Technology and Parenting

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Screen Time

* ***Screen time*** – time spent watching television, playing a video game, or using a technology device with a screen, such as a smart phone or tablet.
* Previously, the internet was a destination we went to. Now technology is pervasive and accessible.
  + The advancement of technology is moving faster than our research can keep up.
* Questions to consider:
  + How can we study, analyze, and adapt and make wise choices about technology?
  + Should we really assume that all technological progress is taking us in a direction we want to go?
* Romans 12:2 – Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will.
* Paul seems to assume that formation is the default.
  + We are either being formed – conformed – to the world, or we are being formed – transformed – by God.
  + The human heart is never not being shaped by something.
* **Parenting elementary age and younger**
* Questions to wrestle with:
  + How are our children being shaped? What are we allowing to form them?
  + Have we outsourced the formation of our kids to a screen, and what’s been the result?
* The goal is to have a path forward for the world of tech that our children will grow up in.

Four healthy habits for young children and technology

1. **Screens are not good curers for boredom.**

* It’s ok for children to be bored – boredom can foster creativity and ingenuity.
  + Don’t short-circuit the process by giving them technology when they’re bored.
* If a child claims boredom, say “Good – let’s think about how we can use our brains to cure our boredom”
  + Books, crayons, go outside
* Make the car and dinner table device free with no exceptions.

**Car**

* Consider the story from Jonathan related to the mother and three children in the car. All three children had headphones in and their heads down looking at their phones.
  + Is this the norm in your family, or is it the exception?
* The car is a rich opportunity for conversation
  + “Car time is conversation time” – Andy Crouch in *The Tech Wise Family*
  + Cultivate a daily appointment with your children in your car
    - Give your children a time to process their day in the car. Keep the car time for conversation time.

**Meals**

* At meals, the TV is off, and phones are in the other room.
* Give your kids and spouse your full focus.
* Teach your kids that we talk to each other about our day, and we learn what matters to one another.
  + Consider conversation starters – “what’s your idea of a perfect day?”, “what’s one new skill you’d like to learn?”

1. **Children don’t own devices. They borrow them.**

* “This iPad belong to me and mom, but we’re happy to let you use them under certain circumstances.”
* Children have not developed the discipline or self-control necessary for technology.
  + It’s ok to teach your children that the way they handle this responsibility, and how they react when you take technology away, will be an indicator as to how ready they are for more responsibility.

1. **Parents should model the behavior they wish to see in their kids.**

* Questions to consider:
  + Do your children view ***your*** device as an appendage?
  + How often do they see us without their phones?
  + Will their earliest memories be your eyes looking at your phone or computer screen?
* You and your child don’t need to abide by the same screen time rules but spend time reflecting on what habits your children will learn from you based on how you use your devices.
* Examples:
  + When you put your kids to bed, put your phone to bed.
  + Leave your phone charging in the other room during a family movie night.
  + When you forget you phone – follow up with, that’s ok, I can go without it!

1. **Teach your kids to create, not just consume.**

* Consider what happens in our brains when we watch something vs. when we make something
  + Example: Legos vs Netflix. How much mental energy does it take to watch Netflix vs. build Legos?
* Help your kids explore the world of content creation. Teach them to create media, not just consume it.
* Use tech to serve your purposes – not the other way around.
* Examples:
  + Create a fake movie trailer
  + Create a cover of your favorite song
  + Create a music video of your family band
  + Put your phone on airplane mode and walk around the neighborhood and take pictures of different birds, trees, cars

Tech serves us. It is not our master.

* We can use it without becoming dominated by it. And in the process, we can create family memories.
* The point of parenting is making disciples of Jesus. We create the atmosphere for disciples to grow and flourish in faith.
  + This requires constant attention and calibration.
* Kids require ongoing attention.
  + We adapt to their changes and reactions. We monitor how they respond.
  + Technology advances and changes, and we need to be ready to adapt in all of it.

***We want our children to be equipped to make their own god-honoring decisions, particularly with technology.***

Resources

*The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in its Proper Place* – Andy Crouch

*Shepherding a Child’s Heart ­–* Tedd Tripp

*God, Technology, and the Christian Life* – Tony Reinke

[“Twelve tips for parenting in the digital age”](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/twelve-tips-for-parenting-in-the-digital-age) - Tony Reinke