

Real Life is better than High Definition

How do you feel when someone answers their mobile phone while talking to you? Maybe they're polite enough to ask if you mind. What goes through your thoughts? *"Actually, yes, I do mind. After all, whoever it is hasn't made the effort to be with you in person. But I have. What more do I need to do to get your full attention? Should I go away from here and phone you? Would that help?!"* Of course we are much too polite to say that out loud.

The fact is that technology has made it easier to be distracted from the people and things around us. The way many of us work now is what a vice president at Microsoft has called "continuous partial attention." That is "the behaviour of continuously monitoring as many inputs as possible, paying partial attention to each." We keep a top priority in focus. At the same time we scan the periphery to see if we are missing other opportunities, and if we are, our very fickle attention shifts focus. What's ringing? Who is it? What e-mail just came in? 15 text messages. What is the weather in Bristol?

Technology promises to put us in better contact with the world but in reality it can do the opposite. It promises us life in High Definition -- but delivers life sat on a sofa. The truly high-definition things are the things that surround you right now. Whatever you're sitting on; whatever your view is; whoever you're with. In fact, the screens we look at are just about the only non high-definition thing in our lives. Everything else is 3-D, full-colour, natural, high-definition, surround-sound. Or Real, for short.

Life is about getting in touch with these things and people that are around you now. Practising what is called "Presence". Making sure we are 100% with the people who are talking to us. We can be reached by others everywhere, but as a result we are never fully present anywhere. We rack up "friends" on social networking sites. We spread our presence thinly among hundreds of contacts. We maintain relationships around the country and the world, but we don't always get to know people where we live.

There is a much sharper reality than any technology can provide. There is a High-Definition world waiting each day for us to explore. All we need to do is use the power button. Just not in the way we've been told.

God Bless, *Revd. Peter.*

