The Pitfalls of Social Media and What to do

Review

Last week we talked about social media’s temptation to look to it to define us and to affirm us so we can feel good about ourselves. We said that is it idolatry to look to anything other than God for our identity and worth.

God is our creator. He gets to define us and our relationship with Him should remind us of how much He loves us and values us. That is where our affirmation should come from.

Intro

We want to consider some of the pitfalls of social media/internet that we need to be careful of. This is not to say that everything about smartphones and social media is bad because it is not. We just have to be aware and discerning.

I. Distractions

A. Definition

1. a thing that prevents someone from giving full attention to something.

2. Something that turns your attention away from something you should concentrate on.

B. This happens in a number of different ways.

1. Have you ever been in a conversation with someone and then get a text message and immediately they answer it ignoring you and what you are saying?

2. it has been said that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” We need times of reflection and meditation. We need time to think about life, why we are feeling like we are, and what is motivating us.

Joshua 1:8 “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

3. If you pull out your phone to surf the web every time you have some down time you are being distracted from contemplation.

C. Satan doesn’t care what it is that distracts you. He just doesn’t want you to spend concentrated time with the Lord.

D. In Luke 10:38-42 we read of Martha being distracted.

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39**She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. **40**But Martha was **distracted** by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

**41**“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, **42**but few things are needed—or indeed only one.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+10%3A38-42&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25406a)] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

There wasn’t anything wrong with Martha wanting to prepare some food to serve Jesus. Just like there may not be anything wrong with the things you are looking at on the internet. But there is a time to put the smart phone away so you can reflect, so you can be fully present.

E. Along with distraction is escape and wasting time

1. Do you habitually pull out your phone as an easy escape from life because you don’t want to have to think about life or deal with it?

2. Is your smart phone causing you to waste time and not do the productive things you know you should be doing?

3. John Piper has said, “One of the great uses of Twitter and Facebook will be to prove at the Last Day that prayerlessness was not from lack of time.”

II. The importance of in-person fellowship and communication (embodied fellowship)

A. It is not ok to spend so much time with social media that you are ignoring the real life person who is in front of you.

B. This is the person who comes home from school and even though they are in the same living room with their parents they are totally ignoring them because they are so focused on their phones.

C. I realize they may be texting a friend but there is something important about connecting with people in person.

D. Notice Johns priority for communicating

2 John 12 “I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.”

E. God created us as embodied beings and we need to acknowledge the importance of in person fellowship.

F. Watching church online is just not the same as being present for a worship service.

G. Think about it. When God wanted to communicate the most important truths to us He took on human flesh and became a man who lived among us.

1 John 1:1-3

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. **2**The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. **3**We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

III. We lose our ability to concentrate and think deeply

A. So many things come to us in short, quick snippets that when we need to concentrate and really spend time thinking deeply to understand we struggle.

B. I have been watching 9-minute highlight versions of NBA games on YouTube this season. That basically means that every time a player shoots they make it. it was so hard for me to watch any of March Madness because it seemed that they missed so often that it was easy to get frustrated and bored.

C. This is happening to us intellectually. As Christians we are to be students of God’s word. To do that effectively means that we need to slow down enough to read God’s word and think about it.

How would you describe someone who is digging for treasure?

Proverbs 2:4 “And if you look for it (God’s wisdom from His word) as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

Proverbs is challenging us to seek wisdom by earnestly clawing for it like a treasure hidden underground, invisible to the skimming eye scrolling down a lighted screen.

IV. We Get comfortable in Secret Sins

A. We think that what we do online in private is hidden. You may even look at stuff on your phone that you shouldn’t while you are sitting in the same room as your parents and they don’t know about it.

B. Online anonymity is an illusion. We think we can post stuff and then delete it and it is gone. That is a lie. Once you post something you have no control over whether is copied and remains online forever.

C. Behind this fake veil of believing that no one will ever find out you view stuff and in the meantime it is poisoning you. Even if no one else knows about it God knows.

D. Scripture calls us to vigilance in protecting the desires of our hearts through radical self-discipline.

E. A lot of this stuff enters our minds through the eye-gate. That is why Jesus said, “If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw away.” Matt. 5:29

F. Jesus is not telling us to literally rip out our eyes but to take radical steps in making it difficult to sin.

G. this would involve telling someone else who can help you and possibly putting filters or locks on portions of your devices so you can’t go to places you shouldn’t go.

