

A PARENT'S GUIDE to THRIVE

as a family in the digital age



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Introduction

The eBook you are about to read has something truly remarkable about it – it was written by four DADS! Some of us have raised children to adulthood and some of us have younger families. A couple of us have multiple teens in our households so we are not writing this from ignorance but are active in the arena. We want to thank you for taking the time to read this timely book. We hope you will join us as we learn to thrive as families in the digital age.

Sincerely,
Phillip, Greg, Trent, and Rhett

Chapter 1: MOTIVATION

By Phillip Telfer

The title of this eBook contains a potentially powerful word for you and your family – thrive. What does it mean to thrive? How you define it will make a big difference in how you approach the following pages and whether or not you find them helpful.

Webster's 1828 dictionary says that thrive means "to prosper by industry, economy, and good management of property; to increase goods and estate." That definition doesn't quite match the context so thankfully there's more from Noah Webster, "To grow; to increase in bulk or stature; to flourish. Young cattle thrive in rich pastures and trees thrive in a good soil." That is certainly closer but let's look at the last option from Webster, "to grow, to advance; to increase or advance in anything valuable."

Just in case you think the Webster's 1828 may be too archaic to help a family in the twenty-first century, let's consider what a Google search uncovers, "grow or develop well or vigorously (of a child, animal, or plant)"

To thrive as a family means you're increasing or advancing in what is valuable according to God. He is the Author of humanity and invented the potential for people, animals, or plants to thrive. Better yet, He has a plan for you and your family to live life to the fullest. How do I know that? Consider these words from Jesus...

“The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness.” John 10:10 (GNB)

Jesus said He came to provide life to the fullest – He wants you to thrive, but once again, definitions matter. What Jesus taught about living a full life and what the world claims about life to the fullest are usually contrary to one another. They both can't be right, someone is not telling the truth and Jesus doesn't lie.

So what does this have to do with media, technology, and children? Parenting has always had its challenges going all the way back to Adam and Eve, but this modern era has ushered in unprecedented obstacles alongside amazing opportunities when it comes to raising children. The digital age has swept rapidly upon the world bringing many new blessings and new burdens. These changes have the potential to help your

family advance in the right direction or to keep your family from thriving if not handled with care.

The Christian response to these sweeping changes covers a broad spectrum. At one end of the extreme is aversion and disallowance; at the opposite side you find heedless enthusiasm. In the space between those poles, you can find Christians who are complacent and yield submissive compliance with the strong cultural current. There are better options: deliberate discernment, reasonable convictions, careful handling, purposeful use, and self-control.

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Nearly all races share some common denominators: a starting point, a finish line, a desire to win, and focus. The race analogy for the Christian life is a Biblical one. Keeping the right focus in this race is eternally more important than a gold medal or a perishable wreath. Think about this Bible passage in Hebrews 12:2 which says, “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...” What is the finish line and the goal presented in that verse? The finish line is Jesus, and the goal is to live a life focused on Him without giving up. If you do not have the right focus, then today’s challenges regarding media choices is not going to be viewed with the correct perspective.

The title of this chapter may lead you to think that your motivation to get a better handle on media and technology in your home should be to thrive. But thriving is not the goal, it’s a by-product of a healthy family culture that is focused on Jesus. When we talk about culture we might need to be reminded that the word “culture” has its origin in agriculture. It was about cultivating plants. What is the culture of your household? Who is influencing it the most? Are you ready to provide good soil and deliberate cultivation in your home in order “to grow, to advance; to increase or advance in anything valuable”? Otherwise, the cultivation of a world around us that ignores Christ and pushes its own agenda may keep your family from advancing in the right direction.

I hope the following chapters by our team at Media Talk 101 will inspire you to have the right motivation and help equip you to thrive.

Chapter 2: MONITOR

Greg Gawryluk with Phillip Telfer

Throughout history, shepherds have diligently kept watch over their flocks in open ranges. It is a much different approach to animal husbandry used in industrial nations, like the United States, where livestock are successfully managed by creating strong fences. Parents today can learn something from these two different approaches. There is a time and place for building strong fences – meaning the establishment of rules and boundaries, especially for young children. But as our children get older, that’s not always the best or most effective solution.

Whether your children are young or are teens preparing to launch out on their own in the future, nothing can replace the importance of a parent’s watchful presence. Fences are often constructed to minimize the necessity of the continual watchful presence of a shepherd. As parents, we cannot replace our children’s need for guidance and care through rules. They need to be monitored, but not merely through digital tools. They need a real person. They need you to give the needed oversight. Some synonyms for “monitor” are “observe, watch,

track, keep an eye on.” What does that look like when it comes to media and entertainment?

