

Christian leaders warn about “Charlie-Charlie” demon summoning game



New demon summoning game, “Charlie Charlie”, is a real threat say faith leaders (PHOTO: Facebook)

Originally published in [Charisma News](#)

Popular online challenge [Charlie Charlie](#) has lit a firestorm of controversy on the Internet, with mainstream media and social media alike sharing their thoughts on the demon-summoning game.

Faith leaders are also speaking about the game, and their advice is all but unanimous: Stay away.

Billy Graham has [referenced](#) biblical warnings against attempting to consult with the spirits of the dead or with demons. Citing the tragic last days of King Saul’s life, where the leader of Israel turned his eyes from God and focused instead on occult practitioners, as well as a key warning from Deuteronomy 18:10-11: “Let no one be found among you ... who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens ... or who consults the dead.”

“You are wise to protect your children from anything that might bring them into contact with occult spiritual forces that do not come from God, and are even opposed to God,” Graham advises parents.

Pastor Robert Jeffress of First Baptist Church in Dallas also cited the Deuteronomy verse in his warning against the demon-summoning phenomenon.

“The Bible is clear that Christians should run—not walk—away from any attempt to contact or harness demonic powers through games like ‘Charlie, Charlie,’” Jeffress said to the *Christian Post*.

Other leaders liken “Charlie Charlie” to a demonic gateway drug, opening spiritual doors and demonic desires that should stay closed.

Father Jose Antonio Fortea, a Spanish priest and Vatican-approved exorcist, warns that participation in the game could seed interest in other occult practices.

Meanwhile, Pastor Carl Gallups compared the game to Ouija boards, with all their inherent dangers despite the purportedly “fun” game aspect.

“This is the Ouija board of our time in the sense that it is a trick, but also a gateway drug,” Gallups told *WND News*. “This is a gateway to the occult.

“With this, you are literally praying to a supposed demon, calling out to ‘Charlie,’ asking for a gateway to be opened,” Gallups added. “So it is a trick, but it can set people on a path to something darker.’”

The 700 Club host Pat Robertson also [warned against the game](#), decrying claims from many participants and the mainstream media that the game is just harmless fun.

“Folks, like it or not, demons are real,” Robertson said.

“They’re not play things, and they’re certainly not parlor games.”

Image of couple praying fervently before wedding goes viral



US Marine Corps Corporal Caleb Earwood and his bride Maggie hold hands and pray on opposite sides of a doorway moments before their church wedding in Asheville, North Carolina.

(PHOTO: Dwayne Schmidt Photography).

Originally published in [Christian Today](#)

A picture taken of a young couple praying fervently moments before they got married has become a huge hit online, drawing countless visitors and inspiring other couples to seek God first before tying the knot.

In the photo taken by wedding photographer Dwayne Schmidt, US Marine Corps Corporal Caleb Earwood and his bride Maggie are seen prior to their marriage holding hands and praying on opposite sides of a corner.

The young couple did not want to see each other's face prior to making their wedding vows as per tradition, so they tried their best to pray together without looking at each other before their big event.

"We were about to take our first steps in life together, and we didn't want to take a step without it being in God's will," Caleb told TODAY.com. "I prayed to God for my beautiful and intelligent wife that he blessed me with and the amazing family I was marrying into."

His bride Maggie said, "When I first grabbed his hand, he was shaking really bad, so I knew he was really nervous. It relieved me to know the person I was getting ready to marry felt the same way about God."

The couple both grew up in Asheville, North Carolina, and first became friends in high school. They started dating just two years ago, and they have been inseparable ever since.

"She's so beautiful. I couldn't help myself!" Caleb gushed about his bride. "We're thankful that our picture is able to bless so many people and touch that many hearts."

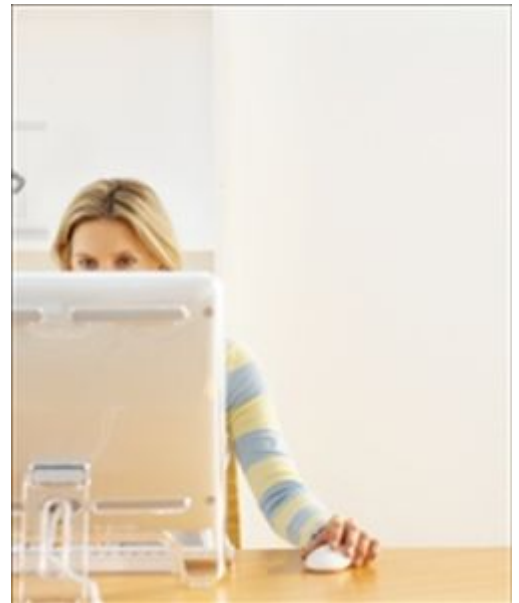
For his part, Schmidt said that he almost did not make it to

Caleb and Maggie's wedding because of an emergency surgery last week to remove a kidney stone, but he considers himself lucky to have been part of their big day.

