

A Parent-Child Discipleship Guide  
When Your Kid Wants a Phone

– **Dynamite**  
– **in your** –  
– **hands** –

By Andy Huetten & Jil Stauter



# How to Use This Resource

Phone ownership has become a modern rite of passage that provides an opportunity for parents to instruct their children in the way of the Lord. To best utilize this resource, we recommend:

## **Schedule It.**

Block out time and space to discuss the material in each lesson. A weekly rhythm at a set time and place for five weeks is ideal. Put the responsibility on the shoulders of your child to complete each lesson prior to meeting, and then discuss the material and questions together.

## **Don't Promise a Phone.**

These lessons are not a hoop to jump through for your child to earn a phone. Many parents likely will proceed to get a phone for a child upon completing the lessons in this book, but it would not be healthy for the child to view a phone as an entitlement.

## **Embrace the Rabbit Trails.**

This book can be a great connection point for parents to talk with kids about all kinds of aspects of life. Parents should be encouraged to get kids talking freely and not miss the primary point of relationship and discipleship with their child, even if that means the discussion veers from the lesson at hand.

## **Share Your Child's Excitement.**

Your child is excited to get a phone. Don't rain on the parade with stern lectures about phone ownership. There are plenty of warnings in this book about the dangers of a phone that will provide for meaningful discussion, but don't let the warnings and caution cloud out the joy that you can have in walking with your child as he or she steps into this new phase of life.

## **Look in the Mirror.**

This is a great time for parents to examine their own phone habits. While there may likely need to be different standards of phone use for parents and children in the home, parents should be cautious not to communicate "Do as I say, not as I do." If, for instance, you expect your child to dock their phone at night, this is a good moment for you to consider doing the same.

## **Don't Travel Alone.**

Parents who are intentional with their child's phone usage are anomalies in today's world. Your children, therefore, may see all of this discussion and training as "over the top." Consider sharing this resource with other parents in your church, family, or neighborhood so that your parental involvement in your kids' phone habits is "normal parenting" among your friends and their children. Common expectations and language with your peers around phone usage and habits will be helpful reinforcement and encouragement to swim upstream.

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A Final Word to Parents

For more information about the development of this booklet and the conversation regarding the material check out *The Quarantiny Podcast* episode #74.

**1**

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LESSON ONE



PRIVILEGE  
AND  
RESPONSIBILITY



# LESSON ONE

## Privilege And Responsibility

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What would you do, if you made a million dollars in one year of work? Buy front-row tickets to a concert? Install a water slide in your backyard? Take all your friends to an amusement park?

How would you spend a million dollars right now?

Response:

Good news! You can make a million dollars a year. All you have to do is become a brain surgeon. On average, brain surgeons make well over half a million dollars per year and some even make over a million bucks a year.<sup>1</sup> There's a catch, though. In order to become a brain surgeon, you must go to four years of college, four more years of medical school, and then put in another five to seven years of training in a fellowship program. That's 13-15 years of school after graduating high school! Yes, brain surgeons make a lot of money, but that's because they do very risky, life-saving work that can only be done after many years of intense preparation.

The privilege of making lots of money and helping save lives only comes after much preparation. Preparation is what this workbook is all about.

Many good things in life require preparation. Olympic athletes spend years preparing their bodies to perform, farmers prepare their fields to produce crops, and fifteen-year-olds go to driver's education classes in preparation to safely drive a car. Imagine a sixteen year old, getting her driver's license without any preparation about how to steer, how to merge onto the interstate, or what the various road signs mean. She'd not only be a danger to herself, but to others as well.

You may think that getting your own phone is not a big deal because you've been allowed to occasionally use your parent's phone for many years now or because your friends already have a phone. The reality, however, is that a phone, just like a car, is a very powerful machine capable of much good and also much destruction. The material in these lessons is designed to prepare you to safely and successfully navigate life with your first phone so that you can avoid costly mistakes.

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<sup>1</sup>"Neurosurgeon Salary in the United States," last modified February 25, 2022, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/alternate/neurosurgeon-salary>.





# LESSON ONE

## Privilege And Responsibility

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### The Good

On January 8th, 1815, General Andrew Jackson led U.S. Troops into battle against British troops in the Battle of New Orleans. Hundreds of men lost their lives, thousands were wounded in battle and, sadly, it all happened after the war was officially over. Over two weeks earlier, on Christmas Eve 1814, a treaty was signed in Europe to officially end the War of 1812. Since it took several weeks for that message to reach New Orleans from Europe, Andrew Jackson and his troops did not know about the treaty and continued to fight.

A phone call would have saved a lot of life.

For much of world history, people simply could not have dreamed of the ability to communicate instantaneously with others around the globe. When Paul Revere knew the Redcoats were coming, he couldn't send a group text to let people know. He had to hop on a horse. From the days of messengers on horses, to today when we can FaceTime, there has been a lot of progress in the way we communicate. This progress is not only convenient, it's actually what God has commanded us to do.

In the opening chapters of the Bible, as God created the universe, he repeatedly declared "It is good!" He liked what he created, and when he made human beings "in his image" (Gen. 1:26), he made us to be creators like himself. He commanded mankind to "subdue the earth" and "exercise dominion" (Gen. 1:28). Those are just fancy ways of saying, "Make stuff!", "Explore!", "Create!" God commanded humans to take the raw materials of this world and combine them in ways to make brilliant inventions that make life better. The existence of a phone is evidence that God made a good world, and he made humans with the ability to create good things from his world. There are thousands of scientific and mathematical discoveries that have occurred over thousands of years that make it possible for you to chat with your friends in real-time. Phones are truly amazing tools that are good gifts of God!

What are some of the ways that phones have made life better?

Response:



## The Bad

As a young man, Alfred Nobel was fascinated with science, especially the science of blowing stuff up. He got a job working with a chemist, and after much tinkering in the lab, Nobel had figured out a way to safely control and detonate the power of nitroglycerin to create large explosions. At first, Nobel was going to name his invention "Nobel's Safety Powder," because he had created a safe way to utilize explosives. Eventually, he opted to name his newly formed explosive dynamite, from the Greek word for "power." Since dynamite was predictable and safe, Nobel's invention helped build the world. Railroad tunnels were soon blasted through mountains and the foundations of skyscrapers were set deep in the earth with the help of Nobel's amazing new invention.

As dynamite production increased, however, Nobel's good invention was perversely used for evil purposes. Dynamite was used for landmines in war and became an instrument of death. When Nobel's brother died in 1888, a newspaper mistakenly published the line, "Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday."<sup>2</sup> When Alfred Nobel saw that the newspaper had accidentally written about him with such a dreaded legacy, he was distraught. His well-intended invention had been misused as a weapon of war. In response, Nobel took his family fortune and began funding the Nobel Peace Prize which has become a prestigious award given to exemplary individuals who promote world peace.

The invention of dynamite shows us good things become bad things when they're used in the wrong way. Just like dynamite, a phone is a good tool, but it can be used for bad purposes.

What are some of the ways that phones are used for bad purposes and cause harm?

Response:

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<sup>2</sup> Frederic Golden, "The Worst and the Brightest," Time, October 16, 2000, accessed February 13, 2022, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,998209,00.html>



# LESSON ONE

## Privilege And Responsibility

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Alfred Nobel didn't intend for his good invention to be used badly. Can you think of some ways that people may cause harm with their phone, but don't intend to do so?

Response:

### To Whom Much is Given...

There are two words that you absolutely must understand if you're going to use your phone well: **privilege** and **responsibility**. In this world, responsibilities and privileges go hand in hand. If you separate privilege from responsibility, everything goes out of whack.

Most kids can easily understand why life would be bad if you had more responsibility than privilege. No one wants to do chores all day, get homework done, help watch their little siblings, and get no privileges in return. However, a lot of kids may think that having more privilege than responsibility sounds pretty cool. I can ignore my chores and my homework and still get to hang out with my friends and play video games all night? Sounds great, right? It's hard to deny that it does sound good, on the surface. But, all you have to do is Google "athletes go broke" or "lottery ruined my life" to see that too much privilege without responsibility can breed a lot of destruction.

To earn the privilege of having a phone, you must first demonstrate that you can handle the responsibility. This expectation might sound ridiculous if all of your friends have phones and it doesn't seem like a big deal. But, this is generally how the world works. You swim in the shallow end until you prove you can handle the deep end of the pool. You ride a bike with training wheels until you prove you can stay up on two wheels. It's very common to require some level of competency or responsibility before new privileges are awarded. It would be ridiculous to hand over a computer with the entire contents of the internet on it without any prerequisites.



# LESSON ONE

## Privilege And Responsibility

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What are some ways to demonstrate that you are ready for the responsibility of owning a phone?

Response:

So, let's say we get to the end of this workbook and your parents determine that you have demonstrated responsibility and readiness for a phone. When you get ownership of "your" phone,<sup>3</sup> you will be holding a good object that has potential for both good and bad purposes. Privilege is the fun part, but every privilege comes with additional responsibility.

What are some new responsibilities you'll have in your life once you have a phone?

Response:

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<sup>3</sup> Your parents will most likely be the owners of "your" phone, but for the sake of simplicity, we'll call it "your phone."



