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**Facebook 'em, Danno**

When Teens Reveal Too Much Online

By Paul Asay

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**What Happened:**

On July 1, *The New York Times* published a letter about an eighth grade teacher who had been “friended” on Facebook by several of her students. Through Facebook, she learned more than she wanted to know.

The teacher found that some of her students were cheating, drinking, doing drugs and making mischief.

The content she saw wasn't unusual. Most teens use social networking sites as a primary way to connect with friends. They talk about their relationships, post pictures they took at parties and sometimes “confess” to things that could get them into trouble.

Many students have been suspended or expelled from school because they've posted videos of themselves fighting, drinking or doing drugs on YouTube. Employers often check applicants' social networking sites and Web history before deciding whether to hire them.

Teens who post flirty pictures of themselves online sometimes find themselves subject to unwanted attention. Sometimes those photos are downloaded from the Web and e-mailed to dozens, hundreds or even thousands of people. Occasionally, posting photos can expose teens to unwanted contact by strangers. Pretty scary.

“Strictly speaking, when these students gave her access to their Facebook pages, they waived their right to privacy; but that's not how many kids see it. To them, Facebook and (other similar tools) occupy some weird twilight zone between public and private information, rather like a diary left on the kitchen table. That a photo of drunken antics might thwart a chance at a job or a scholarship is not something all kids seriously consider.”

Randy Cohen, *The New York Times*

**Talk About It:**

Do you have a page on MySpace or Facebook? What do you use it for? Who reads it?

Have you ever posted something online you wished you hadn't? Have you ever gotten into trouble, either with your parents or with someone else, for what you posted?

Do your parents read your social networking page? Do they have rules for what you're allowed to post? Do you have your own rules?

If one of your friends posted on a social networking site a picture of himself or herself drinking, what would you do? Would you tell him or her to take down the picture? Would you tell your friend not to drink? Would you tell *on* your friend? Why, or why not?

### **What the Bible Says:**

“Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops” (Luke 12:2-3).

“Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of pictures? For they say, ‘the Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land’” (Eze. 8:12).

“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed to the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light” (Eph. 5:11-13).

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down And are acquainted with all my ways” (Ps. 139:1-3).