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# THE FAITHTECH PLAYBOOK:

## PRACTICING REDEMPTIVE TECHNOLOGY



# **The FaithTech Playbook:**

Practicing Redemptive  
Technology



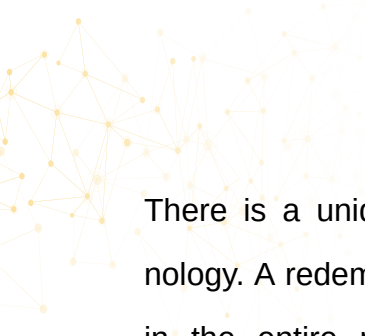
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“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

*Ephesians 2:10*

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# A Different Way



There is a uniquely Jesus way of building technology. A redemptive way. A way that infuses faith in the entire product design and development cycle. A way that not only embeds biblical beliefs and values into the methods of creation, but a way that results in products that truly align with God's vision for the world. A transformative process that leads to transformational products.

Beautifully, it is the very individuals creating who have the opportunity to be transformed in that process. A team that forms around a set of biblical values and beliefs are in turn formed in Christ-likeness while creating technology. A transformative process that leads to transformed people.

*In other words, we believe there is a way of building technology that redemptively changes the world while transforming those who build it.*

This belief has led our community to develop a redemptive way of building technology products. A different way that examines and questions the modern practices of technology companies while adopting its most useful methodologies where they align with the way of Jesus.

We also believe we, as designers and builders of technology, are created by God in a particular way. We have a way of seeing a problem, or viewing the world, that God has uniquely instilled in us to uniquely advance to his Kingdom here on earth. Therefore, our community has developed a way of being a technology builder that is rooted in the core teachings of the Word of God. It is a way that roots our identity as creators in the way of Jesus, his word, and his practices.

This playbook is about a different way of building technology, and being a builder of technology.

A redemptive way.

## As a Community, For a Community

This playbook draws on years of iterating—thinking, testing, dialogue, dismantling, testing again, and re-engineering. We collected ideas and methods from hundreds of volunteers from around the world who are part of our practicing community. And we gathered focused input from world-class practitioners and thought leaders to ensure this playbook is theologically rigorous and practically useful.

Therefore, we write as a community, for a community.

We write as a community desiring a different way of building technology. A way that aligns with our faith. A way that unifies our faith with our work of creating.

We write for those in our community longing to see their one o'clock design thinking meeting or their four o'clock strategy session impacted not only existentially by who they are as followers of Jesus, but also practically by bringing in new language and methods of building technology.

We write for those in our community feeling a disconnect between their personal beliefs and the implicit beliefs of the technology industry.

And we write for those in our community longing to build technology that helps humanity become persons who love God and love others more deeply.

As you venture forward in reading and applying this playbook, we venture with you, beside you.

## How to Use This Playbook

This playbook is structured in three parts.

First, *a way of being redemptive*.

This way defines the problem we seek to solve. It also expresses our values and beliefs that establish the bedrock for why we do what we do. This way describes our redemptive framework as a blueprint for the kind of builders we aspire to be.

This way includes shared values, beliefs, and language that provide us real and honest ways to identify, realize, and apply our purpose as redemptive creators. They provide us a way of being Jesus in our work and in the digital cultural moment we find ourselves in.

Second, *a way of building redemptively*.

Building technology redemptively is our unique value proposition to the technology industry. It is here we define what we mean by “redemptive technology.” We focus on three core areas: belief, values, and tools. The belief of redemptive technology explains the why behind it all. The values get at how we view and treat people as we build. And the tools define a different way to view our goal for the products we create.

Third, *a way of practicing redemptive technology*.

We will unpack this with our four-step process: discover, discern, develop, and demonstrate. In part three, you'll hear the heart behind our redemptive method of co-creating.



It is our deep desire that this way of building technology will offer you an entirely new way of viewing a creating process. You will see that it is truly possible to create a product in a uniquely Jesus-centered, God-honoring way. And this way of building can not only transform you along the way but can be applied transformatively to the other arenas of your life.

As an action-oriented community, we suggest translating this playbook from your mind to your hands as soon as possible. Test it. Does the language stick? Do the methods help?

The ideas presented in this playbook are designed for practicing more than contemplating. To only read this playbook and not discuss it with others or create a product from its methodology would be like buying a hammer just to place on a shelf to look at. A hammer is designed to help you build. To help you create.

May this playbook be a useful hammer to you.



# A Brief Theology of Technology

Every hammer has a designer. A creator. And so do we.

We believe that at the heart of the biblical story of technology is the Maker. The Creator. “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). He creates all things and his primary purpose in creating is for his glory.

Likewise, we believe the Creator has been creating and leveraging technology since the *dawn of time* and will do so until the *end of time* in order to advance his vision for *our time* on earth.

We believe God views technology as enabling both *idolatry* and *opportunity* and we underestimate and under-value both these capabilities. To create redemptively is to be rooted in the redemption narrative of God's Word and to ask, “What is God's view of technology?”

## Hello World

“In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1, emphasis added). God's first action was creating. In our human origin story, he created us in his image and likeness to co-create with him. God designed us to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion.” We can create because God designed us to create. Therefore, we are to find our identity as image-bearers and to live and create in such a way that reflects the image of God in us and others. Our identity as creators of technology is as *image-bearing co-creators with the Creator*.

## The First Upgrade

Sin enters the world through deception and lies, and our first parents covered up their shame and guilt with prototype clothes (fig leaves). God then performed the first upgrade, taking the earth's raw materials—an animal—and sacrificing it to make a more effective technology (real clothes). We learn from the beginning how humanity's natural posture is to cover up shame, guilt, and brokenness with our own technological innovations and tools. And those upgrades come with a sacrificial price.

