



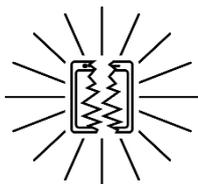
THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

DIGITALISATION: BREAKING FREE FROM SCREEN ADDICTION



LUKE RININGER

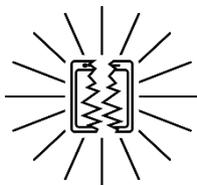
**DIGITALISATION:
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LUKE RININGER

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INTRODUCTION — HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DISTRACTION

I downloaded the game to connect with my boys. My two younger sons were playing it on their tablet and kept my requesting help. After a few days of trying to figure it out alongside them, I thought, *I'll download this on my phone so I can learn it better and show real interest in what they care about.* That was my first mistake ...

Within weeks, I was hooked. The game was designed so you could never win. The levels just kept getting harder; your team could always get stronger, and there was always someone with a better team than yours. My boys eventually lost interest and moved on, but I didn't. Two months later, I was averaging seven hours of screen time a day on my phone, and that most of that was owed to playing that game.

If you're reading this, maybe you have your own version of that story. Perhaps it's not a game but social media addiction, streaming services, news apps, or just the compulsive habit of checking your phone every few minutes, signaling a potential phone addiction. Maybe you've noticed your kids—the generation of digital natives—glued to screens and realized you're no different. It's possible you've felt the nagging guilt of missing real moments because of digital distractions. Or, maybe you're just tired, tired of the constant pull, the fragmented attention, the sense that you're never fully present anywhere.

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You're not alone, and you're not crazy. Screens and digital technology have become one of the most dominant forces competing for our attention in human history. The average American spends around seven hours a day on screens, and Generation Z averages around nine hours.¹¹ The average American checked their phone 144 times each day in 2023, increasing to 205 times each day just one year later.² ²We scroll before we pray. We reach for our devices before we reach for our spouse. Somehow, we've convinced ourselves this is just how life works now, entrenching these unhealthy digital habits.

This life skill guide isn't here to shame you. It's here to help you see clearly what's happening and to offer you a way out. Screen addiction isn't just about wasted time. It's about a divided heart, fragmented attention, and a soul that was made for something far greater than endless scrolling.

Our devices aren't neutral tools anymore. They've been engineered to capture and keep our attention. The brightest minds billions of dollars work to make it nearly impossible for us to look away, fueling our digital dependence. That said, just because something is designed to hook us doesn't mean we have to stay hooked.

You were not made to live a distracted, fragmented life full of digital distraction. You were made to know God, love others, and steward your time and attention for His glory. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Abundant life doesn't come from a screen. It comes from the One who created you, loves you, and calls you to something better than cheap digital dopamine.

1

DESIGNED TO ADDICT—WHY WE CAN'T LOOK AWAY

The engineering of captivity

Your phone buzzes. Before you even think about it, your hand reaches for your phone to check a notification, a like, a message, or a headline. Within seconds, you're scrolling, and five minutes later, you wonder how you got here. You weren't planning on checking Instagram. You didn't mean to fall down a YouTube rabbit hole. This reflex is the seed of phone addiction.

Here's the thing: it didn't just happen. It was designed to happen.

The apps you use, the platforms you visit, and even the videos that autoplay are all carefully engineered to create digital addiction. Every feature has been designed by some of the brightest minds in digital technology, armed with billions of dollars in research, for one singular purpose: to capture and keep your attention as long as possible. The longer you stay, the more ads you see. The more you engage, the more data they collect. Your attention has become the most valuable commodity in the modern economy, and these companies have built empires by taking it from you.

Philosopher Matthew Crawford describes our modern world as an "ecology of attention," an environment deliberately designed to hijack every perceptual trigger we have.³³ We're not simply choosing to spend time on our devices but walking into carefully constructed traps, baited with digital dopamine hits and engineered to keep us coming back.

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Consider the mechanics of digital addiction. Infinite scroll means there's never a natural stopping point. Autoplay ensures the next video starts before you can decide whether you want to watch it. Notifications are timed to interrupt you at optimal moments, creating endless digital distractions. Even the colors on your app icons, those bright reds and oranges, trigger urgency and excitement in your brain.

This isn't a fair fight. You're up against a system built to exploit the way God designed your brain to work.

