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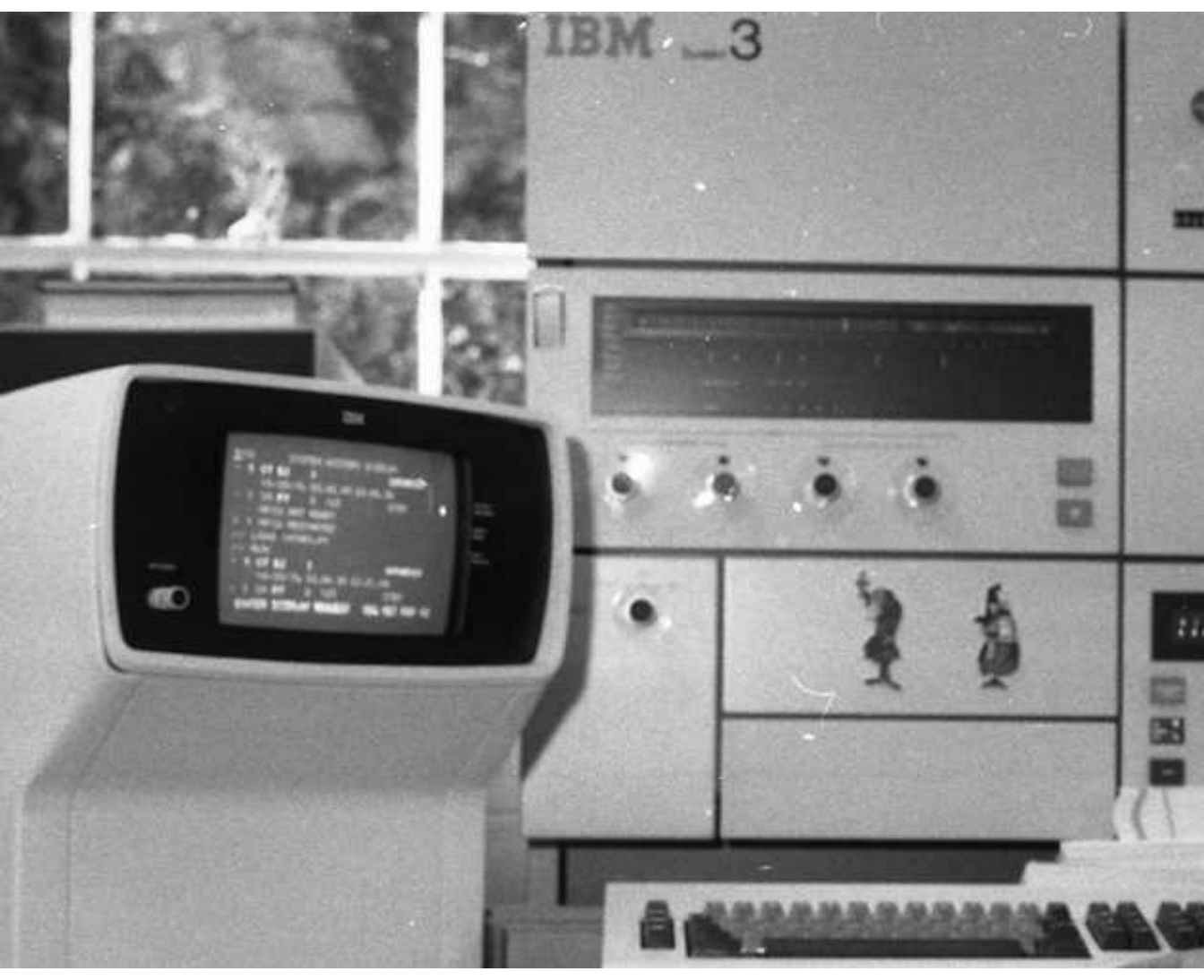
5 Ways the Doherty Threshold Des



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Once upon a time, I wanted to get my degree in computer science, work for Google, and make truckloads of money. I was *this* close to going to Purdue University to follow in my father's footsteps and study it. I loved computers in middle school and high school. Then, I learned that to do computer science, you have to learn really advanced math. I was not about that.