By way of analogy, consider a teenager learning to drive. In most states in America, a young person can get their learning permit at age fifteen. And while they can legally drive a car, it must be under the watchful supervision of a responsible adult. As the teenager demonstrates his or her ability to follow the rules of the road and drive safely, he or she eventually has the opportunity to get their driver’s license and the privilege to drive independently.

This should be a similar experience for our children as they engage in media consumption. As they grow older, we begin to allow them to make media choices but we as parents are involved and intentional about providing supervision and guidance. As they demonstrate a pattern of good media discernment followed by wise decisions, we provide increasingly more opportunities for them to make media choices until they cross the threshold of independent adulthood.

Parents should be prepared that during the “learning permit” stage, our children may make some poor media decisions and need help with some course corrections. If you are shepherding and actively involved you can quickly provide guidance, counsel and correction before a pattern of poor decisions develop. All the while, reinforcing in

them the necessity to learn to be guided by Christ and His word.

Another way to monitor your family's use of technology is to keep your devices public at all times. Laptops should stay in a common area of the home with screens in view for anyone. Instead of headphones for music try a Bluetooth speaker and enjoy music or audiobooks together. When someone wants to watch a movie or a TV show, do it as a family and enjoy entertainment in community. All of these suggestions give you the ability as a parent to monitor the content and the amount of time being spent. With young children you may need to preview movies before showing them to the family. That's extra time for you but it is time well spent as a shepherd of the home.

What about monitoring smartphones? That's a big can of worms since there is wisdom in delaying a teen's use of a smartphone until they are mature and prove maturity and responsibility for such a privilege. This subject deserves its own eBook so for now let me just touch the surface of the topic by encouraging you to have a "family" smartphone that you as a parent own and allow your teen to use. Here's where a combination of fences and watchfulness work together. Have guidelines for your phone that you are letting them use. This approach gives you a much greater ability to monitor its use, especially since the phone is yours

and always comes back to you. There is much more to say on this subject that we can't cover in this book so if you're interested in learning more be sure to contact us through the website and let us know.

Another overwhelming arena that requires the watchful eye of parents is social media. Once again, another huge can of worms, but for this parent's guide let's keep it short, sweet, and to the point for now. If you allow your teens to be engaged with social media (and that should be a BIG if) you must (and that is a BIG must) be engaged also on the same platforms. If you don't have time to do that then you probably shouldn't allow your child to wander off in that direction without you. It's a huge open range with lots of predators, thieves, thickets, quicksand, tar pits, and more for your little lambs to get entrapped with. Just like the subject of smartphones, this deserves a special emphasis so if you would like more helpful information, let us know.

These are just a few examples of what it looks like to monitor your family in the digital age through your presence. As I mentioned earlier, there's a place for rules but it is God's goal for our lives, that we not simply live under law and rules, but instead that His law would be written on our hearts, transforming our lives.

“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Galatians 3:23-25

This transformation is ultimately at the center of what our children need in order to make wise media choices. Making good choices on their own must be the result of God’s work in their lives.

Fences have their place but they are a poor substitute for the watchful presence of loving parents who desire to see their children mature in wisdom and discernment. It is a parent’s privilege to take part in guiding our children as they enter adulthood to be directed by the ongoing guidance of Christ, the ultimate Shepherd.

Chapter 3: MODEL

Greg Gawryluk with Phillip Telfer

If you thought this parents' guide was going to tell you how to fix the problems in your children, think again. One of the biggest contributors to helping our families to thrive in the digital age is our own behavior. The last chapter emphasized the need for us as parents to observe our children but this chapter is about the impact in the lives of our children as they observe us.

When it comes to training children, it has often been said that “more is caught than is taught” and that is certainly true when considering the subject of media and entertainment habits. Are we as parents good role models of media discernment and wise use of technology? Do we demonstrate in our own lives that it is under our control instead of being under its spell? Are we a living example of the good choices we ultimately hope our children will make? This may be the biggest hill to climb in your pursuit to thrive.

“My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.” Proverbs 23:26

King Solomon desired that his son give him his trust, observe his conduct, and emulate his choices. This is in stark contrast to the actions of parents that conveys “Do as I say not as I do”. There are many examples in the Bible of the importance of being a good role model for others to follow.