## A Blueprint for Salvation

As the world progressed, evil dominated the human heart, and “The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled” (Gen 6:6). Yet by his mercy, God redeemed civilization through a man, his family, and a technological marvel—an ark. God provided Noah with a detailed blueprint for an advanced technology to save humanity. Technology *can* be built for redemptive ends with God's intentions for humanity.

## A New Invention: Bricks

A new invention—bricks—gave way to a new opportunity to be like God. Civilization decided to build a tower to reach the heavens. If they could reach up to God, they would become famous and powerful. When God saw it, he said that “nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Gen 11:6). Humanity believed they could leverage technology to use God for their own benefit.

## **Craftsman for the Creator**

Skilled people built the Tabernacle—the extraordinarily designed, detailed, and complex house of the Lord for the people of Israel. The Lord had “chosen Bezalel...and...filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills...to make...all kinds of artistic crafts” (Exod 31:2-5). God chose skilled workers and gifted them with abilities to accomplish the tasks that would enable people to worship God.

## **The Cross Redeemed**

Our friend John Dyer explains, “The cross...is a symbol of the distorted creation turning on its Creator. That twisted tree represents the twisted us, a humanity transformed by sin and bent toward death...the Creator was rejected by his own creation.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus takes the technological symbol of pain, intimidation, and rejection and redeems it to become a symbol of hope, joy, and salvation.

## **Startup Church**

At the time of Jesus Christ, the Romans ruled. The Pax Romana was a moment marked by advanced road systems, a common language, and a common currency. With these in place, the apostles were uniquely positioned to rapidly scale the Good News around the world.

## The Holy City


Scripture's main portrayal of a city is as a place of fallenness and life apart from God. But God is not content to leave it that way. In Revelation 21:1-2, the apostle John writes, "Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." The city in Revelation is a symbol of innovation, creativity, arts, and technology, and in the imagery of a new Jerusalem, we have a city God has redeemed and given his people to dwell in.

This quick overview of the Scriptures demonstrates that God has a plan and purpose for technology and for our role in creating and redeeming it for his glory. Our responsibility is to create and leverage technology in such a way that leads to life and redemption, rather than abuse or idolatry.

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# A Way of Being Redemptive

We believe the Creator created us to create.



The apostle Paul said, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10). God created us out of his creativity and rooted our identity in Jesus Christ. The purpose he called us to is good works. And this call has already been prepared in advance. Our responsibility, then, is to fulfill our creation mandate faithfully.

We believe, therefore, that there is a way to live faithfully in the world of technology. And as every good creator of technology knows, one must first ask: what is the problem we are trying to solve?

## Problem Statements

Technology has a disproportionate influence on the world. We do not view it as a sector or an industry as much as a societal operating system influencing all other cultural arenas. Modern technology is radically reshaping individuals and realigning tribes. It's restructuring communities and the world at an unprecedented level and pace.

That disproportionate influence, however, is broken.

### Killer App Trap

The *Killer App Trap* is the belief that technology will solve our deepest problems. If people are dying, technology can solve that. Is the political system broken? New tech will take care of that. Society is increasingly lonely, depressed, and sad. There's an app for that.

Walter Brueggemann calls this “the promise of technology.” And for builders and creators, the *Killer App Trap* invites us to put our faith in the technology we build. The danger is the deceptive ways that belief moves our heart away from faith in Jesus Christ. When we fall into the trap, our hearts, our work, and our end products look less and less like Jesus.

Another term for this is “solutionism.” The Australian pastor Mark Sayers, summarizing journalist Evgeny Morozov, says that solutionism is “the largely arrogant belief that we have the resources and smarts to under our own steam solve any problem that confronts us. All we need to do is discover the Killer App, and the discomfort we



feel, the obstacles we face, will disappear.... Solutionism is ultimately a belief in novelty, and a lack of patience and faith.”<sup>2</sup>

Put another way, we put our faith in ourselves and our creations over faith in God as Savior and Creator.

The *Killer App Trap* tempts us to accept a posture to solve first, solve quickly, solve selfishly, and solve without account for the repercussions. And because it is a deeply held belief shaping the everyday decisions of the technology industry, for us to live faithfully within it requires a countercultural way. The rest of this playbook will demonstrate a uniquely Jesus way that frees us from the *Killer App Trap*.

## **Faith and Work Gap**

A Jesus-following software engineer summarized this gap well: “I go to church and no one understands my work. I go to work, and no one understands my faith.” The *Faith and Work Gap* describes the tension many of us feel—both our places of work and our places of worship misunderstand us.

At church, it is hard to regularly hear your pastor say, “social media is harming us,” and then log in Monday morning to get more people to use social media. It is hard to proudly share your work with your brothers and sisters in Jesus when they question the very work you believe is a calling. And it can be hard knowing that God has uniquely given you a set of skills and passions that in a modern local church are largely being underutilized.

Likewise, at work, it is hard to be in a culture that has fundamental beliefs at odds with your own. Many people in our community have a real sense of fear that by sharing their faith in Jesus Christ they will be viewed as illogical and become an outcast. Being an outcast can result not only in relational tension with colleagues but can put your very job in question.

Living in this gap, we can lose our sense of identity and purpose. We can begin to feel like we don't belong in two extraordinarily important domains of our lives, and that is a rather disorienting feeling.

We believe there is a way to close this gap. A redemptive way. A way of living and creating that becomes more like Jesus in our work, in our church, and in our day-to-day life.

### 3 Ways of Technology

All creators and users of technology build and experience technology in one of three ways:<sup>3</sup>

#### Reckless Technology: “Move Fast, Break Things”

Reckless Technology is the irresponsible creation of technology with the ultimate ends for self above all. This approach prioritizes speed and efficiency and rapid growth above persons. It holds a rebellious and anti-institutional posture. In this paradigm, the creator puts their desires above all else, at the cost of others and even their own well-being. Embedded in reckless technology is a belief that we *live for self*.

