

"Are You Smarter Than A Cell Phone?"

2 /12/12

Ecclesiastes 3:9-19 (page 757)

Galatians 5:13-26 (page 232)

- I. "DID YOU EVER WATCH "ARE YOU SMARTER THAN A FIFTH GRADER?" ON TV?
- A. ***Kathy Cox, a Superintendant of Public Schools in Georgia answered the One Million Dollar Question. The subject was 5<sup>th</sup> Grade World History.***
- a. The question: "Who was the longest reigning British monarch?"
  - b. I knew the answer. Queen Victoria (63 years).
2. Only one additional person ever answered the million \$ question: George Smoot, a professor at the University of California in Berkeley who also won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.
- B. ***I thought I was pretty smart... at least as smart as a computer and a cell phone, until I bought my new Apple iPhone 4s.***
1. I purchased the phone at the Apple store in Ft Worth at the end of December.
    - a. I previously had an iPhone 3Gs.
    - b. And I took the 30 minute workshop on this brand new iPhone 4, with its introduction of a new wireless technology the "iCloud."
  2. Back in Miles City, my new AT&T smart phone worked great except all the sound had disappeared. I could call my wife and talk to her, but I did not get any incoming rings. I played the games, but without any music or voice; it was not much fun. I was sure I had a dud.
  3. So I had to send this phone to my wife, have her call the Apple store, make an appointment, and trade the phone in for a new one.
  4. Now there are 3 levels of help at the Apple Consumer Store:
    - a. The highest level is an appointment with someone on the Genius Bar-or Apple Heaven.
  5. The Genius guy examined the phone briefly, looked at Peggy and said, "You are not going to get mad at me, are you?" ("No, it's my husband's phone.")
    - a. "He accidentally pushed the button that turns off all the sound."
  5. I had even bought a 300 page handbook and read everything I needed to know about the iPhone 4s.
  6. So I am not as smart as my cell phone!
    - a. I felt like a fool. I remembered Paul's letter, what happens when I live by the flesh, or "*the works of the flesh*" with its passions and desires,
      - (1) when I give in to the "*opportunity for self-indulgence*" in Galatians 5, and in I Corinthians ( 4.10).
      - (2) At such times I am acting foolishly, or like fools,
      - (3)
- "and those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of heaven."*
- II. LET US SPEND A LITTLE TIME REVIEWING THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN LEARNING, PARTICULARLY IN THE MODERN ERA—THE LAST 5 CENTURIES. HOW HAS OUR THINKING CHANGED? HOW HAS THAT CHALLENGED OUR FAITH AND THE WAY YOU AND I LIVE?
- A. ***A second question which our science, research and technology, asks us is related to it.***
1. About 15 years ago I took a course on "Introduction to Computer Science," in a Junior College. The biology professor who taught the class asked us to write an essay on the topic, "Do Computers Think?"
  2. Do any of you remember the movie, "2001 Space Odyssey," which featured the computer known as "HAL." Hal could think.
    - a. H.A.L. Computer Systems, Inc was a Campbell, California-based computer manufacturer founded in 1990 by Andrew Heller, a principal

- designer of the original IBM computer.
- b. A year ago an IBM computer named Watson was a contestant in the long-running quiz show, "Jeopardy," for 3 consecutive days. Watson soundly trounced the two champion male contestants Brad Rutter and Ken Jennings?
3. Thinking, intelligence, reasoning, problem-solving: these are gifts from the LORD who made us. How you use such gifts and technology shapes your relationship to others creatures and to God.
    - a. 35 years ago I made a very foolish statement. I said, "I will never have have a computer in my church office. They don't belong there."
- B. ***In the history of gathering and organizing human learning, I personally am able to identify 10 key inventions. Each one has been a brilliant break-through!***
1. Moving from oral tradition to writing: the invention of the alphabet.
    - a. The Phoenicians had an alphabet in 800 BC. preceding the Greek or Roman alphabet.
  2. The Codex, or the use of modern "books," rather than scrolls, invented by the first-century Romans. Julius Caesar may have been the first to use this.
  3. Libraries
    - a. Some of the first libraries go back to 2,250 BC. But one of the most important was in Alexandria (Egypt) in the second century BC, which preserved many important Jewish and Biblical resources.
  4. Johannes Gutenberg's Printing Press in 1440 AD, and reusable type.
    - a. That led to people having the Bible in their own language and being able to worship in a common local language.
  5. The Copernican Revolution, began in 1540. It was fueled by Galileo.
    - a. It took 200 years before the church's notion (Ptolomy) that the planets revolved around the earth was accepted as false.
  6. Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Watson patented the telephone in 1877. But there were many predecessors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who paved the way.
    - a. It was followed by the radio.
  7. The invention of the flying machine by two sons of a conservative Methodist Bishop from Dayton, Ohio, in October, 1903, Orville & Wilbur Wright.
    - a. That led to the race in space exploration and the first lunar landing. 3 astronauts on board Apollo 8, the first manned lunar flight, on Christmas Eve, 1968, read from Genesis 1 as they orbited the moon.
  8. Photography
    - a. On a summer day in 1827, Joseph Nicephore Niepce made the first photographic image with a "camera obscura." Prior to Niepce people just used the camera obscura for viewing or drawing purposes not for making photographs.
    - b. Then came the daguerrotype, tin types, negatives and finally George Eastman's versatile film.
    - c. The church had to rethink how it applied the prohibition of the commandment against making any "graven images."
  9. The Computer and the Internet
    - a. So who invented the computer?
    - b. Konrad Zuse in 1936 is credited with the first programmable computer.
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- (i) The transistor came in 1946, UNIVAC 4 years later, then the integrated circuit and microprocessor.
- c. Apple was invented as early as 1976 by Steve Wozniak.
- 10. Finally, #10, the cell phone, or smartphone.
  - a. My research shows that the first smartphone came as early as 1982.
  - b. It was called "Simon," and it was created by IBM released 10 years later.
  - c. The Nokia 9000 (1996) was "arguably the first in a line of smartphones."
- 11. Each of these phenomena have had a dramatic life-changing impact on us
  - a. And therefore on the church itself, and the way you and I do "religion."
  - b. I list the smartphone by itself because for the first time communication, knowledge, and images became mobile, available anywhere in the world instantaneously to anyone!
- 12. I am forced to conclude that computers do think.
  - a. The human brain operates in much the same manner with its chemical and electrical impulses or synapses.
  - b. Computers learn,
    - (i) computers store and organize information,
    - (ii) they are taught or programmed to plan for the future,
    - (iii) they remember and give feedback.
    - (v) They talk and carry on a conversation!