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11:1

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” 1 Peter 2:21

“Then He [Jesus] said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Luke 9:23

So what does it look like for parents to model wise media choices? There are two aspects to consider carefully; the amount of time we spend and the content of media that is being consumed. In our ministry we like to refer to it as the “all-you-can-eat media buffet.” It’s like a food buffet and we are piling lots on our plates that is generally unhealthy. Did you know that according to Nielsen Media, “American adults spend over 11 hours per day listening to, watching, reading or generally

interacting with media”¹? We as parents should naturally expect the media content our children observe us consuming will contribute significantly to the media appetites they develop.

Do your children have to compete with a smartphone, computer, or television for your attention? Do you neglect prioritizing others in your presence by engaging in social media instead of focusing on the people in front of you? Do your children observe you demonstrating self-control by keeping appropriate boundaries with your own devices? Are they learning about the importance of moderation from your example? Are you a role model for discernment and making healthy choices in entertainment instead of indulging in the predominant garbage being consumed by the masses without discretion?

Do your children see you making it a priority to spend time in God’s word, in prayer, and Christian fellowship? Do they hear you talking about these cultural issues and how your relationship with Christ makes a difference in the choices you make? Do they observe you “redeeming the time” according Ephesians 5:16?

Only you can answer those questions. They are critical to consider if you hope to thrive as a family

¹ <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2018/time-flies-us-adults-now-spend-nearly-half-a-day-interacting-with-media.html>

in the digital age. Don't wait another day to make needed changes in your own life. I love the old saying "When is the best time to plant a tree? Thirty years ago... or today."

Chapter 4: MENTOR

By Phillip Telfer

When someone is looking for a mentor, it's usually because they are in need of skills that they don't have and they recognize those skills in someone more experienced who can help teach them. It is generally someone older who is able to become a mentor. Whether it's a sport or a craft, a task or a job, or some other life skill, mentors help us learn. Do you remember a time as a child when a loving adult took the time to teach you a skill that you didn't have back then but are glad now that you learned it? In fact, if you take a moment to think about it, you might realize you would still be lacking that skill today if someone had not taken the time to give you the know-how.

In addition to being a good role model of media discernment, there is need for on-going mentoring of our children. They are known as "digital natives" who have grown up with the Internet, smart phones, social media, movie streaming and a bunch of other modern marvels. They don't know what the world was like without these new media and technologies. Unless you are young parents like my daughter Elisabeth her husband Christian, you are likely a

“digital immigrant” who has witnessed many of these changes during your lifetime. You’ve known what life was like before Gmail, iPhones, Instagram, and professional eSports. You may even have longings on occasion to go back in time to live a simpler life – but we can’t go back, we must move forward and help our children learn to navigate in this new world with wisdom and purposeful use.

Don’t assume that because your children are more tech savvy than you are that they have the necessary skills to thrive in the digital age. This is where mentoring comes in. Once you’re living your life as a good role model you have the privilege of becoming a mentor to your children. They need to learn your skills in handling everything from safe Google searches to an appropriate formatted email with proper grammar and old school etiquette. They need you to take time to explain to them why texting and driving is extremely stupid, dangerous, and potentially deadly. Sit down with them sometime and watch some of the hair-raising public service announcements about the dangers of texting and driving. They need to learn good social skills online and offline from a veteran with experience. You can teach them to be discerning when it comes to online news sources and the many agendas that drive misinformation on the web.

Teach them the importance of accountability and openness when it comes to use of technology.

Instruct your sons about the traps of online pornography and your daughters about the bondage to social media FOMO (Fear OF Missing Out). There's no shortage of subjects that can be and should be discussed with your family

They also need mentoring on how to live differently with boldness and grace when the majority of others they encounter outside the home are making poor choices and experiencing the consequences as a result.

One of the greatest assets of a mentor is the power of encouragement. Help them see the blessings of living a counter-cultural life for Christ and encourage them daily to pursue Christ and learn to handle today's digital tools in a way that benefits them and brings honor to God.

Most importantly, they need to learn the power of staying free from captivity to media, entertainment, and technology. You begin with modeling good behavior but mentoring takes it to the next level by specifically teaching your children how, what, why, when, and where with the ultimate goal of keeping your focus on Christ.

Chapter 5: MODERATE

Trent Young

“The digital age has swept into teenagers’ and young adults’ lives like a tidal wave. It has now affected every waking moment of their lives.”

Mark Bauerlein

Leading your family to have a healthy and balanced media diet is a monumental task. The response to the many changes we are facing is not to be anti-media or anti-technology, but to grow in discernment and use biblical guidance to make wise media and entertainment choices. We need to consider the content as well as the quantity of media on our plates.

