



# **Biblically Handling Technology and Social Media**

*Applying Biblical Principles to  
Facebook, Texting, iPods, etc.*

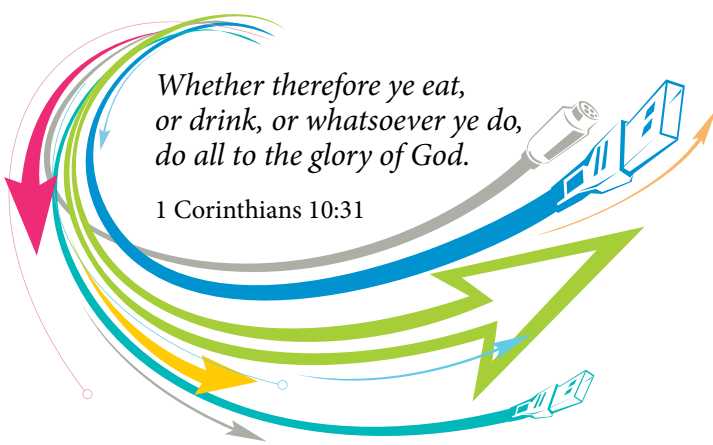
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## Preface

The speed at which technology has advanced in just the last decade is incredible! We are literally reeling with all the “new.” With so many innovations happening so quickly, it is easy to carelessly accept what is going on around us without mentally taking a step back and evaluating our Christian response to the times in which we live. In 1 Chronicles 12:32, the Bible talks about how *the children of Issachar . . . were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do*. We should accept this challenge to understand the times in which we live and learn how we, as Christians, should respond to our culture in a way that reflects a Biblical worldview.

The purpose of this booklet is to encourage and challenge God’s people to evaluate their use of digital devices and social media seriously and then to apply Biblical principles in their everyday use of these. This booklet also outlines cautions with the purpose of helping Christians sharpen their discernment levels. By allowing the Bible to create a framework of guidelines on which our choices and attitudes are based, we can bring glory to God and experience the blessings of victorious Christian living. This is not an exhaustive study in applying Biblical principles to the use of technology and social media, but is meant to simply be an aid for building a stronger Biblical worldview concerning our perspective and use of them. It is a comfort and blessing to know that God’s Word speaks to all our needs and desires including our entertainment, technology, and media choices. The Bible must be our blueprint for living.



*Whether therefore ye eat,  
or drink, or whatsoever ye do,  
do all to the glory of God.*

1 Corinthians 10:31

# Biblically Handling Technology and Social Media

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## So Much, So Quickly!

In the last two decades, the ever-increasing worldwide advances and uses of technology-based systems have created a cultural phenomenon that continues to escalate. Not only have a new list of words and phrases for our dictionaries emerged, but more significantly, these cultural changes also have dramatically affected the way we view and handle friendships, the workforce, and our own lifestyles. Take a moment and consider life without computers or the Internet—no emailing, social networking, on-line chatting, blogging, YouTube, Wikipedia, Twitter, online shopping, Internet gaming, or online education. Additionally, consider the remarkable uses of cell phones (particularly smartphones) with most having Internet capabilities, cameras, texting, voice commands, GPS, television capabilities, and much more to come. Mp3s, Mp4s, iPods, iPads, MacBooks, Wi-Fi, e-book readers, video games, and virtual reality are now considered just a part of life. It was not that many years ago that these were not even imaginable. Because a culture driven by on-demand technology and virtual relationships is now our “world,” how are we as Christians Biblically handling this world?

## Biblically “Taking On” Technology

Since we are part of the family of God, our lives should reflect His character of purity and holiness while we engage in the culture around us. We are to be distinctively Christian in our choices and actions so that the watching world can make no mistake that we are different—the *children of light* (Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5) and not enslaved to the world (Rom. 6:16). Let us take the challenge of making the Bible our **blueprint** for living, for it is *given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Though technological innovations are exciting, they bring both benefits and dangers. Therefore, one **key verse** to apply to our use of digital devices and social media is 1 Corinthians 10:31: ***Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*** Evaluating our actions and choices in light of this Biblical principle can help us to better achieve the challenge of Colossians 1:10: ***Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.***

## Being In the World but Not Of the World

Since we can't ignore the world we live in, we should be equipping ourselves to respond Biblically to it. As Christians, we are to be in the world, but not of the world: *And be not conformed to this world* (Rom. 12:2). Jesus Himself makes this point when He says in John 17:14 that we *are not of the world*, which should be a reminder to . . . *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth* (Col. 3:2). In this 21st century, the technology-based systems and media that our culture has embraced will affect our lives. How can we be distinctively different in our approach to these new advancements so that we are using them in ways that are not of the world, but instead with His principles in mind and therefore for His glory?



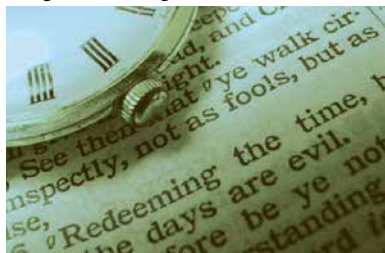
The danger in mindlessly copying the world's ways or responses is that we can easily be led into carelessness, foolishness, and sinfulness, often even becoming enslaved. Where are you today? Have you become a slave of texting, Facebook, YouTube, a blog (or other people's blogs; maybe you are a blogaholic!)? Or rather, have you learned how to make these cultural trends your servants—making sure that you remain their master? *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?* (Rom. 6:16).

All that God has provided, including these devices, can be tools for ministry. Tools usually have an intended use. As believers, our intended purpose is to be focused on doing all we do to further His kingdom. We are His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20); therefore, let us use whatever we have to serve Him well, *giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed* (2 Cor. 6:3).

Part of serving the Lord well is identifying the fact that many devices and media options are highly addictive in nature, making them potential time-stealers. We must be attentive to the TIME we are spending involved in the ventures of this world, so that we are not wasting time that could be spent more effectively on the Lord's desires for us. Ephesians 5:16 encourages us to redeem our time because the days in which we live are evil. Living in days that are evil means our enemy would like to trick us into wasting our time.

## **Redeeming the Time**

*Redeeming the time*—what does that mean, and how would one do that? What does redeem mean? While it does imply that we should use our time wisely, it also means to exchange something bad or unprofitable for something desirable. If something is to be redeemed, something must be ousted with the welcoming of a new reality. For example, it could be replacing our old sinful being with the new identity of Christ, or our mortal earthly bodies with the eternal perfect bodies we will receive in Heaven.



So how does this apply to us? What are you doing with technology? How can it get better? Here is my challenge to each of us: seek to redeem all your time. When on your computer, phone, or whatever, what are you doing? Is it in light of eternity? If it's not bad, is it good? If something is neutral, or cold, it has not been redeemed, according to the correct meaning. I challenge you, redeem your time and do something good with it. Make people see a person that is different, changing to be like Christ our Redeemer, in you, in ALL your posts, in ALL your texts, in ALL your tweets, in ALL your movies, in ALL your music, in ALL your life. *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* Ephesians 5:16

~Contributed by Josiah Dieckmann, age 17

## Four Basic Principles to Apply to Digital Media, Portable Media Players, and Social Media

While using your smartphone, iPod, iPad, Mp3 player, or while on Facebook, blogging, in the midst of Internet browsing, or playing video games (to name just a few of the many options that are available!), consider the four principles below to help you to better glorify God and thus be a good ambassador for Him.

### 1. Don't be rude—show respect for others.

One way that you can be distinctively different from the world while using any kind of device is to think of others more highly than yourself. Remember Jesus' standard of humility: *but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others* (Phil. 2:3-4). When God's people make the conscious effort to stop putting "me" first, they are less apt to be rude and more able to think of others' needs and feelings above their own. We have to remember that it can be uncomfortable to communicate with someone who is constantly checking a phone or texts, using an iPod or Bluetooth earbud, or is unable to take his eyes away from a Facebook page for even a minute to look directly at the one who is speaking to him. Being inconsiderate (rude) with our devices and social media sources can be especially discouraging for those who are less involved with the newest electronic and digital trends. Don't allow yourself to use anything in a way that could make others feel inferior.

Therefore, to show the highest level of respect and love for friends and family members, and additionally teachers (texting while in class is disrespectful), consider putting away communication and entertainment sources during the time that you are in their presence. If this concept makes you uneasy, it is possible that these devices have more power over you than you have intended to give them, and you are, as a result, using them more culturally than Biblically. One of the world's mottos is to live for ourselves first because life is "all about me." We hear messages around us that support this worldly view of life. If we are not careful, we can mindlessly adopt it ourselves and, sadly, many Christians have. Here are a couple more Biblical principles to guide us in keeping the mindset of putting others first: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Mk. 12:31); and *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love*

*as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous* (1 Pet. 3:8). Let us consciously try to combine courtesy with our technology use.

The Lord Jesus always treated people as important—more important than Himself. We need to be concerned about practicing the principles He has given us for loving others (see 1 Cor. 13:4-8). Specifically remember the principle that love is not self-seeking. We must train ourselves to die to our selfish desires as the Apostle Paul encourages in 1 Corinthians 15:31: *I die daily*.

There is another area regarding portable devices about which Christians should be concerned: the way we handle these devices in church. This is not referring to a building, but to those times during the week when Christians gather together for preaching, prayer, worship, and fellowship. Although you may think that you would not allow your iPhone, iPod, or iPad to distract you, if you have them with you and turned on, they likely will. Touchscreens make it so easy to “quickly” check a text or comment on Facebook. The Bible reminds us in Matthew 26:41 that *the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*. Using a portable media player or constantly checking a phone for messages while in church is not only a distraction to yourself and others, but it also gives people the impression that you aren’t very interested in the worship or the message.

The gravest concern, though, is how disrespectful this misuse of devices in church is to the Lord. We serve a holy and powerful God who is full of compassion, love, and mercy. It should be a joy to worship Him *in spirit and in truth* (John 4:24), humbly showing Him respect and reverence. It honors Him when we can take times during the week to lay aside the distractions in our lives and be fully focused on our Savior and the wisdom from above. While many Christian adults may have the spiritual strength to use their technological devices in correct and non-distracting ways while in church, a very real concern is the vast number of teenagers and young adults who are both distracted by and distracting others with their devices. Ask yourself this question when tempted to text, use your music player, or accept a call during church: “Would I do this if I could see the Lord Jesus sitting right next to me? Do I really want to be rude to the Lord—the One who bought me with so great a price?” (1 Cor. 6:20).

## Christianity . . . Just a Religion?

Our perspective of Christianity will make a difference in the way that we view church, or Bible studies, or any time meant to be set aside for more specific focus on our God and our spiritual growth. Today, a large percentage of Christian young people live in complete apathy (perhaps they never were truly saved), and one reason is because of their perspective on Christianity. Many of them have never been taught that Christianity is not a *religion*. Many teenagers are forced to attend church and they only see it as a religious part of their lives. Is it any wonder that while in church so many young people are consumed with their smartphones, iPods, or MacBooks? Is it any wonder that their hearts are not engaged and that they act without respect and reverence toward God when they have never personally understood Christianity as anything other than a religious practice? Looking at it from this perspective, it's easy to understand



their disinterest in church and their natural tendency (particularly in this culture that worships technology) to make technology their source of fulfillment, whether they are with believers or not. Young people need to be shown (by the example of passionate Christians) that real Christianity is so much more than a religious system; rather, it is a *relationship*. That relationship is with the God of the universe whose Name is Jesus Christ, and it is a relationship that brings fulfillment, peace, and joy.

We would like to encourage anyone who has ever thought about Christianity as only a religion (instead of a belief system that allows one to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ), to take the time to open the Bible to the Gospels in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Study the life of Jesus and His disciples. Take note of their selfless living, their compassion for others, and their great work for the Kingdom of God. Theirs was a real and active faith, which they were expressing, experiencing, and living out.

Jesus' disciples were not acting out of religiosity. They had a passion for their Savior. Their relationship with Him gave them joy in the midst of their trials and fervor for life and for others. Pursue that relationship, and among other countless blessings, church will become an exciting part of your life. It will be a place and time where

you will desire to act respectfully, which will include handling your devices in a God-honoring way because your heart is filled with reverence and awe for Him.

*My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee (Ps. 62:1).  
As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my  
soul after thee, O God (Ps. 42:1).*

## 2. Don't be excessive.

Remember the Fruit of the Spirit and exercise temperance (self-control) (Gal. 5:22-24)! Don't forget to *let all things be done decently and in order* (1 Cor. 14:40). Take a minute to re-evaluate your life and consider how much time you are spending in the Word, witnessing, serving (within our families, churches, or communities), compared to the time spent on a phone, MacBook, iPad, MySpace, blogspot, video game, or any Internet activity.

