

A Special Word from SermonAudio Regarding Technology

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RFC Conference 2014

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Bible Text: Hebrews 10:25

Preached on: Friday, August 1, 2014

Website: www.sermonaudio.com/misc

Many of you are probably already familiar with SermonAudio, but some of you may not be, so we wanted to take just a moment to introduce ourselves and explain a bit why we wanted to help with a conference like this.

Our generation is the PC generation. When I was a boy computers completed the transformation from room sized contraptions to desktop PCs. I can remember reading about the “information super highway” as if it were some fantastical bit of science fiction. Now, the iPhone in my pocket has more computing power than those early PC's, and the trend for sometime now has been to put everything in the cloud, where it can be accessed at any time from almost anyplace.

The world has gone online in *less* than 30 years, and we now live in a world awash with information of every type. Seemingly, *everything* is accessible online.

For 14 years SermonAudio has been at the front, helping churches to navigate this new world, and, even though we are a tech company and our focus is on helping the local Bible believing church with their technology needs, we recognize that technology cannot do everything.

The internet provides us with a platform, a distribution point, a tool for communicating information like nothing the world has ever seen. With over 825,000 sermons available at the touch of a finger anywhere and at anytime, good preaching has never been so accessible to so many.

With that many sermons already on the site, you may wonder why we are here. It is not just to add a handful of sermons to an ever growing treasury of great preaching. It is not just to stream another conference to those that could not be here because of expense or sickness or schedule. Those are good things, helpful things, but that is not primarily why we are here.

We recognize the tremendous potential of technology in the furtherance of the Gospel today, and that is why we are devoting so much of our time and energy to the development of mobile apps and other tools that help get those sermons out to the people wherever they are and whatever they are doing. But as a tech company, we also recognize something else, something that you have probably thought about too.

An app cannot replace a person.

We love our apps, and we would encourage you to download and use them if you are not already doing so. The download is free, and the preaching will challenge and encourage you, but a recorded sermon, as good as it is, and as beneficial as it is, cannot replace the local church. We need personal interaction, and *that* is why we are here. *That* is why we wanted to help with this conference. Our goal is not to fill your computer with sermons, or to replace your local church, but to get you plugged into an assembly where you can be fed and encouraged and challenged by like minded brothers and sisters.

Somewhere along the way, our culture lost the idea that technology is a *tool*, and for many it has become *the master*.

Have you noticed how noisy the world has become? In an effort to free ourselves, to communicate better, to be more efficient, we have actually lost something.

The trend for sometime now, as I said, has been to put every aspect of human existence online where it can be accessed at any time right at your fingertips.

The pace is relentless. I have recently been told that email is for old people; that it is too slow. We now Facebook our spouses and text with our children; we live in a constant barrage of Instagram photos, of tweets, of blogs, of bits, and of bytes. We send more information back and forth than at any time in the history of the world. We are chatting constantly with friends and family, even perfect strangers, our faces always glued to little glowing screens.

We have a 24 hour worldwide news cycle; we know about events happening all around the world, but little, if anything, about the people next door.

We are in contact with more information and more people, but, unfortunately, that contact is shallower and more superficial than ever.

This is obvious, I am sure, and we lament this often. But what is the answer? Do we shun the technology? No. It is valuable. But we must work harder to pull ourselves out of our screens. We must deliberately work to interact in a personal way.

SermonAudio is a great tool, but it cannot replace the fellowship of a local body. It cannot replace the care of a local Pastor; it cannot replace these things.

It *can* be a supplement and a great encouragement, but as soon as the pastor you are listening to online replaces *your* pastor, you lose something. As soon as you trade the face to face interaction of the saints for text messages and Facebook, you lose something. The depth of the face to face encounter is critical for our spiritual development.

The noise of the technological world must be blocked out, at least sometimes, if we are to really experience the growth that we need as Christians.

This was recently brought home to me by my youngest daughter. I have a large family, and with a large family comes a certain level of noise. Thankfully, that noise is not dropped on you all at once, but it grows as the family grows, as does your ability to block it out.

On a particular day, a year or so ago, my youngest daughter wanted to tell me something. I was engrossed in what I was doing and was not hearing her voice among the many that were chattering in the living room that day. She walked up to me and said, "Daddy?" Nothing. So she tried again. "DADDY!" No response. She tried it rapid fire. "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy." Nothing.

After a minute or so of trying to raise my attention she leaned forward, and, in a last attempt, whispered, "Daaaadddd." Immediately, she had my attention. She had broken through the cloud of noise that was surrounding me. I was arrested by that little voice. We laughed about it, and we laugh about it still, but it illustrates something important. We need to be able to tune out the noise, so that we can hear the little voices, the important voices, that need and desire our attention.

We need to *unplug* and *engage*.

This conference has as its theme "the great commission." How will we accomplish that if we never look up from our screens?

SermonAudio *can* be a tool to help you; the technology does not have to be your master. Are you going on vacation, or moving to a new area? The local church finder will take out some of the guess work and help you find a congregation in your area that is faithfully preaching the Word of God.

Some are not physically able to attend church. Missionaries in the field, soldiers far from home, and shut-ins find the webcasts and archived sermons to be a tremendous blessing but do not forget them. They need YOU too.

Do you want an easy way to share the sermon that your pastor just preached with a coworker? The free app that I mentioned earlier will let you do it with ease.

Is your church unable to muster the resources to develop an iPhone App, an Android app, a Roku Channel, Chromecast support, Apple TV support or a website to deliver your sermons?

Most can't. But we have, and we are constantly working to ensure that our churches are able to focus on the *ministry* and not be burdened with trying to maintain a voice on the many platforms needful today.

SermonAudio can help you and your local church in so many ways, but we *cannot* and do not wish to be a replacement in *any way*. That is one of the reasons why, in the last few

years, we have supported many small conferences just like this one, and why we are here supporting this one today.

Our mission is the “Preservation and Propagation of solid, Biblical preaching for this generation and the next,” but never at the expense of the local assembly, and never at the expense of face to face interaction.

We have become a people that communicate information on a scale like never before, but it has become more superficial and less personal. We need to realize, once again, that communication is more than just the passing of information. Real communication has at its heart *communion*.

In this technological age, we need to work at this.

So, we want you to enjoy the site; we want you to download the app; we want you to grow by what you hear, but we also want you to turn off the screen once in a while and really engage with the world around you. It is so much easier to text someone; call them instead. It is so much easier to withdraw and hide in our “Facebook world,” but our nation needs us, our churches need us, our families need us, and we need them.

As you look around the room today, you may see faces that you know, but I would encourage you to focus on those you do not. Yes, renew those old friendships, but don't leave here without having made new ones. We are glad you are all here, and we will feel that this conference was a success if you leave here having met with God *and* His people in a *real* and *living* way.

Thank you.