The dopamine economy

At the heart of screen time struggles and digital addiction is a simple neurological reality. Your brain craves dopamine. Dopamine is the neurotransmitter associated with reward, pleasure, and motivation. God designed our brains to experience pleasure and reward because He created us to find our deepest satisfaction in Him. This dopamine system should draw us toward what truly delights God and fulfills us, knowing Him, loving others in community, and experiencing the joy of meaningful work done for His glory.

Tech companies have learned to weaponize this, creating a cycle of digital dopamine. Every time you get a like on social media, your brain releases a small hit of dopamine. Every time you see a new notification, open a fresh app, or discover something surprising in your feed, dopamine is released. The problem is that these rewards come at unpredictable intervals, which is precisely the pattern that creates the strongest digital dependence.

Psychologists call it "intermittent reinforcement," and it's the same mechanism that makes slot machines so addictive. You never know when the next reward is coming, so you keep pulling the lever. Or in this case, keep swiping, scrolling, and refreshing. Your phone has become a pocket casino. The stakes aren't money but your time, your digital attention, your peace of mind, and ultimately, your walk with God.

I have an addictive personality. Most of my life, I've been an athlete, head coach, and very competitive. This competitive side led to a terrible gambling addiction (see Field Guide #45 Gambling: The Hidden Costs for more information). Social media addiction is similar in many ways. Much of

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the content is funny, making you laugh, cry, and want more. There's the draw to watch one more reel, one more short, complete one more task, and our phones are always just inches away. I had become a digital addict. The way my brain works is I think something like, this video is less than 20 seconds, so I won't waste too much time, and before I know it, two hours have gone by. I convince myself I can multitask and get things done while scrolling and watching videos, but the truth is, I'm not nearly as good at multitasking as I think I am.

But behind every hit of dopamine lies a deeper hunger—not just for pleasure, but for meaning.

What are we really seeking?

Here's the uncomfortable truth. We don't reach for our phones primarily because we need information. We reach for them because we need something deeper. We reach to satisfy a digital dependence we often refuse to acknowledge.

Maybe it's validation. Social media addiction thrives on a steady stream of affirmation through likes, comments, and shares. Every notification whispers, “You matter.” “People see you.” “You're important.”

The comparison trap intensifies this. You scroll through feeds filled with perfect families, flawless bodies, and highlight reels that make everyone else's life look effortlessly amazing. You start believing you need to measure up to impossible standards. This is the heavy burden carried by digital natives and the wider digital generation alike. If you gain followers, you're trapped maintaining a facade you can never sustain. You're chasing validation through a fantasy no one can live up to.

Maybe it's an escape. We use our devices to drown out the silence, creating layers of digital noise to avoid sitting with our own thoughts.

Maybe it's control.

Maybe it's a connection.

Or maybe it's simply the promise of something. The next video might make you laugh. The next article might answer your question. The next notification might be important. We stay because we're always chasing

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that elusive "something better" just one scroll away, hooked on digital dopamine.

Where your treasure is

Track your screen time for a week. Don't change your behavior but observe it honestly. How many hours a day? What apps consume the most time? Look at your digital habits. Then ask yourself, if this is where I'm spending my life, is this what I treasure?

This is why phone addiction is fundamentally a spiritual issue. It's not just about time management or self-discipline. It's about worship. Whatever captures your attention, whatever you give your best hours to, whatever shapes your desires and emotions, becomes what you're worshipping, whether you realize it or not. In this era of rapid digitalisation, we must be careful not to fall into digital worship, where the created device takes precedence over the Creator.

God created you for Himself. He designed your heart to find its deepest satisfaction in knowing Him, loving Him, and living for His glory. His purpose for you is clear: to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). You were made to grow in Christlikeness, to reflect His character, priorities, and love more each day. But digital distraction hinders this growth. Sin has twisted our desires, leading us to chase substitutes—things that promise to fulfill us but ultimately leave us empty.

Screens and digital technology are just the latest version of an ancient problem of seeking joy and life apart from God. We open a digital Bible app, but get sidetracked by a text. We try to engage in digital prayer, but our minds wander to the news. We watch digital church, but treat it like entertainment. True digital discipleship requires us to fight for our focus.

The good news is that recognizing this pattern is the first step toward freedom. You don't have to remain a digital addict. The same God who created you with the capacity for deep attention, meaningful work, and rich relationships is ready to restore what's been fractured. He doesn't just want to modify your behavior but to redirect your heart toward what will truly satisfy and conform you to the image of Christ.

