Understanding the Power and Peril of Technology

Shovel Talk

Imagine you’re driving home after a long day of classes, and you spot a man in a nearby field holding what looks like a shovel. You’re not sure if he’s doing something respectable, like breaking ground on a new ministry building or perhaps something a bit seedier—like burying something he stole from a pawn shop. Being the curious type, you decide to pull over and ask him. “Hey there, what are you making with that shovel?”

He puts down his shovel, lifts up his hands, and shows you his palms. Then he says with a wry smile, “Blisters.”

You’re a little confused, so you ask again. “No, seriously, I wanted to know what you’re doing with that shovel.” He answers, “It doesn’t really matter what I’m doing with it, whether I’m using it for good or evil. Either way, the shovel uses me as much as I use it. The ground gets a hole, and I get blisters.”

Extensions of Man

This little story tells us something surprising about the way tools—from shovels to iPhones—work. Most of us think of technology simply as “neutral tools” that we can choose to use for good or bad purposes. The Internet, we argue, can be used for bad things like pornography and extortion, but it is not inherently bad because it also has many good uses like Bible study and connecting with friends. Nuclear power too can be used for good like cheap power, or evil like destructive bombs. Either way, it’s all about how we use technology. Right?

This view is what philosopher Albert Borgmann calls the “instrumental view” of technology. Marshall McLuhan used slightly stronger language when he said, “Our conventional response to all [technology], namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot” (Understanding Media, 17-18).

The reason McLuhan uses such a colorful description of our typical view is that he sees technology as an “extension of man.” For example, the shovel extends our arms, the wheel and all transportation machines extend our legs, telescopes extend our eyes, and so on. The trouble, McLuhan warned, is that while technology always brings amazing benefits, sometimes we become so dependent on the new tool that it stops functioning as a mere “extension” of our natural abilities and becomes an “amputation” of our humanity. But when we focus exclusively on the morally good and morally bad uses of technology, we miss the subtle unintended transformations that are also taking place.

For example, among the 2,000 students here at DTS there is probably no one who can project his or her voice to an audience of more than a few hundred people. Yet all of them have come for what waits beneath the blue awning—Luke’s Pantry and Closet.

Luke’s Pantry welcomes full-time students who can’t provide enough basic food for themselves or their families. Luke’s Closet, on the other hand, welcomes full-time and part-time students, along with DTS staff.

“Luke’s” (as it’s affectionately called around campus) gets its name from Luke 3:11. Responding to the message of John the Baptist, the Judean crowds ask what they can do to bear fruit worthy of repentance. John answers, “The person who has two tunics must share with the person who has none, and the person who has food must do likewise.” Now according to Dr. Bock’s exegetical commentary on Luke, “just kidding!”

After perusing the Closet or filling out the Pantry’s order form, a student, spouse, or staff member comes face to face with a gracious volunteer. In that moment one can see both the compassion of the Savior in the volunteer’s eyes and thankfulness on the part of the student. But just who are these servants who stand behind Luke’s counter?

Each week through a ministry of presence and meeting needs, Luke’s volunteers remind students of the Father’s care for His children. Mrs. Sally Thor and Mrs. Sonja Rose currently direct Luke’s Closet and Pantry. Sally has served at the Closet for nearly twenty-five years, and Sonja has served at the Pantry for eighteen years. Both started out as weekly volunteers. “Most people, once they start serving here, really don’t want to stop,” said Sally.

Sally and Sonja organize over fifty volunteers and serve one-hundred and fifty DTS families every week. When asked why they continue to serve after all these years, they affirmed both a sense of the Lord’s leading and a genuine enjoyment of their fellowship with volunteers and students—especially international students. According to Sonja, “We feel that we are serving the Lord by serving the students.”

Servants like these—along with the donors—are the lifeblood of Luke’s ministry. Right now Luke’s is looking for more.

Look for the Blue Awning

by Richard B. Morris

It is Wednesday, and the door opens at 10:00 a.m. At 9:59 people of all ages and sizes crowd closer as they wait for the door to open. Some are single, some push strollers, and some drag uncooperative toddlers by the hand. Yet all of them have come for what waits beneath the blue awning—Luke’s Pantry and Closet.

Luke’s Pantry welcomes full-time students who can’t provide enough basic food for themselves or their families. Luke’s Closet, on the other hand, welcomes full-time and part-time students, along with DTS staff.

