A "SMART" CHURCH
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Today we have SMART devices. The acronym SMART means Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology. It monitors hard drives and alerts us when there are problems and processes underway. It even tells us how to use the technology. Smart devices, like cell phones, TV's, cameras, and computers, connect to the internet and GPS. We can quickly access information, share it with others, and store it for future use. SMART devices also link with other digital tools through wireless protocols such as Bluetooth, so--like magic--I can use my Bose speaker with my telephone anywhere I want! Even more amazing is that SMART devices can be updated and repaired, if the hard drive is not terminally damaged or out of date.

Suppose, however, we think of SMART technology as a metaphor and apply it to the evangelical church. That church would be highly interconnected and supremely intelligent. It would possess multi-capacity hardware and endless, application potentials. So, let us engage in a little thought experiment and imagine what this might mean.

The SMART church's self-monitoring analysis and reporting capacity would scrutinize the thought and practice of the church, and warn us quickly of any crisis or inappropriate application. The church would address malpractice and moral failure, such as abuse of power, sexual misconduct, unwise political collaboration, or lack of financial transparency. It would also discern and address fatal doctrinal errors and syncretism with local cultures and worldviews ("viruses").

The SMART church with its religious context, and the community. It would creeds, theological key moments in would link to the world and learn would deeply cultural setting in

would connect history, its social global Christian know its past: the development, and church history. It believers all over from them. It understand the which it resides.

The SMART church would be a place for thinkers. Believers would love God in all dimensions: their heart, their hand, and especially their mind (Mark 12:30). Businessmen, artists, academics, writers, technicians, and scientists would grow in knowledge and wisdom. They would connect their faith and profession. They would discern how to be "in" the world but not "of" it. Preachers and leaders would be trained in the Scriptures, theology, culture, and worldview. Sermons would be well-prepared and intellectually stimulating for believers and non-believers. The music and lyrics would be thoughtful, other-focused, and multi-cultural. The liturgy would include scripture reading, confession of sin, communion, testimony, and citation of creeds.

The SMART church would function as a learning center whose members possess intellectual curiosity. SMART believers would be readers because of their hunger to learn about God and his world. They would study the Bible and the basic tenants of theology, such as atonement, modes of revelation, sanctification, and the sacraments. They would understand human depravity and divine grace. They would view their cultures critically and engage idolatry, even

while they enjoy society's blessings. They would design many creative applications for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind.

The SMART church would provide insightful contributions for the common good and public square. SMART Christians would attain positions of influence in society in business, the arts, sciences, politics, law, education, and the media. They would express and model the intellectual plausibility and existential credibility of the Christian faith.

But now, let us return to ecclesiological reality. Sadly, many evangelical churches today are not SMART. They are not often historically, globally, or even contextually interconnected. They are turned inward and tuned out. They are gullible and easily swayed by public opinion and erroneous schemes. They are viewers not readers. They are largely irrelevant.

Metaphorically, many churches prefer the old, rotary phone. Their technology cannot connect with the world today. They are basically self-preservative, continually focused on maintaining outdated infrastructure.

And, sadly, we know what happens with old technology. It goes to the museum or worse—it is thrown into the trash.