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The question isn't just how to avoid digital addiction or whether you can stop scrolling. The question is, what will you treasure instead? Perhaps it is time for a season of digital fasting to reset your soul. Until your heart finds something better than the cheap thrills of your phone, you'll keep going back. Freedom comes when you discover that God offers something infinitely better than anything a screen can provide, leading you to true digital rest and a renewed digital faith.

Reflection Questions

1. When you reach for your phone, what are you typically seeking? Validation? Escape from digital distractions elsewhere? Entertainment? Connection?
2. Look at your screen time data. What does it reveal about where your treasure really is?
3. How has constant digital stimulation affected your ability to be still, to pray, or to be present with God and others?

2

THE HIDDEN COSTS—TIME, RELATIONSHIPS, AND PURPOSE

What you don't see at first

No one picks up their phone thinking, I'm about to waste the next three hours of my life.

Digital addiction doesn't announce itself. It creeps in quietly, masked by convenience and entertainment. The first things you notice are the wins, the funny video that made you laugh, the article that taught you something, and the message from a friend. The last things you notice are the things you're losing because of these subtle digital distractions. By the time you realize what it's really costing you, the pattern is already deeply rooted in your digital habits.

The losses aren't just about hours scrolling but about how those hours could have been otherwise spent. They're about relationships eroding in real time while you're staring at a screen. They're about skills you never develop, books you never read, conversations you never have, and moments with your children that slip away forever.

Paul warns us to walk wisely, "making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16). When Paul uses the word "walk" here, he's not talking about physical steps but describing your entire way of life, the pattern and direction of how you live each day. Every hour given

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to mindless scrolling and yielding to digital temptations is an hour you'll never get back. This section is about seeing those costs clearly, the ones that don't show up in your screen time report but show up in your life.

The time you'll never recover

Recently, I asked my high school students—true digital natives—to check their average daily digital screen time from the past week. Many reported spending between eight and twelve hours a day on their phones. I was stunned. Much of it was Netflix or other streaming content, but even so, that's an enormous portion of every single day—especially during the school year.

Let's do the math together.

Eight hours a day adds up to fifty-six hours a week, nearly three thousand hours a year. Over a decade, that's 29,000 hours—more than three years of your life consumed by screens.

Think about that. What could you do with three extra years? You could learn multiple languages, master an instrument, read hundreds of books, or invest deeply in your relationships. You could pursue meaningful work, grow in your walk with Christ, or build something that lasts through faithful digital stewardship.

Instead, most of that time vanishes into an endless stream of content you won't remember a week later, a symptom of severe digital overuse. The tragedy isn't just the hours themselves but what those hours could have been—the conversations never had, the skills never developed, the memories never made. Every hour on a screen is an hour not spent on something that actually matters.

The relational damage

Phone addiction doesn't just steal time but steals presence. You can be physically in the room with someone while being mentally and emotionally absent. Your spouse talks to you, but you're half-listening, eyes glued to your phone. Your kids ask you to play, but you tell them "Just a minute" for the tenth time. You're at dinner with friends, but everyone's scrolling, lost in social media addiction, instead of talking.

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Researchers have coined the term "phubbing," phone snubbing, to describe the act of ignoring someone in favor of your device, prioritizing digital attention over human connection. Studies show that phubbing increases conflict in relationships and decreases satisfaction.⁴⁴ When you choose your phone over the person in front of you, you're sending a clear message. This screen is more important than you.

Over time, trust erodes. Your family stops asking you to engage because they know you're distracted. Your friends stop confiding in you because you're not really listening. The people closest to you begin to feel like they're competing with your phone for your attention and losing.

The academic and professional toll

The research is sobering. Studies show that each additional hour of phone use per day lowers a student's GPA by an average of 0.152 points.⁵⁵ Adolescents who spend more than seven hours daily on screens are 40% less likely to achieve high academic performance.⁶⁶ Even two hours of television per day at ages 8-9 correlates with losing four months of learning per year.⁷⁷

As a teacher for over 15 years, I've witnessed these changes firsthand. Students today have a significantly harder time with basic social skills compared to a decade ago. They struggle to articulate their words clearly. They can't maintain eye contact when speaking or being spoken to. They have difficulty relating to one another without their phones as a crutch. Social skills have decreased dramatically. What used to be natural, having a face-to-face conversation, reading social cues, and expressing thoughts verbally, now feels awkward and uncomfortable for many young people. They've grown up in a world where communication happens through screens, and they simply haven't developed the skills needed for real human interaction.

