

Lecture 2 - Technology Use

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” (1 Corinthians 6:12)

In this generation, we can definitely say that we have been brought under the power of our phones.

Risks

- Health and Wellness
 - Addiction - devices and screen use are as addictive to children as cocaine
 - Increased Depression and Anxiety - the feeling of not living up to the standards of what you see online, the feeling of always being in the spotlight
 - Sleep Disruption - blue light disrupts sleep cycle; during COVID many kids were sleeping all day and up all night
 - Less physical activity
- Emotional
 - Less connected to family
 - Loss of social skills for how to interact with and accommodate their peers
 - Online predators/exploitation
 - Bullying
- Ideological/Intellectual Risks
 - Exposure to inappropriate content
 - Indoctrination to certain belief sets or agendas
 - Tracking and monitoring activity for advertisers and social media companies
 - Illegal activity - it is easier to do illegal activities online
- Unknown Risks
 - We are living in a social experiment - the smart phone came out in 2008; the people who are now driving have lived their whole lives with the smart phone and we have not seen a generation of adults that lived through this yet.

Screen Time Recommendations

- Babies 0-18 Months
 - None except video chat with an adult
- Toddlers 18-24 Months
 - Less than one hour co-watching educational programs with a caregiver
 - Not sitting by themselves; still engaging with a parent or older sibling; making the process active rather than passive
- Children 2-5 Years Old
- Kids 6-17

- CDC average usage is 6 hours a day of screen time (recreational and non)
- Adults 18 and older

Content Concerns

- Many shows targeted to children are pushing a liberal agenda
 - E.g. Arthur had an episode a few years ago where the whole episode was the wedding of a gay character to his husband
 - There are subtle hints in programs such as characters wearing pride flag colors
 - Media companies are celebrated for pushing "queer" characters
- Even classic television shows - if they are still in production, then they will start to introduce this content
- This content is being pushed to children
 - E.g. Muppets had a transgender muppet
 - E.g. Thomas the Train Engine has a bi-sexual train

Social Media

- Every new service is going to have a social component
- There's no way of getting away from social-media-like content
- "The Social Dilemma" on Netflix
 - How social media platforms design their algorithms to maximize engagement and essentially increase addiction
 - The recommendations don't care about truth, your well-being, etc. but are targeted towards keeping you engaged to stay on the platform and they can sell advertising
 - Many executives in these companies do not allow their own children to use their product (reminds us of drug dealers)

Exploitation Online

Dark Web

- A way to mask online activity
- Anonymity allows people to do all kinds of things that they wouldn't do if their identity was known

Technology Solutions

How the Internet Works

- You type in a web address on your client (phone, tablet, computer)
- That data is sent through your router or modem (at home) or cell tower (phone) to your internet service provider (e.g. AT&T, Spectrum, etc.).
- The data goes to a Dynamic Name Server (DNS) which gives the address to that website
- The website is sent to your device

Router Level Features

- Most consumer routers nowadays have some control and filters for what content can be used on your network
- You can filter Adult Content, IM and Communications, P2P and File Transfer, Streaming, etc.
- This is not easy to use or trivial

ISP Level Controls

- Cell provider and ISP can monitor and restrict device access to certain websites, etc.
- Some of those providers will charge a monthly fee

Ecosystem Level Controls

- Tailored to a specific "ecosystem" but is deactivated after 13 years old
 - Google Family Link
 - Apple Content and Privacy Restrictions
 - Microsoft Family Safety

3rd Party Parental Control Apps

- Can be installed on several devices and platforms
- E.g. Qustodio, Bark, Kaspersky Safe Kids, Net Nanny, etc.
- Can be disabled by kids easily

Specialized Devices

- E.g. Troomi, Pinwheel, Gabb, Bark - these companies make phones that are targeted to children and teens
 - Some don't have web browsers, or no social media
 - Some don't allow deleting text messages
 - Some block addictive games
 - Some have caregiver portals
 - Some need approval to send images to certain contacts
- Devices like the Light Phone that doesn't even have a blue light screen

Strategies

- Technology (above) is a **PART** of the solution but not the whole solution
 - All of the above are not enough on their own
- Limit technology use **EARLY**
 - Putting up with the fight when they are little will help us be able to deal with it when they're older
- **TALK** to our children about dangers
 - They trust their parents, and should be talking about how there are dangers and we want to protect you
 - Having a time limit or a limit on what they can do will be something they are accustomed to
- **MONITOR** use

- Don't use screens as a babysitter
- Don't let your children watch anything that you haven't watched first
- Gradually increase access when they show **RESPONSIBILITY**
 - Like driving... they have to sit in a car seat, then a booster seat, then back seat, then front seat... and one day they'll sit in the drivers seat with an adult... then they can do that by themselves but only during the day... then at night... then they can let someone ride with them... eventually they can even drive while having kids in the car with them
 - But if you simply hand them the keys to the car when they're 14, it can be fatal
 - If you hand your child an unlocked iPhone as soon as they say "well all my friends have it" - it can be fatal
- **PUT DOWN** our own devices
 - Apply the same rules to ourselves as we apply to our children
 - If we are mad at our children for having their phones at the dinner table, then we can't answer calls or respond to emails or catch up on the news during dinner time
 - At the very least, we would show them that it is possible for them to put the devices down because we can

There is no substitute for engaged parenting

Sunday School Application

- As Sunday School Coordinators, how do we compete with the attractive YouTube videos, games, etc. that are competing for the attention of our youth
- His Eminence gave a presentation on an idea that was presented to HE by an engineer in Egypt called "Joy City"
 - It is directed to all ages to deliver the message of the Scripture through a video game

Revision #3

Created 2023-06-10 17:09:13 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba

Updated 2025-11-25 16:47:46 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba