



Spread the Gospel via Social Media

By Kurt von Schleicher

Should Christians isolate themselves from unbelievers and potential tools for evangelism or rather lovingly infiltrate and employ them? Should fishers fish uncompromisingly with tools and bait that the fish like—where they gather and are biting.. if you will?

"He (Jesus) said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" —Luke 10:2

"World evangelization in this generation!" —The Urgent Cry of the Student Volunteer Movement

The net—it's for fishing; it's not primarily for decorating and making things look nice ...at least that's what a true angler would tell you. What do you use the net for? What do you use social networks for?

You might not be intoputer-technology and I'm not here to promote or slight any social network or endorse one above another ..or even insult those who opt not to use them. We all know there's been a lot of buzz about social networking lately. Even on the evening news just five minutes ago they were talking about Facebook. And it's been kind of interesting to me to watch what is going on. Recently Google unveiled their *Google Friend Connect* and right on the heels of that *Facebook* announced their version of *Facebook Connect* ..yes, within minutes of each other. (I've been using both a little bit lately).

Yes, and now *Facebook Connect* is competing with *MySpaceID* for world domination in the SN arena ...who's deal is significantly different because it uses open web tools and partners with Facebook's competitor, *Google Friend Connect*. But in the ID platform race unfolding before us it is obvious that, *Facebook Connect* has clearly grabbed the lead. To me, like the different cell phones are merely relational tools not to become enamored with, so are social networks mere tools. *Facebook*, like politics, is definitely not my passion, but the company's growth has been astounding to watch. They lead the way globally with over 220 million members and guess what.. today is Facebook's 5th year birthday. Congratulations founder, Mr. Mark Zuckerberg! Thank you for your work. Please do opt to keep it clean no matter how much money advertisers offer you!

Are you a righteous biz-person trying to shine your light out further? I was reading something interesting in this regard the other day. Computerworld was commending *LinkedIn* as being the

most focused network for business. It's true, they are more than just a place to socialize; they are a viable business tool.

But maybe you're wondering which company was found best for professional use today, *LinkedIn* with its hyper-focused stiff approach, or *Facebook* with its mega-multitude of applications? The results that Computerworld found were interesting, "*There is no absolute winner here; both Facebook and LinkedIn excel in different business scenarios depending upon what you need to do.*"*

Inside Facebook blogger Justin Smith was quoted saying that "Facebook members must be growing by 600,000 or 700,000 users per day." Statistics firms like Nielsen, ComScore, and Compete.com all show us that *Facebook's* U.S. user count will indeed overtake *MySpace* this year.

Here are a few more stats regarding Facebook:

- The average FB user has connected with 120 friends on the site
- More than 15 million users update their statuses at least once each day
- More than 3.5 million users become fans of 'Pages' each day
- There's more than 850 million photos uploaded to this site each month
- More than 24 million pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photos, etc.) are shared each month
- * More than half of Facebook users are outside of colleges
- * The fastest growing demographic is those 25 years old and older
- * 2.6 billion minutes are spent on Facebook each day (worldwide)
- * There are more than 2 million events created in FB each month
- * There are way more than 19 million active user groups existing on the site

It's God who enlarges our ministry vision, but aren't we the ones called upon to enlarge our circle of love to take in all people.. without being pulled down spiritually? Have you been trying to fulfill your ministry by being the chiefest without fishing or being the servant of all (See [Mk. 10:44](#))?

Hey, *Facebook* is just one among many tools, but it ain't goin' away for awhile. My point and purpose here? It's this: Be encouraged, Christian, to prayerfully utilize all the best tools minus sinning.. to build friendships for Christ right! I'm not hugging any one social media per se (and we can't allow anything to get in the way of the basics of devotion to the Lord), but please do use them, or some e-tool for communicating.. to proactively fish for souls as Christ leads you!

Are you really not into using any online tool for viable ministry yet.. or even halfway interested in how they might enhance world evangelism efforts? You've undoubtedly been emailing for years now. Do you remember how American missionaries and agencies after the Great War had missed some key opportunities in the East due to being too slow to adapt?

Christian, are you willing to become a witnessing missionary at school, at work, across the seas, or even across the street? How about while typing on a keyboard or no matter where the Lord leads? Rather than merely "being nice" to gain lots of e-friends, what if the Lord leads you to be bold and tactfully typing out your stance of faith in *Facebook*, or with *Twitter*, or with *Plaxo*, or with *LinkedIn* or in that *MySpace* account you've had so long? Would you obey Him?

