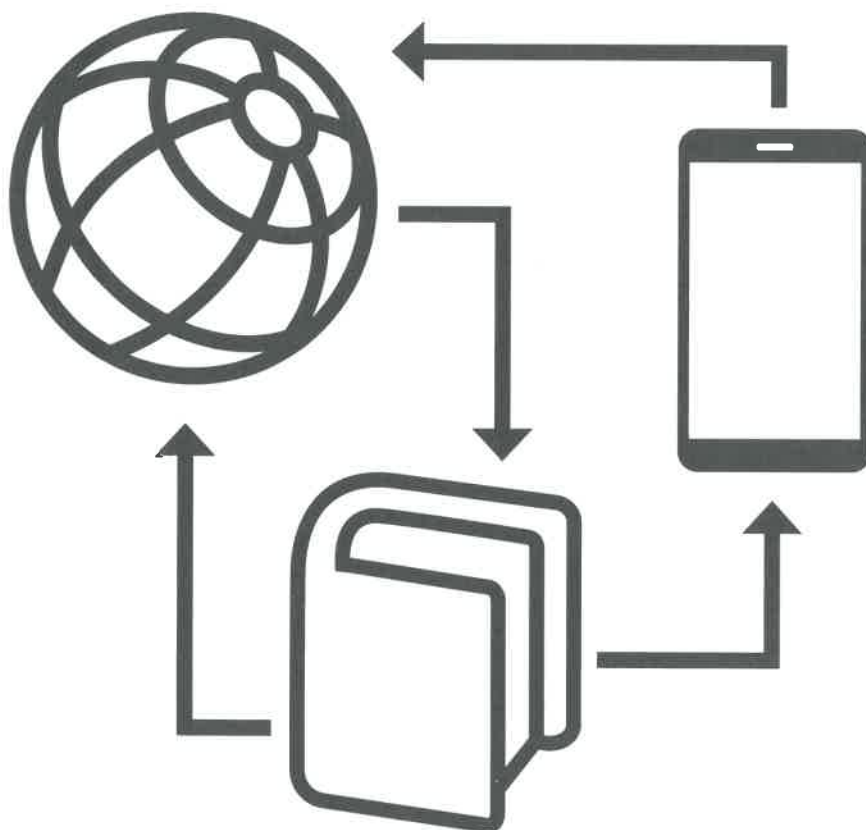




TECHNOLOGY: THE GOOD & THE BAD

I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil.

ROMANS 16:19b

TECHNOLOGY OVERLOAD

Our children are engrossed in technology. Unlike many of us, there was never a time when our kids didn't have the Internet or access to personal computers. Most children begin using technology around age two, usually through smartphones or tablets. As they grow up, their engagement with digital media grows with them. From games and shows, to texting, shopping, and social media, there are an unlimited number of ways that technology has become integrated with modern life. And sadly, both statistics and experience tell us that the results are often negative. As Christian parents, it's time we admit that too much technology is dangerous.

In the scope of a lifetime, you have a few short years with your children in your home. Don't give those precious moments away.

Is your family guilty? Do you hand your kids a phone or a tablet in the afternoon and let them check out? Work is exhausting. You have a thousand things to check off your list between leaving the office and putting your head down on your pillow at night. But one thing you absolutely cannot neglect is quality time with your kids. Christ-centered parenting is intentional parenting. In the scope of a lifetime, you have a few short years with your children in your home. Don't give those precious moments away. Don't let the pale light of a screen raise your children for you.

A GREAT TOOL, BUT A DANGEROUS MASTER

Technology isn't going away. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. As we discuss this issue, let's be clear that technology in and of itself is not evil. We can all appreciate the gifts of modern technology—microwaves, cars, and yes, even smartphones. The danger for our kids is not the technology itself but when and how they use it.

The digital revolution has changed our lives. Unfortunately, it has also opened the door to certain kinds of temptations that were previously unimaginable. This is the reality for our children's generation. They will contend every day with temptations that many of us have never known. And this leads us to a simple point: Christian parents must not allow their children to use

computers, smartphones, or tablets that have unrestricted Internet access.

Hear this as a plea. We know what happens when sexually-forming minds are exposed to pornography. We know the kind of pull to temptation, especially among young males, that comes with the promise of sexual “fulfillment,” even more so with the illusion of anonymity. And we know that predators use the Internet to troll for naïve children to exploit.

So how could we possibly put our children in a situation of that sort of peril?

We ought to know better than this. And we don't mean that Christians ought to know better. It's worse than that. Human beings ought to know better. It doesn't take the indwelling Holy Spirit to know that turning a middle schooler or teenager loose with unrestricted Internet access is insane.

Jesus described the Fatherhood of God by noting that no one, not even an evil person, would give his son a serpent when he asked for a fish (Matt. 7:10). Why not? It's because natural affection propels a father to seek to protect his child from something harmful.

But sadly, we live in a culture, even in our Christian circles, that is willing to give a child a serpent, as long as he really wants it. After all, all his friends have access to venomous reptiles and we don't want him to feel different. Besides, we “trust” him.