"I was lucky to witness such a moving moment, let alone capture it. I have been fortunate enough to photograph several weddings, but this is a moment I will remember forever," he said.

Social media: the latest evangelism tool

By Robert Wayne – Originally published in Crosswalk.com



Imagine the miles Saint Paul could have shaved off his sandals if he had owned a mobile device with built-in Wi-Fi.

Nearly 2 000 years after Jesus commanded followers to go into all the world and make disciples, an increasing number of gospel messengers are doing their missionary travels by way of social media.

It is the latest trend: build a website by which, with the push of a button or click of a mouse, spiritual seekers from around the globe can hear and read about how to begin a personal relationship with Christ.

“We can spend how many millions of dollars to try to sneak someone into a country, and how many get led to Christ? Very few,” said John Essig, a pastor at Fellowship Church in Springfield, Ohio, who serves as part-time Ohio Director at Global Media Outreach, one of numerous international ministries with a goal of reaching the lost through the Internet.

“But by [them] having a cell phone you’re going to reach those who can’t otherwise get a missionary to come to them,” Essig said, adding that online/mobile outreach is effective in large part because it relies on response, not targeting.

“We *know* they’re seeking us, so there is not as much opposition,” he said, pausing. “It is amazing how God will find a way to find that lost person.”

The numbers reported by GMO are staggering.

Gospel message

“From 350 000 to two million people a day will read the gospel message, with about 15 percent of those clicking a button at the bottom of the page telling us they just gave their life to Christ,” Essig said, explaining that GMO’s vision is to give every person on earth multiple opportunities to hear about Jesus, with the goal of the Great Commission being fulfilled by 2020.

“How do you do that?” Essig said.

Easy. Just “click for Christ.” Those who do will receive from GMO an email that includes a note of encouragement and applicable Bible verse with a link to discipleship opportunities.

From there, one of GMO's online missionaries connects with the seeker for what hopefully becomes more than a short-term discipling relationship.

"We're not trying to replace the church," Essig said. "But the idea is to get to them while they're young [in the Lord] and feed them with the word so they can grow."

Essig said studies show that those who commit to Christ via the Web read their Bible more often than the average American Christian and also more often share their [faith](#), "which shows a genuine experience with Christ."

One such GMO study reported that half of people who made a decision for Jesus over the Internet have subsequently shared their faith with others. Of the more than 100,000 surveyed around the world, 51 percent said they shared their faith three times or more and 37 percent said they shared their faith at least once or twice.

Critics of social media evangelism

Some critics, however, wonder just how genuine that sharing experience can be if it takes place via satellites and cell towers. Those leery of social media evangelism and discipleship say a huge difference exists between growing in Christ via Facebook and using a face-to-face/by-the-book approach to relationship spiritual development.

Cynthia Ware, a noted Christian technology expert, cautions against turning evangelism/discipleship into a cast-the-nets exercise, because often those nets have holes.

"With the Internet, the gospel can be effective in a peer-to-peer way," said Ware, adding that many of the social media outreach ministries she encounters are more about appealing more to the masses than the individual.

"It sounds like a broadcast modality," she said. "It is the same mindset people took to broadcast media before the

Internet. I think the Web should be used by Christians not so much for broadcasting but for listening. People are looking for answers ... and you have to take on a more conversational tone rather than spouting a message as someone might do on the street corner in 1900."

That is not to say Ware is opposed to mixing social media with Christianity.

"How it can become something [effective] is if people go in with a predetermined idea of how to evangelize," she said, citing the example of how her sister posted her adoption story online.

"The goal was not her story, but to see how many other like-minded people would show interest, so she could engage in the gospel with them," Ware said. "The key is finding common ground, then letting Christianity spread by its very nature."

That method, however, takes more time to reach more people, a luxury the unsaved world may not have, according to some online evangelistic ministries.

Plus, connecting by cell phone or home computer *can* be done in a personal, one-on-one manner that makes the seeker feel cared for, Essig said.