# LESSON ONE

## Privilege And Responsibility

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In Luke chapter 12, Jesus tells a parable (a story to illustrate a point), in which some servants are given the privilege of overseeing a large amount of wealth. Sadly, while their master is away they are irresponsible and spend their time partying. When the master returns and finds that his servants have been unfaithful, he's very displeased. The point Jesus makes from this parable is that "to whom much is given, much will be demanded" (Lk. 12:48). That is, the more privilege you have, the more responsibility you also have to use your privilege to honor God. The day is coming when we will give an account to our heavenly Master, God himself, for how we have lived and used the many good gifts he's entrusted to us. Our time, abilities, money, possessions and even our phones are gifts God has given to us to use to live in a way that pleases Him and serves others. We all will have mistakes, sins, and failures, which is why we all need to trust in the forgiveness that Jesus offers us. And yet, with God's help, we can live in a way that honors Him by responsibly handling the privileges he gives us.

Getting a phone is a major privilege and a significant step toward becoming an independent adult. Now is the time to take seriously the responsibility that comes along with this new privilege, not only to have a healthier life, but most importantly so that you can live in such a way that pleases God. At the end of your life, you want the Lord to say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Mt. 25:21) God delights to give us good gifts, and he wants to rejoice with us when we find joy in the privileges he gives us by acting responsibly.

What is your main take-away from what you read in this lesson?

Response:

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BE  
WHERE  
YOU  
ARE

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L E S S O N   T W O



## LESSON TWO

### Be Where You Are

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Several years ago, The History Channel filmed a reality show in which ten contestants were dropped off in a remote location with only a few supplies and had to figure out a way to make shelter, hunt for food, and out-survive the other contestants to win a boatload of prize money. Despite freezing temperatures, weeks of near-starvation, and encounters with hungry wolverines, contestants regularly mentioned that the worst part of their experience was that they were completely . . . alone. As additional seasons of *Alone* continue to be filmed, the setting changes, but the battle with loneliness remains a constant feature of the show.

Being alone is kind of nice sometimes, but being lonely is miserable. In the opening scenes of the Bible, God repeatedly pronounces "It is good!" over his creation, but the chorus comes to a screeching halt when Adam realizes he is alone. Adam notices that all the animals have fellow creatures of their own kind, but when he cannot find any other humans, God pronounces the first "not good" of creation, saying, "**It is not good for man to be alone**" (Gen 2:18).

Genesis 1 gives us a clue as to why it's not good to be alone. In Gen. 1:26 it says, "**Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'**" Notice: God refers to himself as an "us." God speaks of himself in plural form. God uses "us" and "our" to describe his nature because God exists eternally in three persons: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's nature, as the Trinity, is mysterious, but at the very least we can know that God is a relational God. He exists as a unified community of three persons.

The reason it's not good for man to be alone is because we are made in God's image and He is not alone. Made in God's likeness, we are made to enjoy relationships. In fact, we need relationships with other humans to have joyful, healthy, God-honoring lives.

Which of your relationships with family and friends bring joy into your life? In what ways?





## Garbage Cans, Lighthouses, and Smartphones

Since we're made to resemble God's image by having relationships with others, God gave us the ability to communicate with each other to develop and enjoy those relationships. He gave tongues and lungs to speak words, ears to hear, eyes to see nonverbal communication, hands to type or illustrate a point, and brains to process it all in a matter of nanoseconds. Our bodies are designed to be communication machines.

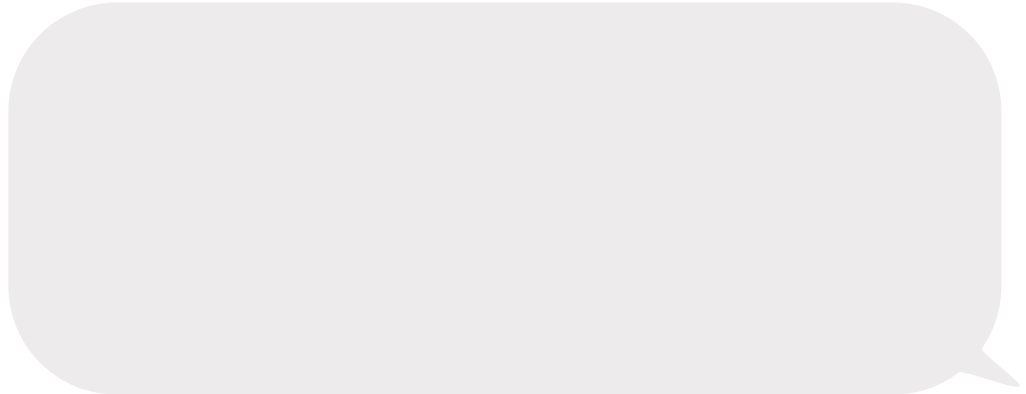
While the most basic way to communicate is through face-to-face conversation, people have figured out how to communicate in thousands of additional ways. From lighthouses declaring, "There's a rock here!", to billboards alongside the road enticing us to stop for a milkshake, communication devices are everywhere in our world. In 2017, the Houston Astros were caught cheating when it was discovered they had an elaborate communication scheme to steal signs from the opposing team. A camera in the outfield would video the opposing catcher's hand signals and display them on a screen in the dugout. Someone in the dugout would then smack a garbage can with a certain number of thuds to alert the batter to the type of pitch that was about to be thrown. With this communication scheme, the Astros went on to become 2017 World Series Champions.

Lighthouses, billboards, and thuds on garbage cans are tools we can use to communicate with each other. A phone is also a tool, a go-between, that relays messages. There's nothing inherently good or bad about different communication tools, but they are all limited in their ability to communicate. A thud on a garbage can or a flash of light from a lighthouse can convey a message, but it's tough to have an in-depth conversation using garbage can thuds. Similarly, texting can relay information, but it lacks the ability to hear voice inflection and to see nonverbals. Calling someone or FaceTiming them comes closer to face-to-face conversation, but still doesn't offer us the ability to see body language or give a hug to a person in tears.

Why are we talking about communicating with garbage cans? Thinking about your phone as a tool of communication has a lot of practical application. For instance, have you ever been "left on read"? You can see that your friend has read your text message, but hasn't responded. All of the sudden, you're finding yourself wondering if you're even friends at all. Maybe she can't stand you. Maybe she's at a party without you? WHY ISN'T SHE RESPONDING?!!! A face-to-face conversation can remove some of that anxiety. You know where your friend is and you can see her facial expressions while you talk. No need to worry about being "left on read".



Texting is a useful medium of communication, but sometimes texting is not the best way to communicate. List some scenarios in which it would be better to talk by phone or in person than to text.



### Hit Me Up!

The internet and new technologies have given us ways to connect with people more than ever before. You can now go online and follow your favorite celebrity on Instagram, watch a YouTube channel streaming the life of a family who lives in London, or Zoom with your cousin who lives in New Zealand. You can start your own YouTube channel and connect with hundreds, thousands, or millions of people from across the world. There is no doubt that phones have given us access to communicate and interact with people in new, exciting ways.

We've already determined though, that anything good can become bad. Your phone can be used as a tool to communicate and build relationships with others. It can also be used as a tool to hide from the outside world, create fake personas, and avoid meaningful conversations.

Scientists are beginning to understand that being alone is not the same as loneliness and, inversely, interaction is not the same as fulfillment. According to Louise Hawkey, a research scientist at the University of Chicago, "One of the things that distinguishes between loneliness and isolation is that loneliness has very little to do with quantity, with how many people you interact with, how many groups you belong to."<sup>4</sup> Dr. Carla Perissinotto, a professor of medicine at University of California San Francisco, goes on to say, "You could have a ton of social contacts and still be incredibly lonely."<sup>5</sup> Dr. Perissinotto offers the insight that real connection comes from a feeling of value and purpose in whatever relationships you have.

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<sup>4</sup> "Alone and Lonely Are Not the Same: How to Feel Connected No Matter How Many People Are Around", CNN Newsource, February 26, 2022, accessed March 28, 2022, <https://kesq.com/news/2022/02/26/alone-and-lonely-are-not-the-same-how-to-feel-connected-no-matter-how-many-people-are-around/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



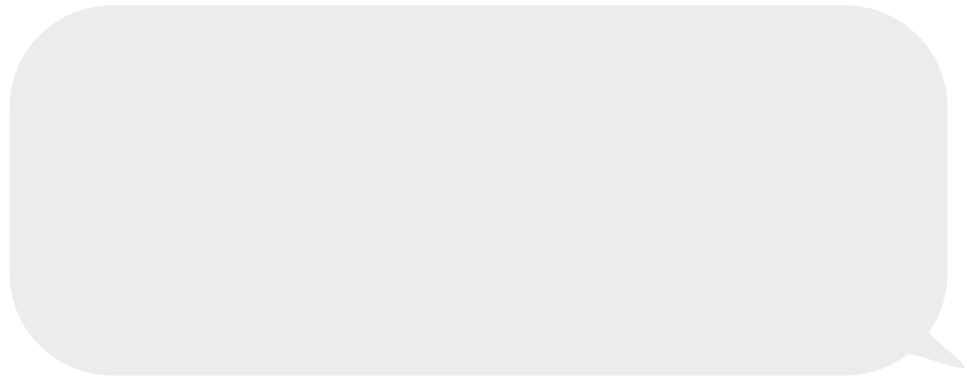
## LESSON TWO

### Be Where You Are

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Relationships can certainly be started online and friends can communicate via text message or Snapchat, but value and purpose is built in real life interactions with each other. Deep connections come from spending time together, experiencing grief and joy together, resolving conflict together, and much more than can't be fully experienced over the phone. Posting "hit me up!" on your Instagram stories is not the same as having real life best friends to laugh, cry, and bond with in real life. Getting 300 likes on your latest Instagram post is not the same as having one close friend who knows what makes you feel better when you're sad.