Finland offers a sobering case study. Once the world's education leader, Finland embraced technology heavily in schools over the past decade. Between 2012 and 2022, students' performance declined by more than 20 points on average across all subjects.⁸⁸ Of Finnish students, 41% reported that digital resources distracted them in every or most math lessons, significantly higher than the OECD average of 31%.⁹⁹ The decline

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was so severe that in April 2025, Finland's Parliament passed legislation banning personal device use in classrooms for students aged 7-16, which took effect in August 2025.¹⁰¹⁰ The lesson is clear: unlimited screen access doesn't enhance learning but undermines it. Whether you're a student, a professional, or simply someone trying to grow and develop, screens fragment your focus and diminish your capacity for deep work.

The physical and spiritual costs

The physical toll of screen addiction is real. "Text neck," forward head posture from looking down at devices, causes chronic pain for millions. Digital eye strain affects 50-90% of computer users.¹¹¹¹ Blue light exposure disrupts sleep patterns, leaving you exhausted and irritable. Hours of sitting while scrolling contribute to sedentary lifestyles and declining health.

The spiritual cost may be even greater. When your mind is constantly occupied by digital noise, there's no space left for God. Prayer becomes rushed or forgotten, often confusing true communion with a quick notification from a digital prayer app. Reading your digital Bible feels boring compared to the stimulation of your feed. Digital worship experiences feel flat because your heart has been trained to crave novelty, not depth. You lose the ability to sit in silence, to embrace digital rest, to meditate on Scripture, to hear God's still, small voice.

Our crisis of attention is really a crisis of the self. When we can't focus our digital attention, we can't fully engage with reality, including spiritual reality. Screens don't just create a digital distraction from God but reshape us into people who are incapable of sustained attention to anything, including the One who made us. This undermines true digital discipleship.

The path forward

These costs are real, but the good news is that recognizing the cost is the first step toward change and learning how to beat digital addiction.

God calls us to walk wisely, to make the best use of our time through digital discipline. That doesn't mean perfection. It means intentionality. It means looking honestly at what you're losing and deciding it's not worth it

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anymore. The days are evil, Paul reminds us. We don't have time to waste. Every moment matters.

What you've lost can't be recovered, but what lies ahead can still be redeemed, rebuilding a resilient digital faith.

Reflection Questions:

1. What has excessive screen time cost you in terms of relationships, sleep, work, or spiritual growth?
2. If you could reclaim the hours you've spent on screens this past year, what would you do with that time?
3. Who in your life have you "phubbed" or neglected because of your phone? How might you begin to restore those relationships and reduce your digital dependence?

3

DIGITAL IDOLATRY— WHEN SCREENS BECOME A GOD

How screens function as idols

An idol isn't just a golden statue in an ancient temple. An idol is anything that demands the allegiance that belongs to God alone. It's whatever we run to for comfort, identity, validation, or escape. It's what captures our hearts, shapes our desires, and consumes our attention. By that definition, for many of us, our phones have become idols, fueling a subtle but powerful digital addiction.

Think about it honestly. What's the first thing you reach for in the morning? What's the last thing you check at night? When you're anxious, bored, lonely, or stressed, where do you turn? If your phone is lost or dies, how do you feel? For most of us, the answer reveals an uncomfortable truth. We've become dependent on our devices in ways that mirror worship, elevating digital technology to a place of reverence. This is what we might call digital worship—giving our primary devotion to a screen rather than the Creator.

John's command is simple and direct. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). He's not just warning against obvious false Gods. He's warning against anything that takes God's place in our hearts, including modern digital temptations. Screens promise to meet needs that only God can truly satisfy, and we keep believing them.

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Social media as false community

Social media addiction promises connection but delivers comparison. It offers validation through likes, comments, and shares, tiny hits of digital dopamine that make you feel seen, important, valued. For a moment, you matter. Then the feeling fades, and you need more.

This creates a vicious cycle. You post something hoping for affirmation. You check obsessively to see how many people liked it. You feel elated when the number goes up and deflated when it doesn't. Your sense of worth becomes tied to metrics that mean nothing, digital attention from people who barely know you, scrolling past your life on their way to something else.

Worse, you start performing. You curate your life to look impressive online. You filter your photos, edit your captions, and present a version of yourself that doesn't actually exist. If you gain a following, the pressure intensifies. You're now trapped maintaining an image you can never fully live up to. Your identity becomes whatever gets the most engagement. This is a trap that ensnares the digital generation and older generations alike.