### Testimony

When I was 15, my mom got a fabulous new “toy,” an iPhone. I was so excited because we had never had Wi-Fi or Internet in our home. Every chance I got, I would grab the phone and go off to play with it. My mother said that I was wasting far too much time, but I was having so much fun! Now, I was not doing anything bad, just playing around wasting time, at first. I told myself that since I did not have Facebook or email, I was not wasting any more time than was normal. Finally it got to the point where electronics were the only thing I did. It interrupted my quiet time with the Lord, my interaction with my family, and my school work. And I was beginning to watch YouTube films that were not necessarily bad but did not honor God. I confessed my sin of disobedience to the Lord and to my parents, then had my mom put a password on her phone. It was hard to stop, but I am glad I did. I encourage you to evaluate your electronic usage and make sure it is not wasting the precious gift of time. *For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad (Mark 4:22).*

~Sarah, age 17

A note from Sarah's mother: I have never allowed the children to have computers in their rooms nor use them when alone. Somehow, the iPhone sneaked in; we did not equate it with the dangers of the Internet at first. Now, I have disabled all the Internet features on the girls' iPhone; it functions as a phone only. They are limited on what they can use on mine. Do not let the iPhone, a fabulous tool when used properly, become a slave-driver and time thief (or worse) in your home.

### 3. Don't be possessive or too dependent.

Remember these Biblical admonitions: *Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God* (Lev. 19:4). *Ye shall make you no idols* (Lev. 26:1). Consider taking certain days to fast from your devices or media, replacing that time with a renewed focus on improving your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ so that you do not allow idols into your life.

### Watching Your Barometer

How exciting it is for all of us to hear that little tone—a text! “Someone cares about me!” “Someone texted something important that they think I must know!” My hands immediately grab for the phone. “My email . . . should I check it again (and again, and again . . . ), just in case someone else wrote?” “Oh, and Facebook . . . perhaps someone responded to my post! I just MUST know!” How convicted I have been to look at my own excitement sometimes over such little things in contrast to my excitement over God's Word (His letter to me); over hearing the soft, quiet whisper of His Spirit; feeling assured of His presence; or His convicting my heart of something in my life that is not pleasing to Him; and keeping that constant “abiding” fellowship with Him. What if we were as addicted to staying as connected to the Lord as we are “addicted” to our connection with technology? Ultimately, perhaps we could even use our excitement over



technology as a barometer of our excitement for Christ and His ways. If this “barometer” reveals that technology has gotten too great a hold of us, let us prayerfully relinquish it to its rightful place. It will not be an easy fight, my friend, yet it is a fight we must win. Do not be discouraged! It is both an instantaneous battle and a daily one, but far worth the eternal rewards as we determine to courageously refocus and maintain a heart that is “all for Christ, and for making Him known.”

~Contributed by Jennifer (Lamp) Neef  
Author of *His Chosen Bride*

#### **4. Don't be secretive.**

If there is something about your text messages, voice messages, phone numbers on your call log, song selections on your iPod or Mp3, content of your social network or blog, YouTube selections, or your Internet browsing choices that would embarrass you if someone in an authority position (parent, grandparent, spouse, church leader, friend) in your life knew about it, or that you would become defensive concerning, it is a very good sign that it is something that would not honor the Lord (see Prov. 10:17).

The Bible has particularly established parents as authorities over children (Ex. 20:12; Mk. 7:10; Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20) and husbands as authorities over their wives (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22), which also means that both parents and husbands are positioned as protectors. There is a promise that goes along with children honoring their parents, and it is that it will *go well* with them: *Honour thy father and thy mother . . . that it may go well with thee* (Deut. 5:16). Be open and honest with your parents or spouse. Transparency and honesty allow them to better protect you, and thus make it harder for Satan to ensnare you in a dangerous relationship or choice you might make without their guidance. One of Satan's goals is to cause us to stray from the guidance of God's intended authorities in our lives, seeking rather to live independently of their counsel. Too many young people try to push their parents away too early, and the consequence is that they lose physical, emotional, and spiritual protection. Additionally, they miss out on the promised blessing of Deuteronomy 5:16.

## The Internet and Marriage

Concerning the Internet and Christian spouses—there must be accountability. Satan is out to destroy Christian marriages and families! It is important to be reminded of all the marriages that social networking and other Internet sins have ruined. It is now common to hear of Christians reconnecting, via their social network (often it is Facebook), with high school sweethearts and leaving their spouses of many years for new relationships.

Before even connecting to the Internet, Christian husbands should refresh their minds with Ephesians 5:25: *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*, and Ephesians 5:33: *Let every one of you . . . so love his wife even as himself*. Christian men should remind themselves that love is an action and, therefore, loving their wives means staying away from all Internet activity that would cheapen her in their eyes, or make them lose interest in her. Likewise, when Christian wives connect to the Internet they need to refresh their minds with Ephesians 5:33b: *and the wife see that she reverence her husband*, and Proverbs 31:11: *The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her*. Christian women need to understand their susceptibility to become emotionally involved in social networking and other Internet activities (i.e., YouTube, online shopping, blogging, etc.). Sadly, too often, wives steal time from their husbands and household duties because they get so consumed with all that the Internet offers them.



Real life is hard to live. Virtual life is easy and fun but can lead into discontentment with our spouses. Emotions can easily deceive us into sacrificing authentic relationships for the counterfeit, and while those may appear to be more fun (for a time), in the end they will not bring true and lasting fulfillment, nor will they bring God's blessing. Consistently filling our minds with God's Word will give us discernment and the spiritual power and authority to bring our flesh into submission.

Another real concern has to do with strong Christian marriages in which the spouses believe themselves to be above temptation and, as a result, don't give any thought to preventive measures. Unfortunately, little by little, even these couples can be snared. We must be proactive in protecting our marriages. Take the time to discuss with your spouse the things you are doing and have done online and *make this type of*

*conversation a priority.* In addition to having access to one another's accounts and regularly sharing computers, browsing and television watching are best done in common areas.

This, of course, also extends to children, who should be strictly supervised. Of course, these preventive measures will never replace the accountability that comes from simply being open with one another and taking the time to communicate honestly!

Each day when you pick up your phone or portable media player or log into your social networking account, ask God to help you use them in ways that will please Him. Allowing a parent or spouse to have the password to your personal media or entertainment options will help keep you accountable. Applying scriptural principles to your use of technology-based systems and social media is a great way to guard yourself from being in bondage to them. *But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?* (Gal. 4:9).

### **Using Technology to Enhance Your Ministry**

Technology has created many blessings. For instance, devices such as smartphones and iPads can allow you to have resources always with you. I have my Bible with me at all times, even my big thick 60,000 notes NET Bible. When I find myself waiting somewhere, I can just read my Bible or something else worthwhile. I have hours of sermons, apologetics lectures, etc., that I listen to while driving so that I'm always learning. It's interesting how many times I learn something from a podcast, and then in the next few days God brings people into my life with whom I can share what I learned. Since I can't remember everything I hear, I've started keeping notes on my phone with arguments for or against various things . . . then when the topic comes up, I'll be able to say, "I was studying on that just the other day and took some notes." And then I'll be better able to discuss whatever topic with the person.

~Contributed by Hampton Keathley  
Technical Director for bible.org

## Texting



Does it feel like texting, almost more than any of the other recent digital advancements, has made the biggest impression on society? Surely there is evidence that human collisions have increased due to the texting craze; car accidents certainly have! In the past, societal norms of friendliness suggested that when out in public, if you passed someone, that you acknowledged his presence with a nod, a smile, or a “hello.” In today’s culture, the norm seems to be walking around looking down because of texting, or looking “off” because of talking on a phone. Phones have become extra appendages to our bodies! Often young adults and teens will even text each other while in each other’s presence.

To glorify God with your texting, first identify how you personally view this “tool”—is it for worldly purposes, or are you going to use it in God-glorifying ways? Too often text messages (particularly teenager’s texts)



are silly, flirtatious, or simply useless small talk. Although texting does have useful and practical purposes, it can easily become another way that we Christians waste valuable time and emotions. Sadly, many students (of all ages) use the texting tool as a means to help each other cheat during examinations and tests. The most dangerous aspect of texting that

Christians should carefully guard against is that many lewd and obscene messages and pictures are being sent from phone to phone. Take care who you give your number to so that you do not fall prey to the evil ideas of someone who does not have your best interests in mind or simply a friend who will thoughtlessly forward messages with immoral or suggestive content.

Another way the world often uses texting is to fulfill personal desires for attention. This is done through flirtatious texting (which has led many into wrong and damaging relationships). The Bible calls flirtation “de-

frauding” and warns us against it in 1 Thessalonians 4:6. Here again, we have to take the time to identify how we as God’s children are adopting worldly ways of using our digital devices, and then we have to decide how we are going to pursue a different route for His glory.

Texting itself is not bad, but it can become a destructive vice in our lives if we adopt the unbiblical ways that so many in this world lure us to try. One benefit of texting is that it is beneficial for those who are constantly on the go. It gives some the opportunity to stay more connected with family and friends who otherwise might only make calls, email, or send a letter from time-to-time. Texting can be very practical; the key, however, is to have a balanced use of it. Glorifying God with texting can mean that instead of using it for sending sarcastic and condescending messages, we use it as an encouragement tool—sending a note to friends or family, either something directly from the Word or something wholesome and lovely. A text message sent with the purpose of bringing a blessing into the life of another is texting in a way that glorifies the Lord. The Bible tells us that *a merry heart doeth good like a medicine* (Prov. 17:22); therefore, a text sent with the purpose of bringing a smile or spirit-lifting laughter to a special friend or family member is another way to use a Biblical principle to guide your texting habits.

**Coupled with the Scriptures given under  
“Four Basic Principles,”  
consider a few more to apply to texting:**

*\*Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul,  
and health to the bones (Prov. 16:24).*

*\*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,  
be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength,  
and my redeemer (Ps. 19:14).*

*\*Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but  
contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called,  
that ye should inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9).*

*\*That no man go beyond and defraud his  
brother in any matter (1 Thess. 4:6).*

*\*A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth:  
and the recompence of a man’s hands shall  
be rendered unto him (Prov. 12:14).*

## Testimony

Recently, my parents upgraded our family cell phone plan to unlimited talk and text. When my parents told me this I was thrilled, and I immediately started texting all my friends. Soon the replies to my texts came, and I found myself texting frequently throughout the day. Only fourteen days after I got unlimited texting, I was astounded to see that I had sent and received over four hundred texts! When I saw this huge number, God really convicted me and showed me that much of the time I had spent texting was unprofitable and could have been used more wisely. Although some of the texts were meaningful, more than half were just complete nonsense. Proverbs 15:14 says, *The mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness*. God showed me that I had been feeding on foolishness. The things I did do besides texting those two weeks had suffered quality-wise because my focus was not on doing everything heartily as unto the Lord (Col. 3:23) but was instead on “when will they text me back?” Psalm 103:15 says, *As for man, his days are as grass*. As grass! God really convicted me with this verse; I had wasted time doing something that had no eternal value. He has shown me that I really do not have “my time” to spend because the extent of my life is “His time.” Thinking like this showed me a need to set boundaries not only on how much time I spend texting but also on the time I spend on my iPod, Facebook, and even listening to music. Everything I do and say should be for the Lord and bring Him glory.

~Elisabeth, age 16

## Twitter



Regarding Twitter, remember: your profile is public to anyone. Even if you do not state in your profile that you are a Christian, it would be pleasing to the Lord to be obviously Christian by the way you handle your tweets and feeds. Therefore, think carefully about whom you are “following.” In other words, are you following inappropriate celebrities, liberal news sources, or politicians who condone non-Christian ideals (such as abortion and homosexuality)? Does your profile reflect an idolization of

athletes? Make it a point to carefully consider if those you are following reflect the morals and ideals that would well-represent Christ. Also, besides what others may think about you, what are you putting into your head? Are you allowing feeds and messages to adversely influence your Biblical worldview? Strive to be righteous and glorifying to God in your Twitter choices and tweets: *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil* (1 Pet. 3:12).

### Testimony

A couple of years ago I got a Twitter account. I had not used it much until a best friend also got an account. We talked a lot on Twitter, but we just used it for entertainment. We realized that we had not been glorifying God, and we turned it into a place where we can ask for help on specific Bible passages.

~Victoria, age 15

### Portable Media Players



Use your iPod (or whatever you use) in a way that glorifies God and make a commitment that you will not listen to music that your parents or other godly influences in your life have cautioned you against. Proverbs 10:17 explains that *He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth*. Proverbs 19:20 further explains the benefits of listening to instruction and counsel: *Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end*. It glorifies the Lord when we as His children have teachable spirits. Ask Him to show you what music is not honoring Him, and then ask Him to help you to say “no” to a particular album, music group, or song. This not only brings the Lord Jesus glory but also brings us peace of mind. A teachable spirit is one aspect of walking uprightly and will lead us toward the blessing of which Psalm 84:11 speaks: *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*. Using your iPod in a way that glorifies the Lord also means that you will be considerate in your use of it so that it is not a hindrance to your communication with others—whether from your perspective or their perspective.

## **Applying Biblical Principles to Social Networking and Blogging**

The explosion of social media has been astounding—the popularity and incredible advancements keep statistics almost impossible to pin down. Words such as MySpace, Facebook, Gmail, Google, blog, and Twitter became household words across the world practically overnight. Additionally, the speed at which words such as “like,” “post,” “wall,” “follow,” “tag,” and “friend” have so quickly acquired new meanings is amazing!