“Luke’s” (as it’s affectionately called around campus) gets its name from Luke 3:11. Responding to the message of John the Baptist, the Judean crowds ask what they can do to bear fruit worthy of repentance. John answers, “The person who has two tunics must share with the person who has none, and the person who has food must do likewise.” Now according to Dr. Bock’s exegetical commentary on Luke, “just kidding!”

After perusing the Closet or filling out the Pantry’s order form, a student, spouse, or staff member comes face to face with a gracious volunteer. In that moment one can see both the compassion of the Savior in the volunteer’s eyes and thankfulness on the part of the student. But just who are these servants who stand behind Luke’s counter?

Each week through a ministry of presence and meeting needs, Luke’s volunteers remind students of the Father’s care for His children. Mrs. Sally Thor and Mrs. Sonja Rose currently direct Luke’s Closet and Pantry. Sally has served at the Closet for nearly twenty-five years, and Sonja has served at the Pantry for eighteen years. Both started out as weekly volunteers. “Most people, once they start serving here, really don’t want to stop,” said Sally.

Sally and Sonja organize over fifty volunteers and serve one-hundred and fifty DTS families every week. When asked why they continue to serve after all these years, they affirmed both a sense of the Lord’s leading and a genuine enjoyment of their fellowship with volunteers and students—especially international students. According to Sonja, “We feel that we are serving the Lord by serving the students.”

Servants like these—along with the donors—are the lifeblood of Luke’s ministry. Right now Luke’s is looking for more.
From the Editor

Hello again!

We’ve got quite a variety of material in this issue of the Journal—from stories of God’s redemption all the way to something like a theology of bugs. I would like to take a moment and thank my team for making the job of editing the Journal this year a real joy. Andrea, your hard work and deft hand at layout made the rest of us look good. Trevor, your optimism and easy-going pluck helped me have fun all along the way. And Laci, your creativity and gentle spirit have been real blessings. Thanks, guys!

We are always looking for writers and photographers, and we welcome your involvement in the next issue. Check out our guidelines at studentpaper@dts.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

Greg Rhodea

Chronically Single

by Trevor Main

I am a seminary student. I have a direction for life after school. I pray real hard and eat all my vegetables. So why am I not in a relationship? I couldn’t dream of a better marriage factory than seminary, and newlyweds come hot off the presses each year. Yet the machine hicups every time I come down the line.

This is a real problem for a guy going into ministry, because churches rarely take single men seriously. Their minds go blank when they read anything about the marital status of Jesus or Paul. Instead, they pledge their allegiance to 1 Timothy 3:4–5, all the while ignoring that it was written by a celibate man.

Behold! The answer to my plight comes in the image of 1 Corinthians 7:9. Get married. A simple solution for a simple mind like mine. Yet obviously Paul never tried to get a woman to like him, or else his answer wouldn’t be so simple. One could call it a walk in the park—if the park were a thousand miles wide, infested with ten-foot-high poison ivy, and skittering with man-killing scorpions.

Half the women on this campus are already married. The other half are either in a committed relationship or too focused on their studies to go out on a date (at least with me). Women don’t make it all the way to grad school single for no reason. They don’t want to waste their time having coffee with the pesky man who finally worked up enough guts to ask them out. Not when there are A’s to be made.

What chance do I have? My competitors win-out-class me. They have cars. Their internships let them preach and be all impressive on stage. They dream of pastoring mega-churches, piercing spiritual strongholds in Africa, and getting PhDs. And they’re funny.

I have no car, and my ministry entails leading a spiritual formation group on campus. I’m on my way to teach high school English and getting pelted with spit balls. And I’m not funny. Laughable maybe. But not funny.

Yet I know I do not walk this path alone. So for the sake of single solidarity, I offer the following musings for men who share my experiences, or lack thereof, with Christian women.

Solution 1: Work the Elderly Crowd

The Red Hats can’t resist a single guy in his twenties. Flash them a smile and compliment their hair. Soon they’ll be dying to introduce me to their granddaughters. There’s no way a girl could reject me in front of her dear sweet grandmother—even if the girl is a grad student too studious for coffee and conversation.

Solution 2: Join A Church Singles Ministry

This would be a great idea if they stated what their ministry actually is. Am I worshipping God or scouting out potential? I’d like to think I attend to worship God in a community of my peers. But that’s never what’s on my mind when I go, and it makes me feel guilty. Yet if I don’t go, I feel like I’m missing out when I hear others talk like it’s a free dating service.

