

Technology. I love technology.

But technology is tricky. [1 Smartphones] Take the smartphone for instance. We love the fact that we have a laptop in our back pocket. We actually have in this little device more powerful technology than the computers of the Apollo 11 mission! We can stay connected to our world, find the closest starbucks, and find answers to any question we have about anything, like [pull out phone and fake ask siri..] “now, who was that guy in that movie?” We love technology.

But our feelings toward smartphones are... complicated. Look at this. [2 Smartphones at Table] What are your first feelings when you see it? I'm guessing... annoyance. Maybe a little judgment. Maybe guilt? Not POSITIVE emotions. WHY is that? [2b-e Scroll through pics] We see articles and commercials like this with a high degree of consistency that reveal to us how nervous we are about how much we are looking at the screen. We make judgements about the people in these pictures and commercials, and at that same time make judgements about ourselves.

Many of us are eager to get the newest tech. Others of us are suspect of it. But we all got a smartphone, eventually, right? Families used to have one tv in the house and now it's 1 tv per room. We have computers that we work at all day and check facebook, and twitter. And we love it!

Yet, we still find ourselves being conflicted about how much we use our screens. We wonder how much is too much. Most of us would say that we are attached to a screen more than we should be. So we think, maybe we'd be better off just getting rid of them all together.

But there's one thing for sure. Our road trips are so much better.

[3 Texas to Kentucky map] This summer, our drummer Ryan and I were invited to go play a show with our friend Da Mac in Louisville, KY. Now I've been to Kentucky, and I've been to Louisville, but I've never driven there from Dallas. But it's the craziest thing. Ryan and I didn't have one argument about which way was quicker. We didn't have one incident where the big ol' Map got in the way of seeing the road. We didn't have to stop and ask directions one time. We just asked Siri!

We knew where we wanted to go, we knew the destination, we had a goal in mind, and that determined how we used the technology at our disposal.

We could have easily started driving, put on Netflix or Hulu on my iPhone and just caught up on the latest season of Agents of SHIELD. We would have had a fun time (maybe), but it wouldn't have helped us get to Louisville. And as the driver, it would've been very distracting, not to mention illegal. Our goal informed how our technology was used.

Today, we are beginning a new 4-week series called Social in which we are going to look at the way technology impacts our relationships. Our premise is that the most basic of Christian

practices is friendship, and technology can help those friendships, or hurt them. It can build community, or break it down. So we are going to do our best to give some direction, some tools to help you determine what's best for you and your family.

[4 Bible + Phone] An issue arises when we start these conversations because we don't know how to think theologically about technology. And that's natural because the Bible doesn't talk about facebook, tv or video games. So how do we think about it.

What we are not going to do is give you a list of rules. We can't stand up here and say this is the exact number of hours/minutes each day/week is good and any more is bad. That's not gonna be helpful for any of us. Instead what I want to propose to you today is that technology is good when it facilitates bringing about heaven on earth.

Because believe it or not, there will be smartphones in heaven.

[5 Caveman with fork scratching his head] Now, humanity has always had a love/hate relationship with technology. "Kids these days and their newfangled....." whatever, has been around since the beginning of time. I'm sure the first fork got a lot of hate from the tribal leaders. "It's a fad. That'll never catch on."

Douglas Adams, the author of "A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," came up with a helpful set of rules to help us anticipate how people might react to technology: [6 quote]

1. Anything that is in the world when you're born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works.
2. Anything that's invented between when you're fifteen and thirty-five is new and exciting and revolutionary and you can probably get a career in it.
3. Anything invented after you're thirty-five is against the natural order of things.

If you're old enough, this has started to ring true for you. You see kids fluent in technologies that mystify you. You're a lot more skeptical of the selfie stick than you ever were a discman.

Which means that when it comes to newer technologies, we tend to be pessimistic about them. Sure, forks are great. But Snapchat? Not so sure. We love cars. But self-driving cars are the devil!

There's a better way to approach technology. What if we stop assuming the latest things are "against the natural order of things" and start asking, "Do these help us get to where we're going?"

One of the screens that has gotten the brunt of a lot of criticism over the last 30 years is video games.

