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Alright, well I want to say hello to everyone across all of our campuses today—if you’re joining us from West, Downtown, North, anybody online, those of you in our p.m. services, and those of you here at Northwest. And, for the very first time in the history of our church, can we give it up for our Midtown campus? Today is their grant opening.

We want you to feel the love through the screen. It is so good to have you join us. Welcome to the family. I’ve been getting text updates, videos, and pictures of the morning services over there. I cannot wait to hear all God is going to do in and through that campus.

We are in week number two of this three-week series of message we are calling *Screen Time*. And if you missed it last week, what we’re doing is we are pausing at the beginning of a brand-new year and talking about technology and screens. I know that may be a little bit unusual to talk about in church. We may think, “What does the Bible really have to say about this modern phenomenon anyway?”

I want to be really clear that we’re not glamorizing screens, nor are we demonizing them. This isn’t a three-week Ted Talk on technology, and it’s not a three-week guilt trip designed to make you feel bad or cause an argument on the way home. That’s not the intent of this.

I’ve got a smart phone. I’m on a screen every day. Truth be known, I wrote this message on a screen. I’m preaching this message from a screen. We are somewhat dependent upon them today.

I think all of us would say that technology and screens, in and of themselves, are not a bad thing. It’s sort of a neutral thing. They could be used for good. They could be used for bad. They’re sort of a tool. And like any tool you would find in your toolbox at home, you always want to make sure you pick the right tool for the job. That tool, when it’s used the appropriate way, can be a tremendous help.

I don’t want to drive a nail with my fist. I want to use a hammer. That tool will help me. I’ll be more productive and save some time. I think the same thing could be said of our screens. When we use them in good ways, it can be productive. It can help connect us with others. We have all this knowledge and information at our finger tips. It can be a really, really good thing.

But when we misuse it, it can cause some harm and be somewhat damaging. I am notorious around our house for mis-using tools. I don’t know if any of you can relate to me. I get impatient is what it really comes down to. I don’t want to take the time to figure out how to use the tool the right way.

It is not uncommon for my wife to walk into a room in our house. She’ll say this, “What are you doing?”

“Well, I’m fixing this.”

And she’s like, “Okay, I appreciate the effort but that’s a hammer and you’re working on the television.” Those two things don’t go together. Or, “Why are you trying to repair the thermostat with Crazy Glue?” Those two things should never come into contact with each other.

It’s come to the point where anytime something breaks in our house I’ll be like, “I’ll take a look at it,” and I can see it all over my wife’s face. She would rather me not. And she’ll be like, “Yeah, I’ll just have one of the kids look at it. You just go in the other room and color.”

And so, when it comes to our screens, they can be an incredibly powerful tool. And, when it comes to the technological tool, I think all of us would agree that a lot has changed in how we use them and a lot has changed quickly. I know this is going to sound crazy, but there was a time really not that long ago, when we primarily used our cellphones for—are you ready for this? Making phone calls.

I know. It sounds crazy, but that’s primarily what we used them for. Now that’s the thing I use them for the least. It’s gotten to the point now that when my phone rings it’s annoying. I look at it and see whose calling and I’m like, “Why aren’t you texting me?”

Speaking of text messaging, I can remember when text messaging first came out. Do any of you remember this? I was like, “That will never catch on.” Who wants to spend all their time trying to find the little letters and punch it out with your grubby little fingers? It’s just going to be a big, big waste of time. Little did I know. I stand corrected. It’s become the primary way most of us communicate with others.

I can remember sitting down and watching Steve Jobs introduce the iPhone to the world in 2006 or 2007, it was somewhere around that timeframe. I was blown away. I was like, “Are you kidding me?” Like, on that one little device we can download music, we can surf the web, we can check email, we can play Angry Birds. We can do all this stuff on this powerful little device.

