

12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You-Summary

“For all the abuses and devastation of distraction, wasted hours, narcissistic self-promotion, and pornographic degradation, I see the computer and the smartphones as gifts from God—like papyrus and codex and paper and the printing press and the organs of mass distribution.”-John Piper.

In 2010, just after Apple launched its innovative tablet (the iPad) a reporter asked Steve Jobs, “So your kids must love the iPad?” He responded “They haven’t used it. We limit how much technology our kids use at home.” Later, Apple’s vice president of design, Jonathan Ive admitted, “to setting strict rules about screen time.”

We can’t escape it, and probably none of us *want* to escape it. We cannot become digital monks.

This generation has the unique task of assigned it of discerning what the new media are *really good for*, and that means, also, what they are *not good for*. If they fluff it, generations after them will pay the price.

I (*Tony Reinke*) find myself in a tricky place—asking critical questions about how my phone is changing me while also working full time full time online and trying to leverage my skills and experiences to grab the attention of a virtual audience.

Social media are largely what we make of them—escapist or transforming depending on what we escape from them and how we use them.

Romans 1:25 (NLT) *They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.*

I proceed under the assumption that we all need to stop and reflect on our impulsive smartphone habits because, in an age when our eyes and hearts are captured by the latest polished gadget, we need more self-criticism, not less.

We are East of Eden but West of the Great City of God. How technology fits in during this journey, for good and bad.

1. Technology modifies creation. Starting with farming all the way to modern healing drugs.



2. Technology pushes back the results of the fall. The sweep of technological advance is a gracious gift from God to help us live in a fallen creation. But all of this technology also reminds us of our fundamental problem—we are sinfully alienated from God.

3. Technology establishes human power. Unhitched from fear and obedience to God, technology quickly becomes a pawn in human power plays.

Power and superiority rest on technology (Atomic bombs, warships, etc)

4. Technology helps to edify souls. Over time, the many scrolls of the Old Testament and the many books and letters of the New Testament were gathered into a codex, translated, and mass published in a single book of unified authority that we now conveniently carry in one hand. (*Bret note. The Reformation could not have happened without the printing press. It would have been quashed before gaining popular support as movements before had*)

5. Technology upholds and empowers our bodies (eyeglasses, hearing aids...)

6. Technology gives voice to human autonomy. This is always what happens when technology is misused in unbelief. (The Tower of Babel was built with architectural technology)

7. God governs every human technology. To build a godless skyscraper using God's resources put in the ground and God's inventiveness put in his image bearers, was the height of human arrogance.

8. Technology shapes every relationship. Every technology changes the fundamental social dynamics of how we relate to the world, to one another, and to God.

9. Technology shapes our theology. For better or for worse, technology fundamentally changes how we talk about God. And technology shapes the way God communicates himself with us. God makes Himself clear to us through metaphors of technology, and we find it possible to define Him, and also distort Him by projecting metaphors of technology onto him. (Example; paintings of Jesus)

Perhaps we adapt so readily because technology exerts a sort of terrorism over us. We live under the threat that if we fail to embrace new technologies, we will be pushed aside into cultural obsolescence, left without key skills we need to get a job, disconnected from cultural conversations, and separated from our friends.

36 per cent of 18-29 year olds in America admit they are online “almost constantly”—a phenomenon made possible by the smartphone.

Chapter 1-WE ARE ADDICTED TO DISTRACTION

We check our smartphones about 81,500 times each year, or once every 4.3 minutes of our waking lives.

Even the GPS on my (Tony) phone, which guided me to a new coffee shop today, possesses thirty thousand times the processing speed of the seventy pound onboard navigational computer that guided Apollo 11 to the surface of the moon.

I surveyed eight thousand Christians about social media routines. More than half of the respondents admitted to viewing a smartphone within minutes of waking. 73% check email and social media *before* spiritual disciplines in the morning.

A psychologist at Cal State Fullerton warns that Facebook addicts, unlike compulsive drug abusers have “the ability to control their behavior but they don’t have the motivation because they don’t see the consequences to be that severe.”

Behavioral scientists and psychologists offer statistical proof in study after study: the more addicted you become to your phone, the more prone you are to depression and anxiety, and the less able you are to concentrate at work and sleep at night.

