ADVANCED TOPICS IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING: TECHNOLOGY ADDICTION

I have a confession to make. I am leading a session on technology addiction. You must know something about me:

- ✓ I have an iPhone. And an iPod. And between my wife and two daughters we have three more iPhones and two more iPods.
- ✓ I have a Kindle. So does one of my daughters.
- ✓ I have a desktop computer at my office (27" screen). And another one at home (it's only 20"). And a laptop. And both my daughters use laptops. And I've lost count of how many spare computers and various computer accessories (scanners, printers, modems, etc.) I have around my office and garage.
- ✓ I monitor, at last count, about seven email accounts (I'm not exactly sure how many are active).
- ✓ We have two televisions, one cable package, and subscribe to Netflix and Amazon Prime. And we can access all those packages on our cellphones and one of our Kindles.
- ✓ I have a Facebook page. And I tweet on Twitter. And I blog. I actually have three blog sites, though only one is currently active (I'm making progress?). [I don't have accounts at Instagram, Flickr, Linkedin, Skype, Spotify, or Pinterest. Maybe there's hope?]
- ✓ I shop at Amazon more regularly than Walmart.
- ✓ Does anyone have any help for me?

But I'm not the only one who has issues handling technology, am I?

- ✓ There are currently 1.15 billion Facebook users and in June those users accessed Facebook 20 billion minutes *per day*, or 17.39 minutes per day per user, or 8.3 hours per user per month. Since only about ½ the Facebook users are active, you can actually double those numbers — so the average Facebook user is on it about 35 minutes each day, over 17 hours per month and about 9 days each year.
- ✓ Three weeks ago, we "witnessed the greatest entertainment launch in human history, though I suspect few of us noticed. We remember the buzz around James Cameron's *Avatar* which quickly became the highest-grossing film of all time, raking in over $2 billion since its 2009 debut. Well, last week *Grand Theft Auto V*, a video game, put it to shame, raking in $800 million on launch day, and surpassing the $1 billion mark on its second day. To put this in perspective, the previous entertainment launch record was $500 million in one day, set by another video game: *Call of*

Duty: Black Ops 2. It crossed the $1 billion mark 14 days after it was released. *The Avengers* holds the record for the fastest movie to gross $1 billion, a feat that took 19 days. And now *GTA V* has smashed all previous records; it is not implausible that it will surpass *Avatar* in earnings." [Tim Challies]

✓ In one day on the internet, 22 million hours of TV shows and movies are watched on Netflix. 864,000 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube, 18.7 million hours of music are streamed on Pandora, 250 million photos are uploaded to Facebook, and there are more iPhones sold than babies born worldwide (378,000 iPhones to 371,000 babies).

✓ One report estimated that 5 billion devices were connected to the internet in August 2010 (almost 1 per person in the world) and that number was projected to be 20 billion by 2020 (almost 3 per person). That led one writer to suggest, "There will come a day in the not too distant future when every product you buy will connect to the internet." [Dave Parrack, *tech.blorge.com*]

✓ In 2013, for the first time ever, Americans consumed more digital data (5 hours, 9 minutes) than TV (4 hours, 31 minutes) on a daily basis.

✓ But much of what we know about internet usage is anecdotal — we hear and read stories almost daily about the expanding use of technology:

➢ 14-year-old Casey Schwartz is in the 8th grade in Millburn, NJ. She got her first computer (a toy) when she was 18 months old. She got her first cellphone (a real one) when she was in the second grade. Casey now owns a white iPhone 4S -- a device she takes with her to school. And keeps on the table at meals. And carries around her house. And stores next to her pillow when she sleeps. Here are some things Casey told The Huffington Post's Bianca Bosker about her digital life —

On her iPhone:

"I bring it everywhere. I have to be holding it." "It's like OCD -- I have to have it with me. And I check it a lot."

On the social necessities of owning an iPhone:

"[A friend] wasn't in the group chat, so we stopped being friends with her. Not because we didn't like her, but we just weren't in contact with her."

"[That friend] has a smartphone now, so that's what gets her in. We always loved her and she was always our good friend, but she was excluded -- and she knew it, too -- because she didn't have an iPhone."

