From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology

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From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology John Dyer Where does technology belong in the biblical story of redemption? Believers and unbelievers alike are saturated with technology, yet most give it little if any thought. Consumers buy and upgrade as fast as they can, largely unaware of technology's subtle yet powerful influence. In a world where technology changes almost daily, many are left to wonder: Should Christians embrace all that is happening? Are there some technologies that we need to avoid? Does the Bible give us any guidance on how to use digital tools and social media?

An experienced Web developer and writer on technology and culture, John Dyer answers these questions and more by walking through the story of the Bible and introducing key ideas about how technology and culture interact. Dyer first analyzes the biblical, theological, and philosophical foundations of technology and then studies several examples that show how technology can influence the spiritual life. For youth pastors, college-aged readers, and anyone interested in understanding how technology fits with faith, "From the Garden to the City" fills a gap for biblically-informed literature in a technological world.

"The burgeoning field of internet possibilities has very little written from a Christian perspective, much less from a gifted artist like John Dyer."--J. Scott Horrell, Professor of Theological Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

"Of all the voices speaking and writing on the subject today, John Dyer's is among the voices I most respect. [His] unique combination of technological and theological passion, insight, and credentials make him an author and thought leader that people of faith need to hear from."--Scott McClellan, editor, "Collide Magazine"

From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology Details

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of Technology John Dyer

From Reader Review From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology for online ebook

Douglas Wilson says

This was an outstanding book -- I really enjoyed it. I will be commenting on it further on my blog, but for the present let me say that there is a wealth of balanced information here about technology that will prove to be a great practical blessing to any Christian who wants to know how to incorporate new technologies into a sane lifestyle. Great job.

Nickie says

Must Read! Captured my thoughts through-out the day as I considered what really is technology, why is it good and why is it problematic. So interesting to realize that God has used technology to further His purposes and wants people to use it well. This is a book to return to in the future.

Mark Jr. says

A little story at the very beginning of this book is the one that has stuck with me:

> Throughout my years in seminary, I continued to study and work hard in both theological studies and programming. I spent as much time learning Greek and Hebrew as I did learning languages like PHP, C#, Python, HTML, and JavaScript. But in my final semester of seminary, a professor, who was known both for his brilliance and shocking, out-of-nowhere statements, said something that changed everything for me. In the middle of addressing a variety of current issues in society and culture, he looked straight at all of us and said, "One of the most dangerous things you can believe in this world is that technology is neutral." Wait, what? I thought. Surely, he must have misspoken. After all, nothing could be more obvious than the fact that technology is neutral. What matters is that we use technology for good, right?

Dyer brings up this issue later in the book, and he helpfully frames a question that far too few people are asking: is technology a neutral instrument or does it in some measure determine the ends to which it is put?

Dyer's answer is no: technology is not neutral. Neither is it fully determinist, *making* anyone do anything. But we have to recognize that, as media ecologists have pointed out, technologies tend to "play themselves out" within a culture. They do what they were designed to do (even if the designer isn't always aware how choices he's making in the design will influence that play). A great example is cellphones:

> The presence of a cell phone in my pocket means that my conceptions of space, time, and limits are radically different than a world without cell phones…. When people have cell phones, they tend to answer them when a call comes in. A person is free to use a phone as a

paperweight, doorstop, or hammer, but people will tend to use phones to accomplish what they were designed to do—communicate with people. The longer a tool has been around and the more often we use it, the more ingrained and culturally acceptable its tendencies become. Individuals are still free to discard it or use it in some way other than its original design, but the tool has a specific tendency that will usually prevail among the masses. For example, when mobile phones first came on the market, most people bought them only for emergency or business use. Yet, it seems that mobile phones have the built-in tendency to be used much more often, especially as they continue to gain features far beyond making calls. Instrumentalism is partially true in the sense that individuals are free to use phones however they please, but determinism also has an element of truth in that society at large tends to use the technology in a certain way.

Dyer has done better than Challies, for example, in bringing in the insights of media ecology for Christian discussion of technology. He also used Andy Crouch's work helpfully, speaking of a given piece of technology as a "cultural good."

I believe I agree with several reviewers that this is the Christian book to read about technology.

