

Steve Jobs' Role Fulfilling the Great Commission

Steve Jobs is now being eulogized as part P.T. Barnum and part Walt Disney. We might even add part Thomas Edison. There will be more comparisons but few will accurately portray the fullness of the man's creative genius. There is a biography of him coming out soon and we will learn more about this rather secretive icon of our age.

But it is doubtful that we will learn he was a devout Christian.

I do not know his final moments and therefore I make no judgments, commending this man and his family to a God whose grace and love is greater and wider than we could ever imagine. Yet, in God's common grace, He used this man's innovation and creativity to build a new Roman Road to the world—a pathway through the extremities of a world still held in the tyranny of despots and dictators, poverty and radical religious fetters.

iTunes has become a beacon of hope by bringing the Word of God to the ends of the earth. At Reformed Theological Seminary, our classroom teaching, the very same courses by the very same professors—as well as sermons and teaching by some of the most notable pastors of our generation—are being downloaded onto Macs (and yes even PCs), as well as iPads and iPhones all over the earth. About five million of them, according to Apple's reports to us, are resting on the portable, electronic “book bags” of believers, seekers, and pastors and pastors-to-be all over the world. And so the gospel is getting through to the most hostile places on earth as well as to the most hostile ideological places in the secularized Western world. So I thank God for the life of Steve Jobs.

His commencement speech at Stanford University will likely go down as one of the greatest. It is a testimony to a very spiritual man, not (at least at that time) a Christian man, who saw failures as the turning points in his life, which led to creativity. Our country needs to hear that great American story these days more than ever. Yet behind this brilliant and quite resilient man who changed so much of modern life, and whose destiny is now with His Creator, is really the figure of One who rose again from the dead. Through the creativity of Steve Jobs is a God using all means to reach His own.

We at Reformed Theological Seminary remember that his contributions and the contributions of his company, Apple Computer, became critical collaborators in seeking to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. That sounds like an odd alliance, doesn't it? But this is the God who raised an empire, the Roman Empire, that linked far-flung cities and territories with efficient governance, "super highways" of their day, and allowed St. Paul and an innumerable host of disciples of Jesus Christ to get on that ramp, and transport Christ's message of hope and freedom to the ends of the world.

I will remember the legacy of Steve Jobs in a way that he might not have thought of, as the founder of an empire that linked the world in order to bring Christ to those who have never heard. Even as I write on this MacBook Pro this morning, I remember that God raises up Roman Roads in every generation to reach the lost, the broken, and the dying with a message that failure, indeed, is an eternal turning point to new life and even resurrection.

The Associated Press reported "Steve Jobs saw the future and led the world to it." Maybe that is more eternally true than even Steve Jobs could have known or believed.

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Watch Steve Jobs' influential 2005 Stanford Commencement Address below.