

# DISCIPLESHIP IN A DIGITAL AGE: SHAPING OUR SPACES

Ben Deaver at Mosaic Church on January 15, 2023

Romans 12:2

**So what?** We're being shaped by forces much stronger than us. We need to be proactive in shaping our spaces so we can experience spiritual formation and human flourishing.

**Feel what?** Feel *empowered* to take incremental steps in a favorable direction.

**VISION CASTING** – We need to establish technology parameters personally, for our families, and corporately to give us a fighting chance to move towards human flourishing in our Digital Age.

## MINGLE QUESTIONS:

1. What celebrity do most people say you look like?
2. What emoji best describes how you are feeling right now?

## DISCIPLESHIP IN A DIGITAL AGE:

**Last week:** How We Are Being Shaped

**This week:** Shaping Our Spaces (for spiritual formation & human flourishing)

**BIG IDEA:** We need to establish technology parameters personally, for our families, and corporately to give us a fighting chance to move towards spiritual formation and human flourishing in our Digital Age.

## ***The Tech-Wise Family:***

*Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* by Andy Crouch

Rubric for evaluating our use of technology

Using technology properly requires intention and care, rather than passive consumption.

-pp. 20-21

Technology is in its proper place when it...	Technology is out of place when it...
...helps us bond with real people we have been given to love. —I was sitting at a conference about International Student Ministry at Azusa Pacific in Southern California in 2009 while chatting with my Saudi friend who was in Saudi Arabia. In that moment it hit me like a ton of bricks how powerful technology can be in discipleship.	... is used to bond with people at a distance, like celebrities, whom we will never meet.
...starts great conversations.	...prevents us from talking with and listening to one another.

...helps us take care of the fragile bodies we inhabit.	...promises to help us escape the limits and vulnerabilities of those bodies altogether.
...helps us acquire skill and mastery of domains that are the glory of human culture (sports, music, the arts, cooking, writing, accounting, etc.)	...replaces the development of skill with passive consumption.
...helps us cultivate awe for the created world we are a part of and responsible for stewarding.	...keeps us from engaging the wild and wonderful natural world with all our senses.

## Josh's questions from last week w/ a few removed and a few added

How is this shaping me?

- When do I first pick up a device in the day?
- When do I last put down a device for the day?
- How long can I go in a day without looking at a screen?
- How many consecutive hours in a week do I go without a screen?

How is this shaping us?

- What activities do I enjoy with friends and loved ones which don't involve a screen or device?
- What activities do I enjoy with friends and loved ones which *do* involve a screen or device?
- What activities do I do alone which involve a screen or device?

Questions for a next step:

- What are some sustainable rhythms I can implement in pursuit of digital equilibrium?
- What are some sustainable rhythms we can implement in pursuit of digital equilibrium?

## PRAY

I typed into the AI Writer, "Write a prayer asking for help in developing sustainable rhythms in pursuit of digital equilibrium." I had to watch an ad. And now, let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks for the amazing gifts of technology that you have given us. We thank you for the ways that it has connected us, and allowed us to grow and learn. We ask for your help in developing sustainable rhythms in pursuit of digital equilibrium. Help us to find balance in our lives, so that we can be productive and healthy in our use of technology.

Give us the wisdom to know when to turn off our devices and be present in the moment. Help us to focus on the important things and to be mindful of our time. Show us the ways to use technology to bring us closer to you and to each other.

We pray for your guidance and protection as we strive to find harmony in our digital lives. Amen.

**Romans 12:1-2** 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. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- 95% of the decisions we make don't have a clear *Biblical* answer. As Josh mentioned last week, Jesus didn't talk about technology. No mention of smartphones, smartwatches, pacemakers, cars, airplanes, etc. Does that mean that God wasn't thinking ahead when His Spirit inspired the Scriptures you hold in your hand or is on your phone? Not at all. He has given us all we need to mature and walk in good works.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- Let's dig a little deeper into verse two of Romans 12 together. Here it is in *The Message*, a paraphrase of the Bible by Eugene Peterson.
- **Romans 12:2 MSG** Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. 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.
  - Our culture will pull us towards immaturity. The algorithm on your Facebook and YouTube thingies will move you towards immaturity.
  - Instead, we need to intentionally fix our attention on God.
  - Our culture relishes INSTANT gratification and despised DELAYED gratification.