Joel Arnold says

I've heard other reviewers call this the best Christian book to read on technology, and I definitely agree. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean it's a great book or even a good book. When Dyer sticks to the task of building a biblical theology of technology his work is (usually) excellent. Where he goes wrong is in his reliance on the McLuhan / Postman line of thought with all of the normal intellectual faults media ecology brings: (1) untenable historiography, (2) postmodern emphasis on the context (medium) over message, (3) criticism without tangible or practicable solutions, (4) demonizing technology as an isolate from the rest of human culture.

There are several specific criticisms of Dyer:

(1) he denies that technology is morally laden, but simultaneously denies that it is neutral and even speaks of the values inherent in the devices—values that naturally emerge when we use them.

(2) he defines technology so broadly (anytime we use tools to change the world) that it includes almost anything, including language, large language groups, or nearly any physical object (even the Lord's supper!)

(3) his historiography is very bad, and his observations are sometimes ludicrous. The nadir of the book is definitely 150-153.

(4) the book would be more helpful if Dyer integrated technology into the larger picture of human culture and how we express our values in lots of different ways.

On the positive side:
(1) He offers the closest thing to a biblical theology of technology that I've ever seen. Most of the time, it's very good and it certainly succeeds in tracing the big-picture trajectory.

(2) He is definitely more moderate in his Postmanesque argument than the other Christian books on Technology ("Why Johnny Can't Preach," "The Next Story," "Technopoly" [not Christian]).

(3) He is a good writer—clear, engaging, thought-provoking, and even occasionally entertaining. I would like to steal some of his writing skills.

Random Notes:
We respond to a tool with a mental story line - what is my world like, how would I use the tool, and how would the world change as a result. Then we decide if we want it.
Tools are ways of changing the world but thereafter they change us.

23-24 - when're he brought in a projector the kids stopped bringing their Bibles. [But was it "technology" or just bad teaching technique? What if he had just written every week's text on a chalkboard? The kids would have stopped bringing their Bibles.
26-28 - good points about how each generation implicitly accepts the technologies of their era while being concerned about the new things they didn't grow up with.
36 - a tool changes someone in the same ways, regardless of whether he used it for good or for evil.
84 - quote: the main philosophy of technology in modern thinking is that there isn't one.
*85 - he argues that each technology brings a culture and change of life with it. But how is this different from saying that anything in my life affects some other things? Marriage affects tons of things in my life - does that make it a special ethical category?
88-89 - McLuhan says every technology magnifies something we want to do, amputates something we would otherwise do, recovers some past value, but also creates the risk of new problems if we overuse it.
*90, 93 - the confusion comes by a false linkage: technology makes new choices possible; some of these choices contain ethical values; therefore technologies carry some sort of inherent values.
*93-94 - when we make something we embed our values in it. As we use it those values are reflected back to us.
96 - by magnifying our depravity, technology tends to increase the inward focused selfish bent of our hearts, isolating us from others. Wise Christians know the corrosive tendencies built into new technologies and know how to use them instead for good.
106 - some of the confusion stems from his broad definition of technology that ends up incorporating almost all of human culture. For instance, if language is a technology (pg. 106), what isn't!? On 112, a broadly shared common language is another technology! Likewise any organizational convention (127). If technology is anything we use to transform something God made (127), it essentially concludes any action that has an object. In 139-40 technology is essentially any physical object.
119-says that the more "advanced" a technology the more it removes extra steps and results in less formality. To prove it he goes through the evolution of phones (how they used to require an operator and then identifying yourself to the person who answered; text messages remove all that.) But wasn't face to face much easier and less formal? And weren't smoke signals the ultimate concise technology?
123-124 - technology differences contribute to generational divide.
126-128 - highly improbable explanations of how the printing press influenced the way to do science and theology.
129 - denies that "images [invention of photographs] are a neutral medium where the only thing that matters is he content itself. No, as we've been saying, images as a medium shape our thinking and communicate meaning. Sometimes that meaning contains a powerful theological truth."
141 - he is self-stultifying when he says things like "though a mobile phone is not itself morally evil, it cannot be considered "neutral" either. Instead, embedded in its design is a tendency of usage from which a set of values emerge." Later he speaks of "the value systems that emerge from using a tool; we must discern when those tools are in conflict with the value system of the kingdom of God" (143). The critical question is

can we legitimately talk about "the value system of technology"? (178)

143 - great point about praising God for making humans creative whenever we use technology.