### **If Culture Says It Is Good, Beware!**

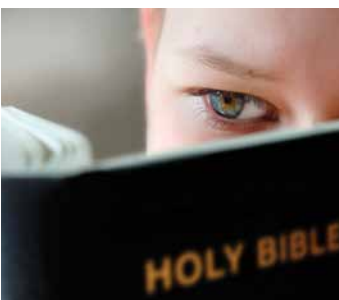
An important truth to keep in mind is that in Satan’s world system, if something is quickly embraced by culture, more often than not, it will have worldly entrapments attached to it that are well disguised. Therefore, the fact that social networking and blogging continue to be such worldwide obsessions should make us sharpen our level of discernment when we get involved in these media venues. Social media is not in and of itself bad, and there are many good and wholesome ways that social networking and blogging can be used by God’s people to bring Him glory. However, there are also serious dangers to guard ourselves against so that we do not diminish our effectiveness for the Lord.

### **Have You Read Your Bible?**

I hardly knew what a Bible was as a child because I didn’t grow up in a Christian home. When I was ten, I was given a small New Testament, and I read it many times before someone invited me to church when I was twelve. I’m so thankful today that some people took the time to put a Bible in my hands, invite me to church, and thoroughly explain the Gospel to me! By the way, how can an unbeliever grow up right in the middle of the “Bible Belt” without knowing what a Bible is? Trust me, when you spend any amount of time sharing your faith, you will quickly learn that this happens far too often.

While social media and technology can be a powerful tool for sharing and growing in your faith *if* you have self-discipline and discernment, it should never keep you from reading your Bible! If you ask most people if they spend at least an hour each day watching television or using the Internet, they will laugh as they tell you that those things consume much more of their time! Then ask those same people if they have ever read the whole Bible even a single time, and they'll look at you as if you had told them to go climb Mount Everest! They know it can be done and that others have done so many times, but they doubt that they will ever take the time to read the whole Bible themselves.

God's Word is a lamp in the darkness (Psalm 119:105) that He



has magnified above His name (Psalm 138:2) and it can make you wiser than your enemies, your teachers, and your elders (Psalm 119:98-100). The Bereans were considered to be “noble” because they studied the scriptures *daily* as they listened to Paul’s preaching (Acts 17:11). If you read only three or four chapters a day, you can easily read the whole New Testa-

ment in three months or the whole Bible in a single year. If you read five chapters a day, you can read the book of Psalms in an average month. If you read one chapter a day, you can read the book of Proverbs in an average month. You can download some free, printable Bible reading checklists on my website at [www.scripture-truthradio.com/articles](http://www.scripture-truthradio.com/articles). May God bless you as you read your Bible and obey what you read!

~Contributed by Joseph McDonald  
Evangelist and Scripture Truth Radio Host

## Watch for This Pitfall

One very real concern regarding social networking and blogging is that these, in so many ways, can feed our fleshly desires if we do not vigilantly guard our use of them. Consider this—we naturally enjoy talking and thinking about ourselves, don't we? If we copy how the world has taught us to use social media, we will find that often it becomes a tool to feed our fleshly desire for the approval of our peers as well as for our longings for attention. The Bible warns us that acclaim and approval are already strong desires with which we struggle: *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God* (Jn. 12:43). We must be careful not to succumb to even deeper levels of pride. In Mark 7, Jesus warns of this and other problems: *Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts . . . pride, foolishness* (Mk. 7:21-23).

Before social media, it was commonly considered in bad taste and boastful to talk about your accomplishments; now our culture has led us to believe that this is acceptable. Yet, the Bible says, *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips* (Prov. 27:2). The Bible addresses boasting and encourages us to channel it toward the Lord: *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad* (Ps. 34:2). With the Christian community so involved in media friendships, we are often not face to face with someone. Without face-to-face accountability, it is easier to be boastful. We cannot continue to feed our *pride of life* (1 Jn. 2:15) and become more like Jesus Christ at the same time.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* (Phil. 2:5-8).

Remember that since social networking and blogging often include unbalanced proportions of people talking about themselves and eventually revealing everything about their lives and habits, we as Christians must take care. Certain information could truly limit or damage a future ministry opportunity. Additionally, many employers now use the Internet to “investigate” potential employees, looking at their postings, observing how they seem to respond to authority and how they present themselves on their walls, blogs, or any other places on the Internet.

## Our Culture Mirrored in the Athenians

The fixating in today's culture on getting and giving information is observed in the worldly Athenians. Acts 17:21 gives the account that *all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing*. The truth to observe from this verse is that the Athenians were the kind of people who were always wanting *to tell or to hear*, but as a result, *spent their time in nothing else*.

While these Athenians were involved with in-person conversations, our modern-day version of their actions can easily be mirrored in social media. Therefore, we must be aware that we are not falling into the same consequence they were—spending *their time in nothing else*. To best glorify the Lord with social media, we must carefully and mindfully practice balance and discernment, thinking of the ways in which we can use these media options in light of Biblical principles.



## The “Not Me” Challenge

At this point, take a quick self-check and consider what would be left on your social network or blog if you took the “me” out of it. If you would have to delete most all you have posted in the last week (because you are speaking of yourself with the words “me,” “my,” or “I”), then there is a great possibility that you are making yourself easy prey for the pride of life—and you may be focusing too much attention on yourself rather than giving God first place in your life. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world* (1 Jn. 2:16). Before posting anything about yourself, remind yourself of Proverbs 27:2: *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips*. An even more powerful Scripture to apply to posts is John 3:30: ***He must increase, but I must decrease***. How much of your social network or blog truly makes Him *increase* and you *decrease*?

As God's people, we don't want to constantly focus on ourselves. Studying the life of Jesus shows His heart, which was all about other people—their needs, their concerns, their lives. Often social media becomes another

avenue to bring attention to ourselves. In regard to blogging your day's happenings, why does it really matter that everyone know every aspect of your day? Philippians 3:3 says we *have no confidence in the flesh*, but instead we *rejoice in Christ Jesus*. Use blogging and social networking differently than the world does—be humble! Talking about yourself is pride, and the Lord warns that *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble* (Jas. 4:6).

### Testimony

I have seen a family blog that was so uplifting just for the simple fact that every post had one mention or another of the Lord Jesus and His active hand in the happenings described within the post. It was so neat to read about God's provision for the family and to know that this is the same God at work in my own life! Naturally on this blog, one family member would be praised for an accomplishment, but these "posts of tribute" were always written by a parent or sibling eager to applaud their loved one and also point others to the true source of that person's strength—the Lord Jesus. What a simple way for us to share what happens in our own lives and still bring glory to God! If only we will remember Who is the true Author of our days and simply give Him the honor due Him.

~Nicole, age 22

Here is the challenge: for one day, take off all parts of your blog or social network that deal with yourself and see how much is left—how much brings glory to God, and how much brings glory to yourself? It is not necessarily sinful or wrong to post information concerning yourself, but for a first step in identifying how much of a me-centered philosophy you have adopted, just try taking the "Not Me" challenge for a day. By God's grace, this experiment could help you to recognize if you have reached into the self-centered way that the world uses social media, and then lead you to be more balanced, moderate, and God-glorifying in your approach to it.

## With a Purpose!

Incorporating “yourself” into your social network or blog in a God-glorifying manner, for example, could be posting that you had specifically prayed for something and the Lord answered. Instead of talking about your achievements, talk about your latest ministry or witnessing adventure, mission trip, or family day. Share about the blessings and the challenges that the Lord gave you through those activities. Talk about the people you spend time with and the character qualities that you like in them. Use media options to glorify the Lord by having a true meaning to your posts. Ask the Lord to give you a redeeming purpose for your blog, Facebook, and YouTube posts, or personal websites. It is important to once again stress that we as Christians need to be distinctively (yes, even radically) different in the way that we use whatever the world promotes or the culture deems acceptable. The strength of the choice is in your hands. By God’s grace, you do not have to allow anything to have power over you (2 Cor. 12:9-10).



### Testimony

I began my adventure in the “wonderful world” of social networking fairly recently. Being quite a social person, I LOVED my social network account! However, this love soon drove me to suppress the reality that my account was gradually stealing more and more time from other necessary pursuits. After discussing the subject with my dad, I finally admitted that while my account was convenient and fun, it was not wise (Prov. 2:1-9; Prov. 12:15). Since deleting my account, I have missed the ability to keep up with distant friends and interact with those I know on a more frequent basis, but I have been investing more of my time in what I know God wants me doing right now without the distractions of ever-available electronic friendships. I’m glad I stopped. Though very enjoyable, social networking had become a negative pull on my life, pulling me from God’s priorities toward my own. I still keep up with friends through emails, letters, and face-to-face meetings and have found these relationships to be much more healthy and

heartfelt than their electronic alternatives. Even though get-togethers might be less frequent, these infrequencies allow for more time investment in other necessary duties and more meaningful conversation and fellowship when get-togethers do take place. I would encourage each one of you reading this to make a list of the top five things you spend your time doing and discuss them with your family. Are they wise, God-glorifying investments? (Eph. 5:15-17).

~Kathleen, age 21

## **Christians Using Social Networking to Promote Immorality and Sorcery? Can This Really Be Happening?**

Within the Christian community, a growing concern is that social networking and blogging have begun to get Christians to feel comfortable with certain worldly practices and ideas that do not coincide with a Biblical worldview. For instance, one of the most disturbing is that it has become acceptable for Christians to “like” things that have immoral content, filthy language, or occult (i.e., wizardry, sorcery, all sorts of witchcraft, etc.) practices in them. To promote movies, television shows, literature, games, or anything else that condones or promotes immorality is something a secular culture does—it is not something that a Christian seeking the purity and holiness of God should promote: *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy* (1 Pet. 1:16). The Bible speaks directly to the sin of immorality and outlines what our Christian worldview should be on this topic. (Specifically defined, immorality includes, but is not limited to, fornication, pornography, homosexuality, adultery, and unchecked lust.)

Please review the Biblical passages below and ask yourself if you really want to post as a “like” or “favorite” certain movies, music, television shows, or literature that include some form of immorality. If indeed you have been posting such on your blog or social network, then you have adopted a way that associates you as not just living in the world, but becoming part of the world.

### Consider These Biblical Warnings:

*\*Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, **lasciviousness**, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and **defile** the man (Mk. 7:22-23).*

*\*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints (Eph. 5:3).*

*\*Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).*

*\*But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:28).*

It is not difficult to understand that movies with bedroom scenes, nudity, and inappropriate innuendos, can easily lead a Christian into lustful thoughts. The Bible says that we are to flee lusts; therefore, a Christian watching the immorality in a movie is not practicing the principle of fleeing. King David said, *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside (Ps. 101:3)*. For a Christian to endorse something involving immorality is Biblically irreconcilable.

### Testimony

Several years ago I realized that I was in a daily battle of spiritual starvation and spiritual nourishment. I wanted to have victory over sin and temptation in my life, but I was not starving my fleshly desires nor nourishing those things which could help me grow in Christ. I realized that I was particularly susceptible to dangers from technology (specifically the Internet) and social media because they are very visual and offer many opportunities for lust. I was challenged during this time in my life by godly individuals to prayerfully look ahead and anticipate situations which might prove compromising and to avoid them. This has proven to be faithful advice to help me guard my eyes and heart. I was also challenged to memorize large amounts of Scripture in order to give the Holy Spirit ammunition to help me fight temptation. Whenever temptation presents itself, the Holy Spirit will often

bring to mind a verse on the very issue I am struggling with and how I should respond to it. I praise God that He remains faithful to me despite the fact that I am completely undeserving of it! *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit* (Rom. 8:5).

~Jonathan, age 24

## Can Evil Be “Sometimes” Good?

Just as disturbing as the rampant immorality included in the posts of people who call themselves Christians is the increased interest in vampires, wizardry, witchcraft, white witchcraft, sorcery, black or “white” magic, dark supernaturalism, and New Age New Spirituality. These forms of dark supernaturalism, occult practices, and non-Biblical spirituality seem to have widely invaded the culture and infiltrated the church and Christian community. Wizardry and vampire themes especially are seriously affecting the church—particularly young people. If you are condoning or promoting anything that in light of Biblical truth is *darkness*, this could have serious consequences on your life and testimony.

### Consider These Biblical Warnings:

*\*Regard not them that have **familiar spirits**, neither seek after **wizards**, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God* (Lev. 19:31).

*\*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, **witchcraft**, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, **that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*** (Gal. 5:19-21).

By posting anything that is in opposition to Biblical light and life, you adopt a way that the world uses social media. In Satan's world system, promoting the deeds of darkness is very popular, but it should **not** be acceptable to a Christian—especially in light of Ephesians 5:11-12:

*And have **no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather reprove them. **For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.***

## Which Side Are You On: Light or Darkness?

It is very possible that if you have embraced entertainment such as *Twilight*, *Harry Potter*, and *Avatar* (or anything related to these movies' genres), then you have started loving darkness above the light—you are not just **in** the world anymore, but you are becoming **of** the world. In John 3:19, God's Word speaks directly to those who choose to embrace darkness: *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness** rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* Remember our Savior is Light, and in Him there is no darkness: *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all* (1 Jn. 1:5). In Colossians 1:13, the Bible confirms that He *delivered* us from the *power of darkness*. To be delivered implies that darkness is something bad—something we would not want to be enslaved to or taken captive by: *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son* (Col. 1:13). Yet today, occult practices, non-Biblical spirituality, and dark supernatural powers are not looked upon as darkness anymore but rather as fun, cute, and harmless. Do not swallow this deceptive, worldly philosophy—it does not have a Biblical foundation!



