



From the Principal:

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Choosing to Redeem the Time

Last week I wrote about the changes to our world and human interaction that have come via new technologies. New technologies are not in themselves necessarily bad, but like many developments in human society, they can be a source of evil or used to hurt or to disable us. From simple tools, like the machete, to the advanced ability to split an atom and release enormous power, humans have to make choices as to how these technologies are to be used. A machete is a great tool in clearing undergrowth, chopping wood, splitting a coconut or shaping a log, but it was the weapon of choice to slaughter hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Rwanda less than 20 years ago. Atomic power can generate electricity or drive a ship, but humans chose to develop the most powerful bomb ever known and wipe a whole city in an instant.

It is the same for the communications technology I discussed last week. Television, computers, mobile phones and the internet are in themselves morally neutral – neither good nor evil. They are agents of communication. However, we make the choice as to the messages we receive or send, the information we allow access to our minds and thus to influence our thinking. These technologies can also be addictive, we can become obsessed with them, and feel drawn to check them or to watch or interact with them for hours. The Apostle Paul wrote about the dilemma of what can legally do knowing in our heart of hearts that it may not be helpful, or in fact it may take control of us:

***“Everything is permissible to me” (you may say) – but not everything is beneficial!
“Everything is permissible to me” (you may say) – but I will not be mastered by anything!*** (1 Corinthians 6.12)

I think there are two great questions to ask ourselves when it comes to our use of technology: Is it good for me – for my thinking, my use of time, my spiritual health? Is it becoming my master – am I uncomfortable or anxious when I can't use it, do I need my daily 'fix', do I find it hard to stop watching or playing or using it?

Television is a simple one. We all have at least one in the house. Some of them are very big these days, and come with surround sound! I grew up without a TV in the house. We were weird! When I started teaching and in the first few years of marriage, I didn't own a television. The students couldn't imagine life without a TV, and they felt quite annoyed that I couldn't enter in to conversations about the latest show or some movie. But when I look back, that period of my life was one of the most creative periods of my life. I read books, wrote songs and music for all occasions, poems, stories, plays. My mind wasn't clogged up with all the dreadful stories on the news or the latest madness of Jackie O and Kyle.

This week my daughter is doing the 40 Hour Famine. She is fasting from food, Facebook and TV! I wonder which of these will be the hardest to give up? Like many people 'on the wagon' she is demanding that her mother and I don't turn on the TV because it might tempt her to break her vow of abstinence! (I personally think that it actually makes her a better, stronger person if I watch her favourite program and THEN she has to go and study in her cold, lonely room!)

My point is a simple one. If we ask ourselves those questions every time we go to switch on the telly – Is it good for me? Is it becoming my Master? – we may just give ourselves an extra hour per day to do something that is beneficial for us, that involves us in doing or making or talking or even thinking about our lives and praying. One hour per day may not seem much, but *365 hours in a year could transform our lives*, and in so doing, greatly improve the lives of those around us, as we become more thoughtful, more fulfilled by our creative achievements, more at peace and more tuned in to God and other people. The television gets us ridiculously concerned about 'pretend' people and events, so that when something bad happens in real life, we actually find it hard to respond as we would have in the past, because we are programmed to think 'it's just a show!'

So, take a small step to rediscovering your own possibilities, and choose the one hour per day that is going to be your time, not the TV's. Make it useful; do something that matters, something that grows your inner person. If possible, make it a time when the family can do something together. The second step may not be so hard to take!

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