

Is IT the Answer?

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During spring break, my wife and I took our little daughter on a mini-vacation to Sudbury, Ontario. We needed to get out of town and we wanted to check out the teacher supply store there since Sault Ste. Marie, where we live, doesn't have one. Also, we wanted to sample Science North in anticipation of a future trip.

If you've been to a science center, you'll sympathize with me; so much to do and so little time. The hands-on science was great and we thoroughly enjoyed it but there were a couple of things that made a big impression on me. First, I noticed that even with all the latest gizmos and gadgets, it was difficult to grab and hold the children's attention. They were bouncing around from display to display, staying just long enough to be entertained, and then zooming off to the next attraction. I asked myself, "Are they really learning?" Secondly, I noticed the complete deletion of God from His creation. Am I strange for noticing these things?

It's not that I don't like gizmos and gadgets. As a generation Xer, I grew up seeing newer, better, and smaller technology coming to the market place every year. Today it seems that the latest technology comes out every month and it is simply impossible to keep up. Also, I grew up seeing technology as a tool to make my work easier. Today's kids seem to see technology more as a toy that should entertain them.

The media explosion in the 90's started a new era and most children today fill their time with video games, texting, internet, iPods, and hundreds of new TV channels. Parents even allow their children to have TVs and computers in their bedrooms. I've had children come to school so impaired from lack of sleep that they can't function during class. There is no shortage of entertainment and in many cases it works against the whole education of the child.

Last year during a Bible class, we did a class activity in which the children named their five most watched TV shows. Then the children rated each program as Christian if it portrayed Christian values or non-Christian if it portrayed non-Christian values. I then placed the non-Christian shows into a bucket labeled "Garbage" and the Christian shows into a bucket labeled "Food". The "Garbage" bucket was completely full. The "Food" bucket had one show, "American Idol", because "sometimes contestants sing Christian songs."

So you are asking yourself, what is his point? Well, I would like to sound a warning about the amount of technology we push on our children. We've now convinced ourselves that we need more technology integrated into our classrooms. Both educators and parents promote technology in the classroom to reach the "digital natives". But, have we taken the time to really study the benefits versus the risks of using all these electronic devices around our children? What are the physical, mental, spiritual, and intellectual risks?

Recently I read an article in *Popular Science* (March 2010) that portrays the possible physical dangers of EMFs (Electromagnetic Fields). The article highlights Per Segerbach, a Swedish electronics engineer, who is now so sensitive to EMFs that he becomes unconscious within seconds

if exposed to the radiation generated by a cell phone. He must now live in a special home built in a wilderness area. He is not the only one who has developed this sensitivity.

So there may be physical dangers but have we researched whether there are mental, intellectual, or spiritual dangers? Should we as Adventists be more cautious about accepting technology into classrooms and our homes until the long-term effects are known? How might our thirst for technology affect our development as citizens for God's Kingdom?

No matter how fun these new toys are, I have a "weird" wish. I'm praying that there are no computers or electronics in Heaven. I want to unplug for a thousand years. When I made this comment during a Bible discussion, one child said, "I think I would die." Without being too dramatic, wouldn't it be a good idea to teach our children to unplug here on Earth too, so that there are fewer distractions from learning about their Creator and Saviour, Jesus Christ?

Then let us labor most earnestly to impress and urge upon our children the necessity of understanding the reasons of our faith. We are surrounded with temptations so disguised that they allure while they taint and corrupt the soul. Satan varies his enticements to suit different minds; and he takes advantage of every circumstance to make his plans for a soul's destruction successful. {RH, November 9, 1886 par. 14}