

Does The World Need More Facebook?

Mark Zuckerberg CEO of Facebook is not happy with the outcome of the election and he isn't shy about telling everyone. Nor is he happy with the role his social media monster played in distributing information that helped Donald Trump become President. He stated last month in Chicago at a gathering of Facebook enthusiasts, that he wanted to change the entire mission of Facebook to bring people closer together. Implying that had Facebook done the job it is now poised to do, Trump would not be our President. But what is really eyeopening to me is that he "wants Facebook groups to play an important role that ... churches and Little League teams used to perform."^[1] So the church should be replaced by Facebook? In his speech he said, "Americans are in need of something to unify their lives. It's so striking that for decades, membership in all kinds of groups has declined as much as one-quarter... That's a lot of of people who now need to find a sense of purpose and support somewhere else...We started a project to see if we could get better at suggesting groups that will be meaningful to you. We started building artificial intelligence to do this. And it works. In the first 6 months, we helped 50% more people join meaningful communities.' His ultimate goal is to convince 1 billion users to join Facebook communities. 'If we can do this, it will not only turn around the whole decline in community membership we've seen for decades, it will start to strengthen our social fabric and bring the world closer together."^[2]

Video of the sermon

Wow, so using their artificial intelligence software to data mine everything that is known about you, from your everyday

purchases, from your patterns of where you drive, where you shop, what you wear, who you talk to, who you text ad infinitum, they will engineer a social group just for you. Facebook will choose your friends out of their 2 billion members world wide so you can be close to people you have never met face to face. Do you think there is something suspicious about their agenda, let alone their methods of data mining your entire life?

We already know there are many stories about Facebook's censorship of the side of the political spectrum that its company heads disagree with.^[3] Maybe their new motto should be 'Friends don't let friends vote for Trump. Won't you be my friend?'

Now Zuckerberg is on to something, there is a collapse taking place in America of solid relationships as people abandon church, as marriages and families break apart, as people choose to isolate and insulate themselves from deep friendships. Robert Putnam researched this trend for 25 year and then published his groundbreaking book based on that data "Bowling Alone." Putnam showed "how we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and our civic structures— and how we may reconnect.

Putnam warns that our stock of [social capital](#) – the very fabric of our connections with each other, has plummeted, impoverishing our lives and communities.

Putnam draws on evidence including nearly 500,000 interviews over the last quarter century to show that we sign fewer petitions, belong to fewer organizations that meet, know our neighbors less, meet with friends less frequently, and even socialize with our families less often. We're even bowling alone. More Americans are bowling than ever before, but they are not bowling in leagues. Putnam shows how changes in work, family structure, age, suburban life, television, computers, women's roles and other factors have contributed to this

decline. He detailed Trends over the last 25 years – Attending Club Meetings- 58% drop, Family dinners – 43% drop, Having friends over – 35% drop”[\[4\]](#)

Other researchers have added to this body of data. One writes, “Probably the most surprising finding is that people with good networks actually live longer.⁴⁸ All the mechanisms are not fully understood, but the link between networks and longevity appears to be caused by both behavioral and biological changes. For example, it has been widely observed that frequent attendance at religious services reduces mortality, partly due to behavioral changes—the tendency to make more social contacts, to improve health practices (stop smoking, reduce alcohol consumption), and to stay married—but also due to the meaning to life religion gives.⁴⁹ Lisa Berkman, M.D., now chair of the Department of Health and Social Behavior at the Harvard School of Public Health, mapped the social networks, lifestyles, and health behaviors of seven thousand residents of Alameda County, California, following them over nine years.⁵⁰ She discovered that isolated people were three times more likely to die during the nine years than the well-connected.”[\[5\]](#)

So that leads me to ask the question, What about the effect of social media, such as Facebook on social capital? There are some conflicting studies but one noted researcher, James Coleman got it right. “Social capital flourishes when people are following the ‘rules’ of society. People that live their life this way feel that there are norms in society which they can follow. Coleman says that when people live in this way and benefit from this type of social capital, individuals in the society are able to rest assured that their belongings and family will be safe.”[\[6\]](#)

There is how it all ties together, a society will only function so long as there are an agreed set of Laws that

almost everyone will follow, say like, Thou shalt not murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, lie, or covet what belongs to your neighbor. If the vast majority believe these are what is right and good, and then most often follow them, then “individuals in the society are able to rest assured that their belongings and family will be safe.” I was reading about the long term work of a missionary in a south American country. When they began their ministry of the gospel to that people they noticed that everyone brought their wealth with them on buses and trains. Their wealth was usually animals, chickens, goats or what have you. Why? Because their property was not safe if left at home. It was only safe if they took it with them. Decades later, when the a growing percentage of the population had come to Christ and were growing as disciples of Jesus Christ, he noted that fewer and fewer people brought their wealth with them on public transportation. Why? The gospel had transformed the culture. The commands thou shalt not covet thy neighbors chickens and goats as well as thou shalt not steal were being obeyed. People who were not even Christians had noted that things had changed. Or in James Coleman words. “Social capital flourishes when people are following the ‘rules’ of society. People that live their life this way feel that there are norms in society which they can follow. When people live in this way and benefit from this type of social capital, individuals in the society are able to rest assured that their belongings and family will be safe.”

Facebook can't accomplish this task – only the church of Jesus Christ can as it makes disciples who walk in obedience to all Christ has commanded us to do.

Learn more about your Constitution with Pastor David Whitney and the “Institute on the Constitution” and receive your [free gift](#).

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FootNotes:

[1]

<http://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/26/mark-zuckerberg-compares-facebook-to-church-little-league.html>

[2] Ibid.

[3]

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/facebook-right-wing-trending-news-former-employees-censoring-a7021101.html>

[4] <http://bowlingalone.com>

[5]

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<http://webuser.bus.umich.edu/wayneb/pdfs/BakerChap1.pdf>

[6] Coleman, James S. (1988). "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", American Journal of Sociology. 94 Supplement: (pp. S95-S-120)