

*This message was delivered by Mike Sessler of [ChurchTechArts](#) at the Gurus of Tech conference held October 3-5, 2011 at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY.*

I would like to start off today by saying "thank you" to **you**! You are the ones who show up early every weekend and are still there cleaning up long after everyone else at church has been seated at Chili's. You serve in the shadows, often without recognition.

Too often, when you—the church tech—is noticed it is only to deliver criticism. It doesn't seem to matter if it's  
too loud, too soft,  
too bright, too dim,  
too hot or too cold,  
too country, too rock n roll;  
you will most likely be the one who takes the heat. Oh and when things go smoothly, the band gets the credit.

But *I* know what you do. I know the dedication, the hours you put in and the effort you expend every weekend to create an environment where people can connect with God.

I know you do it not for money or fame (I mean, come on, you work at a church!), you don't do it to be recognized, you do it because you love Jesus and want to use your gifts to serve him.

More importantly, God knows what you do. *He* sees your service, *He* sees your heart. And someday, He will reward your faithful service.

So thank you! Really, thank you! [clap]

[Have them turn to someone next to them and thank them for all they do to serve the church.]

Being a church tech is hard work and the truth is, very few people can do it. Even fewer do it well. When *you* serve the church with your unique skill set, it is a sweet offering to God.

He is pleased with what you do  
and He is pleased **with you**.

A few weeks ago, I was introduced to a character in the Bible I've never noticed before. Has anyone ever heard of Bezalel? If I could, I would make him the patron saint of church tech. Like most of us, he was not well known, and only got two paragraphs in the whole Bible. But check out what God says about him.

Moses told the Israelites, "See, God has selected Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. He's filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and know-how for making all sorts of things, to design and work in gold, silver, and bronze; to carve stones and set them; to carve wood, working in every kind of skilled craft. And he's also made him a teacher, he and Oho-liab son of Ahi-samak, of the tribe of Dan. He's gifted them with the know-how needed for carving, designing, weaving, and embroidering in blue, purple, and scarlet fabrics, and in fine linen. They can make anything and design anything.

"Bezalel and Oho-liab, along with everyone **whom** God has given the skill and know-how for making everything involved in the worship of the Sanctuary as commanded by God, are to start to work." Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab along with all whom God had gifted with the ability to work skillfully with their hands. The men were eager to get started and engage in the work. They took from Moses all the offerings that the Israelites had brought for the work of constructing the Sanctuary. The people kept on bringing in their freewill offerings, morning after morning. All the artisans who were at work making everything involved in constructing the Sanctuary came, one after another, (Exodus 35:30-36:4 MSG)

I talk a lot about creating environments for worship; that's one of the cornerstones of our mission as church techs. And what do we see Bazalel and Oholiab doing? Creating an environment for worship! These are the guys who built the temple, the sanctuary where God's people could come meet with Him and worship Him. That's a pretty big deal, right?

It's not that different from what we do today. We may not be the ones who personally built the building, but we certainly help create the environment every week.

From getting the sound right to creating engaging lighting to making sure the right words are on the screen at the right time; all of those elements combine to create an environment where people can worship and meet with God. That's a pretty big deal, right?

If I were translating the Bible into a modern vernacular that reflected our current state of the church and it's use of technology, I might write that paragraph something like this:

Rick told the church, "See, God has selected Chuck. He's filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and know-how for making all sorts of things, to design and work in sound, lighting and video; to build sets and arrange the stage; to edit video, working in every kind of technical capacity. And he's also made him a teacher, he and Larry, that other guy. He's gifted them with the know-how needed for mixing, designing, installing, *and* keeping equipment running way past it's useful service life. They can make anything and design anything.

You are the Bazalels of the modern church! You are the ones called by God to make possible all those crazy, creative ideas your pastors, worship leaders and program directors come up with. You do it well, you do it with skill and grace. God notices and He is pleased by that.

It's important to realize that we are accomplishing one of the greatest missions ever. God is allowing us to be part of the life-change that happens every week in our churches.

As humans, we were created in God's image, to worship our God. Each weekend, we get to be part of the team that helps create an atmosphere in which people can connect with their creator.

Have you ever thought about it that way before?

What you do helps bring people into a closer relationship with the God of the Universe. That is a special and sacred calling; and not everyone gets to do that.

When we exercise our collective gifts and abilities, God takes it and does something extraordinary. He meets with his people and changes lives.

That guy who heard the message on forgiveness and decided not to leave his wife and family; you were part of that! The girl who saw the video from the mission trip to Africa and decided not to go to law school but head to the mission field; you were part of that! The woman who broke down during the worship time, realizing that she does indeed need to surrender all to Jesus; you were part of that! The family that came forward to give their lives to Christ and be baptized together; you were part of that!