If I finally do go and invest a few weeks, I’ll still feel awkward—like I’m supposed to be doing something that I’m not, or vice versa. Will she find me creepy if I ask her out after two conversations, or do I have to become her BFF before initiating? These thoughts run through the typical Christian guy’s mind about every half-second. Mainly because we’ve all experienced the “yeah, right” looks from women we recently met and the “but I don’t want to ruin our friendship” lines from less-courageous girls. Of course there is never a way to judge the case beforehand. No, it’s bad enough on campus. The last thing I want is to jump into the bog of muddled conscience and awkwardness that is the typical church singles group.

Solution 3: Pray a Lot

Luke 11:5–8 seems to say that I should pray like the persistent friend and that God will grant my request because of how annoying I am (yes, yes, I know that God is never really annoyed at me, but just bear with me). Yet I’ve been praying about this longer than I can remember. Let’s suppose that tomorrow I start dating my soon-to-be wife. If I had not been praying all this time, does that mean it would have taken God longer to get us together? The answer might be no. Maybe God would get us together at the same point in time because...
that’s when He ordained it for us. If that’s the case, why do I spend so much emotional and mental energy on persistence? Or maybe the answer is yes, my persistence does make a difference as to when we’d meet, and God feels moved to shorten the time. I’ve waited this long already. So if this is the case, how would I ever know that the time I must wait has indeed been shortened? I don’t. It all chalks up to faith, which is more scary than satisfying.

Most people will tell me I just need to be patient. But here’s the rub. The moment I ask a second time—whether it’s five seconds later or ten years—I’ve become impatient (or is it persistent?). It’s God’s perfect system to keep me indeﬁnitely occupied while He takes His sweet time doing whatever He’s going to do. “Beat your reﬂection in a staring con-
test, Trevor. Then I’ll give you a woman.”

Solution 4: Keep Busy and Forget about It

This means ﬁlling up the void with other things—like prayer, read-
ing Scripture, and evangelism. You know, spiritual stuff. I know a student who did just that. He came to DTS completely opposed to getting mar-
ried and dove into his studies from day one. Yet God introduced him to a par-
ticular woman, and it was ring by spring. Maybe that’s how it works.

God puts the desire in me, watches me squirm around for a while, and just when I learn to get over it, He grants the desire. I’m sure there’s some spiritual spin to put on it: lesson learned, character deepened, faith increased—now can we get started already? Because until then I have to settle for a nice candle-lit dinner with Traina.

But don’t get wrong ideas, ladies—it’s not a committed relationship. • • • • •

vulgare
by James Daniel Mosher

Why did you make me a pill bug?
I don’t like the other bugs.
I don’t like that I don’t like the other bugs.
I bury myself in the earth, unknown.
I rearrange pebbles and specks.
I revel the silent black cool of the under-rock.
I thrive in the moist comfort of undisturbed soil.

But you seem to enjoy overturning my roof,
Stinging me with the sunny day.
(Why do you do that?)
(Why did you make me this and then do that?)
You know what happens every time:
I make my own darkness, coiling into myself—
A ball of me.
I refuse to show my soft, white underbelly
To you—or anyone.
Why do you poke,
pry,
prod?
Maybe I feel squeezed and conﬁned;
Maybe I like it that way.
Everybody else ﬂies like butterflies, singing.
I try to sing, but I just cough clods.
I can’t ﬂy.
All I can do, all I prefer, is to roll up in a sphere, safe. Alone. Leave me alone.

But instead, you pinch me gently between your ﬁngers,
Roll me around in the palm of your hand,
And wait for me to open up, to feel your giant skin,
To climb around on feather-legs across,
So that you can whisper with a heartfelt smile
Into my pining roly-poly soul,
“Carpe Arnaeaillum!”

The Main Movie

Noises Off (1992), starring Michael Caine, Carol Burnett, Christopher Reeve, and John Ritter, follows a group of actors whose incompetency knows no bounds. From botched cues to a vengeful cast, anything that could go wrong does.

The movie begins during the pseudo tech rehearsal of a Broadway farce entitled NOTHING ON. With “several more minutes” before their opening performance, the cast tries their darnedest to nail down the play. As their rehearsal continues, tension builds among the actors until the calamities of their personal lives spill over into the performance.