- In the New Year's Day teaching on High, Low, Buffalo and Word-of-the-Year shared about Maddox's basketball team that I recently coached. These guys were pretty good quickly and fairly easily. But then, the last game, the one I mentioned you could ask me how the season ended up. We got punched in the gut by the other team. Things didn't come so easily and the boys were frustrated and wanting to give up. But it was a good lesson for them. True success in life will take hard work and grit! That's not what our culture is into these days.
- We will gravitate to the path of least resistance and that's not usually a good or healthy thing.

## ***The Tech-Wise Family:***

*Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* by Andy Crouch

"Technology emerges from the amazing success of modern science, and the hard work of scientists, but it's not like science at all.

Science is hard. Technology is easy."

"All this happened, for all practical purposes, in about two generations. In the most fundamental ways, we are still like every other human generation that has ever lived. Like every generation before us, we are made for relationship with one another and with our Maker. Like every generation before us, we live in bodies that are both beautiful and burdensome. Thousands of years ago 'Moses, the man of God' wrote these words: 'The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away' (Ps. 90:10). Those words are as true for our time as they were for his."

"But in one central respect, we are living a life that even our grandparents never imagined and could not fully understand: a world in which the technological dream of easy everywhere has come true—is coming true—before our eyes. In our grandparents' era, travel by air was rare, exclusive, and slightly dangerous; now it is one of the safest things you can do with your day. And it seems likely that in a few years another form of transportation will make a similarly grand leap from tool-like to technology-like, from requiring skill to working all by itself, in the form of driverless cars (which really will be, finally, *automobiles*, things that go by themselves). In our grandchildren's era, travel by car—currently one of the most dangerous things you can do with your day—may become as safe and passive as air travel is for many of us today."

"We are in the midst of the greatest revolution in easy everywhere the world has ever known. And it may just be getting started.

All that would be fine—in its place, actually, it *is* fine.

It's just not the best thing for our families." -pp. 51-52

**Philippians 4:6-8** <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

# START Rules of Thumb

From Screen Sanity, [screensanity.org/our-approach-tools](https://screensanity.org/our-approach-tools)

S – Start with yourself—model healthy tech use for your kids

T – Tables + Bedtimes—create device-free zones

A – Accountability—apply filters + settings

R – Ride. Practice. Drive.—use a driver's ed approach to tech training

T – Time well spent—connect online + offline

Let's dig in....

**S – Start with yourself**—model healthy tech use for your kids

- The other evening after the K-State victory over Oklahoma State I got home and we ate together around the table as a family. The kids and Maris were playing Nerts so we were going to start that back up but Maris or I pulled up a hilarious Reel on Instagram and our whole family got swept away. The funny Reels kept flowing! That night as I was putting Kate to bed she expressed her disappointment that we didn't go back to playing games together but rather got stuck on screens. I initially defended myself because the whole family seemed to be having a good time. But then I thought about it later and realized that I have failed to establish technology parameters for our family to give us a fighting chance to connect with one another relationally.
- A healthy relationship to technology and digital media in my home will begin with me and Maris.



## **T – Tables + Bedtimes**—create device-free zone

- “We wake up before our devices do, and they ‘go to bed’ before we do.” -*Tech-Wise*
- Put your screens to sleep at least thirty minutes before you go to sleep.
- Let your screens sleep in at least thirty minutes later than you wake up.
- Our screens increasingly are personified because they function almost like another person in our lives. I remember when the marketing for my Samsung Galaxy S5 was that it was my *life companion*. And it increasingly felt that way. My watch literally tells me when to breathe and guesses when I’m going on a run. It sometimes prompts me to *Record Indoor Run* when I’m playing the keys here on a Sunday morning.
- Cars + Bathrooms
- “Car time is conversation time.” -*Tech-Wise*
- I was at the epic win over Oklahoma State last Tuesday, but shouldn’t have been. I was walking around City Park last Tuesday and Maris was really sharing with me when I noticed a text from someone offering me four free tickets to the K-State men’s basketball game vs. Oklahoma State. Competing values!

