Tomb, thou shalt not hold Him longer;
Death is strong, but Life is stronger;
Stronger than the dark, the light;
Stronger than the wrong, the right.
Faith and Hope triumphant say,
Christ will rise on Easter-Day.
- Phillips Brooks, "An Easter Carol"
services and plan special music or messages for "Easter Sabbath," all neatly within the confines of our day of worship. But perhaps we should be more conscious of Easter Sunday, and what we do that day? What do you think?

Join the discussion on our Facebook page.

Ministry

Getting Easter Ready
Preparing Your Congregation for Seekers
by Rajkumar Dixit

I was filled with pride when the Easter banners were erected on the front lawn of our church. We were the first congregation in the community to have signage up displaying our Easter weekend plans. In a 2008 Gallup poll, 62% of respondents said they were planning on attending an Easter service. We hope to attract these seekers to our church doors.

Traditionally, Adventists have not celebrated Easter. This is a lost opportunity in reaching the people in your community who are searching for God. Studies have shown that the two times a year people are more likely to attend church are on Christmas and Easter. This is a compelling reason for Seventh-day Adventist Churches to take this evangelistic opportunity seriously.

One group of seekers are former Catholics. In a 2008 survey, the Pew Foundation found that one in 10 Americans now considers themselves an ex-Catholic. These individuals have been jaded by their childhood religion, and are seeking something else that can fill the spiritual gap. How will Adventists reach out to the unchurched in their community? Here are a few tried and tested ideas on gaining the attention of seekers during the Easter season.

- **Create web-friendly domains:** Create a web domain that is easy to remember for a motorist who may be driving past your church. This year, New Hope Adventist Church will use four different domains during the Easter season, based on the audiences we are trying to attract. All of your domains can be pointed to the same website. Here are some of the examples we are using:
  - Lookingforachurch.org
  - NewHopeLovesFamilies.com
  - LiveBeyondtheEgg.com
  - EasteratNewHope.com

- **Order Church banners for your front lawn:** This is especially important if your church is located along a busy road or residential area. Be certain to order banners that are a minimum of six feet in length. Also, make sure the banner highlights your church web address prominently. Here are more tips for ordering a church banner.

- **Facebook Ads may be the most successful option in reaching your targeted audience:** It is relatively inexpensive in comparison to print or radio ads. You have the ability to target those you are trying to connect with based on their demographic profile. In addition you can narrow your audience by choosing words that your potential publics are using in their own Facebook posts. For example, if somebody within a five mile radius of your church has used the following words in their Facebook post, "God, Easter, church, kids, family," our ad can zero in on that particular person through your advertising campaign.

- **Plan a Sunday bridge event for the community:** You may want to consider planning a huge pancake breakfast, or Easter egg hunt on Easter Sunday morning. Many people are looking for something to do on Easter Sunday. By opening your doors (or front lawn) to the community, they will learn more about your church and have the opportunity to be invited to church the following Sabbath.

Join the discussion on our Facebook page.

Rajkumar Dixit is the author of Branded Faith: Contextualizing the Gospel in a Post-Christian World. He pastors at New Hope Adventist Church. You can read more at rajkumardixit.com.

Best Ideas for Ministry

Streaming a Live Internet Show for Teens

Pastor Stephen and Pastor Kevin have teamed up for "two guys in the word" where they take teen questions on a live show on Sunday night. Teens text their questions and the hosts give them live answers from God's word on the spot. They come to teens live via streaming on the internet. This team is available to stream to youth groups everywhere. Click here to see them share their idea on the NAD Ministerial Best Ideas VOD site.
Pray for Five People for Thirty Days
One of the problems pastors face is trying to get the saints involved in ministry. Pastor Fresse had his members write out a simple prayer list of about five names of their neighbors and co-workers. They prayed for those five people for thirty days. Then they contact the person they have been praying for and ask if there is anything else they can pray for them. Then they continue to pray for them for another thirty days and then another thirty days. This has fired up the church members and they are not excited about ministry. Click here to see Juan share his idea on the NAD Ministerial Best Ideas VOD site.

Word on the Street: Public College Ministry
If your congregation is near a university campus you have a wonderful ministry opportunity to reach the students nearby. A great resource to set you up is entitled "The Word on Campus" that gives instructions on how to do Public College Ministry. This resource is available at AdventSource. Click here to see Bill share his idea on the NAD Ministerial Best Ideas VOD site.

Sermon Contest
Wanted: Your Best Sermon
Ministers and graduate ministerial students in North America are invited to submit their best stewardship sermons. Up to ten outstanding sermons will be selected and awarded $1,000.00 each.

“We know there are many exceptional stewardship sermons and we would like to share them with other ministers and leaders throughout North America,” states John Mathews, Stewardship director for the North America Division (NAD). Stewardship is a central Biblical theme and faithful stewardship by members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church makes it possible for the church to fulfill the mission of Jesus Christ.

Ministers (active or retired) from the North American Division or graduate ministerial students (such as M.Div. or similar) studying in North American schools may participate. For additional information about this contest visit www.iGiveSDA.org/contest or contact Lori Bryan at 301-680-6432, lori.bryan@nad.adventist.org.

Reading for Pastors
What people talk about before they die: hospice chaplain Kerry Egan reflects on the last moments of life.
We’re always talking about youth who leave the church. What do we know about those who don’t?
Pop culture: Donald Miller's Blue Like Jazz becomes a movie - but expect it to be controversial in some circles.
What makes a great team? John Maxwell's nine qualities of an effective team. Quote: “The right team will embrace uncomfortable conversations and will not drift towards making everyone in the room happy but rather making the right decision.”
Mark Driscoll's new book on marriage has gotten lots of press. But some say he's gone too far, and is creating a sex-obsessed religion.
Do you want people listening to your message, or live-tweeting it? Quote: “It is more important to listen, than to be immediately telling others what you think. But live-tweeting during a sermon seems to encourage the potential for many people to be speaking before the first speaker, i.e. the preacher, has even finished.”
The five types of work that fill our days. Quote: “Thanks to the proliferation of mobile devices, Reactionary Work seeps into every opening of your time - walks between buildings or a free hour that results from a canceled meeting. The biggest mistake we make is prioritizing Reactionary Work over everything else.”
The Stay-Home generation: American mobility is at an all-time low.
What's the secret of successful organizations? It's not just intelligence, strategy or speed, argues Patrick Lencioni in his new book The Advantage, but a healthy wholeness.

To the Point
Let every man and woman count himself immortal. Let him catch the revelation of Jesus in his resurrection. Let him say not merely, "Christ is risen," but "I shall rise."

~Phillips Brooks

God expects from men something more than at such times, and that it were much to be wished for the credit of their religion as well as the satisfaction of their conscience that their Easter devotions would in some measure come up to their Easter dress.

~Robert South

In the bonds of Death He lay
Who for our offence was slain;
But the Lord is risen to-day,
Christ hath brought us life again,
Wherefore let us all rejoice,
Singing loud, with cheerful voice,
Hallelujah!

~Martin Luther

But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.

~Walter Raleigh

He takes men out of time and makes them feel eternity.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thou art the Sun of other days.
They shine by giving back the rays.

~John Keble

We live and die; Christ died and lived!

~John Stott

And he departed from our sight that we might return to our heart, and there find Him. For He departed, and behold, He is here.

~St. Augustine

The joyful news that He is risen does not change the contemporary world. Still before us lie work, discipline, sacrifice. But the fact of Easter gives us the spiritual power to do the work, accept the discipline, and make the sacrifice.

~Henry Knox Sherrill

Easter says you can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there.

~Clarence W. Hall

News, Ideas & Reminders

Humor: Old guys rule!

A reminder that we have a Best Practices Facebook page that we'd love for you to join.

From Walt Williams: InMinistry Spring Intensives now posted and open to interested pastors. Check in and check them out. One might be just what your ministry needs right now.

- Previous resource links:
  - The Hope of Survivors, ministry to victims of pastoral sexual abuse
  - iFollow website
  - NAD NewsPoints (formerly Friday Fax): by email, or on a web page,
  - Adventist Parenting e-newsletter
  - The one Project
  - Facts with Hope, evidence-based health messages for bulletins
  - NAD Volunteer Screening Guidelines and Screening Form
  - The digital Andrews Study Bible
  - Adventist Family Ministries
  - REACH North American Resources Guide
  - Adventist Meetings Speaker Registry
  - World Life Expectancy website
  - The ONE project, Seattle
  - NAD Calendar of Special Days
  - Facebook page for Adventist songwriters, poets and artists
  - Facebook page for pastors' spouses
  - 2012 NAD Prayer Calendar in a PDF format
  - Child protective resources from Risk Management
  - Prophecy decoded series
New Pathfinder honors in community service
NAD Facebook page
Adventist Recovery Ministries newsletter "Journey to Life"
National Conference on Innovation

Got a tool, resource, site, article, idea or seminar that you like a lot? Share it with us at BestPractices@ameritech.net.

Upcoming NAD Events

Do you have an event you’d like to invite NAD pastors to? Send details to BestPractices@Ameritech.net.

Youth Week of Prayer. Mar 17, 2012 - Mar 24, 2012, North American Division. Special materials are available online. For more information, email: dunchiem@gc.adventist.org

Great Controversy Tour. Mar 30, 2012 - Apr 12, 2012, Italy, Switzerland, France and Germany. Join Gerard Damsteegt, associate professor of church history at Andrews University to see prophecies of Daniel and Revelation come alive! Visit Rome, Italy and Reformation sites in the Waldensian Valleys, Switzerland, Germany and France. A most exciting experience! To reserve your spot, call or fax 269-471-5172. For more information, email: gctours@mac.com

SEEDS Atlantic Union. Mar 30, 2012 - Apr 1, 2011, Stamford Marriott Hotel & Spa, 243 Tresser Blvd, Stamford, CT 06901. The Festival of the Laity SEEDS Conference is for Church Members, Leaders, and Pastors Who Equip Them. You will find inspiring worship services, heartwarming music, exciting witnessing stories, challenging preaching, and 65 different seminars that will encourage and equip you for reaching people for God. Phone: 800-255-7568. For more information, email: ContactSEEDS@nadei.org

Worldwide Day for Prayer and Fasting. Apr 7, 2012, Worldwide. First Sabbath of each quarter has been designated as days of prayer and fasting for the world church. Families and individuals are encouraged to establish the first day of each month and one day a week as normal or partial fast days. Support information and helps are being developed by the Prayer and Fasting Subcommittee.

Religion Communicators Council. Apr 12, 2012 - Apr 14, 2012, Philadelphia Airport Marriott Hotel, 1 Arrivals Road (Terminal B), Philadelphia, PA 19153. Plan now to attend the annual convention for the Religion Communicators Council (RCC) “In(ter)dependence: Religion Communication Today”. You will experience interactive workshops, and attend two award banquets. Featured Speaker: Debra L Mason, Executive Director, Religion Newswriters. For more information, email: rccpro@rcn.com; mmonn@pensions.org


The ACS Outreach Leadership Conference is sponsored by the Adventist Community Services - Washington, the North Pacific Union Conference and NAD Adventist Community Services. It will be held at the Washington Conference Office in Federal Way, Washington on March 2-4, 2012. Participants will hear challenging speakers and choose from 30 training seminars. For registration and more information: www.washingtonconference.org/ACS.

Nonprofit Leadership Certification Program
- Southeastern Conference: 1701 Robie Ave, Mt. Dora, Florida 32712,
  - Session I, June 3-7, 2012
  - Session II, September 23-27, 201
- ACS Outreach Leadership Conference, Washington Conference Office
  - March 2-4, 2012

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Forward email
Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
My Faith: What people talk about before they die

Editor's Note: Kerry Egan is a hospice chaplain in Massachusetts and the author of "Fumbling: A Pilgrimage Tale of Love, Grief, and Spiritual Renewal on the Camino de Santiago."

