



Technology, The Future & The Church

How technology is changing the way we do church
and what we can do about it....

The Challenge

- A young pastor graduating from bible college today may be still ministering in the world of 2050 – but we are still training them for the world of 1950!
- We are still using the frameworks of:
 - *The local parish church
 - *The 1950's nuclear family structure
 - * Lifelong denominational affiliation
 - *A certain “standard” set of pastoral problems
- In a world that is now mobile, urbanized, multi-cultural, globalized, fragmented, and awash in powerful technology that is their primary source of information.
- And which is facing significant future challenges from bio-technology, information technology, and a whole new way of “being connected” (to both good and evil).
- There are a whole new set of pastoral problems that just “weren't there” in 1950!!



Technology Is Changing Pastoring

- Some current technology issues:
- Information overload
- Pornography addiction
- The 'always connected' youth
- People who live their whole life playing video games or who dwell in a virtual reality world
- Satanic online games / role playing
- "Church" on Facebook / Internet
- Cult recruitment online
- False doctrine online
- Privacy issues, scams,
- Internet dating & cyberspace contribution to marriage breakdown



Technology & Your Church

- 85% of young people will check your church website before even considering visiting your building
- Your people are getting their doctrine online and are keeping up with prophecy and world events online
- Your people are getting pastoral advice and counsel online
- Your people are getting their worship music and having their worship experience online
- Your people are doing their private thinking online: about medical issues, politics, the Bible, spirituality, about 1/4 of people get saved online
- People are making their commitments online: to a church, mission, bible college, who to give their tithe to, or even who to marry.



Don't Be An Ostrich!

- “This is too difficult, I will just ignore it, besides Jesus is coming soon, so I will just wait for the Rapture...”
- BUT the problem is ALREADY HERE.....
- 37% of pastors are struggling with Internet pornography
- Many divorces now involve pornography as a factor (2/3??) and “Internet affairs”
- False doctrine is rampant
- Money for the Kingdom is being siphoned off by scams
- The “ostrich response” is a very poor model
- The “ostrich” response is like the shepherd ignoring the wolf!



Possible Issues in 2025...

- How do you pastor a human clone?
- How do you even get people to a church building when they can “do a church service” in a virtual reality environment
- How do you pastor people who are hyper-sexualized from childhood and have ready access to powerful sexual stimuli?
- How do you share Christ in a world of universal surveillance?
- What if the gerontologists are right and we will all soon be living over 100 and possibly to 120 or even more?



Good Technology



- The first Spirit-filled person in the Bible was a craftsman – Bezalel who built the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 31 & 36)
- Jesus was a carpenter and so using tools and creating objects must not be sinful.
- Ezekiel’s vision of God dwelling above “the wheels” of a huge spiritual machine “for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels” (Ezek. 1)
- Good craftsmanship is always praised in the Bible because God gives wisdom and diligence to people so they can apply it.
- Technology can be used for good purposes such as construction, medicine, crisis relief etc.
- Good technology blesses people and glorifies God “that they may have life and have it more abundantly”

Evil Technology



- However technology often arises out of rebellion e.g. Cain's descendants who became inventors and technologists.
- Evil technology includes instruments of torture, idols, massive images of dictators, and things created to deceive and enslave people. “The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy”.
- The image of the Beast – “given breath” (artificial intelligence) able to speak (artificial speech) and able to kill all who do not worship it. (Rev 13:15)
- Ancient temples often had tricks to make the idol appear alive
- Evil technology creates fear and dominance and denies the existence of the Creator God so people worship the creature rather than the Creator.

How Should The Church Respond?

- **The Amish** – ban technology
- **Ostrich** – pretend it isn't there
- **Virtual Church** – churches online
- **Conspiracy Theorist** – fear technology
- **Televangelist** – for self-glorification and \$
- **Consumer** – uncritical adoption
- **Madison Avenue** – make the gospel into an easy-to-communicate “product” or message, throw out the awkward and unmarketable bits. Aim for “buy-in”.