"Our system will generate a template for us, and we'll guide them through it," he said. "They may say, 'I'm having doubts.' Or their [marriage](#) is breaking up or they are depressed, so we send them to a spot on the site that meets their immediate needs."

Search engines

Finding sites that share the gospel is not a problem; dozens if not hundreds exist; but finding a specific site can be challenging, which gets to the financial end of Internet sites. The more money a ministry spends with a search engine, the higher its site moves to the top of the page where more

seekers will see it.

For example, type "Jesus Christ" into Google and the first entry might be a Wikipedia article. Click Google again and a Catholic Encyclopedia reference site might pop up on top. It all depends on the contract terms between the search engine company and the site owner.

"It is bizarre reality that the more money GMO spends to promote its [125 different] sites the more people come to Christ," Essig said, adding that Godlife.com is GMO's most popular site. "When we spend \$120,000 we can get more hits. If we don't spend, people will go to other sites. That doesn't mean you can't go to other sites and give your life to Christ, but there may not be the follow-up. PeaceWithGod.net (affiliated with Billy Graham) does a great job. GMO does not have to be the only fulfillers of the Great Commission. The big-picture thought is there is a huge wave of people (online) giving their lives to Christ right now."

Essig said there are elements of Internet evangelism that still need to be fine-tuned, including working with language barriers. Many Internet ministries offer different sites in multiple languages.

Then there is the general skepticism that stretches from one side of the world to the other.

"A big concern everyone has is 'Is this real?' Despite the giant numbers, is this really happening? The other suspicion is, 'How are you going to reach people who don't have a desktop computer or electricity?' But GMO is in the early stages of developing its own cell phone that is solar powered, which will have applications in it."

Some might see such technology as tearing at the essence of personal, "human touch" evangelism and discipleship. Essig does not. He turns to the Bible (Habakkuk 1:15) for assurance that God's wonders have no limit:

“Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.”

Join the Happiness Challenge and participate in our Thankful Thursdays



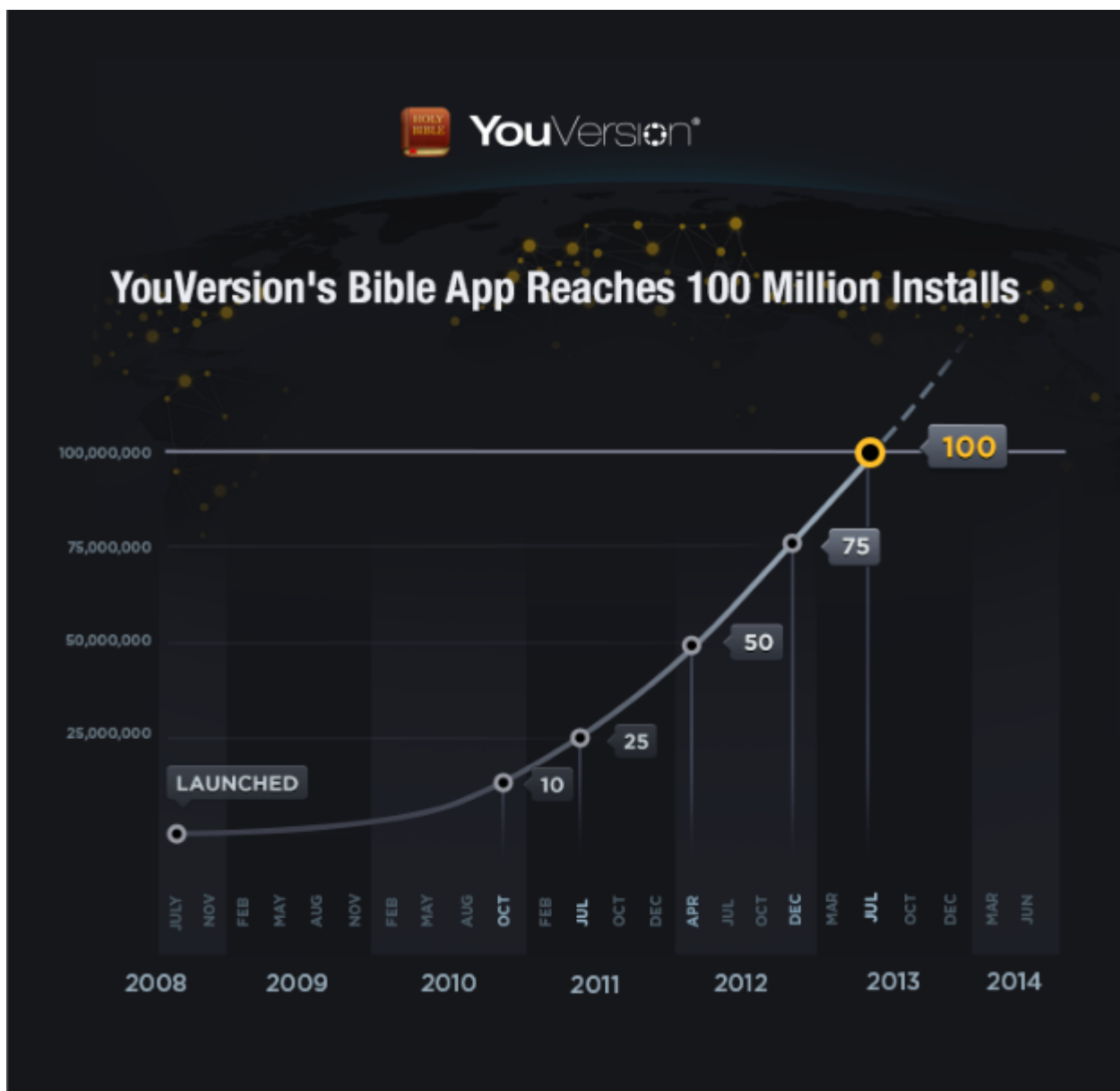
Thousands of people around the world have been flocking to the www.100happydays.com page to join the happiness challenge – an initiative that challenges their members to take a photo of 1 thing that makes them happy every day. The photos are then uploaded onto one of the prescribed social media platforms with the hashtag #100happydays. For those who prefer privacy, there is also an option of emailing your daily photo to myhappyday@100happydays.com. Photos have been bombarding Twitter, Face Book and Instagram, as people begin to value and share the little things in their day that puts a smile on their faces.

