

GAP 21: DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

Driving Question for Collaborative Design

How might Christians in the church, parachurch, and workplace collaborate to reach and disciple people in digital communities who are simultaneously connected online but physically apart?

Description

In our digital age, significant portions of the global population have moved their primary source of community online. This has had widespread and important effects on identity formation, knowledge validation, mental and physical health, and societal cohesion. Paradoxically, the shift to locating and growing our communities of 'friends' via social media has caused an observed increase in loneliness and other mental health challenges. The church, parachurch, and workplace must navigate the gains and losses of digital community including questions regarding the role of our bodies and how to form genuine relationships of integrity when mediated through technology, how to show Christ in word and deed to those experiencing disconnection, how to foster authentic interactions online, and ultimately the appropriate use for digital communities.

Acknowledging these shifts, this conversation prayerfully explores:

Collaboration Questions

- How are digital communities different from in-person communities?
- What lessons can be gleaned from mainstream organizations with most workers operating digitally?
- What role does digital community formation play in evangelism and Great Commission efforts?
- What digital communities are 'unreached'? How can they be reached?
- How can mission/church organizations/workers successfully foster Christian digital communities?
- What efforts are needed to reach/minister to the lonely?

Sub-Topics

- Digital tools for digital communities
- Organizational collaboration for digital evangelism
- Wise practices for digital community formation for the gospel

Preparation before Seoul 2024

Please read these sections of the State of the Great Commission Report:

- Introduction from the Theology Working Group
- Part I, on the State of the Great Commission globally, captured by text and graphics
- Part II, with the article on 'Digital Communities', also drawing on 'Virtual Work' and 'Decentralization and Web3'
- Part III for your particular region in which you primarily work or serve in church or parachurch