These screens are an incredibly powerful tool. They were, and they are just continuing to increase in their power. Many of us are beginning to discover that they can be potentially mis-used. And I think many of are beginning to ask, beginning to wonder, maybe we’ve never even articulated it, but we’ve felt it, like, “Is this really the way I want to use this?”

It’s begun to feel like, instead of being a tool we use, that we’re being used by the tool. They are taking up hours, days, and minutes of our days. They are constantly grabbing at our attention and disrupting us from concentrated thought and they are distracting us from meaningful interactions.

The average person today receives 45 notifications on their smart phone ever day, not counting text messages, DMs, and news links. Our phones are constantly pinging and dinging and crying out to us, “Look at this!” and “Check that out.” and “Scroll over here.” And it’s

leaving us feeling more overwhelmed, because we don't know how to process it all, and more disconnected and emptier than ever before.

So, what we're doing in this series is we are just simply posing the question:

What are screens doing to us **emotionally, relationally, and spiritually?**

Now, I don't think the answer is to get rid of them. I don't think we should say, "Well, we just need to go to something else." Maybe technology will slow down. I don't think technology is going to slow down. I think it's just going to continue to advance at a faster and faster pace. I think programmers in Silicon Valley are going to continue to come up with smarter and more effective ways to grab our attention, because their livelihood depends upon it. The next social media fad is just around the corner.

I don't say all that to overwhelm you or to cause you to panic. In fact, I had somebody this last week come up to me and they were like, "I heard everything you said. What are we supposed to do? I feel like I'm drowning. If I put my phone away I feel like I miss out on something and I need it for work, and what about being connected to this person over here?" And so, we just sort of feel like we are running against the flow of culture. We don't really know what to do.

I say all that not to overwhelm you or to cause you to panic. I just say all that to say, "We just need to be a bit more proactive than what we've been up to this point." Instead of being reactive, we should be proactive. We should begin to give some thought to this. And we should begin to say, "No, we're going to establish some boundaries and give some intentional effort toward how we interact with screens. We're going to have a say over how much influence they have in our personal lives and in our homes."

What this means is that we're going to have to have an intentional conversation with our kids about their screen time. And just what it means to them as they grow into young adults. This is the first generation that is going to grow up with a screen in front of their faces. What is it going to do to them into adulthood?

What this means is husbands and wives are going to have to have a thoughtful conversation, and not be defensive, not attack each other, but to have a thoughtful conversation. It means, kids, you're going to have to ask mom and dad to have a thoughtful conversation with you about the use of screens. Because they're not going to want to have it. Truth be known, they are just as addicted and dependent on a screen as you are. And it hits a little close to home. And it causes us to feel a little bit defensive.

In fact, I was just telling the worship team back in the green room. I said, "The last time I felt this way preaching a message series was when I did a series on personal health." And everybody looked at me the way you're looking at me right now. Like, "Preacher, stop meddling. Stop getting involved in my personal life. This is church." And so, even the silence right now is cracking me up. You're like, "Yeah, could you stop?"

So, what we've been doing is looking at this passage in Romans 12. This is our anchor passage. We've been looking at it every week: Romans 12:1-2. So, if you have a Bible or a screen with a Bible on it— it's okay, there is no judgement, no hidden cameras catching you turning there, Paul is writing a group of people living in Rome.

They're still people. They are just like you and me. They have struggles in life. The issues are a bit different, but the heart is the same. Paul writes to them and says: I want you to pay attention to the way you are living your life. I want you to be intentional about your daily life, the way that you're spending your days, hours, and minutes. And so, he gives them this encouragement. And that's what it's meant to be.

This is starting in verse 1, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's **mercy**, to offer your bodies as a **living** sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper **worship**. Do not **conform** to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**." That's where it begins. "Then you will be able to **test** and **approve** what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Paul is saying: Listen, the motivation for you and me to examine anything in our lives should never be fear, guilt, or shame. Now conviction is a different thing. But he is saying: Listen, the motivation here isn't to make you feel bad about yourself.