A recent study shows that kids who are unchecked and unregulated in their game time “are more than twice as likely to have ADD/ADHD, get into more physical fights, and have health problems caused by long hours of game play (e.g, hand and wrist pain, poor hygiene, irregular eating habits). [And that many] need treatment to improve their academic performance and return to normal functioning.”<sup>1</sup> Video games can cause us to be secluded and anti-social and have a problem getting other things done. Gamers too often use games as a way of escaping the real world and not addressing real issues.

But, the same could be said for other screens that we seem to be addicted to.

[7 family staring at tv] How many of us are cognizant of how much we watch tv? We get hooked on a new show on Netflix and we binge watch 5 seasons in 3 days. Right? Netflix’s own survey concluded that 61% of their subscribers binge watch (that’s an average of 2.5 episodes per sitting) on a regular basis. And “76% of TV streamers said watching several episodes at a time was a welcome refuge from the busy world we live in.”<sup>2</sup>

Or how many of us find ourselves out with friends, or at a party hanging out, and we are sitting there on our phone looking at Facebook, and we didn’t even remember pulling it out of our pocket.

And it gets even worse when those of us that are parents are trying to figure out how much to let our kids use them. We have a lot of anxiety about it. In part because this is a new issue. Our parents didn’t have to deal with this. We are the first generation of parents who are having to answer these questions.

But even though it’s easy to blame the screens, the problem isn’t the technology.

The psychologist who led the study on video games, Dr. Douglas Gentile, said, "It's not that the games [and for us today the screens] are bad. It's not that [they're] addictive. It's that some [they] use them in a way that is out of balance and harms various other areas of their lives."

[8 balance with question mark] We know that we should have balance, but unfortunately we don’t know what a good balance looks like. We know we should put limits on ourselves and on our kids, but we don’t know how much and for what reason, so we make decisions when the questions come up. It’s like if Ryan and I would’ve just flipped a coin at each stop sign on our way to Louisville. We probably wouldn’t have ever gotten there because we didn’t have a clear goal set for ourselves, we would’ve been aimless. In the same way, when we try to make decisions about technology without a goal in mind, we are literally aimless.

So what is the goal we should have?

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<sup>1</sup> Vivo, Meghan. [“New Facts about Video Game Addiction: Problem More Widespread Than Expected”](#) Study done by Iowa State University and the National Institute for Media and Family

<sup>2</sup> West, Kelly. "Unsurprising: Netflix Survey Indicates People Like To Binge-Watch TV". Cinema Blend. Retrieved February 12, 2014.

[9 Garden] Most of us probably wouldn't think the bible has much to say about technology, or if it does, then it's probably against it. But the bible begins in a garden, which is technology, right? It's not just plants growing in the wild. A garden implies cultivation. It's tilled rows, planted seeds, fertilization and irrigation. It's hoes and spades and scythes. Technology.

[10 Garden/City] And the picture that we get at the end of the bible IS a garden, but the garden has become a city. God isn't anti-progress. Progress, advancement, was God's idea.

Now the goal that God has had since the garden has been to dwell with us. God created us to be in friendship, community, with God. God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. God brought the people of Israel to the promised land and said over and over again, "I will be your God and you will be my people." God then came as Jesus to live here on earth with us. The message that he preached over and over again and the prayer he prayed was about bringing the kingdom of heaven, God's rule, to earth.

And when God returns, God gets what God wants,

"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. (Rev. 21:3)

The goal of all of this is for God to dwell with us. So the goal of humanity, then, is to facilitate God's rule, heaven, on earth. So if that's the big goal we all should be striving for, does technology orient us to that goal or away from it?

Sounds strange, doesn't it? To think that God cares about our bluetooth headsets? After all, how many of us thought of screens as spiritual before we came in today? But as we say often, everything is spiritual. And if everything is spiritual, then we must take seriously how we use our screens. Screens, in and of themselves, are not bad. Screens like the rest of technology are morally neutral, but what we do with them isn't.