God is already committed to working through his Church in world missions and as Christians it's our privilege and responsibility to be a part of His plan in wise and relevant ways! Let's get creative for the Creator! This old dog (me) can learn new tricks ..that aren't wrong!

I believe that we all should have a sense of urgency and compassion without becoming brutal or pushy. I'm convinced we need to use every proper technological means available to us for getting the Message out today! And I don't mean that any of us should ever add to the offense of the cross.. but are you willing to get off your blessed assurance and become innovative? Are you willing to take a new risk; a venture of faith, or to even lose a few friends in an effort to reach unbelievers with the Gospel?

Of course e-fishing online will never replace the need for cross-cultural career missionaries or even for short-term missions efforts. It of course won't replace the need for day-to-day, face-to-face friendship-building, verbal seed sowing, watering or face-to-face reaping either (I mean winning people to Christ). But these days, I don't even know of any lifestyle-missionary here or cross-cultural missionaries out there who is not utilizing some social networking company or blog to assist them in their efforts on the field.

I do feel for irreligious people who actually feel afraid of becoming a "born again" Christian, because they think Christ will immediately lead them overseas to become a Mother Teresa type with say.. smelly lepers or third world street people? Some have run into angry, harsh and self-righteous witnesses too.

Hey listen; no worries! Giving your life to Christ won't make you weird! Selfcontrol is a fruit of the Spirit. Relocating to go live among, and serve the poor (or even lepers) fulltime overseas can be awesome for some Christians—some are called to do this. It's a joy for them. They want to do this and count it an honor. The Bible says, "***for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure***" ([Phil. 2:13](#)). As Christ works in the Christian's heart, we each begin to desire what God is leading us to do. And Christ expects to use all of us Christians in spreading His Gospel on some mission field if you will..even if some live in America all their life.

Go ahead and tell the Lord that you are willing to go anywhere for Him overseas or at home ..or that you're willing to be made willing. But yes, every believer is called of God to be a witness by life, deed, attitude, and with words ..starting where they're currently located geographically. It's got to start here and now! But it's amazing to me how much money churches have spent to send certain missionaries overseas who are not even willing to witness on their home turf... like landing in a foreign land where people speak a different language somehow magically converts the secret agent saint into one with a real missionary-heart.

Whether it's across the square or across the pond (the Atlantic) we can find joy in depending upon the Lord as His representatives! Jesus never use the lash to motivate or reminded His disciples that the harvest field is all around them: "***Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!***" (Jn. 4:35). We don't need to pressure anyone either! But do look for those opportunities where you are.

Perhaps you already use some form of social media to interact with your friends or with their friends? I'm not talking about for gossip, skirt chasing, or backbiting. I'm talking about for keeping in touch with friends, for networking, for meeting new acquaintances? Too many Christians still underestimate the value in making friends online through some type of social media. They say it is all a "wasting of time" connecting with others online. And it can be, but

doesn't have to be. I can relate to them because, there's been a whole lot of immature stupidity expressed online over the years. Consecrate it too God!

Some friends are afraid of the very real possibility of their employer a maybe their next potential employer rejecting them after they discover all their trash talking online. Solution: don't talk trash or selfishly be in it for what you can get!

However, as Christians, the evangelistic opportunity before us is like one we have never seen before and we must be careful not to be obnoxious, over-ambitious, or brash. They don't need our "righteous spam" and inconsideration. They need sensitivity, truth, love, understanding, the Gospel and gentleness! We have an opportunity to equip and encourage believers to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth now without them ever leaving their home office. We don't want to become bad employees on the company's time, but we do have window to work within. Again, do we do this minus fervent prayer, simplicity or pure love? Never! NEVER!

"For with God nothing will be impossible." —Jesus, Luke 1:37

"The church that does not evangelize will fossilize!" —Oswald J. Smith

"Consider the call from the throne above, 'Go ye,' and from round about, 'Come over and help us,' and even the call from the damned souls below, 'Send Lazarus to my brothers, that they come not to this place.' Impelled, then, by these voices, I dare not stay home." —Jim Elliot

"Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live." —Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:14, nlt

These days I have seen more than one whole church jump onboard with a social network to promote their vision and "fellowship" amongst their constituents, but at your church are there too many "fellows in the same ship"? Are the Christians too afraid to reach out and tell someone new about the Good News? Christians need to have integrity, and make sure that all their communication is considerate and respectful. It can be humorous too, but for each one it must be kind and consistent with their profession of faith! The Bible says, ***"Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them"*** ([Eph. 4:29](#), nlt).