How amazing is that!? Things like that happen every single weekend in our churches! Realize that God doesn't *need* to use us to accomplish His purpose—rather He *allows* us to participate in what He's already doing. It's like getting writing credit on a song; we may have only added one word, but we still get the royalty checks. That is our God! He lets us be part of this.

Our role is not at all unlike what Aaron and Hur did for Moses during the battle with the Amalek. Do you remember that story? It's found in Exodus 17.

Joshua did what Moses ordered—in order to fight Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill. It turned out that whenever Moses raised his hands, Israel was winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, Amalek was winning. But Moses' hands got tired. So they got a stone and set it under him. He sat on it and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side. So his hands remained steady until the sun went down. Joshua defeated Amalek and its army in battle. (Exodus 17:10-13 MSG)

If the Pastor and Worship Leader are Moses and Joshua, we are Aaron and Hur. Without *them*, the church would not even be in the battle. Without *us* supporting them, they would grow weary and the mission of the church would falter.

Be encouraged! Don't ever consider yourself, "just the sound guy," or "just the TD." You play a vitally important role in the mission of the modern church. Like Bazalel and Oholiab, you will probably not get a lot of credit. Like Aaron and Hur, you are there to support someone else's mission. But your role is vital—don't ever forget that.

Now I know what we do can be exhausting. Working in a church is tough, not only because of the long hours, the people challenges and unusual schedule, but also because of the constant spiritual attack we are under. The irony is that the better we are doing our job, the greater the attack. But Jesus said,

I've told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world." (John 16:33 MSG)

We *really do* get to do this! But we can't do it alone.

Based on the e-mail that I receive and the fact that I'm here speaking at this conference, some of you might be under the impression that I have this all figured out; that I know what I'm doing.

Let me take this opportunity to dispel that myth. Most of the time, I have no idea what I'm doing.

Yes, I am a good technician. God has gifted me with the ability to understand how technology works and how to use it. I've dedicated my life to learning the craft. I spend countless hours studying, researching and talking with other techs about how to better utilize technology in the church. And yes, I've gotten pretty good at that part of it.

But when it comes to doing ministry, anything good that I've done or said or written has come from the Spirit.

In fact, when I first received the e-mail asking if I would consider speaking at Gurus, the first thing I did was check the headers to see if they had contacted the right person. Clearly I'm a geek just because I know that e-mail contains headers, but anyway...

After I determined that he had, in fact, emailed *me*, I told Stephen that I would consider and pray about it. The next day, on my morning walk, I asked God if I had anything to say to all of you here. He immediately and clearly replied, "No."

But then, just as clearly, He said, "But *I* have a message for them, and I'd like to use you to deliver it." Now it may seem a little weird at a tech conference—even a Church tech

conference—to have someone up here saying, "God said this" or, "God told me that." But as I've been growing as a TD, as a leader and as a Christ-follower, it's something I'm increasingly more comfortable with.

I have a good friend who has been helping me hear from God much more clearly. We've been getting to know each other over the past 2 years, and have been in a more intentional mentoring relationship for about 8 months. When we started, he said, "Just so you know how I do this, we're not going to study a book, or even go through a chapter of the Bible. I usually just ask God, 'What do you want me to say to Mike today?' and go with that."

To tell you the truth, I was a little freaked out at first, but I can't tell you how many times he has exactly the words I need to hear. A few months ago, we were hanging out and in the middle of a discussion on guitar pedals, he pulled out the verse, "Where your treasure is, your heart will be also," and talked about how applicable that is to marriage.

Now, we've never talked about my marriage, or anything that's going on in it. But at that moment, that was a powerful word picture that I needed to hear. I have no doubt that God prompted him to quote that verse, and follow up with some amazingly applicable comments.

Over the past 25 years of serving the church in technical roles, both on staff and off, I've learned many things. One lesson learned is that I am incapable of working on a church staff on my own. But with the help of the Spirit, somehow, in a miraculous and mysterious way, it works.

John 16:24 says, "Ask in my name, according to my will, and he'll most certainly give it to you. Your joy will be a river overflowing its banks!" (John 16:24 MSG)

We read that verse and tend to think it only applies to getting stuff. Stuff that God wants us to have, of course, but stuff nonetheless. But in context, Jesus was telling the disciples that if they have questions, ask. If you're struggling to follow Jesus, ask! If you don't know what to do next, ask.

Sadly, few churches expect or even desire their techs to be growing spiritually. They expect us to be masters of technology and capable of training *volunteers with no prior experience* to do incredibly complex and demanding jobs. But growing spiritually and in touch with what the Holy Spirit is doing? Not so much.