Just as parents generally desire healthy nutrition for their children, so should they desire healthy moderations of media and the use of technology in the home. Moderation is the avoidance of excess or extremes. If all your household is doing during your free time together is consuming media and entertainment, then there is cause for concern. If there is no filter on the content being consumed, then that too can become a means for spiritual, moral, and emotional trouble in the home.

This leads to the idea of establishing a healthy diet. Diets tend to be successful when you have a purpose or goal. You need to be intentional with what and how much is consumed, and show a great deal of self-control when faced with temptation. You must be determined to develop new habits and resist the tendency to over-consume.

Speaking of habits, did you know that discernment is a learned habit? Hebrews 5:14 says, "...But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." (NASB). As many professionals have said, "every good diet should be coupled with an exercise plan". Parents are to be moderating through a Biblical worldview and must be ready to put into practice the discernment to know how much is too much, and what is acceptable versus what is contrary to God's character.

There is the old saying by Aristotle, "everything in moderation." Because we are all individuals and most diet plans tend to be subjective, we are prone to have different ideas on what a good moderation threshold is supposed to look like. Generally, this is dependent on our own tastes and likings. An extreme example that many of us could be tempted with is ice cream. Say you were to eat a pint of ice cream every night. The doctor says, "You really should stop eating all that ice cream at night." You say to yourself, "Well the doctor is right, I will only

eat half as much... twice a day.” Typically, when we want something bad enough, we compromise to justify why we should consume junk and do whatever we please, even if it is contrary to what we know and understand to be true.

Our church has a “pot-blessed” meal every Sunday directly after the service. There are two main reasons children are not allowed to walk through the line unaccompanied by their parents. First, children often don’t know what’s best for them regarding a balanced meal, as they would typically grab up all the carbs and fried foods if it were up to them. Second, children’s eyes tend to be too big for their stomachs, which leads to perfectly good food getting thrown into the trash can. We as parents need to judge media content according to God’s truth, and the consumption intake according to established moderation levels. The first establishment is by the living Word of God guided by the Holy Spirit, and the second is set through you, the parents and shepherds of the home. Set up your boundaries and know what’s best for your flock that God has entrusted to you as a steward. When it comes to media and entertainment, moderation will help you thrive as family in the digital age.

One thing that does not need moderation is to be

completely obedient to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If that relationship is right, then He is sure to guide you in what is best when deciding what to put on your plates.

Chapter 6: MEDITATE

Rhett Simkins

The Bible doesn't mention the internet, social media, smartphones, video games, movies, TV, podcasts, blogs, memes, or any other modern digital distractions, but it may be surprising to some that the Bible actually has a lot to say regarding the daily struggles we face with all of these things vying for our attention. 2 Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue..."

Though you won't find specific verses about DVRs or the iPad, the principles contained in God's word will give you everything you need to handle every situation you face with godly wisdom. The trouble is that we are so often distracted by the latest technology that we often neglect the quiet meditation of God's word that gives us knowledge of 'all things that pertain to life and godliness'.

In the 1950s A. W. Tozer noted the struggle to make time to meditate on God's word while reflecting on Psalm 4:4: "'Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still' is a wise and healing counsel, but how can it be followed in this

day of the newspaper, the telephone, the radio and the television?... No spot is now safe from the world's intrusion." If it was a struggle in the '50s it's certainly a struggle today.

Distraction isn't new. People have always had things that occupy their minds and have taken their attention off of God, but the problem has been compounded with the buzzes, beeps, dings, and noisy chatter of electronic media. The distractions that our culture has embraced are not likely to go anywhere soon. These electronic devices are here to stay. However, you do not need to be slavishly devoted to hearing from them.

Psalm 1 tells of the habit of a person who bears fruit in the Lord, "in His law he meditates day and night." A good habit to begin is to not only read and know the word, but to spend time meditating on the truths contained there. If the goal is a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and to seek to be like Him, we need to get our attention on Him. We will bear His character, the fruit of the Spirit, the more we know Him and reflect on His life.

Noah Webster, the man who gave us the dictionary once wrote, "All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible."

Do your children see you carving out time to read and study God's word? Do you talk about what you are learning? Seek to make it a priority in your life to dwell upon the things of the Lord unhindered by the intrusive notifications and noisy messages of today's media. Be intentional to have time away from these things, even if only for short intervals throughout the day. Make it a habit to spend time in His word before you ever check your phone or turn on the news in the morning. Try not using your phone as an alarm clock if that becomes an early morning time sink. Make it your habit to meditate on His word and you'll be glad you did.