By Kerry Egan, Special to CNN

As a divinity school student, I had just started working as a student chaplain at a cancer hospital when my professor asked me about my work. I was 26 years old and still learning what a chaplain did.

"I talk to the patients," I told him.

"You talk to patients? And tell me, what do people who are sick and dying talk to the student chaplain about?" he asked.

I had never considered the question before. “Well,” I responded slowly, “Mostly we talk about their families.”

“Do you talk about God?”

“Umm, not usually.”

“Or their religion?”

“Not so much.”

“The meaning of their lives?”

“Sometimes.”

“And prayer? Do you lead them in prayer? Or ritual?”

“Well,” I hesitated. “Sometimes. But not usually, not really.”
I felt derision creeping into the professor's voice. "So you just visit people and talk about their families?"

“Well, they talk. I mostly listen.”

“Huh.” He leaned back in his chair.

A week later, in the middle of a lecture in this professor's packed class, he started to tell a story about a student he once met who was a chaplain intern at a hospital.

“And I asked her, 'What exactly do you do as a chaplain?' And she replied, 'Well, I talk to people about their families.'” He paused for effect. “And that was this student's understanding of faith! That was as deep as this person's spiritual life went! Talking about other people's families!”

The students laughed at the shallowness of the silly student. The professor was on a roll.

“And I thought to myself,” he continued, “that if I was ever sick in the hospital, if I was ever dying, that the last person I would ever want to see is some Harvard Divinity School student chaplain wanting to talk to me about my family.”

My body went numb with shame. At the time I thought that maybe, if I was a better chaplain, I would know how to talk to people about big spiritual questions. Maybe if dying people met with a good, experienced chaplain they would talk about God, I thought.

Today, 13 years later, I am a hospice chaplain. I visit people who are dying – in their homes, in hospitals, in nursing homes. And if you were to ask me the same question - What do people who are sick and dying talk about with the chaplain? – I, without hesitation or uncertainty, would give you the same answer. Mostly, they talk about their families: about their mothers and fathers, their sons and daughters.

They talk about the love they felt, and the love they gave. Often they talk about love they did not receive, or the love they did not know how to offer, the love they withheld, or maybe never felt for the ones they should have loved unconditionally.

They talk about how they learned what love is, and what it is not. And sometimes, when they are actively dying, fluid gurgling in their throats, they reach their hands out to things I cannot see and they call out to their parents: Mama, Daddy, Mother.

What I did not understand when I was a student then, and what I would explain to that professor now, is that people talk to the chaplain about their families because that is how we talk about God. That is how we talk about the meaning of our lives. That is how we talk about the big spiritual questions of human existence.
We don't live our lives in our heads, in theology and theories. We live our lives in our families: the families we are born into, the families we create, the families we make through the people we choose as friends.

This is where we create our lives, this is where we find meaning, this is where our purpose becomes clear.

Family is where we first experience love and where we first give it. It's probably the first place we've been hurt by someone we love, and hopefully the place we learn that love can overcome even the most painful rejection.

This crucible of love is where we start to ask those big spiritual questions, and ultimately where they end.

I have seen such expressions of love: A husband gently washing his wife's face with a cool washcloth, cupping the back of her bald head in his hand to get to the nape of her neck, because she is too weak to lift it from the pillow. A daughter spooning pudding into the mouth of her mother, a woman who has not recognized her for years.

A wife arranging the pillow under the head of her husband's no-longer-breathing body as she helps the undertaker lift him onto the waiting stretcher.

We don't learn the meaning of our lives by discussing it. It's not to be found in books or lecture halls or even churches or synagogues or mosques. It's discovered through these actions of love.

If God is love, and we believe that to be true, then we learn about God when we learn about love. The first, and usually the last, classroom of love is the family.

Sometimes that love is not only imperfect, it seems to be missing entirely. Monstrous things can happen in families. Too often, more often than I want to believe possible, patients tell me what it feels like when the person you love beats you or rapes you. They tell me what it feels like to know that you are utterly unwanted by your parents. They tell me what it feels like to be the target of someone's rage. They tell me what it feels like to know that you abandoned your children, or that your drinking destroyed your family, or that you failed to care for those who needed you.

Even in these cases, I am amazed at the strength of the human soul. People who did not know love in their families know that they should have been loved. They somehow know what was missing, and what they deserved as children and adults.

When the love is imperfect, or a family is destructive, something else can be learned: forgiveness. The spiritual work of being human is learning how to love and how to forgive.

We don’t have to use words of theology to talk about God; people who are close to death almost never do. We should learn from those who are dying that the best way to teach our children
about God is by loving each other wholly and forgiving each other fully - just as each of us longs to be loved and forgiven by our mothers and fathers, sons and daughters.

*The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Kerry Egan.*

"What do we do about our kids?" The group of parents sat together in my office, wiping their eyes. I'm a high school pastor, but for once, they weren't talking about 16-year-olds drinking and partying. Each had a story to tell about a "good Christian" child, raised in their home and in our church, who had walked away from the faith during the college years. These children had come through our church's youth program, gone on short-term mission trips, and served in several different ministries during their teenage years. Now they didn't want anything to do with it anymore. And, somehow, these mothers' ideas for our church to send college students "care packages" during their freshman year to help them feel connected to the church didn't strike me as a solution with quite enough depth.

The daunting statistics about churchgoing youth keep rolling in. Panic ensues. What are we doing wrong in our churches? In our youth ministries?

It's hard to sort through the various reports and find the real story. And there is no one easy solution for bringing all of those "lost" kids back into the church, other than continuing to pray for them and speaking the gospel into their lives. However, we can all look at the 20-somethings in our churches who are engaged and involved in ministry. What is it that sets apart the kids who stay in the church? Here are just a few observations I have made about such kids, with a few applications for those of us serving in youth ministry.

1. **They are converted.**

   The Apostle Paul, interestingly enough, doesn't use phrases like "nominal Christian" or "pretty good kid." The Bible doesn't seem to mess around with platitudes like: "Yeah, it's a shame he did that, but he's got a good heart." When we listen to the witness of Scripture, particularly on the topic of conversion, we find that there is very little wiggle room. Listen to these words: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." *(2 Cor. 5:17)* We youth pastors need to get back to understanding salvation as what it really is: a miracle that comes from the glorious power of God through the working of the Holy Spirit.

   We need to stop talking about "good kids." We need to stop being pleased with attendance at youth group and fun retreats. We need to start getting on our knees and praying that the Holy Spirit will do miraculous saving work in the hearts of our students as the Word of God speaks to them. In short, we need to get back to a focus on conversion. How many of us are preaching to "unconverted evangelicals"? Youth pastors, we need to preach, teach, and talk—all the while praying fervently for the miraculous work of regeneration to occur in the hearts and souls of our students by the power of the Holy Spirit! When that happens—when the "old goes" and the "new comes"—it will not be iffy. We will not be dealing with a group of "nominal Christians." We will be ready to teach, disciple, and equip a generation of future church leaders—"new creations"!—who are hungry to know and speak God's Word. It is converted students who go on to love Jesus and serve the church.

2. **They have been equipped, not entertained.**

   Recently, we had "man day" with some of the guys in our youth group. We began with an hour of basketball at the local park, moved to an intense game of 16" ("Chicago Style") softball, and...
finished the afternoon by gorging ourselves on meaty pizzas and 2-liters of soda. I am not against fun (or gross, depending on your opinion of the afternoon I just described) things in youth ministry. But youth pastors especially need to keep repeating the words of Ephesians 4:11-12 to themselves: "[Christ] gave...the teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Christ gives us—teachers—to the church, not for entertainment, encouragement, examples, or even friendship primarily. He gives us to the church to "equip" the saints to do gospel ministry in order that the church of Christ may be built up.

If I have not equipped the students in my ministry to share the gospel, disciple a younger believer, and lead a Bible study, then I have not fulfilled my calling to them, no matter how good my sermons have been. We pray for conversion; that is all we can do, for it is entirely a gracious gift of God. But after conversion, it is our Christ-given duty to help fan into flame a faith that serves, leads, teaches, and grows. If our students leave high school without Bible-reading habits, Bible-study skills, and strong examples of discipleship and prayer, we have lost them. We have entertained, not equipped them...and it may indeed be time to panic!

Forget your youth programs for a second. Are we sending out from our ministries the kind of students who will show up to college in a different state, join a church, and begin doing the work of gospel ministry there without ever being asked? Are we equipping them to that end, or are we merely giving them a good time while they're with us? We don't need youth group junkies; we need to be growing churchmen and churchwomen who are equipped to teach, lead, and serve. Put your youth ministry strategies aside as you look at that 16-year-old young man and ask: "How can I spend four years with this kid, helping him become the best church deacon and sixth-grade Sunday school class teacher he can be, ten years down the road?"

**3. Their parents preached the gospel to them.**

As a youth pastor, I can't do all this. All this equipping that I'm talking about is utterly beyond my limited capabilities. It is impossible for me to bring conversion, of course, but it is also impossible for me to have an equipping ministry that sends out vibrant churchmen and churchwomen if my ministry is not being reinforced tenfold in the students’ homes. The common thread that binds together almost every ministry-minded 20-something that I know is abundantly clear: a home where the gospel was not peripheral but absolutely central. The 20-somethings who are serving, leading, and driving the ministries at our church were kids whose parents made them go to church. They are kids whose parents punished them and held them accountable when they were rebellious. They are kids whose parents read the Bible around the dinner table every night. And they are kids whose parents were tough but who ultimately operated from a framework of grace that held up the cross of Jesus as the basis for peace with God and forgiveness toward one another.

This is not a formula! Kids from wonderful gospel-centered homes leave the church; people from messed-up family backgrounds find eternal life in Jesus and have beautiful marriages and families. But it's also not a crapshoot. In general, children who are led in their faith during their growing-up years by parents who love Jesus vibrantly, serve their church actively, and saturate their home with the gospel completely, grow up to love Jesus and the church. The words of Proverbs 22:6 do not constitute a formula that is true 100 percent of the time, but they do provide us with a principle that comes from the gracious plan of God, the God who delights to see his gracious Word passed from generation to generation: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

Youth pastors, pray with all your might for true conversion; that is God's work. Equip the saints for the work of the ministry; that is your work. Parents, preach the gospel and live the gospel for your children; our work depends on you.
Jon Nielson is the senior high pastor at College Church in Wheaton, Illinois. He blogs at Something More Sure.

More from Jon Nielson or visit Jon at
Actor Marshall Allman, who plays Don Miller in “Blue Like Jazz” film, with actress, Claire Holt, who plays “Penny.”
March 9th, 2012
05:00 AM ET

Donald Miller’s ‘Blue Like Jazz’ film set to open

By John Blake, CNN

Raw, gritty, with some foul language - not the typical description of a Christian film. Yet that’s how some are describing the upcoming movie “Blue Like Jazz.”

The film, based on a bestselling coming-of-age Christian memoir of the same name, is scheduled to premiere Saturday at the South by Southwest Film Festival in Austin, Texas.

“Blue Like Jazz” follows a pious, 19-year-old sophomore at a Texas college who decides to flee his conservative religious upbringing by transferring to one of the most liberal college campuses in America.

The movie is rated PG-13 because of mature themes, and some references to sexuality, drugs and alcohol.

“It’s a little more gritty than a lot of films, and certainly any Christian film,” says Donald Miller, the author of “Blue Like Jazz.” “It’s more raw and real life.”

The film, which almost didn’t get made due to lack of funding, opens April 13 in theaters nationwide. The movie’s financing fell through at one point but was saved after Miller posted an online appeal.

Miller says the “Blue Like Jazz” film is a hybrid in that it will appeal to a Christian and a secular audience.

“We hope that there’s an enormous demographic of people of faith, and people who have walked away from their faith, who will find themselves somewhere in this story,” he says.
Miller has already reached such an audience with his 2003 memoir. The book is a collection of introspective and irreverent essays where Miller writes about everything from questioning his faith to growing up without a father.