[Scripture Slide] If you have a bible, turn with me to Romans 6:20. If you grabbed one of the free bibles it's on page XXXX and if you don't have a bible feel free to keep that one. Paul is writing to the church in Rome. Rome was the center of the empire that ruled most of the territories Paul had visited. He spends a good bit of this letter telling them what it means to follow Jesus. In this particular section he talks about how we have the tendency to become enslaved by our sin, our bent toward bringing hell to earth. Paul flips it on them and says, you are now enslaved to Christ and his desires, and bent toward bringing heaven to earth. That it's not about following a list of rules, but about a constant submission to Jesus. How we live our lives leads to a goal and those goals were different before knowing Christ and after knowing Christ.

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the

benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:20-23)

Look at the end of verse 21 again...“those things result in death!” The word that is translated *result* is the Greek word [11 Result = Telos] “telos” it literally means “the end.” Similar to the end of Ryan and my trip to Louisville. We had a beginning and we had a *telos*. Throughout this letter, Paul has been saying that your life is going to be pointed toward sin, or toward Christ. Those are the two options. And they have 2 very different outcomes, results, ends.

[12 paths, one to death one to life] But more than that, Paul is saying the end of the road that you used to be on was death. That used to be your path. You have nothing to show for all the ways you used to live. But now, you have been set free from sin and God is making you new and now the path that your own is to eternal life.

In other words, your life used to be spent bringing hell to earth, but now you are about bringing heaven to earth.

We aren't talking about paving roads with gold bricks and retrofitting pearl gates on all our front doors. This is about peace, justice, righting the wrongs, love. This is about God's rule in the here and now.

Jesus commonly taught that the kingdom of heaven is “at hand.” It's as though it's just beyond the senses, just beyond the curtain, the fabric of our reality. And it's moments of peace, justice and love that allows heaven to break forth into our reality. It's our job to be on the look out for these moments where we can step in and bridge the gap.

Your life operates like this. So does your technology. You are either walking towards death, bringing about Hell on Earth, or you are walking towards life, bringing about Heaven on Earth. Which GOAL are you pursuing? And how is your technology contributing to that goal?

[13 Tech to death] We've already mentioned some ways that video games bring hell to earth. Smartphones and TVs can do the same thing. They can isolate. Sitting in a room playing a game or watching a show by yourself long enough will have a negative effect on you, whether you're a kid, a teen, a college-age person, or single or married. The end of that road trip is heartache, pain, frustration and broken relationships.

Simply put, a life of selfishness and isolation, a life that uses screens to keep people out, is hell on earth.

[14 Tech to life] But believe it or not, video games and smartphones and TVs can also build community. Video games are now more community-centric than they've ever been. Online gaming is built for making friendships and connecting with other people. Facebook is designed so that you can stay in touch with friends you haven't seen in years. TV and movies are the campfire of the modern age. We gather around with friends and experience these stories and

that brings people together. People have found each other and dated and got married and are living happily because of dating sites. See...Technology isn't all bad.

Technology that orients us toward God and others, technology that facilitates our self-giving love, can bring about heaven on earth.

We want to know whether certain technologies are good or bad. Should my kid play video games? If so, how much is too much? What is the exact number of hours I can play on Facebook at work before I should feel guilty? Under what conditions am I allowed to text while I'm hanging out with a group?

These are the wrong questions. They're trying to figure out if technology is good or bad, but it's BOTH. Because the issue isn't the tech you're using, it's WHY you're using it. Is it to bringing heaven on earth, or is it bringing hell on earth.

Now I know it would be really nice if we gave you a comprehensive guide with a list of 100 rules to make sure you know exactly how you're supposed to use technology. This is what the Romans wanted to. Just give us a list Paul. But Paul insisted that God was doing a work in them. God was making them new.

Later in his letter he put it this way...

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. 2 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.

We want to present our whole self to God. All of our wants desires and questions, as well as our technology. Allow God to renew our mind so that we can know what is best for us and our families as we approach the questions in this series. Recognizing that every decision that we make is pointing us somewhere. Recognizing that, will help us determine what our decision should be.

So, when you've got plans to hang out with friends, figure out what is the purpose, the goal, the end of this get together. Most of the time, it's gonna be because you like these people and you want to spend time with them [15 IRL] IRL. So that should help us determine how much we need to be looking at our screens that evening.

