

## *Pk's Perspectives ... Technology & Artificial Intelligence*

I have, over the last several months, wrestled with a growing unease in my soul. The focus of this unrest is what I see with my own eyes, read in various research and sociological reports, and hear anecdotally in the course of conversations with parents, educators, fellow pastors, and friends. At the core of my restless thoughts is the issue of technology and artificial intelligence.

Technology is amoral...neither good nor bad of its own standing. Like all other aspects of human invention (which inventions, by the way, flow from the incredibly creative human brain that God formed out of dirt, therefore there is no truly “human” invention), things which are amoral can become “good” or “bad” things in our lives depending on how they are put to use. A simple example: the telephone is an amoral thing. A telephone can be a good thing when it is used for good purposes such as calling friends, checking in on someone who is sick, alerting first responders in the case of emergency, sharing a word of encouragement, or even praying with someone when a face-to-face encounter is not possible. A telephone can be a bad thing when it is used for bad purposes such as harassing someone, carrying on illicit conversations with someone other than your spouse, inflicting terror through threats of physical violence, or separating people from their money or personal information through a slick, well rehearsed scam.

The proliferation of personal computers, tablets, and smartphones is the more specific issue of technology that concerns me; and also the ever younger age that our children are being given unfettered access to these technologies. I’m amazed at how often it seems as if technology is controlling humanity as opposed to humanity controlling technology...and I’m thinking this is not a good thing. All the way back in Genesis, God instructs humanity to subdue all other aspects of creation...he placed humanity in the middle of creation with this simple directive: “...work it and watch over it.” (1:15) Me thinks that in many ways, technology has begun to “work and watch over humanity.” I wonder if the all-knowing smartphone has maybe become the newest idol to which humanity pledges allegiance...it’s obvious that many are loathe to be separated from their cellphone and keep it always very near, as if attached to it by some sort of cyber umbilical cord. When personal opinions and views relating to important issues are based on what’s trending on social media, what # is most popular, or what Wikipedia has to say about an issue, then humanity is well on the way to serving technology as opposed to being served by technology. I think this is dangerous.

I want to leave you with two quotes from some of my recent reading. The first quote is from Anthony Levandowski, former Google executive and founder of Way of the Future, a new church based on the religion of artificial intelligence. His statement in an interview from 11/15/2017: *“What is going to be created will effectively be a god. It’s not a god in the sense that it makes lightening or causes hurricanes. But if there is something a billion times smarter than the smartest human, what else are you going to call it? And this time you will be able to talk to god, literally, and know that it’s listening.”* The second quote is from a presentation at the MIT Aeronautics and Astronautics Department’s Centennial Symposium in 2014. The speaker is Elon Musk: *“With artificial intelligence, we are summoning the demon.”* Where is your smartphone right now? Cya in Sunday School & Worship, PK.