

“Could Theological Education Be Better Online?”

by Dan Ulrich

1. Dan Ulrich finds some very positive uses of technology in education. What is your experience with learning on the computer, formally and informally? What kinds of things have you learned on the Internet, for instance?
2. Ulrich believes that groups learning together online form a type of community even when they are far from each other geographically. What is the basis for community in a class that meets together in a single physical space? How, if at all, is a community that gathers online any different?
3. Ulrich says, “Online discussions allow time and space for everyone to contribute so that participation is more easily required and a lack of preparation more obvious.” Why do you think people feel more compelled to engage in a group discussion when they are online than when they are physically together in one room?
4. What are the advantages to online learning? Do you see any disadvantages? Consider an experiment with online learning with a Sunday school class or other small group. Agree together to read a news article or blog online and then use Facebook or even e-mail to make comments that everyone else in the group will read. After a few days, when everyone has had a chance to comment, prepare another set of comments about the experience. Did you like the format? Was it frustrating? Did you feel apprehensive about sharing your ideas? Or did you find it easier to speak up when you were online?