



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## Put Down the Phone

by Jonathan Banning

Early one Sunday morning a few weeks back, Lexi, our beloved German Shepherd, shattered my phone. No, she didn't chew on it. She simply knocked it over in a fit of excitement, leaving me holding a shattered mess. This was not your run-of-the-mill single crack in the screen. No sir, we're talking about an innumerable quantity of cracks and breaks, dislodged jagged pieces of phone screen falling out daily, and gaping holes. In terms of broken iPhones, this was the Hindenburg.

To be sure, it was a hassle trying to accomplish anything on a phone in that condition. The holes in the glass made it nearly impossible to go back a page on the internet and the cracks made reading emails a painstaking process, but the circumstance wasn't a total loss. It got me thinking about just how strong of a grip my phone had on me. When your screen is pristine and the interface smooth, you hardly realize how often you pull out your phone to browse, play or check the inbox. When the screen is cracked and the process is difficult, you notice every time you pull it out. And I noticed that I used it a lot. In First Corinthians 6:12, Paul warns Christians about being "mastered." Sometimes created things, which are intended to make our lives better, end up taking over our lives.

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything."

Paul's point is this, under the Law of Christ no food is denied. We are free to eat anything. Still, if a man is mastered by his appetite he transgresses, even if every piece of food he eats is clean. Maybe Christians should consider Paul's point here as it relates to our devices. Everything you do on your phone may be "clean," but even clean things can master us. Do your devices dominate your life?

I'd rather not try to lay down hard and fast rules about our electronic escapades. Instead I'd like to just provide you with a few thoughts I've had about our devices. Will you allow it?

I wonder if our tools have become our distractions. We get defensive whenever someone begins to ask questions about our use of electronics. I know because I get defensive, too. We defend ourselves by saying, "It is a tool, it is something we need!" and "We need it for safety, for work, and don't forget that it is so useful in evangelism!"

True enough. No one can honestly deny the effective applications of our devices, but the question isn't whether or not it is a tool. The question is whether or not I'm allowing my tool to become my distraction, whether I'm allowing my phone to do more harm than good. For some of us, myself included, the phone, TV, iPad has crossed the line. **No longer is it something we use, it is something we do.** It may aid us, but we also allow it to distract us from accomplishing good things. It is laziness dressed up as activity, the sluggard's 21<sup>st</sup> century disguise. Go to the ant, brothers and sisters, observe and ask, "How would he use his phone?" (Proverbs 6:6-11).

I wonder if our connection has led to family disconnection. Both parents and grandparents bemoan the phone. They can't get their young ones to talk, "They're too busy on their phones." Kids complain, too. They want the attention of their parents but can't get it, because dad is watching the game or mom is checking Facebook or Pinterest. We live in a time where we wear out our couches faster than our dining room tables.

Is it possible that my addiction to entertainment has prevented me from giving my family the time, love and instruction they require? Fathers, let's set the example. Turn off the devices and focus on our homes (Ephesians 6:4).

I wonder if our devices are robbing God. "Food is for the body" just as phones are for the human, but both can usurp the throne of God in our hearts. Sometimes God takes a backseat to electricity.

Do you pray more than you check your texts? Do you think about your phone while you are worshiping God? Have you ever used your phone during worship? Would you even consider just leaving the phone at home or in the car when you came to worship? I wonder, have you checked your phone since you started reading this article? How is it that I don't have time to study, but I have time to check Facebook at least 13 times? We go through the day without thinking on things above, because our eyes are set on the blue glow from a screen.

Maybe my device has more power over me than it should. Maybe it's getting in the way. Will you please take a second, put down the phone and consider the words of Paul? It may help.

## Parenting

Our children are one of God's greatest blessings while we walk this earth. "Children's children *are* the crown of old men, And the glory of children *is* their father." (*Proverbs 17:6*)

"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So *are* the children of one's youth. Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate." (*Psalms 127:4-5*)

*Along with this blessing from God comes responsibility. Although it is important for congregations to have good classes to teach the word of God in a congregation, let us not forget that it is the parents responsibility to train up their children".*

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (*Ephesians. 6:4*)

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

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart You shall teach them **diligently** to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (*Deuteronomy 6:7*)

Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren," (*Deuteronomy 4:9*) Jesus warned against offending a child, in **Matthew 18:6**. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

This most definitely includes parents! We have to remember that we have the greatest influence over our children because they see what we do and hear what we say each and every day. If we neglect the word of God, they will learn to neglect the word of God. If they see us neglecting the services, they will learn to neglect the services. If they see us being unkind, uncaring, and selfish they will learn how to imitate these sinful actions. To cause them to stumble is to suffer the severe consequences at the hand of God.

Parents should not approach the task of training their children lightly. We need to study with them, teach them how to study, help them with their lessons, answer their questions, and teach them the commandments of God and the best way to do this is to learn it and live it. We should set the best example possible for our children, we know they are watching.

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