Although comedy is too subjective to rate on a laugh-o-meter, it is a safe bet that this movie will bring most people to tears. Anyone with theater experience will appreciate the complexity of the play and the film itself.

The film’s comedic style is atypical compared to most films today. It could be called slapstick, based on the discomfort, panic, and embarrassment of the actors with each other and their audience. One could describe this movie as a blend of Meet the Parents and The Three Stooges, in the sense that if bad things aren’t happening to the characters, they are busy sabotaging each other. Yet Noises Off moves at a much faster pace.

Unlike most movies, Noises Off works with extended shots of complicated entrances and exits across a theater stage. Where most film actors have the luxury of taking one or two lines at a time, these comedy titans must endure extended takes lasting minutes at a time, with the camera either centered on the stage or panning from side to side.

The ﬁrst part of the movie gives us an idea of what the play should look like and sets the standard by which to compare the later chaos.

The second part of Noises Off gives a backstage pass to the show during an actual performance. Between the same entrances and exits, the actors pull pranks and attack each other as they sort out their personal issues. The play’s dialogue may be heard in the background, but the backstage scene is mimed—milking the movie for physical comedy as well as verbal.

The third part of this ﬁlm is every stage actor’s worst nightmare.

Like any other play-within-a-play, the Noises Off actors must each portray two different characters, and be able to jump from one to the other. Each of the characters has unique quirks. There’s Gray, who talks without really saying anything, Selsdon, who repeats the director’s ideas thinking they’re his own, and Freddy the homophobic, who gets nosebleeds from witnessing violence of any kind.

Don’t expect to gain any great insights from this movie—its sole purpose is to make you laugh. This makes it a great choice for minds weary of schoolwork.

Noises Off is available from most movie rental stores and costs less than nine dollars at Amazon.com. The movie managed to squeak by with a PG-13 rating despite some crude language and suggestive moments. Viewer, be ye warned.

Any feedback? Email Trevor at tdmainman@yahoo.com

Visit Dallas’s finest gardens, the Dallas Arboretum.

http://www.dallasarboretum.org
Perhaps what we don’t know won’t hurt us—but it won’t help us either. Seminary students have discovered a hidden gem in Jimmy’s Italian Market, while 6,000 acres of the Great Trinity Forest lie uncharted nearly in our backyard. Some call it Dallas’s best kept secret. This wilderness—America’s largest urban hardwood forest—flourishes less than ten miles southeast of the DTS campus, and it contains lakes, rivers, and miles of brand-new hiking and biking trails.

The city of Dallas has recently invested a lot of time and money in making the Great Trinity Forest more accessible. The Trinity River Audubon Center (www.trinityriveraudubon.org) sits off Loop 12 right in the middle of the forest and exists to connect people with nature. The Audubon Center hosts guided nature walks, music, kids’ crafts, paddling and more.

Zeshan Segal, Education Manager of the Trinity River Audubon Center, told me the Center stands adjacent to a portion of Dallas notorious for its high crime. He believes access to nature for those who haven’t had it in the past can provide part of the solution to the crime problem. One thing is for sure—those starving for nature amidst the hustle and bustle of downtown Dallas can feast on the twelve-foot-wide concrete trails that begin in the Audubon’s parking lot, thread their way through the forest, and stretch across the river.

Also worth checking out is the recently-upgraded Buckeye Trail (www.texasbuckeyetrail.org). It features a paved and stroller-accessible path all the way to the Trinity River, as well as non-paved natural hiking trails. A few hundred feet into the trees, and it’s hard to believe you’re still in Dallas.

This spring, be sure to check out the Great Trinity Forest. Given the location, however, practice common sense. Biking and hiking in company is recommended.

Looking for a beautiful park within striking distance of campus? Check out what was designed to be the Central Park of Dallas, Reverchon Park! www.reverchonparkfriends.com
Faith in Real Life

Why Your Broken Prayers Are Enough

by Samantha Krieger

It’s interesting how the word “prayer” conjures up many emotions and feelings for people. You might view your prayer life as a delight, a duty, or both. Maybe it just depends on what kind of day you’re having.

The demands of seminary, working, raising children, serving in ministry, and making our marriage a priority often leaves my husband and me with no choice but to fall on our knees before God. Our prayer lives have been forced to grow as our responsibilities have increased over the years, and I admit that much of my strength has come from confessing my absolute brokenness.