C. ***I believe the smartphone computer has impacted our lives more drastically than any of the other 9 break-throughs!***

- 1. In my "iPhone Life Daily News Release," by way of email, on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, I read the following, "Mobile smart phones are changing the way we live, socialize and do our businesses. Our phones have replaced many other once-common tools, from GPS devices to .... games, notebooks, calendars, cameras, newspapers, portable audio devices... "
  - a. weather, data storage, books, movies,
  - b. Smartphones are now used in banking, health, education and government!
- 2. The Preacher, or the writer of of Ecclesiastes, hundreds of years ago concluded at the end of his lifelong study of human behavior, chapter 12; 12, "*My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh*" (American Standard Version).

III. SO THE QUESTION ARISES, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE, IF ANY, BETWEEN INTELLIGENCE, BEING WISE, IN THE DIGITAL MICROCHIP WORLD AND IN THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN WORLD.

A. ***Has the Church, has the Judaeo-Christian faith, kept pace with all these changes or advances?***

- 1. Another way to say this is: Have we in our religious pursuits become any smarter, any wiser?
- 2. Have we figured out the answers to life's most perplexing problems –how to live together in peace and harmony?
  - a. and for the purpose God created us: to be holy, to belong to God alone, to enjoy God?
- 3. Again to the wisdom or skepticism of Ecclesiastes:
  - a. Chapter 3: "*What gain have all the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with...I know that there is nothing better for them to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live...*"
  - b. What then about justice and evil, righteousness and wickedness?  
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c. Ecclesiastes says that is for God alone to judge and decide our fate.

B. ***The book of Proverbs is dedicated to the study of the difference between wisdom and foolishness, or teleology.***

1. Proverbs was written as a textbook for the sons of royalty, to instruct them in manners and good living.
2. But Proverbs makes no attempt as Job does, "to explain the paradox of divine mastery and responsible human freedom," writes Raymond van Leeuwen, in the New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, and a Professor of Religion & Theology in the Christian Reformed Church.
3. Your life "is not static, but a journey whose end is found in its God-centered beginning."
  - a. Writes T.S. Eliot in "Four Quartets,"  
*"What we call the beginning is often the end....  
We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time."*
3. Wisdom is to confess you and I started from God, in God we shall end.
  - a. Computers, the smartphone can never know this,
  - b. or what we call teleology-purpose and meaning in life.
  - c. We often talk about this in terms of salvation, or being saved, preparing for life in God's new creation or kingdom.
4. For Proverbs, and also in the Psalms, the foolish person says in his heart "*There is no God,*" but the wise person knows "*the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.*"
  - a. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount tells his disciples never to call another human being a "fool." Why do you think he said that? (Matthew 5:22).
  - b. Yet Paul writes, "*the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness'*" (1 Cor. 3:19).
5. The great German Old Testament theologian Gerhard von Rad put it so well: "Humans are always entirely in the world, yet (we) are always entirely involved with God."

B. ***Many of us are losing something else: our moral theology, our ethics.***

1. Morality is what you believe or learn is right and wrong. Ethics is how you live it out, your daily actions.
2. Both Paul and John Calvin said we are saved to do good works, to bear the fruit of the Spirit.
3. This is language or communication where computers, the smartphone, will not ever teach us anything.
  - a. In opposition to the works of the flesh, in Galatians 5 we learn "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*"
  - b. Yesterday I watched a TV movie about a young man very much in love who was sent after college to live as a missionary for 2 ½ years on a remote island in Tonga. The movie about a Mormon was called, "On the Other Side of Heaven." The natives' idea of progress was to finally have electric lights and a radio. But the young man, whom they called "Holipoki," learned something far more important.
  - c. Do you still have your "star" from last Epiphany? How have you used that gift the church gave you?  
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4. For me here is where our wisdom and intelligence has it all over computers, smartphones.
  - a. God gave only us a "soul" and a "will," a moral conscience
  - b. Someone who has an iPhone 4 or 4s may ask it a question and it will answer and take you to where you need to be. You talk to "SIRI," which I guess is the evolutionary successor to Hal. If you try asking SIRI what is how to find God, or do you love me? "I Love You, SIRI!" --your smartphone may act like a fool. Mine said, "I don't understand."(i)
  - c. Some of the smartphone's verbal answers make us laugh, as you heard this morning in the Children's Sermon. For example,
    - (i) "Do you love me?" Answer: "I don't understand 'love.'" (page 5)

**Now may all of God's smart children respond by saying, "Amen!"**