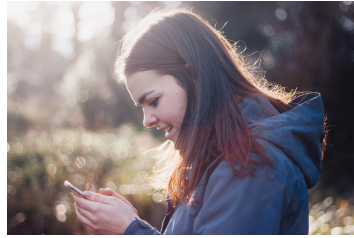


Technology Addiction: Will We Do Anything about It?

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The addictive power of technology. It's like ivy on the edifice of our culture, every day growing stronger and finding more and more places to thrive. Today, wherever we go—to work, to school, to the park, to the bathroom, to bed—our technology goes with us to help us, inform us, entertain us, and keep us “connected.”



We all know this and sometimes it makes us sad. Somehow, we know that we've lost something. Was it a relationship? A creative idea? A memory?

We are also willing to talk about it, especially as we see it in others. We cluck our tongues and wag our heads about the “youngsters.” We gasp at the college students and their video games. “What is our world coming to?” we wail. But sometimes, when we're honest, we admit the power that it has over us, too.

This is an important admission, but once we make it, there is yet a harder question that faces us: “Are we going to do anything about it?” Like with eating habits and exercise, talk is cheap.

A Worldwide Addiction?

I recently returned from teaching at a Bible school overseas. Imagine me in class as I announce that we will take a 10 minute break. Within seconds, nearly every student has pulled out a phone or computer. For 10 minutes, I sit and look at these 15 faces, lit up by flickering lights. Then class begins again.

I am not trying to disparage these students. This is becoming our world culture. Is it becoming a worldwide addiction?

Technology can be wonderful and useful for so many things. I'm no advocate of a return to scrolls and wax tablets. Like you, I rely heavily on these tools to do my day-to-day work. But I don't know anyone who is blind to the negative effects that it can have if allowed to take control. It can make relationships superficial, dry up creativity, sap thoughtful extended concentration, and just plain waste our time.

What will you do?

Yes, I know, this is yet another article lamenting the effects of technology in our day. But maybe this article will be just a little different, because I'm not

just pointing out the problem, I'm really asking, “Are we going to do anything about it?” I don't mean at a cultural level, but personally.

If you think that the internet may have too much of a hold on your time and interest; if it harms your ability to pray, to relate to others, to concentrate; if you believe that perhaps your life could be richer, even more godly if it were freed from this power, let me offer you a few practical suggestions. I hope you will use them, and even modify them, in ways that fit your life.

- Consider setting a time each day when you are committed to being disconnected. Perhaps this is between dinner and 8 pm, a time when you can connect in a real way with your family and others.
- Reconsider your use of social media. Do you really need several social media accounts? Maybe you should just stick to one or two and get off the others.
- Think carefully about the apps you have on your phone. Are these apps distracting you? Do they fill your free moments and even your not-so-free moments? Think of your phone as a tool and use it insofar as it is useful. Is it really enriching to your life to have games or Facebook so readily accessible? We should even think about news and sports apps carefully. Do they provide you helpful information or do they just entertain you with a barrage of stories that have very little effect on your life?
- Evaluate honestly whether or not TV is adding value to your life. I'm in no way opposed to a little entertainment now and then and a movie or TV show may be just the right thing, but I've been in many homes where the constantly flickering TV screen dominates the family life. One alternative form of entertainment is reading out loud. My wife and I have really enjoyed doing that together this last year.
- Think about going “old school” with a few things that you do. Perhaps you would want to switch back to reading hard-copy books. Or maybe you want to journal with pen and paper. Who knows? It might even be fun to write a real letter now and then!
- Finally, try a once-per-month “fast day.” This may be a weekend day when you don't have as many responsibilities that require the use of technology. Try not to use your phone except to call and receive calls and commit to staying off the internet completely. I think you will enjoy this oasis time immensely.