We've got to start with God's mercy, "...in view of God's mercy," in view of his love for you, in view of the fact that God is in your corner cheering you on, in view of the fact that God wants your days, hours, and minutes to be utilized the best they can be, in view of the fact that God wants you to be the best version of you.

God created you to be the best version of you. He sent his Son Jesus to die on a cross to be the best version of you. In view of that, examine the way you are spending your time, energy, and thoughts.

That's why like sin is such a big deal to God. And we get uncomfortable talking about sin. Who's to say? What list is it? If it's a sin for you, is it a sin for me? We need to understand that God is not mad at you for sinning. He's not like surprised by it. God's mad at what sinning does to you and to the people you love. And I'm willing to bet you're probably not happy about it either.

Regardless of what you believe right now, regardless of where you stand with God, regardless of where you are in your spiritual journey, because we've got people all over the map, if you were to do an honest evaluation of your life, you would have to admit there have been some times where your anger got the best of you and caused damage to a relationship. And you're not happy about it, that there have been times when your inability to say no really set you back in your career. There have been times when you've indulged in something you knew you shouldn't have, and it actually cost you in some way and you're not happy about it.

Sin is taking anything that in and of itself is a good thing, sort of like technology—sin is taking a good thing like food, or drink, or entertainment, or a hobby, or sexual intimacy, and by the way

God created all those things, they are his idea, and we take those things and instead of using them the way God intended, we make it ultimate in our life.

What does that mean? Well, it's what you run to when you're stressed, anxious, and depressed. It's what you end up coping with most often. And you start to rely on it a little too much. And you make it maybe part of your identity. You get to the point where you think you would be less of a person if you couldn't utilize it in some way.

And you start to think you can't live without it. And anytime somebody brings it up, it's a little touchy and you get defensive about it. Could I say it this way? Sin is always taking a good thing and turning it into a God thing. And after a while we discover that it can never do for us what God can. And it, or they, promised us everything but left us feeling emptier than ever.

So, Paul says: Here's how you keep things in perspective. You worship. And I love that definition of worship. I don't know how new you are to all this, but worship, it's certainly singing songs but it's way more than that. It's gaining perspective on life. That's how I like to think of it. We gather here every seven days. The service doesn't alter that much. We talk about different content. We're looking at a different passage. But we're singing some of the same songs, maybe 15, 20 songs, I don't know how many we sing in a rotation.

But what are we doing? We're coming in here together and hopefully gaining perspective from the week we just came out of. I don't know about you, but there were probably some challenges to your week, just like there were in mine. I need a little hope. I need a little perspective. I'm getting perspective for the week I'm heading into.

Paul says: Listen, you can do that every single day. You don't need to just wait for a song to be sung in order to do that. You can take your everyday, ordinary, getting up, working out, getting coffee, running the kids to school, going to the meeting, checking your email, texting, scrolling, swiping kind of a day, you can make all those things an act of worship.

It's actually a living act of worship. Once again, you might be like, "What does that mean?" It means, for starters, "I'm not going to make a good thing a God thing. I'm not going to automatically run to my screen to give me validation, instruction, or direction. I'm not opposed to using a screen. God's not opposed to me using a screen."

But God, "I'm going to declare to you and maybe a few others that I want to turn to you first and foremost. Therefore, you have jurisdiction over my screen. I don't want to become too reliant upon it, I want to rely on you. I don't want to be conformed to what I'm consuming on a screen, but I want to be transformed by the renewing of my mind."

I think that for many of us, and I know this is true for me and maybe this is a good time for you to take a breath. Maybe this is hitting a little too close to home. I think maybe it's time to recognize that we didn't set out to get caught up in our screens. We didn't mean for that to happen. It just sort of happened. I think that's part of the issue.