The Sweet Word Abba

When I was single, I had a more designated time for prayer, but now my prayers are more un-scheduled, short, and spontaneous. And lately the prayer I offer most to God is help! I’ve also had times when the only words I could offer were tears. And of course the most pivotal prayer of all was when I asked Jesus to save me.

But most of the time I still feel this pressure to offer drawn-out, formal prayers to God, and if I don’t do that, I’m not spiritual. But it’s interesting to note that in Romans, Paul says that in our spirit we cry out, “Abba, Father” in our adoption as His children. And that’s a short prayer if I’ve seen one.

Being Natural with God

I’ve been reading the 30-day devotional book called Prayer by Charles Spurgeon, and in it he says, “I think this sweet word Abba was chosen to show us that we are to be very natural with God, not stilted and formal.” Spurgeon goes on to say that sometimes our prayers to God are more like groans and longings, and that when we cry Abba, “The cry in our hearts is not only childlike, but the tone and manner of utterance are equally so.”

I can just picture the tone and manner of the word “D-a-d-d-y” when a child is in great danger or in need of help, and how when we cry “A-b-b-a” to our Heavenly Father, it is the same.

Spurgeon’s words have reminded me that it’s okay to offer such a short, broken prayer when that’s all I can do. They’ve also reminded me that lots of things keep me from being natural and real with God, among them pride, stubbornness, fear, my inability to trust Him with everything, and my failure to believe that He loves me.

Embracing a Child-like Faith

But when I come to God as my Abba, tell him all that He already knows, and be real with Him, I’m amazed at how He shows himself and works in my heart.

But when I come to God as my Abba, tell him all that He already knows, and be real with Him, I’m amazed at how He shows himself and works in my heart.

also reminded me that lots of things keep me from being natural and real with God, among them pride, stubbornness, fear, my inability to trust Him with everything, and my failure to believe that He loves me.

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.” – Romans 8:15

Contact Samantha at her website, samanthakrieger.com

You can check out their website for more info: https://sites.google.com/site/dtspublicspeaking
the development of unaided voice projection. Of course, this doesn’t mean that microphones are morally evil, but it does mean that we can’t really label them “neutral” either. Instead, we should look at technology as a powerful force in forming who we are and what we can do.

In the example of the shovel, eventually those blisters will become calluses, and over time our arms and backs will become stronger. The question we have to ask when using technology is not only, “Am I using it for good or bad ends?” but also, “How will this technology transform me?”

**Transformation of Society**

In addition to shaping our lives as individuals, technology also transforms society at large.

Remember back when you were a kid and buying music meant either purchasing an entire album for $15.00 or getting a single for at least $4.00? Today, through digital downloads, Amazon and iTunes allow us to buy a single song for 99 cents. For us, this arrangement and this technology naturally seem “better.” But the interesting thing about the technology changing history is that it has reconfigured the entire music industry for the better and the worse.

**Language**

— Socrates refused to write because he felt that reading conveys information and knowledge, but only personal interaction can produce wisdom. Solomon was not praised for “writing” thousands of proverbs, but for “knowing” (i.e. deeply internalizing) them.

**Print**

— Before the printing press, no one knew John 3:16. It’s not that they hadn’t heard the verse, it’s that there were no verse numbers before the printing press could accurately reproduce them. Our entire system of scientifically referring to proof texts is based on a technology not available to the early church.

**Images**

— Words are good at conveying abstract ideas in a logical linear fashion, but a photograph can capture the emotion and underlying story of a moment in time. The stories embedded in images can powerfully affect us emotionally and urge us to make illogical connections (a Porsche will make me happy!). It’s a good thing that the Scriptures contain both narrative and logical thought.

**Automobiles**

— The automobile has been around for only a century, and yet modern life would be inconceivable without it. The auto industry brought interstate highways, fast food, police cars, mega churches, and suburbs. We can go anywhere we want to see whomever we want, yet we are lonelier and more distant from friends and family than at any time in human history.

**Telegraph**

— Long before the Internet, it was the telegraph that allowed information to travel faster than human movement. This meant that “news” no longer consisted of what happened in one’s local area, but included the horror of the entire world all at once. Thinking globally is great, but it needs to be balanced with local awareness.

