Dear Lexie,

"Contagious"

If you are like me, one of the things that you have developed a strong dislike for in recent years is flying. It's not the actual flying itself that I dislike but everything that one has to do just to get to the gate. Now, I understand all the security measures that we have and why they have been put into place, but it really has made what was once an enjoyable experience something that I now dread. But I must admit that one thing that has taken some of the sting out of flying is the joy that I get out of browsing through the airport book stores. In recent years I have made it a habit of mine that whenever I fly I must purchase at least one book to read on the plane. This little exercise has definitely added to my already massive collection.

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Taming the Technology Tyrant

On a recent metro train ride, the passenger
next to me shared an eye-opening statement. He had an inquiry to make, but saw the phone in my hand and apologized for disturbing me. I forthrightly assured him that he was not and we proceeded to have a great conversation. We live in an age of technological marvel that is having enormous impact on our human relationships in ways we may not fully realize.
Contagious

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One of my recent acquisitions is a book titled, Contagious by Jonah Berger. In Contagious, Berger examines what makes some things more popular than other things. For instance, why do certain ideas or products seem to catch on and catch fire more than others do? At first glance you would think that the answer would be the advertising or marketing strategy that was used. But not so, according to Berger. He believes that, “People don’t listen to advertisers, they listen to their peers.” Berger believes that hearing how a friend or peer feels about a particular product or service is at least ten times more effective than conventional methods. What also makes something so “contagious” according to Berger is that we tend to select the particular people who we feel would find that given piece of information most relevant.

I’m sure by now you know where I am going with this, or at least I hope that you do. If the gospel of the Kingdom that we as followers of Jesus feel so passionately about is going to be shared with the rest of the world, then wouldn’t it be more effective for us to first share it with our friends and those close to us whom we feel would be more receptive to hearing it, instead of using some of the more conventional methods that have been used in the past, where our goal has been to share it with complete strangers? In Contagious the author makes the point that the main reason why the method of sharing with friends and peers is so powerful and continues to have such a great deal of success is that a friend shares the effect that something has had on their lives regardless of whether it is positive or negative. In other words, we expect our friends to be honest and to give it to us straight. And because of this, when customers are given a referral from a friend, according to Berger, they spend more, shop faster and are more profitable overall.

Imagine if we as citizens of the Kingdom of God took this approach when it comes to sharing the love of God through Jesus Christ how contagious the impact would be in our communities and within the hearts and lives of our peers. Maybe this is what Jesus meant when he said, “And I, If I am lifted up from the earth will draw all peoples to myself” (John 12:32 NKJV). My prayer for us here at Sligo is that we will become as “contagious” as we possibly can so that we can infect the world with the love of God.
On a recent metro train ride, the passenger next to me shared an eye-opening statement. He had an inquiry to make, but saw the phone in my hand and apologized for disturbing me. I forthrightly assured him that he was not and we proceeded to have a great conversation. We live in an age of technological marvel that is having enormous impact on our human relationships in ways we may not fully realize.

Do we find ourselves gazing into a small screen while the greatest wonder of God’s creation is in our midst, (another person)? A new category of accidents are developing such as walking into objects while texting or the most dangerous form, driving while texting. What impact will the growing digital addiction have our lives?

Over the past decade a scholar from MIT, Sherry Turkle, P.h.D. has been studying the impact of technology on our human relationships, and the findings are giving many thought leaders pause. Her most recent work, Alone Together, argues that we are at a point of decision and opportunity. Technology now invites us to lose ourselves in always-on mobile connections and even in relationships with inanimate creatures that offer to “stand in” for the real. In the face of all this, technology offers us the occasion to reconsider our human values, and reaffirm what they are. This is at the heart of learning, realizing our value and purpose.

How do we gain the blessings of technology’s advance and not surrender the precious human values? Is texting now more important than talking as a means of communication? What constitutes a deep conversation in 2015? How protected is dinner time from the intrusion of technology? How do we feel when our in-person communication is put on pause, demoted by a technology interruption?

The advance of technology will certainly continue, and we need to develop habits to ensure the supremacy of our human relationships.

Over the past few years, a movement has started to give us means of unplugging from technology and intentionally investing in our empowerment in our human community consecutiveness.

The time from sundown Friday, March 6, to sundown Saturday, March 7, has been designated as National Unplug Day. The national day of unplugging is an adaption of the Sabbath where we set aside one day per week to worship, unwind, unplug, reflect and connect with loved ones. Resources to help make this day meaningful from an unplugging perspective can be found here.

The many marvels of technology create shiny objects that can become our pied piper and with its many distractions undermine the value of our humanity if not managed well. We can equip ourselves and kids with tools that will develop our focus, our means of intentional reflection, and give us strength to go off grid and enjoy the gifts of each other and the wonders of creation. The future belongs to those who will leverage technology and not become a slave of it.

(by Chris Daley & Dawn Reynolds)