"Friending" someone in *Facebook* at the right time, or simply offering to pray for them is so relevant—it's the way we can care for and truly get to know our neighbors ([Jam. 2:8](#)).

Of course online friendships ought never to replace face-to-face friendships—we aren't to live like hermits in a cave. But some of my online friends are turning into my physical-world (Christian and non-Christian) friends. How cool is that! Sure there are simply precautions about your privacy and security needs that must be remembered and respected (you already know not to upload sensitive personal info), but one acquaintance I knew came by my house not too long ago, wanted to go grab a quick bite to eat at a near by restaurant and man, by the end of that lunch time together, he had become a Christian right there at the table. It doesn't get any better than that, O NO!

Relating to unbelievers through *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and other companies can actually augment and enhance relationship-building. It doesn't have to be real costly in terms of time either. I find that I can communicate with more people more effectively this way than by simply using email or the phone. If you really watch your attitude, language, and quite time alone with Jesus daily, this can be a very good investment of your time for eternity.

It can be the most cost-effective way to connect with large groups of people who you might never have a chance to keep in regular contact with otherwise.

Let's face it Church, from looking at our track record.. our tendency has been to remain in the cozy cocoon, sheltered away in the warm holy huddle, safe amongst ourselves. Yup clumped together for security in an evil world that's filled with darkness OooOOoo kinda scary!

We all need fellowship with growing Christians. We love our group-think, our group-speak—Christianese—our group cloisterization-mentality. We want to keep our kids at home or even pay more money to put our children in Christian schools (nothing wrong with that).. and we want to shop in a Christian grocery store for righteous vegetables, want to see Christian movies, read only Christian books, hear only Christian radio stations, have cappuccinos in a Christian version of Starbucks. The world thinks we clutch our Bible tight and throw away our brains and other people.

We never want to be “spiritually polluted” around unbelievers who might say a “D” or an “S” word.. hey, and I can relate to those feelings. Hearing gobs of trash-talk can grieve the Holy Spirit inside and tear down the work of Christ in you. Besides, God tells us to, ***“come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”*** (2 Cor. 6:17-18, kjv).

But taking advantage of what's good and necessary (fellowship) can become an inverted lifestyle that hinders our ultimate horizontal purpose (evangelism).

I can indeed sympathize with some saints, who have been mocked, insulted, ridiculed, laughed at, persecuted and are now even fearful of those evil boogie-men culprits...and there are indeed some very dangerous and oppressive people out there to beware of too. But Jesus told an ex-demonized person, (an ex-boogie man if you will..) to, ***“Go home to your friends, and tell them what wonderful things the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been”*** (Mk. 5:19). Now you and I could also go home (to our friends using our Mac and PCs) and do exactly the same thing. Some of them might even want to get together with you after that to hear more.

The gay people are coming out... why not us come out of the closet with our Lord.. with our beliefs.. with our world-changing passion? Christ wants us to enter the prayer closet and then exit it with power. He commanded us, ***“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world”*** (Mat 28:19-20, kjv).

You remember back in the day, how Jesus basically gave His disciples this same great commission and they ignored it. They seemed to turn it into the great omission by hanging tight together in Jerusalem. That is until God allowed fierce persecution to break out at their comfy home base, Jerusalem. That's what it took to spread them out pretty quickly ..with the Gospel to spread. And Churches were planted. How exciting!