"We'll be sitting on a couch next to each other, texting each other," she notes. "We text in the same room. It's weird, I don't know why."

On the 56 text messages she and seven friends exchanged, as a group, 4 p.m. on a weekday:

> *"That's not even a lot. That's small. And we were in school the whole day also."*

On Facebook:

> *"It's not like I want to or I don't. I just go on it. I'm, like, forced to. I don't know why." "I'll wake up in the morning and go on Facebook just ... because." "Facebook takes up my whole life."*

On technology in general:

> *"If I'm not watching TV, I'm on my phone. If I'm not on my phone, I'm on my computer. If I'm not doing any of those things, what am I supposed to do?"*
>
> *"I think that in a few years, technology is going to go back and people won't use it anymore because it's getting to be a lot. I mean, I don't put down my phone. And it makes me wish that I did. It's addicting."*

"Casey may not be representative of her generation, or of her gender, or of the subspecies of humans sometimes classified as 'digital natives.' But her comments are revealing nonetheless. She seems to love her phone -- and her Facebook -- in spite of herself. She seems not to want the constant connection the digital world provides -- and yet to be, finally, unable to escape it.

"'It's getting to be a lot,' she says. Before, probably, returning to Facebook." [*The Atlantic*]

➢ I have recently counseled 2 young men in their teens/early 20s who averaged 8 hours per day on the internet and gaming. My suspicion is that they are not that unusual.

A definition of technology

John Dyer —

✓ The English term technology is composed of two Greek words: téchnē, which means "craft, skill, or art," and logía, which refers to the systematic study of a subject. But unlike the way we have been discussing technology, the Greek term téchnē referred to a person's skill in making things, not the tools they used to do so.…Over time, as these machines grew larger and more powerful, people started distinguishing between "fine arts" like painting and sculpting and the "mechanical arts" (i.e., machine making). Eventually, they stopped using the word technology to refer to crafting skills, and began using it exclusively in reference to mechanical arts. [*From the Garden to the City* (Kindle Locations 936-938).]

✓ "We are therefore able to create a simple, encompassing definition of technology: 'the human

activity of using tools to transform God's creation for practical purposes.'" [*From the Garden to the City* (Kindle Locations 1090-1091).]

That means that the book I read is just as much a technology as my Kindle. My car is technology (and so was the horse and buggy a generation ago). And so is my watch (and a sundial). And my washer and dryer (and a scrub board). And my television (and radio and wireless). And iPod (and record player). And email (and mail service and telegraphs and the pony express). And a chainsaw (and an ax, shovel, and handsaw). And Facebook (and email, and Twitter, and the telephone).

When we are talking about technology, we need to be careful not to assume that what the younger generation is doing is technology but what I am doing is not technology. Young people might use texting and I might use a telephone that is connected to a cord, but we are both using technology.

That means, that the battle against technological addiction is not a new phenomena.

For our purposes, when I use the word "technology," I am going to be using it as short-hand for electronic technology and media (since most of us aren't addicted to the use of shovels). But do be aware that there is much more at stake with technology than merely the latest iPhone or Facebook.

Electronic technology and morality

- Some biblical benefits of electronic technology:
  - ✓ COMMUNICATION — informational emails, Twitter, Facebook, e-zines,
  - ✓ TEACHING — blogs, sermon/teaching podcasts, books, study guides
  - ✓ Initiation of RELATIONSHIPS
  - ✓ EVANGELISM — Google gave me an opportunity to share gospel 6x with two counselees.
  - ✓ CREATION

> *"From the opening pages of Genesis, we find God speaking the entire universe into existence and Adam making up words as his first creative acts. Language is our first example of how humans create within the creation of God, imbuing each creation with value and meaning. God designed the world in such a way to be cultivated and shaped by humanity, and when we create we are operating as God's image-bearers." [Dyer,* From the Garden to the City *(Locations 883-886).]*

- Technology and sin:
  - ✓ Two definitions of sin:
    - ○ *"Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God."* *[Westminster Shorter Catechism]*
    - ○ *"Sin is what you're do when you're not satisfied with God."* *[John MacArthur]*