“Move Fast, Break Things” is a mantra that ushered in a movement of tech startups beating down the door of institutional resistance to innovation. We do celebrate how this movement pushed against the slow and counter-productive systems of old. However, the mantra represents how speed can be chosen over thoughtful caution for repercussions. It chooses disruption over collaboration. And it takes no care to avoid long-term human isolation and addiction.

The result of reckless technology, then, is exploitation. I win, you lose. Those creating technology extract value from those using it. We see this pattern over and over in technology—exploitative practices in the guise of innovation move faster than law and faster than society can properly create the scaffolding to distribute safely.

Reckless technology views *people as commodities*. We use others for the value they can create for us. You've heard it said, "Users are data." This is innovation that is set up to create wealth on one side, then continues mining value, information, and data that increases the ability to generate more wealth. It invades personal space to seize opportunity. It ignores privacy for the sake of an algorithm. Reckless technology dehumanizes by disconnecting the "user" from the human. It cares only for the user on their platform, and not the human beyond the screen.

Tools—the various technological products and services that we create and use in our daily lives—when they are built recklessly end up *advancing harm*. They move people away from God and others rather than toward a fulfilling life with others and God. A reckless tool ultimately pulls both users and creators away from Jesus Christ and thus away from love.

## Responsible Technology: "Slow Down, Fix Things"

Responsible Technology intentionally thinks about the ethics, values, consequences, and negative impacts of technology. It seeks to create technology that promotes harmony rather than division. It pursues unity, peace, and fairness. Embedded in responsible technology is a belief that we *live for justice*.

"Slow Down, Fix Things" counters reckless technology by slowing down to take stock of what kind of technology is being built, and how. It seeks to fix rather than break, and aims for an ethics-based approach to solving problems rather than recklessly creating

new ones. Responsible technology at its best does not merely react to the broken past but also proactively seeks to solve problems of the future.

The result of responsible technology is an equal-sum game. I win, we win. Nobody loses. This equitable outcome is the primary goal of responsible technology. It is a great expression of common grace, where organizations, innovators, and developers look to create an environment where nobody is harmed.

Responsible technology views *people as equals*. It is based on a commitment to treating all people with equal respect and consideration, and it seeks to ensure that technology is developed and used in ways that promote social justice and equality. Responsible technology seeks equal justice for all.

Tools that are built responsibly *advance human flourishing*. They account for the potential impact on people and society. Building tools responsibly means designing with empathy, considering the needs and experiences of all customers, and incorporating ethical principles into the design process. These tools allow humans to flourish in relationships and in culture.

## Redemptive Technology: “Sacrifice, Create Things”

Redemptive Technology redefines what it means to create. It redefines how we live and work in the technology ecosystem. It is a dependence on the Spirit of God to guide all that we are and all that we do. Rather than living for self like reckless technology or living for justice like responsible technology, the heartbeat of redemptive technology is to *live by the Spirit*.

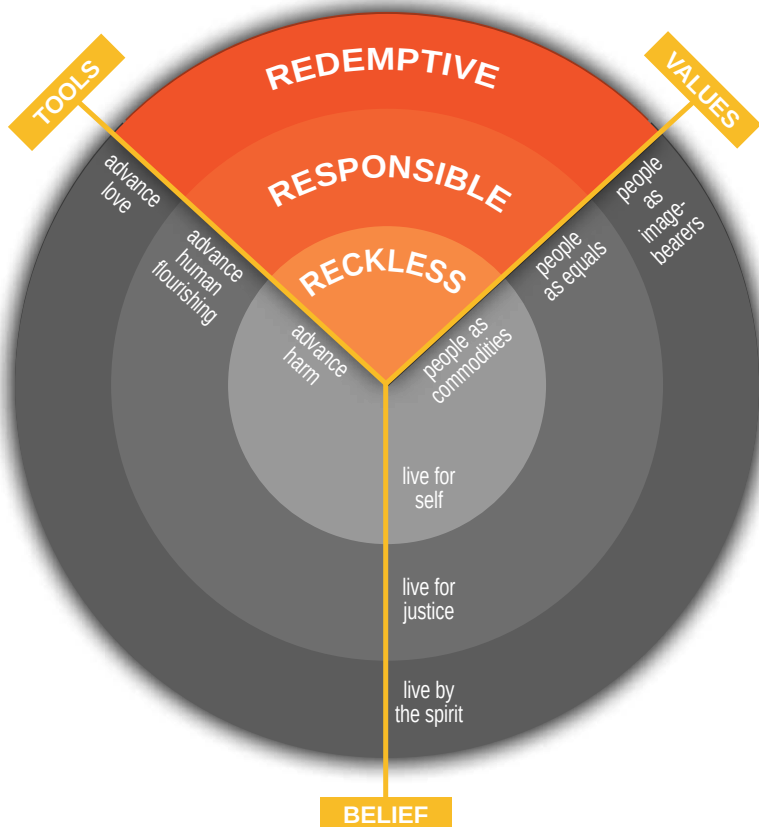
“Sacrifice, Create Things” radically flips the narrative of reckless technology and calls us to a life of surrender for the benefit of others above ourselves. Rather than breaking things or fixing things as our mantra, we have a creation mantra. Our primary posture changes. Rather than consuming, we create. Rather than critiquing, we make. Rather than complaining, we build something that reflects the image of God.

The result of redemptive technology is blessed people. I sacrifice, you win. I give of myself for your gain. It comes from a deep place of generosity. Others benefit regardless of our short-term outcome. To bless others is to ultimately gain Christ, in whom our deepest joy and love is found. Others are truly blessed when we sacrificially live by the Spirit.

Redemptive technology views *people as image-bearers* of God. We look into the mirror of humanity and remember that God created humanity in his image and likeness. We are his. We therefore sacrificially love fellow image-bearers and put people above

products. We create in such a way that the process of creating and the products we create help us look more and more like our Creator.