Those who know the Word of God understand the hurt it must cause the Lord Jesus when His children promote entertainment that so adamantly seeks to destroy God's best, which is purity, holiness, and light. Instead, this form of entertainment glorifies and exalts the very powers that nailed Jesus to the cross.

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light* (1 Pet. 2:9).

Why would any Christian want to allow or encourage an appetite for activities and values that have historically been “of the darkness”? Not many years ago, vampires, sorcerers, wizards, witches, and anything

that involved supernatural powers not recognized as coming from God were deemed sinister, dark, evil, or, at the very least, dangerous and to be avoided by Christians. Today, occult practices and characters have been embraced, characterized by Christians at Halloween, and thoroughly accepted by many in the Christian community. Christian people are now even posting the *Harry Potter* series directly next to the Bible as favorite literature options. Having these two books posted together is a complete disconnect!

The great significance in God's people keeping the lines of light and darkness clearly defined is that if there is no difference between the two, then there is no difference between good and evil and therefore no need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How much cultural darkness have you embraced because you wanted to be accepted by the secular community and considered relevant or up-to-date by the Christian community?

## Christian Liberty Is Not a License to Sin!

If you feel that your Christian liberty allows you to be involved in activities and entertainment that the Bible says will defile you, take care! Christian liberty should never trample a specific Biblical command that has been given. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth* (1 Jn. 1:6). Just because you do not feel convicted every time you are involved in something unbiblical does not mean that your spirit or conscience has not been harmed or defiled in some way.

With these thoughts in mind, another fact to seriously consider is that the contents of a blog or Facebook account could provide a stumbling block to others. We cannot let our selfishness cause us to overlook this very real concern. With everything you post or “like,” keep in mind how it could impact those who look up to you and consider you their example to follow. Remember that others (family, friends, church members, co-workers, employers, or anyone else) may not be as spiritually strong as yourself and may be struggling with certain temptations revolving around the very items or information you have posted. If, as a result of your influence, the life of a weaker brother or sister in the Lord is negatively affected by what he observed on your blog or MySpace (or whatever social network you use), it may end up causing him to *stumble*—possibly even causing lifelong consequences. Look at this verse: *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way* (Rom. 14:13; see also 1 Cor. 8:9-12 and I Cor. 10:32).

## Please at Least Consider . . .

In the world in which we live, it is hard to think like a Christian. Often without “thinking to think,” we just allow our culture to move in and influence our values. It is so easy in Satan’s world system to stray from the holiness and purity of Jesus Christ. Even if you personally do not want to give up something that could provide a stumbling block, what you can do is keep that something to yourself so that before the Lord you never have to be responsible for being part of causing a brother to stumble. The Bible says: *But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ* (1 Cor. 8:12). It is so important that we take responsibility for whatever we put on walls, blogs, and websites, as well as our YouTube and Netflix recommendations. Walking in holiness and purity will never give you the “freedom” to promote actions and attitudes that go directly against God’s Word.

If you are one of God’s children who goes around saying that your Christian liberty allows you to watch R-rated movies and fill your eyes with immoral things and your mind with evil deeds of darkness, please be admonished by Galatians 5:13: *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; **only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*** Instead of using your Christian liberty as an excuse for fleshly purposes, use your Christian liberty to restrain yourself from recommending or promoting anything that could cause a brother (or sister) to stumble. Surely you are able to keep to yourself what you think you



can watch that is a Biblically controversial topic. You see, some of you may be saying “everybody does it,” but what you must remember is that 2 Corinthians 10:12 specifically warns against comparing yourself with anyone else, and says that doing this is *unwise*. It is unwise in one regard because you take someone’s lifestyle habits as truth for your lifestyle desires and forget instead to compare your life to Biblical principles and to the example of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:1).

One more question . . . how are all your “likes” helping others spiritually? How are they helping *you* spiritually? Is your investigation of the many links associated with the “likes” of others causing you to waste valuable time that could be spent serving the Lord? A good question to ask yourself would be, “How meaningless and fruitless has the time I spend on the Internet become?” *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit* (Gal. 5:25).



## Don't Let Pride Be Your Guide

Another way that Christians can easily adopt worldly social media practices is by buying into the idea that worth is closely connected with how many friends you have on your social network or involved in your blog. Have you ever noticed that often when people talk about their Facebook how quickly they let you know how many friends they have? Why is it that so often the number of friends one has is so readily volunteered? This is the result of the human craving for the approval of men (Jn. 12:43) and to prove our popularity. The bottom line is pride—a weakness among unbelievers as well as believers. The Bible explains the result of prideful ways in Proverbs 18:12: *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility* and Proverbs 16:18: *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*. First Corinthians 10:12 reminds us: *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*.

Not so long ago friendships were limited to in-person conversations, phone calls, letters, and emails. Now, with social networking, a whole new world of friendship opportunities has become available. Please take a moment and think about this . . . what is your underlying motive for wanting friends on your friends list? Sadly, many send out and accept every invitation possible because they have a desire for attention, a desire to be seen as popular, or as someone with whom hundreds (or thousands) want to be connected. Be honest with yourself concerning your motives for sending out invitations—make sure they are sincere and not for personal gain.

## Social Media Friendships

The friendship-craze that social media has created can be a huge distraction and time waster. There is only a certain amount of time in a day. Is it really worthwhile to be constantly developing your virtual social network and sacrificing time you could spend in person-to-person contact? Cyber friendships are not necessarily bad; however, they have much potential to be shallow. A consequence of shallowness is the absence of godly encouragement and challenge. Take time to study your current friendships, asking yourself if any of these friendships are void of true Christian encouragement. Virtual friendships kept simply because they feed your fleshly desires and give you attention (and you may not even realize this is a motivation) are self-based, often leaving you feeling cheap, empty, and wishing that you had more carefully chosen a particular friendship.

Take a moment and think about Internet friendships as well as face-to-face relationships in light of Biblical teaching on friendship: *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (Jn. 15:13). How many people on your friends list do you value enough to lay down your life for? Remember also that in Matthew 28:19 (*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*) Jesus calls us to make disciples, but too often we are focused on making friends! Social media encourages our tendency to have a lack of balance in the area of spending time on making friends versus making disciples. If you have never committed to take the time to make and evaluate your friendships in light of Biblical thoughts, now is a good time to start!

### Consider These Bible Verses on Friendship:

*\*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Mk. 12:31).

*\*A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly:  
and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*  
(Prov. 18:24).

*\*Faithful are the wounds of a friend* (Prov. 27:6).

*\*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the  
countenance of his friend* (Prov. 27:17).

### Testimony: Standing for the Truth

A few months ago an adult friend of mine on Facebook wrote something disrespectful about a popular Christian family and their convictions. She and her adult friends made fun of them and made crude remarks about them. It bothered me all day until I finally had to say something. When I told them that this was a good family who loved God, they started to come against me, saying I shouldn't "judge" them. I started using verses to show how I wasn't judging. I was nervous to do this and say these things to them because they were adults. I didn't want to come across as rude, but my parents wisely reminded me that if I spoke God's truth respectfully it would honor Him. They encouraged me that I should never

be afraid to speak God's truth to anyone. First Timothy 4:12 says,  
*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*  
 ~Adriana, age 14

## Thoughts Concerning Virtual Relationships— An Eye Toward Reality

There are many stalkers and convicts pretending to be someone they are not. The stories of dangerous situations that have occurred via Internet relationships continue to increase in number. It is so difficult to discern if someone is truly who he says he is without being able to see him face to face and look him in the eyes. Looking someone in the eye can tell you a lot about who he is. Another very important fact about eye contact is that it requires accountability. It is so much easier to be sarcastic, flirtatious, or condescending with people via the Internet because you are not looking them in the eye—you do not have the immediate responsibility for those words nor the increased awareness that a real person provides. Without face-to-face accountability, many different emotions can be put forth far too easily in comments without even considering the full impact of the words. Perhaps you have even felt yourself becoming nearly reckless as words spill out without thought as fast as your fingers can fly! You know you would never say these words to anyone's face, but at the moment, you would rather not think about that. Maybe this is when we find ourselves forgetting who we are—ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Regarding sarcastic comments, if we are talking to someone face to face, we can tell by his response if we have hurt him, and God can use that to convict us. God's Word is all about others. We are to be lovers of people as Jesus is, not lovers of the attention we can obtain from others. Therefore, we must guard ourselves against allowing our own desires for attention to get out of control, which with today's media options is so easy to do. Remember, too, that any or all of the conversations that you post can be kept by someone. Though something may have been all in fun on your part, it could seriously affect the way that someone characterizes you.

Also, it should be mentioned here that many marriages have been wrecked via social networking as a result of married people getting involved in friendships that started out (or were revived—like high school sweethearts finding each other again) with seemingly innocent flirtatious

“comments,” which then led to seemingly innocent meetings, which led to dates, and then right into adultery. Don’t train yourself to be reckless with your comments!

Please do not sacrifice your true friendships and relationships for simply “exciting” ones. For example, it is very easy on social media sites to end up spending a large amount of time interacting with someone of the opposite gender that you don’t even know. Often teenagers are the most vulnerable to this weakness.

**Scenario:** Say a guy sends a Facebook invitation to a girl that he has never met. In most cases the girl will be flattered (especially if she thinks this guy is good looking—and his posted picture may or may NOT be him). Therefore, she starts spending quite a bit of time on his Facebook, investigating his interests, information, and photos. She ends up taking a lot of time thinking about flirty or cute comments she can put on something that he posts. Meanwhile, she is also trying to keep up with her 562 other friends. Therefore, when her Christian friends with whom she has cultivated true and meaningful relationships call and want to spend quality time with her, she may not have that time anymore as she wasted it on possibly meaningless friendships.

This kind of situation happens frequently among Christian young people, not only causing many to sacrifice the time that they used to spend on more meaningful friendships, but most seriously, it causes many to sacrifice time that they used to (or could) spend with the Lord.

## What Is Your Face Telling Others?

It is important that our facial expressions demonstrate our love and concern for others. There is now a whole new generation of Christian young people who are not able to communicate well with their facial expressions. They have spent so much time in social media relationships or texting that they have either forgotten or never learned how to have gracious and loving expressions. If you try to converse with many teenagers and even young adults today, often it is hard for them to look you in the eye. Therefore,



it is difficult to reach out and communicate with young people, because without facial clues it is hard to know how they are receiving verbal communication. Spending so much time communicating with technology really has affected many people's abilities to express graciousness, Christian love, and the joy of the Lord on their faces. The most damaging part of this is in the area of a Christian's ability to connect with and evangelize the lost world. When engaging with our culture, we as God's people must be able to show the love of Jesus on our faces! We need to share the Gospel, not with deadpan expressions and disinterested looks, but instead, with sincere love for others and the excitement of our salvation—Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27)! Our countenances do much to either minister or discourage those with whom we communicate.

### Recapping Ideas for Using Social Networking and Blogging in Ways That Glorify God

1) Think about all parts of your profile and what you post and “like” in light of your testimony for Jesus Christ and in light of principles set forth in His Word.

2) Evaluate each comment that you post or blog by asking yourself: Is it edifying? Is it self-seeking? Is it God-glorifying?

3) Be careful that you are *redeeming the time, because the days are evil* (Eph. 5:16). Don't waste time! Let your first goal be to focus on pleasing the Lord both with what you say and with the time you are about to spend on that particular social media option. Instead of taking time on wall comments that edify very little, use that time to post something that is encouraging, spiritually challenging, or in some way redeeming and that will glorify God. Doing this will be satisfying and meaningful instead of feeding the emotional ups and downs that come from seeking the approval of others.

4) Be careful never to post content that could provide a stumbling block to others. We shouldn't let our selfishness cause us to overlook this very real concern.

## **The Creepy Nature of Evil**

It has been said that the basis of our physical life is resisting germs. In a similar way, the basis of our spiritual life is resisting evil. Second Timothy 3:1-7 is a clear description of our day, as verse 7 speaks of those who creep into households and make captives. From personal experience, I have witnessed this subtle, insidious, and “creepy” nature of sin. It seems that someone is always wanting to give us a TV, questionable books, a wireless router, DVDs, or some other item that has great potential to feed a flow of evil coming into our lives. Even the US government paid for citizens to upgrade their TVs to the new format! I initially allowed Facebook use in our home. Later we saw the negative impact that it had, and after struggling and praying about the decision, we greatly limited its use. Occasionally I learn of someone who actually uses the powerful tool of social networking to advance the Gospel of Christ. What a blessing! But as I see evil creeping into people’s lives through social media, as I observe how addicting it is, as I watch God’s standards of holiness being slowly compromised and eventually discarded, and as I witness the destruction of lives through worldly philosophies and lusts, I hate evil even more, and must issue a clear warning of the dangers related to social media. David said, *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked* (Ps. 97:10). Solomon notes in Proverbs 8:13 that *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*

~Contributed by Keith Neds  
Assistant Pastor, Rockwall Bible Church, Rockwall, TX

## Digital Entertainment: Quick Cautions

Concerning a few other technology-based systems like video games, e-book readers, and DVDs, always remember to be vigilant to use self-control. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law* (Gal. 5:22-23). Remember also that we can easily dwell on unhealthy entertainments and so therefore, we should memorize and think on Philippians 4:8: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* Another good Scripture to apply to digital entertainment is *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes* (Ps. 101:3).