  - ✓ Sin can be an overt act of REBELLION — e.g., visiting pornographic website (1 Thess. 4:3).
    - ➢ "Do not be deceived, 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Cor. 15:33).
    - ➢ "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). That means that even in a fictional world, sin is still sin. Gaming that glorifies sinful activity cultivates a heart that either delights in sin or becomes hardened to sin. Here is one review of recently released Grand Theft Auto:

"It is also pervasively violent, crude and sexualized. The game's creators insist the game is meant to be tongue-in-cheek and subversive by exposing society's hang-ups and peccadilloes. However, based on reviews, it seems clear that it pushes far beyond the boundaries of good taste or good satire. The game offers an exaggerated world of violence, crime and sleaze. It is unapologetically misogynistic and crude, the language is harsh, and 'everyone you meet is a sociopath, narcissist, criminal, lunatic, sadist, cheat, liar, layabout, or some combination of those.' Players will visit strip clubs and encounter explicit sexuality there, they will consort with prostitutes, they will be involved in a lurid scene of torture, and they will kill gratuitously, graphically and repeatedly." [Tim Challies, "Greatest Entertainment Launch in History."]

Contrast that with these words:

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." (Phil 4:8)

  - ✓ Sin can be an act of OMISSION — The use of technology might prevent the user from doing what is best or most essential in a moment. The technology itself is amoral, but he has violated God's moral standard by not doing what he is called to do.
    - ➢ E.g., a man who talks about ministry in online forum to people he will never meet instead of ministering to his wife who is sitting in the same room, lonely & disconnected.

➢ E.g., a woman who locks herself in the bathroom for two hours each evening to watch movies and play games on her iPad instead of paying the bills and preparing the children for bed.

➢ E.g., a teen who routinely (4-6 nights a week) wakes up at 2:00 a.m. to play four hours of online games instead of sleeping to prepare for school the next day.

✓ Technology can entice someone to sin in both ways — both by rebelling against what God has commanded and by failing to do what God has commanded.

- Technology, cause, and effect — does technology make us sin?

  ✓ Technology is AMORAL. As an inanimate object it has no moral value. Yet the reason for its creation and the application of its use do have moral value.

> *"Though the devices and tools we create are inherently amoral, at the same time we would be foolish to believe that they are morally neutral. The things we create to assist us in overcoming the consequences of the curse also seek to dominate us, drawing our hearts away from God rather than drawing us toward him in dependence and faith. That iPhone in your pocket is not an 'evil' device. Yet it is prone to draw your heart away from God, to distract you and enable you to rely on your own abilities rather than trusting God."* [Challies, The Next Story.]

  ✓ Technology is ESCHATOLOGICAL. Technology can tempt us to trust it rather than God for our hopes for the future. It offers a heavenly vision of a utopic existence, without the presence of God. Technology is the savior instead of Christ. The potential problem for *any* technology is that we come to depend on it and then seek refuge (protection) in it and then use it as a source of spiritual hope and courage and joy rather than Christ. And that can also be a chainsaw or a DVD — just watch how you respond when your technology is taken away from you (your shovel handle breaks or your iPod is stolen or your Facebook account is shut down) — and then it will be revealed whether or not you are worshipping that item (**Is. 44:12-20**).

  ➢ "But let all who take refuge in You be glad, Let them ever sing for joy; And may You shelter them, That those who love Your name may exult in You." (Ps. 5:11)

  ➢ The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." (Ps. 18:2)

  ➢ "O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!" (Ps. 34:8)

  ➢ "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;

Though its waters roar *and* foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride." (Ps. 46:1–3)

✓ Technology is a MEDIUM. It is a means by which relationships and values and possessions are *mediated* to others. It does not *make* us sin, but it has a powerful ability to tempt us to sin.

"When we move from communicating in person to communicating through technological means, we are, in effect, rewrapping our words in a new set of packaging. Instead of wrapping our words in elements of our identity, we wrap them with the identity, values, and meaning inherent in the particular technology we choose. We call those packages—whether it is an email, a handwritten note, a phone call, a Facebook wall post, or any other tool we use to communicate—mediums. The message is the content we transmit from our minds to our audience, while everything that surrounds those words can be considered a medium." [Dyer, From the Garden to the City *(Locations 2001-2007).]*

➢ The medium (how we use the technology) trains the user. In general, the more powerful the technology, the less dependent we are on other people, the more isolationist we can become and the more relationships are changed and diminished.

