

Prayer, Facebook, and Droids



Recently I was sitting at a gate in an airport waiting for my flight. There were easily 40–45 people in the waiting area. As I looked around (actually, as I looked up from my phone), I began to chuckle. An odd scene unfolded before me. Absolutely every person in the room was on his or her phone! Most were looking down and probably either texting, playing a game, or answering emails. A few were talking out loud, oblivious that all of us could hear at least one side of their conversation. But not a soul was interacting with another person in the room.

I am not an expert on this, but I surmise that modern technology and social networks have certainly changed a lot of things: the way we interact with each other (most would rather speak through a device than have significant interaction), our abilities to stay with the same train of thought (we are a world of “attention deficit” people now—and that is largely due to television and the Internet’s rapidly changing images and sound bites), and our reactions to situations and things we read or hear (everything is super-hyped and considered an emergency).

All this makes me wonder how this is affecting prayer. Is it damaging prayer? Or could technology be a plus?

Since I have passed the half-century mark—and I hate change—I naturally struggle with all these developments. But as I look at the dramatic changes, I need to think about the

possibilities.

Believers today can regularly participate with other like-minded people of prayer in online prayer meetings via chat rooms or conference calling. People who live miles apart can Skype or FaceTime and pray together. Recently a denomination hosted a 24-hour prayer meeting streamed live around the world with thousands of participants in dozens of locations. While people in remote locations watched a live video feed, they could participate via Internet chat and then pray with others in their location at the same time the group at the main site prayed. It proved to be a very cool prayer meeting!

In addition, a growing number of excellent apps (programs designed for phones and tablets) related to prayer are being developed. There are apps to help you keep track of requests and the names of those you pray for, apps that provide prayer guides, and apps for prayer discipleship.

One of our most popular resources, Pray the Word, has released an app of powerful Scripture-based prayers designed to teach people the power of praying God's Word. The goal is to move people from fix-it praying to praying the things on God's heart for their lives.

For me, as a middle-aged adult, rather than complaining and muttering about technology that is proving daunting for me to grasp and use (and bemoan the good old days), I need to embrace new technology and find ways to use it in my own prayer life. This year I plan to use multiple prayer resources on my phone and tablet to find ones that will make it easier for me to connect with God through prayer.

I hope you will embrace this "can do" attitude and join me. Let me know what good apps you find by emailing me at jon.graf@nationaldayofprayer.org. We are soon putting together a page on our website that reviews and recommends prayer apps and online prayer technology.

-Jonathan Graf is the vice president for publishing and resources for the National Day of Prayer Task Force and a popular speaker on prayer.