Meanwhile, God offers you an identity that doesn't depend on performance or screen time. In Christ, you are fully known and fully loved, not because of what you project, but because of what He has done. You don't need the approval of strangers. You already have the approval of the One who matters most.

Repentance and turning from digital idols

Repentance isn't just feeling bad about your behavior or acknowledging you are a digital addict. It's turning away from sin, and turning toward God. It's recognizing that what you've been chasing can never satisfy you, and choosing to run to the One who can.

If screens have become idols in your life, repentance starts with honest acknowledgment. Admit that you've given them the attention, affection, and trust that belongs to God. Confess that you've been looking for identity, comfort, and validation in places that can't provide them, realizing the depth of your digital dependence. Don't minimize it or excuse it. Name it for what it is.

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Then turn, not just away from screens, but toward Jesus. Ask Him to renew your mind, reshape your desires, and redirect your heart. The battle isn't won by sheer willpower. It's won by worship. When you treasure Christ above everything else, the cheap substitutes lose their power. This is the heart of true digital discipleship—following Jesus even in our digital choices.

Romans 12:2 reminds us, "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." Transformation happens when God's truth reshapes the way you think. The more you fill your mind with Scripture (whether through a physical book or a distraction-free digital Bible), the less room there is for digital noise. The more you experience God's presence through prayer (not just digital prayer requests, but real communion), the less you crave digital dopamine.

Remember who you are

You are not defined by your screen time or your digital habits. You're not defined by your likes, followers, or online persona. If you are in Christ, you are a beloved child of God, chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:3-14). That's your identity. That's who you really are.

Let that truth sink in. You don't need validation from strangers. You have the approval of your Father. You don't need to perform for an audience. You're already fully accepted. You don't need to escape into screens. You have rest in Jesus—a true digital rest that no app can provide.

The path forward isn't just breaking a habit or learning how to beat digital addiction. It's reclaiming your worship. Keep yourself from idols. Give your heart back to the God who made you, loves you, and calls you His own.

Reflection Questions:

1. In what ways might your phone or apps function like idols in your life, creating a digital dependence, demanding first attention, promising satisfaction, or shaping your identity?
2. What would change if you truly believed your worth came from Christ alone, not from digital validation or online performance?

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3. What does repentance look like for you practically as you consider how to avoid digital addiction? What needs to change, starting today?

4

SETTING BOUNDARIES— STEWARDING TECHNOLOGY WISELY

Technology as tool, not master

By now, you've seen screen time abuse and digital addiction for what it really is: a designed system that captures attention, steals time, damages relationships, and functions as a modern idol. You've recognized the costs and named the sin. Now comes the practical question. What do you actually do about it?

Paul's words to the Corinthians give us a framework. Not everything that's permissible is beneficial. Not everything that's lawful builds up. Digital technology itself isn't evil, but it is a tool. The question is whether you're using it, or it's using you. This section is about taking back control through digital discipline, biblical stewardship, and practical boundaries against digital temptations.

Biblical stewardship principles

Stewardship means managing what God has entrusted to you for His glory and others' good. You're a steward of your time, digital attention, relationships, and even your technology. God didn't give you a

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smartphone so you could waste hours scrolling. He gave you time and mental capacity so you could love Him, serve others, and fulfill the purposes He's designed for you.

This means treating your devices as servants, not masters. A hammer is useful when you need to build something. It's useless, even dangerous, when you're obsessively swinging it with no purpose. Similarly, your phone can serve you well by staying connected with distant family, coordinating schedules, and accessing helpful information. It becomes harmful when you're compulsively checking it with no real purpose, just feeding a digital addiction.

The goal isn't to demonize digital technology or retreat to a pre-digital age. The goal is intentionality. Use technology deliberately, for specific purposes, and then put it down. Don't let it use you.

Remove the apps that hook you

Delete apps that fuel social media addiction from your phone. You can still access them on a computer if needed, but removing the instant access creates "friction," extra steps that make the habit harder to perform automatically. Friction is your friend because it forces you to be intentional rather than mindless.

If you can't bring yourself to delete them entirely, at least remove them from your home screen. Make it harder to open them without thinking. Turn off all non-essential notifications. You don't need to know instantly when someone likes your post or comments on a photo. Notifications are designed to interrupt and capture your attention. Silence them.