➢ As an example, consider the printing press, which significantly increased the amount of information that was available to people, and the number of people who could access that information. But the printing press is a medium, and it also brought about other changes:

"The printing press also brought with it a radical, new way of thinking embedded in the technology itself and the way we tend to use it. Two major features built into the technology of printed books are uniformity and complex linear thought. Before the printing press, books were hand copied and each copy would look slightly different, with minor variations from copy to copy. But printed books are completely uniform. Every letter is rendered with precision, and every page of every copy of every book looks exactly the same. Due to lower costs, printed books can contain longer, more complex ideas than speech or the written word can readily handle. The printed book, then, encourages things like uniformity, accuracy, and complex linear thoughts; and it turns out these are features of the Scientific Revolution as well as much of the theological work that followed it." [Dyer, From the Garden to the City *(Locations 2170-2177).]*

➢ So technology influences your counselee (and you) by what is taught — and it also influences us in *how* we think.

➢ Another example: the believer in Christ grows and changes by meditation and contemplation thinking deeply and long about portions of Scripture (often very small portions). Yet all the information in the world is available to us not in minutes but in seconds — so the believer must work hard to maintain the ability to read and contemplate deeply (something not valued by the internet).

- Some unbiblical DANGERS of technology:
  ✓ Ungodly uses of technology replace relationships with the APPEARANCE of relationships. The more technology we use, the more distant we move from genuine relationships and human interaction (cf. 2 Jn. 12; Phil. 2:23-24; Col. 4:7-9; 2 Tim. 4:9; Philemon 12).
  ✓ Ungodly uses of technology entice us to believe that WE are SOVEREIGN and the solution to our problems and God is not. Just as Adam and Eve used technology (sewing and wearing fig leaves) as an attempt to hide their sinfulness from God, so we use technology to hide from God and usurp His authoritative position.

> *"Today nearly every tool available to us enables us to perpetuate the myth that we can live apart from dependence upon God. Instead of affirming that the Son holds every speck of the universe in place, we amass tools with the belief that they can help us overcome our deepest problems. [Dyer,* From the Garden to the City *(Locations 1192-1194).]*

  ✓ Ungodly uses of technology cultivate DECEPTIVE practices — the participant may lie to hide his true practices.
  ✓ Ungodly uses of technology reallocate the commodity of TIME (Eph. 5:15-16).
  ✓ Ungodly uses of technology redirect a biblical use of FINANCES to things that are less essential.
  ✓ Ungodly uses of technology cultivate desires that do not PLEASE the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Cor. 10:31).

- Three summary statements about technology (from Tim Challies, *The Next Story*):
  ✓ "Technology is a good, God-given gift. Created in God's image, we have a mandate and a desire to create technology. Technology is the creative activity of using tools to shape God's creation for practical purposes."
  ✓ "Like everything else in creation, technology is subject to the curse. Though intended as a means of honoring God, our technologies often become idols and compound our sinful rebellion against our Creator."

✓ "Technology is the human application of technology that helps us determine if it is being used to honor God or further human sin. Discerning the intended use of a technology, examining our own use of it, and reflecting on these purposes in light of Scripture disciplines our technological discernment."

The heart of a technology addict — what motivates this addict?

- ENTERTAINMENT

> *"In the twentieth century, entertainment became a cultural superpower.…entertainment's massive impact on us is rooted mostly in its mundane everydayness: in the way it shapes our subjectivities, affects our affections, cultures our choices, and permeates our possibilities."*
> *[D. Brent Laytahm,* iPod, YouTube, Wii Play.*]*

✓ Definition of "amusement" — to muse is to think or speak thoughtfully and meditatively. If you add the alpha privative (amuse), it means "to not think or speak thoughtfully or meditatively" — an amusement is the emptying out and lack of thoughtful, meditative action and thought. It is to disconnect our minds from what we are doing and wanting. And that is the direction and intention of entertainment — to keep us from having to think about the realities of life.