Why distractions lure us. *First of all, we use digital distractions to keep work away.* Facebook, for example, can be a way to escape from work deadlines. When life becomes more demanding, we crave something else—anything else.

Second, we use digital distractions to keep people away. In the digital age, we are especially slow to associate with “the lowly around us.”

Third, we use digital distractions to keep thoughts of eternity away. The human appetite for distraction is high in every age, because distractions give us easy escape from the silence and solitude where we become acquainted with our finitudes, our inescapable mortality, and the distance of God from all our desires, hopes and pleasures.

“I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber.” (*Blaise Pascal 1623 – 1662*). Staring at the ceilings of our quiet bedrooms, with only our thoughts about ourselves, reality, and God is unbearable. We want to be harried and hassled and busy. Unconsciously we want the very thing we complain about. For if we had leisure, we would look at ourselves and listen to our hearts and see the great gaping hole in our hearts and be terrified, because that hole is so big that nothing but God can fill it.

The philosophical maxim “I *think* therefore I am”, has been replaced by “I *connect* therefore I am”, leading to a status desire, “I am *liked* therefore I am.”

Nothing puts social media and smartphone habits into context like the blunt reality of our mortality. Let it sink in a bit. Feel the brevity of life, and it will make you fully alive.

It is difficult to serve God with our heart, soul, strength, and mind when we are diverted and by multi-tasking everything.

(Unbiblical distractions)

1. *Unchecked distractions that blind souls from God.*
2. *Unchecked distractions that close off communion with God.*
3. *Unchecked distractions that mute the urgency of God.*

True distractions include anything (even a good thing) that veils our spiritual eyes from the urgency of the season of heightened expectation as we await the summing up of all history.

Our battle against the encumbering distractions of this world—especially the unnecessary distractions of our phones—is a heart war we can wage only if our affections are locked firmly on the glory of Christ. The answer to our hyperkinetic digital world of diversions is the soul-calming sedative of Christ’s splendor, beheld with the mind and enjoyed by the soul.

There has never existed a life without distractions. We must die to the idea that a distraction-free life is possible—It is not. And it never has been. The holy life it piously complex, meaning we must learn how to apply distraction management in every situation.

If we merely exorcise one digital distraction from our lives without replacing it with a newer and healthier habit, seven more digital distractions will take its place.

As in every age, God calls His children to stop, study what captures their attention in this world, weigh the consequences, and fight for undistracted hearts before Him.

Our smartphones amplify the most unnecessary distractions as they deaden us to the most significant and important “distractions”, the true needs of our families and neighbors.

Chapter 2. WE IGNORE OUR FLESH AND BLOOD

Viral Anger

We are more likely to bubble with rage toward others screen to screen instead of face to face. Researchers call this phenomenon “anonymous anger”. It’s the theory that subconsciously, talking on a computer can seem more like we’re talking to ourselves than to real people.

Our typing thumbs lack empathy without living faces in front of us. It is much easier to slander an online avatar than a real life brother.

“Anger is a high-arousal emotion, which drives people to take action”, says one researcher of this trend. “It makes you feel fired up, which makes you more likely to pass things on.” Rage spreads.

The Joy of Fellowship. If anger is the viral emotion of disembodied fellowship, then joy is the Christian emotion of embodied fellowship.

Our personality will come through to some extent in an email or a tweet. But we are holistic beings; we have feelings, thoughts, imaginations, and bodies. When we remove part of our embodied personhood, misunderstandings become easier.

I think the “fullness of joy” comes with one personality interacting with other personalities in terms of voice, touch, appearance, and timing.

Not *everything* in true fellowship can be typed out on phone screens and sent at the speed of light through fiber optic cables. This is the reality of communication. Joy is a precious emotion of our integrated existence.

Compound Embodiment

In the smartphone age, when our cognitive actions are separated from our bodily presence, we tend to over prioritize the relatively easy interactions in the disembodied online world and undervalue the embodied nature of the Christian faith.

Muddy Pixels

The epidemic of texting and driving (among many other epidemics) is an attempted escape from the limits of our flesh and blood nature. We try to break through the boundaries of time and space, and we end up ignoring the flesh and blood around us.