### E-Book Readers



Yes, there are even dangers in Kindles! Are you getting sensitized to the fact that in Satan's world system you have to apply Biblical principles to everything? One danger of e-book readers is that they have opened up many reading opportunities that are not pleasing to the Lord. Books are amazing and great tools, but they grip the imagination, providing a limitless smorgasbord of thoughts, ideas, images, people, places, concepts, and on and on—all at one's literal fingertips. Accountability becomes much harder to practice. Before e-book readers, book titles on bindings or front covers were easily viewable to all in the house, providing accountability. Additionally, a physical book can be picked up by anyone in the house and skimmed through for content. Even e-book readers, if not approached with the Biblical principles of self-control and of not putting worthless material before one's eyes, can be a vice.

### Are You Hiding Your Light in Your Kindle?

The e-reader discussion also has a flip side. In addition to not being accountable for what we are reading on an e-reader, we are also not showing the good things we are reading. I enjoy reading my Bible on my Kindle because I can check another translation or do a quick search if I get an idea or remember something that suddenly clicks. I also find that it saves me a lot of money because

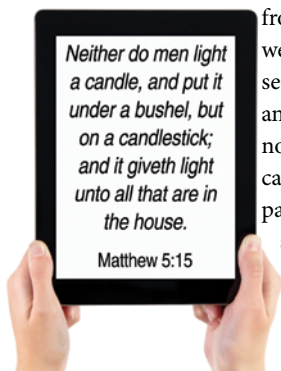
I can find free literature to use with my students through Project Gutenberg. When I was studying for university exams, I was even able to download all of my textbooks to my Kindle to study on the go!

I do feel, however, that there is something to be said for holding a print Bible in my hands. I like that our children see us reading the Bible. I want them to know what I am reading! When I read from my Kindle, they don't know if I am preparing a lesson, studying, or reading the Word of God. I always use print Bibles when we are working on memory verses or when I read passages of Scripture to them.

Years ago I trained with CEF International in a course called Teaching Children Effectively. Much of what I learned became a permanent part of how I work with children. There was a strong emphasis on showing the children that the memory verse was from the Bible, that it came from *God's* authority, not ours. We were taught to keep our Bibles open to the section of Scripture

from which the Bible story was taken when we were teaching so that the children would learn to see God's Word as both the source of the story and an authority in their lives. Although there is nothing wrong with working from a Kindle, because of this training, which has become such a part of me, I have a strong preference for using a print Bible when working with children or others who have not yet developed a healthy concept of the authority of Scripture.

~Contributed by Colette Rickards Nobili  
Translator, Teacher



## Video Games and Online Gaming >>

The popularity of video games and online gaming has greatly increased in the last decade (for young men in particular). These types of games can be a very addictive form of entertainment. The massive amounts of time that many people spend on these games has reached extreme levels. A big concern for the Christian involved in video games is the fact

that so many now include violence, the occult, immorality, and seductive clothing, all as just part of the game. Psalm 119:9-11 is a good verse to help guide you in your choice of Internet games: *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* When thinking about video and Internet gaming, the Biblical principles of moderation and self-control should be once again applied. We should also strive to have entertainment that doesn't wander from the purity and holiness with which the Lord Jesus desires our lives to be filled (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 4:12). Additionally, as a Christian, you should take care not to become emotionally involved with someone of the opposite gender in the game. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise* (Eph. 5:15).

### **Gamers in the Real World**

Gaming is beyond a pastime for many guys, and seems as if it is only going to increase in popularity and sales. Also, with Facebook and Google+ including games in their social media product, girls are getting more involved. The gaming industry is working very hard to crack the girl barrier in gaming. They have already successfully achieved simulating natural emotional response related to surprise, fear, and the joy of accomplishment, and have captivated the male audience. To hook the female audience, gaming seeks to simulate relational emotions. Once romance games are on the market, the gaming industry will suddenly have a huge new target audience.

The problem with gaming is that it offers cheap thrills at the expense of reality. In gaming, the gamer is making decisions; he's an active participant, just like in life—well, not *just* like life. The gaming experience is crafted. If the gamer gets bored, the game maker has lost market share. Ultimately, though, all games tend to bore gamers on some level: once they find the bounds of the game, they lose interest. Many fascinated by or addicted to gaming have forgotten how boundless reality is—it is the most challenging interactive experience with the greatest stakes.

Gamers do not always live alone. Christians as well as non-believers bring gaming into their marriages too often in today's society. Instead of sacrificing for their wife, some of them live for games. Many wives participate in their husbands' gaming because it allows them to interact with their husbands. Too many men catechize their children in gaming and do not take the time for family worship or Bible study. Visions of a typical home now may include fathers sitting down with their children, not to share wisdom or to lead their children to Jesus, but to game—to while away life in amusement. Interactivity itself is not wrong. It can be a great platform with which to engage our current generation. But it is not a way to live life!

~Contributed by Matthew Sample II  
Digital Illustrator and Artist

### **Biblically Handling Video Games**



Video games influence an ever-expanding cross section of society not only in American technology but in global entertainment. In the United States alone, 183 million people play video games each year (59 percent of the population). The majority of kids playing video games make up only 32 percent of the gaming population. According to the Entertainment Software Association, the other 68 percent are over the age of 18, and the average age of gamers is thirty-something! It is incredible that what was once considered a pastime for kids—and especially for boys—now permeates every demographic. In fact, adult women make up a greater percentage of the gaming population (30 percent) than the stereotypical boy of 17 years and under (18 percent) [[www.theesa.com/facts/gameplayer.asp](http://www.theesa.com/facts/gameplayer.asp)].

In fact, “gaming” can now refer to anything from playing on home consoles like Nintendo, Xbox, and PlayStation, to handhelds, computers, online, and even phone and mobile apps, which dominate the marketplace for the casual gamer. There is no verse in Scripture that addresses video games directly, but we read in

the New Testament that we are called to *Prove* [test] *all things; hold fast that which is good* (1 Thess. 5:21). Video games are no exception!

The reality is that many video games and developers can be either ignorant of God's truth, or even hostile toward it. Christians must be on their guard against sexuality, violence, and immoral content in many (not all!) games, just as in television and movies. This is intensified by the unique interactivity of gaming, which moves you from the position of casual observer to that of active participant.

### **Three biblically grounded recommendations can help you as you navigate video gaming:**

#### **1) Don't let the game replace reality.**

One danger of any hobby or form of entertainment is that a healthy relaxation can quickly turn into escapism or even addiction. This often reflects a condition of the heart rather than an inherent evil in gaming itself, but you must be aware of the possibility. If you find yourself depressed or dissatisfied with yourself, your image, your job, or your family, be careful that you don't substitute the sense of accomplishment in games for true spiritual and emotional growth in Jesus! Too many young adult gamers retreat from reality, becoming "full-time gamers," because it feels better to beat the final "boss" than it does to be turned down for another job. As always, moderation is key. If you are a gamer, enjoy it for stress relief or entertainment and in a way that honors God.

#### **2) Don't let the moral dilemmas of the game become the moral dilemmas of your own heart!**

Much of the content in video games would dishonor God if it were part of our "real life." Guess what? If you're a gamer, gaming is part of your real life! Philippians 4:8 says, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* If the game gives you opportunities to make immoral choices, always choose the good! If the game forces you into immoral situations (like scenes of sexuality

or abuse), then put that game away! Do not fall into the trap of saying, “It’s just a game.” *It’s not just a game!*

Remember, Jesus himself says in Matthew 5:27-28, *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Jesus reminds us that sinfulness is buried in the thoughts, intents, and motives that lead to an action, not merely the action itself. Sinful actions within a video game produce those same thoughts and motives. Taking pleasure in “being bad” (for example, killing pedestrians in a crime game) or lusting after game characters and situations are just two examples.

Jesus goes on to say, *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell* (Matt. 5:29-30). Now apply this to gaming: if the temptation is too great, it’s better to get rid of games altogether than to give in to those that lead you into impure thoughts or actions. The dramatic rise of online gaming and massively multiplayer online games makes this truth especially potent. There the interactions are not isolated to you and the TV screen, but they occur with other real people through virtual space.

### **3) Finally, if you are going to game, choose wisely!**

There are many, many games that do *not* contain the kind of content described in the previous paragraph and do not present those kinds of immoral dilemmas. Be encouraged! Take the challenge to choose with your mind sharp and your Bible open! As Christians, we demonstrate the reality of the Gospel by our lifestyles, and this is reflected in our entertainment choices as well.

Christians, whether gamers or not, must take notice of this unique medium and be prepared to defend the Gospel, *speaking the truth in love* (Eph. 4:15), as video games frequently intersect with deep spiritual questions. Games can open the door to many opportuni-

ties to share the Gospel with other gamers because they include so many religious themes and references! Imagine having the confidence to follow the Lord's leading into a conversation where instead of saying, "I think games are bad," you could instead say, "Let me show you who the Bible tells us God *really* is!"

This is why gamers must know God's Word, ask tough questions, and not let the game influence *them*, but be challenged as Christians to influence a gaming culture for Christ!

~Contributed by Carl Kerby Jr: Director of Media and Ministry  
at Reasons for Hope ([www.rforh.com](http://www.rforh.com)) and  
Drew Thorwall: Associate Pastor at Faith Church of Grayslake  
Co-authors of *It's Not Just a Game*

## Netflix



Yet another source of entertainment that has become especially popular is Netflix. Sadly, even Christians are not practicing Biblical discernment in what they are watching. We must be keenly aware that the influence of movies over us is often far more than we realize. Netflix makes renting movies easy and cost efficient, which can feed a lack of self-control and lead into binge renting. The Biblical principles of self-control and good stewardship (*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much*, Luke 16:10) should hold us in check when using this rental service.

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).*

## Important Thoughts to Ponder

Reality ought to be very important, very precious, to Christians. This creation spoken into existence by God is something which we interact with every day of our lives. It is much more profound and startling than anything concocted from our limited imaginations.

Many Christians find themselves consumed with Godless content—not necessarily immoral content, but content without God. If someone listens to NPR all the time, the input affects the way that person thinks. Also, if someone finds himself spending a major part of his time reading fiction, watching movies, or playing

games that involve worlds in which God is never mentioned, that Godless input could lead him, at the least, to ignore God and His work in this world.

The Christian world has increasingly invested itself in its own entertainment. Christian movies and television are exploding arenas, but should be handled in a way that does not encourage more time spent mindlessly consuming entertainment.

~Contributed by Matthew Sample II  
Digital Illustrator and Artist

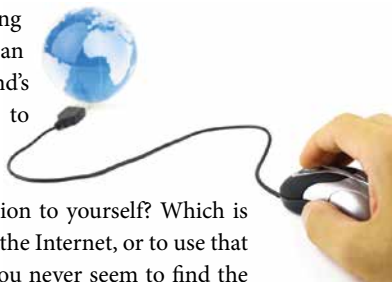
## Other Internet Activities

The Internet has been a major factor in creating a technology-dependent, technology-driven world. It is used for almost every need one would have from education to business, to shopping, to research, to counseling, to “fulfilling” emotional desires, to endless numbers of entertainment venues. As Christians in this world, we must really fight to keep the Lord as our one all-consuming desire: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever* (Ps. 73:25-26). To coincide with the theme of bringing God glory in all that we do, we should also make it a point to keep a clean conscience before the Lord in our Internet activities: *that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death* (Phil. 1:20). We must remember that *the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil* (1 Pet. 3:12).

## Are We Engaged in Reality before We Click “Connect”?

The Internet has simplified our lives. It has made long-distance communication easy. It has provided us with unending information at our fingertips. It has provided us with the resources to participate in worldwide social networking and has also given us as Christians the opportunity to more efficiently spread the Gospel. The Internet, used as a tool to accomplish necessary tasks, can be an asset to our lives. However, we can easily misuse this tool when we allow it to become an unhealthy distraction or let it waste the time that God has blessed us with.

There is nothing wrong with updating your Facebook status, reading a post on an encouraging blog, looking at your friend's Instagram, or pinning snazzy things to Pinterest. But are you really seeking to glorify God with your actions, or are you seeking to glorify and draw attention to yourself? Which is wiser: to spend your spare time surfing the Internet, or to use that time to pray for those friends whom you never seem to find the time to pray for? To read that blog that always lifts you up, or to spend that time encouraging someone in your family? To "like" everything your friends put up on Facebook, or to do your laundry that has long been forgotten?



