

We spend an amazing amount of energy staying connected with students during their middle and high school years.

Some youth leaders spend as much, if not more, energy trying to keep college students connected to church life – others forget about the students shortly after graduation. In both cases, churches see a mass exodus of students from local church ministries shortly after graduation.

Can we reverse the trend? Can we keep students involved in our local churches or at least keep them involved in ministries at college?

Maybe.

Students who were active in church during their high school years and fell off the map during their college and early adult lives will likely return after they get married and have children. If they continue to have a connection with the ministry they were a part of during their younger years, I think the likelihood of them returning is even greater.

Enter social networking!

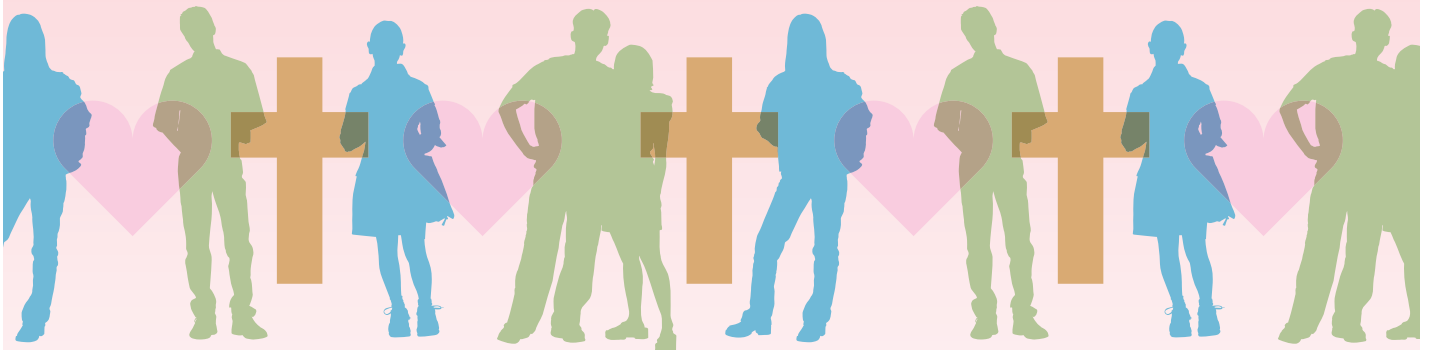
Social networking websites (okay – let's not kid ourselves, I'm really talking about Facebook and not much about any other sites) provide an excellent

opportunity to stay in touch with college age students and young adults during their “absent years” from church. If you're not connected with Facebook, sign up, log on, and start connecting with those college students and young adults you might not have seen or heard from in awhile. Most (if not all!) of them are already connected with hundreds of friends on Facebook.

Some ways to stay connected:

- Sign up at facebook.com
- Connect with students (it takes a remarkably short time for folks to find you!)
- Create a group for students from your youth ministry.
- Wish them Happy Birthday on their birthday.
- Have a “Facebook meet-up” at a specific time online.
- Post memorable (and appropriate!) youth group memory photos on your Facebook group.
- Never post anything in any electronic format that you wouldn't want your mother to see or read.
- Don't remind college students to be appropriate online. You're staying connected to them, but you're not the Facebook police.
- Continue to be supportive, invitational, and demonstrative (big word, eh?) of God's unconditional love.

Did I mention Twitter? I probably should have. You may want to keep an eye out for that site, too!



Social Networking: A Tool To Stay In Touch During The “Absent Years”

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