

Session 3

“Clarity About Technology”

1 Corinthians 6, 10

Intro

Clarity

The quality of being transparent or understandable. Free from ambiguity.

- Honestly, sometimes we *like* ambiguity.
- We do not “drift” toward wisdom.
- 1 Corinthians: “Ancient Truth” for our Digital, Distracted, Anxious Age.

1 Corinthians 6:12-13

“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. 13 “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

1 Corinthians 10:23-26, 31

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 26 For “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” ... 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God

“All things are lawful for me” ... “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof”

1. Digital technology can serve good purposes.

- First Creation & New Creation feature technology:

“A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.” (Gen. 2:10-12)

“The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel...” (Rev. 21:18-19)

“Technology is the reordering of raw materials for human purposes. Adam and Eve reordered the raw materials of soil in order to make plants and flowers flourish. Today, chefs and cooks reorder the raw materials of food into delicious meals. Framing carpenters reorder raw materials of lumber and nails to form homes. Pharmaceutical chemists reorder organic and synthetic elements into healing drugs. Musicians reorder notes and sounds into music. Novelists reorder the raw material of human experience into stories. As a writer of nonfiction, I reorder the raw materials of words and ideas for a publisher, which then reorders wood pulp, black ink, and binding glue into a book for you to hold and read. All of this is technology.”

–Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, 31

“But not all things are helpful”

2. Digital technology can become an unhelpful influence in our lives.

- Technology can be used for evil purposes.
- Some things are not *immoral* but *unhelpful*. They compete with God’s will for our lives.

Distraction

“The average American college student wastes 20 percent of class time tinkering on a digital device, doing things unrelated to class (a statistic that seems low to me!). When life becomes more demanding, we crave something else—anything else.”

–**Tony Reinke**, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, 44

- Shallow things are constantly vying for your attention.
- This doesn’t just affect us when we’re using our devices...

“Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.” –**Nicholas Carr**, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, 7

- Bible reading in a day of distraction...

“The more time I spend reading ten-second tweets and skimming random articles online, the more it affects my attention span, weakening the muscles I need to read Scripture for long distances.” –**Trip Lee**, Rap Artist

➤ Neuroplasticity

“Efforts to deepen your focus will struggle if you don’t simultaneously wean your mind from a dependence on distraction. Much in the same way that athletes must take care of their bodies outside of their training sessions, you’ll struggle to achieve the deepest levels of concentration if you spend the rest of your time fleeing the slightest hint of boredom. We can find evidence for this claim in the research of Clifford Nass, the late Stanford communications professor who was well known for his study of behavior in the digital age. ...Nass summarizes:

So we have scales that allow us to divide up people into people who multitask all the time and people who rarely do, and the differences are remarkable. People who multitask all the time can’t filter out irrelevancy. They can’t manage a working memory. They’re chronically distracted. ...The people we talk with continually said, ‘look, when I really have to concentrate, I turn off everything and I am laser-focused.’ And unfortunately, they’ve developed habits of mind that make it impossible for them to be laser-focused. They’re suckers for irrelevancy. They just can’t keep on task.”

–**Cal Newport**, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*, 158, citing Clifford Nass, “The Myth of Multitasking”

- We can become distracted about the deeper realities of life—our pings and push notifications allowing us to never have to be alone in our thoughts.
- We cannot live totally without distraction. But we can learn how to manage it wisely. ...We should have smartphones “as if we had none.”

“But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. 29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. 32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided... 35 I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:28-35)

Anxiety

➤ “The Age of Anxiety”

- A noisy world is an anxious world.
- We interact with more information than we can process or handle.

“He who increases knowledge increases sorrow.” (Ecc. 1:18)

“Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” (Ecc. 12:12)

- Teenagers & college students today: More physically safe, more psychologically frenzied.

“I will not be dominated by anything”

3. We often allow our use of technology to control us.

Addicted to Information

- The stimulation of something *new*.
- We train our brains—and our souls—to constantly want this.

Addicted to Affirmation

- We’ve gone from “I think, therefore I am” to “I connect, therefore I am” to “I am ‘liked,’ therefore I am.”

“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord”

4. Our interaction with technology can train us to indulge in secret vices.

- The eyes that look on a digital screen are made for the Lord.

“I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.” (Psalm 101:3)

“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor”**5. Our use of technology is often self-serving, and it insulates us from real relationships.**

➤ *“Hair of the Silence Ear Plugs” & “Silent Rave”*

- What texting-while-driving, viral anger, & positive feedback loops have in common...
- Does the way that we use our devices “project scorn for complex situations or boring people”?

“God has called us to love our neighbors, yet we turn to our phones to withdraw from our neighbors and to let everyone know we’d rather be somewhere else. In a meeting or a classroom, if my phone is put away, I am more likely to be perceived as engaged. If my phone is not in use, but is faceup on the table, I present myself as engaged for the moment, but possibly disengaged if someone more important outside the room needs me. And if my phone is in my hand, and I am responding to texts and scrolling social media, I project open dismissiveness, because ‘dividing attention is a typical expression of disdain.’”

–**Tony Reinke**, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, 44, quoting Oliver O’Donovan

➤ *“The 7 Minute Mark” in Conversations (Sherry Turkle)*

“Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”**6. We are to use technology to serve God’s call on our lives.**

Clarifying Questions About Your Smartphone Use

Answer “Yes,” “No,” or “Maybe.” If “Maybe,” revisit with the Lord later.

1. Do my smartphone habits expose an underlying addiction to untimely amusements?
2. Do my smartphone habits reveal a compulsive desire to be seen and affirmed?
3. Do my smartphone habits distract me from genuine communion with God?
4. Do my smartphone habits provide an easy escape from sobered thinking about my death, the return of Christ, and eternal realities?
5. Do my smartphone habits preoccupy me with the pursuit of worldly success?
6. Do my smartphone habits mute the sporadic leading of God’s Spirit in my life?
7. Do my smartphone habits preoccupy me with dating and romance?
8. Do my smartphone habits build up Christians and my local church?
9. Do my smartphone habits center on what is necessary to me and beneficial to others?
10. Do my smartphone habits disengage me from the needs of the neighbors God has placed right in front of me?

—Adapted from Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, 52