

CHRISTIANS IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU WILL DO WITH YOUR LIFE?

John Coblenz is an instructor and campus pastor at Faith Builders. His classes include Introduction to Human Understanding, Teaching the Bible, Congregational Church Life, and Ethics. This newsletter includes a segment from "Christians in the Age of Technology," a study that John is writing for churches and small groups. As a starting point to address the impact of technology and our choices regarding it, John suggests that we are not prepared to discuss technology until we seek to align our hearts with love for God and others.

Introduction

Ask any Christian whether God and His kingdom are more important than a new cell phone or computer, and you will likely get the correct answer. We know that God and His kingdom are more important than gadgets. This is what we believe. But will that belief actually guide our choices and direct our behaviors? The disheartening reality is that if we focus primarily on what we believe and neglect the love of our hearts, a huge gap can open between our so-called faith and our actual living.

In this study, we want to think well. We want to generate discussion and come up with creative ideas about the usefulness of technology as well as its dangers. But we want to do so in the context of hearts that are set right. Without a right focus on who and what we love, these studies won't likely make much actual impact on how we follow Jesus in the age of technology.

The number one thing God wants from us is our love. He calls us to set our affection upon Him above all else, to make our devotion to Him supersede all other loyalties, and to worship Him as the highest good in time and eternity. This stance of the heart is according to how things are. God is our loving Creator. He created us to live in relationship with Him. Just as a

car is engineered to drive on prepared roads across the land, not to sail on the sea, so God created us to live in loving, worshipful relationship with Him. If we choose to love ourselves or material things above God, it's like trying to take a car into the surf. However superb the technology of the car, drive it into the water and the engine will die and the car will go down.

And so, God's warning, "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15) is not to keep us from enjoying life. It is to preserve us in life, to keep us from drowning. It's not the fault of things that they don't satisfy us. Our hearts simply were not made to thrive apart from loving commitment to God above all else.

The Impact of Technology in Communication

In the year 2000, I was in Romania and a missionary friend of mine was telling me that when he first served overseas in the 1960s, he was gone from home for two years and had only the occasional letter exchange and no phone contact with his family during that two-year stint. He was lamenting that a group of young people had recently visited their mission from the States, and he was ashamed for his

Romanian accountant to see the phone bill for that month, even though the youths had left money to pay for their use of the phone. Today, of course, they could use their smart phones with an international plan, bypass the long-distance charges, and not only talk, but Skype with family and friends.

Technology has certainly changed communication. We can hardly imagine life without email or cell phones. Phones have enabled us to stay in communication either by voice or by text with nearly anyone at nearly any time of day or night. We can talk, text, fax, Snapchat, Whatsapp, or email. If we want to communicate something visual, we can scan, fax, or take a picture and send it. Even as I wrote this, I was planning to go on an outing with some students. I pulled up a detailed map of the area where we were going and snapped a picture so that I could retrieve it when we got close to our destination. Or I could have entered the address (or coordinates) in my GPS and followed that, complete with vocal directions.

Technology not only changes the means by which we communicate, but it also changes our communication in other ways. We fire off quick questions

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are an example of the discussion prompts that follow each of the 24 lessons in the study of technology and the Christian.

1. How has technology changed your communication in the past two years?
2. Can you give examples of miscommunication you have experienced due to haste or lack of presence?
3. What kinds of communication do you think especially require presence?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of instant communication?
5. Initiate a conversation with someone close to you to evaluate your communication. Ask the person to describe honestly how technology has changed the way you communicate. How do you see these changes in communication affecting your relationship—positively and negatively? Are there communication habits from earlier in your relationship that have been discontinued or replaced? Are there communication habits you enjoy that have been made possible through technology? If you could change something about your friend's communication via technology, what would it be?
6. What is the most annoying habit or action you observe in other people's use of cell phones?
7. What courtesy rules or protocol would you like to see established for cell phone use?

or comments and get quick replies. We grow impatient if we can't contact someone or if we don't hear back immediately. The quick and efficient mentality often shaves off unnecessary letters and words, especially in the texting world.

"Ppl plz turn down ur music b4 u go deaf! Lol!"

"K Thx"

Of course new technology introduces new vocabulary, too. We hear words like selfie, iPhone, fax, smartphone, unfriend, texting, emoji, and techie. It can be difficult to keep up with the new words and terms, especially if one doesn't use the latest communication technology.

While technology has enabled us to connect with each other in unprecedented ways—quickly and across long distances—electronic communication also has its traps. We will discuss these in more detail

later, but words transmitted via text are often written in haste and lack the visual and aural clues that supply the emotional dimensions of communication. A text that says "K" for okay doesn't tell us if the person is happy, sad, disappointed, angry, or excited. This easily results in misreading responses in texts and emails. Furthermore, communicating from a distance provides a layer of protection for those whose intentions are not good.

John Coblentz



This article is part of a larger study of 24 lessons on technology and the Christian.