The memoir appealed to multiple audiences: evangelicals, progressives and “spiritual but not religious” folks who don’t easily fit into any category. It spent 43 weeks on the New York Times best-seller list, tallying at least 1.5 million copies sold.

Miller still sounds stunned at his book’s success.

“I don’t know. I really don’t know,” he says when asked why his memoir has proved so popular. “It’s just one of those rare things. I didn’t expect it to take off. I wasn’t trying to make it take off. I was just really honest about telling this aspect of my life, and other people were able to find themselves in it.”

Steve Taylor, the director of “Blue Like Jazz,” says he tweaked Miller’s book for the movie. The movie’s main character is younger, lives on campus, and comes from a fundamentalist church.

Taylor says he didn’t want to make a preachy film. Some of his favorite Christian films are “Tender Mercies,” “Of Gods and Men” and “The Exorcism of Emily Rose.”

He sighed when describing watching some Christian films.

“It’s a genre that can preach to the choir,” Taylor says. “If you didn’t know that world, it would feel like you’ve gone into one of those foreign movies where you not only need subtitles, but CliffsNotes.”

Miller says that he’s embarking on a 35-city bus tour starting March 1 to promote the film. Though his book has gone Hollywood, Miller says his life is far from glamorous.

When he was called to talk about his film, he was in the process of moving furniture out of his house, which he sold to help finance the filming of “Blue Like Jazz.”

“I’m in a sweat shirt and tennis shoes, and I didn’t hire movers,” he says. “I’m moving in the opposite direction of Hollywood.”

John Blake - CNN Writer

About

I'm Perry Noble, Senior Pastor of NewSpring Church in South Carolina. These are the writings of a man who is out of his mind.

read more »

Twitter Updates

- Hey @NewSpring, Easter is going to be awesome, help get the word out - http://t.co/SMa926My about an hour ago
- Hey @NewSpring, here is the 411 on Easter tickets - http://t.co/fF9L3SUI (asking all owners to help get the word out!) about an hour ago
- Blessed! Thankful! about 3 hours ago
- “@RickWarren: Waiting until you FEEL like doing something may be the most common mistake you make.” about 3 hours ago
- The 411 on Easter tickets/services @NewSpring - http://t.co/fF9L3SUI - #NSEaster12 (hey owners, help get this word out!) about 18 hours ago

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Maintaining a GREAT Team? February 29, 2012

John Maxwell said it best...teamwork makes the dream work.

As I’ve reflected on the team that the Lord has blessed me with I’ve came to the following conclusions:

- The right team has chemistry, people don’t just love the work they do but also they love the people they’ve been called to do the work with. If people don’t love one another the team will be dysfunctional.
- The right team lightens the load for everyone in the room because problems do not belong to “me” but rather they belong to “we!”
- The right team has an open environment where truth, in love, can be spoken and people love the church and one another too much to allow team members to make a ridiculous decision.
- The right team will embrace uncomfortable conversations and will not drift towards making everyone in the room happy but rather making the right decision.
- The right team will refuse to allow personal preferences to dictate decisions.
- The right team will bring in people from outside the norm when trying to make a decision that directly impacts a particular area, understanding that this does not slow down the process but actually speeds it up...people are way more likely to buy into a decision when they feel as if they’ve had input.
- The right team will not fight to maintain status quo but rather to do everything possible to advance the cause.
- The right team will make hard decisions, knowing that the day they don’t forces them into cruise control where the biggest desire will eventually become to make sure everyone is as comfortable as possible.
- The right team is way more obsessed with their dreams of what could be rather than their memories of what has been!

I love the team I serve with!

Tagged: Leadership

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John Maxwell said it best…teamwork makes the dream work.

As I’ve reflected on the team that the Lord has blessed me with I’ve came to the following conclusions…

- The right team has chemistry, people don’t just love the work they do but also they love the people they’ve been called to do the work with. If people don’t love one another the team will be dysfunctional.
- The right team lightens the load for everyone in the room because problems do not belong to “me” but rather they belong to “we!”
- The right team has an open environment where truth, in love, can be spoken and people love the church and one another too much to allow team members to make a ridiculous decision.
- The right team will embrace uncomfortable conversations and will not drift towards making everyone in the room happy but rather making the right decision.
- The right team will refuse to allow personal preferences to dictate decisions.
- The right team will bring in people from outside the norm when trying to make a decision that directly impacts a particular area, understanding that this does not slow down the process but actually speeds it up...people are way more likely to buy into a decision when they feel as if they've had input.
- The right team will not fight to maintain status quo but rather to do everything possible to advance the cause.
- The right team will make hard decisions, knowing that the day they don’t forces them into cruise control where the biggest desire will eventually become to make sure everyone is as comfortable as possible.
- The right team is way more obsessed with their dreams of what could be rather than their memories of what has been!

I love the team I serve with!

Tagged: Leadership

http://www.perrynoble.com/2012/02/29/what-makes-a-great-team/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+perrynoble%2FZvVU+%28Perry+Noble+dot+com%29
The popular and controversial book about sex and relationships penned by Seattle megachurch pastor Mark Driscoll has one critic claiming there is a new craze for "sex talk" in the church, while the pastor's followers seem excited that Mars Hill manages to promote a biblical approach to sex among secular audiences.

Both the charismatic pastor known for his very quirky preaching style and his book, *Real Marriage: The Truth About Sex, Friendship, and Life Together*, have been receiving increasing publicity, taking the debate about Christianity and sex outside of the church. Over 200 people commented on Driscoll's Facebook page after he and his wife, Grace, appeared on "The View" Wednesday to discuss their book. The couple also appeared on "Fox and Friends" Thursday morning, and Driscoll's interview with Piers Morgan airs tonight on CNN.

*Real Marriage*, a New York Times Best Seller, takes a look at topics that Christians are often afraid to ask their pastors, and that pastors are often afraid to address, as the book is advertised. The Driscolls expose some of their own "sins" in the book, and also address the roles of both men and women in marriage relationships and talk bluntly about topics relating to sexuality (such as sexual abuse, pornography and sexual activities that are permissible in a marriage).

Pastor Driscoll has been attracting critics for a while, even before *Real Sex* was published in January, for uttering controversial comments about sexuality, such as remarking that masturbation can be a form of homosexuality. Many pastors have criticized his teachings and book.

Conservative journalist and author David Kupelian, who is also managing editor of WorldNetDaily, published a column Tuesday in which he accuses Driscoll of inventing a "version of Christianity for people obsessed with sex."

"There's a new form of Christianity sweeping the U.S. Its main focus: sex," Kupelian writes, adding that he has nothing "personal against this popular, hip, tough-talking young pastor in blue jeans" and that he totally understands the appeal of his "blunt, masculine, passionate style – a refreshing respite from all the stuffy, pretentious and cowardly pastors out there."

However, the journalist writes, Driscoll's "preoccupation" with talking sex goes too far.

Kupelian also did not spare Ed Young of Fellowship Church in Dallas, who also wrote a book considered by some to be a bit too open as far in describing the pastor's sexual marriage life.

"By the way, as runner-up for top mega-church pastor in 'The Church of Sex,' I'd nominate Ed Young, senior pastor of Dallas-based Fellowship Church, who recently staged 'a 24-hour bed-in with his wife atop his church,' a stunt designed to publicize his just-released New York Times best-seller, *Sexperiment: 7 Days to Lasting Intimacy With Your Spouse,*" Kupelian writes.

Despite the criticism, *Real Marriage* has been causing more and more mainstream media to feature Driscoll and his wife, which supporters say is a good thing. Wednesday's interview on "The View" kept Driscoll's fans on the edge of their seats, as the pastor discussed topics like sex outside of wedlock, his own marital problems, and whether or not oral sex and masturbation are "sinful," on the secular show hosted by Barbara Walters, Whoopie Goldberg, Joy Behar, Sherri Shephard, and Raven-Simone filling in for Elisabeth Hasselbeck.

Although their statements were not well-recieved by some of the hosts, such as Behar, who criticized Driscoll for being against homosexuality, the Seattle couple were applauded for discussing a topic even considered taboo in the secular world while representing Christ.
Thank you for printing this page. Do come back to matthiasmedia.com/briefing again, as we are constantly adding new and challenging Christian articles. Please note that, to save you paper and ink, we have stopped navigation, comments and other unnecessary elements from printing.

**Preaching: to tweet or not to tweet**

*Sandy Grant* | 9 March, 2012

That is the question. At least that’s the question raised by the twitter feed from my treasured old seminary, Moore College (@MooreCollege if you want to follow them!)

This morning John Woodhouse is continuing his series in 1 Timothy. You can follow tweets at #MTCchapel - [esv.to/1Tim6.11-16](http://t.co/FJgzq9xB).

I replied,

As a MTC grad and preacher I am not real keen on people tweeting during church myself. So no thanks! Afterwards OK.

(People who know me probably think it’s ironic for me to comment on technology when I only got a mobile phone two months ago. But hey, I’ve been tweeting since the second half of last year, via laptop, so how’s that for cred?)

Anyway, back on topic, someone tweeted back, and here’s how the conversation unfolded (I’m quoting with permission, edited slightly for clarity)...

- [@thebiblebasher](https://twitter.com/#!/thebiblebasher) - I’m pro-sermon tweeting. A 140 character concise tweet is a sign God’s word is being digested... much more encouraging than people passively sat there like they’re at the movies. #readmarkandinwardlydigest [over 2 tweets]
Me: Maybe, but a sermon tweet gives others the impression they can do whatever on their phones (maybe not prob at MTC)

@shanerogerson (https://twitter.com/#!/shanerogerson) - what about note taking and doodling, is it any different? Lloyd Jones preferred no sermon notes

We all want people to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the preached Word of God, as Cranmer’s old collect memorably said! And clearly, people learn in different ways. And people also get distracted in different ways.

So as we use technology to take notes or help us reflect further on the sermon (whether old technology like a pen and pad, or new technology like a smart phone), we all need to think whether our use of technology distracts others or inadvertently gives them permission to focus elsewhere (as they see my doodle, or use of Twitter).

And speaking personally, as a new user of a smart phone, I can see how easy it is to get distracted. During a sermon, I remember a task I need to do, so I take my phone out to list it in my task manager app (Wunderlist, if you were wondering), to get it out of my mind and refocus on the Word. But then I notice I have some new messages, and get tempted to read them... Know what I mean? Maybe the novelty wears off, and all you experienced phone users are no longer distracted!

Remarkably I have even found myself justifying this, because in my case I already heard the sermon at an earlier service I attended that day. Note to self: what about the bad example I am setting for others? Second note to self: even if no one can see you, don’t you realise God’s Spirit might help you get something you missed the first time!?

On the other hand, clearly one can use a smart phone to follow the Bible electronically, take notes, and so forth. OK, my tweeting friend, Andy, got the discussion back on track...

@thebiblebasher (https://twitter.com/#!/thebiblebasher) - the challenge is how we use tech to build & glorify, rather than being anti. It’s Gods gift to us.

Fair enough. However, I had another concern. It wasn’t just about using technology for note-taking to aid one’s own concentration or reflection or memory.

The original tweet apparently encouraged students to ‘live-tweet’ (is that a word?) during the sermon. This must be so that others could follow along, using a hashtag (#MTCchapel (https://twitter.com/#!/search/%23MTCchapel)) and see what the tweeters were saying. Presumably it would be in summary of sermon highlights or in reaction to the sermon.

So I tweeted back...

Does 1 Cor 14:31 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2014.31) have relevance? You can all prophesy in turn! Wait till preacher has finished?

In response, Shane wondered,

@shanerogerson (https://twitter.com/#!/shanerogerson) - not sure it’s really that prophetic, just summarising salient points of what is being prophesied

Of course, tweets during sermons could just summarise what is preached.

