CHRISTIANS IN THE ERA OF **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

VASILE FILAT

All rights reserved: © 2019Vasile Filat

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by electronic or mechanical means, including photocopying, except with permission
in writing by the author.

Translation: Erik and Elena Brewer

Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotes are taken from the *International Inductive Bible Study Bible.*

Table of Contents

Introduction 5

Lesson 1
Christians and modern I.T. 9

Lesson 2
Studying the Bible using digital devices 17

Lesson 3
Christians and Social Media 23

Lesson 4
Personal Strategy for Social Media 31

Lesson 5
Taking quality pictures and Recording quality videos 45

Lesson 6
Communication in the digital world 55

Lesson 7
Planning and Organizing your work in the digital sphere 65

Lesson 8
Obsessive dependence on technology 73

Introduction

Recently, I metwith an old friend of mine who is older than I. He has grandchildren, some of whom were born before 2000 and some of whom were born after. When we began to talk about our grandchildren, my friend told me that his are great, they attend church and are faithful to the Lord but, there is one major problem. They do not know how to communicate well. When he spends time with them, they spent most of their time looking at their smart phones and when he speaks to them, their answers are always short, "Yes" or "No" to every question. Their answers speak volumes. To him, "Yes" and "No" sounds more like, "Leave me alone".

When I asked a young lady from our church how her parents were doing, she told me that her father, who is not yet 50 years old, has become addicted to the Internet. When he comes home from work, he no longer enjoys talking to his wife or with his children. Instead, he just sits with his cell phone in hand and scrolls through it for hours on end ...

I have often seen situations where a child is crying hysterically, throwing a fit so that he can get the phone from his parents. To calm the child, the parents give in and give the phone to the child. This scene has become all too common. We are in a completely new era. Technology offers all kinds of new possibilities for communication, but it also brings with it hazards that affect not only our relationship with people but also with God.

I am part of the generation that has seen the emergence of the Internet, cell phones, tablets etc. and I am aware of both the negative and positive impact of modern technology. I thank the Lord that, at the beginning of my walk with Christ, He led me to the wonderful teachers Mia and Costel Oglice, who taught me

not to be afraid of new things. Instead, I need to see the opportunities that they offer, to use it for Christ and the advancement of the Gospel. At that time the Internet had just arrived on the scene, and my teachers helped me acquire a computer. Then I opened an e-mail account to use for the Gospel ministry that I am part of, Precept Ministries International. I began using a laptop for the Gospel and I still use it today. As a pastor, I understand the broad implications of information technology in our daily lives making it imperative for pastors to equip believers in the wise use of this technology. This will help bring spiritual growth and spread the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, telling them to "make the most of their time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). The Apostle also challenges the Christians in Colossae to "conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity" (Colossians 4:5). The Greek word translated *opportunity* in these verses is *kairos*, which means opportune time, season, favorable weather that comes and goes and will be lost forever if it is not used at the correct time. In John 4, when His disciples returned from Sichar with food, the Lord Jesus, who had been waiting for them at the well after He had spoken to the Samaritan woman, refused to eat the food that they had brought to Him and then rebuked them for missing the opportunity to speak to the men of the city about Him, the Messiah. That time, the disciples missed the opportunity, but after the ascension of the Lord Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit, these same disciples used every opportunity afterwards to preach the Gospel. We know this because the Gospel spread from them through the ages and finally reached us today.

From then until now, about 2,000 years have passed and many things have changed. Every century has brought new opportunities. The 20th century and especially the 21st century have brought unique communication opportunities through the emergence of the Internet and other digital technology. This technology has become accessible to everyone and allows us to

communicate quickly over great distances and to a large number of people. Not long ago this kind of communication was unimaginable. The sad thing is that these opportunities are not used very often by the children of light, much less often, as a matter of fact, than used by the children of darkness. Instead of using technology for good, we guard against it, criticize it, or treat it as use for recreation instead of ministry. It should not be this way. Christians make extensive use of technology at work, at home, in their studies, in business, for most things; yet, too few Christians use technology for the work of the Gospel and for spiritual growth. Why? Mostly because we do not know how to use it effectively. The disciples of Christ have an urgent need to be taught how to use all the tools and opportunities offered by information technology for Christ and for the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle writes, «And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, to the building of the body of Christ» (Ephesians 4:11 -12). It is our duty as Gospel ministers during this digital age, to teach the saints to use technology for the growth of the Kingdom of God. This book is an attempt to fulfill this great need and my desire is that it will be a handbook for the Christian in the digital age.