What I've found though, is that apart from the Spirit I can do nothing.

At least not of any significance. I am really good at developing processes and procedures, designing and installing systems, and using and training on all sorts of AVL equipment. I can do that. And that would be fine if that's all I was called to do.

But we have to remember that the church is in the people business. And, as part of the church, we too are in the people business. For the socially awkward, introverted church tech, that requires some supernatural intervention.

I used to think that staying connected to the Spirit was complicated, full of rituals and involved getting up at 5 AM to have a 2 hour quiet time. But that never worked for me; how about anyone here?

I don't know about you, but my mind runs so fast and furious that I would start praying and in about 5 minutes realize I was thinking about something completely different.

It wasn't until a few months ago that Roy pointed out to me that God made me the way I am; He fitted that crazy, over-clocked brain in my head for a reason. And He's using me to accomplish His purposes.

So instead of being apologetic to Him when I drift off, I just bring whatever I'm thinking about to the Lord.

What I've found is that staying connected with the Spirit is as easy as talking to Him. More than anything else, God wants to be in relationship with me.

And He wants to be in relationship with you.

Let that sink in for a minute; **God deeply desires to be in relationship, with you!** We know that, right, I mean we all work at churches. But do we really **know** that? Do we really understand what it means to us personally?

And like any good friend, He wants to know what's going on in our lives. Of course, He already knows, but when I get stuck on something, I make it a point to talk it out with the Lord. I can't tell you how many times a great idea has hit me or a problem is solved just because I was talking it out with God. Suddenly the answer I've been searching for is right there.

We don't like to talk about this much, because it's mysterious and mystical. After all, we're geeks. We like technology; we like things with blinking lights and shiny buttons.

But we are dealing mystery more often than we might think. Why does a given lighting look just "feel" right? How does tweaking the of the words on that slide just make it better? I recently re-gained my PA; opening up the amps a little bit and dropping the input gains on my mixer.

We all agree it sounds better, but we can't completely articulate why. But even people who didn't know I changed anything commented on the improvement. It's a mystery.

Even though we're geeks, and perhaps *because* we are geeks, we really need to be intentionally about staying connected with the Spirit. Most of us aren't by nature people

people, right? So when it comes to dealing with volunteers, other staff or church politics, we really need some help.

Bring those issues to God. He wants to help. In fact, He longs to help. If God called you to this, He wants to help you do it well.

When we involve Him in our ministries, amazing things will happen. Things that will blow your mind. Here's an example.

Does anyone have a hard time finding volunteers? Based on the email, the twitter and topics on the tech forums, it's one of the hardest issues we face. Like you, I've tried everything; bulletins, job fairs, announcements, personal asks, etc.. All were met with the same middling results. Then I did something crazy; I asked God for some volunteers.

It finally occurred to me that this is *all* part of God's economy. He has called our church into a new season which demands more tech volunteers. I believe He is calling us to move in this direction, and I believe He is the ultimate provider for all our needs—both personally *and* corporately.

So, it seemed perfectly reasonable to ask Him to provide the very volunteers He's called me to minister with and to.

But I figured, why ask for just any volunteers; I wanted people who are passionate about what we do and who want to learn. I prayed for a group of young people that I could mold and shape into skilled, God-honoring technical craftsman; people like Bazalel and Oholiab.

I asked Him to give me eyes to see those who should be on the team, and that He would prepare those people to serve.

Now, to give you a little context, at my church, we have never really had volunteers in tech. For pretty much the entire 25 years Coast Hills has been around, they filled each technical position with paid staff or paid contractors.

However, in the last six months, we've gone from...

0 to 4 people on the audio team.

2 to 4 people on the lighting team.

1 to 4 people on the presentation team.

And we've more than doubled our camera team over the last year and a half.

Now, this is not me! I didn't do anything but ask the people He told me to ask, and respond to the people he brought by the tech booth. Of course, we've had some people start and drop out, and we've had a few who stopped by the booth telling me how stoked they were to get started; but they never showed up for anything.

And I'm OK with that. Tech is not for everyone; and honestly, I try to make it a little hard to join the tech team. I want to be sure that anyone who joins the team is here because God called them here.

But that's just one example. I could list dozens of ways God has provided in miraculous ways, just because I've asked Him about something. Some things are very minor, others are huge. But it all starts with me saying, "Hi Father, so I have this thing..."

Now, just as we can't do ministry apart from the Spirit, I've also learned we can't do it without help from fellow TDs. If you've ever listened to our podcast—and I'm going to do a shameless plug here; Church Tech Weekly, a weekly podcast that deals with all sorts of issues church techs encounter, both technical and interpersonal, is available on iTunes and at churchtechweekly.com. End shameless plug.