What are some ways you could guard against losing "in real life" relationships, even after you get a phone?



If you've been waiting weeks, months, or years to get your first phone, it may seem backward that you are being warned against loneliness. Being one of the only kids in your class who doesn't have a phone can sometimes feel like a lonely reality. If you had a phone you could be in the group texts! You could find your friends on their Snapchat location! Don't be misled, however, into thinking a phone will fix the problem of loneliness. It is certainly a tool that can help you connect with people you love, but the phone itself will only intensify those feelings of loneliness if it is not used in a healthy way. What if your friends start a group chat without you? What if your friend's Snapchat location shows that they are at your best friend's house and no one invited you? Your phone won't fix your loneliness. Avoiding loneliness requires you to prioritize real-life people over your phone.



## Flaming Darts and Deadly Arrows

It's clear that digital friendships are no replacement for relationships in real life, but we still need to think about how to communicate with kindness in a digital world. The Bible has a ton to say about how we use words, and many of the words that we "speak" are now tapped out with our thumbs rather than verbalized with our tongue. Consider the following four Scriptures as you think about how to communicate in a way that shows the love of Christ to others:

### Ephesians 4:29

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

Words have the ability to tear a person down or build them up. Ephesians 4 shows us that God's desire for our words (and our texts) is to build people up. That's not to say that every text has to be super-over-the-top-encouraging. A lot of your texts will be about normal, everyday things like, "See ya soon," Or "Running five minutes late." In many instances, simple texts like that are what most "fits the occasion" as Ephesians 4 says. But consider how you can use texting to send encouragements to friends and family to "build them up" and to show them your love.

### Proverbs 26:18-19

"Like a madman who throws flaming darts and deadly arrows, so is the person who deceive his neighbor and says, 'I was only joking!'"

This Proverb teaches that our words can do damage that we cannot take back. Simply saying "I was joking!" or texting a laughing emoji doesn't take away the sting of an insult. Texting can even make hurtful words even more hurtful because, unlike spoken words, it's easier for recipients to look at back at exactly what was said again and again and think the worst about what you meant. The point? Be careful where you point your arrows.

### James 1:19-20

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

Ask almost any adult, and they can tell you that they've made the mistake of sending out an email or text that they regret because they sent it in anger. There are many reasons this happens: we may not know the whole story, we may misunderstand, we may disagree, or we may just feel angry. The foolish move in those moments is to reply quickly. In our anger, we don't make good choices. The wise move, is not only to wait, but often it is to pick a different way of communication that increases understanding. When this happens to you, consider calling or talking in person so others can see your face and hear your voice. Texting, posting, or emailing in anger almost never turns out good and it certainly doesn't bring honor to Christ.



## Proverbs 16:28

"A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends."

There are many proverbs about gossip (11:9, 11:13, 17:9, 18:8, 18:21, 20:19, 26:20), but they all show us that where there is gossip, there is DRAMA. Gossip breeds conflict, not peace, and phones are one of the primary tools that people now use to spread gossip.

Remember, anything you type can (and probably will) be shown to another person. If you gossip or slander about someone, it's pretty easy—even months later—for someone to scroll back through their texts and screenshot that message to pass along to someone else. Imagine if anything you send to someone is later read out loud to everyone in the cafeteria, because that could very well happen.

As you think about how to use your spoken and written words to build up, rather than tear down, there's one final bit of bad news you need to know. Temptation to sin with your words increases when using a phone. Psychologists call this the "online disinhibition effect,"<sup>6</sup> which is just a fancy term meaning that when you're communicating from behind a screen, you're more likely to be mean. One author explained, "People are more aggressive, rude and forthright online because they're anonymous and can act as unpleasantly as they like without immediate consequence."<sup>7</sup> Communicating from behind a screen gives us a sense of safety to say things that we'd never say to a person while looking them in the eyes. Like a soldier who throws a grenade from the safety of a bunker, we can lob out some words that might explode in another person's mind, but we don't even see the wreckage. Beware that you will be tempted to be unkind and rude with your words from behind the false safety of a screen.

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<sup>6</sup> Lauren Farrar, "Is the Internet Making You Meaner?", PBS KQED, Aug. 5 2019, accessed Feb 28, 2022, <https://www.kqed.org/education/532334/is-the-internet-making-you-meaner>.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Martin, "Online Disinhibition Effect and the Psychology of Trolling," Wired Magazine, May 30, 2013, accessed Feb. 28, 2022, <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/online-aggression>.

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LESSON THREE



# HOOKED ON "LIKES"



# LESSON THREE

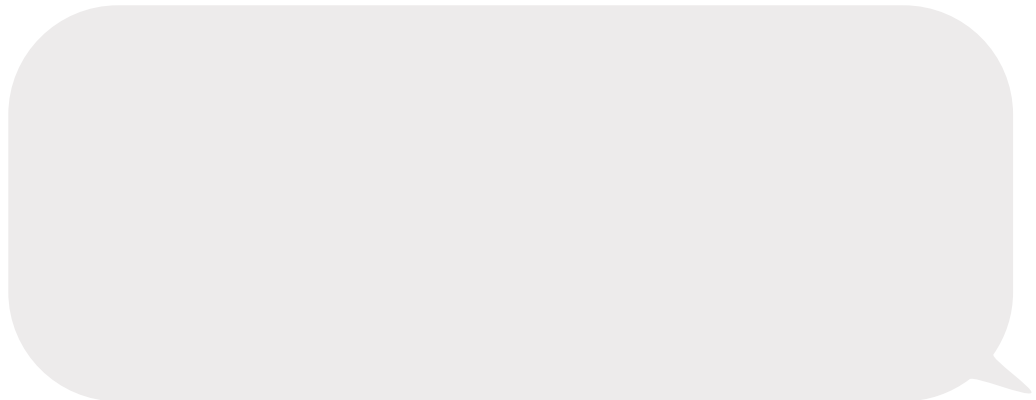
## Hooked on "Likes"

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Wouldn't you love to be able to eat the salty goodness of french fries, savor the juicy splendor of a double cheeseburger, and drink the sugary sweetness of your favorite soda as much as you want? In the documentary movie, *Super-Size Me*, Morgan Spurlock did exactly that. For one month, Spurlock conducted a small experiment in which he ate only at McDonald's for three meals a day. In just thirty days, Spurlock gained a whopping 25 pounds (which took him 14 months to exercise away), experienced heart palpitations, vomiting, and significant decrease in energy. According to the three doctors monitoring him during this experiment, the results of his "McDiet" were exceedingly worse than they had imagined. Spurlock's experiment is evidence that too much of a good thing, can quickly become harmful and unhealthy.

Sometimes people become addicted by consuming too much of a good thing, like eating too much junk food or consuming too many pain pills after a surgery. Other times, addiction can come from going down a path of consuming something that is well-known to be toxic, like taking illicit drugs or gambling. Either way, we often do not realize we're heading down a path of addiction until it is far too late.

In our own words, what does the word "addiction" mean?







## LESSON THREE

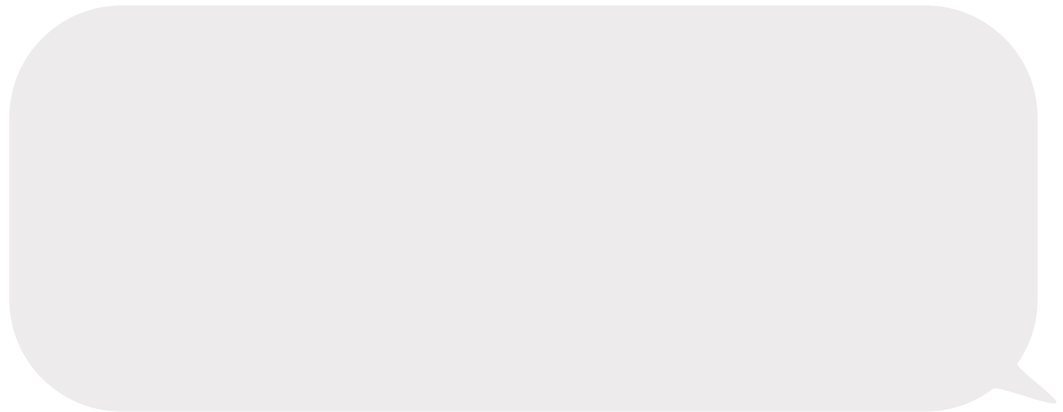
### Hooked on "Likes"

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If you go to a casino in Las Vegas, there's one thing you will not see: a clock on the wall. The goal of a casino is to get gamblers inside for as long as possible, because the longer they are in the casino, the more money they will likely spend. Casinos have a whole bag of tricks they use to keep people pumping money into their machines. They may offer free food and drinks or free hotel rooms connected to the casino. They may arrange the gaming tables in a maze to make it difficult to find an exit. Often, you won't even see windows in the room to remind people by the light of day how much time they have frittered away gambling.

