



Creative use of digital technology

Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.' I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Colossians 4:15–18 (NIV)

Reflection

The coronavirus pandemic sent cities and communities in strict quarantine and lockdown. This has churches wondering how they could continue with their ministries while being discouraged to organise public gatherings.

Apostle Paul is no stranger to such a situation. By being imprisoned, he had his share of experiencing a literal lockdown. But he did not let lack of mobility hamper his work of strengthening churches. Instead, he maximised the use of available technology during his time (cf., 2 Timothy 4:13). He sent out 'epistles' (handwritten letters) and had congregations read them in public. Though he could not be with them in person, he was able to keep in touch with the rest of the Christian community. As his letters got circulated from one church to the other, he also helped churches to be connected with each other. This is what we read in Colossians 4:16, where he reminds the believers at Colossae to swap letters with the church at Laodicea.



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Bible scholars say that Paul's use of personal letters for religious instruction and inspiration is a distinctively Christian

innovation. What could be a crisis – getting locked-out from doing ministry – turned out to be an opportunity for him to be creative. Let this be an encouragement for churches during this time of the coronavirus pandemic. Today's digital technology presents a variety of options for churches to explore fresh ways of doing ministry. Options range from finding the best way to facilitate online gatherings to harnessing the power of social media in mobilising support and resources for those who need it most. At this time, that means especially those most vulnerable to the virus.



Furthermore, in times of city-wide lockdowns, people will be heavily reliant on information that circulates in social networks. Unfortunately, fake news and other forms of disinformation that create panic, escalate fear, and fuel hatred can grow rapidly. Those who believe that 'truth sets people free' should find themselves at the forefront of countering these with a dose of truthful and reliable information laden with 'faith, hope, and love.'

Reflection questions

1. If you will read Colossians 4, starting with verse 7, all the way to verse 18, how do you imagine the emotions that well-up in Apostle Paul?
2. How do you feel about the way churches have been using digital technology as a means of being together and also a way of reaching out to the wider community?
3. What fresh ways of doing ministry, in times of pandemics such as the coronavirus, can the church explore through digital technology?

Prayer

Lord, in this time that we are kept apart by a deadly virus, may the love of Christ be the driving force in our pursuit of how technology can better connect us to each other. Amen.

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