Chapter 3. WE CRAVE IMMEDIATE APPROVAL

Have you ever wondered why it feels so natural to communicate with others online but it sometime feels awkward to communicate with others at church on Sunday mornings? Many factors are involved.

First in the online world we can break free from our physical limitations (If we want to). (Age, appearance, etc.) Self editing is less possible in genuine face-to-face relationships.

Second, in the online world, we can separate ourselves from people who don't think like us and gravitate toward people who do.

Our phones buffer us from diversity. New media is one of the ways our elders are rendered invisible. Also the impoverished, the less cosmopolitan, and non-Westerners. In effect, our online communities render invisible the majority of the human race.

Affirmation and assent merely reinforce existing prejudices. In such contexts, communities become insular, echo chambers of the accepted opinions, closed to opposing voices.

Glory versus Approval

John 12:43 (NLT) *For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.*

“In a solid, God-chosen relationship with Jesus, man's disapproval cannot hurt you and man's approval cannot satisfy”. (*John Piper*)

The sad truth is many of us are addicted to our phones because we crave immediate approval and affirmation.

In God's economy, approval is something we must wait for. Those who feed on little nibbles of immediate approval from man will eternally starve. But those who aim their entire lives toward the glory and approval of God will find, in Christ, eternal approval. The stakes are that high.

Do you want your approval and fame now, or can you wait for an eternal crown?

Chapter 4. WE LOSE OUR LITERACY

Our entire faith is built on a book, and inside that book are sixty-six smaller books. Yet in the digital age, books have become more vulnerable to the label *boring*. The statistics show that Christians who struggle to read books are struggling to break free from poor smartphone habits as one root cause.

[Three thousand of the eight thousand Christians that Tony surveyed] said they now read fewer books as a result of their phones and social media (with women accounting for 56.8 percent and men 43.2 percent) shows that as phones permeate our lives, it is becoming increasingly difficult for a substantial percentage of young Christians to read books.

The more I click online, the more precisely web algorithms feed me images, ideas, and products tailored by my previous engagements. So what I see has tailored to what I *liked* in the past. Creating a custom-built vortex of content, a swirl of new objects, filling my screen as I flick and scroll, all with the aim of keeping my eyes glued to the screen by feeding very specific appetite patterns of my craving heart and ultimately and ultimately reinforcing my smartphone obsession.

What's better for reading: paper or pixels? Two psychologists compared digital and print comprehension using a short article of about a thousand words. Print readers showed better comprehension than digital readers. Why? The answer was simple. Digital readers naturally read too quickly.

Simply put: if you want to internalize a piece of knowledge, you have to linger over it. But we have been trained *not* to linger over digital texts.

The greatest challenge to literacy is a short attention span caught now by one little explosion of surprise, now by another. Knowledge is never actually given to us in that form. But before we delete our Bible apps, we should consider that studies also tell us that Christian readers are more faithful to follow Bible reading plans on smart phones (with daily prompts) than print plans and offline reading.

[Whatever we use] we must become mindful and slow our pace.

God has given us the power of concentration in order for us to see and avoid what is false, fake, and transient—so that we may gaze directly at what is true, stable, and eternal.

We can lose the capacity to enjoy the One who demands the most sustained attention of all. The Bible stands as the oldest, longest, most complicated book we will ever try to read on our own. Simultaneously, every lure and temptation of the digital age is convincing us to give up the difficult, sustained work for the immediate and impulsive content we can skim.

So to skim the Bible is to misread it. The aim of the Bible is discipleship, to continually form and re-form our thinking, our habits, and our behaviors.

The Bible's Author warns us over and over again that the book will be rejected, distorted, or misunderstood in various ways. Stern internal warnings caution us to slow down and read with care, prayer, precision and urgency.

The Bible's Author and authors have chosen to reach their goals not by straight forward lecture, proceeding proposition by proposition, but through songs and poems, dark sayings, and half-interpreted stories.

Social media are far too new, too contemporary, too close, too much like me to tap into the greatest benefit of literacy.

In the smartphone age, we are bombarded daily by the immediate: Facebook updates, blog posts, breaking news stories. Yet the most important book for our soul is ancient.