But they could also be critiques. And I am certainly not sure the latter – especially when made
instantly public – is appropriate from those sitting under the Word. Certainly 1 Cor 14:29 ([http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2014.29](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2014.29)) suggests it is the job of the “others” to weigh what is said. But I suspect these “others” are most likely the prophets, or the congregational elders. So if anyone is to tweet during a sermon at Moore College, maybe it should be the other lecturers!

However my real point in raising that bit of 1 Corinthians 14 is that of orderliness, when people bring the Word of God to one another. (This even reflects something of God’s nature, v33.)

Only one speaks at a time! ([1 Cor 14:30-31](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2014.30-31) again!)

And others can control themselves and wait till the current speaker has finished.

It is more important to listen, than to be immediately telling others what you think. But live-tweeting during a sermon seems to encourage the potential for many people to be speaking before the first speaker, i.e. the preacher, has even finished.

It was a good and friendly interchange. And I have asked my conversation partners to comment here.

Maybe I lack self-awareness, but I do not think I am anti-tech. After all, we discussed this by tweeting. And I myself have tweeted highlights of sermons from others I have heard at St Michael’s where I serve (try #GongCathedral ([https://twitter.com/#!/search/%23GongCathedral](https://twitter.com/#!/search/%23GongCathedral)). But I waited till after church before I sent the tweets. In conclusion, as I tweeted myself...

pro-tech people realise there are times when it is appropriate to wait before using tech!

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74 thoughts on “Preaching: to tweet or not to tweet”

1. If I was a preacher (and you can all be thankful that I’m not), I think I’d be reluctant to have my ?? hours of sermon prep, which I’ve worked very hard to condense down to a 25 minute sermon, further condensed into such small bites, and delivered across the world without the
context of the the full content of what I had said. Nice (flattering?) that people want to republish what I say, but easily misrepresented?

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8310#respond)

2. Ian and Sandy,

In regards to the reaction of the preacher to having their talks tweeted – I would disagree generally speaking.

In the end as a preacher one wants what one says to be given a wide audience – and twitter is one good new way of doing that. And of course there’s going to be loss in translation, nuance, the moment – all that will be lost – but generally better to be out there in the marketplace of ideas!

So why haven’t I started doing it when I am listening to talks? Well personal reasons. I contemplated and I think maybe tried to join the twitter conversation about the preaching at Oxygen – listening to Piper and Lennox – but in the end didn’t join in – because I needed to concentrate on what was being said for me (which I find note taking helps me to do) – rather than listening and repackaging/republishing it for others (especially thinking about how it might be taken by different audiences on my twitter feed). I decided that I wasn’t able to process for me and repackage for others in real time – especially not on such an important topic – as nuancing the teaching of the word of God – and that here and now the most important thing to do was to give me headspace to process for me. Other cleverer people whose brains work differently may be able to – and if so – all power to them!!

But what a helpful discussion on a current ministry topic.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8311#respond)

○ Dominic said:

‘In the end as a preacher one wants what one says to be given a wide audience...’

I am less convinced that it is good for my preaching to be abstracted to an audience beyond my personal and pastoral relations. I concede that this may just be my – again, personal – reaction to the absent-pastor effect of mp3s.

Every now and again I receive an email from someone ‘out there’ listening to my sermons online, and though I thank God that they may have benefited from the labours enabled by my generous church, each time I also wonder whether now is the time to shut down our sermon feed. Preaching is personal, and involves taking responsibility for listeners within and beyond the frame of the sermon. I cannot do that for those beyond my care.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8312#respond)

- The problem Michael and others raise about context doesn’t just apply to tweets — anytime we quote a preacher that is an inherent danger, regardless of the medium. And even whole sermons in print (Calvin, Lloyd-Jones, etc.) don't have that personal element Michael speaks of, yet they can be of enormous value to the reader.
For me the issue is more the one that Dominic raises – if you’re already packaging parts of the message and sending it out before you’ve had time to process it and before it’s complete, are you really ‘reading, marking, etc.’? What is lost by waiting to do it afterwards (as Sandy urges) other than not satisfying the contemporary urge for instant gratification?

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8315#respond)

3. Hi there,

Just thought I would give some perspective as to how @moorecollege is (trying) to use twitter. But first some back story.

Each year college participates in an event which we call Moore Mission. Simply put, groups of students and faculty are sent out to various parts of Australia (and occasionally the world) to partner with churches in running local missions that proclaim Jesus.

In the past (up until 2011) there had been fairly good engagement individually on social networks about mission. The social networks that were implemented were the student run mission blog and individual use of twitter. The topics of the tweets included things like prayer requests, encouraging stories of people learning about Jesus and some included personal tweets about things that individual students were learning from their experiences. While this engagement was good, it had no real traction in the wider college community. This lack of traction was partly due to the college not utilising its social networks to raise the profile of what was happening during the mission and therefore the profile of the college.

It left some of us (students and faculty) asking the questions like, ‘Why we didn’t utilise these networks better?’ and then ‘How could we do things differently moving forward?’

What happened after was the identification of several 1st year students who had professional backgrounds in digital and social media. This group were given the ok to try some new things on the web with the hope of a) increasing the online presence of the college and its activities, b) give a glimpse of the day-to-day college experience and the great things God has blessed students with; as well as the work He is doing through Moore College, and c) explore new ways of using digital and social media with a view to educating others about these things by example and formal training sessions.

While these aims may broaden in the future, this is what we are currently trying to do and we’re having fun asking ‘how can we use this technology for the glory of God and the building-up of His Kingdom?’ Not everything works well, and the #MTCchapel hashtag wasn’t actually started by our group. We were simply making public something that was already being used by a number of students. And by we, I mean me, as I’m the one who sent the tweet which started all of this.

*** On a slightly related note: @moorecollege plan to hosting a couple of student-run Digital Ministry training workshops over the course of the year. If you’re a minister and would like to attend a student-run workshop, we’d love to have you. Please register your interest here: https://docs.google.com/a/student.moore.edu.au/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dHBUZ1pzR0RNUU1QaGp0LVlyZ3dOYlE6MQ (https://docs.google.com/a/student.moore.edu.au/spreadsheet/...
Hi All,
I agree with Sandy; and also would include this reasoning:

Would it not be rude to ‘comment’ to others throughout a sermon while sitting as a Church under the preaching of God’s Word; and what’s more, would it not also be inappropriate because of the role of the listener and the Spirit whenever the Preacher is declaring God’s Word to his Church?

I believe the role of the Listener is not only to be ‘hearing’ the Preaching as God’s Word, is is also to ‘submit’ as under the authority of God’s direct Word in that moment.

It is because of this that ‘speaking’ is out of Order, is inappropriate at this point. He Speaks; We Listen. The importance of this Order comes from the place of Authority in the relationship.

But instead if we speak throughout the Sermon, by ‘chatting’ (when we Tweet), every time we do this are we leave the Mode of Listener; when we Tweet we exit our Place under God’s Word as Listener, under Authority, and actively cross-over, and step into the mode of Commentor. And is not engaging in Commentary while under the authority of Preaching actively working against our sole and singular role as Listeners to God?

Thanks everyone, I appreciate your comments.
I really appreciate the kind way the Moore College students engaged with my (hopefully friendly) critique.
And I like the idea of those with professional backgrounds in digital and social media at Moore trying a few things to leverage these opportunities technology gives us. Keep it up. I am sure we will benefit as a result. My post is an encouragement to refine one of those uses.

Joe, I think you nailed it. We must never lose sight of hearing the voice not of the preacher but of God, and sitting under his Word.

In that regards, it’s worth saying that the #MTCchapel tweets I have seen have been godly and edifying.

I think I’d just prefer to wait till after church/chapel before sending those messages.

Thanks Sandy,
Glad we could outline some of the reasoning behind what we are trying to do @moorecollege. Thanks for your encouragement to keep thinking about how we can refine our thinking in this area.

On another note: Sorry I couldn’t actually engage with you on twitter over last weekend.
Was in the mountains for MKC. With the horrible mobile coverage I wouldn’t of been able to contribute much and Andy (@thebiblebasher) is more than qualified to keep the discussion going :)

Peace.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8322#respond)

6. Pingback: Check out | HeadHeartHand Blog (http://headhearthand.org/blog/2012/03/09/check-out-63/)

7. Pingback: Pat Robertson, Blue Like Jazz the Movie, and more! | ToddRhoades.com (http://www.toddrhoades.com/pat-robertson-blue-like-jazz-the-movie-and-more/)

8. As the world marches, so too the Christians saddle up right behind. It’s all about ‘sound bites’.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8325#respond)

9. I think David Murray linked to this post, and I know he, among many others, see the collection and dispersion of information as NOT the primary purpose of a sermon. It is a supernatural moment in time, where divine truth is relayed by God’s under-shepherd to his people. I’m not saying that there aren’t things to learn, but what’s most important is being fully aware of God’s moving and teaching in the moment. I know there is a call among many teachers of preaching to not use sermon notes in the pulpit for that very reason. Know the Word and then engage with your people. I think that’s why using video screens just simply isn’t preaching, but that’s a top for another time.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8326#respond)

10. While some people are practiced at doing several things at once, the reality is these people are practiced at segmenting their attention from one activity to another. The problem with this is we can really on focus on one activity at a time with everything else standing in a line waiting for further attention. Think of how a cook operates within a kitchen. Many things happening but the cook’s activity is a series of performed actions. We can only focus on one thing at a time. We can operate with noise in the background but we cannot focus on the noise at the exclusion of the activity at hand.

An example is when talking to a child who really does not want to listen, the child's thoughts will wander to something else – a miniature form of rebellion. One way as a parent to counter-act this, in a limited form, is to actively engage the child by asking thought provoking questions rather than just “yes/no” questions, as this forces the child to actively listen and respond. Unfortunately I do not know many pastors who do this in the midst of their sermons...calling out people in the middle of their sermon.

For the Twitter to decide they will tweet in the middle of a sermon is a reflection of the child mentally deciding to think of other things and move the focus from the one who is speaking to something that reflects where the Heart actually is and where it is not. Using the old adage of God giving you one mouth which you can open and close, He gave you two ears that are always open, the Twitter has just replaced their mouth with their hands as they tweet.
Taking notes means you must actively listen so you can record important points knowing that while you are actively writing the note you also know your attention or focus has shifted from the speaker to the pen and paper in front of you. The attention of the dialog is still only between you and the speaker and there is no expectation of having anyone make a comment on the note until maybe after the speaker is finished speaking. This is not so with the Twitter. Attention has shifted to condensing what was said for others to read so they can try to understand and make comments. Note taking is personal and acts as a mental sign post to jog memory. Tweeting by its very nature is not personal as it is a communication tool between 2+ people with the expectation of soliciting comments.

Michael, do you have evidence of all this ‘brain stuff’ that you’ve posted? It seems to me that what you’re arguing against is Tweeting, per se, but in reality, there is very little difference in brain function between note taking and Tweeting. Unless, of course, you can provide evidence ...

Just so that it is known, I’m not a person who Tweets during sermons, and very little at any other time. Less than 50 in my life, and I’ve had a Twitter account for over 2 years.

Andrew, he’s right about the brain stuff. There is evidence for the fact that we can’t really multi-task, only move from one task to another; and that when we try to do two things at once, rather than sequentially, we actually take longer to do them and do them less well. You’d find evidence for this in Challies The Next Story, his book on technology. So yes, you could take notes as a way of helping your own brain concentrate. You’d find it harder to tweet a comment to someone else – and certainly to read their reaction – while absorbing what was being said during a sermon.

Not so much a comment on the right and wrong of all this (I don’t feel informed enough to comment), just an answer to your question.