Finally, the tools we create redemptively *advance love*. Our tools are helping users become persons who love God and love others more deeply.



## The Grey Zone

The *Grey Zone* is the messy place where Reckless Technology, Responsible Technology, and Redemptive Technology collide.

Social media, for example, often lives in the grey zone between reckless, responsible, and redemptive. The origin stories of social media were seemingly driven by responsible motives to build community, connect one another, and give equal voice to all. However, they had an air of recklessness and rebellion. At the same time, we have certainly seen redemptive work occur within these companies building the technology and the tools themselves.

We must diligently ask whether the beliefs, values, and tools of these technologies are helping us love God and love others. A great question to ask when we feel we are in the *Grey Zone* is, “Does our technology help or hinder humans in becoming persons who love God and love others more deeply?”

Take the Gutenberg Press, for example. The 15th-century invention created the first ever movable metal type printer. And its earliest printed book? The Bible. The printing and mass production of the Bible disrupted the way everyday people could read and learn about God, better understand God, and by the millions, receive God as the Creator and Savior of the World. However, it was also quickly used recklessly to spread poisonous ideologies and communicate evil. Do we throw the innovation out because we fear the exploitative possibilities or do we embrace the redemptive potential? The answer is not so clear cut.



We believe, when living in the *Grey Zone*, there are two helpful commitments we can make:

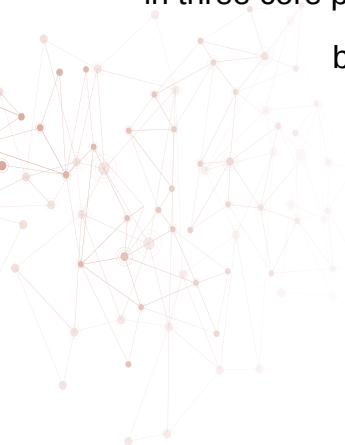
We commit to **pursuing truth**. We will not accept that reckless and exploitative technologies are permissible or inevitable. We bring truth to light when obvious deception is at play. We commit to a way of creating technology that asks “why” when we sense something is not right. And we commit to saying no to products that blatantly exploit others, holding on to faith and a good conscience before the Lord.

We commit to **creating redemptively**. Our primary posture will not be one of critics, consumers, copiers, or condemners of technology and technology culture. Our primary posture is to be creators. Author Andy Crouch asks, “Why aren’t we known as creators—people who dare to think and do something that has never been thought or done before, something that makes the world more welcoming and thrilling and beautiful?”<sup>4</sup> We, therefore, willingly say no to technology that does not align with our vision to redemptively create things more welcoming, more thrilling, and more beautiful.

Now that we’ve outlined the problems we see and the three approaches we can take, how can we bring the approach of redemptive technology to our workplaces and our development cycles? We are now prepared to turn our attention to how we go about building redemptively.

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# A Way of Building Redemptively



FaithTech's way of building redemptively is rooted  
in three core principles:  
belief, values, and tools.

## Belief: Live by the Spirit

We commit to creating technology and living in the technology ecosystem according to the Spirit of God. By doing so, our minds will be set on what the Spirit desires.

We believe there are three ways to uniquely live by the Spirit as redemptive technologists.

### To Give Up Power and Control

We believe to live by the Spirit is to *give up power and control* and in turn be led by the Spirit.

“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”  
— *Romans 8:5*

Building technology can be intoxicating. Building something from seemingly nothing with as little as a computer and our minds is powerful. The desire we have to create is one that our Creator embedded in us, and fulfilling it can be deeply thrilling and holy. We, therefore, should rejoice in this impulse and thank God for giving us holy pleasure to create new things.

When our desires turn to gratify the flesh rather than gratify the Spirit, it will be harmful to our souls, our lives, our colleagues, and our friends and family. It beckons us back to the *Killer App Trap*, believing that the power of technology, particularly in our hands, will solve our deepest problems. We, therefore, commit to releasing control and power to the Spirit of God. We commit to trusting in his

care for us. And we commit to humbling ourselves before the Creator who has all authority.

## **To Rely on the Spirit to Guide Our Thoughts**

We believe to live by the Spirit is to *rely on the Spirit to guide our thoughts and ideas*. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:11, “For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”

We receive through the Spirit of God the thoughts of our all-knowing and all-powerful Creator of the world. Therefore, as a redemptive technologist our way of life is rooted in and dependent upon the Spirit of God. It is a way of humility, recognizing that our best ideas are from the Spirit for the glory of God. It is a way of building redemptively that begins with our need for the Spirit to grant us access to the knowledge of God. Living by the Spirit enables us to do our work in step with him.

As Jesus says in John 14:26, “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” The Spirit of God will teach us all things required to do his will. When we live by the Spirit, he will grant us knowledge and wisdom to build technology redemptively for his glory.

## To Receive Our Identity and Freedom

We believe to live by the Spirit is *to receive our identity and freedom*. “The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’” (Rom 8:15).

The *Faith and Work Gap* is a disorienting place when we lose our sense of identity. We don’t feel like we belong. Yet, as people who live in the Spirit, we gain a new identity from the word of God: We are children of God. Adopted by the Father. We cry out to him and he listens. We belong to the family of God, adopted as his own, and given the greatest continuous gift—life—through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

The Spirit does not lead us to bondage or slavery but rather to freedom. “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal 5:18). In the Spirit, we no longer live in bondage to the fear that we are not good enough, skilled enough, or loved enough. When we build in step with the Spirit, we build in freedom. We are redeemed from the fear that holds us captive and gives us a way to build redemptively.

To build redemptively is to build with the knowledge and experience of having the perfect Father to rest in, cry out to, and depend on throughout the entire process of creating.

## Values: People as Image-Bearers

We commit to building technology redemptively by valuing *people as image-bearers* of God—both ourselves and others.

