

137243 - What is the ruling on signing up for and participating in Facebook?

the question

What is the ruling on Facebook?.

Detailed answer

Firstly:

The website Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, a student at Harvard University in America, at the beginning of 2004 CE. Use of the website was initially limited to students of the University, then the network expanded to include other universities in Boston, and eventually to include the entire world at the end of 2006 CE.

The aim behind the founding of this site was to enable people to get to know one another and build social relationships. This site is regarded as one of the most important virtual communities on the Internet.

Secondly:

The world of Facebook is a world in which one may communicate in writing or verbally (chat), in which there are both major sins and benefits for people, but this site is distinct from others in many ways, including the following:

1.

Availability of detailed personal information about users, which has already resulted in negative consequences such as:

(a) It has led to reviving old relationships between lovers which led to a resumption of those (illicit) relationships, leading to betrayal and divorce.

A team from the National Centre for Social and Criminal Research in Egypt prepared a study on Facebook which took several weeks, from which it noted serious consequences (of using this

site). Among other things it noted: “many visitors to the website succeeded in finding their first love and former relationships, and rebuilt destructive relationships outside the family, which is threatening marriages and Muslim family life.”

A foreign newspaper discovered a Jewish spy network that was working to recruit Arab and Muslim youth to spy for them.

On the Muheet website – dated 25 Jumaada al-Oola 1431 AH – they quoted from a French newspaper the story of Jewish exploitation of Facebook to recruit agents:

Gerald Nero, a professor in the college of psychology in the French University of Provence and the author of the book Dangers of the Internet, says: “This network was discovered in May 2001 CE; it was a group of networks run by Israeli specialists in psychology who were recruited to work on youth in the Third World, especially those living in Arab states that are hostile towards Israel, as well as South America.”

In fact, this recruitment began before the founding of the Facebook site, which offered more opportunities for this network – and others like it – to find youth who were suitable for recruitment by looking at their details and by chatting with them.

(b) Hacking into bank accounts and stealing the identity of a Facebook member by looking at his personal information.

2. The spread of this website has made it a global chat site which brings together people from all parts of the world; they made matters worse by giving the users of their site a program that makes it easy for these conversations to take place without entering the site, such as that which was produced by Hotmail and Messenger. Chatting results in negative consequences that are known to everyone who has any experience of that on the Internet, especially if the program makes it possible for people to see one another as well as writing. Among the negative consequences of chat and sinful relationships are the following:

(a) Wasting valuable time in trivial talk and getting to know people.

The wise Muslim should realize that his lifespan is limited and that he will not live on earth for ever; he is going to meet his Lord, may He be exalted, Who will ask him about his youth and how he spent it, and about his life and what he did. So let the wise one look at the early generations of this ummah and its scholars, and think about how they thought about time and their lifespan.

Ibn 'Aqeel al-Hanbali (may Allah have mercy on him) said of himself: It is not permissible for me to waste an hour of my life. When I stop discussing issues of knowledge and debating them (with others) and when I stop reading in a book, I would start pondering and thinking when I am resting and lying down, and before I get up, I will have already an idea that I should write down and I am very keen to increase my knowledge now I am in my eighties and more keen than when I was twenty years old.

Quoted from him by Ibn al-Jawzi in al-Muntazam, 9/214

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: A man's time is in fact his life, and his eternal life, whether it is eternal bliss or eternal suffering, is based on how he spent it. Time is passing quickly; whatever time he spends for the sake of Allah and by the help of Allah, this is his true life; any other time is not counted as part of his life, even if he spends it doing what animals do. So if he spends his time in heedlessness, idle entertainment and false wishes, and the best of what he spends his time in is sleep and idleness, then his death is better than his life.

Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi, p. 109

(b) Establishing sinful relationships between men and women, which may cause the destruction of a stable family.

In a study by the National Centre – mentioned above – it says:

One in every five cases of divorce came about when one partner discovered that the other was having a relationship through the Internet, and through Facebook.

We have discussed the ruling on correspondence and chat between the sexes in a number of fatwas. Please see the answer to questions no.

78375, 34841, 23349, 20949, 26890 and 82702.

Thirdly:

It cannot be denied that there are a number of benefits in this site, which are attained by wise people who are keen to guide people to goodness. These people have done well by using modern means of communication – such as the Internet, mobile phones and satellite channels; they have entered the world of those people to serve their religion and call people to their Lord, especially activities that are done collectively, because that makes it less likely that the one who does this type of work collectively will fall into the temptations of that world. Among the benefits of that website are the following:

1. Personal pages for some shaykhs and daa'iyahs, in which they offer advice to the people and answer their questions, especially those who have groups. The leader or founder of the group benefits when a number of people who are part of that group get together and send out messages to the group, open up topics for discussion, and post a large number of high-quality video clips.
2. Global campaigns to alert users of that site to global Islamic events that are suppressed and ignored by the non-Muslim media, or to support oppressed peoples, or to close a website or personal page.
3. Spreading useful and beneficial books, articles and websites among visitors to that site.
4. Communication between friends and relatives, especially those who live far apart from one another. Communication has a good impact in maintaining bonds and encouraging one another to remain steadfast in Islam.

Fourthly:

With regard to the shar'i (religious) ruling on signing up for Facebook, it depends on the intention of the one who wants to sign up. If he is a man of knowledge or a seeker thereof or a member of a da'wah group, then it is permissible and good, because of the benefits they have to offer to the people. But for the one who joins it for evil purposes or for whom there is no

guarantee that he will be safe from temptation and may easily slip, especially young men and women, it is not permissible for them to sign up for it.

The one who knows the reality of our times and the temptation and turmoil that is knocking at the door of all of our houses will not object to any faqeeh or mufti (religious scholar) who disallows anything in which there is harm, whether it is totally or mostly harmful. The fact that there is some small benefit does not encourage one to say that it is permissible because there is still fear for the one who embarks upon it. If what is good and beneficial is great and the evil and harm is small or non-existent, then we may with a clear conscience say that it is permissible. Hence some of our scholars were very strict about satellite channels at first, because of the pure harm and evil in them; but when there started to be some great good in them and completely Islamic channels were founded, and receivers that only accepted those channels became available, the view that they are permissible became valid; indeed we see that many scholars have contributed to these channels and have useful programs on them.

The one who cannot control himself on Facebook and similar sites should refrain from joining them. Joining them is permissible for the one who acts in accordance with the shar‘i guidelines by controlling himself and not following his whims and desires, and who joins them so that he can benefit himself and others.

We ask Allah to keep us safe from temptations both visible and invisible, for He is the Guide to the straight path.

And Allah knows best