptures in Daniel 12:4.

Social media has brought a lot of advantages to the society. From progressed nations to under-developed countries, every nation is utilizing the power of social media to enhance life and use it for the betterment of the people. We as 7th Day Pentecostal Assemblies have not been left out in the usage of Social media tools- We have 2 websites, a Facebook page, a YouTube channel and a WhatsApp group. For us, the usage is for the propagation of the uncut saving true gospel of Yah. We will discuss in general the NEGATIVE use of social media, but first of all

Some of the obvious advantages include:

1. **Connectivity** – The first and main advantage of the social media is connectivity. People from anywhere can connect with anyone, regardless of the location or region. The beauty of social media is that you can connect with anyone to learn and share your thoughts.
2. **Education/ Information and Updates** – Social media has a lot of benefits for the students, teachers and people around the world. It is very easy to be educated from others who are experts and professionals via the social media. You can follow anyone to learn from him/her and enhance your knowledge about any field. Regardless of your location and education background you can educate yourself without paying for it. The volume of information shared and discussed on Social media outweighs that of TV, print media and radio put together.
3. **Help/ NGO Donations** – You can share your issues with the community to get help. Whether it is helping in terms of money or in terms of advice, you can get it from the community you are connected with.
4. **Promotion/ Improves Business Reputation/ Awareness** – Whether you have an offline business or online, you can promote your business to the largest audience. The whole world is open for you, and can promote to them. This makes the businesses profitable and less expensive, because most of the expenses made over a business are for advertising and promotion. This can be decreased by constantly and regularly engaging on the social media to connect with the right audience.
5. **Helps Government and Agencies Fight Crime**- It is also one of the advantages of the social media that it helps Governments and Security Agencies to spy and catch criminals in the fight against crime.
6. **Helps in Building Communities** – Since our world has different religions and beliefs, social media helps in building and participating in the community of one’s own religion and beliefs to discuss and learn about it. Similarly, people of different communities can connect to discuss and share related stuffs.

Now to the main discussion, Social media has some **dangerous disadvantages** to which I would like to bring your attention to.

1. **Cyberbullying** – Most teenagers have become victims of cyberbullying over the past. Since anyone can create a fake account and do anything without being traced, it has become quite easy for anyone to bully on the Internet. Threats, intimidation messages and rumors can be sent to the masses to create discomfort and chaos in the society.

2. **Hacking** – Personal data and privacy can easily be hacked and shared on the Internet-Which can make financial losses and loss to personal life. Similarly, identity theft is another issue that can give financial losses to anyone by hacking their personal accounts. Several personal twitter and Facebook accounts have been hacked in the past and the hacker had posted materials that have affected the individuals’ personal lives. This is one of the dangerous disadvantages of the social media and every user is advised to keep their personal data and accounts safe to avoid such accidents.
3. **Addiction** – The addictive part of the social media is very alarming and can disturb personal lives. The teenagers are the most affected by the addiction of the social media. They get involved very extensively and are eventually cut off from the society. It can also waste individual time that could have been utilized by productive tasks and activities.
 - a. **Reduces command over language use and creative writing skills**

Students mostly use slang words or shortened forms of words on social networking sites. They start relying on the computer spelling check features. This reduces their command over the language and their creative writing skills.
 - b. **Time wastage**

Students, while searching and studying online, get attracted to using social media sites and sometimes they forget why they are using internet. This wastes their time and sometimes students are not able to deliver their work in the specified time frame. House chores are left unattended to due to addiction to WhatsApp and Facebook.
4. **Cyber Fraud and Scams** – Several examples are available where individuals have scammed and committed fraud through the social media.
5. **Security Issues** – Nowadays security agencies have access to people’s personal accounts. This makes their privacy almost compromised. You never know when you are visited by any investigation officer regarding any issue that you mistakenly or unknowingly discussed over the internet.
6. **Reputation** – Social media can easily ruin person’s reputation just by creating a false story and spreading across the social media (as happens on WhatsApp “photoshoped” pictures). Similarly, businesses can also suffer losses due to bad reputation being conveyed over the social media.
7. **Cheating and Relationship Issues** – Most of the people have used the social media platform to propose and marry each other. However, after some time they realize that they were wrong in their decision and part ways. Similarly, couples have cheated on each other by sharing fake feelings and incorrect information.

8. **Health Issues** – The excessive use of social media can also have a negative impact on the health. Since exercise is the key to lose weight, most of the people get lazy because of the excessive use of social networking sites. Sleep quality is also affected as one always wants to catch up with social media happenings. The excessive use of these sites affect the mental as well as physical health. Teens, especially Students, do not take their meals on time or take proper rest. They take excessive amount of stimulants (coffee or tea) to remain active and focused which affects their health negatively. The overuse of these sites on a daily basis has many negative effects on the physical and mental health of students making them lazy and unmotivated to create contact with people in person. Parents should check on their children for a balanced use of the internet. They should be on guard whether they are using it at an appropriate period or not. The peers and teachers should also help students make them aware of the negative effects and explain what they are losing in the real world by sticking to these social networking sites.
9. **Glamorizes Drugs and Alcohol** – One of the disadvantages of the social media is that people start to follow others who are wealthy or drug addicted and share their views and videos on the web. This eventually inspires others to follow the same and get addicted to the drugs and alcohol.

However, on the other hand it has also affected the society in a positive way. Just like anything which can be used for both good and bad, social media have also had both negative and positive influences on people.

Best Practices

When using any social media platform, take responsibility for your own safety and never join a group just because it is trendy or all your friends are doing it. In evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of social networking, it's best to err on the side of caution and protect your privacy. Be careful with what you post and treat others as if you were in a face-to-face situation.

God bless us all and give us good counsel. Shalom and Amen!