So, instead of going to a cheap state school to learn a scientific trade and make truckloads of money, I went to an expensive private school to learn a liberal arts trade and make Matchbox-truckloads of money.

I know, right?

Anyway, I've been watching *Halt and Catch Fire* on Netflix recently. It's a fascinating show from AMC about the cutthroat nature of the early days in the computing world. It's like Mad Men, but instead of focusing on 1960s advertising, it focuses on 1980s computing, and features a lot less alcohol.

In a recent episode I watched, they mentioned the "Doherty Threshold." What is the Doherty Threshold, you didn't ask? Well I would be delighted to tell you:

> In 1982 Walter J. Doherty and Ahrvind J. Thadani published, in the IBM Systems Journal, a research paper that set the requirement for computer response time to be 400 milliseconds, not 2,000 (2 seconds) which had been the previous standard.
>
> When a human being's command was executed and returned an answer In under 400 milliseconds, it was deemed to exceed the Doherty threshold, and use of such applications were deemed to be "addicting" to users.

(If you're interested in reading the original IBM Systems Journal article, you poor, helpless soul, you can here.)

The Doherty Threshold is the reason you whine when Microsoft Word takes 25 seconds to load instead of five seconds to load.

Our pathetic inability to pay attention to something for any significant amount of time, and our remarkable ability to lose our patience at the drop of a hat, or a glass of milk, perhaps, are rooted in this idea that we can access the world at our fingertips in less than 400 milliseconds.

This affects the church, you know? How? Five ways our impatience destroys our churches:

1. We lack the patience God has for us.

God truly is a patient God, isn't he? Scripture tells us this in a number of places:

> But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (Ps 86:15)
>
> Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? (Rom 2:4)
>
> And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, (2 Pet 3:15)

Jesus tells us in John 13:34 to love one another as he has loved us. A HUGE part of love is patience. I admit: I'm not very good at this (just ask my wife). We feel this in our churches, don't we? How much of the conflict we find in church might be resolved with a bit of patience and humble love?

Our lack of patience for life in general keeps us from loving others as Christ has loved us.

2. We judge others based on soundbites.

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Rage culture is a sickness. It plagues the broader culture around it. Social media only fuels this flame. The mob mentality is dangerous, especially when the mob is

organized around something morally questionable.

We demand change too often, quite frankly, because it's working for some people. No one has ever accused me of not having strong opinions, so I know this feeling. But one of the most important pieces of advice my dad ever gave me was this: choose your battles.

> *Don't submit to the ignorance forged by our soundbite world. We've never been so informed and so ignorant at the same time.*

I like to get in more battles than I would prefer to admit. Many of us in the church are this way. Choose your battles. Don't demand change at every turn.

4. We get angry when change is slow.

In the local church, we can grab our torches and pitchforks like people on social media do and demand change in an instant, but it likely isn't going to change that fast. Change in church can take a bit, and it requires more patience than we're often willing to give it.

Be patient. Change is good, and it's okay to advocate for it, it might just take longer than you'd like. This is especially true in larger churches. It takes more effort to turn a battleship than it does a paddleboat.

5. We leave churches at the first sign of friction.

When we experience friction in the church, it's incredibly tempting to leave, isn't it?

I've written a bit about this before. People aren't perfect, even in the church, and we need to have enough patience to not skip town the first time someone scuffs our self-esteem. Conflict happens. No one likes it. No one likes solving it (except maybe me).

We need to remember our call to love others as we have been loved by Christ. Friction is annoying, but forgiveness is essential.

Our lack of patience destroys our churches. It make only take a few seconds to solve a puzzle in Candy Crush, but real life problems take longer to solve, and the solution isn't to bail when we get bored.

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