145 - hoping in future technology to solve all of our problems is called technicism according to Stephen Monsma.

150-52 - a shockingly naive, conspiratorial understanding of supply-demand and economic history. Definitely the nadir of the book.

152-53-Complete reinterpretation of the basis behind the apple logo (c.f. Isaacson's bio of Steve Jobs).

153 - what reasonable person could actually question the idea that "technology can make life better"?

169 - most of this books criticisms come down to selective observations of negative things in technology without acknowledging the positives. For instance, he notes that it's easier to criticize on Facebook than commend someone for a "good point" without noting that there is a like button and no dislike button.

172 - the concern would be that we start to think online interaction is just as good as face to face. But I don't think we actually do that. I think we actually are very aware of the difference and use it intuitively all the time.

175 - he summarizes the message of the book as the idea that "technology changes everything."

Brian Koser says

Reading this book felt like a puzzle piece clicking into an empty spot I didn't even know was there. Dyer makes a compelling case against the idea that technology is morally neutral. He doesn't claim that technology is inherently good or inherently evil, rather that it's inherently transformational regardless of whether we use it for good or evil. For example, the mind of a person who reads mainly books will be different than the mind of a person who reads mainly Twitter; regardless if you read good or bad material in either medium, the mediums themselves will change you apart from the content.

And there was a lot more. I want to ruminate on this one some more, and I'll definitely be pushing this book on family and friends so I can discuss the topics.

Notes and quotes:

15
"One of the most dangerous things you can believe in this world is that technology is neutral."

16
Media ecology: study of how technology operates within cultures and how it changes them over time.
Philosophy of technology: how technology relates to what it means to be human.

21
"Because of all this technology, our world has changed so drastically over the last fifty years that the biblical character Abraham of 2000 B. C. would probably have more in common with Abraham Lincoln of the early 1800s than Lincoln would have with us in the twenty-first century."

24
"Every single believer from Moses to Martin Luther--from 1500 B. C. to A. D. 1500--encountered God's Word by going to church and *listening* to it alongside others. They almost never had the chance to *read* the Bible for themselves. This meant that for nearly three thousand years, there was not a single believer in the one true God who ever had a 'quiet time' as we know it today."

26

"Douglas Adams divided technology into three groups: before you're born (normal), before you're thirty (exciting), after thirty (terrible, gradually accepted)."

30

In 2 John 12 and 3 John 12-13, John prefers to continue the conversation in person instead of through writing: we should evaluate when to use technology.

42

Tools shape humans: digging with a shovel gives you calluses whether you are breaking ground on a new orphanage or burying stolen goods. Reading Christian or atheist books will change you in a different way than reading Christian or atheist tweets.

48

"In fact, these passages in Genesis 1 and 2 have sometimes been called the "culture mandate" because theologians find in it the command and responsibility for humans to create culture."

50

"The wickedness of much of today's culture has led some to believe that culture is synonymous with worldliness. Therefore it's hard to believe that culture and technology actually existed in the garden. Yet the word translated "cultivate" in Genesis 2 is elsewhere translated "till", an action that assumes the use of tools."

65

Dyer's definition of technology: "the human activity of using tools to transform God's creation for practical purposes"

103

Why didn't God save Noah supernaturally? "The use of the ark seems to indicate that the physical world--and what we make with it--is so important to God that he graciously chooses to use what we make in his plan of redemption."

108

On Exodus-Deuteronomy: "While it is admittedly not a terribly entertaining read, this section of the Bible is amazing for one simple reason: there in the Middle Eastern desert, God took a group of slaves and gave them a set of objects, images, rituals, and language that would transform them into an entirely new culture, distinct from everyone around them."

110

God started the exodus when the new technology of writing was making it easy to preserve knowledge; his laws could be kept unchanging.

112

God used the new technologies of the widespread Greek language and the Roman road system to spread his gospel.

113

"Although God is restricting the use of a particular medium--carved images--he does so for a very important reason. It's not that God thinks images themselves are inherently evil. It's because he recognizes that tools of

technology never function as neutral, inert instruments."