The upheaval in the music industry is an example of what Neil Postman meant when he said, “Technology is ecological, not additive.” Our natural tendency is to think of that when a new device is invented, we can add it alongside all the other stuff we have, and things will stay pretty much the same. Instead, Postman is saying that a new technology introduced to society operates like a new animal introduced into an ecological system. Some animals survive, while others die out, but all of them change the way they live to accommodate the presence of the new species.

I saw this principle at work when I was a youth pastor in College Station. I noticed that only about half my kids brought Bibles to church and that some of them didn’t even open them when I was teaching. So I found a video projector that I could use to display the Scriptures (and use to play a little Halo after hours). The projector was great, but a few months later I noticed something that surprised me—even fewer students were bringing their Bibles to church or opening them when I taught. At first I wondered if the content of my messages was getting worse, or if something that I said was making them not appreciate the Word of God. But it turns out that the projected Bible had pushed out the printed Bible in my youth group, just like the digital song pushed out the physical CD in the music industry.

Another way of saying this is Marshall McLuhan’s famous statement that, “The medium is the message.” Regardless of the words or Scripture passages I had put on screen, the medium of the projector communicated to my students that they did not need to open their Bibles. The history books are full of stories of how new mediums and new technology subtly transformed the societies into which they were introduced.

Perhaps the most famous story of a communication technology changing history is that of Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of movable type. The technological ability to create perfect textual replicates of written words enabled the kind of information sharing that was necessary for the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, and our own favorite—the Protestant Reformation. Before Gutenberg, power and information resided with kings and popes, but the technology of books transferred this power to individuals. The succession of kings was replaced with elected presidents, and the singular pope was replaced with the priesthood of all believers. To be sure, technology didn’t cause democracy or Protestantism (if we believed that we would be guilty of “technological determinism”), but technology certainly played a larger role than we often notice.

**Technology in the Scriptures**

So far, we’ve made some fun observations about how technology and media can shape individuals and society. But what are we to do with all of this? And what difference does it ultimately make?

The good news is the power and meaning of technology is not mystery to the Scriptures. In fact, it is in the Scriptures that we find a hopeful view of technology that transcends both its evil uses and its unintentional consequences. From the beginning God commanded humankind to cultivate the earth with the implied idea that we would use tools to accomplish that goal. Early on, we see Adam use what media ecologists call the “technology of language” to shape and order the world (Gen 2:19–20).

Immediately after Adam and Eve fell into sin, their very first act was to attempt to invent a technology (clothing) that could overcome the devastating effects of the Fall (Gen 3:6). Rather than condemning their resourcefulness, God responds by graciously giving them an “upgrade” of sorts from leaves to leather (Gen 3:21). As the story moves out of the Garden, an even more sinister side of technology emerges. God commands Cain to a life of “wandering,” but he ignores God’s command and instead sets up a city. In the thought of French theologian Jaques Ellul, the “city” in Scripture comes to represent a kind of anti-Garden, a place where man amasses technology to escape the effects of the Fall and lives apart from any dependence upon God. In the Scriptures, the “city” is always the recipient of condemnation as it crushes the innocent and brings glory to men rather than God.

Hope and grace, though, seep into the story when the Scriptures tell us that from that anti-Garden came “all who forge tools” and “all who play [instruments]” (Gen 4:19–22).
Technology cont.

God does not condemn their creativity, but instead graciously allows their expression of the *imago dei* to continue. Apparently, even when mankind attempts to use technology to run from God, they cannot outrun their purpose and design as those who would glorify God.

As Ellul points out in *The Meaning of the City*, it is the city—the place where man attempts to live apart from God—that God Himself has chosen as the end point of the story of Redemption. The Bible does not end with a return to the Garden, but with God restoring His creation, redeeming our sinful souls, and bringing a city down from heaven cleansed of sin and evil. This means that technology and all human works are deeply embedded throughout the biblical story, and therefore they warrant deeper and more careful theological reflection.

Redirecting Our Hope

Believe it or not, Christians are not the only ones with an eschatology. In the story told by the broader technological culture in which we find ourselves, our current fallen condition will not be overcome by Christ returning to restore all things, but with the advancement of technology that will one day allow us to transcend our bodies and all worldly problems.

It is easy to slip into seeing technology in this transcendent way, because technology does sometimes work toward redemptive ends—such as when a new well brings clean water to a Sudanese village or a heart transplant rescues a person from certain death. Yet in our thinking about technology, we must remember that these redemptive uses of technology, while worthy of pursuit, are only temporary.