If you've been avoiding worldly people, carnal people, sinners, social media opportunities ...perhaps based on *MySpace's* lame reputation or due to fear, here are some steps to get you up and running right:

1. Decide to quit being a secret agent; a *slip-a-tract-in-the-crack* type of Christian online. Appropriate Christ's boldness by faith. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!
2. Understand how some Christians in social networks have been fearfully inverted, uncaring, apathetic, arrogantly snobby, disobedient, self-centered and even cynical about reaching out. Understand why many Christians are apprehensive to use the current technology they already own for witnessing, and how many of them are ignorant of the potential good involved. Many simply don't understand the severity of the need and many don't care. Please purpose to use whatever you can and become proactive in prayer first and in befriending new people in Jesus Name (yes, call out their names to God).
3. Have something worthwhile and practical to say that adds value to people's lives. Aim to build them up or win them. Share the Word and be prepared to draw in the net when the time is right. Too many have nothin' to say online—they tear down. Realize that social media is not merely something for lost lustful fools—those who love to gossip, score for themselves, and endlessly talk about the latest details on American Idol etc (not against TV—I've enjoyed that show on occasion).
4. If you are already saved, grounded in the Word and have a vibrant church and prayer life, please consider test-driving one of the Social Networking tools for awhile (you can always deactivate and bail on it later). Don't be shy about asking your friends to add you, or in searching for your friends to bring them in. it's very easy, especially if someone you know has already added many of your acquaintances. Bring your school and work friends into it. Signing up is simple and the price is right. Free. All you need is an email address, God's love, a clue, and a desire to build relationships.
5. Create your personal profile (again, do not inject your personal info in there—creeps and criminals also use Facebook). Find a teenager if you need any assistance with getting set up. It's all second nature to them. Your profile needs to be straightforward.. as simple or complex as you want it to be. You decide.
6. Upload clean pics, and maybe tag some friend's cool photos. Upload some clean videos too. Add personality in there.. not in some forced, sociopath-ic or awkward kinda way, but naturally. Choose the style of Christian music that reflects your tastes—keep everything consistent with the Gospel, your eternal purpose and your personal testimony. Join groups that reflect who you really are as well.. your specific interests, your profession, your education, geographic area, etc (FB allows 50 groups per person).
7. Feed your page. If you blog, make sure you syndicate. RSS (really simple syndication) feed apps. For Facebook there are easy to find and use in the top left search field. Try ping.fm to cross post and status entry (no extra work or double posting involved). Blog RSS Feed Reader is nice too.
8. Not to sound like Rick Warren or anything, but mingle on purpose and for a purpose. Don't be shy to ask for connections (you can [connect with me](#) if you'd like..), this is how relationships multiply and your sphere of influence will grow into a warm-hearted-community tat you facilitated. And sharing our faith honestly, not like we've arrived, within our personal communities should be our goal. Remember, you want to connect with friends but also stretch out beyond the familiar. I love making new friends in lands where it's more challenging to be a missionary.
9. Perhaps add events that you think others might be interested in hearing about or attending. We never want to spam people, but when we seek to add value to their lives, they will come to trust us (and pray to never abuse that trust). Anything decent counts in this area, book review groups, seminars, financial classes, scrapbooking parties for the girls—that's how you meet new people.
10. Pray about creating a group, but many get tired of being constantly hit-up by strangers for money. The options are endless. We've seen unique examples including high school reunion groups, church or missions organization groups etc.
11. Do check your page when you can at regular intervals. Use it or loose it. If you don't check in once in a while or respond to people writing you, the new friends will loose interest in their ability to connect with you completely. Plus, your home page is where the news feed lives. It's how you get current information on all the people that matter to you and want to remain connected with.

God is looking for someone to labor in His field today. Jesus told His disciples, "***The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest***" (Matt. 9:37). The observers are many. The spectators are many. The complainers are many. The critics are many. The "evangelism-experts" are many, but the laborers are few. Don't wait until you are flawlessly perfect and all-knowing to get started!

I'm certainly no expert (though one pastor called me that this year – HUGE LOL!), I am merely a learner, a bibliophile, a servant wanting to help more lost people. I want to do my part thoroughly so I can spend eternity visiting with and "poking" everyone in my network up in heaven.

Billy Graham said, "*The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men, women, and nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear full responsibility for the next one. But we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities.*"

You have your field. I have mine. Let's believe and roll up our sleeves to do the work! You have a testimony. You know Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the entire world and then came out of that hole in the dirt. So climb out of the hole you are in and start telling people. Go public with Him—out into the harvest fields and tell It.. movin' It from theory to the pavement, then take It to the people with wisdom. Head knowledge alone and circling the wagons isn't enough. Let's apply the truth we've heard, "***For we are laborers together with God...***" (1 Cor. 3:9).

*Computerworld article, "Facebook vs. LinkedIn: Which is better for business?"

Do you have a prayer request? Would you like to share with us what God is doing in your life? [Contact](#) us today!

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