

Lay Evangelists Encouraged to 'Facebook' the Gospel

It's National Networking Week—but not the kind of networking you might think. No, it's not about organizing power lunches to make new business and ministry connections. It's about using social networking tools to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

During National Networking Week, Christians are encouraged to post more God-honoring social networking updates—one a day all week.

With 500 million people on Facebook—that's 7 percent of the world's population—and another 50 million people on Twitter, the opportunity to spread God's Word is real and growing.

Imagine if the apostles in the early New Testament days could update their Facebook status and impact the lives of hundreds or thousands of people all at once?

Reinhard Bonnke is a good example of using Facebook to reach the masses. His Facebook page has more than 250,000 members and he posts inspirational messages several times a day. One of his recent messages reads, "This world has false standards, false values, false gods, and false heroes. Its honor is a wreath of fading fame. True greatness is not bigness or spiritual prominence. It is doing the will of God."

Joyce Meyer has more than 1 million Facebook fan page members. She posts status updates like "What do you do when disappointment comes? You can either let it press you down or you can use it as a stepping-stone to better things."

But National Networking week aims to give regular Joes and Janes an opportunity to reach their friends with the Word of God in an easy-going way. It's like planting a seed in the

garden of someone's soul—and it only takes a minute.

Marnie Swedburg, author of *SANE: Social Networking in 15 Minutes a Day*, is sponsoring National Networking Week. As she sees it, the key to reaching others for Christ is authenticity, whether online or face-to-face. While some people feel great about posting pithy comments, others about posting Bible verses and still others about posting a link to an uplifting YouTube video, she says, each person needs to find their own fit.

“The average social networking site member has 120 connections,” Swedburg says. “Each time a person sees a posted comment and either shares it, comments on it, or retweets it, the original comment is given a new audience to influence, and at no point does the networking host stop this outward flow. The powerful potential makes some people put on facades.”