

10 Warnings for the Internet-Obsessed Christian

I'm grateful for the opportunities that the internet, social media and other tools provide us as we do ministry in the 21st century. We can talk to the world in much more expedient ways today than we could when I started ministry more than 35 years ago. So, I'm overall quite positive about these tools. On the other hand, I do have these fears for young church leaders who've grown up with these tools:

1. **That they will do ministry without talking with people.** That's what happens when your communication strategy usually means texting, emailing and so on rather than having a conversation.
2. **That they will do ministry via quick fix, simple, 140-character solutions.** I worry they will not understand the value of a long-term, deeply felt commitment to a group of people. They've grown up in a world of abbreviations and shortcuts.
3. **That they will not understand the value of their actual voice.** It's one thing to text a prayer to somebody, but it's a completely different issue when that person *hears* you pray. A hurting, supportive voice can minister much better than a text.
4. **That they won't know how to relate directly to people.** When your communication with people is primarily through a phone or computer screen, dealing with people face-to-face can be anxiety-producing and difficult.
5. **That they will relocate physically as the Lord calls them in ministry, but they won't really "move" from home.** Today, you can relocate and still spend much more time talking with people from home than getting to know people in your new location. You've moved in body but not in spirit when your world revolves around Facebook

friends from the past.

6. **That they will learn the hard way the value of words.** We probably all learned this lesson the hard way, but it's just easier to say harsh or impure things via the Internet before you've thought about what you said. And, the words we put on the Internet seldom go away; they can haunt us for years.
7. **That they will waste a lot of time in ministry.** For example, writing emails and then following up to clarify misunderstandings, to add neglected information, and to explain your thinking often takes a lot longer than a simple phone conversation would require. Moreover, the Internet simply beckons us to "come and search" when we have other things we must do.
8. **That they won't know how to listen to people.** It's tough to know how to listen well when your entire life pattern has been to check your phone continually even while you're having a conversation with somebody. To listen directly without a phone in their hands might, in fact, bring on the angst of withdrawal.
9. **That they will look down on others who fight against change.** The young generation has been raised on rapid change, but the older generation is often longing for *something* to stay the same in their lives. That's a recipe for conflict unless young leaders are willing to slow down, hear and minister to a generation that doesn't always live by texts and Facebook posts.
10. **That they will have no up-close, personal heroes.** That's already happening: Their heroes are not men and women with whom they can have coffee; they're preachers and teachers they know primarily from the internet. Having those heroes is not wrong, but all of us need heroes who can stare us in the face and challenge us to walk with God.

Just my ramblings for this Monday. What are your thoughts?
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