

Why Online Evangelism Is the Wave of the Future

In a world of seemingly ever-present iPhones, iPads and laptops, it's difficult to go anywhere without seeing people transfixed by their technology devices. Could it be they're doing more than updating Twitter and Pinterest? One study says yes.

According to the study by the Pew Research Center, one in five Americans shares their faith online, and in a typical week, nearly 50 percent of U.S. adults see someone else share their faith online.

Southern Evangelical Seminary President Dr. Richard Land says that while changing modes of faith-sharing may make some uncomfortable, online evangelism is critical to reaching the unreached and will be central to fulfilling the Great Commission.

"Technology is the future. We can either try to swim against the current, or we can surf the wave," Land said. "Sharing one's faith online is perhaps the best way to reach many younger people with the Gospel, and it may be the only way to reach those in foreign nations that have governments and cultures hostile to the Gospel. Like any scientific or technological advancement, the Internet has the potential to be used for either good or evil. When used by Christians dedicated to sharing the life-transforming truth of Holy Scripture, it can be a medium that can reach around virtually the entire globe and change people's eternal destinies."

The study, conducted in May and June of this year, found that 20 percent of Americans said they had shared their faith within the previous week on social networking websites or apps, including Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, 46 percent

responded that they had seen someone else post something online relating to their faith. By comparison, 40 percent of respondents said they shared something related to their faith “offline, in a real life setting.”

Generationally, younger people ages 18-29 were approximately twice as likely to see someone sharing their faith online as were adults ages 50 and over. According to Pew, “This pattern reflects broader generational differences in technology adoption and media consumption, with young adults using the internet more than older people do.”

Land added that online evangelism is also key to reaching nations that are closed to the Gospel and where witnessing is punishable by death.

“Scripture tells us that every tribe and every nation will hear the Gospel,” Land added. “While it’s easy to conclude that ubiquitous technology use is a detriment to society, it’s also important to recognize the growth of technology as God’s provision for the spreading of the Gospel. The Internet is the way through which we are going to fulfill the Great Commission call to all the world. It’s no longer a question of ‘how’ every tribe and every nation will hear the Gospel—we have the means. It’s up to us, however, to use the tools we’ve been given.”