The speed at which this has come at us as a culture, the speed at which technology and screens have advanced, has largely left us unprepared for how to manage it. We just sort of reacted to it. We sort of received it. We're starting to get caught up and going, "Now wait a second, I don't know if I like what this is doing to me."

Programmers have admitted the way they continue to stay in business is to keep your eyeballs on the screen. That becomes increasingly difficult to do in this world where there is so much competition for your eyeballs. So, they go lower on the brain stem. They say, "If we can get you outraged and emotional, we can keep your attention."

What it's doing to us isn't healthy. We didn't mean for it to happen. Maybe you've got a cellphone for work, but now work is always following you home. There is a blurred line between work and home, and you don't know how to establish those boundaries.

Maybe you got a phone for your teenagers because you wanted them to be safe, you wanted to be able to contact them wherever they were. Now it's sort of turned into this thing you didn't mean for it to turn into because they're in their rooms all the time with their doors closed and they are texting their friends in that strange emoji language you'll never decipher. And at times you're like, "I don't understand where they are going online. What are they doing? Who are they talking to?" You feel overwhelmed and don't know where to begin.

You got on Facebook, opened up a Facebook account 10 or 15 years ago. It seemed like a really good idea at the time. It was a really cool space to go and connect with old friends, classmates, and stay connected with relatives around the world and post pictures. Now, increasingly, you just get sucked into toxic comments and fake news. You're just like, "I don't like how I feel about myself when I get off that."

We post a picture to share, only to be disappointed when it doesn't get many likes. So, we take it down. We post a video to TikTok and hope it will trend, but then it doesn't. So, we wonder if anybody really likes us. We gave out our number to someone as a courtesy and they text us all hours of the day.

We come home from work and are looking to decompress. We're just looking to alleviate a little stress. We pop on Netflix to look at an episode and before we know it we have binged watched an entire season of *Gray's Anatomy* or *West Wing*. And we're like, "What am I doing? What am I doing with all my time?"

And we're discovering that all of this instant access to information isn't necessarily producing the fulfilling life of wisdom we were hoping for. In a sermon that Doctor Martin Luther King preached in 1965, he made a statement, and he could have very easily been talking about the present day when he said these words:

"We have allowed our **technology** to outdistance our **theology** and for this reason we find ourselves caught up with many problems."



Theology is just our thoughts about God. I think that's really at the core of the issue. When we allow our screens to constantly disrupt or distract our thoughts, what it does is they disconnect us from God, they disconnect us from the people we love, and they disconnect us even from ourselves.

And these screens that have promised us so much are letting us down. Have you ever been let down by your screen? Have you ever been disappointed by your screen? Have you ever been embarrassed by your screen?

I was talking to a pastor friend of mine not long ago. He was telling me that he and his wife were out, and they were shopping or something. A guy comes up to them and he said, "I just started recently going to your church," and he begins to get very, very emotional.

And he talks about how God got ahold of him and turned his life around, and how he had been going through a messy divorce that was super-painful and now God has become real. He was expressing his gratitude for the ministry of their church. Right then his phone rang, and this was his ringtone, *I'm Sexy and I Know It*.

That's like worst-case scenario, isn't it? My life has changed, God is so real. He was like fumbling around with his phone. He's like, "My kids have changed my ringtone." Right then it goes off again. He is mortified, his face is beet red. Don't you just feel for the guy. You just want to look at him like, "Bro, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle." I'm really surprised you guys knew that. That's a shocker.

Have you ever been let down by your screen? You're texting your boss and autocorrect changes what you're saying? You send it without editing it or look at it, and it's really embarrassing.

Or you're late for an appointment and GPS leads you down a dead-end road, and you don't know how to get back. Your battery light is about dead. You look at it and it's about 20 percent. You're like, "It should be good," but then you look at it a minute later and it's down to zero. It just dropped all the way down. And when it dies, part of you dies with it.

