

Addicted to my Phone!

In 2007 the iPhone was introduced to the world. Smartphones had been around for a little while, but they were given a massive boost that year with the introduction of Apple's new product. Back then, I remember having very little interest. My normal, "dumbphone" worked just fine, and if I needed to sit down and work with a computer- I'd sit down and work with a computer- not stare at a tiny little screen. If I needed to mark something on my calendar, I'd pull out my pocket calendar and pencil- not trust some digital device to handle it for me. And I resisted, and resisted- for years- and then around 2012 I was given a smartphone for my work. It was pretty fun, having the world at my fingertips- but I remember my eyes feeling unaccustomed to the light and uncomfortable with looking at this small, handheld device. However, I ended up never going back to a dumbphone. It's convenient to check emails on the go, have voice to text, use a little data to get something done if away from the internet, have calendars/reminders/alarms, GPS.

For a long season of time my family didn't have internet at our home, and we were really thrifty on our cell phone plan, so, that equated to our data/internet usage on the phone being very limited. We'd make a list of things that we needed to accomplish on the internet, and do them at our places of work- before or after work. And then came the year 2020... schools closing meant students needing to be at home online and we ended up getting internet. From that point and moving forward, there were no longer any limitations holding us back on internet usage at home. And because of all the events and unknowns, it was somehow really comforting to check the news very often. *What happened today that I need to be aware of? A Google news feed, what does Fox say about it, what are people hearing on Facebook, is this true, is this false, I better send this text, respond to that text, someone might be needing me...* And all of a sudden, I realized I might be becoming really close to being addicted to my phone. The light emanating from it no longer hurt my eyes as it did years ago, but rather my eyes almost craved looking into the screen. My thirst for knowledge seemed unsatisfiable, I felt there was always something pulling me towards getting something done using my phone. I wanted to check it first thing in the morning when I wake up, to check it throughout the day, to check it before and after dinner, to check it right until the time I attempt to go to sleep.

Listen, church- we are worshipping beings. Every single one of us will choose to worship someone or something. We will worship knowledge, money, power, intelligence, fashion and style, convenience, recognition, skills, love, beauty, thrills, happiness, social media, Facebook “likes,” sex, pain killers, drugs, alcohol- all of these can become worshipped “idols”- or we can choose to worship our Creator. Now idol worship doesn’t always look like it used to, or like it does in other cultures around the world- with candles lit and people bowed before a statue. Rather, most often idols are erected through the things we spend the most time thinking about, the things that our hearts and minds are drawn toward, the things that we do habitually. Idols are put up through our desires and longings. And not only are we worshipping beings, but we are habitual beings. We are creatures of habit. And often the habits we form, end up determining who or what it is that we worship.

Perhaps you can relate to what I was saying about my cellphone addiction. Perhaps you are wrestling with other potential idols that are calling to you- calling for your attention, desire, love, and focus to be elsewhere, somewhere other than rested and stayed on the Lord. And we wonder why our hearts are often so restless. Listen to what **Isaiah 26:3** says: *“The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.”* In other words, God will give peace to the mind that is steadfast on Him, trusting in Him. I like the way the New King James version says it: *“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”*

As believers, we want that peace of God- so how do we keep our mind steadfast and stayed on Him in the midst of such a chaotic and distracting world that offers so many idols to worship? Paul, writing to believers at the church in Rome, says this *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* Paul wouldn’t have written this if it had not been possible that believers could conform themselves to the world. We, even as believers, can tend to be conformed, imaging those in the world around us, instead of imaging the one whose image we were created to bear. In realizing that we all can be prone to conforming to the world, Paul says rather be *“transformed by the **renewing** of your mind.”* Even believers, who have had all their past, present, and future sins forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus, have need for the renewing of the mind. And how do we renew our mind? Through new habits. New habits that recalibrate, re-focus, draw our hearts away from the world, and

re-center us on the truth, work, application of God's word presented to us in the Bible. And as we do this, not only does the promise of *peace* from **Isaiah 26:3** become obtainable, but as Paul states, through renewing our mind we can prove what the will of God is.

I want peace and I want God's will to be clear in my life. And so, I am putting new habits into place that will focus me less on my phone, and more on the LORD. Will you join me in that effort as well? Identify and observe the things in your life that, without a change of habit, could very well become idols that enslave and create addiction, causing you to conform to the world, and miss out on God's peace and will. Choose to renew your mind daily, even multiple times daily, through habits that cultivate worship of the One who is the only One, worthy of our worship.