In the same way, your phone is designed to make you spend as much time as possible on it. Very few technology companies will say so outright, but don't be fooled. The more we use our phones, the more data technology companies collect from us, which enables them to make more money. It is in the best financial interest of app developers and technology companies to get us addicted to using our phones as much as possible. One Silicon Valley developer stated that behind many well known apps there are "literally a thousand engineers that have worked on this thing to make it maximally addicting." He added "in order to get [tech companies'] stock price up, the amount of time people spend on your app has to go up" so companies "invent new ways of getting people to stay hooked."<sup>8</sup> Even though phone addiction is harmful to our mental health, billions of dollars are spent every year researching, redesigning, and implementing ways for us to use our phones even more, because there's so much money at stake.

What are some symptoms of habits that someone who is addicted to their phone might do?



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<sup>8</sup> Hilary Anderson, "Social Media Apps are 'Deliberately' Addictive to Users," BBC News, July 4, 2018, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-44640959>.



## Digital Obesity

If you eat too many french fries, you gain weight. Too many pain killers could end your life. Too much gambling will probably leave you broke. But what happens if you're on your phone too much? Is it really that big of a deal?

### Phone Addiction Blinds You to Foolish Decisions.

When people are addicted to something, they often describe their addiction in terms of slavery.

Drug addicts, for example, may want to be free, but their craving for drugs controls their daily life.

Rather than being in control of their day, they are controlled by the desire to use drugs. Addiction is enslaving. Addiction is when we are mastered by something outside of ourselves and do not have the strength or ability to resist.

Two thousand years ago, people didn't have phones, but they did have desires that could lead to addictions. The city of Corinth was known as a "party town." Corinth was like the Las Vegas of the Roman Empire so the Christians in Corinth were struggling with how to live in a city with so many temptations and to still be committed followers of Jesus. Their pastor, the Apostle Paul, writes them and says, "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. **"I have the right to do anything—but I will not be mastered by anything"** (NIV).

Notice the word he uses: "mastered." To be mastered is to be controlled by someone or something. Paul's point is that many things in life which are acceptable still have the ability to master us, or enslave us, if we're not careful. Anyone who follows Jesus, should have one master—the Lord Jesus Christ. If we find that we're being controlled by something other than Jesus—even if it is something that's not inherently sinful—then we need to remove that false master from our lives so we can be free to obey Jesus.

When a person is addicted, or enslaved, by drugs or alcohol, they often make foolish decisions in "obedience" to their master. A drug addict may steal money to pay for his habit, an alcoholic may drive a car when intoxicated putting many people at risk. It's not that addicts want to make such poor decisions, it's that they are enslaved and don't even realize their poor choices in the moment.

In the same way, those who are addicted to their phones, are enslaved to a degree that they don't realize how foolish their choices are. Consider some of the foolish choices people make when addicted to their phone:



## LESSON THREE

### Hooked on "Likes"

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A teenage girl can't put her phone away while driving and accidentally causes an accident while texting and driving. She injures or kills another driver and goes to jail for manslaughter.



The star basketball player stays up late scrolling on his phone and ends up only getting a few hours of sleep. That night at the game he is exhausted, can't focus, and blows the game.



A new graduate gets a job at a bank, but can't put her phone down during work hours. Her boss notices that she's distracted and ignoring customers and she loses her new job.

### **Phone Addiction Robs Your Ability to Think Deeply.**

Another reason addiction to our phones is a problem is because too much time on our phones can change our brains for the worse. Just like too many french fries makes a body flabby, our brains become less fit for deep, purposeful thinking when we're not in control of our screen time.

Here's a scientific term that will help you understand why your phone affects your brain: neuroplasticity. "Neuro" simply means "brain" and "plasticity" means "moldable." It's a big word that basically means that our brains are moldable, like Play-Doh. And just like Play-Doh is most moldable when it first comes out of the container, but hardens over time, so too our brains are most plastic, or moldable, when we are younger.

The prevailing view of neuroplasticity today is summarized in what is known as Hebb's rule: "Cells that fire together, wire together." Our brains are like a system of roads made of cells. The more a pathway is used, the stronger it becomes, kind of like an Interstate highway. The less a pathway is used, the weaker it becomes making travel difficult, like on a gravel road. When we get used to taking in data from our phones in quick, bite-sized amounts of social media, texts, or tweets, the paths in our brain that become the strongest are those that are dedicated to simple, shallow thinking. The parts of our brain that are needed for deep, complex, intelligent problem solving then go unused and can become like hard-to-travel country backroads.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2010), 23.



## LESSON THREE

### Hooked on "Likes"

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If we are addicted to the constant interruptions of our phones, the "Play-Doh" of our brain highways gets molded in a way that craves distraction and finds it very difficult to focus. Author Philip Yancey, who has written over thirty books, saw how the problem of screen addiction was affecting his own life. He writes:

"I used to read three books a week. I am reading many fewer these days. The internet and social media have trained my brain to read a paragraph or two, and then to start looking around. Soon I'm reading the latest tweets, or perhaps checking tomorrow's weather."<sup>10</sup>

Yancey's predicament is common. The more we all become accustomed to the mental sugar-rush of our phones, the less our brains are able to focus and think deeply.

Why does the ability to concentrate and think deeply matter?

### Phone Addiction Changes What You Love.

Psalm 1 says, "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." What do you think of when you read the word "meditate"? Often, people think of someone sitting cross-legged with their eyes shut murmuring soothing noises. But meditation is what our minds do every day. To meditate is to think repeatedly and consistently about a given topic. If you've ever had a crush on someone, your mind repeatedly thinks about them. If you've been anxious about a big test or excited for a big game, your mind will meditate on that upcoming event. Meditation is thinking over and over and over about the same thing.

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<sup>10</sup> Yancey, Philip. "The Death of Reading Is Threatening the Soul." The Washington Post, September 12, 2019.



## LESSON THREE

### Hooked on "Likes"

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Psalm 1, and many other Scriptures, encourage us to meditate—think often and repeatedly—about the truth of the Lord. As we do so, his Word will shape not only what our mind thinks about but also what our heart cares about. To meditate, is to “**delight in the law of the LORD.**” Meditation on God’s Word and truth cultivates love for him in our hearts. In the same way, when we meditate on other things, our souls will begin to love and care about those other things.

This is bit gross, but do you know how cows eat? Cows digest their food by a process called “chewing the cud,” which means that they chew their food, swallow it, vomit it back into their mouth, chew it some more, and keep this process going until their food is sufficiently chewed and digestible. The way a cow repeatedly chews the same piece of food is a vivid—and disgusting—illustration for how we meditate on our phones. Approximately once every three minutes of the waking hours in the day, Americans pick up their phones to chew on digital content.<sup>11</sup> This repetitious consumption of digital content is mental meditation, which has the power to change what the soul loves.

### **Phone Addiction Can Affect Your Mental Health.**

Bad phone boundaries can create habits that make us feel miserable. Social media is often a highlight reel of the best events in the lives of those you follow. Every time you scroll through, you see friends smiling together, couples taking selfies on romantic dates, and people posing with their latest award or achievement. Considering that, it’s not surprising that people walk away from social media feeling inadequate or even feeling the sense that they are “missing out.” Comparing your Tuesday night on the couch doing homework to your friend’s MVP performance at their latest volleyball tournament is like comparing your bank account to that of a billionaire. You may have saved thousands of dollars but it’s minuscule in comparison. It doesn’t change what you’ve accomplished, but it does change the way you see yourself and the world.

Have you ever looked at someone’s Instagram account and seen nothing but squares upon squares of selfies? Selfies aren’t inherently evil, but the name itself reflects a focus on “self”. As self-focus grows, it can choke out your ability to focus on other things in your life—namely friends, family, community, and God. Waiting for people to “like” your selfies can contribute to compulsively checking your phone. We think that posting that selfie reflects pride in the way we look, when it actually can create a vicious cycle of checking to see what everyone else thinks about us. It is a misconception that focusing on ourselves will build our self-esteem. In fact, more and more evidence points to the fact that one of the best ways to raise self-esteem is to focus outside of ourselves.

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<sup>11</sup>Trevor Wheelwright, “2022 Cell Phone Usage Statistics: How Obsessed Are We?”, January 24, 2022, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.reviews.org/mobile/cell-phone-addiction/>.



# LESSON THREE

## Hooked on "Likes"

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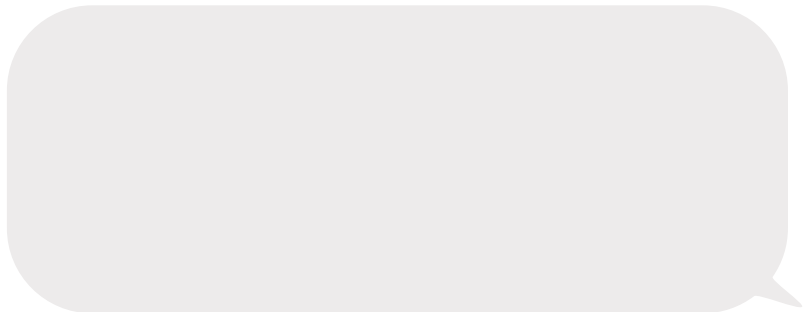
An Article in The Journal of Adolescence reported that teens who volunteered in their community reported higher self-esteem over time.<sup>12</sup> It seems that we have a choice: allow our self-esteem to be dependent on "likes" and comments or build esteem through connections with people and community.

