

## Tripping Over the Technology Divide

It hit me after the last council meeting. I had tripped over the technological divide. After the meeting, I headed for the car, reached for my keys, and pressed the button on the ignition key that unlocks the door. We are a two-Honda family: the Civic that Julie drives most of the time, and which we drive to church and any place we go together, has this nifty modern convenience. My Prelude, which is getting close to antique-hood, does not.

In the past when Julie and I went anywhere, I would always unlock and open her door. With the new car, I don't really have to. I hit the button on the key fob and unlock her door. I no longer open it for her. She doesn't complain about it, and hasn't really commented on it, but I am sure she has noticed that I no longer do this. I brought it up recently, and she reminded me of the first time I took her home to meet my family...

On a rainy Saturday, the two of us and my mom and dad went out to have lunch and do some shopping. We were leaving the restaurant where we'd had lunch, and were getting ready to get into the car. I unlocked the door for my mom first, and was going to open the door on Julie's side next. My mom, having raised me to do such things, made a point of chastising me as only my mom could, about not opening Julie's door for her. I didn't even bother to defend myself. I would not win. Never did with my mom. There was no point in telling her that Julie told me to get the door for my mom first.

We shared a good laugh remembering that, but it made me even more aware of the fact that, somehow, I have stopped performing that simple common courtesy that my mom and dad raised me to do. A gentleman always held the door for a lady. Non-negotiable. Some women, feeling the need to be independent, don't seem to appreciate the courtesy as much anymore, and I guess that's okay. Julie says she always appreciates it, because she was brought up with the same idea. But lately, somehow it has become inconvenient for me to open the car door for my wife.

Science fiction writer Ray Bradbury is famous for shunning technology. He maintains that modern technology has taken the human element out of our society. He doesn't own a computer or a cell phone, has never driven a car or used an ATM. The central idea of a lot of Bradbury's writing is the conflict between humanity and technology. And if you think about it, modern technological devices weaken our human connections and eliminate the simplest of simple courtesies.

Cell phones have become so common that they ring during church services, concert performances, and even during conversations. People answer those calls. It may be rude but they do it. While I am pretty comfortable with some technologies, like Mr. Bradbury, I don't have a cell phone. I have never sent a text message. I enjoy the quiet of being technologically disconnected.

Like Moses I listen for the voice of the Lord in the quiet. It is in the quiet that I confront God and, more importantly, God confronts me. I can reflect in quiet and rediscover the things God has told me before, be reminded of what I have forgotten. I cannot have a conversation with God while texting or talking. I think people like the distraction. Technology can keep people and God at a distance. The constant music or cell phone interruption filters other thoughts out, and it filters out the voice of God. I read recently

that more pedestrians are being hit by cars because the pedestrian is talking on a cell phone or listening to iPod and not paying attention to traffic. When I used to jog, the great thing about it was I could quiet my mind. I could pay attention to the world around me and what I was thinking. I could listen to myself and God.

I guess technology has its place in our world. Computer literacy is vital in the modern workplace. We can communicate with distant family and friends quickly and easily, and have greater access to vast amounts of information. Medical technology saves lives every day.

But...technology can divide individuals from each other and individuals from God. The distraction causes people to ignore important signals from God and other people.

Unplug every now and then, and listen to the messages God is trying to send you. He doesn't have a cell phone either.

Robert Arndt