Finally, consider using tools such as Freedom, Cold Turkey, or your phone's Digital Wellbeing settings—apps designed to limit digital screen time and block digital distractions. Set these blocks in advance, during moments of clarity, so your future self can't easily override them in moments of weakness.

Create phone-free zones and times

Establish sacred spaces where phones aren't allowed, such as the dinner table, your bedroom, your morning quiet time, and the living room during

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family time. These spaces should be reserved for real connection with God, with family, with yourself.

One of the most important changes you can make is charging your phone outside your bedroom at night. Use an actual alarm clock instead. This single change will transform your mornings and evenings. If you're concerned about emergencies, most phones allow repeat callers to ring through even when Do Not Disturb is enabled.

Make the first hour of your day and the last hour before bed screen-free zones. Begin each morning with prayer, Scripture, and reflection before allowing the digital noise to make its demands. Close each evening with digital rest and gratitude rather than scrolling into the night.

Practice a digital sabbath

Set aside one day a week, or even just a few hours, where you completely disconnect. Practice digital fasting—no phone, no social media, no screens. Use that time to rest, worship, engage with loved ones, and remember what life feels like without the buzz of technology. Jesus regularly withdrew from crowds to be alone with the Father (Luke 5:16). If Christ stepped away from demands to be alone with the Father, how much more should we do the same? The sabbath principle isn't just about physical rest but about finding true rest in God alone, trusting His provision rather than our own constant activity.

Use tools that create accountability

Enable screen time limits on your device. Many phones have built-in features that track usage and set daily limits for specific apps. When you hit your limit and the app locks, don't override it—that's the boundary working. Ask someone to hold you accountable by giving a trusted friend or family member permission to check in on your screen time and ask hard questions. Share your struggles honestly rather than managing this alone. Consider checking in weekly to show them your screen time report, discuss what's working and what isn't, and pray together. Some people find accountability software that sends reports to a trusted friend helpful. Others benefit from joining or forming a small group focused on digital discipleship. The key is finding real people who will lovingly challenge you and celebrate your progress.

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Replace the habit

You can't just stop scrolling, but you need to replace it with something better. When you feel the urge to check your phone, do something else like praying, reading a book, going for a walk, having a real conversation, or working on a meaningful project. Replace poor digital habits with life-giving ones. Train yourself to reach for better things by keeping a physical book in places where you typically scroll, such as your nightstand, your bag, or your car. When the urge hits, read a page or keep a journal nearby for prayer. Have a list of people you've been meaning to call. The more you prepare alternatives in advance, the easier it becomes to choose them in the moment. If you struggle with scrolling during transitions like waiting in line, sitting in your car, or between tasks, decide ahead of time what you'll do instead. Pray for specific people. Practice gratitude. Observe your surroundings. Simply be still. These micro-moments add up to a life of faithful digital stewardship.

I've had to delete many games, apps, and platforms fueling my social media addiction over the years because of how much time they consumed. The first few days of this digital detox were genuinely difficult. I'd wake up and immediately think about checking those apps, wondering what I was missing, what notifications I hadn't seen. But by the end of that first week, something shifted. My daily screen time had dropped by more than three hours. There was a real sense of accomplishment in that, and more importantly, a sense of freedom. The apps that once felt essential turned out to be entirely replaceable.

The role of community

Freedom flourishes in community. You need people who know your struggle and will speak truth to you. Join a small group, find an accountability partner, or talk to your pastor. Don't hide because isolation is where digital addiction thrives.

If you're married, have an honest conversation with your spouse about boundaries. Work together to create a healthier environment and better digital habits in your home. If you have children, model what you want them to learn. They're watching you. Your boundaries teach them what's valuable and what isn't. Consider creating family agreements about digital

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technology use, when and where devices are allowed, what types of content are appropriate, and how much time is reasonable. Make these decisions together and hold each other accountable with grace.

Grace for the process

Setting boundaries is hard. You'll fail sometimes. You'll check your phone when you said you wouldn't. You'll fall back into old patterns of digital dependence. When that happens, don't spiral into shame but confess it, get back up, and keep going.

Sanctification—and true digital discipleship—is a process, not a one-time event. God is patient with you. Extend that same patience to yourself. The goal isn't perfection but progress. Small, consistent steps forward over time will lead to real, lasting change.