We have to make sure that we are engaged in reality and know what needs to be accomplished around us before we delve into the world of cyberspace. Don't let the Internet slow you down. Use it to be more productive. Use it to magnify Christ and His kingdom. 1 Samuel 12:24: *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.*

~Contributed by Madison Clark, age 16

## Browsing



Concerning Internet browsing, it is good to think on Proverbs 15:3: *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* Because the Lord's eyes are upon us, we should desire to carefully guard where we allow them to wander: *I made a covenant with mine eyes* (Job 31:1). As God's people, keeping a healthy fear of the Lord is the kind of mindset that will help us stay accountable to His Word and additionally will produce rewards as Proverbs 19:23 explains: *The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.*

## Internet Shopping



Even something as seemingly innocent as Internet shopping can cause us to take our eyes off the Lord. Not only is it easy to covet while Internet shopping, but also, shopping online can take us to websites that are not pleasing to the Lord. It can also encourage us to make hasty decisions as

some purchases are just a click away. Therefore, we must be always mindful and careful, remembering the verses above dealing with our accountability to the Lord in addition to the verses that specifically remind us not to covet, three of which are Exodus 20:17, Romans 7:7, and Romans 13:9.

## YouTube



There are several thoughts to consider regarding YouTube. The first is to have self-control and to limit the time you spend on it. Most importantly, though, keep the shows and material you watch of a pure and holy nature. Many think that their time on YouTube is justified because they are only watching spiritual and educational videos. Don't forget to be a Berean (Acts 17:10-11) so that you are not swayed by the significant amount of false teaching that can be found on YouTube. Even if you are only involved in watching educational and spiritual YouTube clips, if, for example, your family needs to be fed, or your sister needs help with her homework, or your friend down the street needs help with a project, or if anything comes up that is of a more important nature, then remember to keep your priorities straight. We must keep everything in the perspective of having balance and moderation (1 Cor.14:40). Another aspect of YouTube is the actual posting of your personal films. Don't get involved in the unessential and (too often) excessive activity of making silly YouTube clips that only steal time from more meaningful activities. Also, don't post self-exulting videos (to which many of the Scriptures previously mentioned apply). We don't need the approval of men—all that should be important to us is that we have the approval of God.

*I live before the audience of One;  
before others I have nothing to gain,  
nothing to lose, nothing to prove.*

~Os Guinness

## Virtual Reality



Virtual reality has many dangers and many concerns connected with it. First, consider the fact that as Christians we should be thankful for the world that God has created and given us: *O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches*

(Ps. 104:24). We should be content to live in the reality that God has made for us. Allowing some other “reality” to come into the one God created is usually not good. When we let ourselves get involved with forms of fantasy, this can often create and feed feelings of discontent toward the reality of the world and circumstances in which God has placed us. Our Infinite Creator knew exactly what would be good for each of His creatures when He made the world: *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good* (Gen. 1:31).

An extremely dangerous result of virtual reality gaming is that players can get so involved in their virtual world, that they actually forget that it is not reality. Actions and attitudes that people play in their virtual games can become a part of their non-virtual lifestyles. The fantasy world allows senses to grow accustomed to violence (or other bad things). The challenge is that you will take to heart the following Scriptures and relate them to your involvement in virtual reality: *Mine eye affecteth mine heart* (Lam. 3:51). *The eyes of man are never satisfied* (Prov. 27:20). *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life* (Prov. 4:23). The point of virtual reality is to lead gamers into embracing the game as reality. Many of these games entice people into sins which they would never consider committing in reality. After time, the virtual and the real get confused. Should we soften the lines of sin? Satan would love to distract a well-meaning Christian when so many lost people desperately need to know about Jesus Christ. Where is our time going? Time spent on virtual worlds could be spent instead on the real world that has eternal value. Too often we are not *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. 10:5).

## Torrenting



In recent years, many in the Christian community have started to make use of torrenting. (Torrenting is simply a way of downloading large files off of the Internet.) While people can (and do) utilize torrenting for good, there are unethical ways in which it is being used or tolerated even by Christians—specifically in regard to files being downloaded. To be faultless in our handling of torrenting, a good question to ask ourselves would be, “Is torrenting without pirating always all right, or are there times that even legal torrenting becomes unprincipled?” Consider the fact that many times the world equates legality with morality. However, Christians should not fall into this trap. For example, abortion may be legal, but according to the Bible it is morally wrong.

As Christians, we have to be very careful that we do not accept things just because they are legal. For instance, maybe in your state it is legal to download. If you do not care about individual companies' copyrights, but rather focus only on the fact that it is legal to download files, you may not feel guilty downloading just about anything (including information that companies do not want you to download for free). Once again, from a Biblical perspective, just because something is legal does not make it morally right. If we, as Christians, understand that the spirit of the copyright law is to avoid unauthorized use of a company's rightfully owned media, but continue downloading available files that are not considered free by the company, we are in violation of James 4:17: *to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

In addition to ethical concerns, torrenting has moral concerns. An important step to take regarding your involvement with torrenting sites is to be careful not to jeopardize a wholesome and pure environment. Just a few things to be aware of . . . as soon as you get on many torrenting sites, you are hit with pop ups, ads on the side of the page, as well as files of movies and songs. Most of the time, these extras are not only pointless, but also inappropriate. While a lot of Christians will not open questionable advertised pages or download explicitly immoral videos, is the potential to do so worth it just because you want that movie, game, or song? In reality, if you feel like you needed whatever it was enough to take that risk, then you should have bought it. While on torrenting sites keep in mind Psalm 101:3: *I will set no wicked* (some translations say *worthless*) *thing before mine eyes.* As Christians, our integrity must be proactive—even when a decision is only between us and the Lord.

The Bible teaches that we are to have respect for others, and this includes those we deal with online—either directly or indirectly. While involved in any Internet activity, we should constantly remind ourselves that *the eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good* (Prov. 15:3; see also Heb. 4:13). Getting involved in torrenting movies, music, or any other program can lead you into pirating, which is in direct disobedience to Romans 13:9 and Exodus 20:15 that both command: *Thou shalt not steal.* When downloading material and resources, we must always be respectful of copyrights, as this glorifies the Lord.

## Staying Pure and Holy in Today's World

In addition to studying and applying God's Word to help build our discernment levels and create in us clean hearts (Ps. 51:10), we should also seek to set up another good defense against falling into temptation—accountability. Being proactive to keep ourselves from the dangers of the Internet by putting filters and screens on our computers as well as setting up accountability partners is a very wise, precautionary step to take. Our enemy, the devil, is committed to our downfall, and so as 1 Peter 5:8 warns us, we must be ready for his attacks and fortify our hearts with Scripture, prayer, and accountability. Too often we Christians get a little overconfident in our faith and think that we can handle this world's allures and entertainments without fortifying ourselves. First Corinthians 10:12 cautions us that the person *that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*. We need to be very aware of how easy it is to fall into sin. Our spirit may be willing, but the Bible tells us that our flesh is weak (see Mt. 26:41 and Mk. 14:38). Thus be prepared to expect the enemy to confront and try to overpower you in spiritual attacks.

### Testimony

In these technologically advanced times, we have so much available to us. We have computers, cell-phones, telephones, TVs, iPods, Mp3 players, radios, the Internet, texting, listening to music, or just playing pointless games. Recently, I've been thinking about how much time I spend on the computer or on my other forms of technology and then comparing that to how much time I actually spend just talking to God and building my relationship with Him. At times without even realizing it, I spend hours on the computer, and the majority of that time I'm not doing anything important. I'm definitely not saying that technology is bad. I'm just saying that we all need to watch how much time we spend using it, and also that it is good to have an accountability partner who can ask you if you've been staying on track. Don't think of this as a chore, but as a way that God is drawing you closer to Him, because He is.

On another note, we can use technology for great purposes. Facebook alone reaches millions of people. You can use that to share Bible verses, share what God is doing in your life, and to encourage

others in their walk with God. The same goes for Twitter, MySpace, and whatever social networking site you may be involved in. Text and email can be used for the same purposes. You can always send Bible verses and encourage friends through email and text. Technology can be used for good or bad; it's your choice. Make the most of it! *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil* (Eph. 5:16).

~Sarah Elisabeth, age 15



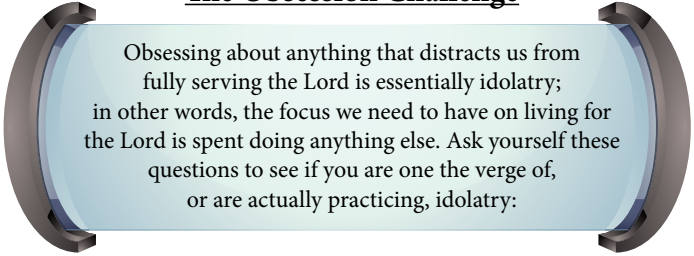
**EVERY  
ACCOMPLISHMENT  
STARTS WITH  
THE DECISION  
TO TRY**

## It's Too Hard—Can We Actually Do It?

Often we get a knot in our stomach when even *thinking* of asking God if we have started spending too much time with something (Facebook, iPhone, movies, novels) or if we are using certain devices or entertainments for His glory or not. We may be too scared (or simply too proud or too selfish) to consider handling entertainment and technology Biblically, because we know it means that difficult changes must happen; we try to ignore problems, hoping we can continue on as we have. Yet our heart's cry should be the message of Luke 22:42: ***Not my will, but thine, be done.*** Sometimes this is too big of a step to take immediately, and we have to first ask the Lord to give us His strength to even pray these words with sincerity. His promise is that He will help us: *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness* (2 Cor. 12:9). The next step is then admitting to ourselves that we might have a problem. Last of all, we have to identify and name the problem, so that we can submit to doing His will in the way we handle what is in the world.

The truth is that idols and addictions are not worth the emptiness they leave behind. Knowing that emptiness will be the outcome of indulging in worldly pleasures, the Lord graciously provided a better way for us—the way of His Son, the Lord Jesus—a pathway leading toward holiness, purity, and righteousness. A personal and open relationship with the one and only Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, brings blessing and fulfillment into our lives. *For he satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness* (Ps. 107:9). *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Phil. 1:21).

### **The Obsession Challenge**



Obsessing about anything that distracts us from fully serving the Lord is essentially idolatry; in other words, the focus we need to have on living for the Lord is spent doing anything else. Ask yourself these questions to see if you are one the verge of, or are actually practicing, idolatry:

1. Do I wake up thinking about it, or when I have “idle time” find myself daydreaming about it?
2. Do I find myself doing whatever “it” is first before spending time reading, meditating, or studying God’s Word?
3. Have I wasted money on it? Should I have instead given that money “back to God” in some way?
4. Do I value it more than the things of God? Am I sharing my faith in Christ? Am I giving back a proper amount of time, energy, or some of my resources to the church?
5. Am I seeking to be refined in my Christian walk regarding this issue?

~Contributed by K. Paul Gerstenberg, D.O.  
Family Practice Physician  
Elder, Ridgewood Church, Port Arthur, TX

## **A Special Fast**

Consider fasting from media for 3 to 7 days. Give yourself an opportunity to reconsider it from a fresh perspective. Take this time to pray to the Lord about your use of that which takes so much of your time, focus, and mental energy. Purpose to spend as much time as you were spending on all your media to memorizing a passage of Scripture, or consider reading the four Gospels or even the entire New Testament during your fast. Also, you may throw in some “good neighbor” deeds and serve someone in need. Commit to investing the time you used to spend on meaningless or less-than-fruitful activities into things that will matter eternally.

### **All for Christ! All for Eternity!**

#### **An Exciting Challenge!**

What if you were to take 80-90 percent of the time you are now giving to technology, how many more hours would you have at your disposal during the next year? Have you ever thought of all the exciting things you could do with that time? Perhaps begin by asking yourself:  
“Where is my passion; what is it that fills my heart?”

#### **Here are a few ideas:**

- Create a plan for ministry to orphans and orphanages in foreign countries.
- Learn a foreign language and go on a short-term mission trip.
- Become a team member at a soup kitchen.
- Spend more time in the Word and prayer.
- Teach literacy to struggling children, using this as an outlet to share Christ.
- Work at a crisis pregnancy center.
- Write children's books that focus on godly character.
- Learn graphic design.
- Learn to grow a garden and donate produce to your local Union Rescue Mission.
- Offer to landscape or plant flowers outside your church.
- “Adopt” a missionary or Compassion child. Find out

their needs, pray for them, send them care packages, or raise funds for unexpected needs.

- Freely mow a lawn for someone in need.
- Offer to fix computers, change oil, take a meal, baby-sit, clean, help a special needs child (or his mother!).
- Exercise; keep yourself healthy.
- Be an essential member of your family team, making life easier just because you are there.

Seek what God lays on your heart, remembering to redeem the time because the days are evil. Get excited about storing up your treasures in Heaven (Matt. 6:19-20). Get excited about how many hours you can redeem each week that will make a powerful impact on eternity and the person you are becoming today in Christ. You will look back a year from now, and then a lifetime from now, with few regrets, but rather a sparkling, spilling-over box of eternal riches to present heartily before your Lord, your Savior, who gave His all for you. What a privilege!