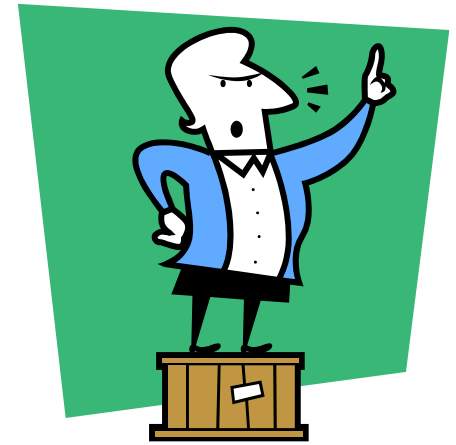
A Possible Godly Response

- Maintain the message (esp. of the Cross)
- Don't oversimplify the Gospel or commercialize it
- Use some technology & use it well
- Create genuine face-to-face community
- Offer a compelling competing reality to the virtual world. Relationships!!!!
- Have a strong pro-life ethical foundation
- Know what is going on
- Fight isolation, selfishness and addiction
- Provide blocking software and other easy technological solutions, educate people on how to avoid scams etc
- Get experts (in your denomination or seminary) to teach on these issues.



Teaching On Technology

- There are no bible verses that directly talk about computers, avatars, clones etc.
- Use **passages that contain principles** about purity, addiction, foolish lifestyle choices, idolatry, identity, covetousness, discernment of good and evil etc.
- Provide big picture frameworks:
 - Cool vs. Holy; Godly Identity vs. Branding
 - The ethical use of power
 - Renewing the mind, not just filling it
 - Taking control of your lifestyle
- Teach people how to be led by the Spirit and by the voice of God speaking through the Bible and through their conscience.
- Show the consequences of their choices
- Raise the issues, talk about them, be aware



Competing With Technology

- The media and the Internet will soon totally dominate areas such as information delivery and entertainment – even in spiritual areas!
- Your people can get doctrine, bible teaching, and even “life application” from TV, radio, websites, books, DVDs, and seminars – without ever setting foot in your church!
- Churches built on “church-as-theatre”: information delivery + entertainment model, will not be able to compete. A good sermon and a great worship team won’t hold people for long any more
- The unique product of the local church is godly presence, the anointing, relationships, community, love, exhortation, discipleship and encouragement, & long-term emotional safety.
- Christians have loads of information but they are dying inside and are feeling lost and neglected.



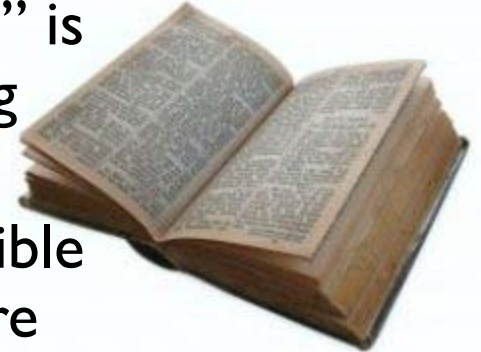
One-Another-Ministry

- People are lonely, are crying out to be heard and desperately want real community
- Technology is creating vast loneliness
- The NT has 33 “one-another” commands: love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another etc.
- A church that actually “does” these commands will create disciples that can withstand temptation and will give accountability in a mixed up world.
- It will meet a real hunger and a real unmet need. Love will cause people to grow.
- Requires trust in lay leadership as this is far beyond what a pastor can do alone.



The Role Of The Bible

- The Bible as mere “spiritual information” is not working and people are not growing much from just “learning”
- The local church and relationship: the Bible in living context, spoken to people where they are at by people who love them and who pray for them.
- Inspiration not just information, Spirit and life, conviction, Living Promises.
- The Word made personal
- Biblical apologetics to clarify the mixed up belief systems that so many people have absorbed from the world.



Technology That Blesses The Church

- Send out prayer points
- Validate your Church to enquirers and donors
- Assistance for the disabled in services
- Put complex church information online
- Hold discussions about church life
- Contact pastors, elders and counselors
- Advertise church events
- Network with others
- Make the local church into a global presence
- Share the gospel – locally and overseas
- Provide resources for new believers



Some Final Thoughts

- The Internet can be your fishing Net
- People don't drive around looking for churches - they Google - unless you are online you simply will not "exist"
- Up to 50% of your pastoral problems will involve their interaction with technology (at some level)
- Technology is the ocean in which your ministry will either sink or swim
- You can't ignore the avalanche
- The parish church is now the multi-cultural networked church