In a day and age where being right is more important than being happy, it is so refreshing to see so many people excited about sharing their appreciation for the beautiful things in their lives. This could be anything from a morning walk to doing some shopping or spending time with family and friends. The creators of this challenge had this to say: "We live in times when super-busy schedules have become something to boast about. While the speed of life increases, there is less and less time to enjoy the moment that you are in. The ability to appreciate the moment, the environment and yourself in it is the base for the bridge towards long term happiness of any human being." The website reported that people who have successfully completed the challenge claimed that they started to notice the things that make them happy every day, which made them more optimistic about life and put them in a better mood. The site states that this challenge is not a competition or a showing off contest but is designed for the everyday person, who wants to celebrate the little joys in their lives. On completion you have the option of receiving a 100 page book that will display your 100 happy days, at the finish line of the challenge.

To join the challenge, you can register at www.100happydays.com.

Don't forget to share your 100happydays photos on to the www.facebook.com/gatewaynewspage. We will be reposting and sharing your happy moments once a week on Thankful Thursdays. May the joy of Jesus abound in your heart every day.

At 100m downloads, YouVersion Bible app changing how people read the Word



Wednesday marks the fifth anniversary of the launch of Apple's iTunes store. One of the first and most popular free apps, [the Bible App by YouVersion](#), is likewise making history of its own.

On Sunday, YouVersion reached the colossal milestone of 100 million downloads, joining major brands like Instagram,

Facebook and Twitter that have all achieved the same landmark. For perspective, the Bible App was among the first 200 apps on iTunes; today there are over 900,000. For three consecutive years, Apple has ranked it among the top 100 free apps. Today it's available for virtually every mobile device.

"This is not a story about an app as much as one about a global mission to share the Bible—from publishers and Bible societies offering 500-plus versions of the Bible for free in 300-plus languages to the assistance of hundreds of committed volunteers that enable our 20+ staff members to provide world-class customer service for an app at no charge," says pastor Bobby Gruenewald of LifeChurch.tv in Oklahoma.

Gruenewald, who came up with the idea of using technology to make the Bible more accessible on smartphones and tablets, initially hoped for 80,000 downloads in the first six months—a number surpassed during the first weekend the Bible App was released.

A first-ever survey of the world's largest digital Bible-reading community found that the Bible App is not only changing the frequency of Bible usage but the experience as well:

- Over 77 percent of respondents read the Bible more frequently because they have it on their mobile device that accompanies them virtually everywhere.
- While the app was most-used at home (81 percent) and church (60 percent), it was also used "on the go" (55 percent). Nearly a third used the Bible App at work.
- Over 67 percent switch between Bible versions.