Checking to see what your friends are up to seems harmless. Posting selfies on social media seems harmless. However, if you develop an addiction to your phone and can't get away from always knowing what your friends are up to and posting selfies every day, the results will show up in how you feel. We aren't meant to live in a world where we know what everyone else is doing every second of the day—that will breed anxiety in your heart. We aren't meant to focus on ourselves—that will breed vanity and low self-esteem. We are meant to be in relationship with God and with others and focus on our phones and our social media accounts ultimately makes us feel empty and miserable.

### Prepare for Battle

Billions of dollars are spent every year to get you addicted to your phone. If you aren't serious about protecting your mind against the threat of addiction, it will sneak up on you before you realize it. In 1 Peter 1, Peter encouraged followers of Christ to be diligent in protecting their minds, as they sought to live as followers of Jesus in a world that didn't follow Him. He writes, "Prepare your minds for action and be sober minded." Literally, the Greek word Peter used for "prepare" was a military term which meant to put on armor. The Christian must take extra efforts to guard our minds, much like when soldiers take extra efforts to put on armor to guard their bodies in battle. As Romans 12 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." We saw in previous chapters, phones are great tools to have, but we must be aware of how they can affect our minds and take practical steps to guard our minds from addiction.

What are some practical ways that you can guard your mind from becoming addicted to your phone?



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<sup>12</sup> Laura Padilla-Walker Laura and Gustavo Carlo, Madison K. Memmott-Elison, "Longitudinal Change in Adolescents' Prosocial Behavior Toward Strangers, Friends, and Family" Journal of Research on Adolescence, no. 3 (2018):698-710, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29144027/>.

# LESSON THREE

## Hooked on "Likes"

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There are lots of habits that soldiers form through training to help them survive in battle. You also will need to form good habits to win the battle against the addictive screen in your hand. Here are some practical suggestions to help you win the battle against phone addiction:

**Dock It**  
Put a charging cord or dock in a common space in your house and regularly dock your phone in that space. If your phone is always in your pocket, then you're always going to be a second away from picking it up. Create some distance between you and your phone and put it on the dock and treat it like an old-school phone connected to the wall by a cord. It's there and if it rings you answer it, but you don't have to be dominated by it everywhere you go.

**Just Say No to Notifications**  
There are sometimes when notifications are extremely useful when they infrequently alert you to important information. But many notifications are unimportant and too frequent. If you leave notifications switched "on", your phone will blow up with an incessant stream of attention-grabbing distraction. Unless there's a really, really, good reason to have a notification turned on, turn it off and give your brain some peace and quiet.

**Take a Phone Holiday**  
The word "holiday" means "holy," or "set apart," day. It's a day where you do something different, like eat a turkey or watch fireworks. In the Bible, the Sabbath is a weekly holy-day for rest and worship. It's a day to do something different from the normal routine. Consider taking regular phone holy days, maybe even weekly, where you have set amounts of time that you don't use your phone. Give your mind some space to live in the real world and to be free from distraction.

**Deep Work**  
There are certain tasks requiring sustained mental concentration, which have recently been dubbed "Deep Work."<sup>13</sup> Reading, homework, writing, and creating are just a few examples of deep work that are inhibited by a buzzing phone nearby. When you have deep work to do, power off your phone or leave it in a different location.

Addiction is not inevitable. You can win this battle, but it will take intentionality. We are all weaker and more prone to addiction than we'd like to think, so humbly take steps to win the battle against distraction and have a mind that is healthy, focused, and ready to serve the Lord.

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<sup>13</sup> See Cal Newport, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016).

4





PORN  
IN  
YOUR  
POCKET

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L E S S O N   F O U R



## LESSON FOUR

### Porn In Your Pocket

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With one tap on your phone screen, your entire life can drastically change. In 23 states, sexting—texting a sexually explicit photo—by individuals under 18 years old, is considered child pornography, which is punishable by up to twenty years in prison as well as mandatory registration as a sex offender.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps more common than jailtime, however, is what has occurred in too many schools to number: A photo that a student thought would be private, gets distributed to many others or even used as blackmail against that person in the future.

In addition to sexting, pornography use (viewing any sexually explicit photo or video) among teens has risen to such high levels that in 2016 the State of Utah declared porn use a public health crisis, and since that time numerous other states have followed suit.<sup>15</sup> Actual statistics vary, but almost all research on pornography use points to the same conclusion: It's everywhere. Christian author Francis Chan explains how pornography has become much more widespread in recent years. He writes:

"Things are different nowadays. Sin is much more accessible and acceptable . . . When I was a kid, a guy had to let everyone in the store know he was a pervert when he walked to the counter to buy a [pornographic] magazine. These days, people can look endlessly at pornography on the privacy of their own phones. And many don't even consider it that perverted."<sup>16</sup>

Sexual immorality is as old as the human race, but Chan is right. Never before has sexual immorality been more easily accessible. If you haven't already viewed—whether accidentally or intentionally—explicit images, it's only a matter of time before you are going to need to make a choice to flee from sin and seek purity. This lesson aims to prepare you to live a pure life in a world of impurity.

Do you think that pornography/sexting is common at your school or with kids your age? If so, why?

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<sup>14</sup> Carroll, Linda. "In Some States, Sexting Could Land Teens in Jail for a Long Time." Reuters News, April, 16, 2019, accessed Feb. 2, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-teens-sexting/in-some-states-sexting-could-land-teens-in-jail-for-a-long-time-idUSKCN1RS2BT>.

<sup>15</sup> Kimberly M. Nelson and Emily F. Rothman, "Should Public Health Officials Consider Pornography a Public Health Crisis?" *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 2 (February 2020): 151-53, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6951382/>.

<sup>16</sup> Francis and Lisa Chan. *You and Me Forever: Marriage in Light of God's Glory* (San Francisco: Claire Love Publishing, 2014), 27-28.



## LESSON FOUR

### Porn In Your Pocket

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In his book *The Purity Principle*, author Randy Alcorn writes, "Suppose I offered you a cookie, saying 'A few mouse droppings fell into the batter, but for the most part it's a great cookie—you won't even notice.'<sup>17</sup> Would you want to eat that cookie?"

Often, the thought of being sexually pure is viewed as being too strict, too old-school, or too difficult in today's world, but sexual purity—like pure ingredients in a cookie—is for our good.

When God made the world, he made male and female as sexual beings with unique body parts and upon creating human beings he pronounced his creation "very good." It was God's idea to design us with sexual desires, and His Word also gives clear boundaries for sexuality that protect us and lead to our health and flourishing. God's design that begins in Genesis and is reiterated throughout the Bible is for a sexual relationship to occur exclusively in a marriage covenant between a man and woman for life. Through sexual union, a husband and wife may have children, reaffirm their commitment to one another, and enjoy one of God's good gifts of creation.

When sexual activity occurs outside of a marriage relationship, it is called "adultery" in the Bible. The seventh of the Ten Commandments says plainly, "**You shall not commit adultery**" (Ex. 20:14). Since God's love does not waver in his commitment to us, a marriage relationship is instructed to be faithful and pure to imitate the love of God.

You are likely a decade or more away from marriage, so you may be wondering what all this information about sexuality and marriage has to do with you owning a phone. In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus takes God's commands about adultery from the Old Testament and ups the stakes. He says, "**You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**" Jesus teaches that even if we don't physically commit sexual immorality, we can still be impure and adulterous when we lust after a person's body in our hearts. Lust is a word that's kind of hard to define, but Jesus makes it clear that it's a dangerous sin so let's try to get a better idea of what it means.

Lust is desire. However, since God gave us sexual desires, lust is more than just desire. If, for instance, a boy sees an attractive girl, he may think, "Wow, she's really pretty!" He may even desire to get to know her better, to date her, or to marry her. Such desire is not automatically lust. It's not wrong to be attracted to someone or even to desire to pursue a relationship with someone. In fact, at some point in your life, it may be that God wants you to pursue your desire to love someone until death do you part through marriage.

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<sup>17</sup> Randy Alcorn, *The Purity Principle: God's Guardrails on Life's Dangerous Roads* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2003), 62-63.



# LESSON FOUR

## Porn In Your Pocket

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Lust is not when you desire a relationship with a person, but rather when you desire someone's body sexually and you continue to think about his or her body and how it makes you feel sexually. Lust is when you cross a line in your mind from God-given desire of attraction to when you mentally treat someone else's body as an object for your own enjoyment. To lust is to stare at and think about body parts instead of to appreciate someone as a human. And Jesus shows us that lust is where adultery begins. It's using someone else's body in a sexual way inside our own mind and heart. When we lust, we're committing adultery in the heart, which means we're sexually impure.

Sexual photos or videos on the screen of a phone (whether explicit pornography or simply through provocative advertisements or social media posts) breed lust, not godly love. Since sexuality is only and exclusively to be shared between a husband and a wife, viewing someone's body outside of a marriage is committing adultery. That person's body simply doesn't belong to the viewer. Additionally, viewing images of someone else's body on a screen means that the person's body has become an object to be used rather than a person to be cared for. This is lust, and because sexual desires are so strong, such images are hard to get out of one's mind once they have been viewed. Viewing images with a lustful mind effectively imprints those images on the "video screen" of one's mind. Sexual images do not stay imprinted forever, but they are not easy to remove.