Each lesson includes discussion prompts (example in left column). We plan to have this study available in the fall of 2019.

Please email clr@fbep.org if you would like us to notify you when the study becomes available.

Christians in the Age of Technology *study outline*

Part I Clarifying Our Values

1. Love for God
2. Love for Others
 - a. Community
 - b. Family
3. Our Mission
 - a. Creation mandate
 - b. The Kingdom of God
 - c. Making disciples

Part II The Impact of Technology

1. Tools
2. Communication
3. Information
4. Entertainment
5. Processing

Part III Identifying the Traps

1. Gadget lust
2. Waste of resources
3. Addiction
4. Self over relationships
5. Sexual snares
6. Escape

Part IV Strategies to Flourish

1. Assessment: ways to evaluate the use of technology
2. Connection: using technology to enhance relationships
3. Creativity: cultivating creativity and ways technology can serve
4. Quiet: strategies to preserve quiet and rest
5. Freedom: breaking bondage when technology has taken control
6. Learning: using technology to grow the heart and mind

This newsletter includes excerpts from "Love for God" and "Communication."

APPLY FOR WINTER TERM!

DECEMBER 31- FEBRUARY 1, 2019

This five-week term offers courses with schedules to serve a variety of students. Courses run from two to five weeks, giving flexibility in your winter plans.

We welcome a range of ages and experience, such as young people seeking spiritual growth and seasoned pastors seeking refreshment and encouragement.

Winter Term courses are designed to deepen and challenge your faith, whatever your season in life.

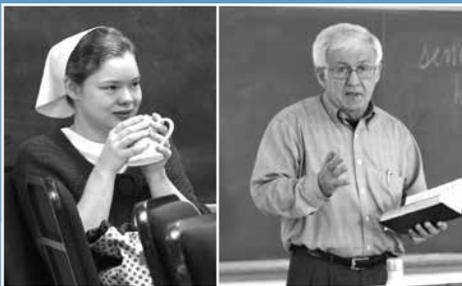
The Sermon on the Mount	Brandon Byler
Women in Service	Barb Coblentz
Becoming One in Marriage.....	John & Barb Coblentz
Understanding Depression.....	John Coblentz
The Kingdom of God.....	Melvin Lehman
Kingdom-Centered Business	Gary Miller
Music Fundamentals.....	Brandon Mullet
Growing into a Godly Woman.....	Marie Mullet
Church Growth	Allen Roth
Women of Faith.....	Carolyn Roth
Understanding Muslims	Chris Stoltzfus

For a full list of courses, instructors, and schedule:

Visit fbep.org/wt

Email fbep@fbep.org

Call (814) 789-4518, ext. 224



OPEN HOUSE AT FB

NOVEMBER 16, 2018, 10:00 AM-6:00 PM

Do you have questions about Faith Builders?

Would you like to see what a student from your church experiences here?

We invite parents, church leaders, and business owners to our fall open house to attend classes, chat with instructors, and tour the school.



REGISTER TO ATTEND

Find more information and register:

www.fbep.org/open-house
(814) 789-4518, ext 224

UPCOMING EVENTS & TERMS

TEACHERS CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 12-14, 2018

Event filled to capacity.

HEART & VOICE

NOVEMBER 16-19, 2018

Men's choir program and recording, Sandy Ridge Mennonite Church, Bourbon, IN

FBTI CHRISTMAS CONCERT

DECEMBER 11, 4:00 PM

WINTER TERM

DECEMBER 31- FEBRUARY 1, 2019

Apply at fbep.org/wt.

ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE & RETREAT

JANUARY 17-19, 2019

Registration opens mid-September at fbep.org/acr.

PLAN TO ATTEND REACH!

MARCH 20-21, 2019

REACH brings together 50 conservative Anabaptist ministries and Kingdom-workers from all walks of life.

Over 100 breakout sessions address those in ministry and those seeking to serve. Ministries share their vision in focus sessions and displays. General assemblies unify the event with worship, messages, and prayer.

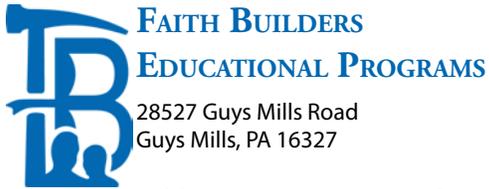
REGISTRATION OPENS LATE FALL

Capacity 2,200

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FAITH BUILDERS NEWSLETTER The Faith Builders newsletter is published quarterly and serves to inform, inspire, and equip its readers. Subscription is free upon request.

FAREWELL

- » The graduates of 2018 demonstrated love and tenacity in their two years here. We bless them as they disperse and invest in the kingdom!
- » We are deeply grateful for the houseparents and seven volunteers who served us generously during the last year.

WELCOME

- » Nineteen new students began two-year studies in August! They joined twenty-one returning students.
- » Seven volunteers have joined us to serve in maintenance, kitchen, bookstore, and housekeeping responsibilities. We wish them a year of rich blessings!

