

Connected Tablets



By Russ McGuire - russ.mcguire@gmail.com

Last month I talked about software for the iPad, including a quick review of Bible software I had tried. Some of the software worked great, as long as I had WiFi connectivity, which I indicated wasn't always a simple thing.

WiFi Isn't Ubiquitous, Is It?

When I bought my iPad, I opted for the WiFi model instead of the 3G model. It was \$130 cheaper and didn't require me to pay another \$25 per month just to connect my iPad.

Much of the time, this isn't a problem.

When I'm home, I easily connect to my home WiFi. I meet for Bible studies in coffee shops that also have free WiFi, so no problem there. But, our IT department at work doesn't make it easy to use the company's WiFi to connect an iPad, and since our church meets in a rented facility, there's no WiFi available at a key time for using Bible software. So, WiFi network connectivity can be a challenge at times.

However, a couple of months ago I upgraded my phone to the Samsung Epic from Sprint. Among many other features, this device (calling it a phone is a major understatement) has 4G connectivity and a personal hotspot feature.

The 4G service has proven to be pretty good. In my house, it's not quite as fast as my cable modem service, but still faster than what I used to get with DSL. I really notice the difference compared to 3G when browsing the web and downloading applications from the Android Mar-

ket. Around town, most places I go seem to have decent 4G performance.

When I travel, 4G service is a bit spottier. Sprint has launched 4G in 71 markets covering about a third of the U.S. population, but it's certainly not available everywhere. But even when 4G isn't available, my Epic falls back to 3G connectivity, which is better than nothing.

But what does that have to do with my iPad?

That's where the hotspot feature comes in. For an extra \$30 a month, I can turn my Epic into my own personal WiFi hotspot. That means everywhere I go I can not only connect my iPad, but up to another four WiFi devices – such as my laptop and my camera with an EyeFi card (and my son's netbook and my wife's laptop when we're traveling together). Especially for my iPad, this is an awesome feature. Since I always have my phone with me—that means my iPad is always connected.

Integrated Connectivity

For Christmas, I got a new gadget – the Samsung Galaxy S Tab. The model I received runs on Sprint's 3G network. Unlike the iPad, a 3G Galaxy Tab actually costs less than a WiFi-only model because the wireless carrier subsidizes the price in exchange for signing a 2-year con-

tract.

The device costs \$299 and then \$29.99 per month for data service. Since it's not a 4G device, I find that I use the Galaxy Tab in WiFi mode when I'm at home for faster performance, but 3G mode at work and when I'm on the go.

I'll talk more about Bible software on the Tab in next month's column, but the device has replaced my paper notebook at work. The Galaxy Tab is smaller and lighter than the iPad, so it is much more convenient to carry around. The smaller size also makes it easier to thumb type, especially when holding it in portrait mode. Better than thumb typing, the Tab comes with "Swype" – a unique way to input text. You simply drag your finger across the keyboard, for example, sliding my finger from "i" to "i" to "s" to "e" to "n" would spell the word "risen" in one smooth motion.

The Tab easily synchronizes with my Exchange e-mail, contacts, and calendar. As an Android device, it also synchronizes well with Google services including Gmail and Google Calendar, as well as other on-line services. Android also supports Flash, so the browsing experience is even better than that on the iPad.

Unlike the iPad, the Tab also includes not just one camera – but two – one on the back of the device and the other on the front for video conferencing. The Qik video conferencing application is pre-loaded which seems to work pretty well.

The Tab also comes with ThinkFree Office, a Microsoft Office compatible productivity suite including word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation modules. I've used it to view files sent to me in e-mail and to create word processing files for note taking while on the go. I haven't yet had the opportunity to do any heavy duty work using the package.

The Android Marketplace doesn't quite have as many applications as the Apple App Store, but it still provides plenty of variety. Most of the popular iPhone/iPad apps are also available for Android. In addition to Bible software and a few games, the other application I've downloaded that I really enjoy using is the Kindle app.

Amazon has done it right, synchronizing the book I'm reading across all of my devices. I can read the first 10 pages on my dedicated Kindle. When I switch to the iPad and open the same book in the Kindle app, it takes me right to page 11, and then when I switch to the Galaxy

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S Tab, my progress on the iPad is also recorded, making it easy to pick up where I left off, so I can have my library with me on the go, no matter which device I'm carrying.

It's "on the go" where the Galaxy S Tab really shines. I can easily get through a full day on one battery charge and I take it to all my meetings. I haven't had any problems with network connectivity anywhere I've taken the Tab, so I don't even have to think about it, I can just assume I have an Internet connection. I purchased a cover that makes the Tab look like a small "padfolio" notebook, so it easy travels with me and it doesn't stand out as a high tech gadget – at least not until I open it up and start using it. And having it with me all the time means that I have easy access to all my notes, my calendar, my e-mail, my reading material, and my Bible.

Next month I'll provide an overview of Bible software I use on the Galaxy S Tab.

Russ McGuire is an executive for a Fortune 100 company and the founder/co-founder of three technology start-ups. His latest entrepreneurial venture is Hschooler.net (<http://hschooler.net>), a social network for Christian families (especially homeschoolers) which is being built and run by four homeschooled students under Russ' direction.