### Our Identity as Image-Bearers

In Genesis 1:26, God says, “Let us make mankind in our image.” In our human origin story, we see two important lessons that relate to how we are to build technology redemptively. First, “*let us make mankind in our image.*” God created humanity. His unexplainable creativity and power is on full display in his creation of humanity. We were created by the Creator to create. We were designed to build. And when we create, we embrace our identity as image-bearers of the Creator who created us.

And second, “let us make *mankind in our image.*” All of humanity bears the image of God. Throughout the creation account, God’s image is not placed in anything else but people. The universe was not granted God’s image. Neither the earth, nor animals, nor plant life. It is only humans—each and every one—whom God chose to grace with his image. Therefore, we must value humanity in such a way as to wonderfully honor that image.

To be image-bearers is to diligently pursue an understanding of who God is and to bear that image to the world. To reflect him in our work, our methods, our end-products. To bear God’s image as creators and designers of technology is to represent him honorably and faithfully throughout our entire creation process.

## Our Responsibility as Image-Bearers

We commit ourselves to building products redemptively by pursuing committed sacrificial relationships with fellow image-bearers.

We recognize that every human being has inherent worth and value as a reflection of God's image. Therefore, we are responsible to view people, both our colleagues and customers, as individuals who are created in God's image and deserving of our sacrificial love. We reject language, such as "users," when it does not further that vision.

With this in mind, the product development cycle now becomes a *disciple-making and disciple-forming* journey towards Jesus. We place a very high value on the human interactions involved in creating a product and on the relationships formed along the way. We believe the greatest potential for long-term redemptive impact exists in the individual relationships developed and invested in as we build together.

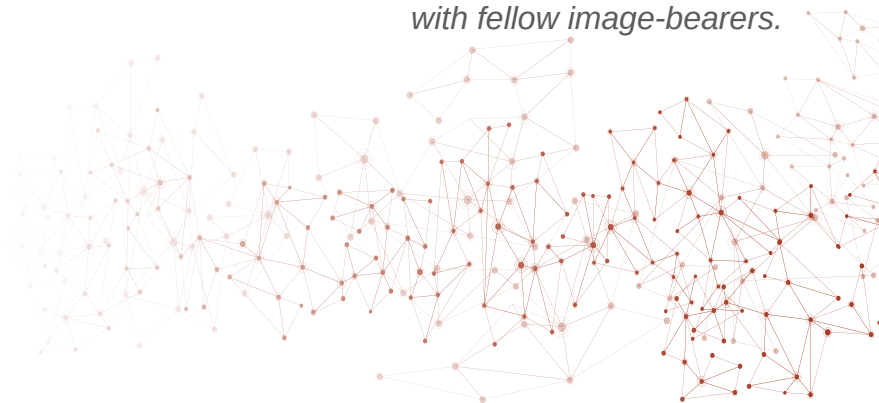
We believe, then, that it is more important to do *projects together over projects themselves*. If a team member needs to be heard, or cared for, or loved, we willingly pause to care for that person over perfectly achieving the end result. While we understand goals and results are in view, we lean towards an unhurried approach to work, not willing to sacrifice our team for our product.

Lastly, we believe that building projects together, as a team, is of greater value than building a product in isolation. We believe that



creating happens best with others in committed, trusted, sacrificial relationships. We intentionally find ways to create with others and seek to represent God faithfully as his image-bearers along the way.

*We commit ourselves to  
building products redemptively by  
pursuing committed sacrificial relationships  
with fellow image-bearers.*



## Tools: Advance Love

We commit to making products that *advance love*.

We constantly ask this question: “How is this technological tool helping users become persons who love God and love others more deeply?” To build redemptive tools is to commit to designing and creating tools that advance a loving encounter, whether it be with others or God.

The great temptation is to build a tool that serves our own interests and our own selfish desires. To create a product that solves our deepest problems. Yet we believe that a deeper satisfaction in life can be found in a product that facilitates and creates an opportunity to further love.

The love of Jesus Christ is displayed most evidently by his sacrificial death. Paul the apostle wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

In the same way, Christ’s love compels us as creators of technology to no longer live for self but to live for him. We believe it is out of that love and by the Holy Spirit that we, as redemptive technologists, must continue to create technology that brings about love, true love, to the world.

The Bible defines love with words such as “patient, kind, trusting, hopeful, persevering.” It says love does not envy, boast, or dishonor

others, is not proud, self-seeking, or easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. How are the products we build furthering this definition of love? How are they helping humanity live with more of this kind of love?

In the end, we commit to making tools that turn users into persons who love God and love others more deeply.

*Christ's love compels us  
as creators of technology to no longer  
live for self but to live for him.*



An abstract graphic featuring a network of orange dots connected by thin lines, resembling a molecular or digital structure, spanning the width of the page.

# **A Way of Practicing Redemptive Technology**

We commit to building technology redemptively  
by valuing people as image-bearers of God—both  
ourselves and others.



We've outlined the problems we see at the heart of the tech ecosystem today. The *Killer App Trap* believes there's a tech solution for everything, and the *Faith and Work Gap* believes that two central pieces of our lives can't coexist. We at FaithTech believe that both beliefs are misguided.

We've also described three relationships that builders can have toward technology: Reckless, Responsible, or Redemptive. And with the Redemptive posture in view, we've laid out a clear set of beliefs, values, and tools to guide our development.

So how do all these come together into a true product design and development process?

We have created a four-step framework for how we build redemptive technology that incorporates all these elements into a practical way of building a product.

Each of the four steps—Discover, Discern, Develop, Demonstrate—starts with a summary statement, then describes the reality we inhabit and the redemptive opportunities that exist. Our goal here is to give you the heart and ethos behind each stage.

