



## Map Apps

By Russ McGuire - [russ.mcguire@gmail.com](mailto:russ.mcguire@gmail.com)

**T**he new iPhone came out last month. One of the striking changes was that Google Maps had been replaced by Apple's own Map app. Strategically, this isn't too surprising. Ever since Google launched its Android platform to compete with the iPhone, relations between the two companies have cooled dramatically. It appears that Google was pushing to make their app have more hooks in it to drive revenue to Google, while Apple was pushing for feature parity between the iPhone version of Google Maps and the Android version. Apparently they couldn't reach an agreement, so Apple decided not to include Google Maps in the new version of iOS, the operating system that runs on Apple's mobile products.

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That decision, by itself, shouldn't be a big deal. The problems stem from each company's readiness to implement the decision. Apple had been working on their Map app, but based on the problems users have encountered with the program, the company seems to have rushed it to market before it was at a quality level that Apple's customers have come to expect. Meanwhile, Google hadn't prepared a standalone Google Maps app to

distribute through the Apple App Store; iPhone users unhappy with the iOS Maps app couldn't simply download Google Maps to replace it.

### What is a Map App?

I've been fascinated by maps my whole life. I had a map of the world hanging on the wall by my bed as a child and I would stare at distant countries as I drifted off to sleep. I

don't think I'm alone. When our son was small, he would sit in his car booster seat flipping through the map book making up "save the universe" stories. Maps give us a sense of how we physically fit into the world. They help explain why history has unfolded the way it has (wars, exploration, colonization, missions and evangelism...). As a Christian, maps feed my wonder of God's creation and His sovereignty over all of history.

Maps also play an important role in helping us get from point A to point B. Someone can tell us turn-by-turn directions, but seeing it on a map makes those directions infinitely easier to comprehend and follow. Perhaps more importantly, if for some reason the directions fail to get us to the destination, a map allows us to figure out where we are, where we need to go, and how to get there. When I was in college, I spent a summer working in Finland and "competed" (not very well) in Orienteering. It was unfortunately common that I'd end up asking a passing motorist to show me on my map where I currently was.

Technology advanced the science of navigation with the creation of the Global Positioning System, with the first GPS satellites launched in the late 1970s. In 1983, the system was opened for non-military use and companies like Garmin, Tom-Tom, and Magellan began making products for aviation, sporting, and automobile use in the 1990s. By the end of that decade, the cost of a low-end personal navigation device had dropped to a couple thousand dollars. Although these devices amazingly combined the strength of a dynamically updated digital map with turn-by-turn directions that could recalculate if you missed a turn, the price put them out of reach of most consumers. The electronics

required to hold the maps, receive the GPS signal, calculate the route, and present it to the user cost too much for most of us.

All of that changed late in 1999 when the FCC approved the installation of GPS chips into mobile phones to help locate callers for response to emergency 911 calls. A company called TeleNav was formed and launched their first mapping app for a mobile phone in 2000. By leveraging the electronics already in the phone, the company was able to offer their product for \$10 per month, dramatically broadening the market. Today, of course, Google and others offer full mapping and navigation mobile apps for free.

### **How do Map Apps benefit Christian ministries?**

Our churches are active communities, meeting in different places for different activities. Our members have to find their way to these new locations. If they don't have confidence they can find a meeting place, they may decide not to come. If they try to come and

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get lost, it may disrupt our ministry activity, or may even put our members in danger. Earlier this year, the percent of Americans with a smartphone passed the 50% mark, so now most of our members have at least one Map App at their fingertips, helping our ministries to operate more smoothly, with greater participation, and with greater confidence to try new things in new places.

### **Do Map Apps represent danger to our churches?**

I think the greatest danger represented by Map Apps is one of overconfidence. I recently bought a new car with built in navigation. I was driving my son to a meeting on the University of Kansas campus. Unfortunately, my car navigation took us to the wrong side of campus. In this case, our mobile Map App bailed us out, but we were delayed and flustered. Map Apps will suffer the same fate, and this has been one of the complaints with Apple's new product.

There are plenty of news reports about accidents caused by bad GPS directions. A quick search uncovered stories of head-on collisions, people directed onto railway lines and walking trails (I've experienced that one), cars sunk in lakes and rivers, and cars being directed off of cliffs in Utah. Thankfully, I did not uncover any stories of people killed by blindly following their Map App's directions.

Bottom line, we must be diligent to trust our God-given senses and wisdom and not blindly follow man-made technology.

But, I think there's one more lesson to learn from Apple and Google. Each company was over-confident in their own ability to bring about their desired outcome and now both companies are suffering.

Two passages come to mind:

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV)

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what

is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." (Romans 12:16-18, ESV)

It is my hope and prayer that these articles on the power and danger of technology will encourage you in your daily walk with Christ. Whether it is the printing press, radio, television, personal computers, the Internet, mobility, Wi-Fi, or map apps, new technologies continue to advance our ability to know God and to serve Him, wherever we go.

*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 seven young men under Russ' direction.*



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