~Contributed by Jennifer (Lamp) Neef  
Author of *His Chosen Bride*

## Do We Really Have the Time?

Remember, if we are not actively pursuing the Great Commission and witnessing, or striving toward fulfilling the greatest commandment and loving God and others more than ourselves, then even if our blogging or social networking is handled in a God-glorifying way, do we have time for it? *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Eph. 2:10). Let's not miss out on the good works that He has prepared for us to walk in by wasting time on the aspects of social and digital media that will not matter for eternity. Have you lost your *First Love*—the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 2:4)? Is your Facebook or iPhone where you go to get comfort and fulfillment, or do you turn to the pages of our Lord's Word first?



*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.  
If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him* (1 Jn. 2:15).

## Testimony

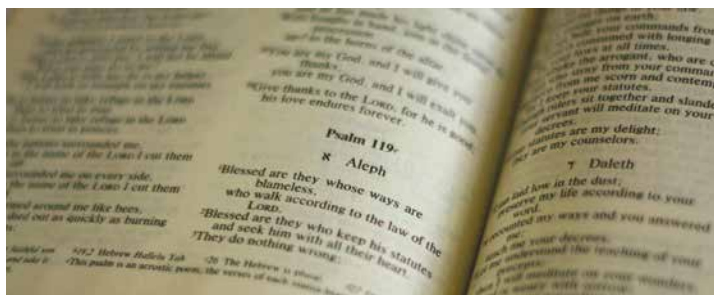
I recently changed employment to a marketing position and found myself beginning each day by checking email, voicemail, returning phone calls, reviewing my schedule on the computer, sending email updates, and texting friends. A large portion of my day was also spent advertising for my company on Facebook and Gmail as well as on other social media outlets. In less than a month of being engrossed in social media I knew that I had changed! I was discouraged, sluggish, short tempered, and ungrateful. What happened? My heart had been divided!

Later, I was convicted by Psalm 119:10: *With my whole heart I have sought Thee!* I read this one morning and learned an important lesson! There are only so many channels of communication that we can manage at a time. It is most important and necessary to listen and to speak to God. If we replace God's Word and prayer with texting and Twitter, we break the absolute, most important line of communication in life. In the end, a lack of communication with God will strangle our growth and relationship with Him.

~David, age 22

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

C.T. Studd (1860-1931)



What is happening in today's Christian community? We are mindlessly getting involved in activities and actions that the world has presented as "just a part of culture"—we participate in them and adopt them into our lives without really *thinking*: "How does this line up with Biblical principles?" The huge consequence is that many Christians are living lives full of wasted time and emptiness when they could be living victorious and effective Christian lives. Many of our problems simply lie in the fact that we do not take the time to think about how we are using what the world deems "popular" and "cultural." Our ultimate goal must be to bring God glory in whatever we are involved with and to walk worthy of Him (Col. 1:10).

### **Timely Thoughts**

How are we using these tools to glorify the Lord? Personally, I can think of a few friends who post mainly Scripture on their Facebook accounts. Sometimes they ask a question looking for insights from others. From these posts they can see where their friends are spiritually, and they can pray for, exhort, or ask counsel from those who have replied offline.

I know of a single lady in Canada who collects wonderful Christian quotations and sends them out with a little devotional once a week. I love seeing her email pop up in my mailbox, and the quotations are things that I post around my desk and send to others. The three sieves are a great thing to apply to any communication situation: (1) Is it true? (2) Is it kind? (3) Is it necessary? I like to add (4) Am I the one to address this issue? There is a lot of back-biting and bitter roots that are seeing the light of day through social media. *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh* (Jas. 3:10-12).

Remember also that many employers will get online to see who your friends are and what you have posted before considering you for a job. What is said about a boss or a place where one has worked is important! Specifically, ministries carefully choose their employees and volunteers. A status that says "My parents make me so upset" or "I hate my life" signals problems that come when there is not a proper perspective on authority and contentment, while a status that says "Praying for direction" shows that there is

a greater potential for success.

Ask the Lord if there are any areas of social media that need to be given to Him; include confessing the fact that maybe you have not been seeing others as more important than yourself, or that you have been succumbing to past bitterness, or that you have compromised, flirted, or fed your pride through your media choices.

~Contributed by Stacey Smith  
Secretary at ALERT Academy

## Final Thoughts

While mentally our desire is to do all for the glory of God, often we do not truly discipline ourselves to actively pursue this goal. We need to go beyond just *knowing* to *finding* specific ways to practice this principle in our lives. In other words, we have the thought that we want to bring God glory, but then we seem to leave it at that, subconsciously thinking that He is miraculously turning what we do into something that will bring Him glory because He knows that is our desire. We have to be careful to guard ourselves against being deceived in this way and instead train ourselves to *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. 5:8). We must make sure that with our devices,



social media, and Internet activity we *walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil* (Eph. 5:15-16). Acting upon our purpose to glorify Him will also include diligently striving to examine ourselves in ac-

cordance with His Word: *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting* (Ps. 139:23-24). Then, we should be diligent to consider daily the parts of our lives that need to be in better submission to the Word of God. We need to be humble enough to ask Him to show us how to do His will, while purposing to reevaluate our actions in the light of whether or not they match scriptural principles: *Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness* (Ps. 143:10). *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God* (Col. 1:10).

### Testimony

As a fourteen-year-old boy, my parents have taught me to guard my heart and mind, directing me toward scripture verses like Proverbs 12:11: *He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding*. In this verse, it is laid out straight in front of us that if we follow after *vain* people (and therefore, the vain or worthless things that they offer), we become *void of understanding*.

We should be following after heavenly things, keeping our minds focused on the Scriptures—things that would glorify, honor, and praise Him, not merely seeking to make our lives happier. Colossians 3:1-2 says, *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*. In these verses, we are commanded to set our minds on the things above, not on the passing things that are on earth. To me, obeying this command of Scripture includes social media, which is such a powerful distraction to many young people today. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever* (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

~Micah, age 14

## In Conclusion



Some may even choose a lifestyle with less technology, as it was only a few years ago when we were all able to live without smartphones, blogging, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, texting, MacBooks, iPods, and iPads! Whichever way you choose, remember the theme of our lives should always be to do all for the glory of God.

*\*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do,  
do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).*

*\*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your  
body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:20).*

*\*Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give  
glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake (Ps. 115:1).*

*\*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and  
honour and power (Rev. 4:11).*

### More Scriptural Principles

*\*Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:13).*

*\*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:1-2).*

*\*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).*

*\*But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? (Galatians 4:9).*

*\*How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (John 5:44).*

*\*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12).*

## The Good News

Digital devices and social media have provided so many avenues of entertainment that one would think we could predict a more satisfied and fulfilled culture. However, the opposite is true as more and more people struggle with depression and discontentment in their lives. In John 4:1-26, Jesus meets with the Samaritan woman at the well. This woman has evidently lived a life seeking fulfillment in relationships but has not found it—she has a hunger and thirst for things that do not fulfill. Jesus explains to her that the only way to true and lasting satisfaction and fulfillment is via His way: *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life* (Jn. 4:14). In John 6:35, Jesus says, *I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

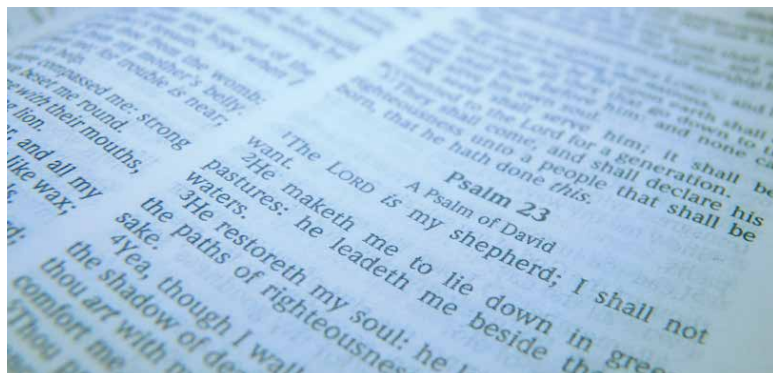
Our search for satisfaction and fulfillment can be ended by submitting to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ—this is His promise to us: *For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness* (Ps. 107:9). However, some have not taken their salvation seriously enough to progress into the victorious and satisfying Christian life.



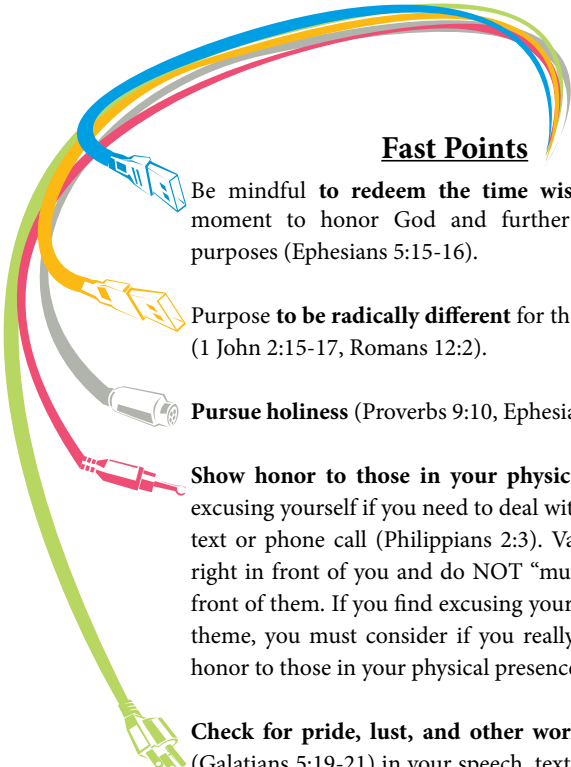
Others have never taken the step to actually accept His free gift of salvation: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (Jn. 3:16). Salvation is not hard to receive. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, salvation cannot be earned or worked for—it is a free gift: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* First of all, one must understand his sinfulness and need for a Savior. Everyone in the world has broken at least one of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20). We have all lied, stolen,

coveted, etc., and so according to God's Law, we are sinners. Romans 3:23 reminds us that *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*. God is holy and perfect and so our sin separates us from having a relationship with Him. The Good News is that the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross is the solution to our sin problem. On the cross, sinless Jesus took our sins on Himself so that through His death mankind would no longer be held accountable for his sins—2 Corinthians 5:21: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. Jesus' deity was further demonstrated when He raised Himself from the dead after His crucifixion. The fact that Jesus was able to raise Himself from the dead—and *that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures* (1 Cor. 15:4)—proved that *He is God*. As God, He had the choice of what to offer His created humans for their salvation, and He chose to offer us eternity with Him in the perfect holiness of Heaven—an unexplainable gift!

Sadly, we can allow our pride to keep us from admitting our sinfulness and need for a Savior. Don't miss out on salvation and eternity with the Lord Jesus just because you don't want to humble yourself to come under God's control. If you do not truly know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior and you have come to realize that this is what you need, remember that it isn't hard! It's simply a matter of laying down your pride, asking for His forgiveness for your sins, and then *believing* the truth about His death, burial, and resurrection. Romans 10:9 gives the promise: *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*.







## Fast Points

Be mindful **to redeem the time wisely**. Use every moment to honor God and further His kingdom purposes (Ephesians 5:15-16).

Purpose **to be radically different** for the sake of Christ (1 John 2:15-17, Romans 12:2).

**Pursue holiness** (Proverbs 9:10, Ephesians 1:4).

**Show honor to those in your physical presence** by excusing yourself if you need to deal with an important text or phone call (Philippians 2:3). Value the person right in front of you and do NOT “multitask” right in front of them. If you find excusing yourself a recurring theme, you must consider if you really ARE showing honor to those in your physical presence, or not.

**Check for pride, lust, and other works of the flesh** (Galatians 5:19-21) in your speech, texts, tweets, posts, blogs, etc. Rather, make sure you display the love, joy, and patience that show a desire to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23, 25) and purpose to honor God with all you do.

~Contributed by K. Paul Gerstenberg, D.O.  
Family Practice Physician  
Elder, Ridgewood Church, Port Arthur, TX

## APPENDIX

### Internet Usage and Modern Technology by Sarah Mally

#### A New Struggle for Our Generation

Recent studies show that, on average, teens in America spend about six hours a day using media such as TV, computers, Internet, cell phones, video games, etc. We face a new struggle that the generations before us have not had to deal with. It's hard for most of us to imagine living without this new invention called the computer. Modern technology is a new blessing, but with it come many huge dangers which our generation must learn to overcome.

First of all, the Internet, in itself, is a good thing. There is nothing inherently wrong with the Internet. It's just a tool, an invention that has many great benefits and is extremely useful.