"Never before could you compare multiple translations of the Bible in an instant. In the past, it would have taken an entire room of Bibles and weeks if not months to do so," says Gruenewald. "Now when you don't understand a particular phrasing, it's easy to check out another translation for

clarity.”

Further tracking research indicated:

- People love to share Bible verses. In 2012 alone, there were more than 31 million shares of Bible verses via Twitter, Facebook, email and text message.
- The three most-shared verses were [Isaiah 53:5](#), [Hebrews 4:15](#) and [Matthew 7:7](#).

“Building on this research, we’re currently launching a new social feature of the Bible App that will advance the Bible-reading experience in the context of trusted relationships and community,” Gruenewald says.

The new feature allows readers to form a group of close friends and interact with them about the Bible—learn from what their friends are learning, discover new insights and explore what passages mean in conversation with people they are close to.

A collection of new initiatives announced in celebration of the 100-million milestone will extend the demographic reach of the Bible App:

- Adding the New American Bible Revised Edition, one of the most popular Catholic versions of the Bible and approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. In recent years, the Vatican has encouraged greater church efforts to teach Catholics about the Bible, equipping them to read it and pray with it more. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia and Cardinal Francis George of Chicago joined others in the Catholic community applauding the move.
- Plans are in development for a new Bible app for children ages 4 to 10 that includes an interactive experience full of fun games and stories to help educate and empower them with God’s love.
- A new one-year devotional from the Rev. Billy Graham,

which joins hundreds of other reading plans already available for tackling everything from relationship woes to life. There are even plans for reading the entire Bible—another goal many people have achieved thanks to the accessibility of the app.

Gruenewald sees no end in sight when it comes to growth of the Bible App, and the celebratory theme for the historic milestone expresses his sentiments best: “It starts with 100 million.”

[Click here](#) to see a special collection of infographics that has been created to examine the engagement behind the 100-million milestone.

Stars light up as world reads of birth of Jesus



Youversion, the leading Bible app that is on more than 70 million smartphones and pads, has created a fun live map that allows viewers to watch the world reading about the birth of Jesus.

The so-called [Christmas Story Tracker](#) lights a star on the reader's country when she or he reads about our Saviour's

birth on the app. A counter on the top right shows the total number of readings from the YouVersion since December 1.

Curious, I opened the birth of Jesus account in Luke 2 on my smart phone, and watched the tracker map: sure enough after a minute or two my little star appeared on the south eastern tip of South Africa!

The Bible app which was developed by Life Church features 400 Bible versions in more than 200 languages. It is totally free and according to Life Church lead pastor Craig Groeschel it will remain free. To download a copy of the Bible on your mobile device, visit <http://www.youversion.com/download> .

Are Facebook, Apple and Google censoring Christian speech?



Originally published in [Charisma News](#)

Social media and smartphones are changing the way people communicate—and consume—information. And there's a clear bias against Christian speech.

That's why the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) is wading into a unique and volatile communications freedom issue—the collision course between **free speech** on the Internet and the free market power of new media companies like Apple, Google and Facebook to block viewpoints they don't agree with.

“The stakes are continuing to rise on this dilemma: Last week, YouTube, owned by Google, banned a message by orthodox Rabbi Yehuda Levin, labeling it “hate speech” because it criticized the gay rights movement,” said Craig Parshall, NRB senior vice president and general counsel, who heads the John Milton Project for Religious Free Speech. “For similar reasons, YouTube also censored a Christian youth ministry, You can Run but you can't Hide International ... This is a problem that cannot be ignored.”

Here are some of the disturbing findings from the John Milton Project for Religious Free Speech's new report, “True Liberty in a New Media Age”:

Apple has twice removed applications that contained Christian content from its iTunes App Store. In both instances, Apple admitted that these apps were denied access because it considered the orthodox Christian viewpoints expressed in those applications to be “offensive.” One app had expressed the traditional, heterosexual view of marriage as set forth in the Bible; the other had stated the view that homosexuality is inappropriate conduct that can be changed through a Christ-centered spiritual transformation. Of the 425,000 apps available on Apple's iPhone, the only ones censored by Apple for expressing otherwise lawful viewpoints have been apps with Christian content.

Google has committed past practices of **anti-religious censorship**. For content reasons, it refused to accept a pro-life advertisement from a Christian organization, an issue that prompted litigation in England. Google is also alleged to have blocked a website in America that had conservative

Christian content. It had blacklisted certain religious terminology on its China-based Internet service, and in the United States it bowed to questionable copyright infringement threats from one religious sect, which had complained when a blog site criticizing it had quoted from the sect's materials.

