Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith

Shane Hipps

Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith

Shane Hipps

Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith Shane Hipps
Flickering pixels are the tiny dots of light that make up the screens of life--from TVs to cell phones. They are nearly invisible, but they change us. In this provocative book, author Shane Hipps takes readers beneath the surface of things to see how the technologies we use end up using us. Not all is dire, however, as Hipps shows us that hidden things have far less power to shape us when they aren't hidden anymore. We are only puppets of our technology if we remain asleep. Flickering Pixels will wake us up--and nothing will look the same again.

Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith Details

Date	:	Published February 3rd 2009 by Zondervan (first published January 16th 2009)
ISBN	:	9780310293217
Author	:	Shane Hipps
Format	:	Hardcover 208 pages
Genre	:	Nonfiction, Christian, Science, Technology, Religion, Christianity, Theology, Spirituality, Cultural, Sociology

Download and Read Free Online Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith Shane Hipps

From Reader Review Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith for online ebook

Micah Taylor says

Very thought-provoking and a little convicting. A mandatory read for any believer in the new media industry, a useful read for all people living a culturally-engaged life. This book offers great insight and an intuitive look at the affect a buzzing social media world has on our interpersonal relationships and our faith. I would suggest this book to everyone.

Matt Bailey says

Great insight into the mediums of technology and its effects in our life.

Julia says

This is a great, informative read. The author is attempting to apply insights about media & technology to some basic issues of our faith & life. He talks about how the exclusivity of personal information creates the conditions of intimacy. That intimacy is preserved in that relationship as long as the information remains exclusive. The moment it is available to anyone and everyone (such as on Facebook) is the moment intimacy begins to evaporate.

"The internet has a natural bias toward exhibitionism and thus the erosion of real intimacy. There is nothing exclusive about it, yet it creates, paradoxically, a kind of illusion of intimacy with people we've never met or hardly know.This is the phenomenon or anonymous intimacy - the feeling of a relationship, but one that hasn't been, and likely never will be, face to face."

I can't say it better than the author, so I am quoting..."This anonymous intimacy has a strange effect. It provides just enough connection to keep us from pursuing real intimacy. In a virtual community, our contacts involve very little risk and demand even less of us personally. Vulnerability is optional. A community that promises freedom from rejection and makes authentic emotional investment optional can be extremely appealing, remarkably efficient and a lot more convenient."

"Virtual community is infinitely more virtual than it is communal. It's a bit like cotton candy; It goes down easy and satiaes our immediate hunger, but it doesn't provide much in the way of sustainable nutrition. Not only that, but our appetite is spoiled. We no longer feel the need to participate in authentic community, because it involves high degrees of intimacy, permanence and proximity....."

I know many of us are "addicted" to virtual community because it is so convenient. Our interactions with people are efficient and allow us to keep in touch more often. Is there a difference, though, in keeping in touch and truly connecting with others?

A personal example happened about a 1 1/2 years ago, when I found out on Facebook that my neice was engaged to be married. That day I felt I had lost some personal intimacy with my sister. Why couldn't she

have phoned me to tell me the good news, the important family news? And since I don't frequent Facebook on a daily basis, when I read this news, it was already 2 weeks old. What has that taught me? It hurts to talk about it.

This book is worth owning and definitely reading!

Seth says

The book really surprised me with its breadth. I'd anticipated a narrow critique giving guidance on how to think Christianly in one's usage of technology. It gives this, but its real strength is in its broadening one's perspective of what we perceive to be media (i.e. the tabernacle, the church itself, culture) and how God works through ever-changing media to communicate His never-changing and always mysterious message.

Shannon says

Hipps makes some good points, especially in the chapters on conflict resolution and the church as the body of Christ. However, the main focus of the book is not so much on faith as it is on communication theory & history. I think I might have been better off reading Marshall McLuhan's Understanding Media (which this book is largely based on) and making the applications to Christianity on my own.