Like, this last week, and I can't even make this stuff up, I got into an argument with Siri. I didn't mean for it to happen. I was picking my girls up from school and I said, "Hey Siri, text Shawn." She's like, "Okay, what do you want it to say?" I was like, "Text him that I'll give him a call later." She's like, "Okay, I'm testing Shawn, 'I'll give you a ball later.'"

"That doesn't even make sense, Siri."

"Do you want me to send it?"

"No."

I say it again and she keeps dictating it wrong every single time. This is not that like uncommon of a sentence, Siri. I get to the point literally where I'm yelling at her. And my girls look at each

other like, “Dad has lost his mind. He is in need of therapy.” That’s actually very, very true. I am.

Our phones often let us down. And we’re so dependent upon them. According to research from Morgan Stanley, they say that 91 percent of smart phone users have their phones within arms reach at all times. I thought about having all of you just hold up your phones right now, but I don’t want to do that to you. And 68 percent of us won’t go anywhere without it.

The New York Times posted an article not that long ago. I thought the title was kind of interesting, “The Rise of the Toilet Texter”. Surveys have found that 75 percent of us have used our smart phones on the toilet. Oh, stop it, you know you’ve done it. I can’t believe three-fourths of the room would do such a disgusting thing.

It gets weirder. About 25 percent of us refuse to go to the bathroom without them and 63 percent of us have answered calls, 41 percent of us have made calls, 16 percent of us have ordered items online (I think that’s much higher) and 20 percent have joined a conference call. All while sitting atop the porcelain throne.

So, one of the cultural issues for the Christ followers living in Rome at the time Paul writes this letter to them was idolatry. I don’t know what comes to your mind when you hear that word. Chances are maybe you think about little golden statues people sort of carried around and bowed down to.

It’s very easy to dismiss idolatry as a thing we deal with today in our modern era. We don’t think it’s a modern problem anymore. But I like Henry Blackaby’s definition of idolatry. He said an idol is this:

“Anything you turn to for help, when God invited you to turn to Him for help.”

So, anything can be an idol. Actually, any good thing can become an idol. So these believers living in Rome, they had all these various physical temples they could go into to turn to for help, to find some comfort, to get some instruction and direction in their lives rather than looking to God for those things. They would visit all these pagan temples to get a fix of some kind.

Listen to how Paul describes the scene in Romans 1. I really like how the Message paraphrases it. “What happened was this: People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn’t treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they **trivialized themselves** into **silliness** and **confusion** so that there was neither **sense** nor **direction** left in their lives. They pretended to know it all, but were illiterate regarding life. They traded the glory of God who holds the whole world in his hands for cheap figurines you can buy at any roadside stand.”

Does that sound eerily familiar? Today we no longer necessarily have these physical temples we go into to get a fix. We don’t have to. We carry these temples around in our pockets. And we can go anywhere we want online anytime of the day in relative anonymity to find the help or the comfort, the instruction or direction we are looking for.



So, when we're feeling restless, we might visit the temple of amazon.com to purchase something we really don't need. It can wait, but we need a hit of dopamine. So, we hit order. And we're looking for some inspiration so we visit the temple of Pinterest. We're stressed so we visit the temple of a porn site. When we're bored or lonely we visit the temples of Instagram or Tick Tock. And we say, "I'm not literally bowing down to these things."

I'm just wondering what it might look like to God when he sees all of us, his people, just walking around with our screens in this posture. It sort of looks like worship. It sort of looks like we're bowing down to these online temples.

I'm just wondering if God is saying, "Those things aren't bad, they can be good." And we're going to talk more about this next week. How can we use our screens in more productive ways? How can we redeem them, so to speak?

But I'm just wondering if God is asking us: Hey listen, would you begin to allow your screen to diminish the glow from your face so I can say some things and do some things in your life? For many of us, instead of putting our screens on the altar, we've turned them into an altar. Instead of leaning into God who created the world with his hands, we've traded him for a device we hold in our hands.

