

THE MESSENGER



"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

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Web Worship: An Exposé of MySpace.com

by Julie Adams

As parents we are in a constant struggle of concern about the environment in which our children live. Our kids wash their hands with anti-bacterial soap guaranteed to remove 99% of germs. The media warns about the danger of childhood obesity and we take the steps necessary to train our children to make healthier food choices. But there is a fast moving danger that is enticing our teenagers, our young adults and even some older adults. That danger is www.myspace.com.

The website myspace.com has been called the "new burger joint," of our times. It just happens to be bigger and more diverse. It is the newest and fastest growing fad-appeal that is commonly called . . . social networking. This giant among all other social networking sites has over 60 million users with half of those being children. Initially launched in 2003, the site functioned mainly as a forum for musicians and bands. But in the summer of 2005, media mogul, Rupert Murdoch purchased the site for \$580 million.

What seems to be just a "more diverse and contemporary" way of communicating, has become the latest tool of Satan. Once again, he has progressively lured many into thinking that no harm can come to us because we are Christians. What is alarming is the number of Christians who are entertained by MySpace and who fail to see the danger. Let's take a closer look.

PROBLEM No. 1: Sexual Predator's Dream

In a report aired on Dateline in April 2006, police investigators noted that predators "troll the site." To show how easy it is, one investigator became fictitious and entered the MySpace website of three teenage girls who, thinking they were chatting with a teenage boy, were quick to give him personal information about themselves. In this social network, anyone can be anybody. A sexual predator can make up his/her name, age and location and have a fake email address. Most will troll the various sites looking for photos and full names. Then after learning more about the person via the personal profiles, the predator begins to engage in conversation, luring the trust and comfort of their "new friend." Many predators are looking for a person spending hours online and who are in need of attention (which is why they spend hours online). Current statistics show that 1 in 5 profiles are solicited for sexual favors.

PROBLEM No. 2: Get Ready for Pornography

Most parents would be horrified to see what their children are seeing on MySpace. Vulgarity is rampant, suggestive photos, lewd comments and use of alcohol dominates. Some argue that they only talk to their friends and thus limit exposure to such ungodliness. But what they don't understand is that not all people perceive ungodliness as they should. Many Christians have profiles that are clean but have friends who have profiles with suggestive photos and profanity. And even if a profile is "private," there is always a temptation to browse the site and get "tangled in the Web."

PROBLEM No. 3: Time Spent on the Computer

The computer is replacing relationships. Recently I heard of a young mother who decided that she needed to give up the "talk time" on the computer because she was abandoning her responsibilities to her husband and children. She made a good choice. Friends on the computer become the focus of our lives and we spend hours "chatting." As prudish as it may sound, the "Proverbs 31" woman would not have been found sitting around her home mindlessly "chatting" for hours upon hours with friends. She "set about her work vigorously" which meant that her life was productive for God, for others, and for her family (Prov. 31:17).

PROBLEM No. 4: Tolerance Reigns

Upon completing a profile with the MySpace site, there is a questionnaire eliciting personal information. In addition to answering questions about favorite movies and music, occupation and salary, one question stands out: sexual “orientation.” This question wants to know if the user is gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or “straight.”

I have a question about the question: Why are Christians aligning themselves with a media production that caters to people who have no respect for God? We would be outraged if this question was on a job application, credit card application, or school information card. But our world has slowly lured us into thinking that this is just a part of our culture and there is nothing we can do about it. Even sadder is that it just doesn’t bother us anymore.

Perhaps we need to return again to the warnings of Scripture. I John 2:15-17 – do not love the world; Gal 5:22-24 – live by the Spirit; Romans 12:9 – hate evil.

As amazing as it may seem, there are many Christians who frequent MySpace.com daily and often for hours at a time. It is a multi-faceted problem and one of grave concern. And while we live in an age that prides itself in technology, we are losing the sense of shame and anger that should be directed toward this ever-growing media outlet that proudly flaunts its godless nature.

The Sexual Predator’s Dream

We live in a sex-crazed world. At the earliest of ages, little girls are dressing to look much older than they are while more and more arrests are being made of sexual predators. We know they are out there, yet we invite them into our homes via the Internet. I am sure we would be shocked at who is looking at our girls. Private information and pictures are given all too easily, making one an easy prey. What makes you think that the Devil who came into God’s Garden of Eden, would not want to come and find you? Evil people abound and the Internet is one of the easiest tools they have.

Pornography

According to Webster, pornography is defined as “writings, pictures, etc., intended primarily to arouse sexual desire.” Have you noticed that many are not as shocked at pornography as they used to be? Thanks to television, we have been de-sensitized to nudity, vulgarity, lewdness and violence. But we have allowed that de-sensitization to take place. We are making choices and very loud ones at that. The MySpace.com web site is growing at an astronomical rate. Thousands join every day. And many are using the foulest of language, posting pictures that are sexually suggestive, or advocating violence and racism. On October 13th of this year, a San Antonio, Texas assistant high school principal filed a lawsuit against some students and their parents. These students had created a blog on MySpace.com with postings about the principal that were defamatory and libelous. These posting contained obscene comments, pictures and graphics.

Supposedly the staff of MySpace.com is dedicated to removing questionable postings but they don’t. There is nothing stopping anyone from seeing the pornography. And even if your site is “private,” it doesn’t mean that you cannot troll the “space” and view the trash of others. I look at it this way: if your child wanted to get with his/her friends (and you knew them), but decided to gather outside the local adult book/video store, would you let them go? I doubt it.

Time Spent on the Computer

A major complaint among married couples is lack of communication . . . not enough time spent talking and listening to one another. In the past few years it has become obvious where some of the trouble resides: the computer keyboard. We are a culture hiding behind a screen; and spending hours doing it! There is an addiction among us that is robbing marriages of the time needed to cultivate and maintain relationships. It is the computer that is more appealing than our mates. It is the computer that steals us away from our children. Many lose sleep because of endless time on the Internet. And moms, the computer is “hypnotizing” our young people. Make the effort to stop the addiction. Do not abandon your family responsibilities and the care of yourself for the company of a computer. Spend more time in God’s word. Be a servant for someone who is in need. Talk in person, with those you love. Do things together.

Tolerance Reigns

One of the saddest commentaries about our society is the lack of loyalty toward the word of God. We are no longer grieved at foul language. We are numb to the sin of homosexuality, adultery and fornication. We flirt with the world enough to get a taste of it without indulging. I have seen postings on MySpace of those who claim to be Christians and while some are good and limit “friends” to those from church, there are others who have “friends” that delight in “expressing” themselves in an ungodly manner. Why is this okay? Why do “friends” who have no shame in what they say, or the provocative pictures they post, not bother them? What an influence some could be by taking a stand for what is right.

Moms . . . get involved in the life of your child. We live in a society that promotes privacy for children and, yet, we can’t seem to figure out why our kids have so many problems!

Years ago, parents took a more active role in the life of their children. Today, the jungle is bigger and the predators are numerous. Our kids need us more today than ever before. God expects us to care for our own and raise children that will grow to glorify Him (I Cor. 10:31).

Mom to Mom . . . please get involved!