Speaking of McLuhan's book, I do have a copy on my shelf, and I've so far left it unread because I don't think I'd buy into the hyperbolic thesis that "The medium IS the message." I agree that the medium strongly INFLUENCES the message, but the two are not synonymous. I know from experience that many different messages can be sent and received through one single medium.

To some extent, Flickering Pixels suffers from the same sort of overstatement, to the point that it affects Hipps's credibility in my mind. He implies that changes in media technology are the sole cause of many events and developments in philosophy, when I would cite the same changes simply as contributing factors. In some cases, he seems to blend -- almost confuse -- cause and effect. For example, he argues that the linear alphabet caused the Greeks to develop a linear form of thought. Couldn't it have been the other way around, that their linear thinking led to a linear alphabet?

All in all, I felt uneasy reading Flickering Pixels -- and not because I was being exposed to new ideas. (I work in the field of communication and am well aware of many of the dangers this book covers.) My uneasiness came from the feeling that something was not quite right with the book's reasoning, though I couldn't quite pinpoint what. Maybe it was simply that Hipps seems to attribute greater power to a part of Creation (media technology) than to the Creator. The dominant media of our culture do affect the way we respond to God, but God Himself and His story of redemption do not change because we do. Hipps seems to disagree.

Jeremy says

Don't waste your time. There's a reason Rob Bell recommends this book.

Johnny says

A book that does just what it aims to do: "make us aware." On page 183, Hipps writes, "When we realize, for example, that digital space has the extraordinary ability to create vast superficial social networks, but is ill-suited for generating intimate and meaningful human connection, we may treat it more like dessert than the main course."

Flickering Pixels both tells the history of media, with insights into how the printed word affected mankind's thought processes and more, to critiquing our more current infatuation with technology, the internet, the television, Facebook, Twitter, and Goodreads. Hipps uses a broad stroke to discuss the ideas here, but the book is readable in only a day and serves both as a great introduction to those interested in further study and as an easy to read wake up call to those usually passive about the media they consume. Emphasizing a need for local relationship was one of the strongest points he made, along with pushing the church to realize that we are both the media and the message.

Overall, a book that confidently and accurately critiques our addiction to technology from both theological and psychological standpoints, and a necessary read for everyone who can get their hands on it.

Donovan Richards says

Little Dots Comprise the Image

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines a pixel as any of the small discrete elements that together constitute an image. The pixel is a building block, a portion of the larger whole. Without pixels, no image exists.

Similarly, people are the building blocks of culture and society as a whole. If the entire population of one country moves to another continent, no culture remains. In Flickering Pixels, Shane Hipps attempts to break down technology in order to analyze its building blocks and its effects on society.

With his prior career in advertising providing a unique perspective on the relationship between media and culture, Hipps writes Flickering Pixels in a skeptical voice. The basic thesis found in these chapters is a request to pause, take a step back, and evaluate the way media and technology influence our culture and more specifically our faith.
Technology's Relationship With Culture

Although not evident in everyday life, technology continually reshapes culture. The Greatest Generation remembers life before and after the television set; Baby Boomers consider life before landing on the moon different from life after the moon landing; Generation X defines itself in relation to the computer, and the Millennial Generation identifies life in pre- and post-iPhone terms.

Looking back at how society functioned decades earlier provides evidence for changes in culture, but we do not often consider how technology has altered culture over the years. For example, text messaging enabled people to send quick and efficient messages to each other. This technology, however, included some unintended consequences: the rise of text messaging prompted the rise of chat speak (e.g., Lol, wut,

2kewl4u, rotfl).
Technology's Relationship With Faith

Just as technology creates inadvertent outcomes for culture as a whole, Hipps narrows the focus to effects of technology on the Christian faith. Referencing the influence of the printing press on the Reformation, the author contends that technology has been shaping Christian tradition for millennia.

