



High-Tech Holiness

by Thomas S. Heard

Imagine being able to listen to favorite worship songs, favorite chapters of the Bible, favorite sections of devotional books, favorite prayer books, and favorite sections of inspirational books in one easy resource. Imagine having all of these favorites arranged in an order that guides your daily devotion. Imagine that your favorites could be arranged in any order, keeping them fresh, meaningful, and spontaneous, yet still focus on the heart of what you've come to love and live. Now, imagine having all of these possibilities at the touch of a button. The Apple iPod makes these imaginings a reality.

Introduced in 2001, iPods are now in their 5th generation. iPods interface with your computer through free software, iTunes, a user-friendly program that organizes audio files by title, artist, album, and other categories. I own a 4th generation iPod, which plays music and audiobooks and displays photos. Though I have not yet felt the need to upgrade to the 5th generation iPod, I have transformed and upgraded my use of it to include devotions, sermons, prayers, and even the Bible itself.

Many churches have websites on which they make their recorded sermons available online for downloading and listening on your personal computer. Some of these churches and other Christian organizations offer "podcasts," a term for a broadcast adapted for use on an iPod. A podcast is a subscription, almost always free, of sermons or talks that are delivered to your personal computer daily or weekly, that can then be easily added to your iPod for you to explore at your convenience. Manually transferring these resources to your iPod usually requires just one click of the mouse to download them to your computer and



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then another click to transfer them to your iPod. I subscribe to R.C. Sproul's free weekly podcast, *Renewing Your Mind*, and Alistair Begg's free daily podcast, *Truth for Life*. While I love listening to Alistair on the radio during his morning broadcast, my work schedule doesn't allow me to listen at that particular time of day. Instead, I download his sermon and listen to it as I walk to work each morning.

iPods and iTunes also store and play audiobooks. An audiobook is a book which has been read, usually by a trained speaker, into an audio file for use on an iPod. The Bible, for example, is an indispensable audiobook for Christians to have. My iPod has the complete NIV Bible read by Max McLean, but you can easily use the iTunes software to place only selected books or chapters of the Bible on your iPod if you so desire. This makes the listening manageable and digestible. I can pause when I want to meditate on a particular verse or replay passages that are tougher to digest or more thought-provoking.

In addition to the audio NIV Bible, my iPod has Christian audiobooks that deepen my study and fellowship with the Lord. A few books available in audio format that are on my iPod include Thomas a Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*; Lesslie Newbigin's *Foolishness to the Greeks*; Francis Schaeffer's *He is There and He is Not Silent* and *True Spirituality*; John Stott's *The Christian Mission in the Modern World*; and, of course, unabridged readings of C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, *The Problem of Pain*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and *Mere Christianity*.

Using the high-tech iPod and iTunes software for prayer might seem a bit odd at first, but incorporating these resources into your spiritual life can be very helpful. For example, Max McLean's powerful reading of *The Valley of Vision*, a collection of Puritan prayers, made it easy for me to set up a prayer schedule and provided prayer topics.

Those who pray the Psalter might find *The Psalms of David* sung by the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral in London to their liking; those who love even-song and the other beautiful service expressions of the Psalms will surely enjoy adding these audio prayers to their daily supplication and devotion. Christians familiar with the Daily Office from the *Book of Common Prayer* will find organizing a prayer and Bible reading schedule with an iPod simple and useful.

Where can you find good Christian material for the iPod? To get started in podcasts you may want to explore the following as a starting point from iTunes:

"Renewing Your Mind" with R.C. Sproul
 "Desiring God" with John Piper
 "Truth for Life" with Alistair Begg

If you are interested in "Christianity and Culture" or Christian Apologetics, you might want to try from iTunes:

"BreakPoint" with Chuck Colson
 "The Veritas Forum" with various invited speakers
 "Stand to Reason" with Greg Koukl

A visit to The Veritas Forum's website (www.veritas.org) will reveal more downloadable material ready for your iTunes and iPod. In fact, those wanting more material for apologetics may also want to look into Be Thinking (www.bethinking.org) for a rich source of material dealing with areas of the Christian faith being challenged by our current postmodern culture. For those wanting to go even deeper, full and complete seminary

courses are available at Biblical Training (www.biblicaltraining.org) for free downloading.

A good starting site for Christian audible books is Christian Audio (www.christianaudio.com), where you may purchase books in audio CD format and easily transfer them to your iPod, again using iTunes. Christian Audio is rich in variety and, if you register at their site, you'll receive one free audiobook a month. For January 2007, the free audiobook was *Absolute Surrender (unabridged)* by Andrew Murray. Christian Audio is a first stop for me when I'm looking for new audiobooks. The C.S. Lewis Institute plans to place a list of relevant podcast sites and notable audible book material on the Institute's website. New, relevant, and biblically sound podcasts, discovered and vetted by the CSLI Fellows, will also be made available at the Institute's site, which may expand the list of material to enrich your walk with Christ.

Thomas S. Heard is a patent examiner at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. He holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in chemistry and a doctorate in biochemistry. After completing two postdoctoral fellowships at Merck, Inc., and the National Institutes of Health, he settled into a career in intellectual property in the Northern Virginia area. He is active in the C.S. Lewis Institute Fellows Program and has a passionate interest in Christian apologetics and theology. Tom is a member of The Falls Church in Falls Church, Virginia.

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