Chapter 5. WE FEED ON THE PRODUCED

All of creation is a footpath back to God. Everything real finds its origin in God—meaning that all of creation is *mediated*. But add another level, a middle man—and now we are talking about *intermediated*

So there is **Natural Revelation from God (Mediated Pt. 1)** Creation

Special Revelation from God (Mediated Pt. 2) Scripture, Jesus.

Productions of Man (Intermediated) Image bearers of God (us) take the materials of the world, and the words, natural laws, and values of human flourishing established by the Creator, and remediate it all of it through our cultural products—art, music, literature, and texts—adding a layer of interpretation in our creations, intentionally or inadvertently, for good or evil.

In Christ we see through the showers of gifts to behold the glory of the Giver as we wait for an eternity in the matchless delights of God’s presence. He is the supreme gift of all—the gift toward which all the other gifts have been pointing leading us all along.

But in everything we make, we add a layer of interpretation. So I must always ask myself, does my digital world dim glory or reflect glory?

We must be aware that all the content on the “small screen” of our phones is intermediated. This is not good or bad, just a reality that calls for discernment and discretion.

People used to do things and *then* post them, and the approval you gained from whatever you were putting out there was a byproduct of the actual activity. Now the *anticipated* approval is what’s driving the behavior or the activity, so now there’s sort of been this reversal.

(Tony talks about how the point-and-shoot cameras in our phones might make us less capable of retaining discrete memories. Before a picture could connect us to a memory. But now did we even allow a memory to be formed? A 2-D snapshot isn’t the memory. It can only prompt a memory that has been formed)

Sin lies about the future. “If I don’t grab this chance at glory now”, sin tells me, “it will be lost forever.” We are being conditioned to turn to our phones when we want to be amazed and wowed.

Chapter 6. WE BECOME WHAT WE “LIKE”

The words and images we *share* on our phones influence others. But the words and image we *consume* transform us.

When we talk about “smartphone addiction”, often what we are talking about is the addiction of looking at ourselves. There is an old adage that says, “We are not who we think we are; we are not even who others think we are; we are who *we think* others think we are.”

We are composites of the people we want to conform to, and this conformity defines one of the most powerful lures of our smart phones. Digital technology now accelerates and particularizes our search for belonging.

If we worship idols, we become like the idols. If our idols have no hands to embrace us, no eyes to see us, no mouths to assure us, and no ears to hear us, then we who worship idols become like them: spiritually powerless, blind, mute, and deaf. *If we worship Christ, we become like Christ. The object of our worship is the object of our imitation.*

Submission to a created thing, such as a smartphone, is idolatry when that created tool or device determines the end of our lives. In the digital age, we idolize our phones when we lose the ability to ask if they help us or hurt us in reaching our spiritual goals.

Our digital interactions with one another, which are often necessarily brief and superficial, begin to pattern all our relationships.

The way we interact online becomes the norm for how we interact offline.

Chapter 7. WE GET LONELY

“Humans connect to other humans at so basic a level that when we disconnect, our souls shatter into a thousand pieces.” (*Theologian Peter Leithart*)

Smartphones and social media were supposed to cure the epidemic of loneliness. We would all be connected. But the harsh truth is we can always be lonely, even in a crowd—and now even more so in a digital crowd.

It’s a lonely business, wandering the labyrinths of our friends and pseudo-friends’ projected identities, trying to figure out what part of ourselves we ought to project, who will listen, and what they will hear.

In the big picture, technology offers us many benefits but with one major pitfall: isolation. As technology improves, machines replace people and automation replaces interaction.

From attending a Saturday night concert, to the phonograph, to the radio, to the boom box, to the Walkman, to the iPod—music went from a social community experience to a shared family experience to a private earbud experience.

Our smartphones are portable shields we wield in public to deter human contact and interaction.

The smartphone is causing a social reversal: the desire to be alone in public and never alone in seclusion.

I could put myself out for virtual inspection and validation while remaining in control, remote from the possibility of physical rejection.

Friction is the path to genuine authenticity, and no amount of online communication can overcome a lack of integrity. We must be real with the people God has put in our lives.

On the other hand, in *true* solitude we find ourselves. We prepare ourselves to come to conversation with something to say that's authentic.

