

UNPLUGGED: IMAGING GOD IN A HIGH TECH WORLD

Gardening in God's Image

In the beginning God planted a garden and He put us in it: “Fill the earth and subdue it! Tend and care for this garden planet as I tend and care for you.” When we garden God’s way, we mirror His image to all creation. “And God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.”

The call to cultivate lies behind culture, while the commission to subdue the world requires study and technique—the foundation for science and technology. It’s no coincidence that the Biblical story starts in a garden and ends in a landscaped city. Science and technology are part of God’s plan to bless the world and reflect His image. And to varying degrees, as God sees the tools we use and the culture we’ve made, He still pronounces it “very good.”

The issue is *how* we journey from the garden to the city. On that tragic day when we ate the forbidden fruit, technology became both a blessing and a curse. Would our science care for or consume this garden planet? Do our devices draw us into God’s presence, or depress our desire for His Kingdom? Would our techniques to form and transform the world *magnify or mutilate the image of God in us?*

Buttons or Zippers? Like the Amish drawing a line between what their community endorses or eschews, any distinction sounds like semantics: “Eftpos and Email are in, but Twitter and TV are out.” There are no easy answers. But have we unplugged for long enough to get a fresh perspective? Do we unthinkingly upgrade with the crowd? Can we hear God’s still small voice calling us to be a counterculture? WWJD?

How would Jesus live in this kind of world? If we’re seriously about following Jesus and seeking first His Kingdom, then how should we live in an electronic environment?

How do we image God in a high tech world? It’s time to get unplugged.

Panel Perspectives on Technology Gone Right

Brendan White: Lawyer in the Department of Public Prosecutions

Sue Chapman: Professional Actress, Educator, and Full-Time Parent

Bec White: Student and Nurse with a heart for Developing Nations

Dietmar Hutmacher: Professor of Regenerative Medicine (QUT)

Tammy White: PhD Candidate in Clinical Psychology (UQ)

Dave Benson: Pastor of Evangelism and Community Outreach

¹ *Want a Small Group Guide for this talk, with activities, discussion questions, thought provoking articles, and full notes?* Check out <http://logos.kbc.org.au/blog/resources/logos-talks/unplugged/>.

Technology has been a blessing. But sometimes we need an “out-of-water” experience to assess the electronic ocean in which we all swim. As you engage with the following perspectives, consider your own use of technology. Does it magnify or mutilate the image of God in you? How would Jesus have you live?

Dietmar on Medical Technology ... Humility vs. Pride?

How does my use of medical technology encourage either *humility* or *pride*?

Is my foundational trust placed in the regenerative work of Christ as Saviour, or is my faith invested in man-made solutions?

Does my use of technology develop virtue and character, or does it foster a desire to control the external world while I stay the same?

Brendan on Constant Noise ... Transformation vs. Information?

How does my use of technology encourage either *transformation* or *information*?

How much “noise” do I willingly expose myself to every day? How and when do I “unplug” to hear the still small voice of God?

Do my daily patterns foster engagement with the world and connection with God toward transformation, or am I more prone to distraction and disengagement? WWJD?

Sue on Family and Television ... Connect vs. Fracture?

How does my use of technology either *connect* or *fracture* my closest relationships?

What short and long term effects might it have on my family to switch off the ‘idiot box’?

To some degree we become what we watch: we begin to reflect both the medium containing the message, and the character traits of the ‘stars’. As a family, then, do we use technology to bring up a generation of jaded kids whose purpose is to be entertained, or a generation of hopeful kids whose purpose is to love, connect and serve?

Bec on Engaging with a Hurting World ... Serve vs. Self-Serve?

How does my use of technology encourage me to either *serve* or *self-serve*?

In what specific ways has technology affected my awareness of *and* responsiveness to this world's needy people, reflecting "God's preferential option for the poor"?

"Redemption is fast, but technology is slow." Or, in other words, "Character is not built at the push of a button." What does this look like in my life? How could I reverse this trend?

