Daily Devotional: For when technology becomes too much

Introduction

The premise of this week's devotional is simple. God, as a loving Father, wants to give good gifts to his children. We often recognize quickly that Satan, and all the forces of evil in the world, desire to steal those gifts away. We are usually quick to pray that he is not able to steal those gifts from us. But there is another tactic of the enemy that we often miss-and it is often more painful for us, and for God. Because the only thing worse for a Father than seeing his gifts stolen from his children is to see those gifts used to harm them instead of bless them.

Think about it-if you gave someone a gift, what would be a worse outcome? Someone stealing the gift from them, or the gift bringing them harm? Imagine if you bought someone a car, and a month later the car was stolen. Now imagine you bought someone a car and a month later it broke down beyond repair and left them stranded on the side of the road in the middle of winter. While it would certainly be upsetting for the car to be stolen, the second scenario would in many ways be far worse. You bought them a car so that they could safely and reliably get to the places they needed to go. Not only did the car not get them to their destination, it put them in an inconvenient and *dangerous* position!

So we must be aware that Satan will *always* try to take the blessings of God and use them to bring us pain instead of comfort, anxiety instead of peace, and depression instead of joy.

This week we'll be highlighting the ways that technology is used as a destructive force in our lives. Maybe you don't feel that this applies to you-I'd invite you to work through the week anyway. First of all, because you might discover that technology has more hold over your life than you think. And even if it doesn't, there may be other areas in life that a good thing is being used against you.

Day 1— Enough Honey

Scripture:

> *If you find honey, eat just enough— too much of it, and you will vomit.*
>
> *Proverbs 25:16*

There's something wonderfully practical about this verse. You find honey. You like honey. But if you keep eating it simply because there is more available, something good will eventually make you sick.

That's worth thinking about in a world where there is always another video, another episode, another message, another story. The supply isn't going to tell you when to stop. You can spend an entire evening looking at things that are enjoyable and still go to bed feeling empty, restless, and strangely exhausted.

We often ask whether something is good or bad. That's an important first question, but in our world of unrestricted access we must also ask this: Have I had enough?

Maybe you watched something funny and enjoyed a few minutes of rest. Good! What happened in the hour after that? Maybe you checked the news to understand what was happening. At what point did being informed become repeatedly feeding your anxiety? Maybe you were catching up with a friend, and somewhere along the way you started comparing your whole life to everyone else's best moments.

Prayer:

Ask God the following questions, and record what comes to mind below.

"Where have I continued consuming after I've already had enough?"

_____

_____

What is that excess taking the place of—sleep, prayer, conversation, work, or simply being quiet?

_____

_____

Day 2— Into the light

> *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."*
>
> *John 3:19-21*

Yesterday, we asked God to reveal areas where we are living in excess. Today, we're going to follow Jesus' command do bring our deeds into the light. One of the best ways to test anything in our lives is to bring it into the light. If were are ashamed to say out loud something that we've done, or a thought that we have, there's a good chance that action or idea was not of God. Today, we're going to bring our lives into the light.

Today, begin by taking an honest look. If your device shows your screen time, look at it. Include the time spent watching television, gaming, or moving between devices. What else has God revealed you spend too much time doing? Maybe it's an unproductive hobby or activity. How many hours a day are you spending on that thing? (Note: you don't need to include screen time that is directly related to your job or school)

Got that number? Good-write it down here: _____

It might be hard to look at that number, written in your own handwriting. But the first step in moving forward is bringing things into the light. Today, we're not worried about fixing the problem, we're just here to recognize it and face it.

Prayer:

Start your time in prayer today just noticing how you feel. Is it shame and embarrassment? Guilt? Maybe anger, at yourself or others. Take those feelings to God. Remind yourself that he doesn't call us into the light to make us feel ashamed, he does it to allow us to be cleansed and healed.

Look at what you've written down over the last two days and prayerfully consider-is there something that needs to be changed, and are you ready to change it? Keep in prayer over this for the next day, we'll pick up where we left off tomorrow.

Day 3— First Step

On many journeys in life, the first step is the most difficult. An object at rest stays at rest, right? Getting moving is often the greatest challenge. Today, we're going to do just that-we're going to get moving!

Yesterday, I asked you to pray about what in your life needs to change. I trust that in the last 24 hours God has revealed something to you that no longer has a place in your life. Now that you know what that is, let's get started on the path towards healing.

Scripture:

> *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*
>
> *James 5:16*

Today is short, but tough. Here's your challenge-*tell somebody*. That's it! Connect with a trusted, Christian friend and tell them what you're working on. Tell them what your average screen time is, tell them what you feel God is calling you to change, and ask them to pray with you as you move forward.

Prayer:

Pray about who you should ask to pray with you through this. If you need to, pray that you have the strength and willingness to actually make that phone call. Vulnerability can be hard and you will need God's help to go through with it!