More specifically, when the printing press provided Bibles in the vernacular of the common people, the way culture viewed Scripture fundamentally changed. Whereas stained-glass windows were previously the medium of choice when depicting gospel messages to the masses, the printing press created access to the logically linear arguments of Paul. Exchanging icons for a text, those Protestants participating in the Reformation paved the way for a Christianity defined by logic and reason.

As Hipps contends, since the presentation of the gospel through technological means carries residual effects, it is important to evaluate its impact. Should churches simulcast sermons on video screens? On the one hand, simulcasting offers the benefits of increasing the number of people capable of hearing the message. On the other hand, presenting a sermon on video creates a pressure to place unwanted preference on the appearance of the pastor and his or her surroundings.
To What Extent Should We Accept Technology in Our Faith?

Even though I find value in stepping back and continually evaluating the effects of technology on my faith, I am afraid that Flickering Pixels reads as a warning against the uses of technology in the church — as if a wrong technological step in the modern church leads to heresy.

When Hipps references his previous career in marketing, he seems to be ashamed of his actions. His starting position is that his work of marketing luxury automobiles was morally wrong. In my opinion, the author seems to associate the use of technology to promote Christianity in the same skeptical light.

As a pixel is the building block for an image, perhaps technology is a building block for successfully sharing the Christian faith. Although we should avoid uncritically accepting technology in our faith and cultures, it is important that we avoid the overreaction of skeptically dismissing technology.

Despite Hipps' cynicism of technology, Flickering Pixels is a short, quick, and thought-provoking book worth reading.

Originally posted at http://spu.edu/depts/sbe/cib/reviews/...

Dan Archer says

I picked this book up as the title intrigued me. Not hard to do considering I'm someone very much interested in both technology and faith.

I think there are two things I'll take away from my time reading it, so I can already class this read as a success. If I'm being picky though I did find myself getting a bit frustrated in the middle of the book as Hipps introduces a number of different ideas but only really touches lightly on examples or application. Sometimes this also left me feeling like concepts weren't fully explained. I'd have liked to see more depth, but I can understand that it might have only been a trade off in trying to provide a look at as many forms of media as

possible.

So, onto the 2 things:
1. "The medium is the message" - I had not heard of Marshall McLuhan before, but I'm now looking forward to reading his book Understanding Media. Flickering Pixels has for me been a gateway into understanding that the choice of medium is significant in framing a message
2. Building on the above, I now feel able dig into example of God's interactions with the Israelites in a new way. I can see that the medium that God used to communicate was part of his message, and as such gives me a new tool in understanding who God is.

Jo Oehrlein says

Has some good points. I like his explanation near the end of how to respond to people pointing out hypocrisy in the church.

I'm not sure that I believe that it was the printing press and reading that drove us to a more individualized society. Or that photography has had the vast impact on our psyches that he says it has.

I do think that TV is usually mind candy that we often accept mindlessly, but I think there are ways to counteract that by discussing what is seen. He doesn't really discuss that.

Because of the focus on technology, it seems a little dated (2009) now in 2018.

Kate Davis says

I first picked up this book because Shane is the new teaching pastor at my church, Mars Hill. I knew he had been an advertising exec before entering seminary, and his insights on culture and media are invaluable to not just the Christian community but anyone who lives in a culture (read: anyone). He introduces some of Marshall McLuhan's principles and expands on them to apply to the technology that's become popular today. He explains why ignoring a cell phone can make someone you're with feel honored; why image-obsession (from paparazzi to everyday) can become destructive for everyone involved; and how the Internet is changing the way our brains function. Most appealing about this book, however, is that Shane is extremely practical in his approach. He doesn't argue that we should do away with technology entirely (although at times that feels like a good option), but that we should realize that technology is just an extension of traits we already possess and we should use them with intention, awareness, and care.

William T. Snider says

Good writer; misleading title

This book is 25% about technology and its impact on the church and 75% a well written critique of living out faith today. There are no guidelines for how to make social media a tool for communication, limited advice

on media usage and no strategy suggested. That being said, Hipps is an engaging writer and has thoughts to share.