*We believe there is  
a way of building technology  
that redemptively changes the world  
while transforming those who build it.*



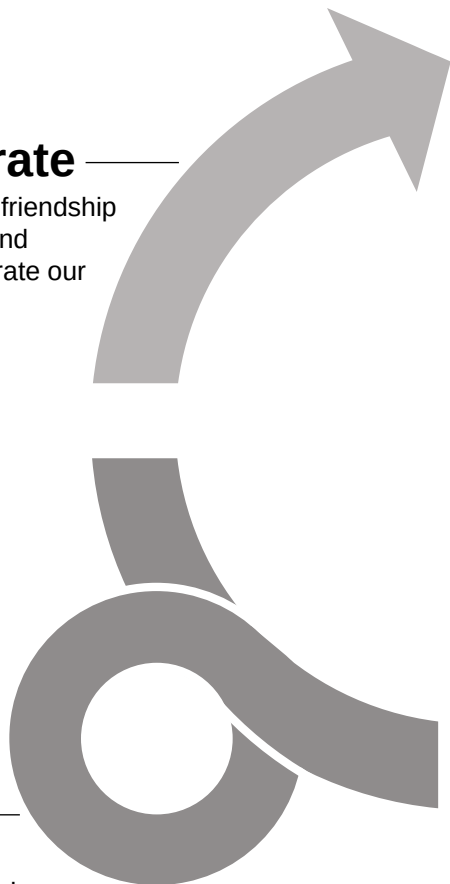
# 4D Cycle

## 4. Demonstrate

We redefine impact as friendship compounded by time and measure and demonstrate our impact redemptively.

## 3. Develop

We recognize that God establishes our steps to develop the solution and we co-develop with the Holy Spirit.







## **1. Discover**

We reorient ourselves to see, through the lens of Christ, those most affected by the problem.

## **2. Discern**

We involve the wisdom of God, testing and refining our approach continually.

# Discover

## Summary

We reorient ourselves to see, through the lens of Christ, those most affected by the problem. We position ourselves humbly through a practice of lament. Through this process, we feel the pain the problem is causing, present it to Jesus, and invite the Holy Spirit to actively help us understand and respond to the problem.

## The Reality We Inhabit

At the heart of any tool or product is the problem that the product is solving. However, our tendency can be to jump to solutions before we deeply understand a problem. We sometimes do this righteously out of eagerness and passion, and also sometimes unrighteously because we are enchanted by the potential of technology's magic to solve a problem for us. As humans, we often lack the discernment to know what we *really* need. This ignorance can lead to products developed for individualistic, selfish ends rather than for true needs and redemptive purposes.

## Redemptive Opportunities

The process of lamenting the problem enables us to approach God. It leads us to surround a problem with his trustworthy faithfulness and to express the pain the problem is creating in light of his presence.

## Listen

Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” To begin any process of creating is to begin with a posture of listening. We listen to the people experiencing the problem. We pay attention. We take the hurts, pain, and suffering before the Lord in prayer. We listen with open ears to what God may be communicating to us and how he might be shaping our hearts and forming us in the process.

## Lament

In the FaithTech community, a problem is commonly expressed through lament. As innovators, we tend to run to the solution. But we press pause on that tendency for a moment.

We will truly discover the problem by lamenting the pain it causes, presenting it to Jesus, and inviting the Holy Spirit into the process of responding to it. Nehemiah models this in his reaction to Jerusalem’s destroyed city walls.

“Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night.” — *Nehemiah 1:5-6*

Nehemiah shows us that there is an appropriate time to lament the problem, deepen our compassion for those it affects, and present it with pre-emptive praise to God. By lamenting, we move beyond empathy and into compassion, taking a Christ-centered approach to ensure that the process starts and ends with him.

In lament, we also surround complaint with trust, recalling testimony to God's faithfulness and intervention in the past, and pulling this into the present reality. As we move forward rooted in this faith, we open our minds to access God's imagination for a redemptive solution.

A simple process for crafting a lament in community follows these steps:

1. **Address God.** Here we acknowledge God as holy, all-powerful, and the ultimate answer to our lament.
2. **Describe the problem to him.** We express the pain. We don't hold back. Like Nehemiah, we personalize the problem. We come to see ourselves as broken alongside others, in need of God's grace and redemption. We are not just mediators of God's redemption to others, but we too are recipients of it. We lift to God the cry of those we want to serve and our compassion for them.
3. **Recall testimony.** As we recall God's work in our lives, we ultimately express trust. We remember what God has done for us. We build our faith based on God's loving faithfulness.
4. **Petition him.** We ask for God's attention. We address him directly. This request moves us to repentance on behalf of those who have caused injustice, pain, and suffering among those affected by the problem we want to solve.

5. **Ask for God's intervention.** We plead with God to act, based on our testimony and petition. We place our faith completely in him to guide us as we seek to solve the problem before us.
6. **Praise him in advance.** We offer thanks in faith that God will guide, inspire, and help as we, in community, move toward discerning, developing, and demonstrating a solution.

This process of discovery guides a team through a prayerful, relational, Scripture-driven approach. By inviting Jesus into the process of building toward meaningful transformation we reduce the risk of building reckless technology.

# Discern

## Summary

We involve the wisdom of God, testing and refining our approach continually. We recognize that true discernment often comes from beyond our own frames of reference, and we seek to uncover and understand the will of God.

## The Reality We Inhabit

At this point we can so easily fall into a lazy posture of indiscrimination. It is at the stage of discernment where we run the greatest risk of building reckless technology. It is the easiest stage to ignore or skip. We think of some quick solutions and we start building. It is back to “move fast, break things.” We buy into the lie that without disrupting an industry, without moving at light speed to do so, we will not win.

## Redemptive Opportunities

Our response, above all else, is to engage in prayerful discernment, seeking the will of God for what may come next. As Paul the apostle instructs us:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”  
— *Romans 12:2*

We move from “How Might We” (human-centered) toward “How Might Jesus” (Christ-centered) as we discern if, what, and how we might build.