Chapter 7: MEDIATE

Rhett Simkins

Have you ever thought about what “media” really is? The word implies that it is the middle point between two things. In the case of electronic media, they are tools of communication from one entity to another. Someone had a story to tell so they made a movie and you watch it. The movie is the medium by which that story is communicated. Our electronic media becomes a go-between to share thoughts, ideas, and other things that may be valuable or otherwise.

Growing in discernment helps us to understand that every form of media has a message and those messages have an impact on our lives. We, too, can make an impact by mediating through prayer. The messages of this world can have a gripping hold on ourselves and our families. Overcoming the power that keeps us a slave to these things is impossible apart from the work of God’s Spirit in this battle.

In fact, the Apostle Paul points out that staying free from the power of Satan requires a battle that we must fight in the spiritual realm by standing firm in the Lord. The famous armor of God passages in Ephesians 6 list the many things that we have to combat the forces of evil in our walk here, but often

prayer is not mentioned, though it is in the list. Paul says to “Take up the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...” Ephesians 6:17-18

The enemy’s plot against God’s people cannot stand against the power of prayer. We are encouraged to spend time in prayer on behalf of others to ask God to give them His power to overcome the deception of the wicked one. This is our role on behalf of our family, to stand firm by His strength and intercede for those who also need to be strengthened.

Jesus is the greatest example of this. He made a habit of getting away alone to pray undistracted by the world around Him. After one of these times apart with a few of His disciples, Jesus came back to find that some of the other disciples had attempted to act in their own strength to cast a demon out of a boy. Being unsuccessful themselves and seeing that Jesus was able to cast the demon out, they inquired of Jesus why they were unable. Jesus responded saying, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.” (Mark 9:29)

Jesus spent time seeking the power of God to do His will through prayer and fasting. We must not underestimate the importance of spending daily

time before the Lord in prayer to ask of Him to help us and our families to overcome the pitfalls and temptations that much of today's media and entertainment can entrap us with.

Take a moment today to mediate on behalf of your family through prayer and ask God to help you thrive as a family in the digital age.

Chapter 8: MATURE

Trent Young

Neil Postman, in his book “Technopoly” said, *“it is a mistake to suppose that any technological innovation has a one-sided effect. Every technology is both a burden and a blessing; not either-or, but this-and-that.”* Part of the blessing of today’s new technologies are the productive and useful tools we have available, but part of the burden is that these powerful technologies are too often used as toys not tools. I’ve learned a powerful illustration of this from a father I know.

On the winter of the eighth birthday of every child, this father takes them hunting. It’s very exciting and the child even gets to have their own gun. You might be thinking, “Wait a minute, kids with guns?” Well, the father is the only one truly with a gun, the children are given a stick that they are to treat as if it was real. If the child’s stick were to point at another person, it would be taken away. He teaches them that the intended and primary purpose of the gun is to hunt, kill and put food on the table, not to go have a fun time and accidentally injure or take the life of a loved one. This father understands what Matthew Henry meant when he brilliantly stated, *“The branch is easily bent when it*

is tender.” Typically, a child who grows up around guns, used in a prudent way, is more likely to be safety minded than someone who hasn’t. This is not because the novice wants to purposely be unsafe; rather, because they have yet to have been trained in gun safety. When the child grows up, the credit typically will go to the father who taught the child all about having a mature and healthy fear of handling guns.

Something quite comical is that a little child can make anything into a toy. You may be experiencing this now or can recollect your child doing something similar to turning their peanut butter and honey sandwich into a dinosaur licking up the remains of another poor dinosaur. “Please, eat your food son, it’s naptime.” “But Dad, my dinosaur’s not done eating yet.” It’s difficult enough trying get our small children to accomplish the task at hand and it seems like they need our constant help and guidance until they are mature enough to complete these tasks independently. Though a parent wouldn’t allow their child to play with a saw or a hammer, that child if determined enough would certainly figure out that a cooking spatula will do. Until children are mature enough to understand that powerful tools have consequences if used incorrectly, parents should be wary of giving their child a device that can not only stunt their creativity, but also damage their conscience.