H. You will never have victory in the Christian life if you are harboring secret sins. But praise God we can repent of them, be forgiven, and then put in place radical steps to help us.

V. We Get Lonely

A. Social media and smart phones tempt us toward unhealthy isolation. Instead of making us feel more connected and engaged, statistics tell us that they make us feel lonelier and more isolated.

B. We want to interact with others, but we don’t want to be vulnerable-so we don’t get hurt, so we use technology to make our relationships cleaner and easier.

C. We look at others and their lives behind the safety and security of a screen but that is not truly connecting.

D. We are trying to use social media as a substitute for real relationships and it leaves us feeling empty.

E. Scripture commands us to focus our attention on others for their good. The best way to do that is in person. We need to stop hiding, let people know us and reach out to others.

Rom. 15:2 “Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.”

Matt. 22:39 “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

F. Last week we talked about the only way you will be able to do that is to find your security in Christ and then you will be able to get your eyes off yourself and reach out to others.

VI. We Open Ourselves us to Being Deceived

A. One of the beauties of social media is that anyone can post what they think on it. One of the dangers of social media is that anyone can post what they think on it.

B. When it comes to exercising wisdom and knowing what to believe the context of who is sharing is important to know.

C. If you know the person is a trustworthy source who has studied the scriptures that is helpful to know. If you know that they have a reputation as a godly person that is good to know.

D. But often when you read a post or listen to a podcast you don’t know the source. If you aren’t discerning, this can be incredibly dangerous.

E. That is why Paul told the following to Timothy.

2 Tim. 3:10-15

“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, **11**persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. **12**In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13**while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. **14**But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because **you know those from whom you learned it,** **15**and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

F. There are all kinds of false teaching on the internet. You need to be careful who you listen to and believe lest you become deceived and led astray.

VII. How should we respond to these pitfalls.

A. Since there are all kinds of pitfalls on the internet and with social media, does that mean that we should never use it?

B. There is something to be said to removing the external source of temptation and to avoid stumbling blocks to our faith. Maybe this means that you get a flip phone.

C. Romans 13:14 “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

What does it mean to “clothe yourself with the Lord”?

D. Jesus loved you so much that He died for you to cover your nakedness and shame by taking the penalty for your sins so that you could be forgiven. Are you daily covering yourself with Jesus’ provisions for you and finding power in your relationship with Him to help you.

E. If your technology use is hurting you, it is only wise to take steps to help you.

F. However you need to address these pitfalls with more than just an external response. We need to address our hearts and get to the place where we are so satisfied with Jesus-we so want to please Him because we love Him, that we will do whatever we need to do.

G. True freedom from the bondage and pitfalls of technology doesn’t primarily come from throwing it away but from filling the void in our hearts with the glories of Jesus. Spend time with the Lord, don’t allow your technology use to keep you from your relationship with Christ. If it is, then you need do whatever it takes to get back in fellowship with God.

H. In Psalm 27 David is dealing with people being against him (he is dealing with some pitfalls in his life) and in verse 4 he says one thing that he asks. You would think that he would pray that God would remove his enemies. But that is not what he prays for.

Psalm 27:4

“One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”

David is saying that everything in life may be out of whack, but when I am with God and that relationship is ok, then everything else will be ok.

H. When we want to please the Lord more than anything else, that desire and spending time with God will guide us and help us to take the steps necessary to make wise choices and protect us from these pitfalls. (Ps 27:11)

Application

1. is your technology use causing you to be distracted from what is most important?

2. It is causing you to waste lots of time?

3. Are you using it to escape and avoid parts of your life that are hard?

4. Are you trying to use your technology to replace in- person interactions with people?

5. Are you using technology to participate in secret sins?

6. Is your use of technology causing you to feel more isolated and alone?

7. Do you know that the podcasts and information you are accessing is not helpful to growing your faith?

If you answered yet to any of these, I want to challenge you to share that in your small group and ask God to help you make the changes you need to please Him.

This is a spiritual battle and Satan wants to do all He can to distract you and make you ineffective and unproductive for the Kingdom of God as He can. But with God’s help you can resist Satan and walk in victory.

Small group questions

1. Review the seven areas we mentioned and ask them if they are experiencing any of these pitfalls. (distraction, wasting time, escape, avoiding embodied inperson fellowship, secret sins, loneliness, deception- listening to stuff that is undermining their faith)

2. Is it their desire to please God with their technology use? If so, what changes do they need to make? What steps will they take?

3. Who will hold them accountable? Do their parents need to know about it? Why/why not?