✓ The counselee that pursues technology may not be seeking it out of a desire not to think about the realities of a hard circumstance (escapism) but out of an ungodly pursuit of pleasure. He wants the pleasures that come from the fantasy world in his video game, or the pleasure of winning the Facebook game or in accumulating friends or the fantasy of a relationship with a beautiful woman.

✓ Cf. Eph. 4:17-19. Out of the darkness of their minds, they pursue sensuality — and they keep greedily pursuing it because it never gives them the ultimate satisfaction they crave.

✓ When these pleasures control their minds, it will destroy their relationships (Js. 4:1ff) and potentially leave them under the judgment of God (Rom. 1:24).

✓ Pleasure should be pursued — but the pleasure we pursue is that which pleases God (2 Cor. 5:9).

✓ His mind needs transformation (Eph. 2:22-24; Rom. 12:1-2) — the game he loves to play is an enemy and not a friend because it separates him from the love and pleasures of God.

- ESCAPISM — a desire to avoid the consequences of choices and circumstances.
  - ✓ This individual is one who seeks entertainment not for the pleasure that it brings him, but out of a desire to escape the reality of harsh, unpleasant circumstances or unfulfilled expectations (Ps. 55:6-8). He believes he is a victim of his circumstances. He is disappointed with life (and God).
  - ✓ He needs to learn the value of difficulties and trials to conform us to Christ (Rom. 8:28-29). Sinful desires and tendencies are rarely revealed in easy circumstances; but what needs transformation will typically be quickly revealed in hardship. That is a blessing (Rom. 8:28-29).
  - ✓ He needs to be reminded a hard life is not unusual — even persecution is not unusual — trials should be expected (1 Pt. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:12).
  - ✓ Be aware also that the person that escapes into ungodly patterns of technology use is doing it out of selfish desires and pursuits. He doesn't want to mow his lawn, but wants to read a book; she doesn't want the hard work of relating to her harsh husband so she retreats into gaming… Note that most of these addicts want particularly to escape relationships. Being in relationship as a spouse or parent or child or friend is *hard work*. Many use electronic technology to escape the biblical requirements on them.
  - ✓ When God saves us, He does so with the purpose of doing good works through us (Eph. 2:10). Life wasn't meant to be a life of ease, entertainment or escape; we are given life to mediate the truth of the gospel and Christ to others.
  - ✓ A parallel principle to this is LAZINESS. It may not be that his circumstances are particularly hard, but that he just doesn't like the "everyday" hard things about life — getting up in time to get to a job at 8:00, the discipline of study, the joy of sweat and hard work, the sacrifice of using the money he earns to pay for his apartment, food, and gasoline instead of DVDs and a new iPad. Cf. Prov. 6:6-15; Gen. 2:15.

- CONTROL —
  - ✓ With video games, the gamer is king. He is in control. The make-believe world is under his authority. "…a gamer is trusting in self rather than trusting in God to provide for his needs. The gamer thinks he knows better than the Lord and has the audacity to say in his heart, 'I can do better than you, Lord. I can have more fun in my fantasy world of games than I can in your created world." [Shaw, *Hope and Help*, p. 19.]
  - ✓ On Facebook (and Twitter and Instragram…) the user is also in control. He creates an image of himself that is almost invariably not the real him. His profile picture is the best picture of him; his profile doesn't include his failures and struggles. His posts (just the fact that he can post and his 562 friends can read it) suggest that what he is doing is of greatest importance and people

should be attentive to him above all their other pretend friends.

✓ One of the greatest desires of man is to ascend to the throne of God and utter the same kind of "I will" statements as Satan and orchestrate life the way we want it. Our disappointments and anger are often because we have designed a plan for our lives and God has frustrated that plan through some difficult realities (everything from a slow driver to cancer at age 24). Cf. **Dt. 8:17-20**.

✓ Can a gamer or tech addict be content with the realities of his life (**1 Tim. 6:8**; Phil. 4:12)?