(Survey of eight thousand Christians) When asked whether they were more likely to check email and social media *before* or *after* having their spiritual disciplines on a typical morning. 73 percent said *before*.

Why? Candy motives and avoidance motives.

1. *Novelty Candy*. We want to be informed about what's new in the world and not be left out.
2. *Ego Candy*. What people are saying about us and how they respond to our posts.
3. *Entertainment Candy*.
4. *Boredom Avoidance*. We want to put off the day ahead.
5. *Responsibility Avoidance*. We want to put off the burdens of the roles God has given us. (Mothers and Fathers, employees)
6. *Hardship Avoidance*

Every morning we must take time to stop, to be still, to know that God is God and we are His children. Digital technology must not fill up all the silent gaps of life.

So as Christians, we push back our phones in the morning—in order to protect our solitude so that we can know God and so that we can reflect Him as His children. And

we push back our phones during the day—in order to build authentic eye-to-eye trust with the people in our lives and to be sharpened by hard relationships.

Chapter 8. WE GET COMFORTABLE IN OUR SECRET VICES

Anonymity is where sin flourishes, and anonymity is the most pervasive lie of the digital age. The clips of our fingertips reveal the dark motives of our hearts, and every sin—every double-tap and every click will be accounted for.

Nearly 50 percent of of professing Christian men 18-29 willingly acknowledged ongoing porn use.

Among Christians, free porn accessed on a smartphone represents a spiritual epidemic of unprecedented gravity in the history of the church, costing a whole generation of young Christians their joy in Christ and corroding young souls by the acid of unchecked lust.

Smartphones make it possible for users to help themselves to fresh forbidden fruit at any moment of any day, and thereby destroy themselves in secret.

We fool ourselves with anonymity. But, whether it's an abundance of shoes, dirty humor, discreet sexting, or anonymous adultery, no addiction in our lives is hidden from the eyes of God.

Pornography is the web's largest industry, and the medium fits the vice. But the sobering fact is that our private sexual practices measure our proximity to God.

Our browsing history remains a permanent record of our sin and shame—unless He shows mercy.

- The gospel of consumerism says: everything you could possibly imagine for your earthly happiness and comfort is available in a dozen options, sizes, colors, and price points.
- The gospel of Jesus Christ says: everything you could possibly need for your for your supreme joy and eternal comfort is now invisible to the human eye.

Video Literacy

In an age of abundant visual vices and stunning CGI-driven visual feats, the Christian imagination is starving for solid theological nourishment.

We are also witnessing a seismic transition from passive video consumption to active (and hyperactive) video filming, editing, and sharing—all from our phones.

When I grow bored with Christ, I become bored with life—and when that happens, I often turn to my phone for a new consumable digital thrill. It is my default habit.

In our phones, the digital age and the consumerist age merge, and our screens offer us everything we can see or desire, even “anonymous” compulsions and lurid fantasies.

Chapter 9. WE LOSE MEANING

Our phones make it possible to share and consume a steady diet of information that is pointless beyond making us feel connected to others. Trivial knowledge that is shared to maintain some sort of social bond, but not to convey ideas.

Our phones draw us into unhealthy habits not because we want unlimited information, but because we want to stay relevant and entertained. We want to be humored and liked.

Driving our desire to connect is our appetite for novelty.

Social media is not replacing the mass media; it's becoming the filter through which the content of the mass media must now pass to reach untold masses.

Social media and mobile web access on our phones all drive the immediacy of events around the world into our lives. As a result, we suffer from neomania, an addiction to anything new in the last five minutes.

What is striking about the speedy and wide ranging communications of modern news is how on edge we are about them, as though we were constantly afraid that the world would mutate behind our backs if we were not current with a thousand disassociated new pieces of information.

In our desire to “master the world”, we are made especially susceptible to novelty and prompts—we get texts, read tweets, or see notifications on our phones, and everything in our lives must stop.

It serves to fix our perception on the momentary now, preventing retrospection, discouraging deliberation, holding us spellbound in a suppositious world of the present which, like hell itself, has lost its future and its past.