Thanks Jean. My only three sources of input for my reasoning is the the 2009 Stanford study on the degraded cognitive ability when multitasking, my own personal experiences where I have found how many different tasks I can accomplish at the same time plus discussions with other people attempting the same, and one of the ways I look at Paul in 1st Cor 8:1-13 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1st%20Cor%208.%201-13). I have found that I can do analysis work when I look for patterns within a data set and listen with comprehension to a speaker (e.g. A podcast, a an audio file) but I cannot listen with comprehension while trying to or while writing as this uses the same portion of my brain and I will miss a part of the discussion when I write or I stop writing when I am comprehending what I hear. The advantage I have over someone in a live/sermon setting is I can turn off the audio and replay. The person Tweeting does not have the same ability. As for Paul in 1st Cor. 8:1-13 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1st%20Cor.%208.1-13), he is discussing food and idols and how it can
influence those individuals who are not as strong in their faith as others. I can see this also being turned with how we should respond when we go to worship to hear a sermon built from the Word of God. By removing our attention from the sermon and the speaker we are in a sense placing our own importance above the message and set a poor example for others (e.g. those new to the church, children and teens who follow the examples set by the adults).

There is no real good reason for Tweeting during a sermon or any other live event if the intent is to hear, comprehend, and learn. If someone cannot come to the sermon they will not miss much in waiting for a podcast or a recording of the sermon. Or you can personally go to them afterward and tell them in person or by telephone. This enables us to maintain the respect towards the speaker (e.g. pastor, teacher, chaplain, priest), set the correct example, keep our focus on what we are meant to hear, and know that by giving fully to the speaker our attention we are also giving the glory to God and not to something or someone else.

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- Good point about which parts of the brain you’re using at the same time. I can knit and listen (see discussion with Karen below…) so obviously some kinds of multitasking work well :).

- Jean, thanks for replying on behalf of Michael.
  I have Tim Challies’ book – just haven’t got around to listening to it, yet. (I’m an audiobook listener, not a book reader.) Does Tim link to studies? No need to provide the links; I’m just interested to know.
  The other thing I want to say is that when I try and take notes, I lose most of what is being said at the time I’m writing. I was like that in school. I’m like that now. Put me in front of a computer, however, and I can (usually) keep my concentration on listening and what I’m typing.
  Call me odd. Many people do!

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8385#respond)

- Yep, page 125.

  Typing is easier, faster, neater and more efficient than writing. You can also look at someone while you do it. I agree: it’s easier to concentrate while typing (not that I would ever attempt this during a sermon, mainly because of the impact on those around me!).

11. Pingback: Pat Robertson, Blue Like Jazz the Movie, and more! | OpenArms.tv (http://openarms.tv/pat-robertson-blue-like-jazz-the-movie-and-more/)

12. Personally, I really dislike when people tweet during service. I’m far from being anti-technology, I’m attached to my cell and my laptop the majority of the day, but I think that for a hour or so at church we could all stand to pay a little more attention to the Word instead of tweeting a reaction to it. Generally I think it looks disrespectful when I see people on their cells or ipads during church. What really bothers me is that the pastors at the church I used to attend would be nonstop tweeting throughout the service. We should be giving God all of our
attention when we are coming together as a church to hear His Word.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8329#respond)

13. I can think of numerous times when I’ve been sitting in on a particularly rich and meaty sermon, and the pastor has brought up points on which I’ve wanted to raise my hand (as if in a discussion) because I know in my heart that I have something I could add that might be a clarifier or that might help deepen the message. But I don’t do it because the middle of a sermon, sitting amongst the congregation is not the appropriate place for that kind of exchange. The problem with social media in this application is that this forum gives everyone the podium all the time, and leads us to believe that we all have equally valid points to contribute whenever we want to contribute them. We get so busy paying close attention to the sermon for sparkling bits of wisdom that really pop, things that we think others might be interested in and how we can put our own turn on them so that they might be more interesting and applicable, that we forget to really listen to the message so that we can digest it and apply it to ourselves. We forget that God’s message of application for me in that sermon may not be the same application that He has for every other one of my Twitter followers.

More often than not, when I have those ‘Aha!’ moments in the middle of the sermon, wishing so dearly that I could have my say in the middle of the congregation, by the time the pastor has reached the end of his sermon and I’ve digested it all in context, I realise that what I would have said wasn’t as appropriate as I thought. Or that the pastor brought it up later on in the sermon in a better context than I would have done. We live in a world of instant gratification, where everyone is able to have their say at any time about anything. As believers, we must be discerning as to what is the proper time to speak and the proper time to be silent, else we will merely become a congregation of clashing gongs and clattering cymbals.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8330#respond)

"We get so busy paying close attention to the sermon for sparkling bits of wisdom that really pop, things that we think others might be interested in and how we can put our own turn on them so that they might be more interesting and applicable, that we forget to really listen to the message so that we can digest it and apply it to ourselves.” That’s a really helpful point. Again, Challies in The Next Story comments on this: one of the impacts of technology is that we’ve become less able to maintain sustained reflection on a book, sermon or argument; instead, our brain jumps from point to point to task to task. I guess a helpful question is: does tweeting during a sermon help my brain to develop the skills of concentrating and digesting, or does it train my brain in distraction and inattention?

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8345#respond)

- Ditto with Jean, Jaye, I liked your comment

We get so busy paying close attention to the sermon for sparkling bits of wisdom that really pop, things that we think others might be interested in and how we can put our own turn on them so that they might be more interesting and applicable, that we forget to really listen to the message so that we can digest it and apply it to ourselves.

But sometimes these are worth remembering and even sharing, so I find writing
them down helps me:
(i) remember it, and
(ii) have it ready if maturer judgment later after church on assesses it as still worth
sharing for edification of others.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet
/?replytocom=8382#respond)

14. I vote against tweeting during sermons. At the very least—I don’t want people to be doing it
near and at the end of the sermon. If people still feel like tweeting near the end of the sermon
(instead of praying, repenting, resolving, or praising) then as a preacher I’ve not accomplished
my goal.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet
/?replytocom=8332#respond)

15. I won’t repeat all the great points already made in previous comments, but I’d just like to say
that I think tweeting during any type of situation that is supposed to turn the focus solely on
God is inappropriate. As a student at Wheaton College, which just experience “Chapelgate”*, I
know it can even be hurtful to do so. Why engage social media if it does nothing to enhance
our spiritual growth?

* A group of Wheaton students pledged to tweet during chapel services about chapel services.
Though often critical comments, the tweets were relatively tame until a recent “Rhythm &
Praise” chapel, in which racially insensitive comments were directed towards the participants
in the chapel, who were mostly minority students. The administration is addressing the
incident and the ensuing uproar, and working to improve diversity and racial relations on
campus.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet
/?replytocom=8333#respond)

16. Great to see a series of disagreeing men & women treat each other so well!

I feel as though there’s a theme among some of the “don’t tweet” brigade that assumes that
those who tweet mid-sermon are doing it for attention.

Fair cop, some of the time.

But one of the features of twitter is that people not right there and then can see in part what’s
being said. Good for people dislocated/unable to be there.

I’ve been prompted to think and reflect by reading the tweets of others (more at conferences
that I’m not at, than sermons), and have been encouraged to see people engage with
services/sermons that I’m involved with!

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet
/?replytocom=8338#respond)

○ “Good for people dislocated/unable to be there.” Could one person be given the
Tweeting task for the sake of those who are not there?

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet
/?replytocom=8346#respond)
Oh dear, just after Rog complimented you all on being so nice! I’m going to be blunt. But in love, so that makes it ok right? ;-)  

Let’s face it guys, most of us can only listen to and digest 60% of what you’re saying at the time, and will remember, at most, about 10%. That’s right, 10% of what you say will actually remain in our brains more than 2 hours after you stopped talking.

It seems to me there are those who don’t seem to actually grasp the concepts of active listening and different learning styles, and instead want to engage in cloaking specific types of personalities and learning styles with godliness-jargon, making ‘being a good Christian sermon participant’ on par with their preferred style (God wants you to sit quietly, facing the speaker at all times, without moving or writing any notes, but simply listening, preferably while wearing neat and tidy clothes').

I would ask, “why did you decide that the inherited concept of preaching being the focus of ‘church’ (services/basically that whole model of church) was the best way of making the Living Word of God the focus of church?” Is it because preaching was what had/has the most impact on you and your relationship with God? Is it because everybody else in your white culture is doing it? Is it because it was the only task you’ve been trained for? Is it because you’ve subtly replaced ‘the Word of God’ with ‘the preached Word of God’? I don’t think the Bible ever actually goes that far. It’s deffo pro-preaching (cue your mental cascade of proof-texts), but a.) weren’t a lot of people illiterate and b.) does pro-preaching equal, ‘Word of God = preached Word of God’?

There is actually a huge variety of ways for engaging with God through His Word to happen communally, and most of them have a lot more impact on people’s actual behaviour and attitudes than the stuff you say for half an hour at us from behind your pulpit in your dress. Especially when 1 in 3 of us have depression or anxiety, 1 in 5 of us have a mood disorder and some strange amount of us have the sit-quietly-and-listen-attention-span of a gnat.

Having said that, I am one of those people whose brains are continually summarising and analysing what is being said (aren’t we awful!), however, my Mum and Dad also taught me manners, so I try not to make side comments to people sitting next to me, and while some of my notes could sensibly be made into tweets, I’m not a Twit yet, so I don’t use that medium. I generally wait and digest, y’know? I don’t start complaining until during the next song, like most of the people around me.

As usual, the solution is not to legalistically ban or encourage something (in this case, tweeting), but, as Tim said, to be the best we can be at what we’re doing (if we’ve decided it’s worth the time and effort), and let/ask God to do His thing.

Should I sign this “Grumpy and Confused in Broken Hill”?

(And to prove the attention span thing, probably only, maybe, 2 people have read this far cos I’m over 500 words! ;-)
1. You reminded us of the importance of the variety of learning styles. Some people need to be more physically engaged in the whole thing to be mentally engaged etc. Maybe (some) reflectors and theorists can sit still and (some) activists and pragmatists are helped by seeing and even articulating where it is all going. Ditto for personality styles more generally. And kinaesthetics too, I guess? Pen or phone in hand and some physical movement might genuinely help (not just distract)!

2. But I also loved what you said about your parents and how they taught you manners. We all need to wait – at times – before we speak out or move around. I think this may be related to the 1 Corinthians 14 point about order. It’s very important.

3. And thanks so much for saying let’s not legalistically ban (or encourage) something. That was certainly not my purpose.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8349#respond)

- Thanks Sandy! I definitely wasn’t thinking you were saying we should ban, it’s just that often these types of conversations end up going in that direction...

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8350#respond)

18. I’m one of what appears to have become known as the “don’t tweet brigade,” and to give my reasons would merely be to restate the well-made points above. But a couple of points:

1. In the original article, @Thebiblebasher was quoted as saying that a concise tweet is a sight that God’s word is being digested. Really? That’s a sign? I think not.

2. He then goes onto say that technology is God’s gift to us. Well yes and no. It’s God’s gift to the world (not just “us” believers), and like all such gifts we need to work out whether they are appropriate for church use before we work out how they are appropriate for church use. But let’s be clear, technology as “God’s gift” is a long way away from those things that God does actually give to “us” for the building up of his church: the reading and preaching of the word, prayer, sacraments, church discipline.

3. I take Rogers’s point above about those unable to hear the sermon in the usual way benefitting from tweets. Let’s be honest, if we’re talking about the housebound or the incarcerated, they are probably not getting a twitter feed on their smartphone. For genuine cases of this, perhaps tweeting that the sermon recording ministry could use some technologically savvy people to assist in the production of CDs and tapes might have been a better use of “God’s gift” of technology.

But maybe we should ask, why aren’t these people at church or chapel? Are they absent because they can’t be arsed to turn up? Yikes, I wouldn’t want to be encouraging that. Or are they absent because they are at their own church on Sunday morning? In which case, they are, we must assume, receiving something about a trillion times better than 140 characters of sound bite; they are receiving the very word of God (or at least the preached word of God if you disagree with the Second Helvetic Confession)! And preached by their own pastor, who knows them and lives them and stands before them.