And we emerge from these online temples feeling emptier, lonelier, more anxious, more depressed than ever. Why? Because they're a false god. And we didn't mean for it to be, but it has become that because they're what we've turned to for help when God has asked us to turn to him for help. And they promise so much, but they always let us down.

In a recent survey, there were some teenagers who were asked about social media. Teens who visit social media every single day are more likely to agree with these three statements:

"I often feel lonely"  
"I feel left out"  
"I wish I had more good friends"

Does that seem ironic to anyone? That social media, the place we go online to be social, leaves us feeling lonelier, left out, and disconnected.

So, what I'd like to do in the remainder of our time is this. I don't want to just leave you there. I want to try to give you some hope and some help. I just want to ask a series of questions designed to just help you, your family, or your life group just kind of think through your screen usage. I want to begin with this question right here.

How do I know if I've become **too dependent** upon my screen?

I think that for many of us, we probably know, whether we want to admit it or not. For others of us, maybe we don't know. So, how do you know? I think the first step is toward making sure

this doesn't become a problem. If its not for you right now, that's great. So how do you keep it from becoming a problem?

If it is a problem, the first step toward getting healthier is to not be defensive, to not be too touchy about it. But to just be open to it and say, "I just need to acknowledge that maybe there is something here. This has digressed into something I never intended."

So, let me just give you a series of questions for you to think through. Here is the first one, and I referenced this last week.

Is it the last thing I look at before going to bed and the first thing I see when I wake?

I'm not saying this is a bad thing. I'm saying is this the healthiest thing? Because the blue light in the screen is disrupting your sleep, which then has all sorts of other effects. If you're a light sleeper and the thing is pinging, dinging, and vibrating all night long it's going to wake you up all night. Or if you can't sleep and you roll over and grab it and start to scroll.

Maybe it's the first thing you go to when you wake up. I had a friend tell me this last week—she just said, "You know, I realize I don't want my phone on my bed stand anymore, but I use it as an alarm clock. So, I went out and bought an old-fashioned alarm, and I'm putting my phone downstairs."

I know by giving that example, some of you are like, "Whoa pastor, that's going nuclear right there." I don't know. That's just for you to decide. Here's another question:

When I get bored, do I instinctively reach for my phone?

You don't even remember thinking, "I'm going to reach for my phone," you just do. Here's another question:

Do I interrupt the conversation I'm in with a real-live person to check my screen when there's a text, call, or notification?

All of us have probably been on both the giving and the receiving ends of that one. And it sends a message, doesn't it? Whether we mean for it to or not, most of us when we reach for our screens when there is somebody right across from us, we don't mean to say, "I don't care about what you are saying?" We think, "Is there an emergency? Is there something I need to look at?" But it sends a message.

I'm hearing more and more restaurants starting to develop these pouches on the backs of chairs where you can just put the screen in the pouch. So, that way you can have an uninterrupted conversation over dinner. Here's another question:

Where do I turn for comfort when I'm hurting?

You see, where you run to comfort first says a lot about what you're putting your trust in, and your hope in. I don't know. Maybe you had a long day at work. Maybe you get into a fight with your spouse. So, you just decide to go into the temple of ESPN+ or amazon.com. You get a little dopamine rush. You feel better for a little while, but it doesn't last. Here's another question:

Where do I go for direction when I'm confused?

Oftentimes we'll go online first. We'll post something asking for other peoples' advice or counsel. There is nothing wrong with that unless we spend all of our time reading what other people have to say about our situation, rather than trying to discern what God is saying to us from his Word. So, increasingly we're looking to our screens for direction.

In the last two years there has been a 60 percent increase in google searches that begin with, "Best \_\_\_\_\_ for me." So, people are getting online, on google and they are going, "What is the best car for me, the best hairstyle for me, the best pet for me, the best career for me, the best vacation for me, the best exercise plan for me, best diet, best option, best match for me, best color for me?"