We are in much need of maturing and growing in the area of media discernment. This doesn't mean we have to live life without smartphones and other electronic technologies, but it does mean we are in need of self-control and wisdom in how to carefully handle these powerful tools. Twenty years ago you would have needed a cart and a generator to handle all the devices that you now have convenient access to on your smartphones. Just to name a few items, you have the: gaming console, television, satellite, movie player, camera, radio, telephone and the list goes on and on.

As parents we must continue to remember that smartphones are tools, not toys. Just as the illustration of the father mentioned earlier, we must teach our children the true meaning and purpose of the technologies we employ. This is in order to help them to mature into discerning disciples of Jesus.

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Colossians 1:9-10

Are the technologies in your household used as tools under your control and submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, or are they stunting the growth of you and your children with the burdens they are sure to bring?

Chapter 9: MEND

By Rhett Simkins

So, you've determined that some changes need to be made if you're going to see any progress in your life and family regarding media and entertainment. Often the tendency is to make sweeping changes as you go all-in to a new life of media discernment. Your zeal is admirable, but may not be shared by everyone in your house. Your children, or even your spouse, may not be as excited as you are to shake things up. They may be quite comfortable with where they are in their media habits even if those habits are unhealthy. What can you do?

One thing you can do to ease the transition to a new way of handling media is to replace rather than just take away. When you decide to set limits on screen time or choose to eliminate certain media altogether, don't just remove things unless you are prepared to replace them with something better. Unplugging is a good first step, but filling that new void with something beneficial is the critical follow up.

Replacing versus taking away is easier to implement when you have younger children. Starting when they haven't developed such deep routines of unhealthy media consumption sets them on a better trajectory for personal conviction and

discernment. Don't be too discouraged if you are late to the game on this one. If you have older children, all is not lost. You just may have a little bit of a bigger hill to climb to reset and move on. Be honest and open with your children about mistakes you have made and that the reason you are making some changes is to focus your attention on them instead of your own media. When you explain why you are making changes in your own media consumption they will likely be more inclined to join you than if you only created rules that strip them of the media routine they have become accustomed to.

A big challenge can be that it takes some forethought and work to make this happen. Planning replacement activities does take some effort. The easy thing to do is to continue to stare at a screen of preprogrammed entertainment. No one said it would be easy, but you'll be happy you did in the end when you see the hard work pay off. This will take some thought. Bear with it. It will be well worth the effort.

The default in an unsatisfied soul is to attempt to find satisfaction in things that can never truly satisfy.

“The satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”
Proverbs 27:7

The proverb suggests that in the absence of something truly satisfying, even something not-so-satisfying can become an accepted, though not beneficial, replacement. To overcome that tendency, find some things that you and your family can do that will be sweet replacements for the formerly bitter media counterfeits you once consumed.

Make a list. Get together and come up with a plan as a family. Start by listing things that you can do immediately like playing a board game or reading a book together. Maybe include things that get you out of the house like flying a kite or riding bikes. List things that will take a little more planning like making a craft or exploring a nearby park. Think of things that you used to do together, but have neglected over time. Tailor the list to your family and interests, but do it, and start replacing the time you would have been engaged in media with time engaged with one another.

When you find an enjoyable replacement for media, your desire for what could not satisfy will diminish and your appetite for time together and other activities will increase.

Chapter 10: MOVE

Trent Young

Do you find yourself more distant to your children and to God than you have been in the past, or maybe it's been ever increasing with time? Have you thought for a moment that the distraction of media in the home could be the issue? Media and technology conflicts in the home may only be a symptom of a deeper problem. However, merely tackling the media issue may not get to the root of the problem. How is your relationship to your children? How does your relationship with God affect the potential conflicts in your home? As a parent, don't just look to solve a problem thinking that's going to fix the media issue, but sincerely desire a deeper relationship with your children.

Often, there is friction in the home and parents naturally wonder why their child's heart has drifted away. Ask yourself, "Have I opened doors and allowed bad media habits to be established in the home?" If the answer is yes, are you frustrated with the results? If you are always checked out by watching your show on tv while your child is being baby sat by their media devices, then sure, that is an issue. However, the root problem is not media and entertainment, it's when parents don't have a close relationship with God... or their children. Move closer to God, move closer to your children. Make

sure that your trajectory in life is always towards the Lord. Move closer to Him in your heart and in your actions.

Case study: There was a man who had a tumor on his neck and was directed to see a specialist. The specialist diagnosed the tumor as cancerous and thought it best to remove it in hopes that it wouldn't spread any further. The patient thought it wise to get a second opinion. He went to another specialist who just so happened to recognize this symptom from a prior patient. Believe it or not, the tumor's origin was stemming from behind the nose. You see, the first physician was only dealing the symptom, but the other dealt with the root issue. The man is a cancer survivor today.

