My Senior Moments Have Gone High-Tech

Karen O’Connor
For all my senior friends.
Acknowledgments

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I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
Psalm 121:1-2
Tech Bloopers
Mickey and her housemate, Ginny, headed for the Sierra Mountains, both ready for a few days off. They set up their tents in the campground at Lake Dorothy. No motor home for them. They preferred camping the old-fashioned way. They took a daily hike on the well-marked trails and returned in the late afternoon to prepare dinner on their camp stove. In the evening, they sat around the fire pit with the stars twinkling overhead in the dark sky.

It was a great time of exercise and relaxation. On the first day, before setting off on their hike, Mickey suggested they turn off their cell phones. “Our cells are right here,” she said, patting her backpack. “To be used for emergency only.”

Ginny agreed.

At the end of the week, the women packed up Mickey’s car and drove down the highway toward home. They’d been out of touch with the outside world for several days and had no idea what was going on in their city or around the globe. A few hours later they pulled into a truck stop for drinks and a sandwich. Mickey felt the urge to check on things, so when they piled into the van again she suggested Ginny turn on the radio. “We ought to be able to get some news and music now.”

Ginny worked the knobs on the radio. “What frequency?” she asked.

“Try 102.3—our favorite country music station.”

After fiddling with the dials for a long time, Ginny sat back and sighed. “I give up. I can get 1-0-2, but 1-0-2 point 3 won’t come in. I don’t understand what’s going on. It’s always worked before.”
Mickey glanced over at the radio and noticed it was turned off. The clock, on the other hand, indicated 1:02.

The women giggled so hard, Mickey had to pull off the road until she and Ginny could compose themselves enough to continue driving safely. They’d definitely been out of touch too long.

TECH TIP

Put on your glasses, if necessary, when reading maps, radio station numbers, and cell phones—if you don’t want to get lost.

Reflection

*His God instructs him and teaches him the right way* (Isaiah 28:26).

Contemplation

“It’s supposed to be automatic, but actually you have to push this button.”

JOHN BRUNNER

Timely Prayer

When it comes down to it, Lord, people are pretty funny creatures, needing your help even with the simplest of things.
“My grandma Marion is adorable when it comes to new technology,” said Charlotte. “She uses Whiteout Liquid Paper on the TV remote to mark the important buttons. She once went weeks without watching television because she’d inadvertently pushed the wrong button. She had to wait for someone to come over to help her.”

Marion also has her doubts about modern washing machines. She isn’t sure hers *really* cleans the clothes, so she soaks them in the washer tub, stirs them with a stick, and then she lets the machine run its cycles.

As for the dishwasher, she uses it for storage only because she doesn’t believe it can clean her dishes as well as hand washing.

One year for her grandmother’s birthday, Charlotte made an appointment with her daughter Mandy, who was away at college, to attend the celebration via a Skype phone call. “It took a little doing because there isn’t Internet access at Grandma’s house,” said Charlotte, “and I’m not very tech-oriented either. But I was so excited to have Grandma see and talk to Mandy during the party that family members and I managed to get it all set up. When it came time to talk with Mandy, Grandma sat in front of the screen straight as a stick. She barely talked, and she only did so or waved when one of us prompted her. It was strange.”

The call lasted only a few minutes, and Charlotte admits she was a little disappointed. “Later I asked Grandma why she was so reluctant to participate. Turns out she thought it was a video. She believed we were putting on a skit for her as we interacted with Mandy. She
couldn’t believe it was a live call or that was really Mandy speaking directly to her.

TECH TIP

Do a run-through explaining what’s happening before using new technology with reluctant seniors.

Reflection

In all your ways submit to [the Lord], and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:6).

Contemplation

“I have always wished for a computer that would be as easy to use as my telephone. My wish came true. I no longer know how to use my telephone.”

Bjarne Stronstrup

Timely Prayer

Lord, I’m so excited when a new possibility comes along, but so often the old way seems easier.
Laurene was going to learn to use a computer if it killed her—and it almost did! She tried to follow the suggestions her son gave her when he sat down with her, but he talked so fast and moved so quickly typing this and searching for that, that she couldn't keep up with him. He also used a little silver box attached to the computer to move from one place to another. He called it a “mouse” of all things. It didn’t look like a mouse to her.