To aid in our discernment, we choose from four potential postures toward technology:

1. **Reject:** Where the *Killer App Trap* says “technology is always the solution,” we understand that technology should not be the sole answer. In fact, we realize that there are times when it is not the answer at all.
2. **Receive:** Where a tech solution already exists, we can embrace it if it aligns with the community we are serving and the kingdom returns we are seeking. We curate, rather than create, custom-built technology that risks placing ourselves and others in technical debt.
3. **Reimagine:** Where existing technology can be reimaged and adapted for redemptive goals, we take it and adapt it to deliver these goals.
4. **Create:** Where something needs to be built to solve a problem, we invite the Holy Spirit to guard us from building anything that may unintentionally exploit those we seek to serve. Moreover, we commit to actively imagine how our innovations might be abused, exploited, or misused, and we design guardrails where possible.

This process of discernment upends brainstorming. We pause to engage in two-way conversation with the Holy Spirit. We continually learn how to listen well, steward our ideas, and free ourselves from the cultural chains of the *Killer App Trap*. Such discernment provides a unique opportunity to aim our resources toward redemptive action.

# Develop

## Summary

In coming to a build decision, we have set our course. But we recognize that God establishes our steps to develop the solution. The outworking of these steps therefore comes through the active involvement of the Holy Spirit to reveal what is in God's imagination, so that we can co-create with him in making new things visible. Therefore we do not simply develop but rather co-develop with the Holy Spirit.

## The Reality We Inhabit

The air we breathe in technology development is efficiency and speed, especially if one can accomplish great feats of innovation in isolation. We idolize people's ability to transcend their body's demands for sleep and health in order to create a product out of sheer willpower and magical brilliance. We so easily forget the true reality that all information, knowledge, and understanding is God's. "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding" (Prov 2:6).

## Redemptive Opportunities

Our response to the reality we inhabit is what we call the *Co-Creation Cycle*.

What we need already exists in God, and through the Holy Spirit, he will reveal this to us, so that what is not yet visible can be brought into view. The Bible says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb 11:3).



Our creative rhythm therefore involves the Holy Spirit and invites him to develop our roadmap from initial build to final solution. Through this approach we can be sure that our development journey will continue to account for all those who we seek to serve, the beneficiaries of our product, as well as those who are building it. We follow a simple iterative rhythm as the development journey unfolds.

### **Co-Creation Cycle**

1. **Request.** We approach God by inviting the Holy Spirit into this step of the process. We thank him for what he has already revealed, and petition him to impart to us the next step of the development roadmap. For “in their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps” (Prov 16:9).
2. **Receive.** We wait. We get comfortable in silence together. We seek Scripture, words, pictures, hints, and details. As the Holy Spirit downloads these to us, we capture them.
3. **Review.** We bring these thoughts, these inclinations, these words, pictures, and scriptures together, and they form the map of the current step of the development cycle.
4. **Render.** We take what the Spirit is downloading and render it into our physical reality. We implement the Spirit-inspired plan in faith. As we complete the tasks in hand, we continue to listen for the guidance of God through the Holy Spirit.
5. **Rejoice.** We pause to thank God for what has been created and celebrate in his co-creation with us.

This simple structure can be repeated as iterations. We “keep asking,” creating a rhythm of Spirit-led inspiration and planning as

we develop (Eph 1:17). The Spirit draws us closer to those we are serving and those we are serving alongside.

The Bible says, “in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). As Spirit-led people, we have the amazing ability to access this treasure.

Ultimately in building our relationship with the Creator through the Holy Spirit, we gain access to resources that are above our own. This access unlocks the opportunity to build beyond our own power and capability. We have the chance to build something that can truly demonstrate Christ's redemptive love to both those we are serving and those who are building.

# Demonstrate

## Summary

We redefine impact from the greatest amount of force in the shortest amount of time to friendship compounded by time. Using this new equation, we measure and demonstrate our impact redemptively.

## The Reality We Inhabit

A myth of tech startup success is that the most impactful product and company achieves the greatest amount of force in the shortest amount of time. The faster we can get an exit, or sell a product, or attract users, the greater our impact will be—or so the thinking goes.

As Andy Crouch has observed, the modern definition of impact looks like this:

$$i = \frac{f}{t}$$

Where  $i$  = impact,  $f$  = force, and  $t$  = time.

In tech, this formula often communicates a requirement to build at the lowest cost, as quickly as possible, to gain the highest possible financial return. But often the impact results in exploitation, breakdown of family structures, and burnout in those who build. Modern impact is also displayed by the wide-yet-shallow networks of social media, built for short-term impact. Communities, families, and even children are sacrificed on the altar of short-term, forceful impact. This sort of impact increases the distance between us, when God's plan was always for us to draw nearer to one another.

## Redemptive Opportunities

Our impact is not demonstrated by the amount of force over time, but rather by the compounding of relationships over time—both as a team and with the community we are building to serve. The greatest redemptive opportunity is not just an impactful product—rather it is the development of relationships with God, with the team, and with the beneficiaries of the solution.

Crouch's definition of influence looks like this:

$$i = f^t$$

Where  $i$  = influence,  $f$  = friendship, and  $t$  = time.

We suggest that this could also be considered “redemptive impact” ( $ri$ ):

$$ri = f^t$$

Redemptive impact begins with a counter-cultural force called friendship. The willingness to go deep in community over time, building relationships that require sacrifice. This impact is demonstrated most powerfully in the lifestyle of Jesus Christ. Jesus devoted most of his energy and time to a small group of twelve men, with an even smaller circle of three friends—Peter, James, and John. Deep friendship compounded over time produces deep people who develop redemptive impact.

We gauge redemptive impact by how it redefines the community, including both those we are serving and those who are building. And it is demonstrated through the lasting nature of that relationship, as opposed to quick-win solutions that may work for a time but leave those we are serving indebted and alone in the future.

In the end, we create and demonstrate our work through a redemptive lens, giving praise and credit to the work of the Holy Spirit.