Remember that every stumble is an opportunity to be reminded of your need for grace. You're not saved by your ability to manage your screen time but by Christ. These boundaries are expressions of gratitude for His work in you, not attempts to earn His love.

Reflection Questions:

1. What specific boundaries do you sense God calling you to implement? App limits, phone-free zones, digital fasting?
2. What fears or resistance do you feel about limiting your screen time? What does that reveal about your dependence on devices?
3. Who can you ask to hold you accountable in this area? When will you have that conversation?

5

LIVING IN THE REAL WORLD—FINDING TRUE CONNECTION AND PURPOSE

The call to embodied presence

You've identified the problem, confronted the idolatry, and set boundaries. Now comes the most important part of living differently. Freedom from screen time dominance and digital addiction isn't just about what you stop doing but about what you start doing. God didn't save you from bondage just to leave you empty. He saved you for something better, a life lived fully in His presence, deeply connected to real people, and purposefully engaged with the world He made.

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we were made for community, real, embodied, face-to-face community. "Not neglecting to meet together" isn't just about showing up to church or watching digital church. It's about refusing to let digital substitutes and digital technology replace genuine human connection. You can't disciple someone through a screen. You can't bear one another's burdens via text. You can't experience the fullness of Christian fellowship through social media.

Phone addiction has trained you to prefer the comfort of digital distance over the risk of real presence. This session is about reclaiming what was lost, the joy of being fully present, the satisfaction of skilled work, and the purpose of living for something greater than yourself.

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Rediscovering lost arts

Skilled practices and activities that require focused attention and engagement within the real world can be the antidote to our digital dependence. When you work with your hands, create something tangible, or develop a craft, you're forced to submit to reality. The wood doesn't care about your feelings. The recipe won't work if you skip steps. The instrument demands practice.

This kind of work is deeply formative. It teaches patience, humility, and focus. It reminds you that you're a physical being in a physical world, not just a disembodied consciousness floating through digital noise.

What skilled practices might you pursue? Learn to cook real meals from scratch instead of scrolling through food videos. Chop the vegetables, season the dish, and serve it to people you love. Pick up an instrument and practice scales, even when it's frustrating. Work in your garden, feeling the soil in your hands and watching things grow over weeks and months. Build something with your hands, a bookshelf, a birdhouse, anything that requires planning, measuring, and adjusting to physical reality rather than digital distraction.

Read physical books that require sustained attention. Not articles or blog posts, but actual books that take days or weeks to finish. Learn a new language through consistent practice, not just an app. Take up drawing, woodworking, knitting, or any craft that demands your full presence and rewards your patience.

The beauty of skill activity is that they force you into the present moment. You can't scroll while kneading bread dough. You can't half-pay attention while playing a musical instrument. These activities demand all of you, and in giving them your full attention, you discover what it feels like to be fully alive.

The discipline of boredom

One of the most valuable things you can relearn is how to be bored. Boredom isn't the enemy but the seedbed of creativity, reflection, digital rest, and prayer. When you're uncomfortable with silence, you reach for your phone to satisfy a social media addiction. When you learn to sit with

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boredom, your mind begins to wander in productive ways. You think, pray, notice things, and become present to God and to yourself.

Some of the most important spiritual insights come in moments of unstimulated silence. The prophet Elijah didn't hear God's voice in the earthquake, wind, or fire but heard it in "a low whisper" (1 Kings 19:12). If you're never quiet enough to hear a whisper because of digital overuse, you'll miss God's voice. When was the last time you were truly still long enough to hear God's whisper?

Service and ministry as antidotes to self-absorption

Screen addiction is fundamentally self-focused, all about consuming content that serves you by entertaining, informing, or validating you. The antidote is other-focused living through service, ministry, and love in action.

Get involved in your local church by volunteering to serve in a ministry that requires your physical presence, whether that's greeting people at the door, serving in the nursery, helping with setup and teardown, visiting shut-ins, or preparing meals for those in need. Mentor someone younger in the faith—engaging in true, face-to-face digital discipleship (which often means putting the devices away)—by spending time with them and investing in their growth.

Visit the sick or spend an hour sitting with someone who's lonely, not texting them but actually being there. Help the poor by using your hands and your time to meet real needs in the real world, whether that's tutoring a struggling student, coaching a youth sports team, or leading a Bible study in your home.

I started coaching two of my sons' soccer teams, which required showing up three times a week with no digital distractions. Those hours of focused presence, teaching fundamentals, encouraging kids, and being fully there gave me a satisfaction that scrolling never could. I was using my time for something that actually mattered.