4. And finally, I just wonder why it is only the sermon the tweeting of which is encouraged?
I’m preaching in a few hours’ time, but before I do I’ll be calling the sauna to worship, I’ll be leading them in a prayer of approach, I’ll be praying for them and thanking God on their behalf, I’ll be feeding richly as one of them reads from the Old and New Testaments, and I’ll be joining my voice with theirs as we sing praise to God. An afterward I’ll declare God’s blessing upon them as we depart and end our time of worship. I don’t know how much of that goes on at Moore College chapel, but if we’re going to see the sermon celebrated in such a way, I’d love to see a bit of #awesomebenediction or #AAPBgeneralconfession action on my twitter feed too!

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8341#respond)

○ And how good is predictive text! Saunas!

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8342#respond)

○ Thanks for some good thoughts, Chris, and love your rhetorical flourish in the last paragraph. And although it’s almost 2 decades since I have been in Moore College chapel, my younger friends who continue to go assure me there are those other sort of features you mention.

But no, I haven’t seen them in the tweets; maybe we’ll have to keep an eye out for those new hashtag suggestions?!

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8348#respond)

19. What about the impact on the preacher as he preaches? (The same could be asked – and I ask myself – about note-taking, Bible-flicking and doodling.) What encourages a preacher most at the moment he’s preaching God’s word? What activities and body language on the part of his congregation?

I’m not a preacher (obviously!) but I do wonder if the sight of lots of heads down and fingers tapping might be a little distracting and/or disheartening! Of course it would depend on the context and the expectations for that preacher’s particular congregation.

Ben Pfahlert encourages listeners to look at the preacher, nod at good points, laugh at funny points etc etc – all ways of making the preacher feel encouraged and engaged with his audience rather than disconnected and disregarded.

This doesn’t stop me taking notes when I think it would help me to concentrate, so it’s no clinching argument on the Tweeting thing. But it’s a point worth considering.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8347#respond)

20. Hi Sandy,

I’m glad you clarified things in response to Jo as your post did come across as anti smartphone at times. I think it’s because you’re really talking about two things here: tweeting during sermons (which I am also against) and smartphone usage in church. You are right: the latter has disadvantages (distraction being chief, as you point out!) even as there are benefits. I would just hate for people to adopt a judgemental attitude towards smartphone users purely...
for using a smartphone in church. That happened to me once; I was in the creche room with my toddler and one of the other congregation members started talking to me in the middle of the sermon because, as he later told me, he assumed I was reading my messages/SMS-ing people when in fact I was reading the Bible and trying to follow the sermon as best I could while also keeping an eye on my toddler. (I responded by asking him if we could talk about whatever he had asked me later.)

For me, some of the benefits of using a smartphone in church include:

* Being able to look up passages quickly.

* Being able to read a passage in different versions. Now that I’m attending church twice on Sundays, I usually read it in the version the church uses during the first service and then in another during the second service as doing so helps me understand the passage a little more.

* Cross-references are easier and quicker to look up when there’s something in the passage that refers to another part of the Bible.

* When my child was younger, breastfeeding and using a smartphone to read the Bible was much easier than trying to juggle a book one-handed. (Maybe I’m just not that dexterous ...)

* When my child got older and more mobile, the same applied when following her around the creche room. (Now that _really_ required good concentration skills!)

* When I find that my brain is being distracted by other matters, I’ve actually found it aids my concentration to make short notes to myself in something like Evernote or Note so that I can stop worrying that I’ll forget to buy milk or take the clothes out of the dryer when I get home as the phone will remember these things for me. Writing such things down on a piece of paper just increases my chances of losing that piece of paper, whereas the phone keeps them in the same place and even emails them to me.

I take Jean’s point about trying to love and serve the preacher by paying attention and appearing to be engaged. I also take your point about setting a good example for other congregation members. But I wonder where the balance is between doing things for the sake of appearances and doing things for your own sake. Elaborating on what I mean by that, pre-smartphone, I used to write notes while listening. But I found that if I was tired (which is more of an issue now, and I must say that fatigue is far more of a distraction than any electronic gadget), writing notes didn’t actually stop me from nodding off. These days, I knit during sermons with a smartphone balanced on my knee. (The bub is now going to creche in the morning and I attend by myself in the evenings, but even before this, I would knit in the creche room.) I find knitting aids concentration as it gives me something to do with my hands, it’s usually repetitive enough that it demands very little brain space, and it requires just enough physical activity to keep me awake. I’m aware it looks bad, it can be distracting for others, and I also know that at times trying to follow knitting patterns as well as listening to sermons can be distracting (it really depends on the knitting pattern). But the benefit for me is that I have paid far more attention and imbibed far more Bible teaching than I would have had I simply sat and taken notes, or sat and just listened. Also, surely it’s more encouraging to the preacher and to others to be awake and actively listening while doing something than asleep. Then I try to encourage the preacher through expressing my appreciation and/or asking questions on my feedback card. I realise my practices are unusual, but they work for me, and because of them, I think I have managed to listen and follow along far more than
many new mums in the initial months of parenting.

Anyways, I hope some of that was intelligible; apologies if it’s not! I’m writing this so dreadfully early in the morning because my toddler woke up and would not go back to sleep.

Karen, I find that knitting aids concentration too! :) Haven’t done it for a while (I’m not knitting much at the moment) but I used to sit up the back of conference talks, knit, watch my kids, and listen. A good combination. I think it was still clear from my body language that I was listening to the sermon. Crafters take note! :)

Just crafting my next post on banning yarn in church!

Hi Dannii,

It’s a little off the original topic, but I am intrigued by your comment. You start by asking the “point of preaching,” and conclude that, whatever it is, you “don’t think it’s the ideal situation for teaching and exhortation.” Really? So during those “public, and wide” sermons, what do you think is actually going on?

But even more problematic is that you see this “teaching and exhortation” role being
better fulfilled by “relatively small groups – sometimes individually, sometimes a one-to-one and sometimes a study group.” What the?

When did that core function of the church – teaching and exhortation of Scripture – become better accomplished by untrained lay people? And even by individual Bible study? Now I have nothing against Bible study groups. I have nothing against suitably qualified lay leaders. I don’t believe in the necessity of a theological degree. And I certainly encourage private Bible study. But in the Bible and in the history of the church, these are not the primary forums for the teaching and exhortation of the saints of God. How can they be when, as you say, their strength is in the dialogue of voices (often voices of ignorance and confusion) rather than in the authoritative proclamation of God’s word to his people?

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Way to twist my words... where did I ever say that the teaching and exhortation should be done by untrained lay people who speak with confusion and ignorance? It should be done by trained lay people of course!

Way to twist MY words, Dannii!

My reference to confusion and ignorance refers to the dialogue that you affirm as the strength of small groups, and not to the qualified lay leaders that you would see appointed to lead them.

As for lay people leading...it’s amusing how quickly you got back to me to tell me that “of course” they are the trained variety! My mistake.

But in any case I’m lost as to where Scripture suggests that the “teaching and exhortation” is to be primarily done (a) in small groups, etc, or (b) by other than the ministers of the church.

I think we really have fundamentally different opinions about how church should be done.

I am very egalitarian – there is no qualitative difference between Christians, only differing Christian maturities and a diversity of gifts. Ideally all Christians would be highly trained, would continually be trained further, and would serve each other. There’d be little need for a small group leader, except when there is a substantial difference in maturities, such as with new believers. However even new believers can be taught exegesis, so that they too can explore the scriptures rather than just sprouting confusion and ignorance. And I think the regular Sunday sermon can be a good place to demonstrate exegesis.

Where do the scriptures ever say that teaching should be done primarily by “ministers”? No instead “each one has a hymn, a lesson, a
revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.” (1 Cor 14:26 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2014.26)). To suggest otherwise is to deny that the spirit equips us all. The scriptures don’t specifically endorse small groups, that’s just me speaking from my experience.

Also, I misspoke earlier, teaching and exhortation can’t really happen by yourself. But the single person equivalents of study and application can.

■ I should say: I don’t believe in “clergy”, but I do believe in a church having paid staff – people who the church believes it worth supporting financially so that they can be freed up to do more ministry. I think the main role we should pay staff for is training and discipleship (if those two can even be distinguished).

I am now suggesting that non-evangelistic preaching be thought of as primarily a training opportunity, and that teaching and exhortation be secondary outcomes.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8373#respond)

■ I’m pretty sure clergy do exist, and that you should believe in them. But seriously, your view is rather extreme, and at odds with the teaching of Scripture (can you really argue that it makes NO distinction apart from their salary?) and the history of the church (including the reformed and evangelical traditions).

As I said, I think we’ve become distracted from the point of the article (my fault, entirely), and I’m sorry that that is the case. I will make this my last comment and close with the words of the apostle (clergyman?) Paul (Titus:

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint paid staff – people who the church believes it worth supporting financially so that they can be freed up to do more ministry – in every town...

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8377#respond)

■ Titus 1:5 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus%201.5)

■ I don’t mind being off topic, as long as good discussion is happening, and I feel it still is.

I know my position disagrees with church history – I believe that most churches for a long time have got it wrong. They have conflated two things which the scriptures do not conflate: ministry, and oversight.

Overseers/elders are essential – they are responsible for ensuring that the church avoids heresy. The qualifications Paul gives us include that they must be able to teach and to rebuke false teaching (1 Tim 3:2 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%203.2), Titus 1:9)
Preaching: to tweet or not to tweet | The Briefing

(http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus%201.9), but this ability neither means that they must do the lion’s share of the teaching, nor that they even have a special gift of teaching. We are all able to do much more than what we have been specially gifted to do.

In terms of a churches ministries, the day to day serving and teaching and prayer etc, the elders may or may not be prominent – it really depends on how everyone else is gifted and led to serve. But even if they’re not prominent then they’ll be there in the background, quietly watching, ready to correct any false teaching if it arises.

22. I believe the core function of interpreting, understanding and applying the word belongs to the Holy Spirit, and that every believer in having access to the Spirit has access to those gifts also. I think that’s when lay people got in on the act Chris.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8372#respond)

○ Ha...when was that, exactly?

I don’t there is anywhere in my original reply to Dannii that suggests I don’t agree with all that. But “teaching and exhortation” do not mean sitting around dialoguing about a passage in the typical small group context, and they certainly don’t mean private Bible study, as beneficial as both of these things are.

But I think we’ve gone off topic, and I apologise for that.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8375#respond)

23. I have never been a note taker until recently. I only write down either quotes or one word to help me jog my memory. If I like a quote I will upload it to my buffer app (which will then tweet it at a designated time) after the sermon is done not during. I find if I am tweeting during the sermon I am too concerned with twitter rather than what is preached.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8386#respond)

24. Interesting discussion. I’ve got a couple of thoughts, probably more towards the pro-tweeting side than others, I suspect.

The thing I really appreciate about Sandy’s piece is the warning to not sit in judgement before it’s warranted. Quite apart from the Twitter question, I know as a preacher myself it’s very easy to sit in sermon-critique mode and not really listen.

Regarding the great point that Jean made of the effect on the preacher – in many of our local church contexts I suspect the knowledge the preacher has of his congregation helps out here. So, for example, I know if I’m preaching that when this person in the 3rd row is hunched over his phone, I’m pretty sure he’s reading his bible on it, or taking a note. That other guy over in the 6th row... because I know him, I’m pretty sure he’s playing Angry Birds. If I’m in your congregation, sitting next to Karen, and knitting—well, you can be pretty sure I’m not paying much attention to you. The same goes for note-taking & doodles, knitting, or Bible reading, or whatever else people are doing while they’re listening.
Another thing to recognise is how one-sided Twitter is for most people. Most people have fewer followers than the number of people they follow. That is, for most people on Twitter there’s not a massive number of people listening to them, just a (relatively) small circle of friends. I suspect this makes the #sermonhighlights hashtag much closer to the note-taking end than the megaphone end of the spectrum.

