

Microwave on Stage –

Good morning everyone! I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. I brought some leftovers to heat up.

While the food is cooking, let me interrupt with a quick commercial break...We have set up a page of resources... that can be found on cccomaha.info – which is where I got a lot of this information from.

A couple in particular I want to highlight

AXIS – Great Parent Resource

Parenting Seminars – I will be leading

uncomfortable Podcast – Jay Kim

I have to be honest; I have no clue how that all happened. I understand the premise of how they work with **electromagnetic** that bounce around, radiating and rapidly moving molecules around inside an object and heating them up.

This magic box was accidentally discovered in 1947 when a scientist named **Percy Spencer** was performing experiments on a device called a MAGNETRON, and the candy bar in his pocket started melting... it wouldn't be for another 20 years that the countertop microwave was in production.

The microwave is just one of the dozens of incredible technological inventions and advances in the last 100 years.

(All on Big Board behind me)

*Television (1939)

*Ball Point Pen (1945)

*Polaroid Camera (1947) – Instant Camera

*Credit Card – (1950)

*VCR (1956)

* Electronic Calculator (1967)

*Closed Captioning (1971)

* Portable Cell Phone (1973)

*Digital Video Camera (1975)

*Sticky Note (1977)

*Heart rate monitor (1977)

*Sony Walkman (1979)

* Internet (1983)

*Handheld GPS (1989)

* Wireless Internet (1997)

In fact, it was in 2007 that a device was released that now houses or replaces all of these revolutionary inventions...

iPhone (2007) **The iPhone/Smart phone is the one that has accelerated much of our social norms today & social media/always connected.*

Have all devices flow out of iPhone -

Ok... well, I guess it still has not officially replaced this one (The Microwave)... but with a couple of swipes and a few taps, I can have a new meal delivered here by the end of this sermon.

These devices inside our pockets, on our wrists, or on desks have revolutionized in so many ways how we do life, probably more than any other single thing in history.

And why we are having this conversation is because it is perhaps the biggest discipleship tool in your life. It shapes the ways we communicate, the way we seek truth, and how we see others and ourselves.

Ultimately we are having this conversation because it's a place the church at large is lagging behind. There is a war for your soul taking place with every tap, swipe and click.

In fact, tech companies are realizing this and putting a ton of resources into helping you become more healthy and balanced when it comes to using your digital devices.

In the last couple of years, if you have paid attention to their product release KEYNOTES, you would be aware that Apple & Google have both spent incredible resources on a digital discipleship "Focus Modes."

Apple Focus Mode - "Focus is a feature that helps you reduce distractions and set boundaries"

Android Focus mode - "is a new Digital Wellbeing tool on Android, that helps you get things done by temporarily pausing apps so you can focus on the task at hand"

And although the words Android and iPhone are not in the Bible, we are going to discover that Scripture does give us more insight into what attracts us to these devices and how we use them than we may think.

For those who may be compelled to dismiss this as irrelevant because you don't have a device, I wanna invite you to listen what scripture has to say, how old is alive and active and I'm confident that the Lord has something for you today

PRAY -

Today we are going to open up to Romans 12

Paul is writing this letter to a group of Jesus' followers that were living in the cultural epicenter of the world at the time. This was the most powerful empire, which because of their own technological advancements ([The Roman Roads - Map](#)), which were connecting the world like never before.

These roads literally paved the way for new opportunities, new ideas, new access, new revolutions like never before in history.

In fact, Jesus arrived on this planet during this booming technological time period and was able to travel and minister in ways that were impossible decades before.... And the idea that Paul is writing what we call the BOOK OF ROMAN – which was actually a LETTER TO THE ROMAN'S was I believe a part of God's sovereign plan to leverage Technology for the sake of the Gospel.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Quickly – anytime we see a “therefore” we ask what it's “THERE FOR” – because it is an obvious response to what was directly before it.... and at the end of Chapter 11 Paul us reminding these Christians of the incredible **MERCY** that God had on those who were once disobedient and enemies of God.

So this is a reminder to those who were once enemies of God because of our sin, but in light of God's incredible mercy, we should....**offer our bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

As humans we were created to WORSHIP, by nature we are worshipers, whether we realize it or not... Or define our devotion with the word WORSHIP, or not. - **Paul tells us that true and proper act of worship is offering ourselves as a sacrifice to God.**

Romans 12:2a

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind

Do not give into the patterns of this world all around you. The ways it will try to lure you in... but be TRANSFORMED... - that word there in the Greek is **metamorphōō** – Where we get our word METAMORPHOSIS... **- to change into another form, to transform, to transfigure...** it's the imagery of caterpillar to butterfly --- seed to plant... By the renewing of your mind. – Often in the church, we call this process “SANCTIFICATION” –in light of God’s MERCY -our lives being transformed or “metamorpho’ed” to becoming more like Jesus

Imagine if a tech company ever named itself after that META concept.

