

- As a reader, **you** are the thing for sale. Since the 1830s, the reader has been the product that “news” outlets delivered to advertisers, who are vying for your attention. “Data mining” is just the latest, but by far the most invasive, iteration of a 200-year-old practice.
- Tristan Harris, former “design ethicist” at Google:
“The single goal of technology is to retain your attention...best way to get attention is to know how your mind works.” Those apps that retain you the longest win the competition for advertisers and make the most money.
- Scott Karp, who blogs about online media, confesses he has stopped reading books altogether:
“I was a lit major in college, and used to be a voracious book reader, what happened? What if I do all my reading on the web not so much because the way I *read* has changed, (i.e. I’m just seeking convenience) but because the way I *think* has changed?”
- In changing how we think, this may be our biggest loss:
“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things” (Php 4:8). What if we’ve lost not just the content Paul speaks of, but the cognitive capacity to “dwell.”
- Think of this in the context of Biblical literacy. From 1982 to 2002, adults who read for pleasure — anything beyond web & newspapers — dropped from 56% to 46%. This is a significant decrease for such a short period of time. Among the Digital Generation (b. after 1985) the numbers are much lower.
- Poet Dana Gioia, Head of the NEA under President Bush:
“What we are losing in this country and presumably around the world is the sustained, focused, linear attention developed by reading. I *would* believe people who tell me that the Internet develops reading if I did not see such a universal decline in both reading ability and reading comprehension on virtually all tests.”
- From World magazine:
“The NEA study indicated that shelves of books are more important than income or parental educational background. Homes with 10 or fewer books yield the lowest test scores, and the scores increase steadily with more books in the home, in history, civics, math, and science. The issue is not income, according to the study, or even whether the parents have a college education, but books.”
- Jean Twenge in the Atlantic:
“Teens who spend three hours a day or more on electronic devices are 35 percent more likely to have a risk factor for suicide, such as making a suicide plan. (That’s much more than the risk related to, say, watching TV.) One piece of data that indirectly but stunningly captures kids’ growing isolation, for good and for bad: Since 2007, the homicide rate among teens has declined, but the suicide rate has increased. As teens have started spending less time together, they have become less likely to kill one another, and more likely to kill themselves. In 2011, for the first time in 24 years, the teen suicide rate was higher than the teen homicide rate.”

PARENTING IN A DIGITAL AGE | COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | APRIL 13, 2019

Resources from Pastor Shiv Muthukumar

The Christian Household: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

- Vision: Flourishing (vs 1-3)
- Mission: Loving God: worship and service (vs 4-5)
- Instruction: Practices and Habits (vs 6-9)

Scripture Verses

- **On Internet & Social Media:**

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)

- **On Phones, Screens & Pornography:**

Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. (Psalm 119:37)

- **On Parenting:**

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Quotes

1. Justin Camblin, pastor: “The companies that make up Silicon Valley are not neutral, and neither are the tools they create.”
2. Marshall McLuhan, media theorist: “We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us.”
3. Jacques Ellul, technology sociologist: “Our technology exerts a sort of terrorism over us.”
4. Andrew Piorunski, engineer: “If something is free, we should realize that we are the product.”
5. James K. A. Smith, theologian: “Micro practices have macro implications for our lives.”
6. Maryanne Wolf, neuroscientist: “Deep reading is indistinguishable from deep thinking.”
7. Chamath Paliyapathi, former Facebook executive: “The short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops that we have created are destroying how society works.”
8. Athena Chavarria, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative: “I am convinced that the devil lives in our phones and is wreaking havoc on our children.”
9. Susan Greenfield, neuroscientist: “The blinking lights and ravishing color discourage concentration, close reading, memorization, and idea formation. Deep knowledge and empathy are losers.”
10. Chris Anderson, former editor of Wired: “On a scale between candy and crack cocaine, [screens are] closer to crack cocaine.”

Helpful Articles

- Carr, Nicholas. “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” The Atlantic, 2008.
- Camblin, Justin. “5 Warnings About Christians’ Thoughtless Use of Technology.” The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, 2017.
- Brooks, David. “How Evil Is Tech?” The New York Times, 2017.
- Sewall, Gilbert T. “Big Tech’s Challenge to Our Humanity.” The American Conservative, 2019.
- Twenge, Jean M. “Have Smartphones Destroyed A Generation?” The Atlantic, 2017.
- Meyer, Robinson. “Your Smartphone Reduces Your Brainpower, Even if it’s Just Sitting There.” GetPocket, 2017.

Books

- Crouch, Andy. *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*. Baker Books, 2017.
- Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing To Our Brains*. W. W. Norton & Co, 2011.
- Reinke, Tony. *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*. Crossway, 2017.
- DeYoung, Kevin. *Crazy Busy*. Crossway, 2013. (See chapter 7)
- Smith, James K. A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Brazos Press, 2016.
- Tripp, Tedd. *Shepherding A Child’s Heart*. Shepherd Press, 2011. **(Parenting)**
- Laaser, Mark. *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*. Zondervan, 2009. **(Pornography)**