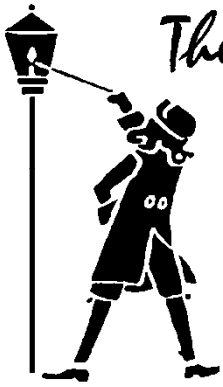

LAKESIDE CHURCH OF CHICAGO

3939 Howard St, Skokie, IL 60076 Fax: 847.763.9719 Phone: 847.763.9720 Email: lakesidechurchofchicago@yahoo.com



LAMPLIGHTER

Rev. Stan Wiedeman, Pastor

Office: 847.763.9725

Rev. Dave Uchizono, Director of C.E.

Office: 847.763.9723

Rev. Mitsuo Suzuki, Pastor, Japanese-Speaking

Office: 847.763.9724

IN CHRIST AND FOR CHRIST - TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN

October 27, 2008

THE INTERNET IS HABIT-FORMING

I have observed a condition in my prayer life that disturbs me. I will bring a subject before the Lord to discuss with Him. Only a minute or two into that conversation my mind jumps to another subject, something triggered by the first conversation. A moment later my mind has drifted to another subject. Unable to focus for any length of time, my mind meanders through a forest of thoughts in a brief time.

Thus, I resonated with Nicholas Carr when he described the noticeable change in his reading habits. "Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy. My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument, and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel as if I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle."

He describes his disorder in an essay he wrote for *Atlantic* (July/August 2008), "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Quoting from numerous sources, Carr makes a good case that our technology shapes not only the breadth of our knowledge, but also its depth. He refers to the writing of media theorist, Marshall McLuhan, who famously wrote, "The medium is the message," arguing that the media technologies impact the way we process information at the same time that they convey information to us. Carr writes, "They supply the stuff of thought, but they also shape the process of thought. And what the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski."

As soon as someone begins critiquing technology, labels begin to fly, the favorite being "Luddite" (a member of a protest movement in England from 1811 to 1816, who opposed the use of manufacturing machinery because they feared it would decrease employment). We would be surprised that critics waged war against technologies of the past, such as Gutenberg's printing press. Even Socrates' censured the development of writing, because men would be able to "receive a quantity of information without proper instruction."

Most of us could readily enumerate various benefits of the most recent technologies. Every technology, however, provides fallen man with the opportunity to fashion an idol from a tree, or transform instruments of healing into weapons of destruction. The technology usually does not possess inherent evil, but the way men choose to use it creates the problem.

The Internet and the latest telephone technology have the capacity for encouraging habits that are counterproductive to shaping spiritual lives of knowledge and wisdom. The internet conveys massive amounts of information in a nanosecond. Whether we convert that information into knowledge depends upon our habits of acquiring information. Webster defines knowledge as "acquaintance with facts, truths, or principles, as *from study or investigation.*" Notice that the facts must be acquired in a certain way for it to become knowledge, which requires a certain familiarity with the facts, a familiarity not normally reached through internet surfing.

Solomon took seriously his responsibility to train his son in a knowledge of the Lord. He compiled a large number of proverbs into a book to train his son in wisdom. He asserts the purpose of the book in the first verses, "To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth" (Prov. 1:2-4). Solomon knew, however, that the simple impartation of this wisdom did not guarantee learning or wisdom. His son needed a certain habit of learning. "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:1-5). Knowledge would come only through the habits of diligent pursuit and single-minded concentration, habits not nurtured on the Web.

Sally Thomas recalls her eighth-grade teacher's correction, "My dears, you are not stupid. You are merely ignorant. And do you know why your are ignorant? You are ignorant because you watch the idiot machine," a reference to the television (from "iPhones Have Consequences," *First Things*, November 2008). That "idiot machine" has spawned several new generations of technologies that have the capacity for keeping us ignorant.

How are your habits forming these days? Are you searching for knowledge or surfing for it?

Pastor Stan