But if you've listened to the podcast for more than 2–3 episodes, you've heard us talk about the importance of developing relationships with other techs.

Real life example: One of my best friends is Van Metschke. Though we've only known each other for about 3 1/2 years, it feels like we've known each other all our lives. We regularly have long, long conversations about technology, sound, working in the church and life in general.

We also support one another. Last year I got a short text from him on a Monday that said, "Can we have lunch this week?" I texted back, "Sure I'm open Tuesday and Friday." His response was, "Tuesday would be good."

That lunch lasted 3 hours, and he unloaded some really heavy stuff he was dealing with. As we talked, I did my best to help him process and tried to encourage him. He left feeling better, and I left grateful for the opportunity to help a great friend.

A few months ago, I received some bad news at work and immediately called him. He always starts conversations off with, "How are you doing?" That day, I said, "I'm depressed." He said, "Why what's going on." I gave him a synopsis and he said, "Well I'm down at Saddleback tonight (which is close to me), so do you want to grab coffee later?"

A few hours later we were sitting at Denny's. We now joke that we would have closed the place down if they ever in fact closed. I left feeling so much better; not because he said anything amazingly profound, but because he listened and he got it.

It is critical that we have people like that in our lives if we expect to do this for any length of time.

In addition to Van, I have a group of 6-7 other guys who I know I can call any time for advice, encouragement or just to talk. And they do the same with me.



Now, as much as I treasure my friends and value their encouragement, I've learned if we really want grow and be more effective in our ministries—especially if we want to do this for a long time—we need someone, or a few someones to help us. Sometimes we call these people mentors, other times spiritual directors or coaches.

A lot of people get hung up on the whole mentor thing and don't really understand what it is all about. Or they make *too big* of a deal out of it, trying to find one magical person who can give them all the answers in life.

My definition of a mentor is simple: someone who speaks light into your life. If you want to grow in a given area, it's a lot easier if you have someone to talk to who has walked where you want to go.

The other day I heard Mark Driscoll talking about mentors and his approach is not to have a single mentor, but a team of mentors; specialists you can call on when you need them.

Others talk of having a Paul, a Barnabas and a Timothy in our lives; that is

- someone who is building into me,
- someone to encourage me
- and someone I am building into.

There are various approaches here, but I think the important thing is that we have someone—or multiple someones—speaking into our lives; people we can call on for support, advice and encouragement.

I've been meeting with my friend Roy for about 8 months to be mentored in the area of doing ministry. As you know, being on a church staff is incredibly draining, and if we don't have someone pouring into us, we burn out.

Roy and I meet every couple of weeks for an hour or so, sometimes longer. We don't talk about every aspect of life because it's impossible to find one person who can speak into your whole life. Mainly, we talk about my ministry and the work God has called me to, and he reminds me—often—that God is not done with me yet.

Both of the mentors I've had in my life have centered around ministry. My first mentor was my pastor; I was the volunteer youth leader (with zero experience or training) and he helped me learn to do ministry. Today, Roy is helping me learn how to be a better leader in the context of being on a church staff.

Finding a mentor can be challenging, but like finding volunteers, the way to start is to talk to God about it. Think and pray about the areas of your life you'd like to experience growth.

Pray for wisdom, and for eyes to see the right person when they come into your life. Be open to whomever God may bring into your life; it might be someone you already know, but maybe not.

But don't put too much pressure on your mentor or mentors. Having a mentor will not solve all your problems. We still need to take responsibility to be in the Word, spend time in prayer and grow personally. But a well-chosen mentor will help you grow in a few areas faster than you will alone.

You know, as I've been praying through this message for the last few months, I've thought about why I do technical ministry in the first place. Certainly I could make a lot more money and work fewer hours in the private sector. But the work would not be nearly as significant. And I think that's what I'm really after. I want what I do to matter.

So how do I—how do you—live a life of significance?

Now that I've reached "old guy" status, I'm thinking about what kind of legacy I want to leave. I want to look back on a life that has been full of significant moments—moments when God used me to help advance the Kingdom or be part of a life change. I know I won't fully realize the extent of how He's used me on this side of Heaven, but I want to be as available as possible.

And I think you do to. You took time out of your schedule—some of you took *vacation* time—to be here for a few days. Clearly you care about what you do; you desire to be used by God to accomplish something greater than you could on your own.

That can happen—it is happening!

To keep it up  
we need to stay connected to the Spirit;  
we need to support each other;  
and we need to be encouraged by mentors.

If we all do that together, we will make an impact for the Kingdom of God that will shake the kingdom of this world at its core.

***Pray***