We have a Good Physician and He didn't come to heal the healthy, but the sick (Matt 9:12). Are you in a place to recognize that you may not have been entirely honest with yourself about where your relationship with both God and your children stand? We must recognize that we have a root problem, take it to the Lord with complete submission and much prayer, and then ask Him to help us mend what is broken.

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” James 4:7-8

Do take careful watch with what you consume, and don't buy into the media's negative portrayal of the family. If you do sit down to watch something, do it as a family. This gives a great opportunity for discussion and teaching points. First though, spend time with your children in the Holy Bible. When you are sitting down, and rising up, discuss the things of the Lord and treat Him as a living person in your household. Malachi 4:6 “And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

About Media Talk 101

By Phillip Telfer

In 2005, the ministry of Media Talk 101 became an official nonprofit organization. I was also writing a book at the time and preparing a seminar, which both got a humble launch at a small church in downtown Chicago. I was glad to be assisted by Rhett Simkins, a former student from my years as a youth pastor, because I had some unexpected complications. Being right downtown in a Chicago high-rise caused radio interference problems with my PowerPoint remote so I had to make due by pointing the remote at Rhett so that he would know when to manually advance to the next slide on my laptop. It was a bit clunky but unforgettable.

This was not my start in this arena of teaching about making wise entertainment choices. I had already been travelling and speaking nationally for another ministry for a couple of years but that wasn't exactly where I started either. Prior to that I was a youth pastor working full time with teens in a rural community. I was surprised to find many of the same problems in the country that were plaguing inner-city youth in Chicago. I had previously lived and ministered in the city and it was apparent that

one of the common denominators of negative influence was entertainment.

I need to go back further still to 1989, when I was seventeen years old and a new Christian. Shortly after surrendering my life to Christ I heard a message from a travelling minister and was convicted by the Holy Spirit about my own entertainment choices, which led me to embark on a two-week media fast. No music, no movies, no television, and no video games. I also went without a cellphone, no texting, no email, no internet, no selfies, no social media – because those weren't around yet (at least not for the average person.) I also had no support. My peers were not enthusiastic about my growing convictions, so I began this journey alone. The great discovery was that I wasn't losing anything in this adventure. I was actually gaining so much more. I experienced a newly found freedom from the distractions and garbage, which in turn helped me have a closer walk with God. After the two weeks were up I didn't want to go back to the pig trough. I still didn't find many supporters for my change of direction so I quietly lived differently.

My silence on the subject began to change when I became a youth pastor and the rest of the story began to unfold. Little did anyone know back then how much would change in our culture during the following decade. It was partly due to the rise of widespread internet access, cellphones, and the

eventual emergence of smartphones which ushered in a 24/7 connection to entertainment and communication. There was also the arrival of social media platforms, YouTube, Netflix, online shopping, internet porn, and a host of other new challenges and problems.

“Media exposure has become America’s most widespread and serious addiction” George Barna

According to recent studies by The Nielsen Company, the average person now consumes 11 hours of media each day! When I began Media Talk 101 my focus was mainly in regard to the content in entertainment; the bad worldview, the sexual immorality, the gratuitous violence, the marketing of rebellion and family conflict, the fostering of greed and discontentment and an assortment of other morality and worldview topics. This emphasis is still relevant but the huge shift towards portable devices and non-stop connectivity has created new concerns and a growing awareness of widespread societal consequences. As Web 2.0 emerged, Media Talk 101 also had to adapt to address the tsunami of cultural impact that was hitting our shores.

Attempting to provide Biblical help for the body of Christ in this area has been one of the most challenging and daunting endeavors of my life. It is

like showing up at a candy convention with a message about the need to eat more vegetables. I don't know how many times I've looked back and secretly wished that I had been compelled to give talks about dinosaurs or geology, or any other creation apologetics subject. Everyone loves dinosaurs! Instead, I was inspired to address a topic that would cause people to take offense or wrongly accuse me of being anti-media or anti-technology. This has been the standard knee-jerk reaction when advocating wisdom and discernment applied to media and entertainment choices. My hope has been to encourage Christians to discover Biblical help for living in a media-saturated society. In all of this, there is an underlying motivation that encourages me to not give up. It is a desperate need for fellowship with God and the true joy when experiencing that real friendship.