On the second commandment, forbidding graven images: "The Hebrews were not free to approach God however they pleased, through whatever means they found enlightening, fun, or interesting."

"It is a strange injunction to include as part of an ethical system unless its author assumed a connection between forms of human communication and the quality of a culture." - Neil Postman

122
Mediums communicate meaning: formality, difficulty, speed.

125
Mediums create culture and cultural divides.

131
Books and photographs change us just as mediums. For example, we now can think of the Bible as a book of verses, when verse divisions were only added recently. Photographs affect us on an emotional level.

136
Joseph and Jesus were artisans or skilled workers (Greek "tekton"). Traditionally they were carpenters, but some scholars think it was more likely they were stonemasons because stone was more prevalent in Nazareth at the time.

138
God is not planning to recreate Eden: instead he will bring down a city (invented by men) from Heaven to Earth.

"Thus the history of the city, divided in two by Jesus Christ, goes from Eden to Jerusalem, from a garden to a city." - Jacques Ellul

"The promise of this new city tells us that God's plan is not merely to regenerate human bodies and resurrect human souls but also to restore human creations to a world untainted by sin. ...although the Bible doesn't make this explicit, we can only assume that some human creations—including tools—will also be restored such that they too are free from the trade-offs and unintended consequences that cripple them today."

139
Jesus built a fire to cook breakfast for Peter when he restored him to leader of the disciples. The last fire we saw in John was the fire in the high priest's courtyard, where Peter denied Jesus.

143
Summary: our use of technology is a **reflection** of God's creativity and other attributes (positive, unintentional). We can use technology for **rebellion** (negative, intentional) or for **redemption** (positive, unintentional). Technology can also cause problems that are in need of **restoration** (negative, unintentional).

160
Book + Photograph + Telegraph + Telephone = Internet

"The Internet and all of the devices we use to connect to it can be understood as the convergence of several

older technologies."

"The book...values logical, linear, structured data sharing; and we saw that the print era was characterized by this kind of thinking."

161
"[I]mages...tend to evoke emotional responses. When we think about our current image-saturated culture, we find that people often care more about how they feel about something than whether it is logically correct of morally right."

"The telegraph...level[ed] information access...the phone connected one person to another."

"Just as the book and its related technologies coincided with the shift from "pre-modern" to "modern" thinking, the shift toward images has coincided with the shift toward a "postmodern" way of conceiving of the world."

"Print transforms our thinking, images transform our feeling, telegraphs transform our informing, and phones transform our relating. What do we get when we combine text, images, information access, and direct human-to-human connection? The answer is the most powerfully transformative technological system humans have ever created."

168
"If there had been no railway to conquer distance, my child would never have left town and I should need no telephone to hear his voice." - Sigmund Freud

169
"Our presence in online communities is only through intentionalities: you choose how to present yourself instead of just being."

171
"Those born into Internet culture and those who feel comfortable in it will need to spend more time challenging it in order to avoid subtly giving into its negative tendencies. On the flip side, those born earlier who find themselves uncomfortable in Internet culture may need to ask God to help them avoid self-righteously running away from Internet culture like Jonah avoiding the Ninevites."

"The Apostle John was comfortable writing, but his joy was not complete until he was physically present with his community."

174
"Rather than be shaped by technology, I try to understand how each new technology can shape me and then decide if that coincides with the kind of person I think God would have me be."

Josh Davis says

Really thoughtful book on technology and how it relates to the Bible and faith. Dyer has clearly reflected on such issues deeply and he shares many pearls of wisdom with his readers. I've been reading a variety of books and articles on the intersection of faith and technology and this has been my favorite so far. Much

appreciated was the author's interaction with the Bible. I wasn't able to get very excited about his chart at the end of the book, but overall Dyer has produced a challenging and useful work.

Tami says

Awaiting the arrival of this book, I wondered just how much the author would bash cell phones and the internet. I use both excessively and I honestly didn't want to hear it. Yes, my curiosity got the best of me, so I decided I'd read the book.

I liked this book!

I thought technology began somewhere in the last hundred years, but the author took me on a road trip back to the beginning of time to prove otherwise. Who knew that technology is nothing new! The connection made between technology and God were quite interesting. The shovel, who made many 'appearances' in the book, provided me with a visual understanding of the information presented in this book. You have to read the book to know what I'm talking about!

