

Did you know that Humphrey County, TN ranks fourth in the state for the highest divorce rate according to statistics found at datacenterforkids.com and according to the state records for Tennessee found at <http://health.state.tn.us/statistics/PdfFiles/TN%20Marriages%20Divorces%20-%202009.pdf> out of 125 marriages recorded there were 72 divorces in the county? Divorce is a fact of the twenty first century. In fact, it has become the accepted practice of countless millions across the United States and many foreign countries. Why? What has gone wrong with marriages? Do folks get divorced just because they don't like the biscuits? Do they get divorced because they suddenly wake up one day to realize they are married? I realize there are many factors that fuel the divorce rate, not only in our county, but across the state and the union, but my focus for this article is on a very popular trend that everyone is familiar with. Yep, you guessed it—FACEBOOK. Is facebook somehow connected to the divorce rate and has it been used for the wrong purposes? I believe the answer to be yes.

Now I know the burning question is, Do you have a facebook account? Well, I did, at one point. I found it fun to be connected with some of my old pals from Columbia. I thought that at one time it was a good tool for the church to use to stay connected. While it can still be used to "stay connected", it is mostly used for gossip, to cast insults at others, and yes to instant message someone else who they know is married or who are married themselves to begin an affair. Now I fully realize that not everyone who uses facebook uses it for those reasons and I fully accept the implications or the "here comes the holy-roller" and now he's picking on facebook. The fact is as Peter stated in I Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." I have come across many articles that have caught my attention and wanted to share them with you.

The first comes from MSN.com: "The social-networking site credited with connecting old friends and helping create new relationships may also be [breaking up marriages](#). A [recent survey](#) says more lawyers are coming to divorce court armed with [Facebook](#) evidence to prove spouses are cheating. Flirty emails, inappropriate instant messages and simply changing a [relationship status](#) have been the cause of arguments and breakups."

The second from www.christianexamineer.com and states: "Surveys that show Facebook being cited more and more in divorce cases should make spouses think twice before "friending" someone of the opposite sex, experts say. A 2010 survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers showed that 81 percent of "the nation's top divorce attorneys" reported an increase in social networking websites being used as evidence in divorce cases. Facebook is the leader, being cited in 66 percent of cases that involve online evidence. We're coming across it more and more," clinical psychologist Steven Kimmons of Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Ill., said in a news release. "One spouse connects online with someone they knew from high school. The person is emotionally available and they start communicating through Facebook. Within a short amount of time, the sharing of personal stories can lead to a deepened sense of intimacy, which in turn can point the couple in the direction of physical contact. It can almost be done on a whim, and that's part of the problem," Martin said. "A thing done on a whim can evolve into a secret relationship that evolves into an emotional attachment that then leads to a divorce. There are some early warning signs that a person should note in order to avoid that kind of thing happening. Facebook relationships, Martin said, are "real relationships. It's not a game. It's not a fantasy. These are real relationships.... People can form powerful, genuinely emotional attachments as a result of an exchange that is initially nothing more than an online exchange," Martin said. "Because these relationships are real and relationships shape our lives, we need to manage the beginning of a relationship with an eye toward the possible outcomes of that relationship. In other words, you don't toy with a dangerous animal. If there is something that a person would not do in terms of a face-to-face relationship — an intimate discussion or a private discussion — they should not do it on Facebook. Otherwise, they are starting down a path which can have extremely negative consequences."

Friends, if facebook can destroy a marriage or just the fact that it plays a role in the destruction of what God has joined together should be alarming to each of us. I realize, once again, that not all people use the site for this type of sinful behavior, however, the old adage still stands, "Give satan an inch and he'll be the ruler." May God bless each of you in your daily walk with God. May we also be on the alert for the roaring lion.

In Christ,

Joe Rhodes