

Author Tim Challies has pointed out that technology is both an idol and something that intensifies other idols making it doubly dangerous. Over the next five days we will look at how technology can rob us in our relationship with God but can be redeemed by him to bring blessing to us.

## Day 1

One thing that the idol of technology can accomplish is to bring meaning and purpose to our lives. Whether that is through getting up every morning to check social media or finding meaning through TV shows and our favorite bands. In the ancient world they had more limited options than we do today but the technology of alcohol offered many similar benefits. This is addressed in Proverbs 23:29-35. Let's read this passage and meditate on some questions:

The drinker spoken of in the text has wounds and sorrow at the beginning of the passage, but at the end of the passage says he is not hurt by them. How do we use technology to cover over our wounds and sorrows?

In the end the drinker asks when he will wake up, then says he has another drink. Why does he need another drink? What will happen when he wakes up? Some people will make their lives about following a movie franchise; going to conventions and living for the next movie release. Does this solve any of their problems? What will happen when they wake up? Do we do anything like this on a smaller scale?

Why will the drinker see strange things and utter perverse things? Does this happen with any other form of technology? What is the cause of this? How can we avoid it?

The drinker goes to wine to cover the pain of life but wine bites like a serpent. How is this true? Is it true for any other misuses of technology? How does going to technology for meaning and purpose backfire? How can it be redeemed? Can technology play a positive role in terms of meaning and purpose for our lives?

## Day 2

The Israelites were often tempted to put trust for their future in physical things vs. having trust in God. One example of this was Israel's hope that Egypt could save them from their enemies. Egypt was a powerful nation that had great chariots, a technology that had transformed warfare. God gave a warning to Israel through the prophets, including in Isaiah 31:1-9. Let's ponder a few questions:

Why is trusting in physical things vs. spiritual things (God) a foolish decision? It seems that physical things are more trustworthy because we can see them and use them, why is this ultimately not the case? What are the limitations of physical things? What are the strengths of spiritual things?

Are we ever in the same position as Israel, trusting in physical strength vs. spiritual? What is the source of that physical power? Where does it come from? How is it maintained?

What are some of the physical technologies that we put our hope for the future in? Medical science? That new labor-saving device? That new phone or virtual reality set?

What does it look like to really put our hope in God for the future, and how does technology fit into that trust?

### Day 3

Having the knowledge of the world at our fingertips has transformed our lives in countless ways. From figuring out where you've seen that actor before to finding your way to that address without getting your atlas out, the power of knowledge has been revolutionary. Getting on YouTube for that project and finding just the right product makes us truly powerful. However, the bible sees wisdom and discernment as different than information. Proverbs 1:7 makes a distinction about true knowledge and wisdom being dependent on the fear of the Lord. Let's think about some questions:

In what ways can the knowledge that the internet provides become an idol? How can it trip us up in our relationship with God?

What is the fear of the Lord? What makes it the beginning of wisdom and knowledge? Why is it the indispensable ingredient? Can a dependence on the knowledge that the internet can provide become a stumbling block to our knowledge of God? Can it erase the fear of God?

How can the knowledge that Google can provide be an illusion? How can it make us stumble? What problems can it not address? What role does the human heart play in the acquisition of knowledge? How is the human heart changed? How can the fear of the Lord redeem our knowledge and wisdom?

### Day 4

Among other things, worship provides a sense of transcendence. It gives us a sense that our lives are greater than the physical limitations of time and place, and it propels us into a larger sense of self as our lives are united to something boundless. Technology is attractive as an idol because it can provide a substitute to this transcendence, allowing us to slip the bonds of our physical existence. In the story of the fall found in Genesis 3:1-7 the serpent's temptation to Adam and Eve is that they can be like God. The desire for transcendence within the human heart is a strong motivation toward the sin of idolatry. Let's think about some questions:

In what ways can technology help us to feel transcendent? Which of these ways is most tempting to you? In what ways can the sense of transcendence offered by technology be an illusion? In what ways can it be harmful?

Cell phones can now allow parents to know where their child is at all times and allow them to reach their child at any moment. When I was a kid my parents had no idea where I was and most times couldn't reach me. What are the advantages and disadvantages to either situation? How has technology made parents transcendent? In what ways in this scenario is that transcendence an illusion? In what ways could it be dangerous? How does the worship of God address the problems of technology and transcendence?

### Day 5

Technology offers the hope of power. Power can seem like the tool for any occasion. The wrench that turns every bolt. But power has its limitations. In 2 Corinthians 6:1-13, Paul describes his ministry in terms that are very surprising. It is not great power that Paul puts on display, but instead something

that appears to be the opposite of power. Paul here speaks about the hardships that the apostles endure in bringing the gospel to others and the witness that these hardships manifest. Let's consider some questions:

Technology increases our power. Are there times that power is not the answer? Name a few.

What are the limitations of power? In what areas of life can power make things worse? Is there a realm where technology is counterproductive because it increases power? Are we ever tempted to use technology to avoid suffering? Does that temptation ever make things worse?

What is the effect of power on the human heart? Does the heart respond to power in positive or negative ways? Do we ever need to give up power to speak to someone's heart? How do we know when?

How does righteousness differ from power? How can God redeem power for good?