With an internet accessible phone, the temptation of sexual lust is often only a few taps away. As with any sin, there are numerous negative consequences that can pile up if you do not guard your heart against lust. If you look lustfully at pornography on your phone, here are a few of the negative effects you should expect:



### **People Become Objects**

You will begin to view other people as sexual objects instead of as humans to love, serve and care for. If you consistently train your mind to look at the bodies of people online, when you interact with real-life people, your mind will be trained to view them the same way.



### **False Expectations for Marriage**

Internet pornography is inherently selfish. It's on-demand, and it's completely about the viewer getting what he or she wants. God designed marriage to be a loving relationship and, if you get married, your spouse is not an on-demand object. Not only that, but no real person looks the same as the perfectly photoshopped and enhanced false body images that are displayed online.



# LESSON FOUR

## Porn In Your Pocket

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### Lust Brings Guilt and Shame Instead of Freedom

If you view pornography or send sexually explicit photos, your soul will have to live with a secret. You will likely seek to cover up your tracks online, but the reality is that you will still know who you are and what you've done and you will likely feel guilt and shame. In Psalm 32, King David talks about how when he hid his sin, it felt like his "bones here wasting away." The guilt he had for sexual sin was always upon him. In contrast, if you're free from using your phone for sexual sin, there is peace from knowing that anyone can use your phone anytime and you have nothing to worry about and no tracks to cover up.



### Lust is a Barrier to Seeing and Knowing God

Prior to Jesus' teaching about lust in Matthew 5, he teaches, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Having an impure heart, makes connecting with God difficult. Thankfully, he forgives our sins when we confess to him, but living with a regular habit sexual immorality makes the practices of worship and prayer very difficult. If you want to be close to God, to see his beauty and find joy in him, seek to have a pure heart.

## At Your Fingertips

Impurity has always been available to us in this fallen world, but the internet has put it at our fingertips. Because of this, it's easier than ever for anyone with a phone to access pornography or other sexual content from the internet, apps, or personal photos from people you know.

Have you ever had someone walk up to you on the street and ask you to take your clothes off? You may have just laughed in response to that question. It's ridiculous, right? Of course not. But, people asking for "nudes", or nude photographs, from other people is happening constantly online. It's happening at such a rate that it almost seems there are no consequences for asking. Legal consequences are a definite possibility, if you get caught, but the social consequences are far less online than they would be in person. If someone approached you in a sexual way in person, they would have the fear of rejection. You might laugh at them or scrunch up your face in disgust. There is a social cost to making a sexual advance in person. Online, that social cost is seemingly non-existent because the person can't see you and they can just move on to the next person in a matter of seconds. Impurity is at your fingertips online because people will be bolder online than they would be in person. Because of this, you will also have to be bold to clearly say no to online sexual requests and take bold steps to keep this boundary for yourself. If someone sends you a nude, asks for a nude, or sends or requests other sexual content from you, block them immediately. It is a clear message that you are not interested. You do not owe them an explanation.



# LESSON FOUR

## Porn In Your Pocket

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### If You Mess Up

Let's say you're eating chocolate chip cookies, and all of a sudden a friend tells you that the cookies you're eating are from a batch that had mouse droppings in them. Surely, you'd spit out the partially chewed cookie and throw the rest in the garbage can. The last thing you'd do is take the cookies to your room and continue to eat them secretly.

When it comes sexual purity on your phone, you may make a mistake. You may even sin intentionally. But when you do that, what should you do?

If you see sexually explicit material on your phone (or any screen), you should treat it just as you would rotten cookies. Don't hide it, but instead take decisive action to be pure. Here are three Biblical steps you can remember if your phone becomes a source of sexual immorality.

### 1) Confess

Confession is acknowledging your sin, by saying out loud what you have done. It's owning up—with perfect honesty—what you've done. The opposite of confession is concealing, which is when you hide something and cover it up. The Bible describes confession in terms of walking in the light and concealing as walking in the darkness. To be in the darkness is to live a lie through hiding who you are and what you do. In the very first sin, Adam and Eve immediately tried to hide themselves from the Lord and one of the most basic human instincts in all of us still is to hide our failures and sins from others. If you sin sexually, you'll be tempted to hide it. You may try to delete your browser history, delete an app, or swipe away any sort of evidence that could reveal your sin to others. If you ever find yourself deleting your online history, it's an indicator that you might be walking in darkness, concealing sin instead of confessing it.

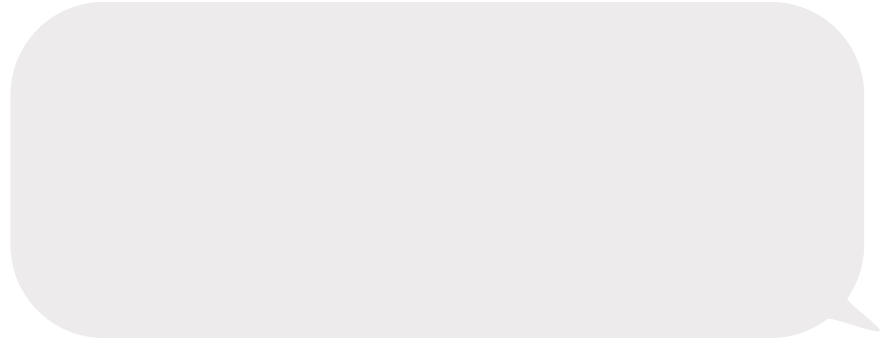


# LESSON FOUR

## Porn In Your Pocket

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Why do you think it's natural for us to try to conceal, or cover up, our sin? Do you ever feel tempted to cover up what you view on a screen?



Instead of concealing your sin, confess it. Bring your sin into the light. First, pray to God and acknowledge your sin as you ask him for forgiveness. Additionally, find a trusted Christian friend, youth leader, or another trusted adult who you can confess to and who can encourage you as you seek to live a life of integrity. While it's not typically wise to go around blabbing your sin to anyone and everyone, it is a part of spiritual growth to confess sin to those in your life who are rooting for you to grow in godliness. James 5:16 says, "**Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.**" It's hard to confess our sins to others, but doing so allows for honest prayer and ongoing encouragement from fellow believers as we seek to walk in the light.

## 2) Believe

In confessing our sin, we must also believe the good news of the gospel, that Jesus forgives us when we repent of our sin and trust in Him. The letter of First John was written largely to encourage believers to walk in the light of God's truth. At the outset of the letter, John writes, "**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" When we sin, we feel guilty and ashamed. As a result, we don't feel worthy of God's love or accepted by Him. Sometimes we want to ignore God in our sinful moments because we are ashamed. In truth, we're never fully worthy of his love, but he gives us his love and forgiveness because he is gracious. We must believe the truth of 1 John 1:9, as well as other Scriptures declaring that we are forgiven, so that we are willing to confess our sins. It's the promise of God's forgiveness that frees us to honestly confess our sins to Him and to others.



## LESSON FOUR

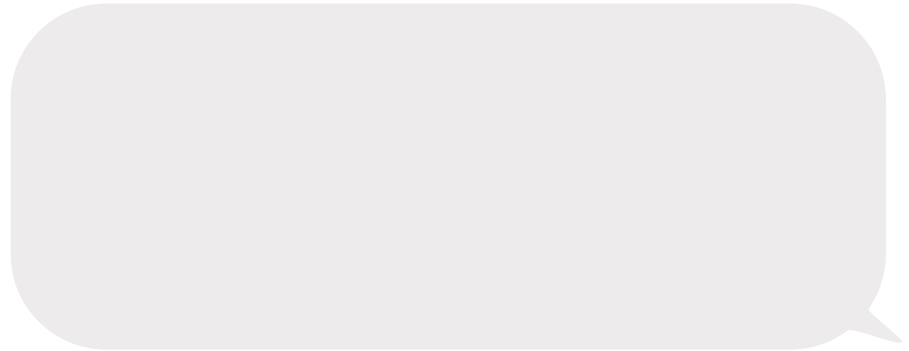
### Porn In Your Pocket

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### 3) Act

All throughout the Bible, genuine faith results in action. Those who really believe God's promises, back up their talk with action. The word the Bible uses to describe the action of confession is repentance. To repent is to turn away from sin by acting in a new way. Once, in the book of Acts, an entire group of people who had been practicing witchcraft realize that they have been sinning against God. They confess their sin, believe in Jesus, and they act. They start a big bonfire and they burn all their witchcraft books, even though those books were worth thousands of dollars. Action is what proves one's belief to be authentic.

Who is someone (or multiple people) in your life you would trust to confess your sin and ask for prayer and help?



### Pluck Out Your Eyeballs

Right after Jesus says that lust is committing adultery in the heart, he makes a shocking statement. In Matthew 5:29 Jesus says,

"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."

Almost all Bible scholars agree that Jesus is speaking here in hyperbole, which means that he's using exaggeration to make a point. Jesus doesn't actually want us to pluck out our eyeballs or chop off our hands. His point is that sin is so dangerous and so serious that we should be willing to take drastic, inconvenient measures to fight against sin. If we don't fight against sin with drastic measures, we can soon be enslaved by it with a hard, unrepentant heart.





## LESSON FOUR

### Porn In Your Pocket

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**Don't miss this:** If your phone is a source of sexual sin and sexual addiction, you must get rid of it. You probably don't want to hear that, so let's repeat: If your phone is a source of sexual sin, you must get rid of it. Seriously. Jesus said we must go to aggressive and extreme measures to fight sin, so if you can't handle having a phone without it being a platform for sin, get rid of it and go to a standard "dumbphone." People have lived for hundreds of years without smartphones, and numerous followers of Christ struggling with sexual sin have made the difficult choice to use a non-internet phone. Will it be inconvenient? Yep. But not as inconvenient as gouging out your eye. Resolve right now, before you ever get a phone, that if your phone is a source of sin in your life, that you will get rid of it at least for a season of growth, repentance, and faith.