## **A – Accountability**—apply filters + settings

- “Streaming into our homes and onto our phones—accounting, by the most widely cited estimate, for 30 percent of all internet traffic—pornography provides and portrays a world where sex is easy.” -*Tech-Wise*, p.169
- “So the best defense against porn, for every member of our family, is a full life—the kind of life that technology cannot provide on its own.” -*Tech-Wise*, p. 172

- “Spouses have one another’s passwords, and parents have total access to children’s devices.” -*Tech-Wise*
- I started a Facebook conversation about this in our Mosaic Online Community Facebook Group but Maris and I haven’t personally rounded the corner on this yet. Let’s keep the conversation going about best practices and take steps in this area together, church family.

**R – Ride. Practice. Drive.**—use a driver’s ed approach to tech training

- Kate drove for the first time yesterday. It was so fun...and also stressful. We both had a clear sense of the danger involved with what we were doing. That sense of danger is not as clear when it comes to screens and digital media. But the danger is there.
- Andy Crouch has a whole chapter called *In Sickness & In Health*. It’s about the commitment to, “...show up in person for the big events of life. We learn how to be human by being fully present at our moments of greatest vulnerability. We hope to die in one another’s arms.” -*Tech-Wise*
- We need to strengthen our ability to be present with one another *in the midst of our digital age* so that we can fully experience the joys and sorrows of being embodied souls, made in the Image of God, and being increasingly conformed to the Image of Christ.

## T – Time well spent—connect online + offline

- “We use screens for a purpose, and we use them together, rather than using them aimlessly and alone.” -*Tech-Wise*
- “We want to create more than we consume. So we fill the center of our home with things that reward skill and active engagement.” -*Tech-Wise*
- “We are designed for a rhythm of work and rest. So one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a year, we turn off our devices and worship, feast, play, and rest together.” -*Tech-Wise*
- “We use screens for a purpose, and we use them together, rather than using them aimlessly and alone.” -*Tech-Wise*
- We bought a trampoline and telescope during the pandemic.
- We bought a ping pong table for our family Christmas gift.
- Let’s go analog when we can.
- Let’s put actual pen to paper.
- Let’s rewrite our neurological pathways and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
- Andy Crouch writes a whole chapter on *Why Singing Matters*.

## INVITE THE WORSHIP BAND UP

- We’re getting ready to sing a new-to-us song called *Simple Gospel*.
- As we sing I want you to think about how we’re using technology right now for good.
  - We’re engaging with amplified music that can hit you in the chest and makes you want to sway a little.
  - We’re streaming this online so there may be people connecting with us from afar. Of course we’d love to have people connected with us in person but online is better than nothing.
  - We’ll be able to come back to this teaching because it’s been recorded.
  - All of this is great.

- But let's listen for one another's voices as they cut through the amplification that is so helpful to us.
- We'll sing the Refrain *I will rejoice, in the simple gospel. I will rejoice, in You, Lord.*

## AWAKE

- My Word of the Year for 2023 is AWAKE. This is mostly because I've felt a general lethargy and fatigue in life and a lot of that, I believe, is being dragged down to our culture's level of immaturity, especially by utilizing technology and digital media in unhealthy ways.
- I want to AWAKE to experience the fullness of life with you all and my Creator. I need to establish technology parameters personally, for my family, and as a faith community so we have a fighting chance to move towards spiritual formation and human flourishing in our Digital Age.
- Join me, Mosaic family and friends.

Questions for a next step:

- What are some sustainable rhythms I can implement in pursuit of digital equilibrium?
- What are some sustainable rhythms we can implement in pursuit of digital equilibrium?

