



FlickeringPixels

HOW TECHNOLOGY SHAPES YOUR FAITH

Christianity is fundamentally a communication event. The religion is predicated on God revealing himself to humanity. God has a habit of letting his people know something about his thoughts, feelings, and intentions. God wants to communicate with us, and his media are many: angels, burning bushes, stone tablets, scrolls, donkeys, prophets, mighty voices, still whispers, and shapes traced in the dirt.

Any serious study of God is a study of communication, and any effort to understand God is shaped by our understanding-or misunderstanding-of the media and technology we use to communicate.

The church has a history of resisting methodological changes.

Media and technology are kind of like Stretch Armstrong: they extend our reach-our words, sounds, images, and even our selves,-beyond our normal limits.

There are four dimensions to all media:

- amplification or extension
- every new medium makes an older technology irrelevant or obsolete
- every new medium retrieves some experience or medium from the past
- every medium, when pushed to an extreme, will reverse on itself, revealing unintended consequences.

There is one expression that's true for everyone-we become what we behold. That is to say, our thinking patterns actually mirror the things we use to think with.

The technology of printing has helped erode the communal nature of faith.

The Internet encourages only the knowledge-gathering stage without considering coordination or meaningful connections.

If we are not alert, the Information Age may stunt our growth and create a permanent puberty of the mind.

Images initially makes us feel rather than think. This is why image-based advertising is so effective.

People saturated in image culture are beginning to prefer metaphors like gardening, dialogue, or dancing for describing evangelism.

Electronic culture disembodies and separates us from the closest to us. Most of us are quite unaware of this phenomenon and, in fact, believe our technology is bringing us closer.

Intimacy happens the moment we are invited into the exclusive VIP room of another person's life. The exclusivity of personal information creates the conditions of intimacy. That intimacy is preserved in that relationship as long as the information remains exclusive.

Virtual community is infinitely more virtual than it is communal. Authentic community involves high degrees of intimacy, permanence, and proximity. While relative intimacy can be gained in virtual settings, the experiences of permanence and proximity have all but vanished.

Reconciliation comes in the context of clear communication, meaningful listening, shared understandings, civility, openness, and a lot of patience. We seem to have a growing habit of throwing stones from a safe distance. Anonymous intimacy-and distant hostility-is not only possible, it's encouraged by our culture.

How we disagree matters more than what we disagree about.

Jesus understood the intimate connection between the methods and message, the container and the content.

May we become communities of humility, repentance, authenticity, and hope.