

Communication Chasm ... let's build a bridge

Let me start by saying that since the first teenagers graced the planet there was a difference of opinion on how to do things -vs- their parents ... Over the millennia, this has become the "generation gap" that speaks of grandparents telling kids that they shouldn't complain about school because when THEY were kids, it was up hill 5 miles each way to get to school, that is when their parents didn't need them on the farm! As a society, we improve ... it's something that's been going on since the beginning and will keep going on long after I've shed this mortal coil, but, usually it's "baby steps." My generation did things a bit differently than my parents thanks to the cost of long distance and airline tickets coming down in price, and, later on, cable TV to keep us from spending every spare dime on the movies the same way as my parents' generation was different than their parents because of the radio and TV's making their way into households, but, in the end, we would all still TALK to one another ... our closest friends typically lived within walking distance of each other, and, when someone moved away, we would promise to keep in touch, but, really, we knew that was the end of that close personal bond. This brings me to this article

I feel that thanks to the omnipresent internet, smart devices, instant communication, and social media, the world of communication is changing at a faster rate than ever before. The way people in their 30's communicate is completely different than the way people in their 40's were taught to communicate, and, people in their 20's and younger have never known a world where they can't whip out a smart device and have any trivial question answered by simply asking the question. They're growing up in a world where around the block and around the planet are, literally, the same thing to them (the next time you're at a lunch or dinner and see a group of teenagers, watch, they'll spend more time with their face in their phones than they will spend making eye contact!) What is considered "rude" to folks over 40 is, simply, the new way to communicate.

I'm writing this in hopes of finding a "middle ground" ... I speak with many folks at church, in my neighborhood, and around town that talk about the kids "always in their phones" and comment on how the art of writing and communication are falling by the wayside these days, and, to be truthful, for years, I would agree, but, no longer. I feel that the "older" forms of face to face communication and writing, and folks holding on to them, are what's truly the issue. At my job, I have NEVER met the last 2 bosses I've had face to face, most of my team is spread out around the world and I've never "laid eyes" on them. My entire job is done in a virtual manner, but, I would argue that I'm just as close, if not closer, with my bosses than many folks are with their bosses that they see every day, I'm just as close to my co-workers as folks that work side by side with their co-workers every day. We speak on the phone daily, we've video chatted, we know about each other's families, our hopes, our dreams, and, yes, my friends that are half way around the world mean no less to me than my friends that are down the street. Some may argue that, because I work for a technology company, I'm the exception, but, am I ??? Most of my son's friends he's met on the internet, the online role playing games provides just as much as a platform for friendship as the old sandlot did for me in "my time." As more and more jobs and roles focus on what you know instead of your location, I feel that the way of the future IS virtual, at least as much as it is physical, if not moreso!

Having said all of that, I'm NOT saying that we need to give up on face to face communication, the art of writing full sentences, and building physical relationships, but, what I AM saying is that we need to recognize that the virtual communication is just as real as the physical communication. A text can be

just as meaningful as a handshake, a Facebook friend just as close as a youth group friend. What does this mean for “our” generation ??? What does this mean for our workplaces, our neighborhoods, our churches, and our communities ??? I don’t have the answers, but, one thing I’m pretty sure of, if “we” don’t start, as the older generations, recognizing and embracing the future, I’m afraid the chasm will continue to grow. I’ll close with an example that had happened in my short lifetime My grandparents couldn’t believe how “lazy” we had gotten as a society because we were so quick to pick up the phone instead of writing a letter They informed me that this was “the beginning of the end” of proper communication We now live in a world where we’re able to communicate with someone around the planet just as easily as we communicate with someone next door ... I don’t look at that as the end of communication, just the end of one form of it ... while being the beginning of a very brave new world in which I’m excited to venture into!

Please take these rantings for what you will ...

In Christ,

Cecil Rice

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