Psychology has a law called the “Law of Cognition,” which tells us that the things we think about determine in large part, the direction of our lives.

Another law in Psychology is the “Law of Exposure,” – which tells us “what our minds think about, process and attract whatever it is most frequently exposed too”

One way I like to put it... **“Take aim at your thoughts because your thoughts aim you.”**

So simply put... what we think about aims the direction of our lives... and what we have been exposed to aims the direction of our thoughts...

And why is this important?

Romans 12:2b

Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Because this is how we are going to be able to know and discern what God’s call and direction are for our lives.

And here is the reality.... We are all being disciplined every day by something... maybe that word DISCIPLE is too churchy... another way to say it, is we are all being FOLLOWING and BECOMING like what we are exposed to.... The things we do the most shape us the most.

In the church world, we often use the words LITURGIES... these are simply the practices we orient our lives around...

For some people, it's the Golf Course; for others, its baseball, band, your job, a TV show, baking, knitting... whatever it might be... none of these are bad things – but they can easily begin to be what we shape our lives around.

And eventually, they become the place we turn to when we find ourselves turning to for comfort.... meaning, and purpose... and somewhere, our lives become wrapped around these patterns...

For most of us in this room, that device in your pocket or counter is playing a bigger role in shaping you than we might think...

It's never been easier to see the metrics of this with things like "Screen Time" reports that your devices will give you...

But my fear is that these digital devices have become functional Saviors in most of our lives more than most of us ever know it.

If you are anything like me, your read Scripture and stories of Golden Calves and Giant Statues and think, "those people are dumb" I would never bow down to a silly idol...

... and then a problem comes up that you need to solve... you feel alone or anxious in a situation... you had a bad day, and emotions are running high... **and almost instantly "BOW DOWN" to search**, to numb, to distract...

What about you? Where do I turn...

- Where do I turn... for comfort when I am hurting? **(Not just tech)**
- Where do I turn... for direction when I am confused and lost?
- Where do I turn... for satisfaction when I am empty, anxious, or lonely?

You all would run me off the stage if you knew how often I am tempted to Replace my access to FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT with APPLE, GOOGLE, and AMAZON... - they easily become functional Saviors of dependence that keep asking me to come back for more...

That's why this device is different than most other tools.... It's different than a Microwave or a book.

See at simple tool sits waiting to be used... but our devices – they beckon for our attention, they seduce.... They nag and buzz and chirp... for our devotion and attention. It wants your worship

“Attention is the main prize of the internet. Everyone is fighting for it, and the phone is the prime battleground. The most potent of weapons in this war is the incessant, whining notification trying to pull your attention away from whatever you are actually doing and into some other app.” – Zach Hines / Death By Push Notification.

Our attention is the greatest commodity – there is an entire eco-system called the **“Attention Economy,”** and every one of us wakes up each morning with the same 24 Hour Credit on our account – and each day it wants to capture as much time as it can.

And it is all designed to give you an **allusion of control** - you think you have some control over the refresh. Like a slot machine... swiping ourselves unknowingly into addiction.

And somewhere along the line... we stop owning them, and they start to own us.

Not only to they give us the **allusion of control – they give us the allusion of connection...**

Statistics consistently point out that we are the most CONNECTION but MOST ALONE generation in history.

Anxiety and depression are at an all-time high... and though research on causation is still being done in this young field of science, there seems to be some correlation to increased social media use and increased feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Friends, this is life or death stuff...

- nearly 50,000 deaths by suicide in 2020. (for every one person killed by someone else, 2.5 people **DIED BY SUICIDE** (National Institute of Mental Health))
- Leading cause of non-accidental death of people between those 34 and younger
- Between 2006 and 2016 the number of deaths by suicide rose by 70% for ages 10-17

It is a silent Killer... the one that nobody saw coming... those are the words I have heard from countless parents and family members who have had to plan their own kid's funeral. Everything on the "outside" looked like it was WELL....

But on the inside there was pain... constant comparison of their lowest moments to everyone else's highlight reels... everyone else's perfect family, perfect vacation, and perfectly curated content... while I face the realities of my imperfections... but I dare not tell anyone, because if they find out – my life would be ruined.

And the reason these devices are so addicting is we were hard-wired by our Designer for CONNECTION... You remember in the creation account, the only thing that God said was "not good"?

