

Thought for Wednesday

March 25, 2009

As some of you may know, because you're on Facebook and a part of the New Life Fellowship network that I too am/was a member of said internet web-connecting-web-networking network (is that redundant?) Anyway, I've really enjoyed getting to know some of you a whole lot better by your personal pages filled with unique and intriguing facts, photos (it's amazing what some people will put on the internet) and to see you use it as a means to encourage, lift up and edify one another.

I even enjoyed getting in contact with several of my classmates from Toccoa Falls College – Men and women I haven't see or heard from in over 20 years! I even signed up for this years NCAA Basketball tournament and joined a pool for fun of the tournament bracket: starting with 64 teams and whittling it down to the final two and eventually a winner. As of this past Sunday, I went 15-1 for the Sweet 16, and that only because of an upset in the second round last Friday.

As enjoyable as it's been, it's had a downside, and the subject matter for my thought for this week. Last Sunday morning someone came up to me before our celebration and said, "*Pastor Mark, I couldn't open the video you sent me on Facebook...*" I said, "*I didn't send you any video on Facebook...*" They said, "*Well, it came in your name...*" After the service I check my cell phone message and there's one from my daughter stating that someone has probably hijacked my account and has been sending some pretty raunchy videos out to everyone on my friends list – Many of you posted on my wall to that affect as well. I went home and put out an urgent message that I had **NOT** sent out any videos and apologized for any misunderstandings.

Well, I thought that would be the end of it, right? Wrong! On Monday I changed my password into a stronger one that I was sure would do the trick – Wrong again! Yesterday I got word from some of you that these videos were still coming apparently from me (you know, one of those moments you want to take the computer and throw it out the window moments...)

So, yesterday afternoon I made a decision – I deactivated my account with Facebook. My reasoning was that I did not want anyone opening something stating it was coming from me that might be offensive or taken the wrong way. And I know many of you realize that my account had somehow been hijacked and I really appreciate your understanding, but to me, this was an issue of conviction. I recalled the words of Jesus, who once said this...

“If your hand or foot causes you to sin, chop it off and throw it away! You would be better off to go into life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the fire that never goes out. If your eye causes you to sin, poke it out and get rid of it. You would be better off to go into life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell.”
(Matthew 18:8-10, CEV)

Now, just for the record, I did **NOT** cut my hand off (it would make typing this a nightmare) and I did not poke my eye out (I would have wrecked the car driving over here this morning)... But I did apply a principle that I believe is the bigger issue for Jesus in this passage = personal responsibility and discipline in the lives of committed disciples. ***Did I actually send those videos out?*** No. ***Did I want to corrupt or cause anyone to stumble in their walk with Christ?*** No.

But I believe I have a responsibility to you, not just as the pastor of New Life Fellowship, but as your brother in Christ to live a life that by the grace of God is above reproach (accusation) Therefore, my reason for deactivating the Facebook account. Maybe in the future I'll try again...

You see, I just think we need to be careful about the items and information we put out, especially over the vast expanse of the internet, because as you know, once it's out there, it's out there! Just recently, I've been thankful for a few folks who have helped me realize the importance of footnoting my materials, you know, to give due credit where it's due – You've been a tremendous help and encouragement to me...

Which gets me to thinking, how are you doing in this area friend? When it comes to networks like Facebook, MySpace, Yahoo-Groups and other such entities, what we put out there about ourselves, ***is it glorifying Christ or perhaps giving Him a black-eye? Does it show our true passion in life to be our relationship with Jesus or something else?*** See, its one thing to say we have a love relationship with God and desire to grow daily in that walk and understanding of Him... But then, by our actions or conversations, we betray ourselves and show our true desires and passions.

My prayer and hope is that we all learn how to walk with integrity of heart and the burning passion of our lives is to see Jesus Christ lifted up and exalted by our lives and witness. I'll close with this reminder from the apostle Paul...

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – If anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:4-9, NIV)

Be Strong, Be Courageous, Be Fearless – and remember...

Christ **IS** All!
Pastor Mark