

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Is Facebook Fading?

Some Wonder Whether It's Good for Us

By Paul Asay

What Happened:

Last month, Facebook's creators took the social networking company public—that is, they allowed the public a chance to invest in the company for the first time. It was selling shares for \$38 a piece, which gave the company an estimated total value of \$104 billion—more than Target, Ford or Disney.

Since then, the value of Facebook stock has sunk, and some believe Facebook is worth about \$350 million less now than it was in the middle of May. That's still a lot of money, but it made some wonder whether Facebook might not be worth its hype.

A recent poll found that half of Americans believe Facebook, despite all its influence, is a fad. More than 59 percent say they have little or no faith the company is interested in keeping their users' private information private. A quarter of those polled don't use Facebook at all.

That meshes with another worldwide study that found Millennials—young adults who grew up with the Internet—are pretty skeptical of this tech-heavy world they helped build. About 70 percent say people have less privacy these days, and a third say social networks such as Facebook are making them less, not more, satisfied with their lives. Many said reading other people's Facebook posts sometimes makes them jealous. It has some wondering whether all the tech we live with actually makes us feel less connected, not more.

Some experts fear that social networks may cause serious problems. About 16 percent of high school teens say they've thought about suicide, and psychologists believe social networks can feed suicidal thoughts.

“What happens with an increase in communication among students is that there's more pressure,” Chicago neuropsychologist Dr. Hector Adames told NBC recently. “There's more bullying. When adolescents and children feel embarrassed, it's kind of like the end of the world for them.”

Despite those concerns, Facebook and other social networks aren't going anywhere for a while. Millions of Americans check their profiles daily—sometimes several times a day. Many would say it allows them to stay in better contact with friends and meet new folks they never would've met before.

Talk About It:

Do you have a Facebook page or an account with another social network? How often do you use it? What do you use it for? Do most of your friends have accounts? Your parents?

What do you like about Facebook? Have you made new friends on it? Do you share your thoughts and feelings through it? Does it help you keep in better contact with the people who are important to you?

Are there any drawbacks to social networking sites such as Facebook? Have you ever felt as if your privacy was violated there? Have you ever been bullied on it? Does it sometimes feel as if everyone else there is happier and living a more exciting life than you?

Does the site sometimes make you feel strangely isolated? Does it make you feel too hyper-connected? If you were going to create your own social networking site, what would it do differently?

What the Bible Says:

Scripture doesn't talk about social networking sites, of course, but it does have a lot to say about friendship and privacy. Here are a few passages:

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity” (Ps. 133:1).

“Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11).

“Everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity” (Eph. 5:13-15).

“Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house—too much of you, and he will hate you” (Prov. 25:17).