Genesis 2:18

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

God created people to be in the community. Part of what it means to be made in the image of God is a being designed for connection. A God who exists in community, designed us to exist and thrive in the community. Human connection is a CORE design written into human design.

But when we buy into a cheap substitute but are convinced that everyone else is experiencing the real thing, we begin to think **we are broken – there is something wrong with me....**

Church by design, **most of our devices want something FROM us, and not FOR us...** they make promises they cannot fulfill.

But before I fully work myself out of a job, here is the Good news.

"Increasingly Empirical research suggests that teenage use of technology points beyond an adolescent hunger for gadgets toward a hunger for relationships of presence... Take away the connectivity of their devices, turn off text messaging and remove their contact list, and teenagers are far less interested in smartphones..." – Andrew Zirschky

"Most teens aren't addicted to social media; if anything, they're addicted to each other." – dana boyd

We crave connection and community, and it is because it was hardwired into our DNA. But we end up settling for a counterfeit; there is no wonder most of us end up disappointed.

KID'S these days... are not as into technology as you think. Sure every student wants an smartphone or devices for Christmas. But they want an those for different reasons than you even want one.

The things that may cause you to want to upgrade like:

A better camera for photos and video to capture your kids

Better security features that ensure your privacy.

A place to store and listen to your music.

Easier access to shopping on Amazon.

Your bank app

Your alarm clock

Your books

Your sports updates

Your Bible...

The ability to catch up on news instantly...

Throughout history, we have found new spaces and places to have this need met. Whether at the bowling alley, the park, going to the movies or jumping in your 55 Chevy to cruise the main street. We have found new spaces to establish connections.

This knowledge is actually GREAT NEWS for the Church if we are willing to look at it.

And what do you know, long before iOS 16 – the Holy Spirit showed up with an operating system, **THE CHURCH** –which is what the church was designed to be. Not a building but a community of people loving and serving one another. Meeting the deepest needs that we have, all the while pointing one another toward Jesus.

This is why we have a **DNA statement like – WE DO LIFE TOGETHER**

And when we do life together, we begin to put technology in its proper place. We don't rely on it to be our functional Savior, **but we use it to enhance the RELATIONSHIPS WE DO HAVE...**

When someone asks for prayer for a job interview or a medical at 2:00 pm on a Tuesday – we set a reminder and pray for that person at that time. In fact, we can pray over a voice memo and send it to that person!

We Marco Polo with a group of friends throughout the week to check in during our drive home and see how they are doing.

We Facetime our grandkids on their birthday and smile at them – telling them we love them. Knowing that there is something special about face-to-face interaction.

In fact – the rest of Roman’s 12 gives us some pretty solid suggestions on how we can leverage and redeem Technology. **(MAYBE ASSIGN AS HOMEWORK)**

Romans 12:3

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

- Don’t think you are better than you are. – Analytics lie

Romans 12:4-8

Use it to enhance your gift, not a comparison trap

- Speak words of life and truth
- Encourage people

Romans 12:9-13

Cling to good, love, honor and serve one another

- Start meal train’s
- Buy gifts for Mission Church’s Christmas Store
- Give to causes that serve the Lord

Romans 12:14-21

Bless your enemies, don’t seek revenge, refuse to be overcome by evil

- Don’t trash people you don’t agree with online – name-calling
- Don’t act like my 3-year-old and say, “they did it first.”
- Stay away from evil – there is a real enemy out there lurking, prowling around, seeking to devour.

Church, I don’t think God is up in heaven scratching His head in and surprised by this or coming up with a new game plan. I think just like the Roman Road’s had opened up the world to all

kinds of new evils, pain, wars, slavery, and migration of disease – Jesus showed up at just the right time in History to use the changing landscape to reach the world in an unprecedented way.

I believe we are living in a time where this digital landscape is giving unparalleled access to some evil – but when it is leveraged for the Kingdom, it has unprecedented power to help us usher in the return of Jesus and let us accomplish the GREAT COMMISSION like never before.

But we cannot simply be conformed by the patterns or landscape of this world, but we need to be transformed by renewing our minds... transformation is a process of growth that takes cultivation and time... **and I wish I could tell you that this magic box will allow me to put this seed in it and an apple will pop out...**

But it takes work... it takes discipline... reliance on community and a faithful gardener. **A gardener that wants something for you and not from you.**

That is why we are doing this series. Because we want you to LIVE THE LIFE YOU WERE CREATED FOR... we want you to experience more COMMUNITY and MORE JESUS...

we don't want you to settle of having your thirst quenched, but we want you to have access to LIVING WATER!

To build your life on a FIRM Foundation of God's love... and not the sinking sand of analytics and the approval and praise of people.