

Series Name: The Power and the Danger

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Early in 2012, Google introduced a revolutionary concept, connected eyeglasses providing an augmented reality view of the world. Called Google Glass, at first it appeared to be like many of Google's "April Fools" jokes – so cool, but it couldn't possibly be real.

Last month, Google made many geek's hearts leap when they announced the Glass Explorer Program – a way for any of us to get our hands on an actual working version of the gear. Of course, it's not free or easy. Google ran a contest for ideas on how folks would use the cool technology. Google says they were overwhelmed with entries. Winners would still need to pay \$1,500 and travel either to New York, Los Angeles, or San Francisco to pick them up.

Google has posted some amazing videos to give a sense for how life could change with this new technology, but how should we, as church technology leaders view this "revolution."

What is Google Glass?

Google Glass is a product by Google currently under development. The product is a form of wearable computing. Specifically, it looks like a pair of eyeglasses, but the right lens actually is a transparent display screen for information presented by a tiny computer embedded in the earpiece. It also has a front-facing camera that effectively captures what you see. The device takes verbal commands and also provides audio output, like a Bluetooth earpiece. It connects to your smartphone to connect to the Internet and to place and receive audio and video calls.

However, Google is much more of a software company than a hardware company, so the real power of Google Glass comes in how the hardware is used to fundamentally change how we interact with the world around us.

Google Glass can capture everything you see, say, and hear and can share that over the network. Google Glass can interpret those inputs and take action appropriately. At its simplest, the product can respond to your verbal commands to take a picture, record a video, place a video or audio call, search for information, or provide directions. Think of it as Apple's Siri, but with real world connections.

Obviously, Google Glass can also present information to you in a head's-up display with audio. You can see and hear the friends you're video calling with, or the results of your search, or the turn by turn directions to your destination.

But, Google Glass can also interpret what you're looking at or hearing and overlay augmented reality information. Theoretically, Google Glass could recognize a painting you're looking at and provide information about the artist and the work. It could recognize music that is playing and tell you about the composer, the musicians, the album, and even how to purchase a copy. It could recognize a product

you hold in your hands in a store and provide ratings, reviews, and pricing information from competing sellers.

I'm one of those people who has encountered lots of folks throughout my career, but struggle to remember names. Theoretically, Google Glass could identify the person I'm looking at and present information from their LinkedIn profile or perhaps my e-mail history to help remind me of how I'm connected with that person.

How could Google Glass serve the church?

The potential applications for Google Glass in ministry are almost limitless. A pastor could see his sermon outline as he engages with the congregation. Each of us could see scripture as soon as we hear the reference. Hymn music and lyrics could appear before our eyes as we lift our hands in praise.

As we serve immigrants in our communities, Google Glass could provide real time translation. As we engage with our ministries, we can easily capture photos and videos, and even share them real time with those that are sick or otherwise unable to be with us so that they can feel as if they are there serving alongside us. Group studies and prayer time no longer require us to be together in one place.

For missionaries, Google Glass can put critical information right in front of them when they need it. Navigation, translation, emergency first aid instructions, Bible references in the local language – you name it, Google Glass could provide it. Supporters back home no longer would be limited to monthly newsletters, quarterly Skype calls, and occasional missions conference slide shows. They would truly experience the mission field through the eyes and ears of the missionaries as they serve the physical and spiritual needs of those God has placed in their care.

What is dangerous about Google Glass?

The power of Google Glass also points to the dangers of the technology.

At its most innocuous, Google can present whatever information it chooses in front of our eyes. Jonathan McIntosh created a humorous example of "[ADmented Reality](#)" via Google Glass on YouTube (click the link or search on YouTube). Google makes its money from advertising, and I'm sure the company will find some way to integrate advertising into the Google Glass experience. As demonstrated by this product spoof, Google has the opportunity to present ads based on what you're seeing, what you're doing, and who you're communicating with. At a much simpler level, Google already does that via web ads and ads in Google Mail.

If you're already concerned about privacy and the fact that companies like Google track what we do on the web and even where we take our Android cellphones, Google Glass should probably set off major alarms.

Finally, consider the missionaries serving in lands hostile to the gospel. Google Glass would enable every person visited, every meeting attended, every word spoken to be captured and potentially shared with the authorities.

Google is famous for their motto of “Do No Evil.” Do you trust their definition of good and evil?

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 Java, the printing press, radio, television, personal computers, the Internet, the Cloud, mobility, or augmented reality, 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 which is being built and run by four homeschooled students under Russ' direction.