



When Social Networks Become Anti-Social

If you use Facebook, you're not alone.

- 1.9 billion people use Facebook
- 700 million use Instagram
- 500 million use LinkedIn
- 328 million use Twitter

We are more connected than ever before, but our relationships may not be any better. In many ways, we have lost connection.

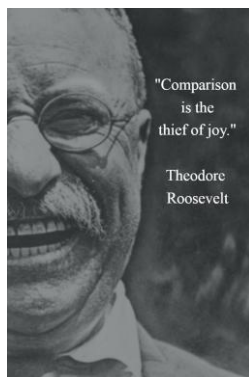
Let me first set the record straight: I like social media.

I have rekindled friendships from high school (sparing me the need and cost of traveling to one of those high school reunions we all dread).

- I can stay in regular contact with former church members whom I served alongside in Texas.
- I have several family members who serve overseas in missions. When Hudson Taylor left in 1853 to serve Christ in China, he told his mother goodbye, knowing he would never see her again. But today I can stay in touch with family overseas on a daily basis.
- But social media has its downside.

1. Social media is intended to connect us with each other, but since we usually view these sites while alone, we can actually feel isolated. We're viewing the events in others' lives from a distance.

2. Multiple studies have pointed to a link between social media usage and depression and low self-esteem. These feelings are triggered by "social comparison." This can happen as we follow the lives of those with more friends/followers and those who appear more attractive. But the key factor is that we tend to only post about the best in our lives.



- We post photos of us on our best days, not those days when our complexion looks like the dark side of the moon or we're wearing that ratty T-shirt we bought in 1998.

- We post pictures of that exquisite dinner at a nice restaurant, not the bowl of Fruit Loops we ate while watching Wheel of Fortune.
- We post about the happy events; we rarely post about the mundane routine of our lives.

You do it—and your friends do it. So depression kicks in for many of us because all we're seeing is the "highlight reels" of others' lives. Who am I compared to that? I can't measure up.

There is a remedy. Spend face-to-face time with people. Sit down with real people, not the digital, online versions of them. Online, we put our best face forward, but live conversations help us see and connect with people as they really are. Sure, some people still like to put up a mask, but when we're face to face, we have a far greater opportunity to see the real person.

Be the presence of Christ in the lives of others. See them as Christ sees them—and love them like Christ loves them. Consider how the many "one another" passages in Scripture call for a physical connection to people.

- "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34).
- "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (Rom. 12:16).
- "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom. 15:7).
- "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thess. 5:11).
- "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Set down the phone. Walk away from the computer. Get in the presence of another person and live out these verses. You'll feel better and you'll build stronger relationships.