Those followers, however, are interested at least a little in what I’m thinking, in pithy form. So if I’m thinking that a phrase captured Romans X:Y really beautifully, why not make that note on this forum?

I’ve certainly tweeted through conferences, and occasionally at church, because there’s an idea that was put beautifully that I wanted to remember and have access to. I know enough about the way my brain works that if I don’t write it down, I’ll forget it, but there’s a good chance that putting it into words just once will lodge it in my head for the long term. Publishing that more broadly than my personal journal has the benefit of a very small amount of encouragement to those who are following me (I don’t assume too much here!). I don’t write it to engage in conversation; I’m certainly not checking #myCongregationsHashtag during the service. In fact I use an app that allows me to ‘draft’ tweets without seeing the rest of the timeline. I recognise that others use Twitter differently to me, but as it is I find it useful.

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Reply ↓ ( /briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8387#respond)

25. Thank you Sandy. 50 comments is a sign of how much this dialogue is needed. What’s the record Tony?

As it was my response to @SandmanGrant I thought it was about time I joined the party.

I actually think we’re getting our knickers in a bit of twist about all of this. No one is proposing that we introduce a Q&A style twitter-feed into Sydney Churches – although that would be fun to try at a conference.

The discussion Sandy and I had was simply about whether a concise tweet was a sign of engagement with the word or a sign of distraction. I stand by my view that an accurate, descriptive sermon tweet (not a critique, conversation or derogatory remark) is more desirable than a doodling pew-dweller who can only remember your intro and the gag you made 12 minutes in.

As a preacher, my prayer before, during and after my sermon is for the word of God to dwell in my hearers richly, that God’s spirit would convict, encourage and grow people as they hear the voice of the living God addressing them personally. No preacher would want any less for their flock. However, I’m not convinced that a sermon tweet is at odds with that supernatural process. Taking accurate notes and summarising the main point of a sermon, then sending a tweet requires a high level of engagement with the preached word. How many preachers could sum-up their own sermon purpose in 140 characters?

I also think it’s worth thinking about what’s going on ‘under the bonnet’ as the 23-year-old lawyer tweets a sermon point that powerfully speaks to him. In sending that tweet, he is standing-up for Jesus in front of his hostile lawyer-mates who follow him on twitter. He’s starting a conversation with his colleagues that he’ll continue over beers with the boys from work. He’s sharing the riches that he’s been hearing and it took him 30 seconds. There are many examples of this exact thing happening. We preachers should be massively encouraged
by this.

Sure – he could do it after the sermon, but digital-natives don’t think like that. Sure – others may think it rude to be on your mobile phone, but digital-natives don’t consider it rude and the rest of us need to get over that. Sure – there might be a temptation to check email, but not if he’s gripped by God’s word preached.

As I looked around at what people were doing during the sermon this Sunday, I was reminded of how valuable a gripping sermon is. People close their eyes, take old-fashioned notes, knit (since when was sermon knitting acceptable?!), tap notes into their phones or just sit there like at the movies. Whatever they do, it is up to us servants of the word to preach to the audience of one and so grip, surprise and delight our hearers with the richness of God’s revelation. If we do that, what’s a tweet between friends? :) 

@thebiblebasher

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8390#respond)

○ Yep.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8391#respond)

26. Oh, and the comments record is way higher than this. The divorce article (http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2012/01/the-good-news-of-divorce/) recently had just under 200 comments (although from fewer people than this thread).

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8392#respond)

27. Hi everyone, just trying to attempt a bit of a sum up...

Karen was helpful in pointing out that I had conflated two issues: (i) the use of smart phones in general in church, and (ii) tweeting during church (and especially during sermons).

I was a little surprised that I was perceived by some as simply being against (i) the use of phones in church altogether. I carefully mentioned that we can be distracting with old technology like pen and paper and over on twitter, Shane provided an example of a particularly distracting doodle on a church bulletin! And I said you can do good things with phones like follow the Bible, record a task to get it off your mind, and take notes.

My warning with (i) is to consider the issue of how it impacts on others; is it likely to distract people near you, and Jean added, is it likely to be off-putting to the preacher, although as Sam pointed out in some congregations the preacher knows people enough to copy, and I would add that some preachers are oblivious to body language!

One other thing that came out from a talk I heard at a Christian business breakfast by Graham Stanton on social media this morning is to beware of how a particular technology exaggerates already existing tendencies. So for example, if you have a tendency to be distractible, the smart phone may well exaggerate it. (Preach it to yourself, brother!)

(ii) My real issue was tweeting during the sermon. Andy and Sam did a good job of pointing
out helpful aspects of tweeting and even suggesting it could be OK during church.

But the work friends of the 23 y.o. lawyer courageously tweeting the sermon summary to the world are not going to be impressed because they got it the moment it happened instead of two hours later. They are probably only vaguely aware, if at all, what time his church meets. It’s the content that matters there, not the instant timing. And why can’t your Christian friends wait a little bit? (Waiting and patience seem to be Christian virtues!) And if you are taking the tight summary notes of themes or highlights in tweet form primarily for your own edification and future reference (which I understand), again, why not take Hans solution and buffer them, or just use a note taking app?

So I have seen very little here to persuade me that I should back down from my strong suggestion to wait till church is over before tweeting (or use Hans idea of the buffering software).

Conclusions (in the absence of some new compelling argument)...  
1. We need to do everything we can to promote that strong sense of sitting under the Word of God when we hear it read and preached.  
2. We should share our responses in a loving way (careful about impact on others).  
3. We should share our responses in an orderly way (waiting till the preacher has finished before we go public), and all the more so, if there is some element of commentary or critique rather than just summary sharing.  
4. We should not rush to judge others for their use of technology in church. There can be lots of good reasons for it.  
5. In particular, some learning styles or personalities can get a lot out of the various apps their smart phones offer.  
6. There is a much better argument that sharing sermon content and reflections after church can have edifying purposes and results with less problematic side effects.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8398#respond)

○ The verse that keeps running through my mind is this one: “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Galatians%205.13)).

And this: “So whether you tweet or don’t tweet or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2010.31)).

I hear you loud and clear, Sandy. I also wonder how I can tweet and, at the same time, listen to the next point that the preacher is making! (Perhaps a if I was as proficient with tweets as note-taking...) But I do wonder if us “digital immigrants” really get how “digital natives” think. Is sermon tweeting here to stay? Do sermons have to take a certain form which we are familiar with and can relate to? What about the sermon is essential, and what negotiable? Those are the questions running through my head.

After all that has been said, perhaps only one thing remains to be said: let all that is done be done in love. Love and respect for the one teaching me from God’s word, both during and after the sermon (remembering that he may read those tweets!); love for those around me, with an awareness of the impact of my example and practices on them, and a commitment to tweet the truth in love; and love for God, with honest
self-assessment of my motivations and the impact of certain practices on my long-term godliness. The exact answers will differ from individual to individual and context to context. But I can at least tweet or not tweet in love.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8403#respond)

28. If Tony Payne is right here...


... perhaps Tweeting is actually a modern form of ‘praise’? (i.e. advertising/broadcasting the truth we have learned about God. Which, as Andy points out, can have an evangelistic edge to it.)

But that doesn’t necessarily mean it needs to be ‘live tweeting’. As Sandy suggests, we could wait until after church to tweet our praise. And do it more thoughtfully rather than on the fly.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8404#respond)

29. Pingback: #Preaching: to tweet or not to #tweet « Experiencing Grace (http://www.experiencinggrace.org/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/)


31. My two cents (unsure whether this has been rasied in the thread already):

A note on paper is intended for the listener and is an aid for digestion and memory. A tweet is intended for an audience and so adds another voice which competes for attention with the preacher, especially for those twitter users following in the room. As such the preacher is denied the attention I think they deserve for that 20, 40 mins or so.

One might say “but what if tweets are simply summaries of the argument so far? surely that could be useful as an intensifier of the preacher’s voice”. This reduces preaching to an exchange of information, and I think there is another relational dynamic involved between listener and preacher which is lost when the information is mediated through short grabs on a smart phone.

Best to tweet afterwards.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8412#respond)

32. As has already been addressed, we are rightly being asked to think before we tweet. The comment about Lloyd Jones highlights that the root of the problem goes beyond the introduction of smartphones. It is not about tweets or other forms of social media, it is about etiquette and praxis.

Basic principles of commenting on what another has said until they have finished presenting their idea, or even in some cases sentence is just bad manners. It has nothing to do with
technology. I confess to having updated my status during a sermon but in most instances it is not a direct response to the sermon, rather a tangent that has been prompted by the sermon,(this is akin to taking a note – only more public) and to not note it down could be a greater distraction. It would not be appropriate to comment directly on what the preacher has said, until s/he has finished saying it.

Checking emails, writing shopping lists etc. is no different to snoozing, daydreaming or any other of the distractions that have been employed in the past, and quite frankly, rude. The fact that the former examples are more public enables us to also now address the latter.

The medium should not affect the basic principles, as I cross stitched for my son – ‘just because you can doesn’t mean you should’.

Lee

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8420#respond)

- But these principles of conversation, turn taking etc, are culturally specific – specific to Anglo English. They are not shared by everyone in this world, nor are they a constant in our culture either. These things can change.

Could it be that Twitter is changing our communication principles by opening a second parallel channel of conversation, so that while we listen without interrupting the monologuing speaker, we may at the same time dialogue with Twitter? I don’t know.

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8421#respond)

33. Thanks to those of you who have commented recently.

I loved Jean’s use of Gal 5:13 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.13) to urge us to use our freedom to serve in love (and not to snare one another with law).

As a digital immigrant I do not want to be legalistic towards digital natives.

That said, I am with you, Martin. What you and in different ways, others like Tim Keller earlier have said really clearly is that we must have a sense of the encounter with God as he addresses us in his word through the preacher. It is not just any old two way dialogue.

Lee, I think courtesy is fundamental here as a principle (rather than a focus only on one medium), and yet Dannii’s comeback is why I went to 1 Corinthians 14 and not just principles of manners which may be culturally variable to some extent.

Dannii and others, I just want to ask, which part of waiting for the first speaker to finish speaking his prophecy (i.e. bring the word of God in some form) does not cross cultures? And if that direction of orderliness from God’s Word does not cross cultures, why not?

Reply ↓ (/briefing/2012/03/preaching-to-tweet-or-not-to-tweet/?replytocom=8422#respond)

- Doesn’t 1 Cor 14:30 (http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2014.30) indicate that if a revelation comes to someone else they are to speak promptly rather than waiting for the current speaker to finish? It’s a bit of a strange verse.

However, does preaching == prophecy?
What’s an “encounter with God”, and shouldn’t we aim for that in all interactions between Christians? Where does the Bible privilege preaching over other interactions?

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Dannii, preaching ≠ prophecy (see http://blog.shields-online.net/?p=152), despite the attempts of some to align the two. So while 1Cor 14:30 has something to say about the behaviour of prophets, I don’t think that applies to the teaching of God’s word (“preaching”). Would Paul have been happy to have been interrupted and told to sit down mid-sermon?

Furthermore, while some people can multitask better than others, there have been studies that have shown that any multitasking results in the various tasks being performed less effectively and efficiently than were the individual tasks to be performed in isolation.

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Actually, there are studies that show that multitasking reduces quality and efficiency. See Challies The Next Story page 125.

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Oops...just realised that was the very point you made!...sorry! Oh well, at least I gave a reference.

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I think there are all sorts of interesting puzzles in 1 Corinthians 14. But I think this principle is clear. Once you have established who is talking in the time when one or more people wish to minister to word of God, then the other people should wait.

(I presume there will be agreed mechanisms known to local congregations by which one person knows when to stop, or may even be appropriately interrupted because time’s up, and another may start.)

One speaks at a time. Simple.

