

Technology and Theology

Lesson 4: Redeeming Technology

Let's Review

1. The challenge of technology
2. The biblical story of technology—technology as savior vs. savior's use of technology
3. The evaluation of technology
 - a. The Medium is the Message – how someone communicates shapes the content; in other words: the same message but different medium is a lie.
 - i. Radio depersonalizes communications
 - ii. Television cannot communicate seriously
 1. It is designed to amuse, not inform
 2. Presidential Debate is about presentation, not proposals
 3. News Broadcast is meant to entertain, not explain, not analyze
 - iii. So, the first point is that the medium distorts the message
 - b. New Technology changes the environment
 - i. Technology is never inert; it always pushes back against those who use it, and it does so in various but repeated ways.
 1. Each person has a different threshold, a different orientation
 2. ILL: the 50 year old scholar who uses Wikipedia will use it differently than the 14 year old student who has never learned to research.
 - ii. Remember the two extremes?
 1. Instrumentalism – “It’s not guns who kill people; people kill people.”
 2. Determinism – “Television is ruining society”
 3. It’s more complex than that: “Instrumentalism is partially true in the sense that individuals are free to use phones however they please, but determinism also has an element of truth in that society at large tends to use the technology in a certain way [i.e., tendencies]” (87) – How do we navigate this?
 - c. McLuhan’s Tetrad: Technology . . . (Mobile Phones = MPs)
 - i. Amplifies – MPs extend our ability to communicate.
 - ii. Amputates – MPs eliminate need for landlines and our ability to be alone.
 - iii. Retrieves – MPs retrieve the close connection once had in local villages
 - iv. Risks – MPs tempt us to have shallow conversations and relationships
 - v. What about using screen in preaching?
 1. Amplifies? – knowledge of verse or point of the preacher
 2. Amputates? – need for a Bible, need to follow argument
 3. Retrieves? – iconography (use of pictures to teach);
 4. Risks? – losing the typographic mind; it reduces attention spans
 - vi. When Calvary debated putting up a screen, were these questions used?

How do we redeem technology?

1. Let's Remember:

- a. Technology is not inert / harmless. As a creation, it has the potential to become an idol.
- b. The more powerful, the more human, the technology, the more tempting it is
- c. Nothing is more human, impressive than digital technology.

2. Digital technology presents a false gospel.

- a. Creation: The world is filled with things to know, do, explore, etc. In a word **productivity** (i.e., knowledge, communications, information) is good, cool, useful, etc.
- b. Fall: Our finite minds, time, and space keep us from productivity (=knowledge, etc.).
- c. Redemption: Technology is the key to productivity. It is the solution to your problems.
- d. New Creation: If you accumulate the right tools / technology, you'll create a utopia.

3. Digital technology also facilitates other false gospels.

a. Security

- i. Creation: Safety and security are very good.
- ii. Fall: The world is dangerous place; danger is very bad.
- iii. Redemption: Technology can help secure you and keep you safe—(1) you will never be lost; (2) you can protect your bank account, home, identity, and public image by means of various apps; (3)
- iv. New Creation: Through technology, your goal of security and safety can be achieved.

b. Sex / Marriage

- i. Creation: Sex (marriage) is very good.
- ii. Fall: Lack of sex (lack of marriage) is bad.
- iii. Redemption: Having sex (getting married). Technology can help—pornography; virtual reality; match-making; hook-ups; etc . . .
- iv. New Creation: Sex without consequences

4. What is our response?

- a. Get rid of technology (and hope we die before it gets too bad)
- b. Give into technology (and hope we die before it gets to bad)
- c. Be wise with technology = have critical instincts (Tim Challies)
 - i. Yes, but where do those instincts come from?
 - ii. Yes, but how do we be wise without adopting a critical spirit?

5. Define technology by an explicitly Christian worldview

- a. Creation – God made a good world
- b. Fall – Creation is treated as God; we enthrone various things over God
- c. Redemption – God has come to redeem us from the world
- d. New Creation – God, with tools (the cross), will recreate heaven & earth, flesh & blood.