Brothers and sisters and friends, this is madness.

Don't miss our point—we think the digital revolution is largely a good thing. Children should be reared to see technology as a tool to be used for kingdom priorities. But there's far too much at stake to turn a developing psyche loose, with no boundaries, on a technology that could psychically and spiritually cripple him or her (and a future family, too) for a lifetime. Technology is good. Turning our children over to the cyber-wilderness is not.¹

We don't have to rid our lives of technology and boycott the Internet. Instead, as we "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5), we redeem our technology use for good. If we truly believe that God is concerned with every aspect of our lives, then we will learn to use technology for His glory.

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

Here are questions to ask your kids (and yourself) regarding technology use:

- Are you being true to who you are as an image-bearer of God? Do you feel any shame about something you posted online or about the way you are using an app or video game?
- Is this honoring your relationships with other people? Are you saying things that are demeaning, derogatory, or manipulative? Are you giving respect to the people you encounter online who are made in the image of God?
- Does your activity online and on mobile apps bring glory to God?²

What picture are your children presenting to the world? Is it an accurate representation of who they are? Is it an honest picture of your family? Are they pointing others to

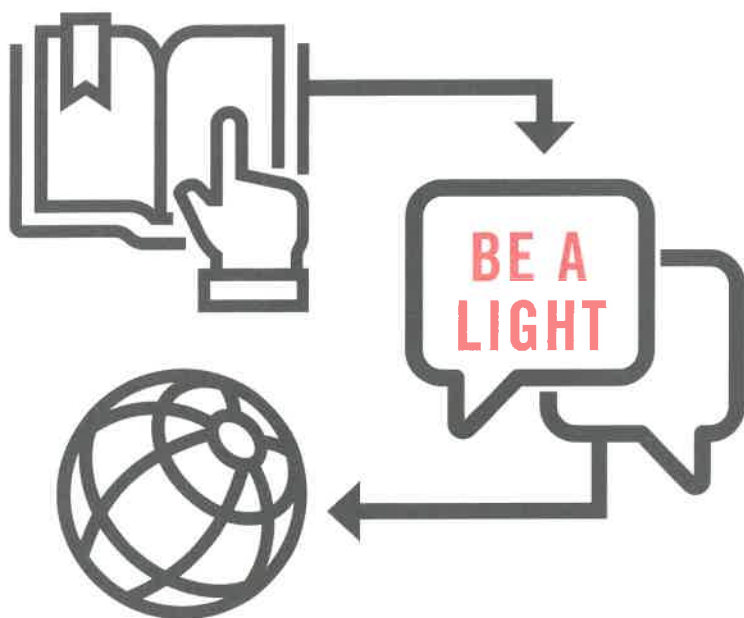
Christ with their witness on social media or putting a stumbling block in someone's path?

OTHER AREAS TO CONSIDER

Thinking through our children's use of technology includes more than surfing the Internet and watching too much TV. Playing video games is an extremely popular activity. While children are usually drawn to video games for entertainment, there are a number of reasons to monitor the use of video games in your home.

Here are a few things to consider. Video games can be highly addictive. Make sure your child's gaming doesn't become an idol or an obsession. Kids sometimes turn to video games to escape from pressures or problems in their life—a child will seek success in a digital world to mask perceived failures or struggles in the real world. Some games simply have inappropriate content. It is always good for you to know what your child is being exposed to. And finally, consider the amount of time your child spends playing these games. Too much attention to gaming can easily cause your child to neglect things like family, school, and Christ.

Another concern that is becoming more and more popular among teens and young adults is known as sexting (sending sexual images of oneself through technology). This is another challenge of the digital age, and it is one that may affect your kids before they are mature enough to understand it. Some kids admit that they sent these images or videos because of pressure from another person, but often this happens simply because the child is too young or immature to grasp the consequences of his or her actions.³



As parents, we must be prepared to respond. On a practical level, reiterate the damage this can do to their reputation and remind them that sending and receiving explicit pictures of a person under the age of 18 is illegal. Help them see beyond today and look ahead to their future spouse and children.⁴ But don't forget to take them back to the basics of the purpose of their sexuality. Sexual intimacy is designed for marriage. It is holy and special. Sexting is a cheap imitation of God's design, and it bears permanent consequences.⁵

REDEEMING THE GIFT

Help your child understand both the positives and negatives of technology. In Genesis 1, we see God's work in the garden at creation and He pronounced it "good." But we know the next chapter in the story. Man sinned and the good things God gave him became burdensome. His work was

made difficult. The blessing of bearing children became painful.

The gifts are tainted. Technology is a good gift, but it can easily be used for sinful ends. Let's help our kids redeem this gift and live "as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16) in the online world.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you think this article comes down too hard on technology? Why or why not?
2. How has technology changed the dynamics of your family life over the last few years, both positively and negatively?
3. What changes do you personally need to make in the area of technology use?
4. What one thing stood out to you from this article?