

Canada Conference – The Theology of Technology

Actual session title: **Technology, New Media, and the Church**

I feel totally unqualified to do this session because our church is certainly not “cutting edge” in using technology – but I think having this discussion at this juncture in our movement is incredibly important, even critical.

Furthermore, I think many times the “pros” so intimidate us that we all leave a session like this either discouraged or feeling like it is irrelevant to us – so maybe it’s a good thing to hear about this from an amateur!

Also, I know that using technology that is “new” to us feels awkward sometimes – it’s awkward at first to worship with a screen. But if we will allow it to work, it will work! (i.e. BOTT simulcast, Harvest Bible College, services with Faith Sanctuary and Belleville, Ontario’s LTC class, service with Dartmouth, prayer with missionaries, Singapore’s PI classes, etc.). The Holy Ghost is EVERYWHERE, so God can work ANYWHERE.

So, let’s try to anchor “technology” into our “theology” as we begin ...

The greatest danger is always at the edge (where the church meets the culture). But so is the greatest opportunity for rescue and redemption. The New Testament church always lived “on the edge” – never safe, just one step from disaster if God didn’t intervene! Jude felt the tension:

Jude 1:22-24 [22] And of some have compassion, making a difference: [23] And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. [24] Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

The problem with living on the edge is that some people try to push you over and other people try to pull you back. It’s dangerous on the edge – people actually fall off the edge from time to time! But there is absolutely no chance for the church to impact our culture unless we get on the edge! Almost all of the growth in any church comes from the edge, because the trend is for Christians to disconnect from unsaved people the longer they are around church.

Matthew 11:19 Behold ... a friend of publicans and sinners.

1 Corinthians 9:22 I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Jesus and Paul were not isolationists! They engaged their culture!

Missionary C.T. Studd said, “Some want to live within the sound of Church or Chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.

That’s the spirit of Jude, of Paul, of Jesus, of the New Testament church! WE HAVE TO GET “OUT THERE” AND REACH THEM! And we have to do it as quickly, as efficiently, and as effectively as possible.

Let’s talk about “technology and the church” – we want to use everything, every possible technology at our disposal to reach the world with the gospel. Since 70% of North Americans never attend a church of any kind, we can’t just pray that they will show up at our buildings someday.

I am not attempting in any way to revisit or score points with brethren on any side of the “TV issues” of our past. In fact, TV broadcasting is fast becoming an obsolete technology. Survey after survey shows that our younger members prefer the interactivity of the Internet hands down.

- It took 38 years for radio to attract 50 million listeners.
- It took 13 years for television to attract 50 million viewers.
- It took 34 years for the telephone to attract 50 million customers.
- It took just 4 years for the Internet to attract 50 million users.

The Internet is the “new technology” that the church needs to utilize!

From the book “Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith” (by Shane Hipps) ...

We often refer to “the media” and think of TV channels, magazines, radio stations, newspapers, books, and the Internet. But even this definition is too limited. “Media” comes from “medium” which is defined as anything that stretches, extends, or amplifies some human capacity.

- The wheel is an extension of the foot’s function
- The telephone is an extension of the ear’s function
- Eyeglasses are an extension of the eye’s function
- Smoke detectors are an extension of the nose’s function
- Tools are an extension of the hand’s function
- Sermon notes are an extension of the brain’s function

(So we all use MEDIA of some kind!) This is the **FIRST dimension of media** – it amplifies or extends human ability or capacity.

The **SECOND dimension of media** is that every new medium makes an older technology irrelevant or obsolete. To make something irrelevant or obsolete does not make it disappear; it simply changes the function of the older artifact (i.e. horse and buggy now a nice novelty).

The **THIRD dimension of media** is that there is nothing new under the sun – every new medium retrieves some experience or medium from the past (i.e. surveillance camera serves function of medieval city walls).

The **FOURTH dimension of media** is the most difficult to see – every medium, when pushed to an extreme, will reverse on itself, revealing unintended consequences. (i.e. automobile crashes, internet overload, spam!). By understanding what thing from the past a medium retrieves, we can better anticipate its reversal (i.e. medieval walls trapped people inside when fire erupted, and surveillance cameras invade privacy, functioning like a prison). There are 4.2 million surveillance cameras in Britain, one for every 14 people, and the average Londoner can be caught on camera some 300 times a day in going about his routine.

We need to be careful that the MEDIA, when used positively to change our METHOD, doesn't negatively change our MESSAGE!

To change a method doesn't mean eliminating everything that is old, but rather incorporating the old within the new. Notice that Israel did two contrasting things when they left Egypt:

Exodus 13:19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

Joseph's bones were the tangible symbol of the Hebrews' history, prompting them to never forget the struggle that brought them freedom.

- **C.B. Dudley** – no education, but prayed hundreds through to the baptism of the Holy Ghost
- **Ralph Reynolds** – sent out a letter raising funds to start a new church the week before he died
- **A.V. Larsen** – died an agonizing death from cancer, but died praying “a people for his name in the province of Quebec”

Exodus 3:21 And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty.