“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

1 John 1:3-4

Today's social media craze is a poor substitute for real fellowship with others and with God. It's interesting that research has shown that the more

time some people spend on social media the more depressed they become. Fellowship with God is not about the proximity of His presence, because God is omnipresent. It is about attention! Fellowship is more than just hanging out, it means that we share something together. Our media choices can affect this.

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” 1 John 1:6

If our attention is drawn away from God and we begin sharing the best part of our time and interests and amusements with the world and the things of the world, our attention is diverted and our fellowship is invested with the world and not with God.

“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’?” James 4:4b-5

Does it matter to you if the Spirit of God is quenched in your life? Does it matter to you if the Spirit of God is grieved? Do you think that the

scriptures are not telling the truth when we are told that “the Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

Twenty-eight years ago when the Holy Spirit began convicting me about my lack of wisdom and discretion in the area of entertainment, it was not about becoming more spiritual by giving something up; it was about the Spirit drawing me into a deeper fellowship with God. In order to place my attention on Him, I needed to get my attention off of other unnecessary and defiling distractions. It was not about saying no to all media, it was about something already lacking in my life. A lack of fellowship and a need for sensitivity to the work of God’s Spirit yearning jealously for my attention.

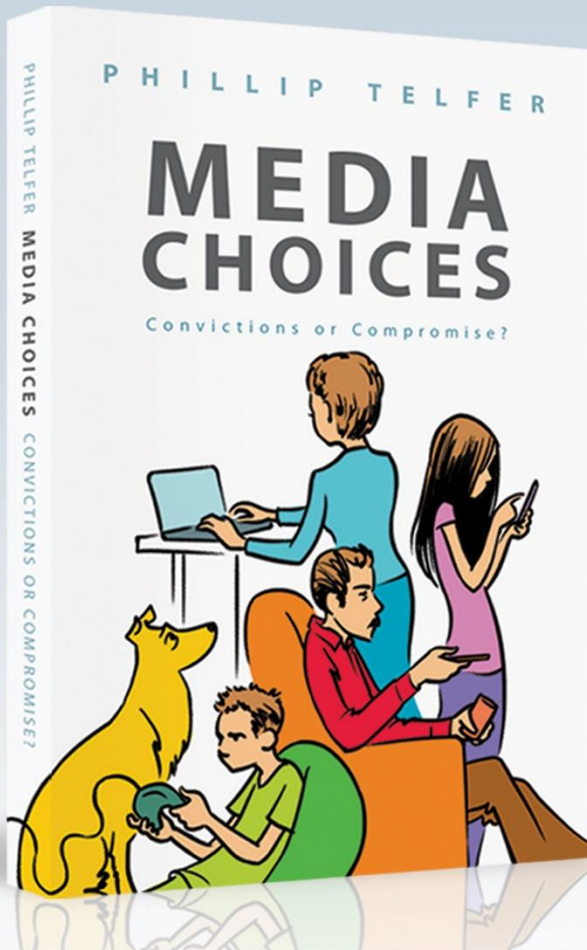
This is my personal motivation. It is why I’m motivated to keep learning how to live it out. It is why I’m motivated to teach this in my home. It is why I’m motivated to teach this in my local church. It is why I’m motivated to continue laboring in hope through the ministry of Media Talk 101 for years to come.

About Phillip:

Phillip Telfer has ministered to youth and families for over 25 years, sharing at camps, retreats, schools, conferences, and churches around the country. He is the director of Media Talk 101 which is a non-profit ministry dedicated to teaching media

discernment in the light of following Christ. Phillip recently authored the book “Media Choices: Convictions or Compromise?” He also produced and co-directed the award-winning documentary Captivated and founded the annual Christian Worldview Film Festival and Filmmakers Guild. Phillip is passionate about family-integrated church and ministry and serves as the teaching pastor at Living Water Fellowship in Bulverde, TX. He and his wife Mary have been happily married for 27 years and have been blessed with four wonderful children, one fantastic son-in-law, and one adorable grandchild!

STORY-DRIVEN ANALOGIES TO HELP YOU DISCOVER PRICIPLES THAT CAN INSPIRE BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS



Media Choices: Convictions or Compromise?
was written by Phillip Telfer, president of Media
Talk 101 and the producer and co-director of
“Captivated”. You can find articles, videos,
podcasts, and other helpful resources by visiting
www.mediatalk101.org



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CAPTIVATED is a production of Media Talk 101 which was founded in 2005 by Phillip Telfer as an outreach to youth and families. Visit mediatalk101.org for helpful articles, videos, podcasts and other encouraging resources.



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