## LET'S PRAY.

# Chopping Block:

## Top Ten Technology Tips

Adapted from *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* by Andy Crouch

10. Choosing Character—We develop wisdom and courage together as a family.
  - Shaping Space—We want to create more than we consume. So we fill the center of our home with things that reward skill and active engagement.
8. Structuring Time—We are designed for a rhythm of work and rest. So one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a year, we turn off our devices and worship, feast, play, and rest together.
7. Waking & Sleeping—We wake up before our devices do, and they “go to bed” before we do.
6. Learning & Working—We aim for “no screens before double digits” at school and at home.
  - Take activities analog when you can.
5. The Good News about Boredom—We use screens for a purpose, and we use them together, rather than using them aimlessly and alone.
4. The Deep End of the (Car) Pool—Car time is conversation time.
3. Naked & Unashamed—Spouses have one another’s passwords, and parents have total access to children’s devices.
  - Streaming into our homes and onto our phones—accounting, by the most widely cited estimate, for 30 percent of all internet traffic—pornography provides and portrays a world where sex is easy. -p.169
  - So the best defense against porn, for every member of our family, is a full life—the kind of life that technology cannot provide on its own. -p. 172
2. Singing Matters—We learn to sing together, rather than letting recorded and amplified music take over our lives and worship.
1. In Sickness and in Health—We show up in person for the big events of life. We learn how to be human by being fully present at our moments of greatest vulnerability. We hope to die in one another’s arms.

### Ideas:

- ChatGPT
- Dogfooding – the use of a newly developed product or service by a company's staff to test it before it is made available to customers
- Turn off all technology in the room (as best we can) and just enjoy being present
- Mr. Beast
- Screens, Sugar, Sleep
- Instant vs. Delayed Gratification

- Technology during Jesus' time
  - Via Maris – ancient trade route that connected the world in ways never before experienced
  - Caesarea Maritima – City and harbor build under Herod the Great through which the Gospel flowed
- Technology
  - The application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry
  - Machinery and equipment developed from the application of scientific knowledge
  - Merriam-Webster: the practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area
- Stories
  - My laptop died on Friday...ironically right before speaking on Discipleship in a Digital Age. So, I put pen to paper instead of sitting in front of a screen. I still had my phone so wasn't completely disconnected from the world, thank goodness. But still felt majorly inconvenienced.
  - My neighbor Bruce recently gave me an extra monitor, yet another screen in our home.
  - Our church now has a 65" TV in our foyer. Do we need another? We have two massive screens in here. When will it be enough?
  - Lola, our cat, has an 8-hour YouTube video of birds she likes watching when we're away.
  - Our ReStore Manager calling me while I was having lunch with someone. I was trying to be present but as it turns out I had accidentally ran off with the ReStore shed keys and they were frantically looking everywhere for them.
- Passages
  - **1 Corinthians 10:31** So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
  - **Psalms 101:3**
    - NIV—I will not look with approval on anything that is vile.
    - ESV—I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.
- Technology in the Bible
  - Cain built a city (Gen 4)
  - Bronze and iron (Gen 4)
  - Ark (Gen 6)
  - Tower of Babel (Gen 11)
  - Temple (1 Ki 6)
  - Jesus and carpentry tools
  - Paul and letters
    - **1 Thess 2:17-20** <sup>17</sup> But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. <sup>18</sup> For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. <sup>19</sup> For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the

presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? <sup>20</sup> Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

- **1 Cor 13:12** For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
- John and letters
  - **2 John 12** I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.
  - **3 John 13-14** <sup>13</sup> I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. <sup>14</sup> I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.
- Technology in Church History
  - Letters, books, roads, ports, printing press, megaphones, radio, amplification, television, movies, satellites, internet, social media
  - What's next? Artificial intelligence?
- Questions
  - What is technology for?
  - What are we for?
  - How does the answer to the first question relate to the second?
- Questions
  - What will technology do *for* us?
  - What will technology do *to* us?
  - Who are we *becoming*?
- *Can We Be Human in Meatspace? A new books asks whether revolution against tech starts at home.* by Brad East on *The New Atlantis* published online on May 2, 2022
  - Review of *The Life We're Looking For: Reclaiming Relationship in a Technological World* by Andy Crouch
  - "Every human is a heart-soul-mind-strength complex designed for love." -Andy Crouch
  - Airplane vs. Bicycle analogy
  - If the technologies we regularly use are to serve human nature, they should wherever possible be on the model of a bicycle, not an airplane. But they rarely are. Instead of playing an instrument, we turn on Spotify. Instead of cooking, we order DoorDash. Instead of enjoying the outdoors with a friend, we Snap while strolling. Instead of getting to know a person slowly face to face, we swipe right on Tinder. Our sin is not pride or lust or even greed. It is acedia. We are listless, lethargic, and lonely. Our hearts are anxious, our minds benumbed, our souls alienated, our bodies sick (Crouch calls metabolic syndrome "the defining illness of our time" and "the hallmark of an inactive life"). And the technology that has so seamlessly integrated itself into our lives in recent decades is almost always near the nerve center of the problem. If it isn't the source of our ills, then it is their enabler. We need a cultural shift.