Today's devotional is short-that was intentional! Use the extra time to make that call or send that text now.

Day 4— Open Your Hand

Scripture:

> *Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.*
>
> *Ecclesiastes 4:6*

> *"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.*
>
> *1 Corinthians 6:12*

Ecclesiastes gives us a picture of one handful with quietness and two handfuls with toil and chasing the wind. Imagine standing there with both hands tightly closed, trying to hold everything you can possibly gather.

Now open one hand.

You have less in your hands. But you also have room to receive, room to give, and room to rest.

We can fill our lives the same way. Every quiet moment gets occupied. We watch a show while checking messages. We listen to something while scrolling through something else. Even our rest becomes crowded.

Today, we're going to put something down.

In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul refuses to be mastered by anything. His immediate discussion concerns the body and sexual immorality, but that commitment also gives us a searching question for our habits: Have I allowed this thing to exercise control over me?

Set a boundary right now. Take your phone (or whatever it is that you're working on giving up) and physically remove it from you. Put it on the other side of the house in a drawer. If you're in your car, put it in the glove compartment *and lock it closed*. If you're doing your devotionals in a park, throw it in the pond. Something to *substantially* distance yourself from it.

Now go to prayer

Close your eyes and open your hands. Ask God to help you create space in your life. Pause and examine what it feels like. Are you feeling and hearing phantom phone notifications yet? Are you realizing how much of your energy is taken up by constantly waiting for those little buzzes in your pocket?

Now think about how much more peace you would have if your whole life was more like this moment. Begin to pray about what needs to be different. What needs to change in order to bring this into your life. We'll continue this throughout the rest of the week, but begin considering what boundaries you

need to set up. Maybe you take time every day to do this same exercise. Maybe you delete certain apps and only use technology for specific tasks. Maybe you stop carrying your phone in your pocket, and intentionally keep it in less convenient places. You don't need to have it all figured out, just begin.

Day 5— Sit Down

Scripture:

> *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*
>
> *Luke 10:38–42*

Martha welcomes Jesus into her home. Mary sits at his feet and listens. Martha becomes distracted by all the preparations, and eventually she asks Jesus to tell her sister to help.

There's something uncomfortable about this story. Martha is doing something good. She is serving. And yet her attention has become so divided that she is frustrated with the person sitting and listening to the very guest she is working to welcome.

We can do that too. We can have a Bible app, a collection of sermons, a worship playlist, and a full schedule of church messages—and still struggle to sit quietly with Jesus. Even helpful things can become one more way to keep moving.

Jesus speaks to Martha personally. He sees her worry and distraction. He points her toward the good portion Mary has chosen.

Today, we remind ourselves once again that even though there are so many beneficial things on our phones or other distracting habits, even good things can pull us away from Jesus.

Prayer:

Reflect on your mindset and how it's beginning to change. Make a list of all the "good reasons" to use your phone and technology. Bring those before God. First, ask if there is anything on the list that shouldn't be there (meaning it isn't as beneficial as you may think it is). Second, prayerfully consider how none of those things are better than simply being in the presence of Jesus. Maybe you watch an hour of reels every day that are sermon clips and devotionals. That's not bad, but it isn't necessarily being with him either.

Day 6— What Are You Taking In?

Scripture:

> *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*
>
> *Philippians 4:8–9*
>
> *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
>
> *Romans 12:2*

By now, you may have noticed that less screen time creates more quiet. But we also need to consider what we allow into the time that remains.

What do you carry away after you've been online? Are you more thankful? More patient? More ready to love the people around you? Or do you walk away angry at strangers, dissatisfied with your home, suspicious of everyone, and convinced that your life is falling behind?

In Philippians, Paul directs our attention toward what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Then he calls us to put what we have learned into practice. What occupies our thoughts matters, and so does what we do with it.

Prayer and practice:

My prayer for you this week is that these brief moments of quiet have shown you how different time in God's presence is from time (even "good" time) engaging with the world in all its forms.

Ask God to renew your mind and reveal any influence you've been defending that is drawing you away from him. Remove or mute a source of that influence.

Also, while we've been focused on things in our life that are not necessarily sinful, we also recognize that as a possibility. If you have been engaging with content that is sinful, take a clear step away from it, repent, and ask for forgiveness.

Then choose something good to give your attention to. Prayerfully come up with a plan to replace those things in your life that are keeping you from him with that which is good.

Replace your phone in your front pocket with a bible-if you don't have one, print out some scripture and keep that in your pocket.

Choose a place in your home for your phone to live-keep it away from the couch and the bedroom.

Make a decision to only use your phone if you’re standing up-make it uncomfortable and inconvenient.

Whatever you do-turn yourself back to Jesus, sit at his feet, and receive all the good he has for you.