## A Redemptive Way

This way of practicing redemptive technology is our answer to the two problems we unpacked at the beginning of this Playbook. The *Killer App Trap* and the *Faith and Work Gap* exemplify two huge challenges followers of Jesus face in the technology ecosystem today. We believe the 4D Cycle offers a new way for us to travel. A way that goes beyond our imagination and leads us towards Christ.

The *Killer App Trap* claims that technology will solve our deepest human problems. It tempts us to move fast, solve selfishly, ignore repercussions, and trust in the solutions built by our own hands. But living by the Spirit invites us to discover and discern. When the eyes of our heart are opened, we see the faces of others in the light of Christ. We lament the brokenness they experience and see our own needs reflected in their eyes. We invite God's Spirit to give us wisdom and spark our imaginations for things we do not yet see.

The *Faith and Work Gap* says that our identities as technologists are fragmented, and we are outsiders in both our churches and our workplaces. But our Creator has made us image-bearers and invites us to create, develop, and demonstrate his plans in our communities. Our identity as co-creators means we belong to God and co-create with him at work and at church. And we develop with an ear for the Holy Spirit, listening for his leading at every step.

*We believe the 4D Cycle  
offers a new way for us to travel.  
A way that goes beyond our imagination  
and leads us towards Christ.*



An abstract graphic featuring a dense network of red dots connected by thin red lines, creating a complex web-like pattern. The dots vary in size and are distributed across the page, with a higher concentration in the lower half. A dark grey rectangular box is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, containing the text 'exit()'.

**exit()**



We truly believe, and hope we have demonstrated, that there is a uniquely Jesus way of building products. Moreover, we believe there is a uniquely Jesus way of building redemptively and becoming people who live by the Spirit. A way that faithfully displays the magnificence of Jesus Christ in the way we shape technology and are shaped by God along the way.



We invite you, then, to join us in this grandiose yet simple vision to *practice redemptive technology in a co-creating, sacrificial community*.

Right. So what can you do now?

We highly recommend two things as very practical next steps:

1. **Reflect.** Ask these three questions as often as possible:
  - a. How do we live by the Spirit as we create technology?
  - b. How do we build things that keep in view people as image-bearers?
  - c. How do we create products that help humanity become persons who love God and love others more deeply?
2. **Create.** Share this journey with others. Work through this playbook together. Discuss each section in a community. Spend your time creating. By God's grace, we have active, local, in-person FaithTech communities seeking to build together and live out the values presented in this playbook. Find your nearest community on [www.faithtech.com](http://www.faithtech.com). And if there isn't one near you, get in touch with us to explore starting one!

We believe there is a way of building technology that redemptively changes the world while transforming those who build it. We believe this because we believe in a Savior who sacrificed himself willingly to love and serve us and who calls us to this way of life.

Jesus calls us to find community and steward our skills to glorify him. He, the Creator, calls us into a journey of co-creation, to be image-bearers with him. And he calls us to enjoy the journey. To enjoy the process. And to enjoy his presence.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City*, 2011 edition: p 137.
- <sup>2</sup> Sayers, Mark, *Disappearing Church: From Cultural Relevance to Gospel Resilience* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016) 48.
- <sup>3</sup> We are indebted to Praxis for their work on the Redemptive Frame that shaped our thinking for Redemptive Technology considerably.
- <sup>4</sup> Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: IVP), 97-8.

*This playbook is about a  
different way of building technology,  
and being a builder of technology.*

*A redemptive way.*



Dear Friends,

This playbook was a deeply collaborative effort. A huge thanks to my colleague and friend, Kevin Burgess. Thank you for doubling down to make this playbook happen! To Beth Round, our fierce Operations leader of FaithTech. Thank you for your wisdom and unique ability to keep this project moving ahead! And to the entire FaithTech staff team. I am truly blessed to be on this journey with you. What a privilege it is to work with you.

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A special thank you to our friends at Praxis. If you read their Redemptive Nonprofit playbook you will see that we stole (with permission of course) a great deal of ideas from them. So much love.

Big shout out to the many gospel patrons of our work as FaithTech. This playbook doesn't happen without you. Thank you.

And thank you to the many others that we love so much that gave input into this project. The countless conversations, reviews, challenges, and insights. We are so blessed.

God is on the move!

*James Kelly, Founder of FaithTech*

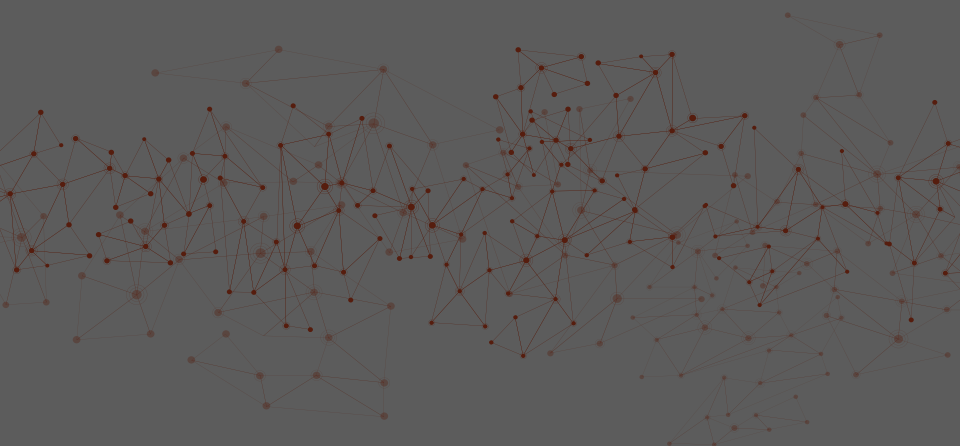


THE FAITHTECH PLAYBOOK:  
PRACTICING REDEMPTIVE TECHNOLOGY  
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