6. We need to think about technology at each of these levels

John Dyer's Technology Tetrad

	Positive	Negative
Unintentional (Passive)	1. Reflection [Creation]	4. Restoration [New Creation]
Intentional (Active)	3. Redemption	2. Rebellion [Fall]

1. Positive – those things we ought to do more and more

a. Increase Reflection –reflecting God in our creation-making

- i. We can praise God when he confirms the work of our hands
- ii. We can praise God for good inventions, even by non-Christians
- iii. We can praise God for common grace—the universal gift that God gives to Xians and Non-X's to make culture better (e.g., good governors, learned teachers, healing doctors, police protectors)

b. (Once Redeemed) Cooperate in Redemption – cultivate, subdue, rule

- i. We should labor to find ways to reflect God
 1. Engineer at Valeo – study the 'light of God' as you make light
 2. Doctor – what does it mean that God is healer?
 3. Teacher – how did Jesus teach? Learn from Scripture.
- ii. We should see problems in our work/world as ways to serve others.
- iii. We should model a kind of order, love, and excellence that spurs others on to love and good deeds
 1. McDonald's lobby vs Chick-Fil-A drive-thru
 2. Plumber, electrician, painter – ethical standards; apprentices

2. Negative – those things we do with technology that we ought to crucify

a. Beware of Rebellion – misusing technology for our selfish interests

- i. Beware of how technology / creation presses on you
- ii. Beware of how technology invites idolatry
- iii. Beware of tendencies in your tools that make you less like Jesus

b. Flee from Restoring Utopia – putting hope in technology as a savior

- i. When technology lets you down, confess your dependence on that “thing” instead of God.
- ii. When technology comes to an end, confess your need for God.

3. Questions (derived from Dyer, *From the Garden to the City*, 180–82)

- a. **Reflection:** How does this tool reflect God? How does it help me serve God, or cultivate/keep the earth?
- b. **Rebellion:** What tendencies does this tool produce in me? How could I misuse this tool? What safeguards do I need to put in place?
- c. **Redemption:** What areas of the fall can this tool help me overcome? How can I use this to relieve misery? Proclaim true, goodness, and beauty?
- d. **Restoration:** In what ways am I trusting in this device that I should be trusting in God? Am I hoping singularly in the new creation, or am being impatient?

Thinking About Technology

Do you see how our critical thinking must be informed by the Biblical Story?

1. We must *THINK* about technology . . . and not just accept the newest thing.
 - a. **Prov 14:12**: There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.
 - b. **Prov 4:5–9**: Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. ⁶Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. ⁷The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. ⁸Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. ⁹She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”
2. We must think *CRITICALLY* about technology . . .
 - a. **Proverbs 18:17**. The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.
 - b. **2 Cor 10:5–6**: We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.
3. We must think critically *ON THE BASIS OF THE GOSPEL*.
 - a. **Rom 12:1–2**: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - b. **Acts 20:26–27**. I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.
4. Questions to ask:
 - a. How can I reflect God with this _____ ?
 - b. How does *MY* sin tempt me to misuse this _____ ?
How does _____ tempt me to sin?
 - i. Repent
 - ii. Trust the Gospel
 - iii. Rest in the only technology you need
 - c. How can I use _____ to glorify God?
 - i. How can amplify its good?
 - ii. How can I minimize its amputations?
 - iii. How can I retrieve what is good? Or reduce its bad?
 - iv. How can I guard against risks?
 - d. Does this technology lead me to self-reliance or Christ’s return?

Case Studies: Television

1. How can I reflect God with this **television**?

- a. In watching a good story, I can experience various emotions
- b. In keeping up with a television show, I can delight in a well-turned plot
- c. In watching God's imago dei, I can have greater love for them (or hatred)

2. How does *MY* sin tempt me to misuse this **television**?

- a. Escapism—tempts me to escape reality
- b. Impure thoughts—impure images, wrong
- c. Coveting—too many real estate, too much HGTV = materialism
- d. Fear – too much news watching can increase anxiety

How does **television** tempt me to sin?

