

A Biblical Theology of Technology

I. Goals for the course

- To help you become a technologically literate Christian, who knows how to use technology well to the glory of God, and who also refrains from poor use of technology.
- To assess the problems we are facing with technology and offer solutions and insight, but to avoid legalism and judgmental attitudes towards other Christian's decisions about technology.
- To foster a culture in our church of purposeful interaction with technology, where we do not follow the masses to do evil (Exod 23:2).

II. Technology's place in God's story

- Definition of technology: any tool that humans make for any purpose, including physical tools and techniques.
- Examples of technology in the Bible: writing (ink, paper, pens) and alphabets (the Bible itself *is* a product of technology!); staffs, plows, axes, adzes, razors, knives, scythes, pruning hooks, and threshing sledges, chariots, bows and arrows, armor, spears, swords, and siege-machines; wagons, boats, yokes, and harness; brick-making, fire, pottery and pottery kilns, city walls and gates, techniques for building houses, stone-working and metal-refining and metal-working implements, techniques for tanning hides, harps and trumpets, tents, blankets, clothing and needles, traps, snares, fish-hooks, and fish-nets, wells and cisterns, medicine, cosmetics, wine-making, cheese-making, bread-making, baskets, cups, bowls, and plates, oil lamps, furniture, coins.
- Creation: God created Adam and Eve to take dominion of the earth (Gen 1:28).
 - This involves using the resources of God's world in intelligent ways.
 - Hints of technology's potential in Eden: the cultivated grove of fruit trees, the gold in the land of Havilah.
- Fall: Adam and Eve immediately employed technology to deal with their sin, sewing fig leaves together (Gen 3:7).
- Themes in technology's role since the fall:
 - Technology is used to empower and facilitate sin: e.g., the tower of Babel (Gen 11), military technology for dominating others (Josh 17:16).
 - God opposes this pride. Ps 20:7: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God."
 - God endorses and employs technology in the work of redemption:
 - He commanded Noah to build the ark, employing pitch and woodworking: Gen 6:14.
 - He commands people to write: Exod 17:14; Deut 31:19; Jer 30:2. God himself writes on tablets! (Exod 31:18)
 - He commanded the building of the tabernacle and the temple, with its furnishings: (Exodus 25–30).
 - He commands us to make music with instruments: Ps 33:2.
 - God is depicted as a shepherd whose staff comforts us (Ps 23:4).
 - God teaches people technology:
 - He gifted Bezalel for his craftsmanship in the tabernacle: Exod 31:1–6 (first use of "wisdom" in the Bible!).

- He teaches the everyday worker: farming and food-processing techniques that conform to creation are “from the LORD of hosts”; a farmer’s God “teaches him” (Isa 28:23–29).
- The redeemed and unredeemed employ technology. Often, the unredeemed are faster to develop it (Gen 4:20–22).
- The cross was a hideous technology of torture, which God employed to win our salvation.
- Technology in glory: the new Jerusalem features cultivated trees, gold and precious gems worked into a beautiful, artful city, and people praising God using instruments (Rev 21–22).

Discussion questions

1. Based on the above survey, what is the Bible’s attitude toward technology?
 - a. How would the Bible respond to the anti-technology luddite?
 - b. How would the Bible respond to the early-adopter technophile?
2. Based on the above survey, what is the goal of technology in God’s world?
 - a. One possible answer: _____

3. Christians have had an uneasy relationship with science and technology (e.g., Galileo’s trial, the Scopes trial). Evaluate these statements (thanks to T. Reinke):
 - a. Human innovation is an imposition on the created order.
 - b. Human innovation knows no limits.
 - c. Human innovation can unleash powers beyond God’s control, and which will make God irrelevant. (Obviously wrong, but are you afraid of AI? Are you afraid of bioengineering?)
 - d. Human flourishing depends on our adoption or rejection of technology.
4. What questions do you have about technology? What are problems that you are facing in connection with it?