Being Wise with Technology
September 24, 2019

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.
1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

It is a fascinating study of how technology changed society in the past. Consider how important he printing press was. It changed the concepts of passages such as 2 Tim. 2:15 from being something we do as a group to the possibility of being at home and studying. One of the most impactful inventions was the automobile. It made relationships more accessible, and changed the dynamic of families (consider the invention of the family reunion). More importantly, it changed the dynamic of churches; congregations could meet at more random times with membership from further away from the location. But at the same time, it created opportunity for sexual immorality; consider that it changed courtship into dating, and increased promiscuity in our country geometrically.

We are seeing similar changes today with information technology, particularly the smart phone and the internet. Many of those changes are good. We are more able to encourage or contact others. We are able to find information (including spiritual/biblical) immediately. But there are also changes for the worse. We are not speaking about the sins of sexual immorality that lust through pornography or adultery create, but issues that arise as a consequence of technology, not a misuse of it. Engaging in superficial communication is becoming a problem. It leads to less physical interaction, and people being overly expressive of their thoughts and opinions. We need to consider the words of 1 Thes. 5:21-22 and learn to rightly divide how to use these things rightly. Let us consider these seven dangers:

1. Being less physically engaged - 1 Peter 4:7-11. Christians need one another's presence; we need to be around each other and around people in the world so our light can shine.

2. Becoming unable to empathize - Philippians 2:1-11. This new technology is lessening our ability to feel empathy with others. When God looked at the world, He knew He needed to experience life in order to understand and sympathize as a perfect High Priest. We need to be like Jesus: we need to learn by being there.

3. Losing control of our opinions - James 3:1-12. One of the most common complaints about electronic communication is that people say things they would not say face to face. We need to reign in our written words.

4. More reclusive behavior - Hebrews 10:19-25. Technology allows us to work from home, order our needs from home, even have medical treatment at home. Such seclusion breeds a desire for reclusiveness. We need to work to avoid the desire to stay apart; without being with our brethren, we are in danger of losing accountability and angering God.

5. A spirit that keeps others from confession - James 5:16. Social media is used to post the best of who we are. This is a form of superficial relationship communication that sends the wrong message. We need to avoid the desire to post the best of things all the time; otherwise others are less likely to be willing to confess their sins.

6. Only concerned with righteous appearances - Matthew 6:1. Social media also makes it easy to present a person that we are not. Consider the concept of the “avatar”. We create a persona that is not really use to appear more righteous than we are. Technology allows an ease of hypocrisy.

7. Rejecting different brethren - 1 Corinthians 12:22-23. Too often, our social media or smart phone interaction is with like-minded or demographically similar people. We become politically or culturally singular in thought, and there is a strong temptation to only associate with like people. This association in a vacuum causes us to be unable to renew our minds and examine ourselves.

Christians need to make sure that using communication and information technology does not cause us to become handicapped to engaging with each other. We know that in the first century, there were struggles in the church caused by the differences of the people in the church (consider Acts 6:1). One important solution was the idea of spending a great deal of time together (Acts 2:46). We need to WORK at spending time together. This means making some sacrifices of time and energy. It means we need to get out of our comfort zones, get out of our homes and into the lives of our fellow Christians. Technology offers many wonderful benefits; let’s not let the negative consequences render them meaningless.