

Look Beyond the Screen For A Better User Experience

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I own a smart phone. I watch movies. I use my computer almost every day. I do not think I am living in the dark ages. I am not anti-technology. But I must admit that the world has changed so fast in the last 15 years that I wonder if at age 48, I can realistically keep up. But the real question is whether or not I even want to. More often of late, I find myself wanting to use technology less and less.

I have on my smart phone a picture I took this past weekend at a wedding reception. It is a picture of a rolling pasture with cows gently grazing surrounded by lush trees. The picture reminds me of that moment. I am glad I had my cellphone with me to take the picture. But in that picture are two girls facing away from me. They are enjoying the same view that I have. After taking the picture, I sat for a few moments and watched those girls simply enjoying the view. Then I took another look at my picture. Something was lost. What those girls were enjoying far exceeded what the picture could give. Do you know why? They were experiencing the real thing.

Two nights ago, I sat with my wife and two daughters on our screened porch. We had dinner there, and then we sat and talked for a good while. We felt the cool breeze and watched the leaves on the trees blowing softly. The sun went down and we lit some candles. The entire evening was fabulous, a step back in time to a simpler age. I hope I do not forget the wonderful feeling of the serenity of that evening and make sure to not wait too long to do it again.

This morning, I was at the church. A family stopped by because the mom had some business to attend to. While she was doing that, her kids came into my office. They had swim noodles in their hands. After mom's business was finished, they were going to a pool. I called them to come and give me a hug. They obliged me. Then we proceeded to play with the noodles. We spoke through the hole in the middle, making our whispers sound loud in each other's ears. We laughed and giggled and just had fun for five minutes. Then a third sibling came into the room. He was intent on pulling books from my shelves. I just watched him. He finally found one he thought would be interesting and sat on my lap to read. This lasted all of 30 seconds before he realized that he had chosen the wrong book. During this time, my own daughter came in and brought me lunch and gave me a hug and a kiss. As I type this out to you, guess what I am doing? I am smiling. Because what I experienced was a moment of life. The smells, the sights, the sounds of life. It was precious, far more precious than any five minutes I have ever spent watching a video on the web.

I love the game of basketball. I have played it all my life. Even though you might think that with more experience, I would keep getting better, but the reality is that age

is taking its toll. My game is getting weaker. My lay-ups are not as pretty. I can no longer jump and grab the rim. I am slower. Let's just say that no one really wants to watch me play the game. But playing the game is still sweet. I still enjoy rising up for the jump shot and watching the ball go through the net. I love the challenge of playing my opponent, even if it ends in my defeat. There is something about playing that will always surpass watching, even if the watching is the NBA Finals. Yes, I am watching the NBA Finals. I grew up near Cleveland, and so I am a Cavs fan. But living life is so much better than watching life.

I have been married to my lovely wife, Robin, going on 28 years. We have done some exciting things in those years. We have visited foreign countries, climbed mountains, canoed streams, raised kids and worshipped regularly in church, among other things. As we get older, the types of activities we do have changed somewhat. But what has not changed is that we love to do them with each other. Whether it is taking a walk with our Great Pyrenees on the Greenway or playing a game of rummy or sitting on the back porch talking, I love to do life with her. I love to feel the softness of her hand in mine or listen to the sweetness of her voice. It is in these moments — these actual experiences — that I find myself experiencing joy.

So, as much as I appreciate my iPhone 8 (I know that already dates me), my goal is to use it less, so that I can live life more.