There is no black or white answer. Included in the book is a list of questions based on the four parts of this book – Reflection, Rebellion, Redemption & Restoration – that can help the reader make smart decisions regarding the usage of the technology present in his or her own life.

Disclosure: I received this book in exchange for my honest review. See full post at ThisMomsDelight.com

Ada says

Take a moment to survey the number of electronic gadgets you have within easy reach right this moment. You probably have a cell phone in your pocket, a computer right in front of you, and a tablet not too far away. In fact, you are surrounded with more technology than you even realize, and it is changing you in ways you probably do not suspect. As a Christian, this should be concerning to you. How should Christians interact with technology? Is it truly the soul-consuming demon some alarmists make it out to be? These are some of the concerns addressed in John Dyer's book From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology.

The first chapter contains a reflection on the confusion with which people view technology. Dyer relates such anecdotes as the mother who laments that her children spend all their time on Facebook- instead of talking to their friends on the phone (27)! She forgets that even though she grew up with telephones, they are still a form of technology. Dyer sites Neil Postman's theory of "The Myth of Technology," the tendency to believe that technologies created before our time or several years ago as part of the normal order of things. In the second chapter, he describes the nature of technology's effect on people: how it changes the world around the user while simultaneously changing the user, and ultimately affecting the user's soul.

With these concerns in mind, Dyer embarks on his quest to give a complete Christian theology of technology by exploring its role in the Christian story. This takes the form of a four-part history of technology in the

Bible: Reflection/Creation, Rebellion/the Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. Each section is followed by a related question and discussion. He begins at the very beginning, with Creation. He argues that as creatures created in the image of God, people are meant to themselves create. Adam's first task is creating a language, for example. Following that is a definition of what technology actually is. He takes a very broad (perhaps too broad view), defining it as anything humanity uses to change the world around it. Next is a discussion of the fall, and how it amply demonstrates that while technology has been corrupted by the fall, it is not entirely a negative thing. Adam and Eve make the first clothing in order to hide their nakedness from God, but God shows them how to make better clothing. Meanwhile, Cain uses technology and builds a corrupt city. Afterwards, Dyer asks the question "Is technology neutral?" and comes to the conclusion that it is not; in fact, it comes with embedded values, which emerge as people define its use.

Thirdly, he addresses Redemption. He does not claim that technology by itself is the means to an eternal life, but that it has been used by God in His redemption plans. Examples cited include Noah's Ark, the Ten Commandments, and the cross itself: a twisted technology made into a symbol of redemption by Christ's death upon it. Finally is Restoration, which looks at its role in modern Christian life and its possible future after Jesus's return. The book closes with a discussion of technicism (the modern view that technology holds all the answers to life) and virtualization (the move toward conducting more and more of our interaction with life through mediating technology).

I highly recommend this book. It is much like the latest version of a mid-range PC: though it contains few truly novel concepts, it is well-designed, attractively packaged, and user-friendly. It provides a nearly comprehensive Christian theology of technology by taking many familiar concepts (and a few new ones) and knitting them together into a cohesive whole. As such, it could serve as both a technological primer for the theological neophyte and a unified view for one already familiar with the concepts discussed. The writing tone is conversational, and an abundance of amusing anecdotes makes it readily readable.

Christians are not called to intellectual atrophy. Rather, they are supposed to lead thoughtful lives. In order to live in the world but not of it, Christians must carefully consider every aspect of their lives and how each aspect might affect their Christian walk. Modern technology is a huge part of our daily lives, and is definitely a complex issue. It isn't easy to form a Christian perspective on it, especially as at first glance the Bible does not have much to say. Jesus had plenty of followers, but none of them were on Facebook! John Dyer does Christians an invaluable service when he explains that the Bible does indeed have plenty to say about technology, and goes on to explain it in a well-reasoned way. Furthermore, he does an excellent job of stripping away one's illusions about what technology actually is and what it actually does. Chapter Six in particular is a good treatment of the controversial topic of the neutrality (or lack thereof) of technology, though it perhaps could have been presented more clearly.

