

4 DOES CHRIST PLAY IN 10 BILLION PLACES?

By Aaron Friesen

A young father and pastor weighs in on a debate we all face: Does social networking technology help or hinder the building of authentic Christian community?

5 ONLINE COMMUNITY

By Nate Beard

Imagine sitting in a room discussing the legalization of same sex marriage with some friends who oppose the idea, an atheist friend, and a homosexual friend – and with many others listening in on the conversation. That's exactly what Nate Beard experienced in one online chat.

7 A BABY CHANGES EVERYTHING

By Curt Arne

A church member begins a Bible study that leads a co-worker to the Lord. The co-worker reaches out to a homeless couple. The homeless couple finds a home and a family in the church. It's amazing what happens when people are introduced to a baby born more than 2,000 years ago.

8 MISSIONARY COMPOSITE

Keep this pictorial guide near your *Global Daily Prayer Guide* and other materials sent from International Ministries, so you can visualize those for whom you pray.

Plus Much More!

Facebook: Opportunity or Distraction?



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

I joined Facebook, a social networking Web site, about a year ago. I wanted to provide a way for our youth to contact me outside

of church and a way to post upcoming events. The first week was overwhelming. So many "friends" requests! I spent way more time on it than I wanted just wading through requests and trying to figure out how to use it. As soon as I became familiar with the site enough to think I knew what I was doing, they changed the format. I don't have a lot of patience waiting for pages to download anyway, and with the slow connection we had at that time, I often ended up exiting the site in frustration. I wasn't sure it was worth my trouble. But my kids said it would all calm down after a week, which it did. And we got a faster connection.

Besides connecting with some of our youth, I now get to see videos of my grandson, view photos of my daughter in Oregon, and reconnect with people I haven't seen in ages...some who live only a few blocks from my home. I love the fact that I can connect with people on my time schedule without interrupting theirs.

Last Saturday I was trying to finish an editing project but wanted to respond to a wedding invitation. Thinking I could do that rather quickly and get back to work I logged onto Facebook. Just as I was about to exit the site, a notice popped up that a relative going through a tough time wanted to "chat" with me. (For non-Facebookers: When someone on your "friends list" is logged onto Facebook at the same time you are, they receive a notice that you are online and they can "chat" with you in real time.)

How frustrating! I didn't want to take time to chat. I was on a deadline! But it seemed rude to exit the site without responding. So I greeted my relative, tried to see how he was doing without inviting a long conversation, and let him know I needed to get back to work. I felt guilty though. What if I had seemed more interested? Would that have opened the door to a meaningful conversation? I would give "anything" to share my faith with this young man...or would I? I couldn't even give him a half hour.

Our theme for this issue is "social networking verses face to face contact." Which is more effective? Both have advantages. In social networking I can contact people I could never visit in person due to distance or time restraints. I never have to worry about calling at a bad time. Yet, it certainly doesn't replace meaningful eye contact – or a hug! When I am not pressed for time, I love to check up on friends and family. Yet honestly, when I am rushed it can seem like one more task added to my to-do list.

For me it is an even draw. Technology exponentially multiplies our opportunities to disseminate information. Yet building a relationship, either through social networking or face to face contact, requires sacrifice. There are no shortcuts. You may add hundreds of friends to your Facebook account, but that doesn't necessarily mean you have created a relationship. Relationships require time – time to listen; time to share. They require give and take. And they all require proper boundaries.

Nonetheless, I cannot "go forth and make disciples" without building relationships. Am I willing?



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