On the other hand, there are also many dangers that the Internet brings:

#### Possible Problems/Cautions with Internet Usage:

- ➡ It opens us up to things that are not holy. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful* (Ps. 1:1).
- ➡ It provides situations that make it easier to compromise our standards of purity and holiness. *I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?* (Job 31:1).
- ➡ It interferes with relationships with parents. With much Internet usage, there tends to be an increase of secrecy and less communication within the family. In addition, individuals are encouraged to become introverted and not be aware of how to be of service to those around them.
- ➡ It leads to an unhealthy emphasis of wanting to have many friends. The number of friends we have becomes a status symbol, making us feel important or popular. But this is an attitude of pride and self-centeredness, not one of humility and genuine love for others. And, in fact, Jesus never told us to make friends—He told us to make disciples (Matt. 28:19)!
- ➡ It produces “artificial” friendships—close friendships with people whom we don't actually know in “real” life.

- ➡ It leads to sharing emotions prematurely or unwisely. What girls used to write in their personal diary, they now publish for the whole world to read. Yet Scripture tells us to guard our hearts diligently (Prov. 4:23).
- ➡ It becomes an emotional addiction. An addiction is something that controls us, something we feel we cannot live without. *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any* (I Cor. 6:12).
- ➡ It causes us to justify relationships that we normally would consider to be unwise or unhealthy.
- ➡ It becomes an area of independence. It's our own "world" that others don't know about. Yet any area of life in which we have no accountability is always a dangerous thing.
- ➡ It can lead to a double or hypocritical life. We are one person in public and a totally different person online.
- ➡ It causes us to become very "me" focused as we share with others countless details about our lives. Yet it is not important for everyone to know how we're feeling or what we ate for breakfast. What *is* important is that we help others focus on Christ.
- ➡ It leads us to waste time or miss out on other more important things that are going on around us.
- ➡ It teaches us to be constantly "multi-tasking." When working on multiple projects at the same time, we might think that we're being more productive, but research shows that we are actually less productive. It takes mental time and energy to switch from project to project, and we tend to be easily distracted and only half-heartedly focused on each task. Scripture reminds us, *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord* (Col. 3:23). As Jim Elliot said, "Wherever you are, be all there."



## Guarding Your Heart

A mother came up to me recently and said, “If my daughter was receiving a letter in the mail every single day from a young man at our church, I would be very uncomfortable. I wouldn’t consider this to be an acceptable friendship at this time in my daughter’s life, when she is seeking to guard her heart and not begin any romantic relationships. So why should I be comfortable if my daughter is receiving messages online every single day from young men at our church?”

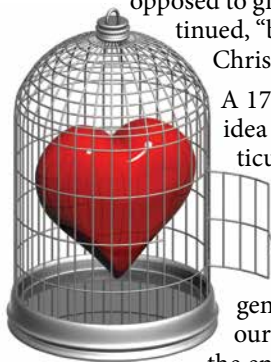
I thought this mother asked a good question. Why is it suddenly okay just because it’s happening online? Somehow the “distance” and the fact that everyone else considers it normal makes it permissible in our minds. But the principle in Scripture still remains: guard your heart!

Another mother wrote me a letter saying she was concerned about the amount of time her daughter was spending interacting with her guy friends online. “I wonder about the wisdom and dangers of checking all these guys’ Facebooks daily or even weekly,” she said. “My daughter and her friends are constantly knowing where each other is traveling, how they are feeling, what they are praying about, etc.” This mother went on to say that her daughter and her friends didn’t seem to think twice about this excessive amount of communication online and didn’t seem to think it made any difference if the time was spent in interaction with guys as

opposed to girls. “Our daughter sees no problem,” the mom continued, “because it’s just a way to keep in touch, and so many Christians are doing it.”

A 17-year-old friend of mine told me, “Sarah, I had no idea how I had become emotionally attached to a particular young man, simply because we were emailing each other frequently. The young man and I had both agreed it was nothing more than a casual friendship. My parents also approved and said they felt this email friendship was okay. I even used a general email account so that my parents could read our correspondence. But when he left for college and the emails stopped, I felt crushed. It was really hard. The amazing thing is that I hadn’t even realized the emotional attachment that had developed.”

Keep in mind that girls can give away emotions just as easily online as in person or when out on dates. In fact, they usually share their emotions more easily online. Many young people write things in text messages,



social networking sites, or emails that they would never speak in person. Be careful not to justify something simply because everyone else considers it to be acceptable.

### **Be Aware of Predators**

When you meet someone over the Internet, you have no idea of their true character. They could be a totally different person than what they are saying, and you would have no way of knowing this. You don't know whether they are telling the truth or outright lies. Many girls have no idea of what a huge danger this actually is. There are young men who are predators, who are deceiving young girls for their own selfish purposes. They know all the right things to say to thoroughly mislead and defraud young ladies. This is serious and dangerous—and it's more common than you probably realize. Just this afternoon, as I was writing this paragraph, I learned of a tragic situation of a young woman I know from a Christian home who ran away with a young man with whom she had begun an Internet acquaintance. This is serious. It is dangerous. And it is happening.

### **Set No Wicked Thing Before Your Eyes**

In II Timothy 2:22 we are warned, *Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* What does Scripture say our response should be to youthful lusts? Flee! Run the opposite direction as fast as you can. Do not stay and linger around. Do not get close to it. Do not look at it. Get away! The Internet is full of impure pictures, evil and inappropriate content, and much that compromises God's righteousness. Scripture is clear that we should stay completely away from those things which defile our hearts and minds. *For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret* (Eph. 5:12). *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes* (Ps. 101:3). We need to be resolute in our commitment to purity in our Internet usage. I strongly suggest that you talk with your parents about getting a secure and reliable Internet filter. This is important because it is very easy to get to an impure site accidentally. If you do see something on the Internet that you didn't intend to see, it is important to tell your parents.

Another frustrating thing is that sometimes even good sites have inappropriate ads that pop up on them. It is easy to get so used to seeing evil, that it doesn't even bother us anymore—we learn to tolerate it. But we should not tolerate evil! We should flee from it. Stay away from anything impure or questionable. Ask your parents to keep you accountable.

*I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil (Rom. 16:19). Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good (Rom. 12:9).*

### **Guard Your Time**

In a parable in I Kings 20, there is a servant who was not faithful in fulfilling an important obligation. The servant makes an excuse for his irresponsibility by saying, *And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone* (the captive he was supposed to be watching escaped) (I Kgs. 20:40). Without going into detail about all of the lessons of this particular parable, I'd like us to consider just the one phrase: *busy here and there*.

How often do we use this same excuse?

*I'd like to be more involved at church, but I'm just too busy.*

*I am planning to spend more time studying and memorizing Scripture, but I never seem to be able to fit it into my day.*

*I know I should be spending more time with my brothers and sisters, but my schedule is already way too full.*

*I would like to help out more at home, but I'm too busy.*

*I'm planning to go out witnessing sometime, but I can never fit it into my schedule.*

Time is the passing of life. None of us want to waste our lives—do we? Yet, we don't seem to think much about wasting some time. We rarely stop to realize that when we waste our time, we are wasting our lives.

We are going to stand before the Lord one day and give an account for how we used this most precious resource He gave us—our time. Will we have the same excuse as the servant in the parable in I Kings 20, “As I was busy here and there ... running here, doing this, doing that ... somehow my main priorities didn't get done”? Talk about a tragedy.

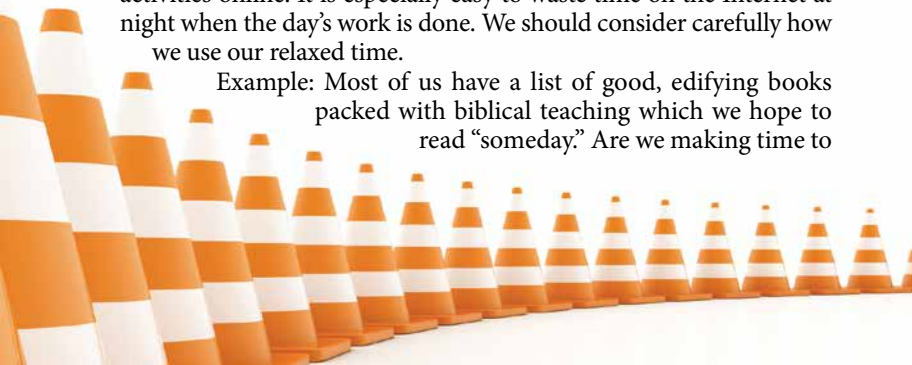
When a thief breaks into a house, he goes after the most valuable possessions—right? He usually doesn't steal the paper plates, the toys, or the table decorations, but rather the expensive jewelry, the electronic equipment, the silver and the gold. Satan is a thief (Jn. 10:10). He is trying to steal our time because he knows how valuable it is. He often tries to steal minutes rather than hours. He tries to bring along things that are “good” to steal our time, so that we cannot focus on what is “best.” Be aware of his strategies and be vigilant in protecting this resource God has given. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil* (Eph. 5:15-16).

The Internet and other forms of modern technology are among the biggest tools the enemy is using to steal away the time of this generation. How many of us have ever said, “I don’t have time to be more involved at church, or help ‘so and so’ in need, or memorize more Scripture, or spend time with my sister or my brother, or (you fill in the blank), yet have managed to find 45 minutes to waste online? It can happen so easily. Without even realizing it, we allow the valuable years of our youth to disappear as we allow the Internet to eat up precious minutes every day. One day we will look back and see that we were too “busy” and didn’t fulfill the truly most important things God had given us to do.

### **Suggestions of Possible Safeguards to Build into Your Life**

- ➡ Don’t check emails or get online until after your morning devotions.
- ➡ Close your email account and other online activities while you are working on important projects, school work, etc.
- ➡ Set limits for yourself when you do specific things online.  
Example: one friend of mine told me that she found herself wasting a lot of time looking at her friends’ blogs. Even though they were good Christian blogs with edifying content, she began to realize how much of her time it was absorbing. She would go to one blog and then click on a link that would take her to another blog which would take her to another site and so on. Finally, she asked herself, “Is this the best way for me to be using my time?” In order to help herself limit the time she was spending reading blogs, she decided that she would only go to her friends’ blogs on Saturdays.
- ➡ Make a chart of how many hours you spend daily on the computer.
- ➡ Choose a certain time in the evening at which you will stop all activities online. It is especially easy to waste time on the Internet at night when the day’s work is done. We should consider carefully how we use our relaxed time.

Example: Most of us have a list of good, edifying books packed with biblical teaching which we hope to read “someday.” Are we making time to



read blogs, articles, and messages online, but missing out on these classics of the faith? Another question to ask ourselves is if we are spending more time online than we are spending reading God's Word.

➡ Ask your parents what kind of guidelines they want for your use of the web.

➡ Create accountability by using the computer in an open place (e.g., in the living room vs. the bedroom).

➡ Give your parents all your user names and passwords.

➡ Ask someone to keep you accountable.

➡ Listen to the cautions of your parents and others.

Example: a friend of mine got a Facebook account, but she found that it was a big distraction to her because she was always wanting to check and see if she had any new posts. Her parents noticed how Facebook was consuming much of her thought and energy, and they asked if Facebook was really necessary. As she weighed the advantages and disadvantages, she began to realize that in her case, Facebook was something the enemy was using as a distraction in her life. She listened to her parents' caution and decided to stop using it altogether.

➡ Be aware of the example you are setting to others.

Example: another friend was considering joining a particular social networking site, knowing that she would be careful to use it in moderation. But then as she thought of some of the younger girls who looked up to her, she decided that in her case it would be better not to be part of it at all. She might be able to use it wisely herself, but if some of her younger friends followed her example, she felt that it could easily be a stumbling block to them.

➡ Go on an Internet fast where for a certain period of time (perhaps a week or a month) you cut out all Internet activity.

➡ If the Internet is a stumbling block in your life which you are not able to control, remember that we should take whatever action necessary to eliminate sin from our lives. This could even mean removing the Internet entirely. Jesus said, *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell* (Matt 5:29).

*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak,  
they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment  
(Matt. 12:36).*

*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that  
refraineth his lips is wise (Prov. 10:19).*

*A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man  
keepeth it in till afterwards (Prov. 29:11).*

This section was taken from  
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Please check out their other resources at  
Tomorrow's Forefathers and  
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Technology-based systems now dominate 21<sup>st</sup> century society. Smartphones, iPods, and social media are a major part of our lives. While these technology innovations are not bad in and of themselves and have useful purposes, they can have a negative influence on our lives if our use of them is not guided by Biblical principles. We are to be in the world, but not of the world: *And be not conformed to this world* (Rom. 12:2).

If we use things the world has deemed popular or cultural, then we need to guard ourselves against copying the way the world uses them. We should strive to view our entertainment and use of technology in light of Scriptural truths, particularly 1 Corinthians 10:31:

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

This booklet presents specific Scriptures to help guide Christians in their use of technology-based systems so that they can recognize how to better glorify the Lord and *walk worthy* of Him (Col. 1:10).

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**[www.biblicaldiscipleship.org](http://www.biblicaldiscipleship.org)**

**[www.creationproclaims.com](http://www.creationproclaims.com)**

**[biblicaldiscipleshipministries@gmail.com](mailto:biblicaldiscipleshipministries@gmail.com)**

**(972) 771-0568**

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