Tammy on "How Much is Too Much" ... Freedom vs. Addiction?

How does my use of electronic technology encourage either *freedom* or *addiction*?

What am I like when my technology is taken away? What world are we opening up for our kids? How can I find *moderation*? What dangers have I found lurking on the World Wide Web?

1 Corinthians 6, 8, and 10 offers a helpful frame to assess our use of technology such as Internet, Facebook, iPhone, and Multiplayer Games. *We are free to do anything, but ...*

Is my use beneficial, or does it dominate my life and time? (6:12)

Does my use cause another to stumble? (8:13)

Does my use build others and myself up, all for the glory of God? (10:23-24, 31-33)

(Remember, Christ came to set us free, so don't become slaves again to anything: John 8:31-36, Galatians 5:1, 13-26)

Dave on Environmental Waste and Want ... Cultivate vs. Consume?

How does my use of technology and expenditure *cultivate* or *consume* God's creation?

To what degree is our western high tech culture responsible for the mess the world is in? Do my consumption patterns mirror or prophetically challenge the status quo?

God loves the world, and the call to tend and care for His garden planet speaks against unnecessary waste and bloated want. As I recall my most recent high-tech purchases, "Did I really need this?" How might Jesus shape my lifestyle choices toward Godly stewardship?

Imaging God in a High Tech World

In the beginning God planted a garden and He put us in it:

“Fill the earth and subdue it!
Tend and care for this garden planet as I tend and care for you.”
When we garden God’s way, we mirror His image to all creation.

As God looks at your use of technology, does He declare, “It is very good”?

The solution is neither to completely avoid, nor uncritically embrace, all that is high tech. *Christ wants us to be in the world but not of it.* We’re his lights on a hill and we shouldn’t be covered up. We must remember that, historically, technology has introduced just as many problems as it has solved. And the world’s problems—the starvation, wars, slave trafficking—are ultimately issues of the heart. That’s because it’s not technology that makes us evil. It’s not our cars and traffic jams that cause road rage. *It’s us.* It’s sin. Jesus said it’s “what comes out of a man’s heart that makes him defiled.”

Technology may help, but only Christ is the final answer.

In our journey from the garden to the cultivated city, *how will we use technology?*

Does our use magnify or mutilate the image of God in us?

Assess the effect of technology on your life by the *fruit of the Spirit* (Galatians 5:13-25):

Love	Joy	Peace	Patience	
Kindness	Goodness	Gentleness	Faithfulness	Self Control

For the technological mediums you currently use, consider under God how you will develop “*Habits of the High Tech Heart*” (Quentin Schultze):

How can I be more authentic and truthful? (Think Facebook profiles and Tweets.)

How can I practice discernment and moderation? (Think TV, Internet, & Texting.)

*Perhaps it’s time to **unplug** from some technology or media or information so that God’s image will gain greater resolution.* How might you electronically fast, to truly assess how well your use of technology fosters a desire for Christ and His Kingdom (Matthew 6:33)?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. God pronounced that “It is very good!” over all He had created. As God surveys our technological advances, how “good” would He assess it to be today? Explain.
2. In what ways does your use of technology magnify or mutilate God’s image in you?
3. Work back through the questions embedded in each section above.
What most impacted, informed, or challenged you through what was shared?
4. Reflect on how your use of technology leads to either
*Humility or Pride, Transformation or Information, Connection or Fragmentation,
Serving or Self-Serving, Freedom or Addiction, Cultivating or Consuming.*
5. What two changes in your patterns would bring the greatest change for good?
6. As a group, consider one form of technology at a time (e.g. Facebook, texting, chat pages, Blogs, emails, TV, iPhone, Play Station, etc.) and consider how it shapes you in terms of the fruit of the Spirit.
7. Try an electronic fast from one or more high tech mediums this coming week.
Ask God to develop in you a hunger for His Kingdom and His righteousness-justice.