Do you see what's happening there? We're not just going to google to access information, but to get direction. There has been an 80 percent increase in google searches that start with should I. Should I switch jobs? Should I retire? Should I refinance? Should I sell my house? Should I get a flu shot? Should I get therapy? Should I make the first move? Should I stop talking to him? Should I stay married? Should I sign up for the dating app? Should I go vegan? Should I go paleo? Go keto? Should I stop vaping? Should I get that rash looked at? Yes.

Should I change doctors? Should I post another selfie? All these questions. What should I do with my life? What direction should I go? And maybe, instead of saying, "Hey Siri," we need to say, "Hey God," more often.

You see, when you're conformed, it leads to this trivialization and this silliness, Paul says. But when you're transformed, here's what you get—I want to read our passage from the Message paraphrase. He said this:

"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it **without even thinking.**" That's what we're doing here, trying to evaluate how much screen time we have. "Instead, **fix your attention on God.**" And here's what you'll get. "You'll be **changed** from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly **respond** to it. Unlike the culture around you, always **dragging you down** to its level of immaturity, **God brings the best out of you**, develops well-formed maturity in you."

I love that way of thinking about wisdom. That's what wisdom is. It's well informed maturity. A couple more questions:

Where do I turn for fulfillment when I feel empty?

So, we run to these apps or these social media sites like Instagram, online shopping, whatever it is. We're just thirsty. We're looking to get fulfilled.

This kind of reminds me of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his rhyme on the ancient mariner. He said there was a sailor adrift at sea. He just said, as he looked around, "There is water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink."

We look at this online sea we're in. There is water, water everywhere and we indulge in it. It tastes initially wet, initially good, but it's salt water and leaves us thirstier than ever. Last question:

Where do I turn for validation when I feel insecure?

So, maybe we just take a selfie and filter it, edit it, crop it, and post it. Then we run back 10 minutes later to be validated by the number of likes or comments in an effort to deal with some of the insecurities we have. And God wants to be that for you. God wants to say some things to you. God wants to speak into your identity.

Psalm 37 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and you know what? He'll give you the desires of your heart." And if you delight yourself in your screen it will never be enough.

So, what are some practical ways we can power down? I just want to go through these really quickly. There are seven of them. I don't think you need to try to employ all seven. I don't want you to be overwhelmed to the point where you can't stick with this. But maybe pick one or two of these and say, "We're going to do it this week," or "We're going to do it before this series is up," to begin to set some boundaries.

What are some practical ways we can power down our screens?

1. Go on a "digital detox"
2. Remove your phone/screens from dinner table and bedrooms.
3. Make a "fully present box"
4. Turn off notifications
5. Use "do not disturb" more often.
6. Set time limits on apps.
7. Commit to decreasing "screen time" by a certain percentage.

Go on a "digital detox." You know, anytime somebody is addicted to a drug they go to rehab. They are detoxing. I think many of us, we don't call it addition, but that's what it is.

Maybe we need to go through a periodic digital detox. You establish the timeframe, maybe with you and some other people. You just say, "You know what? Maybe during a 24-hour period of time we're going to be detoxing from our digital devices," or "From six in the evening to six in the morning we're not going to have them on," or whatever that looks like for you. What is it? It's like a fast. You're just trying to re-center some things in your life instead of letting them dictate your time.

Maybe a practical way you can do that—number two—is to remove your phones/screens from dinner table and bedrooms. Those may be two really good places to remove them from. You say, “You know what? When we sit down for dinner we’re not going to have screens. In our bedrooms we’re not going to have screens. Those are two places where they are off limits.”

Maybe a way to help with this, and I have heard of some people doing this, is to make a fully present box. When you walk into the mudroom, or the kitchen, or whatever. Everybody takes their phones, powers them down, and sets them in the box for an agreed-upon period of time so we can be fully present with one another.

