THE PROPER PLACE FOR TECHNOLOGY

Posted on June 28, 2017 by Eddie

In which I let someone else do the ranting.... mostly. What is the place of technology in mission?
Category: Observations

What follows is a stream of tweets by Skye Jethani; I just wish that I had written them.

https://twitter.com/SkyeJethani/status/880072461500514306

> *Folks are flipping out about Mark Zuckerburg saying Facebook can replace the church by connecting & leading people, but is he wrong?*
>
> *Facebook gives us the impression of community without all of the drawbacks of actual human interaction. We can carefully manage our image...*
>
> *...and only "friend" those we agree with. It puts us in control. It also give us immediate access to an incredible about of information.*
>
> *The downside of social media & tech is that it dis-incarnates us & ultimately cannot satisfy our deepest longings for human connection.*
>
> *Of all people we Christians ought to recognize how essential incarnation is; to know that bodies, flesh, & in-person community matters.*
>
> *Sadly, much of the church is just as enamored w/ dis-incarnation as Zuckerberg. This is due, ironically, to our commitment Christ's mission.*
>
> *Evangelicals in particular have believed that message alone matters & medium is irrelevant. That's why they're eager to employ any & all...*
>
> *...vehicles for communicating the gospel. Radio, TV, t-shirts, bumper stickers, gum wrappers, political parties, ukuleles, etc.*
>
> *They say the medium is neutral & only the content of the message matters, but this is so easily shown to be utterly false. For example...*
>
> *We'd all agree that I can destroy my marriage with only the internet, but can I have a healthy marriage with only the internet?*
>
> *That silly example shows the medium of the web is capably of great harm but only limited good. In other words, medium matters.*
>
> *So, when I see church leaders enthusiastically embrace all tech as neutral tools for ministry/mission, do they understand the implications?*
>
> *Tech offers us the illusion of omnipresence. It allows us to escape the physical limitations of our bodies to transport ourselves elsewhere.*
>
> *I no longer have to be present with those near me, or even with my own thoughts, thanks to the phone in my pocket.*

> *They have become totems giving us the god-like power to escape our bodies. This temptation is especially strong for ministers.*
>
> *We have a divinely ordained mission; why shouldnâ€™t we us god-like technology to help us reach more people than we could as embodied pastors?*
>
> *Incarnate ministry is slow. The word is transmitted person-to-person. The care of souls requires us to be physically present. How agrarian.*
>
> *Digital, dis-incarnate ministry means mission can industrialize. Now we can all scale our influence & reach 1,000s via pixels.*
>
> *Dis-incarnate ministry is so much cleaner, so much more efficient, & infinitely more marketable. But is it the way of Jesus?*
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> *When Jesus came to dwell among us he â€œemptied himselfâ€ to take on flesh. He set aside his omnipresence to occupy a physical body.*
>
> *Jesus was not everywhere, doing everything, engaging everyone. He accepted the confinement of a body. Incarnation is necessarily limiting.*
>
> *This is what a minister enamored w/tech fails to recognize. To be human is to accept our incarnate limitations & embrace them as good.*
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> *It means emptying ourselves of the prideful desire to be like God, to be omnipresent, and to resist the lies of technology.*
>
> *Jesus became incarnate to redeem every part of usâ€”mind, soul, and body. Ministry in His name must do the same.*
>
> *Learning the way of Jesus means accepting & embracing our embodied limitations. It also means being physically present w/those we serve.*
>
> *I'm not saying all tech is evil. Heck, I'm tweeting this rant. But we must be aware of it's seduction & the way it dis-incarnates the church*
>
> *Tech temps us to be everywhere, do everything, & engage everyone, but we can miss what God is doing right where we are.*
>
> *Ok- done for now. I welcome your thoughts. What is the proper place of tech in church/mission?*

I think that Skye has hit on something very important here. There is a place for technology in mission, but it must never be used as a way of avoiding human interaction. I become very concerned when I hear that some brand new technological advance will make it possible to multiply mission efforts,

translate more Bibles or perform some other missional miracle.

I wrote this eight years ago...

> *But, even if we could do a Bible translation in twenty minutes, would we really want to? The problem is not getting the word translated, it is getting people to read it and base their lives on it. One of the most important aspects of any translation project is the Godly lives of the translation team demonstrating the reality and relevance of the message long before the words emerge from the printer. As one African church leader put it, â€˜we want to see the Holy Spirit in the lives of the translators long before we see the words Holy Spirit on the pageâ€™. There is a value in speeding up Bible translation, but not at the cost of losing the human and community touch. This is something we westerners with our task orientation find very hard to understand â€“ but the value ofÂ long term relationships trump the speed of Google in the Kingdom!*