The only truly lacking aspect of the book was the too-brief look at how the Industrial Revolution led to a consumerist society (150-153). While that may be true, Dyer's attempt to reach that conclusion by giving what is essentially a very brief and oversimplified history of the last few hundred years' development in marketing and economy. Bizarrely, he focuses almost entirely on the supply side of the supply-demand equation, skipping blithely over such issues as the rise of the middle class as a people hungry for luxury and setting up suppliers as nebulously nefarious villains. Four pages is simply not enough room to address a complicated subject like that, and he would have done well to either spend more time exploring the topic or left it out entirely. This may seem nit-picky, but when the rest of a book is absolutely excellent, a passage such as this one with its rushed argument and insufficient evidence sticks out like a Ford Pinto in a lot full of Rolls Royces.

I learned a lot while reading this book. In the past, I have tended to adopt new technologies without pausing

to consider what affect they might be having upon me. I know I will not be doing that anymore. For Lent, I have decided to avoid watching movies and videos. Dyer mentioned that not using a certain technology changes one as much as using a technology does. It will be interesting to see how the next forty days will alter me. Also, I had never really considered technology as having any great role within the Bible. As Dyer walked through the many examples, I was able to see certain passages of the Bible in an entirely new light. It is proof that no matter how many times you read even the most familiar Bible stories, there is still new lessons hidden within them.

John Dyer's From the Garden to the City may not be without flaws. However, it is an excellent, very readable look at a pressing subject. It presents a clear theology of technology. It has clear applications to one's Christian walk. I wholeheartedly recommend this book.

Deanne Davies says

An excellent book on thinking deeply about viewing technology through a Biblical lens.

Fernando Pasquini Santos says

Se alguém me pedisse para indicar um livro contendo uma introdução à tecnologia na cosmovisão bíblica para quem tem pouca ou quase nenhuma base filosófica ou sociológica, certamente eu indicaria este. Trata-se uma leitura muito agradável e fluida, apresentando o que todo cristão deveria saber sobre alguns dos episódios centrais da Bíblia relacionados à tecnologia (o mandato cultural no Éden, a construção da primeira cidade por Caim, a arca de Noé, a torre de Babel, etc.) e uma breve introdução à análise do industrialismo e mídias de comunicação modernas.
Em alguns momentos é possível sentir uma falta de profundidade, e mesmo uma percepção de que algumas das questões abordadas são muito mais complicadas do que parecem. O autor às vezes adota uma linguagem "em cima do muro" e não justifica com muita clareza o porquê de nem aceitar uma coisa e nem outra em algumas das polêmicas sérias, que tem surgido desde Heidegger, passando por Jacques Ellul e Hubert Dreyfus. Apesar disso, o livro é uma excelente introdução a algumas das ideias e conceitos destes autores influentes na área de tecnologia - o diagnóstico da sociedade tecnológica, por Jacques Ellul, as quatro camadas do conceito de tecnologia, por Stephen J. Kline, o conceito de mídia como extensão do homem, por Marshall McLuhan, o paradigma do dispositivo, por Albert Borgmann, entre outros.
Além disso, suas ilustrações e histórias são extremamente úteis e fáceis de entender, e sua defesa sobre a não-neutralidade da tecnologia é bastante contundente. John Dyer mostra que os cristãos devem ser mais do que indivíduos que Marshall McLuhan chamou de "imbecis tecnológicos", que dizem que a única coisa importante sobre tecnologia é a forma como a usamos - se para o bem ou para o mal. A ilustração de Dyer é excelente: uma pá, por exemplo - uma ferramenta que pode ser compreendida como tecnologia - pode ser usada para o bem ou para o mal; no entanto, também é importante atentar para os efeitos que o uso da pá terá no nosso próprio corpo à medida que a usamos: talvez dores nas costas ou bolhas nas mãos. Isso significa que nós usamos ferramentas para mudar o mundo, mas as ferramentas também nos mudam - e isso envolve tanto aspectos físicos, como também emocionais, sociais e espirituais. Os cristãos devem ter consciência disso e, na dependência de Deus, usar as ferramentas adequadamente, redimindo a capacidade criativa do homem e, à semelhança de Cristo e sua cruz, transformando os instrumentos de morte e afastamento de Deus em instrumentos de vida e louvor a Deus.

