**Social media is a hindrance to the formation of discipleship amongst youths. Discuss**

It is no longer news that social media is a strong influence in the live of young people today. As a young person, I feel that the importance of this topic cannot be overemphasised. The purpose that social media serves in the nurturing of young Christians has generated a lot of controversies- is it a tool for nurturing Christian discipleship among youths or is it an impediment in shaping the lives of young Christians? In my own view and in the words of a famous quote “You’re the result of the actions you take”. I will like to prove to you why social media can be the most efficient tool for Christian discipleship among Christian youths in our world today. The essence of this essay is to first define the purpose of social media, examine the impact it has on Christian youths and also explain how it is each individual’s choice to make.

The term ‘social media’ refers to the wide range of internet based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, join online communities. The fast growing rate of social media this century is attributed to the fact that internet easily accessible , research shows that there are one million new active social media users are added everyday – that’s twelve every second. A few examples of these social media applications are not far fetched, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, and Wechat amongst many others.

Often people are quick to assume that the negative impact of social media outweigh the positive. What are these positive impacts? Firstly as the names implies, social media is a platform for social networking, interacting with people from different spheres of life. Social media has greatly magnified the voice of those preaching the gospel; it basically gives us the privilege of connecting with people we may naturally not bible to meet due to some circumstances. How does this apply to the young Christian you may say, a social media application like Whatsapp for example gives you the opportunity to create a virtual group where member can share their doubts, ask questions, interact, share materials that will enable them grow grow spiritually.

Secondly, social media can be avenue for encouragement, strengthening and edification of saints through available online material for example; it enables the clergyman of any parish or any elder to nurture and up close relationship with the young Christians of that parish. Many young people today feel more comfortable interacting with adults on social media than sitting and discussing with them. Social media is a neutral space where the young Christian won’t be nervous to table his fears before an elder or a clergyman in his parish for advice or counselling.

Furthermore, social media allows Christians to administer grace to a world that is distracted and burdened, by using tools that people are familiar with ha d expect to see in everyday context. It is the perfect place to preach the gospel to a larger audience. Several social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram allow for such broadcasts to reach a larger audience. Discipleship classes for young Christians can also be set up on social media to reach Christians from other denominations or new converts who. Am not be able to make the regular trip to the parish for services.

However, social media is not like the proverbial bed of roses; it has its flaws. The major disadvantage of social media to young Christians is that it is a distraction to them. Too many young Christians are trying to work on school related assignments or study their bible but are becoming too distracted by their phones buzzing or having the urge to check their social media applications. Even in our parishes, it is not uncommon to find young Christians clicking and swiping the screen of their phones during services. Social media as already become a great distraction to plenty of today’s youths.

Similarly, social media can be a very dangerous place to be due to the presence of its online predators. Once a young person creates and account t online, it is free to the public unless the application provides an optional private account setting. Stalkers can collect, information, and your location just by viewing your posts. There have been many cases of identity theft, cyber fraud and cases where young people have been duped of their several thousands. Surely now you can see that by being aware of what you share with others can keep you from being hacked, duped or attacked by strangers.

Most importantly, social media has produced a culture of self-orientation that is designed to procure a comfortable and individualistic lifestyle. The negative psychological effect social media has on young Christians today is that they are battling with their Christian values and their social media culture. Many young Christians have trivialised the fact that their Christianity is part of them. On social media, the things that now symbolise their Christianity after the pictures they post on Sunday mornings. Due to the need to conform on social media, many young Christians fail to even indicate their religion on their social media accounts this is the message young Christians need to be taught through discipleship classes. Christians need to quit letting social media set the standards for the church. Christianity has never been about convenience or safety. As our saviour Jesus Christ taught us if the world hated him, it will hate his followers as well. Christianity calls us to be transformed by Christ and not conforming to the mould of the world.

After a careful look into the versatility of social media and how it can be exploited towards promoting Christian values through discipleship of young people even though it has flaws, it is safe to say that the positive impact social media has on the young Christian far outweighs the negative effects it has on him. From the standpoint of a concerned young Christian, I’d like the church to educate young Christians on how social media can be of spiritual benefit to them.

In conclusion, the church needs a continuous discussion on this topic in order to let the message sink in. The bible states that “there is safety in the midst of any counsellors”. Voices from different levels of ministry and laity, voices from different Christian organisations, voices from different t parts of the world need to have a part in this great discussion and once in awhile we need to question ourselves; “what does the bible say about this?” and maybe only then can we put the young people in our parishes on the right path to effective’y using social media for Kingdom purposes.

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