- Such a shift must begin with a true telling of the technological story. That story has always in part been a quest, not for the benefit of humans, but for power. It is the story of the sorcerer's apprentice, in which the desire for magic unleashes spirits that cannot be controlled. Crouch thus describes modern technology in terms of the alchemist's perennial dream for the kind of power that can remake the world as we see fit. This dream is fulfilled in our day; we have come face to face with awesome power — "but it is one that masters us, not the other way around."
- God wishes to put all things into the service of persons and ultimately to bring forth the flourishing of creation through the flourishing of persons. Mammon wants to put all persons into the service of things and ultimately to bring about the exploitation of all of creation.
- Crouch never goes quite so far as to say that he is referring to a literal demon who is himself the veiled force at work in our global economic system. He seems to mean something just short of that. But if the spookiness of the suggestion is still a bit much for you, you're welcome to demythologize it. Just call Mammon by his modern name: Capital.
- Proposal
  - Prioritize instruments over devices
  - Foster households over families
  - Privilege blessing over charm
- Foster households over families—sad If you are looking for a single proximate cause of the loneliness that is epidemic in our world, it is the dearth of households." For Crouch, a household is "a community of recognition." It is both a place and a people, not all or always biologically or legally related, who live under one roof (or nearly so), who know one another intimately and love one another anyway. Such an intensely shared communal life impinges on our autonomy, and that is precisely the point. As he writes, "for some people, the quiet of a room of one's own has turned into the isolation of a screen of one's own. Even when we are in the same room, we may rarely fully see and be seen by another face."
- To rebuild households would begin to undermine Mammon itself. If we lived this way together, we would begin to fundamentally change our economy in the most literal sense and eventually change the structure of economic life more broadly — what we value, measure, and reward. To begin this kind of economic restoration does not require us to change the practices of Wall Street, the Federal Reserve, or the European Central Bank — or even to know, exactly, what ought to replace them. We just (just!) have to redirect our energies away from Mammon's domain and turn toward a realm where Mammon has nothing to offer. And then we need to invite others to join us under that new shelter.
- The best-known name for this view is The Benedict Option. Call it the Tech-Wise BenOp. Not the popular caricature, mind you, but the real article. In a postmodern, post-Christian, re-paganized world of tech run amok and the gift of personhood called into question, Crouch wants us — where "us" means not only Christians but all



women and men of good will — to create and to join local incubators of virtuous habits, aesthetic excellence, shared possessions, hospitality, and technological noncooperation. But instead of looking to St. Benedict, Crouch would have us imitate St. Paul; instead of monasteries, he holds up households; instead of retreat from the city, he wants us to stay put.

- As he writes, most people who want to influence the culture want to be a *force*, whereas “Jesus calls us to be a *taste*.”

## Resources:

- *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* by Andy Crouch
- *Can We Be Human in Meatspace? A new books asks whether revolution against tech starts at home.* by Brad East on *The New Atlantis* published online on May 2, 2022
- *Is Google Making Us Stupid? What the Internet is doing to our brains* by Nicholas Carr article in *The Atlantic*, July/August 2008 Issue
- *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* by Rod Dreher (2017)
- *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler
- *Surprised by Joy* by C.S. Lewis
- *How we got to now : six innovations that made the modern world* by Steven Johnson 1968