Bethany Reedy says

Great Christian view on the use and usefulness of technology.

Kamryn (GreyZone) says

Read for COS 104 at Taylor University. Presents valuable thoughts on the positive and negative (never neutral) effects of technology, particularly with a Christian worldview.

Ronia Dubbaneh says

Before this book, I never really gave thought to the implications of technology beyond surface-level questions like "how does it help us? how does it harm us?" But, as this book showed me, there are much deeper realities and truths surrounding technology. This is a brief, simple, yet sharp analysis of how technology fits into the larger story of our creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Great eye-opener as to technology's transformative power over us, but its ultimate place of submission and service to something and someone far greater than us. Written by a web developer/tech guru/previous seminarian. Super interesting subject to read and talk about!

Tori Samar says

This is a thought-provoking book about how Christians should understand and approach technology. I greatly appreciate Dyer's care in "striking a balance" on the issue, as it were. He neither lambasts technology as a total detriment to humanity nor holds it up as something to be wholeheartedly embraced. Instead, he points us to discernment, advising us to recognize that every technology brings with it a certain set of values and to determine where those values support or oppose God's values. Dyer also makes the excellent point that while we shape the world around us through our use of technology, our technology is also shaping us as human beings.

The primary reason why I knocked a couple stars off my rating is that I don't like some of Dyer's hermeneutics. As he used Scripture passages to make some of his arguments about technology, I thought he made far too many interpretative "reaches." To me, it looks like he's trying too hard to find verses and passages that say something clear about a Christian approach to technology. Some of his explanations seem more like "reading into" rather than "drawing out of." Below, I am including a few quotes I highlighted that most confused or concerned me:
-"Adam and Eve transformed fig leaves, but God transformed animal skins. And in doing so, God appears to be sanctioning Adam and Eve's inventiveness, even offering them suggestions on how to improve upon it." (God is *sanctioning* Adam and Eve's creation of fig leaves that they wove together to cover their shame, after they had just *sinned* against Him? And now He's suggesting how they could do better? What?).
-"Cain illustrates that we can do good technology in a faithless, sinful way. Cain was following the letter of the law when it came to the culture mandate, and externally there was nothing wrong with what he made

from the world. Yet John and Hebrews tell us God rejected Cain's work for the sole reason that it wasn't offered in faith. . . . Today we, too, can create helpful, productive, and even redemptive technology, but if we don't offer and use it in faith, it is worthless. God will reject our work just as he rejected Cain's." (Huh? How do we offer and use our technology in faith? What does that even mean? Is this referring to the spiritual state of people who use technology, or their motives? Or none of the above? Confusing!).
-On Noah's building of the ark: "Perhaps God is telling us that he values not just humanity but also the creations of humanity. The use of the ark seems to indicate that the physical world—and what we make with it—is so important to God that he graciously chooses to use what we make in his plan of redemption." (Or perhaps, like Hebrews 11:7 actually tells us, God is telling us that Noah is another excellent example from the Old Testament of saving faith. He believed God's warning and obeyed it by building an ark in preparation for a natural catastrophe he had never seen nor heard of before).

Thankfully, as I mentioned in my first paragraph, there are still plenty of good ideas and insights in this book. So take the good for what it is and the not-so-good for what it is.

(Read for the 2017 Tim Challies Christian Reading Challenge: A book about a current issue)

Leonardo Bruno says

"Uma das coisas mais perigosas na qual vocês podem acreditar nesse mundo é que a tecnologia é neutra".

Do mesmo modo que essa frase, ouvida de um professor, constituiu-se num divisor de águas para o então seminarista John Dyer, seu livro *From Garden to the City* constituiu-se num divisor de águas para mim também, pois me fez repensar muitas de minhas posturas e crenças em relação à tecnologia. Um livro recheado de insights teológicos e filosóficos valiosíssimos, que nos ajudam a ver com mais clareza certos ídolos que inadvertidamente erigimos em nosso coração quando se trata de desfrutar do que a tecnologia tem a nos oferecer. É, decerto, uma das melhores introduções disponíveis ao assunto (qualquer leigo consegue ler), e que merece ser traduzida tão brevemente quanto possível para o português.