Three Solutions from Solomon

1. In all the noise, Christians must identify and cherish wisdom. We must assign a value judgement to all the information that we take in. Perhaps the greatest fate we face is that of living with short attention spans, caught now by one little explosion of surprise, now by another. Knowledge is never actually given to us in that form. It has to be searched for and pursued.
2. In all the noise, Christians must strive for fearful obedience over frivolous information.
3. In all the noise, we must embrace our freedom in Christ, as we step back from the onslaught of online publishing and the proliferation of digital sages.

Chapter 10. WE FEAR MISSING OUT

When we miss out too many times, we can begin to dread the next miss inordinately.

So our phones and social media serve as a real time refresh of our comparisons with the lives of others.

FOMO—“the Fear of Missing Out” anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on a social media website. I want to know, I want to see, and I don’t want to be left out.

One counselor says, “I think that more than ever before Christians are news junkies. More than ever before, through social media and websites, and a 24-hour news cycle, we are aware of what’s happening around us. And I think for many of us that arouses our fears.”

Disciples who are awake to reality have their attention fixed on the only breaking news that really matters; namely the news that the kingdom of God has broken into our world in Jesus Christ. This breaking news demands our sustained attention and a wide awake imagination.

“What I am most afraid of missing out on is not information but affirmation.” The desire for affirmation is perhaps the smartphone’s strongest lure, and it is only amplified when we feel the sting of loneliness or suffering in our lives.

When a sense of pain or suffering hits, we turn to our smartphones...and we exacerbate the pain. “Everybody is better than me.” “Why me Lord?” In your trial your insidious, wicked heart will be exposed, and comparison is how it plays itself out.

We can say that FOMO is the primeval human fear, the first fear stoked in our hearts by when a slithering serpent spoke softly of a one-time opportunity that was too good to miss. “Eat from the one forbidden tree, Eve, and you will be like God.”

Every day believers are still animated by the empty promise of reaching some level of self-sufficiency where God will finally be rendered unnecessary.

Chapter 11. WE BECOME HARSH TO ONE ANOTHER

While there are many “one anothers” in the Bible, “compare one another” is not one of them. And yet this is the direction we tilt online. In an age when anyone with a smartphone can publish dirt on someone else, we must know that spreading antagonistic messages online, with the intent of provoking hostility without any desire for resolution, is what the world calls “trolling” and what the New Testament calls “slander”.

Slander has been defined “as not necessarily a false report, just an ‘against report’”. The intent is to belittle another.

“With social media we can now harm and embarrass and stigmatize people with greater force than ever before in human history. Self-restraint has never been more important.”

Our glutinous fascination with the failures of others long predates social media. Faultfinding is an ancient hobby meant to prop up a façade even among Christians.

Chapter 12. WE LOSE OUR PLACE IN TIME

We live in a technology driven culture, and we are conditioned to reflexively respond to breaking news in our feeds rather than to reflectively connect our past with our endless future.

No generation in the history of the world has been more capable of welcoming distractions into our daily life, more likely to be pulled in various directions, and more prone to communicating in multiple simultaneous conversations. Life online is a whiplash between deep sorrow, unexpected joy, cheap laughs, profound thoughts, and dumb memes.

Losing track of time. At root here is a fundamental assumption about how many tweets and personal updates and news feeds, with their fractured patterns, are healthy for us.

[As a Christian] am I entitled to spend every month simply browsing odd curiosities?

I (Tony) get the distinct sense in scripture that the answer is *no*. I am not my own. I am owned by my Lord. I have been bought with a price, which means I must glorify Christ with my thumbs, my ears, and my time. I do not have time to *kill*—I have time to redeem.

- We squander time. We lose track of time.
- It's the nature of technology to dislocate us historically; it is incapable of appreciating the notions of final causality or ultimate purpose.
- When we use our phones to find sin, we cut our selves off from God's timeline.

Forget for a time your virtual crowd of online followers and imagine all of your spiritual ancestors in the faith watching in the bleachers. They're times are legend. Your time is now.

The internet often feels a lot less like an "information super highway" and more like a virtual village where through countless intertwined lines of relationship, everyone is minding everyone else's business.

CONCLUSION

What I (Tony) am coming to understand is is that the impulse to pull the lever of a random slot machine viral content is the age-old tactic of Satan. (*The theme of C.S.Lewis' brilliant "The Screwtape Letters". Satan's "Nothing" strategy*)

Routines of nothingness. Habits unnecessary to our calling. A hamster wheel that will never satisfy our soul.

