

Feature Sheet-Moody Radio Commentary

Date: 10.18.2010 **Day:** Monday **Air Time:** 6:08 am

Feature Title: Dr. Mark Eckel – Distraction

Bio: Dr. Mark Eckel is Dean of the Undergraduate School and Professor of Old Testament at Crossroads Bible College in Indianapolis, IN.

Sitting at lunch in a restaurant, I spied a young man handling *five* types of media at once. He was working on his Mac, an ipod stuck in one ear, with the other he engaged a conversation on his cell phone, interrupting himself to text on the same device, writing on a pad, and glancing at a book. Wait, that's *five* types of media, *six* types of communication. I was tired just watching him.

Professor Mark Edmundson tells a similar story in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He is concerned that his college students are distracted by technology. One day Edmundson took a poll. He asked his students, "How many places were you at the same time yesterday?" Between cells, texts, Macs, iPods, books, and an occasional glance at the teacher, some surpassed the level of ten. Edmundson concludes, [Quote] "Be everywhere now—that's what the current technology invites, and that's what my students aspire to do."¹ [End Quote]

In her article "The Myth of Multitasking" Christine Rosen addresses this wanting-to-be-in-ten-places-at-once syndrome. Rosen writes, [Quote] "For the younger generation of multitaskers, the great electronic din is an expected part of everyday life. This state of constant intentional self-distraction could be of profound detriment to individual and cultural well-being. The younger generation's culture may gain in information, but it will surely weaken in wisdom."² [End Quote]

There is evidence that our need for information provides an addictive "dopamine squirt." Once addicted to immediate brain stimulation the result

¹ chronicle.com/free/v54/i27/27b00701.htm

² Christine Rosen, "The Myth of Multitasking," *The New Atlantis*, Number 20, Spring 2008, pp. 105-110.

is not more productivity but less. Our person becomes fragmented, easily disengaged from real life situations. Technology is literally rewiring our brains. Matt Richtel in *The New York Times* relays the story of Kord Campbell. [Quote] “Even after he unplugs, he craves the stimulation he gets from his electronic gadgets. He forgets things like dinner plans, and he has trouble focusing on his family.”³ [End Quote] Clifford Nass of Stanford University says that for people like Mr. Campbell, multitasking is catnip. The slightest information distraction tears at the fabric of his relationships.

Professor Edmundson had another discussion with a class. He discovered that when students went to parties about a fourth of them had cellphones locked to their ears. Edmundson asks, [Quote] “What are they doing? Students, They’re talking to their friends. Edmundson, About what? Students, About another party they might go to.” [End Quote] Many complain that technology is changing us. But I suspect the opposite is true. We don’t want to be bound by a need for wisdom or the responsibilities of relationship. I think we are changing technology so we don’t have to change. For Moody Radio, this is Dr. Mark Eckel, personally seeking truth wherever it’s found.

³ Matt Richtel. “Hooked on Gadgets, Paying a Mental Price.” www.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/technology/07brain.html