We must also resist the temptation to place our hope in the potential of the newest device or tool that promises to make our lives easier. First, for all its promises, it will always come with a series of trade-offs. Second, its benefits will always be temporary. Instead of placing our hope in such innovations and their potential, their shortcomings and temporary nature should point us toward our true hope, the return of the Lord who will make all things new.

For now, though, we wait—not for a new gadget that promises a better life, but for the return of our Lord, the One who will redeem not just our souls, and not just our bodies, but also the technology that glorifies Him.

---

PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

**FIRST PLACE**

JASON CUSTER

**SECOND PLACE**

DANIEL JAMES

**THIRD PLACE**

DANIELLE CLOSS

**HONORABLE MENTION**

DANIEL DAVID
My first box was a life-changing box that left me forever marked. The walls of this box were crib rails meant to keep me safe, but instead, they left me feeling trapped and exposed. My abuse began when I was just an infant, too young to speak, comprehend, or process what was happening. My dad used to fulfill his need, and my mom left me alone in my time of desperate need.

Alone in my crib, my box of pain and despair was so dark and so deep that it led to a second box—a box of my own making.

In this box, I learned to stuff all the emotions I couldn’t feel if I were to survive—it also held the needs that no one recognized, including, before too long, myself. It was a box that allowed me to compartmentalize my experiences, feelings, and eventually my life. It worked so well, I even forgot there was a box, except for how it took up space and energy and robbed me of joy and passion.

So to feel more alive I created a third box. I call it my soap box or pedestal. Made up of my accomplishments and achievements, this box—for a time—allowed me to be noticed, to feel worthy, and to pretend that I was okay. Yet this box was wobbly and unpredictable, so I always fell off and lost my sense of significance. Its edges were sharp and critical, but in my desperate need to prove myself, I kept clambering up, even though the effort often left me wounded, sore, and once more feeling trapped and exposed.

About this time the lid on my second box began to fail, and when I fell, the stored-up emotions came tumbling out to mix with the current ones, leaving me overwhelmed and confused. Pretty soon I could no longer get the lid to stay on that first box at all, and the long-suppressed emotions began affecting my daily life. This often led me to retreat into yet another box—my suicide box.

In this box I sought refuge from neediness, both my own and others’. I call it my suicide box, because what began as a retreat for survival became a prison of habit that sapped my will to live, to risk, to love, and to be loved. Thankfully, someone introduced me to God in a way that blew the lid off the box in which I had placed Him. The concept was called the “Mt. Olympus prayer” and it shattered my view of a safely-contained God, opening my eyes to what an all-powerful and loving God could do in me and for me—something beyond my wildest hopes and dreams.

A speaker asked me to formulate a prayer bigger than anything I had ever hoped or imagined—because anything less is not big enough for God. So with my first box exposed, my second box dumped out, and my third box failing, I took a chance on this God, the One on whom I had so long ago given up, the One who I thought had given up on me. I prayed my Mount Olympus prayer. “I want to know, I want to feel God’s presence as much as I feel the pain and despair of my abuse.” In that moment my prayer seemed impossible, yet I can honestly say that not only did God answer my prayer, He also redefined my boxes and my life.

He taught me how to contain my emotions only long enough to bring them to Him, where I could safely pour out my heart and soul.

Today I have boxes and boxes of journals that contain my process of healing and my testimony of God’s faithfulness through it all. He taught me that while I can scarcely remember a time before I became “damaged goods,” He does not see me that way. He had a plan all along to heal and restore what man had meant for harm, and to use it for my good and the good of others. He taught me to place my trust, emotions, and troubles into His capable hands, and He even gave me a tangible box to hold my prayers—my God box. He taught me through my friend Claire, who created the God box, that sometimes He calls me to do things for Him, while other times He wants me to just be with Him. He also teaches me each time I grieve the first box, resort to the second box, or feel the need to climb onto the third box, that His grace is sufficient and His love is unconditional—thus keeping me out of my suicide box and firmly planted in the hope that whatever I face, and whatever I feel, I can find shelter from the storm because He is indeed big enough.

Mary’s God box and journals

Editor’s note: For the last four years, Mary has been a facilitator of a support group for sexual abuse survivors called Shelter from the Storm. She hopes to start a group for DTS students sometime soon. Three churches in the area have Shelter from the Storm support groups: Irving Bible Church, Watermark Community Church, and Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship. If you have questions you may email Mary for more info: maryh535@msn.com