Google blocked that blog site on alleged copyright violation grounds, disregarding the obvious "fair use" provisions of copyright law. Such a practice could block the ability of Christian "apologetics" ministries to quote from primary source materials when using Google platforms to educate the public on the teachings of certain religious groups. Also, in March of 2011, Google established new guidelines for its "Google for Non-Profits," a special web tool program, but specifically excluded churches and other faith groups, including organizations that take into consideration religion or sexual orientation in hiring practices.

Facebook has partnered with gay rights advocates to halt content on its social networking site deemed to be "anti-homosexual," and it is participating in gay-awareness programs, all of which suggest that Christian content critical of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, or similar practices will be at risk of censorship.

"Commissioner [Robert] McDowell described the current move to solve some censorship issues by creating an international body to supervise and monitor the Internet on a global scale," said Parshall. "Proposals would vest control in one of two United Nations agencies: either the International Telecommunications Union or the Committee for Internet Related Policies. Commissioner McDowell painted a distressing picture if the web is placed under governmental control, and stated his preference for continued private control of the Internet by private tech companies."

Free Bible App installed on 30 million phones



Originally published in [Christian Post](#)

The world's most popular Bible App, YouVersion, has reached another milestone – 30 million unique installs this week. The free Bible App is now available in 45 languages and offers more than 190 Bible reading plans.

“It is very exciting to see what God is doing through YouVersion in a short period of time,” said Pastor Bobby Gruenewald, creator of YouVersion and Innovation Leader at LifeChurch.tv. “And this is only the beginning. We’re committed to continuing to use the best of today’s and tomorrow’s technology to help the world fall in love with God’s Word.”

A team of developers at the church launched the app, which allows users to use their smartphones as a digital Bible, in 2008. Gruenewald was named one of Fast Company’s 100 Most Creative People in Business for his work in creating the app.

Craig Groeschel, lead pastor of LifeChurch, told congregants in a sermon earlier this year that he has received offers to monetize the smartphone app but turned them all down. He explained that since the first Bible he received was handed out for free by a Gideons evangelist on his college campus, he wanted to pay that gesture forward.

“My Bible is not for sale,” said Groeschel.

Jesus Daily is most interactive page on facebook

[Jesus Daily](#), a facebook page that posts daily sayings of Jesus as well as lots of prayer requests, has held its position as facebook’s most engaging page for a remarkable 18 weeks.



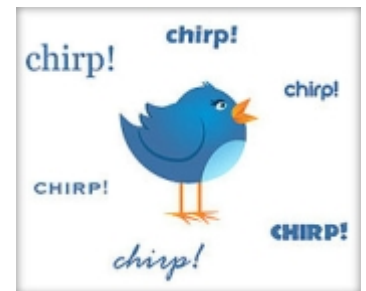
With 3 419 397 in the last week’s count the page is way ahead of all contenders. With 1 044 350 responses, [The Bible](#) holds onto third position for the second week.

[Dios Es Bueno](#), God Is Good, is becoming quite a competitor as it plows forward to fourth; 748,217 talkative likers makes it the page to watch in the coming weeks. A page dedicated to [Jesus Christ](#) cuts the countdown in half by tallying 513 040 posts. It is another week spent in the 15th position for [Joyce Meyer Ministries](#), and it is a 435,050 total that helps the non-profit organization hold steady.

[View the full countdown here.](#)

Social media for the Kingdom course

Transformation Christian Network in Port Elizabeth is hosting a social media course designed to equip Christians to harness the networking power of online tools such as Facebook and twitter.



The course, which will be conducted over four Monday evenings (7pm to 8.30pm from September 26 to October 17) at Fountain Vineyard Church, Walmer Heights, will be presented by public speaker and social media expert Shelley Walters.

Topics covered will include:

Week one – The background of Social Media and the various channels available.

Week two – Setting healthy boundaries and conversing on Facebook, with special emphasis on pastors and parents.

Week three – Practical application. How to use Facebook to evangelise, how to manage privacy settings etc. and what you should NEVER do on Facebook!

Week four – What on earth is Twitter and how can I use it?

Booking inquiries can be made by calling Margie Noble at 041 581 5726 or emailing her at info@tcn.org.za. The course fee is R200 and there are 30 places on the course which will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.