[16 Friends] But we all want to share the experience on facebook and we must take a pic of our food for instagram. Is that bad? No. The problem arises when the goal, the purpose, the end destination, of this dinner or concert or coffee was to have face to face interaction, to pour life and love into the relationship right in front of us and it gets sidetracked, detoured, dead ended when the entire night is spent looking at a bright little screen. So, when you're planning on hanging out with some friends, set a goal for the evening, ask the question, "Why are we getting

together?" Let that inform whether you really need your phone out at all, or can leave it in your pocket, purse, or even the car.

[17 Couple] Same thing applies to my marriage. Early on we realized that some stereotypes are true. Whenever we went to a restaurant that had a TV within eye-shot, I would be staring at it and not talking to Meagan. So if we were out on a date to spend time talking and catching up, I would consciously make sure that I sat on the side of the table where my back was to the TV. To this day, we make the conscious decision to leave our screens in our pockets when we are on a date, because the purpose of that time is to connect.

There are other times where we want to sit around the modern campfire and watch a movie or a tv show and experience a story together. While there are many stories that are just mindless, there are also plenty of stories told on the big and small screen that spark conversation and cause us to reflect on our lives. If Jesus would've had the technology in the 1st century, he would've been a filmmaker. Visual stories are incredibly good at helping us reflect on our lives, relationships, and how we are bringing heaven to earth. It doesn't always happen on it's own, so we make a point to have those conversations. What is this film or show saying about life? How is this film or show

[18 Kids] When it comes to our boys, we are just starting to ask these questions. It's all new territory and we know that we have to find a system that works for us. It's easier to just put on *Bo on the Go* instead of being bombarded by crazy boys all night, but we want to make a purposeful decision about it. Currently, we give them some screen time after dinner so that we can have time for us to talk about our days. But we will definitely be fine tuning that as they get older and stay up later.

A friend of ours at PlayEatGrow.com, Tiffany Malloy, shared on her blog about how they deal with screentime in their family. They set a rule of no more than an hour a day on screens. One of their boys asked if he could bank them and have an epic binge day, and they said sure. why not. So he stored up 2 weeks worth of screen hours and was going to spend 14 hours watching movies. They have since adjusted their system to account for different types of screen time. We'll post a link to her blog post about this on facebook this week if you want to read more. We don't have to do exactly what she does with her family to be a good parent, it's just one example, but we should have a plan and a goal.

If we don't set a goal for ourselves and families then we don't know where we're gonna end up. We feel lost and aimless. Friendships and relationship are key to our life as humans, and in our walk with God. So over the next few weeks, we're gonna be asking some questions to figure out how we are using technology. Is it bringing heaven to earth, or hell to earth.

You should've found these questions on a card in the mini this morning. Next week, we'll be talking about social media and what it can do to our sense of self. The week after that we're going to be talking about Romance/Fantasy and how real love and intimacy has been distorted by porn. The last week of the series we will look at how we view our relationships, are they

valuable because of what we get out of them or what we give to them?

[19 Goal?] This week's challenge is for you, as an individual and as a family, to come up with a purpose statement or a goal. We know what our BIG goal is, to bring heaven to earth, but what is the purpose of your life or family? Now before you baulk at that, you probably already have things that you value, as a person and as a family. You already have a set of guidelines for how interact with the world, and what you want to be known for. So this exercise is really about putting words to it and being purposeful with our time and tech. It'll also give us a chance to see if our goals line up with the BIG goal. We will be providing some resources on our facebook page this week to help you in putting your purpose statement together.

Imagine what it would be like if every single person and family in here began living into their purpose and goal. Not doing the same thing, but creating a tapestry of paths working together to bring heaven to earth. And yes, taking our smartphones along for the ride.

It's easy to get overwhelmed when we are making decisions about our lives and our time when we only think about things when the questions pop up. If we take time to really find the goal for our lives individually and as a family, it will make the process energizing, because we've already set our course and it will be quicker to tell if this takes us toward heaven on earth or not.

### **Communion Set Up**

We come to the table today as aimless people needing direction. This table looks back to the meal Jesus shared with his disciples the night before he was killed, the event that would initiate the invasion of heaven into earth.

His death reveals to us where hell on earth leads, and His resurrection gives us a glimpse of heaven on earth. So we approach the Table today to participate in Jesus' mission: to see God's rule on earth as it is in heaven.