One day Laurene took matters into her own hands. She called a local computer store and asked about tutoring. The gentleman on the line told her they offered a class for seniors on Tuesday mornings from ten o’clock until noon. There were two spots left. “Ma’am, if you’d like one of them, it’s yours.”

Laurene signed up. She felt quite proud of herself. She didn’t tell her best friend or her son her plans. She would learn what to do and then surprise everyone with her expertise—as soon as she became an expert, that is.

The following Tuesday morning, Laurene showed up at “Click! Click! Computers” and found a seat in the last row. She was a nervous wreck. Her palms perspired and her stomach jittered. She didn’t want to make a fool of herself.

The facilitator was a nice young fellow with dark hair and a warm smile. He introduced himself as Jeremy and then explained some of the basics. Later he walked from table to table, looking over the shoulder of each person as he or she practiced. Jeremy helped where it was needed and offered suggestions when he observed a problem.
Then he issued a short assignment. “Use the mouse to locate Google in the upper-right-hand corner of your browser—Firefox. “Touch the mouse, and you’ll see a blinking line. That’s called a ‘cursor.’ It’s your starting point when you’re about to click on something or type. So let’s all do this together. Using the left button on your mouse, click on Google. Now there’s a box in the middle of your screen, and your cursor should be blinking inside it. Type in the words ‘movie theaters’ and then press the ‘Enter’ key on your computer. What came up?”

Several people raised their hands. “A list of movie houses in our community,” called out one man.

“I got the same thing,” said another. Most people nodded in agreement.

Laurene broke out in a sweat. She didn’t get that. In fact, she didn’t get anything. The mouse slid all over the screen. She saw the little box with the word “Google,” but when she put the mouse right on top of it nothing happened.

Suddenly Jeremy was at her side. “Are you having trouble?”

“Yes. My mouse isn’t working. Maybe it needs a new battery.”

“Show me what you did, and then I can help you.”

Picking up the wireless mouse, she placed it on the monitor. “See? Nothing.”

Jeremy shielded his mouth.

Was he about to laugh at her? Laurene was certain she’d turned ten shades of red.

“Ma’am, here’s your problem.” Jeremy gently removed the mouse from her hand and placed it on a pad next to the computer. This is called a ‘mouse pad.’ You work the mouse from here, not on the screen.”

Laurene was humiliated, but she smiled and said, “Thank you.” She decided she had a long way to go before she could brag to her son and best friend that she was a computer expert. She grabbed the mouse and moved it on the pad until the cursor landed on the Google search box. She clicked the left button. From there she could catch up with the others in her class.
TECH TIP

You can tame a computer mouse.

**Reflection**

*God is...an ever-present help in trouble* (Psalm 46:1).

**Contemplation**

“The problem with troubleshooting is that trouble shoots back.”

**Author Unknown**

**Timely Prayer**

Thank you, dear Lord, for technology. Help me keep it in perspective though. It will never be more powerful than prayer.
Eric kept a basket on the coffee table in the den for all manner of gadgets—TV remote, wireless mouse for his laptop, cell phone, cordless home phone, a screwdriver, extra batteries, and even a candy bar or two.

One evening when his wife was at her book club, Eric settled down in front of the television to watch a couple of police procedurals, the kind of shows Cindy wanted no part of. He set himself up with a bowl of popcorn and an ice-cold root beer. (Cindy didn’t approve of that either.) He fished the TV remote from the basket and clicked. Nothing. Not a spark of light or a bit of sound. “Rats! Not again!” he mumbled. “Why can’t technology ever work? Those techie geniuses make more than their share of the fortunes in this world. You’d think they could create a television that would turn on without having to petition Congress first!” He opened the remote and changed the battery to be on the safe side. He clicked and clicked. Still no response. He finally grabbed a magazine and crawled into bed. TV would have to wait for another day.

A couple of hours later, Eric heard Cindy’s key turn in the lock on the front door. He was happy to know she’d arrived home safely. When she slipped into bed beside him, he told her his woeful story about the obstinate TV remote. “It’s times like this when I wished we had two TVs,” he said. “I missed a whole evening of my favorite shows because of that gadget.”

Cindy listened, but she didn’t understand why Eric had struggled. She’d watched a show that very afternoon, and the remote had been as responsive as ever.

The following morning, Cindy asked Eric to bring her the remote.
He brought it to the kitchen where she was dishing up scrambled eggs. She looked up and suddenly let out a belly laugh. “Eric, this is the computer mouse, not the TV remote. Have you forgotten what the TV remote looks like or what?”