- a. Advertising—materialism, sexual impurity, leisure
- b. Programming—glorifies all kinds of vice; promotes worldly virtues
- c. Formatting—it reduces linear thinking, critical thinking; it aims at emotions
- d. Re-virtuing—like gerrymandering, television redraws my moral map (ILL: homo)

3. Gospel

- a. Repent of my reliance on TV (as a savior); repent of folly for being led astray
- b. Trust the Gospel—story of Christ is sufficient
- c. Rest in the only technology you need—the bloody cross and empty tomb

4. How can I use **television** to glorify God?

- a. How can amplify its good? (what is good?)
 - i. Good: Television is good for amusement, storytelling,
 - 1. Watch good stories
 - ii. Good: Television is for information
 - 1.
- b. How can I minimize its amputations? (what does it amputate?)
 - i. Amputates relationships with people
 - 1. I can watch with others—but beware of what you watch
 - 2. I can limit my watching
 - 3. I can change the architecture of my home
 - ii. Amputates reading and talking—I can put a higher value on books, praying, conversation
 - iii. Amputates critical thinking skills
- c. How can I retrieve what is good?
 - i. I can refuse channel-surfing; I can select movies from library
 - ii. I can use it for instruction, good story-telling, occasional entertainment
- d. How can I guard against risks?
 - i. Boundaries: Time constraints, limit channels, fast, eliminate altogether
 - ii. Know its tendencies: for amusement, not education; affects emotions, doesn't inform minds (ILL: Iranian War = why the conflict? What's an Ayatollah?)
- e. Does **television** lead me to sin or my Savior? (Must know its medium tendencies)

Case Studies: Facebook

1. How can I reflect God with **Facebook**?
 - a. Care and concern for the Imago Dei
 - b. Use words to express love, approval, encouragement
2. How does *MY* sin tempt me to misuse **Facebook**?
 - a. People pleasing: Look for approval or evaluate myself on the number friends I have
 - b. Lust: Look for illicit pictures or make friends for sordid pleasure
 - c. Diversion: Like TV, FB can be a singular waste of time.

How does **Facebook** tempt me to sin?

- a. Time wasting: All the games, pictures, stories, likes, and comments can take hours.
 - b. [The Anti-Social Network](#): Believe everyone is happier, better off, or more in love
 - c. Lying: Presenting my life as more glamorous or newsworthy than it really is.
 - d. Coveting: Not stuff (as in television) but relationships!
 - e. Personal neglect: It's more fun/rewarding to FB, than to talk to my spouse.
 - f. Infidelity: Picking up old relationships, that should be buried by time and space!
3. The Gospel
 - a. Repent from ways you've misused FB.
 - b. Trust the Gospel. You are not saved by rightly using FB, but by trusting Christ.
 - c. Rest in the only technology you need—the cross of Christ!
4. How can I use **Facebook** to glorify God?
 - a. How can I amplify **Facebook's** good? (What's good?)
 - i. Stay in touch with friends
 - ii. It improves real-life interaction—I don't need details of life; I can comment on those and get at the heart of people
 - iii. I can promote worthwhile causes, articles, or prayer requests.
 - b. How can I minimize **Facebook's** amputations? (What does it amputate)
 - i. It amputates real life connections – We deceive ourselves into thinking online is as good as real life – see **2 John 12**
 - ii. It amputates room to heal – in the case of divorce, broken relationships
 - c. How can I retrieve what is good? (What does it retrieve?)
 - i. A global village. Keeping up with family, friends, classmates.
 - ii. Speed of news.
 - d. How can I guard against risks? (What are the risks?)
 - i. Too much information. Overloaded by
 - ii. Too personal information (“TMI”)
 - iii. Inability to react—(1) video of Kurdish refugees and (2) invitation to FarmTown
5. Does this technology lead me to self-reliance or Christ's return?
 - a. Am I looking for who likes me, or am I trusting in Christ's approval?
 - b. Do I read comments so often I could quote them, but spend little time memorizing God's words to me?
 - c. When I have a hard day do I resort to *Facebook*, or do I rest in this fact: Christ is coming again!