Technology makes life easier, but immaturity makes technology self-destructive. With my phone, I find myself always teetering between useful efficiency and meaningless habit.

Our advances in technology have a way of rendering God more and more irrelevant to our world and in our lives—the very definition of worldliness. And if our digital technology becomes our god, our wand of power, it will inevitably shape us into technicians who gain mastery over a dead world of conveniences.

Self-criticism in the digital age is a necessary discipline—an act of courage. So I ask myself:

- *Ends*: Do my smartphone behaviors move me toward God or away from Him?

- *Influence*: Do my smartphone behaviors edify me and others, or do they build nothing of lasting value?
- *Servitude*: Do my smartphone behaviors expose my freedom in Christ or to technique.

Scripture is vigilant to focus our attention on things unseen.

- On the external front: are we safeguarding ourselves and practicing smartphone self-denial?
- On the internal front, are we simultaneously seeking to satisfy our hearts with divine glory that is, for now, largely invisible?

Colossians 3:1-2 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

2 Corinthians 4:18 *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we live by faith, not by sight.*

Romans 8:24-25 *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

Hebrews 1:1 *In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,*

John 20:29 *Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

1 Peter 1:8-9 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

1 Peter 1:13 *Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.*

1 John 2:16-17 *For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

12 Ways Our Smartphones are Undermining Our Spiritual Health.

- Our phones amplify our addiction to distractions (chapter 1) and thereby splinter our perception of our place in time. (12)
- Our phones push us to evade the limits of embodiment (2) and thereby cause us to treat one another harshly. (11)
- Our phones feed our craving for immediate approval (3) and promise to hedge against any fear of missing out (10)
- Our phones undermine key literary skills (4) and, because of our lack of discipline, make it increasingly difficult for us to identify ultimate meaning. (9)
- Our phones offer us a buffet of produced media (5) and tempt us to indulge in visual vices. (8)
- Our phones overtake and distort our identity (6) and tempt us toward unhealthy isolation and loneliness. (7).

12 Life Disciplines We Need to Preserve Our Spiritual Health

- We minimize unnecessary distractions in life to hear from God (chapter 1) and to find our place in God's unfolding history. (12)
- We embrace our flesh-and-blood embodiment (2) and handle one another with grace and gentleness. (11)
- We aim at God's ultimate approval (3) and find that, in Christ, we have no ultimate regrets to fear. (10)
- We treasure the gift of literacy (4) and prioritize God's Word. (9)
- We listen to God's voice in creation (5) and find a fountain of delight in the unseen Christ. (8)
- We treasure Christ to be molded into His image (6) and seek to serve the legitimate needs of our neighbors. (7)

Questions to Ask Ourselves in the Digital Age;

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

10. Do my smartphone habits disengage me from the needs of the neighbors God has placed right in front of me?

12 Boundaries

1. Turn off all essential push notifications.
2. Delete expired, nonessential, and time wasting apps.
3. At night, keep your phone out of the bedroom.
4. Use a real alarm clock, not your phone alarm, to keep the phone out of your hands in the morning.
5. Guard your morning disciplines and evening sleep patterns by using phone settings to mute notifications between one hour before bedtime...to a time when you can reasonably expect to be finished with your spiritual disciplines in the morning. (For Tony: 9 PM to 7 AM)
6. Use self-restricting apps to help limit your smartphone functions and the amount of time you invest in various platforms.
7. Recognize that much of what you respond to quickly can wait. Respond at a later, more convenient time.
8. Even if you need to *read* emails on your smartphones, use strategic times during the day to *respond* to emails at a computer.
9. Invite your spouse, your friends, and your family members to offer feedback on your phone habits. (70% of Christians surveyed say nobody else knew how much timed they spent online.)
10. When eating with your family members or friends, leave your phone out of sight.
11. When spending time with family members or friends, or when you are at church, leave your phone in a drawer or in your car, or simply power it off.
12. At strategic moments in life, digitally detox your life and recalibrate your ultimate priorities. Step away from social media for strategic stoppages (each morning) digital Sabbaths (one day offline each week), and digital sabbaticals (two two-week sabbaticals a year).