Eric took a look at the item in his hand and hung his head. “This getting old is getting the best of me,” he said. He gave her a hug. “It seems I can’t do anything without you these days.”

“Does that mean you’re stuck with me?” Cindy said, giggling. “No, it means we’re sticking together.”

Cindy planted a kiss on Eric’s cheek. “I like the sound of that.”

TECH TIP

Take a close look at the gadget you pick up and make sure it’s the right one. Saves a lot of time and headache.

Reflection

*When I am afraid, I put my trust in you* (Psalm 56:3).

Contemplation

“I’m naming my TV remote Waldo.”

Author Unknown

Timely Prayer

Blessed am I, Lord, because when I misuse or misplace a gadget, you help me figure it out or find it.
Roger called tech support. He was at his wit’s end with his antiquated computer. He knew he should probably spring for a new one, but at his age was it worth it? What if he ordered it today, it was delivered next week, and he died the following day? All that money down the drain.

“You can’t look at life like that,” said his sister Maddie. “Live as though you have all the time in the world. Spend your money. Enjoy yourself. Stay up-to-date.”

Maddie sounded convincing. He’d call tech support this time and then plan an outing next week to find a new computer that fit his budget.

Someone from tech support responded to Roger’s call.

“Sir, I can help you with that. It’s a simple fix. Just follow my instructions. I’ll be here to support you.”

“Sounds good to me,” Roger said. “I’m a little flummoxed at the moment. I can’t see as well as I used to.”

“No problem. I’ll stay on the line until you’re completely satisfied that I’ve answered all your questions and you get to where you want to go on the Internet.”

Roger breathed a sigh of relief and then listened carefully. He was almost finished when the tech man threw him a curve.

“Okay, now click your left mouse button.”

Roger panicked. “What? My left mouse button?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Oh! I’m so embarrassed. I didn’t know I was supposed to have a left and a right mouse. I only have the one. What should I do now?”
TECH TIP

You can click left or right on the same mouse.

Reflection

Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this (2 Timothy 2:7).

Contemplation

“Disappointments were not meant to destroy you. They were meant to strengthen you and give you fortitude to accomplish your God-given talent.”

Kemmy Nola

‘Timely Prayer’

I’m praising you, God, for being at my side no matter what situation I find myself in and for always providing a way out when I need one.
Jake bought his mom a laptop, but she frowned at the sight of it. “What do I need a computer for?” Donalda asked.

“Mom, you’re only 72. Think about how it will change your world—open it up and give you more access to your friends and family. You’ll love it, I promise.”

Donalda wasn’t so sure she wanted her world to change. She liked it just the way it was. She had her sewing circle on Mondays, line dancing on Wednesdays, and church with the family on Sundays. That was enough activity for one week!

But Jake wouldn’t take no for an answer. He was certain his mother would appreciate the gift once she got the hang of it. So he talked her into enrolling in a computer class to receive the basic training and support necessary to be successful. In fact, he offered to attend the class with her.

Donalda agreed—reluctantly—as long as her son joined her. On the first day of class, the instructor welcomed the students and then gave a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the basics. Following that, he strolled around the room, going from desk to desk checking each student, answering questions, and making sure they were all on the same page.

He stopped at Donalda’s desk. She’d placed the mouse on the floor and rested her right foot on top of it. The coach bent down, asked her to move her foot, and then picked up the device. “The mouse belongs on the desk next to your computer,” he said. “Like this.” He placed the object within reach of her right hand.
Donalda covered her mouth with a hand and giggled. She looked around, hoping Jake, who was sitting in the back row, hadn’t seen what happened.

“Move the mouse with your right hand,” the instructor continued as he demonstrated how it worked.

“Oh my,” said Donalda. “I thought it was for my foot—you know, like a sewing machine.” She looked around again and then leaned toward the man. “Please don’t tell my son. He’s sitting in the back row.”

“Don’t worry,” he said and patted her hand. “It will be our little secret.”

TECH TIP

Keep your hand on your mouse so it won’t get away.

Reflection

[The Lord said,] “I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them” (Isaiah 42:16).

Contemplation

“Just because something doesn’t do what you planned it to do doesn’t mean it’s useless.”

Thomas Edison

Timely Prayer

Good thing you’re with me always, dear Lord—even in a computer class—or I’d be sunk.