Because of this desire, this is a workbook and to get the most from it, I urge you to answer all the questions and do all the exercises. The manual can be studied individually, but it will be of great help if you study it with the entire church, since you will be able to share experiences and develop a common strategy for the use of digital technology in the church ministry. If the pastor of your church does not know about this book, take the book with you when you go to church next time and present it. If you study this workbook with your entire family, you will understand more about how the other members of the family use technology. You will also learn from each other and form a strategy as a family. Youth pastors can use this manual to do this study with all the youth in the church. You can organize a camp to study

this course or organize a seminar. After Serghey Karamalak, one of the teachers of the Inductive Bible Study Institute of Eurasia, studied a lesson from this course with a group of young people from a region in Russia, the leader of the Christian youth in that region came up with the proposal to do a 5 day camp with all the local youth and study this course. Organizing such a camp or conferences in your region will help people be better equipped to live in this digital age.

This workbook contains 8 chapters that will help you form a correct understanding of information technology, as well as develop techniques to use it effectively in everything that you do. Special emphasis is placed on social media, not only because of its effect upon us, but also because it has tremendous potential for evangelism and missions. You will learn how to approach social media correctly and how to think strategically about it. Each chapter also includes practical assignments. Do not overlook these assignments. They may seem difficult to you or take longer than you expected. They may make you feel uncomfortable or even rebuked. Whatever it is, do not overlook the assignments, otherwise you will not be able to attain the purpose of this manual. I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you and help you discover the truth of the Word of God, which we will study, and show you how to apply this knowledge in the digital age. Also, please do not stop, do not give up on any subject. Instead, apply everything that you learn and share what you learn with others!

Lesson 1

Christians and Modern Information Technology

Modern information technology has become accessible to people of varying ages worldwide. The Earth's population has reached 7.6 billion people in 2019 and more than 4.2 billion are connected to the Internet, which constitutes more than half of all humanity. Currently, while writing this course, 44% of the world's population is present on social networks. Every third person on the planet identifies as a Christian, and most Christians live in countries where the possibilities for using digital technology are increasing, with many new opportunities on the horizon. First Chronicles 12 describes the reconciliation between King David and some in Israel that did not initially accept him. Among the mighty warriors of the army of Saul, who passed over to King David at Hebron, were the sons of Issachar, about whom is written,

> *"Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their kinsmen were at their command."* (1 Chronicles 12:32)

Write two things that made the sons of Issachar different from all others:

1.
2.

If the sons of Issachar were around today, what would have been their approach regarding technological discoveries in our digital era?

Every time period and era come with new opportunities. The sons of Issachar understood the times and had knowledge of what Israel should do. As children of God, it is important that we understand the times in which we live and the role technologies play, the possibilities they offer, and the dangers they bring to those who do not use them correctly. Simply admitting that the times have changed is not enough. We need to know what is to be done. Read Ephesians 5:15-17 and underline the instructions given by the apostle Paul to the believers:

> 15 *Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,*
> 16 *making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*
> 17 *So then do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

List the instructions (at least four) given by the apostle Paul, and next to each instruction write how it can and should be applied in our digital age? The word translated 'time' in English is the Greek word *kairos* which means occasion, period of time, era, and good opportunity.

1.

2.

3.

4.

As a child, I was passionate about science fiction books, however, none of them mentioned the technology called INTERNET. At the time, no one could even imagine a network connecting the entire population on the globe, offering access to information, access to an instant and interactive communication via text and image. During the Soviet Union period, having home phone service was a dream. Home phone lines were limited, and people had to wait in line for years to get service. Today, phone lines are almost extinct. Families opt for cell service and in many families every family member has a mobile phone with advanced communication options, along with many other features as well. In the Spring of 2019, while I was teaching at Haggai International (haggai-international.org) the course "Biblical and Contemporary Models of Evangelis" to a group of 60 key leaders from 27 developing countries, I was amazed at what I discovered. When asked how many have never seen a dial phone, a quarter of the participants raised their hands.

God teaches us in His Word to be careful how we walk and to make the most of our time. This implies having discernment about the tools that are made available to us through modern information technologies (IT). Let's not stick to obsolete communication methods and tools, while neglecting the new methods, instead, we should make the most of the opportunities offered. Believing that the possibilities of today in IT will not become obsolete and that we will use them in the future is one of the ways we make our days 'evil' and useless. Let us not neglect the current possibilities in IT, because the sons of darkness use these to their advantage and do so as soon as new technologies are launched. It is our responsibility to understand God's will regarding technology and how to use it wisely to fulfill the work of God for the salvation of human souls and the building up of

the Church.