Israel also plundered the Egyptians when they left – they used the inventions of the Egyptians to do the will of God in their own nation!

We need to do what Ezekiel did (Ezekiel 37) – we need to make those old bones live! Use every bit of modern technology and method we can, but keep ourselves tied to our heritage, making it come alive! I may use the technology of a new generation, but I have the “bones” of the pioneers in me! **I want to make those bones live in my generation!**

The majority of the world's six billion people are lost without Jesus Christ. There are still over 2000 unreached people groups in the world. Nearly 1/3 of the world doesn't even have a visible witness for Christ. **Four words best describe the lost: Asian, Islamic, Urban, Youth**

Internet outreach from CCC ...

Alicia – came to church via webcast, ready to be baptized in first service
Reuben – refilled with the Holy Ghost watching webcast of worship
Charlie – layman in remote California, teaching and baptizing people
Sunil – aircraft technician in India, saved and heading for Bible School

At today's rate of change, technology will experience 20,000 years of growth in this century. Skills our students are learning in elementary school will be obsolete by their graduation. The top ten jobs in Canada today didn't exist in 2004. The future is accelerating – that is a problem, but that is also an incredible opportunity for the church!

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, **your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:**

Acts 2:16-17 ¹⁶But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and **your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:**

TWO IMPORTANT REVIVAL PRINCIPLES

- **DREAMS vs. VISIONS:** Joel said that in the last days revival, the role of the older generation will be DIFFERENT than the role of the younger generation. (not less important, just different!)
- **SOWING vs. REAPING:** Peter REVERSED the prophecy to show that when the promise is fulfilled the vision of the young will step to the forefront, supported by the dreams of the elders.

Many times in Scripture, the words “dream” and “vision” are used interchangeably; in this context, there is a distinct difference in emphasis:

- **DREAM:** from the Hebrew root CHALAM, which also means “to restore to health, to be strong, to be healthy” (DREAMS HAVE TO DO WITH THE PAST) – **our dream is our MESSAGE, which has to stay “strong and healthy”**
- **VISION:** from the Hebrew root CHAZAH, which also means “to perceive with the intelligence, to see by experience” (VISIONS HAVE TO DO WITH THE FUTURE) – **our vision is our METHOD, which has to correctly “perceive” our generation**

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV) Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

David and Solomon are one of the Bible's best examples of this "generational transfer" from the older generation's dream to the younger generation's vision.

DAVID	SOLOMON
Was a DREAMER who took a group of people who had been ruled by Saul and fashioned them into a HEALTHY kingdom	Was a VISIONARY who took an already healthy kingdom and wisely PERCEIVED how to make it an even more influential kingdom
A man of war	A man of peace
David was known for WORSHIP (experience was the critical element in his day)	Solomon was known for WISDOM (knowledge was the critical element in his day)
David battled the house of Saul (manmade religion) to establish his kingdom	Solomon battled Adonijah (a rebellious brother not willing to follow the will of his father David)

David's kingdom achieved its golden age under Solomon's rule, but there wouldn't have been a Solomon with a David!

The world has accepted the Apostolic EXPERIENCE in the last century (we won that battle!); now it's time for them to accept Apostolic TRUTH!

TWO CAUTIONS FOR SOLOMON:

- Inherited wealth
- Heathen marriage

Deuteronomy 6:10-14 ¹⁰And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, ¹¹And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; ¹²Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. ¹³Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. ¹⁴Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;

The last days revival will be bigger than any of us realize!

Amos 9:12 (KJV) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

God is going to do a quick and powerful work with the younger generation. Elders, don't be disturbed – be delighted!

Romans 9:28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

Matthew 20:12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

When the last days revival occurs in its fullness, EVERYONE will be glad AND THE DREAMERS WHO HELD ON TO THEIR DREAM WILL BE VINDICATED!

Psalm 126:1-6 ¹ When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, **we were like them that dream.** ²Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. ³The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. ⁴Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. ⁵**They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.** ⁶He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

I'm not saying that the Internet (or any technology) is the sole answer to worldwide revival. Revival still comes with a heavy spiritual price tag.

But I am saying to my younger colleagues that it is God who has put the VISION in your heart to try new METHODS to preach the gospel.

And I am saying to my older colleagues that it is God who put the DREAM in your heart many years ago of taking the Apostolic MESSAGE to every corner of the nation of Canada, and the world.

And I am saying again to my younger colleagues that we can't discard any part of our MESSAGE in an attempt to stay relevant in our methods.

And I am saying finally to my older colleagues that, in spite of a TINY number of rebels who crop up in EVERY generation (past, present and future!), your younger brethren honor you and – even more so – honor the message you have passed to us. So don't be afraid of, critical of, or intimidated by the new METHODS that they want to try.

After all, they are only trying to do for their generation what you did for your generation ... to facilitate the revival that God WILL send in the last days ... we are standing on your shoulders ... this is YOUR revival too!