I also made a change at home. As soon as I walked through the door after work, before checking my phone or starting homework, I would wrestle with my boys and go outside to play soccer together for 15-20 minutes.

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That focused time, as soon as I got home, became invaluable to our relationship and met needs they had that I'd been missing. It's time that can never be made up, but it's not too late to start now.

When you're engaged in meaningful service, you won't have time to scroll mindlessly. More importantly, you won't want to. There's a deep satisfaction that comes from using your time and energy to genuinely help others, a satisfaction that no amount of likes or views can match.

Jesus said the greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). While screens can facilitate some forms of connection, they cannot replace the embodied presence that genuine love requires. Love demands our full digital attention, our physical presence, our willingness to sacrifice comfort. Poor digital habits train you to be passive and self-serving. Kingdom life calls you to be active and sacrificial.

Building new habits that nourish the soul

Freedom isn't just about breaking old habits but about building new ones. Here are practices to cultivate.

Begin with morning prayer instead of scrolling. Before you check anything, spend time with God. Read Scripture. Pray through a list of people and concerns. Start your day with Him, not with your feed. Even five minutes of focused prayer will reorient your entire day.

End with evening reflection instead of binge-watching. Review your day with God. What are you grateful for? Where did you see Him at work? Where did you fail? What needs to change tomorrow? Write these reflections in a journal.

Embrace weekly rhythms of rest. Practice the sabbath principle. One day a week, step away from productivity and screens. Choose a specific day and protect it on your calendar. Rest in God's presence. Spend unhurried time with loved ones. Go for a long walk. Enjoy a meal together. Let your soul catch up with your body.

Take monthly digital fasts from noise. Mark one weekend each month on your calendar right now for an extended break from social media or screens altogether. Treat these fasts as non-negotiable appointments with

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God, sacred time set apart for Him alone. Notice how it feels. Notice what you gain. Use that time to read books you've been meaning to read, have conversations you've been putting off, or simply rest.

The long-term vision

Changing your relationship with screens is a lifelong process of digital discipleship and not a quick fix. There will be setbacks, struggles, and moments when the pull of old habits feels overwhelming. That's normal and expected in the process of transformation.

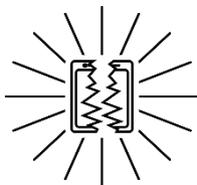
What matters is the trajectory. Are you moving toward God or away from Him? Are you growing in your capacity for attention, presence, and love? Are you becoming more like Christ? This is the ultimate goal of digital discipleship.

Finland's story offers hope. A nation that embraced technology and watched its children suffer is now reversing course. Change is possible for nations, and for individuals. You don't have to stay where you are.

God is patient. He's committed to your transformation. He'll meet you in your weakness and give you strength. Keep walking, praying, and turning your heart back to Him. The path may be long, but you're not walking it alone.

Reflection Questions:

1. What real-world activities or relationships do you want to invest in more deeply?
2. What skilled practices might you pursue that would draw you into sustained engagement with reality?
3. What's your vision for a life less dominated by screen time and digital noise, and more anchored in Christ?



CONCLUSION

Freedom in Christ is not just about walking away from something destructive but about walking into something far greater. Throughout this guide, you've examined the hidden costs of screen addiction, confronted the digital idolatry of modern life, and learned practical steps toward freedom. Now the question is, what will you do?

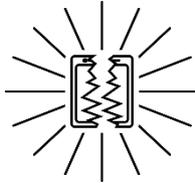
Maybe your journey has been marked by deep regret. Maybe you've lost time, damaged relationships, or drifted from God due to digital distraction. No matter how far you've gone, you are not beyond the reach of grace. Jesus came for the broken, the enslaved, and the desperate. He came for you.

Repentance is more than behavior change. It's a heart turning back to God. Real change happens as you depend on Him daily, building new digital habits rooted in His Word, prayer, community, and meaningful service.

There will be moments of weakness and setbacks along the way. The old patterns of digital dependence will whisper promises they can't keep. When that happens, remember this truth: you're not the same person who started this journey. You're learning to live as someone adopted, chosen, and empowered by the Spirit. Christ doesn't just set you free but walks with you in freedom.

The path ahead won't always be easy, yet it will be worth it. Eyes up. Heart open. Walk forward.

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." —Ephesians 4:1



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