---

Hi Sandy. Paul makes an explicit exception to the rule you’ve stated when it comes to prophets: “But if something has been revealed to another person sitting there, the first prophet should be silent” (1Cor 14:30). One does speak at a time, but the second doesn’t appear to have to wait until the first has finished.

It is all very strange!
I don’t think anyone is saying tweeting equals prophecy. Which makes this tangent perhaps a little – well, tangential. Perhaps no worse for that. But perhaps not highly relevant to tweeting during sermons, except as 1 Cor 14 encourages orderliness, which is the point Sandy made in his post.

Surely someone is having us on. People don’t really twitter and twit and tweet during sermons, do they? If I were a preacher I think I would be a bit upset if I thought my hearers were not fully concentrating on what I was saying and applying it to their own hearts.

35. Surely someone is having us on. People don’t really twitter and twit and tweet during sermons, do they? If I were a preacher I think I would be a bit upset if I thought my hearers were not fully concentrating on what I was saying and applying it to their own hearts.


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Hacking work is all the rage these days, along with tips for managing email, taking notes, and running meetings. But, at a higher level, what can we learn from analyzing the different types of work we do and how we allocate our time?

First, let's take a look at the five kinds of work we do every day:

1. **Reactionary Work**
   In the modern age, most of our day is consumed by Reactionary Work, during which we are focused only on responding to messages and requests - emails, text messages, Facebook messages, tweets, voicemails, and the list goes on. You are constantly reacting to what comes into you rather than being proactive in what matters most to you. Reactionary Work is necessary, but you can’t let it consume you.

2. **Planning Work**
   At other times, you need to plan how you will do your work. Planning Work includes
the time spent, scheduling and prioritizing your time, developing your systems for running meetings, and refining your systems for working. By planning, you are deciding how your energy should be allocated, and you are designing your method for getting stuff done. The best workflows are highly personalized and occasionally borderline neurotic, but they keep us engaged. It may not sound sexy, but Planning Work helps you become more efficient and execute on your goals.

3. Procedural Work
Of course, there are many motions we go through every day that are neither reactionary nor strategic. Procedural Work is the administrative/maintenance stuff that we do just to keep afloat: making sure that the bills are paid or preparing tax returns, updating a deck for a business presentation, or tracking old outbound emails to confirm that they were addressed/solved. Procedural Work is important, but we must remember to remain flexible in our approach to it. Procedures backfire when they become antiquated and remain only out of habit, not necessity.

4. Insecurity Work
Insecurity Work includes the stuff we do out of our own insecurities - obsessively looking at certain statistics related to your company, or repeatedly checking what people are saying about you or your product online, etc. Insecurity Work doesn’t move the ball forward in any way - aside from briefly reassuring us that everything is OK - and we’re often unconscious that we’re even doing it.

5. Problem-Solving Work
Creativity becomes most important during Problem-Solving Work. This is the work that requires our full brainpower and focus, whether it be designing a new interface, developing a new business plan, writing a thoughtful blog post, or brainstorming the features of a new product. Whether you’re working solo or as a team, you’re leveraging raw creativity to find answers.

“The best workflows are highly personalized and occasionally borderline neurotic, but they keep us engaged.”

What We Learn When We Audit Our Work
Taking all five types of work into perspective, we can audit our day and the types of work we engage in most.

My typical day includes 2-5 types of work, with the majority being Reactionary Work. I hate to admit it, but I find that Reactionary Work constantly bleeds over into my efforts to schedule myself (Planning Work) and the deep thinking required to solve problems (Problem-Solving Work).

I also find that, between nearly any type of work, I usually slip into a period of Reactionary Work that may include surfing the top of my email inbox, or a period of Insecurity Work, which usually comes in the form of scanning Twitter messages about our business.

Here are a few realizations that might help as you do your own work audit:

- **Problem Solving Work is best done when you are fully engaged with the challenge you face.** For many, this means working in a zone free from distraction and the flow of social media. Within groups, the best Problem Solving Work is done when staffing is voluntary and topics fall into the overlap of each
person's genuine interest, skills, and opportunity. Without a real sense of engagement, results suffer.

- **Procedural Work, meanwhile, is best done with the help of technology.** Wherever possible, technology should be used to automate systems for managing projects and increasing efficiency. With Procedural Work, you want to minimize the time spent on it and optimize accountability. For those of us that manage teams, Procedural Work should be delegated when possible. Legendary managers recognize that they should spend time on Planning Work, setting up the systems that their teams will use to work, and then minimizing their time spent doing the day-to-day administrative (Procedural) work.

- **Reactionary Work can often crowd out all other types of work;** it needs to be controlled by limiting the time you spend on it to distinct blocks throughout the day. Thanks to the proliferation of mobile devices, Reactionary Work seeps into every opening of your time - walks between buildings or a free hour that results from a canceled meeting. The biggest mistake we make is prioritizing Reactionary Work over everything else. Planning Work, in the form of proper scheduling, can help minimize the gravitational pull of Reactionary Work. Similarly, Procedural Work can help you identify stuff that should be delegated, thus reducing your flow of Reactionary Work.

- **Insecurity Work should be compartmentalized into designated periods of time every day (or every few days if you’re disciplined enough to manage it).** Perhaps allocate 30 minutes at the end of every day to run through all of your Insecurity Work at once - checking stats, how many hits your blog received, how many new followers you gained - whatever calms you.

- **Planning Work is, for most of us, too circumstantial.** You do it when you get stuck, rather than proactively. But if you believe that organization is, in fact, a competitive advantage (as I do), you need to allocate time for Planning Work and learn methods to optimize it. You should leverage existing systems but then customize them for yourself. After all, making your mark on your system breeds attraction, which in turn breeds the loyalty required to stick with that system long enough to achieve results.

All work is not created equal. Try working with an awareness of the type of work you’re doing, and how it’s helping (or limiting) your progress.

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**What's Your Take?**

How do you juggle the different types of work you’re doing?

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*Scott Belsky is the CEO of Behance and author of the national bestselling book Making Ideas Happen. You can follow him @scottbelsky.*

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That neighbor you struggle to love as yourself? Better find a way to follow Jesus' command, because the man on the other side of the fence is less likely than ever to move away. Same goes for everyone else you might want to escape, because the U.S. mobility rate fell to an all-time low last year when only 11.6 percent of Americans changed residences.

The U.S. Census Bureau has been tracking these statistics since 1948, when World War II veterans were bringing Baby Boomers home to new suburban abodes. It was a time of high mobility rates launched initially by the war mobilization and later accelerated by a new interstate highway system and the growth of commercial air travel. But these rates have slowed significantly in recent years, especially among the children of Baby Boomers.

"Sometime in the past 30 years, someone has hit the brakes and Americans—particularly young Americans—have become risk-averse and sedentary," Todd and Victoria Buchholz wrote in a recent editorial for The New York Times. "The timing is terrible. With an 8.3 percent unemployment rate and a foreclosure rate that would grab the attention of the Joads of The Grapes of Wrath, young Americans are less inclined to pack up and move to sunnier economic climes."

Especially if you live and minister among young adults, you've probably witnessed this trend through prayer requests for desperate friends and family unable to find jobs and sell their devalued homes. Indeed, the Great Recession is a chief culprit in these changes. Todd Buchholz—author of Rush: Why You Need and Love the Rat Race—observes with Victoria—a student at Cambridge University—that the share of young adults living at home almost doubled between 1980 and 2008. Indeed, Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau data released last week showed 21.6 percent of adults age 25 to 34 now live in multi-generational households, the highest such percentage since the 1950s and a nearly 6 percent increase since 2000. These figures provoke the Buchholz pair, or at least their Times editor, to judge today's young adults as The Go-Nowhere Generation. They write:

All this turns American history on its head. We are a nation of movers and shakers. Pilgrims leapt onto leaky boats to get here. The Lost Generation chased Hemingway and Gertrude Stein to Paris. The Greatest Generation signed up to ship out to fight Nazis in Germany or the Japanese imperial forces in the Pacific. The '60s kids joined the Peace Corps. But Generation Y has become Generation Why Bother.

Their solution? Move to North Dakota where the jobs are plentiful. They note but scoff at the remark of Harvard pollster John Della Volpe, who observes that today’s young adults aren't eager to move because they enjoy living in their hometowns. The Buchholz plan for Generation Y closely resembles...
the good life as envisioned by *Grapes of Wrath* novelist John Steinbeck. This is a moral vision that celebrates individualism unleashed from the ways of the past. Read it yourself in Steinbeck’s 1960 memoir *Travels with Charley in Search of America* [6], where he celebrates a modern invention he believed would revolutionize American community for the better: the mobile home. Upset with your family? Need a new job? Don’t like the neighbors? Hook up the home and haul yourself toward new horizons.

"Central to modern individualism is the ability to separate oneself from home and family, to wander in pursuit of happiness, to leave communities (if only to rejoin others), to be fluid and unfettered," observes scholar Susan J. Matt, author of the recently released book *Homesickness: An American History* [7].

### Cuts Both Ways

Older Americans have largely adopted this prescription for good living. Baby Boomers popularized the suburban megachurch with ample parking for ecclesial commuters. They bought the big exurban homes and make the long drives to work. They relocated after earning promotions. And many have encouraged their children to seek education at colleges far away from home, decreasing the likelihood the graduates will come home, if such a place even exists. Yet the same capitalistic forces that once demanded geographic mobility now hinder it. Despite these parents’ best intentions, the economic advantages they enjoyed have not been transferred to their children.

"Wages for the young are falling, student debt is rising, and twentysomethings are twice as likely to be unemployed as the rest of the country," writes Derek Thompson [8], senior editor at *The Atlantic*. "This kind of economic uncertainty works as an anchor on national migration."

But economic uncertainty doesn't just affect national migration. These factors transform the shape of Christian discipleship. Prosperity led previous generations of American Christians to believe the good life could be attained through hard work, sacrifice, a well-timed relocation, and perhaps a little luck. Captivated by the same sense of opportunity captured in Steinbeck's work, many left home to start anew, unhindered by the expectations and responsibilities of family and community. This spirit cuts both ways for evangelical churches. Leave your small Bible Belt town for college and work in the big city, and you'll be less likely to follow in your parents' faith. Leave your parents’ urban neighborhood for the suburbs and you may find evangelical megachurch spirituality more appealing than the Roman Catholic solidarity of your youth. Studies such as Robert Putnam's *American Grace* [9] document the unprecedented shifting between religious communities. Putnam reports that as many as 45 percent of white Americans have switched away from their parents' religion at some point. Geographic mobility makes ecclesial mobility more plausible.

### The Secret to Contentment

We don't yet know where the stay-home generation will make their church homes. When the economy improves they may hit the road. But I wonder if something has changed for good during the Great Recession. Diminished economic opportunities might have taught a generation of young adults that they cannot depend on money to make them happy. Even in a better economy your job probably won't last long; the company may not be able to afford you, or you may soon be looking for something else to improve your meager earnings. Organizational loyalty, up and down the corporate ladder, has collapsed.

It would be easy to follow the lead of Todd and Victoria Buchholz and blame Facebook and laziness for younger Americans' unwillingness to drop everything and move to North Dakota. But I would hope other factors, chiefly love of neighbor and family, are at work. The grass is not always greener in the Peace Garden State. Your sins will follow you even to the Canadian border. It's challenging but rewarding to stay home and learn to love the family, church, and neighbors who have known you since youth.

Americans may take the restless pursuit of prosperity at any cost for granted, but that doesn’t make it any more acceptable in God’s eyes. To be clear, it's not necessarily wrong to move for a new job and new start. Certainly it's a noble calling to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. But the national narrative that celebrates the free-ranging individual fosters sinful discontent. Far from liberating, this prescription for a life well-lived conforms us to the pattern of a world where the dollar justifies all. Whether you want to stay home or need to move away, the apostle Paul reveals a better
way to guide us in these uncertain times:

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need (Philippians 4:11-12).

That secret?

[M]y God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever (Philippians 4:19-20).