✓ Does a tech addict "have a desire for more than what God has provided for [him]?" [Shaw, 21]

- SEXUAL sin

  ✓ Unlike the adulterous woman who is waiting at the corner for the young fool in Proverbs 5, technology is waiting inside the young man's home — in the privacy where (he thinks) his sin cannot be discovered. Pornography isn't just waiting for him — it's pursuing him (emails, Google pictures, accidental web clicks…). Websites exist for the purpose of helping married people have adulterous relationships. Games exalt sexual sin. Facebook accelerates the speed of relationships and creates/renews relationships that might not otherwise be a temptation — one-third of divorce filings in 2011 contained the word "Facebook." That was not the only contributing factor, but it was one of them.

  ✓ Sex is a powerful force and it is used now used to evoke desires (feelings) in advertising — to attract people to movies and books and cars and soap.

> *"Christians who battle the sin of pornography are right to focus on the physical, sexual lust that the images evoke. However, one of the deeper and often overlooked reasons people become addicted to pornography is the power of the medium itself. Men and women become addicted not just to the physical response the images elicit, but even more dangerously, to the way the images powerfully affect the emotions and seem to offer temporary relief from the hurts, pressures, and pains of life. Getting out of pornography then is not only a matter of understanding that the content is sinful (not to mention exploitative), but also understanding how the medium of images works upon the mind, heart, and soul." [Dyer,* From the Garden to the City *(Locations 2235-2240).]*

  ✓ So the electronic technology itself is amoral, but the way it is used is immoral — to entice individuals to indulge fleshly desires of the most powerful sort. Some live for sex and these media are making it easier for them to do with anonymity (though still with great consequences).

- FEAR and HOPE
  - ✓ We live in a hard world. People die suddenly and unexpectedly. We get sick and our frailties are exposed. We want our circumstances and lives to change, so we pursue technology as a means to the solution for our problem (rather than God).
  - ✓ We might go to doctor after doctor seeking a cure for our ailment — and what might seem prudent and liberty is really idolatry, bondage, and a lack of trust.

> *"...when we use technology in service of the mission of the Church to make disciples, we are following God's lead in using technology as a part of his redemptive plans. Yet we must also be careful to affirm that the redemptive capacity of technology is limited and temporary. Advances in technology can give us the illusion that it might someday overcome death, but this is a tragic and distracting lie. Clean water and ample medicine can only hold off death for so long— eventually death will find us all. Instead, we should view the redemptive capacities of technology as a temporary means of keeping humanity going while God does his work."* [Dyer, From the Garden to the City *(Locations 1758-1764).]*

  - ✓ Some uses of technology reveal a heart that is angry at God and discontent with His activities and purposes in our lives. We'd rather engage in technology as an escape or use just one more item of technology as a hope that it will fix our problems.

- With every technology we should ask, "what problem is this intended to solve?" and "what is this doing to my heart?"

Scriptures to help the technological addict

- A biblical view of SANCTIFICATION — Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22-24 — emphasis is on mind renewal.

- A biblical view of RELATIONSHIPS — **Rom. 12:9-21**; a study of the 58 "one anothers" in the NT

- A biblical view of CONTENTMENT — 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Tim. 6:7-8; Phil. 4:8

- A biblical view of SUFFERING and TRIALS — 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 12:7-10; Js. 1:2-4; 2 Tim. 3:10-15

- A biblical view of PLEASURE — 2 Cor. 5:1-15 (especially vv. 9, 15)

- A biblical view of SELF, SERVICE, and the CHURCH
  - ✓ Remind him of the use of the spiritual gifts he has been given (1 Cor. 12:18ff; Rom. 12:3-8).
  - ✓ Remind him of his role in the maturing of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:10-16).
  - ✓ Remind him of his purpose on earth — he is to work and he is subservient to Christ in all he does (Col. 1:17-20; 2 Tim. 4:6-7; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Cor. 15:58).

<u>Some homework and strategies for the technology addict</u> (much of what follows is adapted from Tim Keeter, "No Tech: Disciplines Every Home Needs" and "Internet Tools and Disciplines")

- Three reminders about homework:
  - ✓ Address the HEART — behavioral strategies address the circumstances of the sin but not the reason for the sin; they cannot change the heart of the technology addict. Computer strategies are not the "missing ingredient" for obedience, though they can make it more difficult to sin.
    - ➢ Disciplines and strategies must communicate the goal of pleasing God (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Cor. 10:31).
    - ➢ Disciplines and strategies must, as much as possible, eliminate temptations as well as actual sin (Mt. 6:13).
    - ➢ Disciplines and strategies must hinder deliberate attempts to sin by cultivating righteous actions as well as discouraging sinful actions (Eph. 4:22-24; **Rom. 13:14**).
    - ➢ Disciplines and strategies must cultivate self-control (Prov. 25:28; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; 1 Cor. 9:27f)

  - ✓ Address the BEHAVIOR — while helping him see the condition of his heart, also help him conquer his behavioral actions.