It is also wise to take preventative measures to prepare yourself to navigate an online world of much sexual immorality. Here are few ideas:



#### **Consider Beginning with a Non-Internet Accessible Phone**

Someday as you grow up it may make sense for you to utilize a smartphone to make best use of your time or capabilities to do your job or connect with others. But if you have a basic phone that can talk and text, that's probably a great place to start to build responsibility. It's wise to make sure you can swim in the shallow end of the pool, before you jump in the deep in.



#### **Use an Internet Accountability Software**

There are several good internet accountability software programs available that will help your browsing be open and in the light to others you trust like parents or Christian friends. No software is perfect, but these can provide a helpful fence that protects your soul from some of the filth out there.



#### **Put Your Phone to Bed at Night**

Instead of taking your phone to your room in isolation, when it's late and you are tired. Put your phone on a charging station in your kitchen or other family area, to avoid temptation.



#### **Report Shady Characters**

If you ever get asked for inappropriate photos or texts, report them immediately to your parents. Even if it's someone you know at school, report them. The stakes are too high, to even mess around with sexting. You can either not reply or simply screenshot the request and send it to your parents immediately.



# LESSON FOUR

## Porn In Your Pocket

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### Never Take a Nude Photo

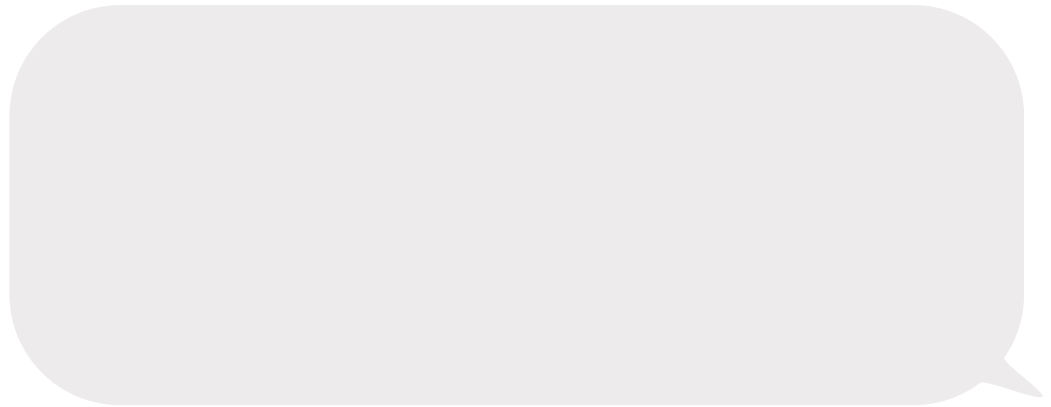
There is no reason, ever, for you to take a nude or sexual photo of yourself. God made your sexuality to be a gift for a spouse and no one else's eyes. Any photo you take on your phone is forever on a server of an internet company somewhere, and worse, could end up in the hands of someone you know. Make a hard line in your life to never even take such a photo in the first place.



### Flee from Temptation

Believers, throughout the Bible, are encouraged to "Flee sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18). Don't hang around near it. Don't cuddle up to sin. Just run. If there's an app that is sexually tempting, delete it. If there's a person that is overly flirtatious, block them. Do whatever you need to do to fight against the sneakiness of sexual temptation.

What do you think of these practical ideas for remaining safe and pure with your phone? Do you have any other practical ideas that would be good to implement?





# REVIEW & NOTES

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5

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LESSON FIVE



DON'T DO  
DUMB STUFF



# LESSON FIVE

## Don't Do Dumb Stuff

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After some off-the-field legal trouble, The Tennessee Titans were ready to give Adrian Peterson, one of the NFL's all time leading rushers, another chance to play football. When Peterson reported to practice, his new coach had a succinct message for him: "Play with great effort and don't do dumb stuff."<sup>18</sup>

As we've seen in lessons one through four, there are many things in life that are flat out wrong to do. Gossip, cheating, stealing, and sexual immorality are all sinful and wrong. But many things in life are not necessarily wrong, they're just not smart.

- Eating cereal with a fork is not wrong, but it's not very smart.
- Wearing sandals in the snow is not morally wrong, but it's a quick way to get frostbite.
- Forgetting to put on deodorant before a date is not wrong, but go ahead and keep your relationship status set on "single."

The book of Proverbs not only tells us how to distinguish between right and wrong, it also tells us how to avoid doing "dumb stuff." For instance, Proverbs 26:17 says, "Like one who grabs a stray dog by the ears is someone who rushes into a quarrel not his own." What happens if you grab a stray dog by its ears? Most likely, you're going to be headed to the emergency room with bite marks on your body. It's not that grabbing a dog by the ears is wicked, it's just not smart. In the same way, when you get involved in someone else's quarrel, even if your intentions are good, it's not a very intelligent move because it's probably going to come back to bite you. It's just not smart.

Fifteen times in the book of Proverbs, the author refers to a group of people known as "the simple." In some instances, the simple person in Proverbs is referring to a child who hasn't lived long enough to gain wisdom through life experience. We all start out as simple-minded infants and have to learn about the world around us as we get older. The simple person hasn't yet learned that stray dogs bite or that smelly armpits cause people to keep their distance. Being simple is not morally wrong, but those who are simple-minded need to humbly listen to instruction so that they go grow in wisdom and avoid foolish mistakes. Proverbs 9:6 proclaims, "Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

The purpose of this final lesson is to give you some practical insight about how to use your smartphone in a smart way.

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<sup>18</sup> Ryan Glasspiegel, "Mike Vrabel's Instructions to Adrian Peterson: 'Don't Do Dumb Stuff', The New York Post, November 4, 2021, accessed March 9, 2022, <https://nypost.com/2021/11/04/adrian-petersons-titans-instructions-dont-do-dumb-stuff/>.



### Insight #1: Digital Footprint

There's a brilliant invention banks use to help catch robbers: dye packs. If a bank robber shows up flashing a gun and demanding a teller hand over thousands of dollars, the teller can fill the robber's bag with cash from a predetermined safe containing a dye pack. When the robber exits the building, a sensor on the door triggers a countdown and within seconds, a package of bright red dye explodes in the bag, ruining the money, and painting the robbers clothing in red dye.

The purpose of a dye pack is traceability. Robbers may think they get away in the clear, but they are marked in red and can be more easily tracked. Even if they get away from the scene and go to all the work of bleaching the cash, the bills still retain microscopic evidence of being marked by dye. Dye packs, help law enforcement trace and track down criminals.

In a similar manner, nearly every time you go online, you're being traced. Your activities are marked out so that others can follow you. You may think that you visited a website and left with no trace, but more often than not, your activity has left a permanent, traceable mark. The trail of online activity you leave behind is called a "digital footprint."

To be fair, googling something for your homework, checking a sports score, or using a GPS map is a lot different than robbing a bank. If someone traces you and learns your favorite baseball team or what your history essay is about, it's not that big of a deal. In the digital world we live in, we all have digital footprints, there's no avoiding it. But we must not be simple-minded about the fact that our online activities are perpetually traced. The wise person considers the implications of having a digital footprint.

### Your information is sold

First, understand that "free" services like search engines and apps have to make money somehow and the way they do that is by obtaining information about you and selling it to marketers. If you google "Nike" a few times, you're going to be targeted with Nike ads, or possibly their competitors, to get you to spend money. There's nothing wrong with looking at shoes online, but just know that as you do that, companies are aiming their ads at your wallet.

### Your information is used to create a "confirmation bias"

Let's say there's a presidential election, and you really like a candidate named Buzz Lightyear. As you look up information about Buzz Lightyear and follow his speeches, tweets, and activities, your digital footprint is telling algorithms "This person is really interested in Buzz Lightyear."



# LESSON FIVE

## Don't Do Dumb Stuff

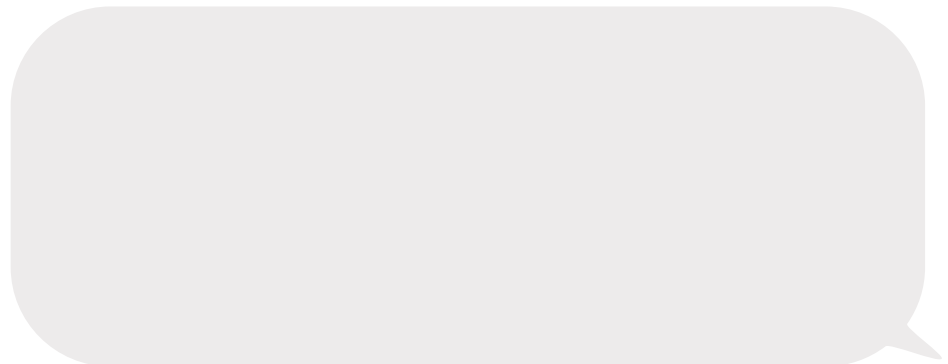
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What then happens is that articles about Buzz Lightyear are suggested to you to follow, including other articles which may not be true against Lightyear's opponent in the election, so that you'll keep clicking on links and seeing more advertising. Over time, the suggestions made to you are only in favor of Buzz Lightyear and your opinions about Buzz Lightyear are only confirmed, instead of challenged. When this happens, it's called "confirmation bias" because we only hear the side of the story we want to hear. Confirmation bias is fed by our digital footprint.