So, I want to have some fun with this. I’d love to have a fully present box competition across all campuses. I know we’ve got some really creative people out there. Come up with a fully present box, and just be super-creative with it. And then, let’s just use Instagram for this, post it. I realize that feels a little icky, a little hypocritical. But we’re redeeming it. Post it just on Instagram because Facebook is of the devil. You can tag me. You can tag our church so that way we can see them.

The winner of the fully present box across all campuses is going to get your life back. So, you’re welcome. Seriously, let’s have some fun with it. I’d love to see some of your creative ideas.

Number four, turn off notifications. I think that’s a little thing you can do right now. Anytime you sign up for an app it will always say, “Do you want to allow this app to notify you?” Always hit no. Just always hit no. Get into the habit of it. Go into your settings, into notifications, and just see how many apps are notifying you. Just hit off, off, off, off, off and it will actually calm your phone down significantly.

Use “do not disturb” more often. I think it’s a glorious thing. I started using it when I was preaching because I was tired of my phone buzzing while I was preaching. And I think you can still select people into your favorites. They can still get in touch with you if there is an emergency, but it just kind of quiets everything else out.

I’m reading a book right now by James Clear called *Atomic Habits*, and he was talking about how when he was writing the book he was spending too much time on social media, and it was distracting him from writing. So, he has his assistant, every Monday, change the passwords on all of his social media and it logs him out on every device.

So, he doesn’t even have the option of logging on Monday through Friday. So, it’s not a distraction as he works. On Friday afternoon she emails him the new passwords so he can have social media over the weekend.

I thought, “Well that’s a pretty good thing to do.” Maybe you don’t have an assistant, maybe you would give that to your spouse or your close friend or somebody you trust to help you with this.

Number six: Set time limits on apps. And then when it gives a five-minute warning and asks, “Do you want to ignore?” don’t hit ignore. Just stay with it.

The last one, number seven, how about this? Just commit to decreasing your screen time by a certain percentage. I’m not asking you to go cold turkey, but go to settings, go to screen time, and just look and see how much time you’re actually spending on that screen and where you are spending it. And ask yourself, “Is this how I want to live my life?”

You know, Tim Cook said that’s the reason they came up with screen time is because he realized he was spending too much time on his device, this is the CEO of Apple. And so, just go on screen time and say, “You know what? I’m spending x percentage of my week on screen time. As a personal challenge I’m going to decrease it by 10 percent, 20 percent,” or whatever it is for you for the sole effort of being able to hear from God more clearly, connect with others more meaningfully, and even to be able to reflect on who you are as a person.

Listen, God wants the best for you. This series is not based in shame. He simply wants to the best for you. He wants to speak to you. He’s got some things he wants to share with you, some ways he wants to guide you.

Maybe even today, you may just need to stop before you scoot out of here really fast. I want to encourage you to slow down. Shut the screen off right now, turn it over, and say, “This is an uninterrupted time where I can sit and reflect and hear from God. What’s the one thing God wants to say to me today?”

And maybe you’re here today, and you’ve never responded to Jesus. And today you simply want to trust him with your life, your screen time. You want him to be your Savior and your Lord because he wants the best for you.

Let’s go to him right now and invite God into our lives.

Father, we come to you right now. This is hard to talk about. I know this maybe hits a little too close to home for some of us. Some of us, we maybe feel ashamed or guilty. I just pray, God, that that would not be the dominant emotion here, but just a healthy conviction. Just an ability to say, “No, we want to speak into the way we spend our time and energy and what we’re looking at.”

So, God, I pray that you give us the courage to take action today, that we wouldn’t feel overwhelmed. I pray, God, that this wouldn’t cause an argument in the car on the way home, but maybe a healthy discussion, recognizing that we want to be for each other in this as well.

So, God, I pray that as we begin to employ some of these practical things to power down our devices, that your voice would become louder, more distinct, and clearer in our lives. As so, begin right now. Meet us in this space. We ask this in Jesus’ name: Amen.