Dave says

Shane Hipps proposes a lot of interesting theories as to how technology affects our brains, relationships, personalities, and our spiritual walks. Initially, he comes across as rather level headed, merely proposing possible concerns and fostering a healthy discussion. As the book goes on however, it increasingly appears that he has an agenda. There were several huge leaps made in logic as the book went on, many with poor citing or little academic support.

One example comes from page 70; Hipps cites the findings of Virgil Griffith's WikiScanner project (which analyzes the origin of Wikipedia edits based on the organization that owns the IP address). Hipps asserts that "The largest number of edits were made by major corporations like Diebold Election Systems, Exxon, or government agencies like the CIA." The statement is both alarmist and inaccurate. Th actual findings of Wikiscanner noted that, yes these organizations were editing Wikipedia but they were absolutely not "the largest number of (anonymous) edits." You can read the article Hipps cites yourself here: http://archive.wired.com/politics/onl...

The article firmly asserts not only that this is not the case of most edits but also points out that the "vast majority" of these edits were minor or insignificant.

Now, this may be a small and honest mistake on Hipps' part. However it begins to reveal either his agenda or the shift in tone used to grab attention. Other factual inaccuracies crop up when Hipps discusses the origin of 1337 speak. Again, a small thing, but sloppy for a book trying to make the claims he makes.

All that said, I actually agree with many of his opinions and concerns. I do wish he had stated them less definitively if he was not going to back them up with more significant research or make accurate statements of that which he did cite. He sacrifices objectivity and factually in favor of being alarmist.

It's a decent read.

Jared Totten says

Flickering Pixels is part history of media, part theology for the postmodern era, part social commentary.This book read like a collection of short essays unified around major shifts in media and strongly influenced by Marshall McLuhan's book "Understanding Media" (you should recognize his now famous aphorism, "The medium is the message"). From the printing press to social networking sites, from texting to TV, Shane Hipps gives a brief and random sample of media history and how each of these elements have effected culture and Christianity.

I found the chapter on the printing press particularly interesting as Hipps argues that it gave rise to the modern age of linear, logical thinking. While most of Christianity is still operating in this modern mindset in its apologetics and theology, he suggests that the postmodern age has been ushered and accelerated by the arrival of the telegraph, television and internet. While the modernist mindset was logical, linear and word-

based, the postmodernist mindset is now nonlinear, narrative- and image-based. I found his criticism of Christianity in this regard to be excessive and more than a little ironic since he was making his argument in book form.

With that said, Hipps understands media well and identifies with post-modernity well (at times uncomfortably so). This is a decent read and certainly a challenging read for anyone who is still a logical thinker of a modernist bent (which I assume most avid readers will be).

Terri says

Shane Hipps is currently a Teaching Pastor at Mars Hill Bible Church and holds a Master of divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary. Hipps was formerly a strategic planner in advertising and worked for several years on the communications strategy for Porsche Cars North America. Experience in advertising contributed to Hipps' understanding of the media/culture relationship and resulted in the writing of two books on the topic. The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture (2006) is aimed at people in church leadership. Flickering Pixels (2009) "appl[ies:] insights about media and technology to some of the basic issues of ... faith and life."

Hipps states that "Christianity is fundamentally a communication event" and with this focus he goes on to explore the hidden power of media and technology and its influence on the communication of God's message. By claiming that the medium is indeed the message, Hipps challenges the idea that the methods change but the message stays the same. Method affects the message, thereby allowing media and technology to subtly (or not so subtly) shape us and our faith.

Hipps does not present the reader with a moral judgment of media and technology, but does point out that we should think about these ever present influences on our lives. Media and technology might inevitably affect us, but the outcome of that influence does not have to be inevitable. By having an "intentional relationship to our technologies," by studying and understanding them, we minimize their power over us.

Those persons with an interest in the religious aspects of media and technology as well as those libraries that support curriculum in these areas would find this book to be a welcome addition to the collection. End notes and a list of resources round out the academic usefulness of Flickering Pixels.