### Your information will be judged by future employers

In the not-so-distant future you'll likely fill out an application to get a job, to get into college, or perhaps for a scholarship. You're inviting people to evaluate you, and in today's world that most certainly means they'll check your online presence. In 2020 a major business magazine reported that over half of employers have decided to not hire a candidate based on their social media presence.<sup>19</sup> What you post today, even if as a joke, may be what costs you a job tomorrow.

If we could search your digital footprint right now, what do you think we'd learn about you?



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<sup>19</sup> Melanie Curtin, "54 Percent of Employers Have Eliminated a Candidate Based on Social Media. Time to Clean Up Your Posts (and Tags)", Inc., January 9, 2020, accessed March 15, 2022, <https://www.inc.com/melanie-curtin/54-percent-of-employers-have-eliminated-a-candidate-based-on-social-media-time-to-clean-up-your-feed-and-tags.html>.





## Insight #2: Phone Etiquette

Every culture has customs, which are patterns of behavior that are considered normal and expected. Different cultures have different customs. For instance, in France it's very common to greet friends with a kiss on both cheeks. In Japan, it's common for people to make slurping sounds while eating noodles as a way of complementing the chef. However, in the United States, if you show up to a friend's house for dinner and give them kisses on the cheek and slurp your food, you'd be a bit of a weirdo. You might be considered rude.

When we are unaware of our social behavior, we can unintentionally act rudely toward others, which is unloving (1 Cor. 13:5). Though social customs change over time, it's helpful to consider some common ways you can use your phone—and not use your phone—in a way that is polite and considerate to others. These phone “manners” are called etiquette.

### Silence Your Phone, and Double-Check

In a public setting, turn your phone to vibrate or silent or just turn it off. Do not be the person whose phone notifications interrupt the movie in the theater, or whose ringer goes off during the National Anthem. When you're walking into a building with other people, double check to make sure it's silenced.

### Eye Contact

It's pretty annoying when you're talking with someone and they look at their phone and start texting in the middle of your sentence. If a person verbally butted into the conversation, it'd be a rude interruption, but for some reason we easily allow texts to interrupt in-person conversations. Though there are some exceptions, show people you care about what they are saying by giving them your attention and your eye contact.

### Put Down the Megaphone

When you're in public, don't be a loud talker on the phone. The strangers next to you don't want to hear your conversation. If you need to take or make a call, find a space where you can talk without bothering others. Especially if you are video chatting, the person on your screen may not be aware how many people can hear their voice. Out of courtesy to others, turn down the volume and step to more private location to chat.



# LESSON FIVE

## Don't Do Dumb Stuff

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### Don't Be an Over-texter

Sometimes group threads are clearly a time where friends are chatting for fun. But often group threads convey information to a group and don't require a response, nor a discussion. If you're on a group thread, the 17 other people on the thread don't want their phone blowing up with a conversation between you and one other person. Similarly, if it's not a group thread, and the person you've texted doesn't answer. Don't send them 84 texts asking them where they are. Chillax. Be patient. Don't be an annoyance.

### Get Consent

Do not share photos or videos of other people without their consent. This is especially important if the person doesn't know you took the photo or video or if it is unflattering in any way. This is a great time to employ The Golden Rule. Ask yourself, would I want someone to share this photo or video if it was me? Be a good friend and always ask first.

Can you think of a time when someone was not using good phone etiquette? Which of the situations listed above will be hardest for you?



### Insight #3: Digital Pacifiers

Babies are simple-minded. When they're hungry, they cry. When they're tired, they cry. When they want something, they cry. That's why the inventor of the pacifier should be considered a national hero. Pacifiers have the ability to soothe and comfort a disgruntled infant. As a child grows, however, there comes a time for them to learn how to cope with discomfort and give up the pacifier. It'd be pretty strange to see a 24 year old walking around with a pacifier in her mouth. Part of maturity is learning how to cope with discomfort.

A lot of adults treat their phone like a pacifier. Anytime they are bored, they look at their phone. Anytime they don't feel like engaging with others: phone time. Irritable and cranky? Scroll on the phone. Thirty seconds at a stoplight? Pass the time on the phone. The phone has become an adult pacifier. Adults turn to it for a sense of soothing and comfort in almost any spare moment.

### Enjoy Your Surroundings

The world God made is full of glorious intricacies in creation. If your eyes are glued to a four inch screen all the time, you're going to miss out. Down time walking, waiting in line, or sitting in an airport gives you time to observe what God has made. Enjoy it. He made this world to be enjoyed. You don't need to capture every moment on video, either. Watch fireworks, enjoy a game, marvel at a sunset. A video won't do the moment justice anyway.

### Be the Difference

If you're at a lunch table, riding in a vehicle, or hanging out with friends where everyone is on their phone, you can be the difference. Don't be the "phone police", but you can put your phone away, and you can start a conversation in real life. You'll enjoy the time a lot more if you put down the digital pacifier, and you actually talk to each other.

Name some things you'll miss out on in life, if you reach for your phone almost every time you have a spare moment?



### Insight #4: Your Parents Are On Your Team

Former Indiana Hoosiers coach Bobby Knight was one of the most infamous basketball coaches of all time. Knight regularly screamed at his players as he stomped up and down the sidelines during games. In once instance, he got so fed up with the referees that he threw a chair across the court (before being promptly ejected from the game). Sometimes coaches are just plain mean.

But not all yelling is mean. Coaches coach, and sometimes they need to shout, "Play defense!" so they can be heard through a roaring gymnasium. When their players are lollygagging at practice, sometimes the best thing they can do is blow their whistle and shout, "Time to run sprints!" Why do good coaches sometimes make their players lives difficult? Because they care about their players' success. Parents are just like good coaches. When they are hard on their children, it's because they care about their success.

Parents, this doesn't mean that you can yell at your kids. It does mean that you can and should coach them. And kids, this means that your parent is on your team. Their involvement in your phone usage is aimed at your success.

### Be Transparent

Since God can see your phone anytime, and He is the one that we are ultimately seeking to please, the goal is that anyone, anytime can look through your phone and you're not ashamed of what they'd find. Your parents will have the right to look through your phone at anytime, and this is good. It's not that your parents want to be super nosy, rather, it's that they are responsible for coaching you in godliness and integrity. Don't be surprised when your parent looks at your phone. It's a gift to have parents who do that and eventually they'll trust you enough that such oversight will become less frequent.

### Own Your Mistakes

It is not a matter of "if" but "when" you make a mistake with your phone. You are learning and you are interacting with a bunch of other kids who are also learning. Mistakes will happen. Hiding those mistakes from your parents will only make you feel more shame and only make your parents lose trust in you. When you sin, confess quickly. When you make a mistake, your parents will give you consequences. You'll probably lose phone privileges for awhile, but remember those consequences are training you to be a mature, responsible, godly adult. Remember: a phone is like dynamite in your hands. Consequences hurt in the short-term, but they are protecting you from an explosion with devastating life consequences later.



# LESSON FIVE

## Don't Do Dumb Stuff

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### Talk to Your Parents about 'House Rules'

You'll want to set some basic expectations—some 'house rules'—for phone usage so that you're not having arguments everyday about your phone. Agree to a phone "curfew". Come up with an agreed time that your phone gets docked every night. This will allow you to unplug, be present with your family, and get the quality sleep you need to grow and develop. Consider if there are certain times, spaces, or places where you should not be on your phone. Discuss whether or not you'll be responsible for paying for a phone, for damages, and/or the monthly payment.

Spend some time together discussing and listing some 'House Rules' for your phone (such rules may apply outside of the house too).



# DO AS I DO (AND AS I SAY)

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A F I N A L W O R D  
T O P A R E N T S



# W O R D T O P A R E N T S

Do As I Do (and As I Say)

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It's easy for us parents to pick on "kids these days" who are glued to their phones, walking around like glassy-eyed zombies with faces aglow from the screen in their palm. But let's be honest: Most parents are no different.

If we want to see our kids not conform to the pattern of this world and maturely use their phones as a helpful tool in a God-honoring life, then we need to set the example for them. It's often said that much of what we learn is "caught, not taught." That is, the rhythms and patterns of our lives will shape our children much more than the mini-sermons we give (or even the workbook we did with them before they got their first phone).

There are numerous instances in Scripture of the truth that our actions are meant to teach others. Jesus taught that "a student will be like his teacher" (Lk. 6:40). In 1 Corinthians Paul sent Timothy to remind the church of "his ways in Christ" (1 Cor. 4:17) and later says, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Likewise, the author of Hebrews points not merely to the teaching of the church's leaders, but also to their lifestyle as a source of instruction when he writes, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7). The point is clear: Our lives teach.

You may have thought you were doing this workbook for your child, but we hope that this is a transformational moment for you as well. Now is the time to consider what your life is teaching to your child, especially in the way in which you use your phone. This is not to say that you should have the same standard as your child. You are the authority in the home and you have many more responsibilities, some of which will require use of your phone. Nevertheless, we urge you to take the example you're setting for your child seriously. Your example will be the most powerful teacher—for better or worse—your child receives in how to use a phone.