Analyze and evaluate how Christians in your country and your community relate to modern digital technologies:

1. What informational technology exists in your country and how accessible is it?

2. What informational technology do you personally use? What about the Christians you know? How are you using it? For what purposes?

3. How do believers use this technology for spiritual growth and to what extent?

4. Is the Gospel spread by Christians in your country using IT? How? Be specific

5. Are there valuable opportunities offered by modern informational technology that are ignored by Christians? Which ones? Why are they ignored?

6. What would be different if Christians and churches in your area would make full use of all the opportunities offered by modern informational technology?

7. How do you personally use modern informational technology?

   a. in everyday life

   b. in your spiritual growth

   c. for evangelism, discipleship and missions

8. What do Christians in your area need to learn in order to use computers, phones and tablets wisely and efficiently?

9. What about you personally? What do you need to learn to be able to use digital technology for the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel in an effective way?

Anyone wishing to benefit from using a computer should first learn the basic skills of typing (with all your fingers). If typing is a struggle, using your computer or tablet will consume your time and make the work burdensome. For me personally, it was my mentor Costel Oglice who first impressed me with his fast typing. In my mind at the time, typing fast and correctly seemed something difficult to learn. I was typing using the "two-finger tapping" method, however, in my mind I was determined to make a change as soon as I acquired a personal laptop. Shortly after, that day came and I had the joy of taking my first laptop out of the box, and right away I searched and found a simple typing program for the English alphabet which consisted of 30 lessons. It took me 6 hours to go through all of them. Later that day, while I was contemplating replying to the 13 new emails in my inbox, I thought to myself that it would take an entire day to just type 13 emails if I had to do it the way I just learned in that program. Fortunately, I knew that if I went back to the "two-finger tapping" method I'd never learn to type fast enough. So, I persevered and practiced what I learned. The first email took me a long time. The second one was a bit easier, but while typing the third one, I noticed that my speed was increasing and by the end of the day I was in awe of my achievement.

Since I learned to type using a program in English I could not fully use the Romanian alphabet (also Latin based), because in the Romanian alphabet there are 5 extra letters. So, I started looking for a typing program in Romanian, but there wasn't one available... yet! Subsequently, the Lord showed me that a typing program would be an opportunity and gave me the concept for creating such a program that would also be an evangelistic tool for Romanian speakers seeking to learn how to type. I created the content of the lessons and the framework of the program; then I invited a computer programmer to help write the code for it. This is how the first Romanian typing program materialized -

"SCRIPTA". A program based on the text of Holy Scriptures, thus the name. This typing program is based on the Gospel of Mark and has 16 lessons, one lesson for every chapter of the Gospel of Mark. Each lesson covers a number of keys and preparatory exercises. The student reads out loud while learning to type new characters and each lesson covers an entire chapter from the Gospel of Mark. Due to users' request, Scripta was made available in Russian and English as well, and can be installed on Windows, MacOS, and Linux operating systems. To download the latest version of Scripta, go to *http://scripteh.info/scripta-2/* The program is free and can be downloaded and used by anyone.

When a young woman from our church was taking secretarial classes in Chisinau, during her typing class she found out that the school where she was studying at was using the Scripta program for all of the students. Today, many computer science teachers in public schools use the Scripta program to teach children how to type. If you personally need help learning how to type fast, download the Scripta program and complete a lesson per day. After 16 days, you will most likely type at the speed of your handwriting. Subsequently, as you practice, your speed will increase. Personally, I type 4-5 times faster than my handwriting. So, to make sure that you complete the entire Scripta program and not stop half way, schedule a daily practice hour in your calendar for the next 16 days. Persevere and do your lessons daily until the course is finished. Write a post on your Facebook page (or the social network you use) and recommend Scripta to your friends offering them the opportunity to learn fast typing and facilitate their reading of the Gospel of Mark out loud. Perhaps, for some, this will be the first time to read the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

10. What conclusions have you drawn from this analysis of how you and the Christians in your area relate to digital technology?

11. What decisions did you make for yourself, your family, your church, the Bible study group you lead, the ministry team you lead, or perhaps the organization you lead?

My prayer for you and for everyone studying this course is to grasp the possibilities offered by informational technology and learn to use these intentionally and efficiently for personal growth and for the work of God.