

How Virtual Reality Helps a Church-Weary Culture Engage with Faith

While the church has come a long way in its use of technology, what if Christian leaders—especially pastors—are missing out on an amazing, proven tech tool that can help individuals grow in their faith?

Look around most any church auditorium or sanctuary on a given Sunday morning and one can quickly observe how technology has infiltrated the faith world. Inside most modern-day churches, you can expect to see an announcement video, people searching for Scripture on their devices and perhaps even a high definition large screen simulation of the pastor's sermon at the main campus being live-streamed in real time to satellite locations or individual computers.

But I can promise you this—these increasingly common tech integrations are just the tip of a much larger, faith-growth-through-technology, iceberg. Despite how much the church has warmed to advances in high-tech applications (as a value-add, rather than a replacement to high-touch), Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are now capturing everyone's attention and raising eyebrows.

Maybe it's because people don't fully understand their uses and benefits. They hear "VR" or "AR" and immediately equate them with other recent developments, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and are troubled by visions of robots and the moral dilemma of gene-editing taking over the world.

It's true that, like any innovative tool, VR and AR can be used for evil. But I have proof that they can be used for good, especially in today's increasingly church-weary culture, in which individuals are looking for fresh and meaningful

methods to engage with the Bible.

Consider Compedia's recent partnership with The Museum of the Bible located in Washington, D.C., for which we leveraged cutting-edge technology to create an experience that would allow visitors to "visit" 34 different biblical sites from the steps of the Temple Mount to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—all through an AR experience that engages all senses.

The result? Museum visitors are wowed by the *ooh-ahh* factor of this 3-D experience that creates the feeling of being transported elsewhere. More importantly, they have been shown the significant historical and archeological importance of the Bible in a sensational way they are unlikely to forget. As a result, they are eager to spread the word about what they experience. Not surprisingly, even secular reports noticed the exceptional amount of visitors that came during its first six months of operation. Any ministry outreach that utilizes AR and/or VR technology, whether that be a museum, church or school, is sure to summon a crowd or make a transformational impact.

It is a fact that VR *churches* are now being created and reports show they are even attracting atheists.

I'm ecstatic about these developments, but am certain it's only the start, as VR and AR applied to faith environments are still new, rare and unique. Audiences of all generations and denominations are continually drawn to this technology, as there is nothing like it. And if it creates an opportunity to help others engage with their beliefs and tenets of their faith and gain knowledge of Scripture, what are we waiting for?

AR and VR are already being used for God's glory, and we miss a powerful opportunity to impact individuals with the truth of His Word by shying away from this revolutionary technology.

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Compedia is an Israeli-based tech company that improves learning experiences through cutting-edge technologies that promote better student engagement and results.