  - ✓ A counselee's reluctance to complete homework and his resistance to a loss of convenience needs to be confronted as a lack of REPENTANCE (2 Cor. 7:10-11).

- Homework ideas:
  - ✓ ACCOUNTABILITY —
    - ➢ Accountability software that is reviewed by a friend
    - ➢ Daily interaction and prayer with a mature and godly friend. "Inspect what you expect."
    - ➢ Put the computer in a public location where all can see it (and put a timer on it).
    - ➢ Check history and cache on a daily basis; read texts and emails; scroll through Facebook activity. Change passwords on social media accounts so the counselee cannot access them.

- ✓ TIME log and a contract for technology usage with parents (cf. Tim Keeter).
- ✓ Put "EDIFYING" decorations around the computer — when people are in darkness, they need to see the light — give them a view of something that is truly beautiful.
- ✓ HEART journal — "what were you desiring when you engaged in that activity?"
- ✓ Make FRIENDS (real ones) — cultivate face-to-face relationships in the church body.
- ✓ Acts of SERVICE — instead of consuming time privately and for selfish purposes, have him do things for others (the first week, have him make a list of 20-25 acts of service he can do).
- ✓ For particularly difficult cases, give control of the devices to someone else, or even give away or sell the devices (and other means of radical amputation).
- ✓ Daily BIBLE reading/meditation/memorization. Replace ungodly activity with godly activity.

CONCLUSION: A few months ago Tim Challies wrote,

It must have been six months or a year ago that I watched my iPhone—my brand new iPhone—sliding, then flipping, down a flight of stairs. I had just pulled it from my pocket and somehow lost my grip on it. It clattered down one step, then the next, then the next, all the way to bottom….
We laugh at the idolaters of old. There is something comical about reading the story of Dagon falling on his face—his carved face—before the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 5). The first day he simply fell on his face; the second day he smashed his face. It's funny. It's a little less funny when it's my idol lying on its face at the bottom of the stairs.

But it actually was funny. It was a gift. It was a gift that showed me the utter folly of investing too much of my hope and joy in something made of glass, silicon and aluminum (which are, after all, not too far removed from wood and stone). Not only that, but it showed me again that anything I can hold in my hand, anything I can drop down the stairs, is just a tool, just a bit of the meaninglessness, the vapor, of this life. It may be a good thing, but it isn't an ultimate thing because it isn't an eternal thing.

My iPhone promises joy and it even manages to deliver some of it. It really does make me more productive and it helps me stay in touch with the family when I am on the road. These are joys, indeed! But I allow it to hold out the promise of too much joy and this is the battleground in my heart; it simply cannot deliver all it promises. I bought some joy, but then I dropped it down the stairs. And this convinced me that I need to elevate my joy to something bigger, something better, and something higher.

TECHNOLOGY ADDICTION: A CASE STUDY

Pastor Dwight and I have known each other casually for several years. One afternoon he called me about Grant, a 20-year-old college student in his church. He started off the conversation by asking, "What do you think about demon possession and Christians?…I wouldn't have believed it either, but he's been seeing weird things and even the family has seen "dark forms" cross the room, and I'm pretty convinced after talking to Grant that he's demon possessed. The family is afraid for their safety and I don't know what to do. Can you help?"

