

- A. As sheltering in place started, I remember that someone gave the advice: "Make sure you don't binge on Netflix, but on the Word of God." Why was that such good advice for the times?
- It's good advice all the time. Today, Pentecost, is a good day to point this out. Everything on that first NT Pentecost was pointing to the Holy Spirit's work thru His Word: rush as of a mighty WIND, and the TONGUES of fire, speaking in previously unlearned languages. The big thing at Pentecost was Peter's sermon and the baptism of 3000 new believers. We may not have all the "special effects" today, but we still have the Means of Grace.
 - As for "Netflix," or however you may refer to the vast amount of material now available electronically, Christians need to pay attention to important questions about both form and content. Regarding content: if you did binge watch Netflix or whatever, how would it be shaping you? For it WOULD be shaping you! What would it prompt you to desire? What would it get you to love? What kind of a person is it setting you up to be? A person who fears, loves, and trusts in God above all things? A person aware of sin and God's wrath, but saved by grace through faith in Christ?
- B. There's a ton that we could talk about there, with regard to the content of what can be viewed and heard online, but I want to go back to your mention of form as well as content. What do we as Christians need to be aware of with regard to the form of electronic communications?
- Story: I suggested short attention spans as a missions conference topic about 30 years ago, yet there was no interest. But you can't teach the Christian faith in sound bites.
 - I had been working in radio. I saw how advertisers were talking about 15 second commercials, and even 7.5 second commercials. They had created a monster that even they were having trouble living with. So while it is important to meet people where you are, nonetheless you don't leave them there. It is incumbent upon us in the church not simply to recognize and deal with attention spans that have grown shorter and shorter, but we also need to take steps to lengthen these attention spans.
- C. So what can the church do to lengthen attention spans?
- We have some useful strategy already from a sixteenth-century source, Luther's plan for catechizing. He said: first, teach the words. Then teach the meaning of the words. Then take up a larger catechism. Well, Luther's own *Large Catechism* does quite a bit to apply Christian doctrine to daily life. In the *Large Catechism* he showed people where the rubber meets the road in day-to-day living, and he made people more acutely aware of their enemies – devil, world, and flesh. Occasionally he also told stories or used comparisons to help make his points stick. All of that is good for holding attention.
 - Right, like a few moments ago I told a story that shows how we can fail to notice a challenge that we will face, like it or not. In addition, we preachers and teachers in the church can constantly push the horizons of people: get them to see something in a text they did not see before. It could be a point of meaning, or a point of significance. STORY ON THAT.
- D. Any other ideas? What else can the church do to lengthen attention spans?
- We can direct people to resources where they can find more. Especially good old-fashioned books!