

Faithfulness to Christ regarding Technology

a compilation

In January 2008 Faith Builders hosted a colloquy focused on developing a Christian understanding of technology. Following some introductory sessions, participants discussed some statements in small groups. We have summarized those statements here, incorporating the small-group discussions. The statements attempt to answer the question “What does faithfulness to Christ in this generation look like?” regarding technology. Most statements are pairs of positive (black) and negative (gray) responses to present the opportunities and dangers that technology offers. This summary is not a formula for dealing with technology, but a starting point for discussion in local churches and church groups.

GENERAL STATEMENTS

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ’s followers and communities will...

- + cultivate an ongoing confidence in God’s ability to guide us by His Spirit in these areas both personally and corporately.
- + redemptively engage the opportunities and challenges of technology.
 - not ignore, ban, or embrace technology thoughtlessly.
- + appreciate/respect technological ingenuity as resulting from the image of God in people.
 - not assume that technological ingenuity represents the highest possible form of human achievement.
- + actively cultivate a Christ-centered, biblical understanding of technology.
 - reject responses to technology that bypass the responsibility of disciples to cultivate renewed minds.
- + use technology as a tool to pursue the values of Christ’s Kingdom.
 - resist the power of technology to control the user.
- + reevaluate our responses to a given technology when we become aware of the unintended consequences.
 - not allow economic advantage or expedience to overrule commitment to Christ.
- + demonstrate that fulfillment and satisfaction in life are found in Christ.
 - resist the notion that fulfillment and satisfaction come from having the latest gadget.
- + define progress and quality of life in terms of growth toward Christlikeness and unity in His body.
 - not define progress as increasing technological sophistication.

EFFECTS ON OUR VIEW OF REALITY

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ’s followers and communities will...

- + cultivate an appreciation for the real world above any virtual world.
 - avoid the comfortable unreality of virtual worlds.
- + embrace God-focused creativity as essential for growth in truth.
 - not equate the whole realm of imagination with reality.

- + reaffirm that living and working close to people and God's creation is an anchor to reality (e.g., gardening, flowers, cutting wood, farming, bird-watching, hiking).
 - admit that absorption in technology tends to skew our grasp of reality.

EFFECTS ON OUR VIEW OF TRUTH

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ's followers and communities will...

- + reaffirm our confidence in Jesus Christ as the Truth (Source and Revealer).
- + reaffirm our confidence in God's self-revelation through Christ and the Scriptures as the most reliable source of truth.
 - recognize the arrogant illusions that easily develop with technological expertise
- + value tradition and community as guides/venues for knowing and understanding truth.
 - resist the chronological snobbery of both "the good ol' days" and "the backward past."
- + recognize that technology's multifaceted engagement of our senses provides special challenges to understanding truth and heightens opportunities for deception.
- + embrace the pursuit of understanding God's self-revelation in creation as consistent with being made in His image and with His command to fill and subdue the earth.
 - resist the notion that Science (the systemic human observation of the human world) is the only system of thought capable of producing truth.

EFFECTS ON OUR USE OF TIME

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ's followers and communities will...

- + seek to participate in appropriate rhythms of work and recreation.
 - resist the deadening distractions of amusements (amuse=not, muse=to reflect).
- + value work and contributing to the community as more satisfying than consumption.
 - not make efficiency, speed, and productivity supreme values.
 - balance efficiency, speed, and productivity with values of relationships, contentment, etc.

EFFECTS ON BELIEFS & VALUES

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ's followers and communities will...

- + rigorously wrestle as communities towards prophetic understanding of our times.
 - not confuse information with understanding.
- + prioritize godly values over technological expertise and innovation.
- + recognize that growth toward understanding and wisdom is often time-consuming and slow and clashes with fast paced values of expedience and efficiency.
- + keep Christ and His Kingdom as the focal point of belief and as the greatest good.
- + value character of material, relationships over possessions, wisdom over knowledge, worship over entertainment, simplicity over sophistication, and serving others over the accumulation of wealth.

EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ's followers and communities will...

- + take personal and corporate responsibility for dwelling on the excellent and avoiding all forms of evil.
 - resist the modern tendency to blame others or conditions (victim mentality).
- + actively disciple each other toward personal transformation (internal character, a renewed mind, godly habits).
 - not rely only on community rules and expectations to control behavior.

EFFECTS ON OUR RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNITY

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ's followers and communities will...

- + give a place of honor and influence to our elders.
 - not regard the aged as irrelevant.
- + value community discussions, agreements, and life as the corporate expression of committed individuals in life-giving relationship.
- + proactively evaluate developments in technology and work toward community consensus as a response.
 - resist thoughtless capitulation to or retreat from developments in technology.
- + demonstrate humility, honor, and respect to other Christian groups who are attempting to engage redemptively with these issues but whose practice differs from our own.
- + pay the price for significant human relationships – the price of presence, time, and effort.
 - resist the reduction of relationships to electronic interaction.

EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ's followers and communities will...

- + create nurturing environments of work, recreation, creativity, and safety for our children in our homes and communities.
 - limit time spent with and content of videos, video/computer games, and other technological diversions.
 - take positive actions to avoid the negative effects a fascination with technology can have on the family – these effects include addictions, poor use of time, disinterest in God's creation, and stymied intellectual development.
- + take seriously the meaning of family loyalty and honor.
 - refuse to accept efficiency as the pre-eminent goal of human relations.
- + consider working together as families sufficient reason to accept less efficient technologies.

EFFECTS ON OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD

Faithfulness to Christ in this generation means that Christ's followers and communities will...

- + reaffirm a commitment to the glory of God and emphasize the place of worship in the Christian community.
 - encourage fasting from forms of technology that are addictive.
 - be watchful for where technology is attempting to avoid God's intended outcomes (e.g., attempts for immortality).
 - reject the mantra "if it can be done it should be done."
 - not make avoidance of suffering or the sustaining of life a highest good.
- + reaffirm of the focus of life's purpose as ongoing acquaintance with God.
- + resist trusting in technology.

Your comments and questions are welcome at [fbep \(at\) fbep.org](mailto:fbep(at)fbep.org).