At that point, Grant had been sent to a psychiatric hospital, diagnosed as schizo affective and put on mediations (Geodone, Ambien, and hydroxyzine). After assuring me that Grant wanted biblical answers, I told Dwight that I'd send him a PDI and that if Grant filled it out I'd see him. He sent in the PDI, but before the first appointment he canceled because he had another episode and went back into the hospital for a week, where they changed his medication to Zyprexa. When he finally came in, these are some of the things revealed on his PDI:

- ✓ He was in average health and weighed 160, having recently lost 10 lbs.
- ✓ He had completed his freshman year at UNT but dropped out in the middle of his third semester because of depression. Because of his hospitalizations he was also seeing a local secular counselor.
- ✓ He was a Lutheran church member and attended church weekly, said he prayed and read Scripture often, but wasn't sure what I meant by the question, "Are you saved?"
- ✓ To the four questions on the back page of the PDI, he answered:
  - ➢ What is the main problem as you see it? *False beliefs mixed in with my Christianity.*
  - ➢ What have you done about it? *Counseling, Counseling, Counseling!*
  - ➢ How can we help you? *A more biblical approach to my problem.*
  - ➢ Is there any other information we should know? *I was involved in a movement called "Spirit Science."*
- ✓ Here are some additional things I discovered during our first session:
  - ➢ He had no friends and he hadn't been taking classes since he dropped out of school one year earlier.
  - ➢ He was quite adamant he was a believer: "I am saved; I am baptized."
  - ➢ The previous fall he began having panic attacks after his girl friend ended their relationship (the first girl he'd ever loved). They had been sexually active (16 mo.).
  - ➢ The previous fall (when he dropped out of school) he began feeling a "presence" around him.

➢ He began playing video games in the first grade (2 hours a day).

➢ Since then, his typical weekday schedule over the previous year looked like this:

8:00 — Noon	Gaming
Noon — 2:00	Productivity
2:00 — 6:00	Gaming
6:00 — 8:00	Dinner/family activity
8:00 — 10:00+	Gaming

8-10 hrs per day

7 days per week

56-70 hours per week, gaming.

➢ Among the games he played were: "League of Legends," "Assassins Crede 3," "Borderlands" (action role-playing first-person shooter video game), and "Runescape" (fantasy role-playing game).

➢ In the past few months he has gotten a part-time job at 24-hour fast-food restaurant, working 10 p.m. – 3 a.m. (Which has made him unproductive during the day…)

✓ Summary:

➢ Pornography and masturbation at least 30 minutes a week for 4-5 years, plus sexually active with girl friend. He did not see this as a problem. (Read dialogue after he became upset at the end of one session…)

➢ "Full-time job" being trained to kill and to meditate on fantasies.

➢ Preoccupation with paranormal and occult.

➢ "I deserve happiness." (Which he defined as an apartment, a girl-friend, and a good-paying job that he likes — "Then I'll see where that gets me.")

Questions:

1. What data are you missing that you want to know?

2. What are some of the priorities for sessions 2-5?
   ✓ Pastoral involvement from Dwight
   ✓ Family involvement (initially didn't because of his age; should have had him have them call me fairly early in the process…)

- ✓ Clarify the gospel.
- ✓ Radical amputation (which will reveal whether or not he wants to change).
- ✓ Biblical teaching about pleasure and desires/motives.
- ✓ Time and schedule.
- ✓ Happiness and joy.
- ✓ Demons, Satan, occult.
- ✓ Loneliness, friends.
- ✓ Sexual sin

3. His secular counselor told him he had "self-image issues." How will you handle his relationship with the other counselor?
   - ✓ I want to know what the other counselor is teaching and if his meds change, but I chose not to contact or work with the other counselor.

4. He is intrigued by "Spirit Science." What kind of a priority should you give that?

   Initially, this was a low priority for me, but his intrigue with demons and the occult proved to be the venue where he began to open up and be receptive. So we took two or more weeks to do a Bible study on angelology…

5. Is he a believer?
   - ✓ He is convinced he is; I am not. His pastor thinks he probably is, but that Grant doesn't articulate it well.
   - ✓ I pressed this as long as I could and then said, "I'll assume you are a believer until it becomes evident you are not…" After a few weeks of resistance to homework, I wrote, "Why does he want to be here?" Never found out — manipulative?

6. What kind of homework would you start him doing?
   - ✓ Bible reading and memory — "Quiet Time worksheet"
   - ✓ Radical amputation — change jobs; start school (he did the following January); change computer habits, location, etc.
   - ✓ Doing acts of service for others
   - ✓ Complete "Heart Journal" for his pornography and masturbation along with gaming.

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