

Bloom

Hope...for the uprooted woman

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Multitasking, taming technology, and being present

By Ann Kelley

I can't imagine life without my cell phone.

Born in 1960, I spent much of my life without it—and somehow managed—but communicating, organizing my calendar, being reminded of important events and tasks, and Googling information (all with a quick tap on the keyboard or dictation to Siri) have made my life so much easier. Even though I love reading maps and figuring the best route from point A to point B, I have succumbed to the ease of bringing up my destination on my phone and being told when to turn. (I still have a map fetish. I open up two map apps to see if they agree on the best route.)

But there are downsides to dependence on our devices. The news is full of reports of the negative impact of technology: an increase in loneliness and isolation, social media contributing to discontentment, losing the art of handwriting and face-to-face communication, as well as new ailments (I'm not making these up) like texting thumb, sweeping finger disorder, digital eye strain, texting neck syndrome, and laptop thigh disorder!

Technology can also prevent us from being present to the moment. You only have to be where people are waiting - a doctor's office, an airport - to notice that most people are on their phones. Take a walk and count the number of people who are walking with ear buds or head phones on. Sometimes it's a wise use of our time to check email while we're waiting, but ask yourself if it's become automatic. Instead of letting your phone absorb your attention, how often do you set it aside and choose to be present to the moment, observe your surroundings, perhaps even say a word to the person next to you?

The truth is, it's not just our devices that keep us from being present. Our minds easily wander to the past (replaying scenes and conversations) or to the future (imagining outcomes). Neither scenario is helpful and both contribute to anxiety and stress. We can't change the past and we can't predict the future. Ruminating on the past or imagining the future means that you miss this moment.

Read on as we explore multitasking (is it really possible?), being present to the moment, technology and its hold on your life, and the tyranny of the urgent.

Serial-Tasking

I don't know anyone who doesn't multitask. It feels so efficient and productive, right? Wrong. Unless you've been living in a cave, you've probably heard that there is no such thing as multitasking. To truly multitask one task must be completely automatic—like walking—in order to focus on a second task.

What's actually happening is that we're quickly switching from one task to another. But is this truly more efficient and productive? *Dr. Jim Taylor at the University of San Francisco, writing for Psychology Today, says *no*, and what we're really doing is "serial tasking." He goes on to say that it is "neither effective nor efficient. ...When you shift focus from one task to another, that transition is neither fast nor smooth. Instead, there is a lag time during which your brain must yank itself from the initial task and then glom onto the new task. This shift, though it feels instantaneous, takes time. In fact, up to 40 percent more time than single tasking—especially for complex tasks."

For those of us who worship at the altar of efficiency, multitasking is addictive and can be a habit that's really hard to let go of. Allowing ourselves a single focus can feel frustrating. Be patient with yourself. The next time you're tempted to "multitask", slow down, stay with one task at a time, be present.

*Technology: Myth of Multitasking. Is multitasking really more efficient?
www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-power-prime/201103/technology-myth-multitasking

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Technology and Our Life With God
3 practices that can transform the way we interact with technology
- Are You Letting the Urgent Crowd the Important?
4 steps to prioritize what's important
- Good vs. Best
Martha and Mary
- Start an *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* group
Just Moved Ministry can show you how



*Each
moment is
all we need,
not more.*

Mother Teresa



Technology and Our Life With God

By Dr. Ted Wueste

In our modern world, we find ourselves more distracted than ever. We struggle because we want to stay focused on what is important but we watch in seeming helplessness as technology draws and keeps our attention. Who among us hasn't logged on to a social media site only to look up and realize we

just spent 45 minutes on *virtually* nothing? Or, we find our attention constantly drawn to the beeps, bells, and ring tones of our smart phones.

At the core of who we are, we desire to live lives in which we are deeply loving God and others. **What this requires is being fully present to others and living with an awareness of God's presence.** However, modern technology seems to clash with this desire constantly. Social scientists have noted that many of us are actually addicted to our devices.

The average American checks their cell phone every 20-30 seconds. Half of us check our cell phone first thing in the morning (66% of millennials) and last thing before going to bed. 75% of us never turn off our cell phones and a growing number of people sleep with their cell phone in their bed. Leadership author and speaker Simon Sinek reports that the same chemical that is released in our brains through gambling, smoking, and alcohol is released when we engage our cell phones and social media. It simply feels good when we get a text or receive a "like." We may experience the distractions and the addictions and feel powerless against these forces.

We may know that we have a problem, but the problem is not technology. Technology is nothing new. A technology is anything we utilize to make our lives easier. The challenge arises when we stop using technology and we become a slave to it. 1 Corinthians 6:12 says: "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything." (ESV)

So, what do we do? How do we interact with technology in a way that nurtures our life with God rather than distracts us?

3 practices that can transform the way we interact with technology

Examine your heart. Prayerfully ask God to show you the motives of your heart. What drives your use of technology? Are there forces at work that are leading to being "enslaved" to your devices? Is it needing to be more productive? Is it not wanting to miss out on what others are doing? Is it simply that you are suffering from an addiction to the endless rabbit holes of social media and google searches? As the Lord graciously gives insight, entrust your heart to Him. Allow Him to be your source of security, strength, and significance. For example, when I experience envy as I view a friend's post from their month-long vacation to Maui, it can be transformed into prayerful trust that He is enough for me!

Create boundaries. We simply do not need to have our technology on all the time. It is not physically, emotionally, or mentally healthy. Learn to use "airplane mode" on your phone. Turn devices off at certain times during the day (meals, meetings, times of prayer, church, etc.). Make a decision to stop technology use at some point before going to sleep and only turn things back on in the morning after you've attended to your relationship with God. Be creative and talk about technology boundaries with your family and community.

Practice meditative prayer. Research has shown that we are better able to battle the distractions of life (technology included) when we spend time each day in quiet, meditative prayer. I've found that simply sitting quietly, meditating on an aspect of God's character as I let go of other thoughts and distractions works well. Bottom line: carve out time each day to be quiet and sit with God in an undistracted way. It takes time to learn to sit still, but it will transform your ability to be present throughout the rest of the day. Consider Psalm 62:1, "For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation."

Technology is a gift to free up space in our lives to focus on what is most important. Through intentional, prayerful practices, technology can remain just that, a gift, rather than a distraction that keeps us from what is truly important.



Ted serves as Executive Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Bethany Bible Church in Phoenix. He practices spiritual direction as a part of his pastoral ministry as well as with those in the broader Christian community. Ted also teaches as adjunct faculty in the Spiritual Formation Program at Phoenix Seminary, and leads the Spiritual Formation Society of Arizona. Ted planted and served as lead pastor of a church in Texas for almost 10 years before moving to the Phoenix area where he lives with his wife, Jenifer, and children, Trey and Claire.

Is the Urgent Crowding What's Important?

By Ann Kelley

"There aren't enough hours in the day!"

Sound familiar? How often have you looked back over your day and complained about getting so little done on your to-do list or, even worse, not completing the task that was most important?

In 1967 an unassuming booklet was written by Charles Hummel that struck a chord with millions and would become a classic - *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. Fifty years have passed and the subject of this little gem is more relevant than ever.

The problem, states Hummel, isn't too few hours, but, "...a problem of priorities. We sense uneasily our failure to do what was really important. The winds of other people's demands, and our own inner compulsions, have driven us onto a reef of frustration."

In 1967 the urgent might have come in the form of a phone call or personal distraction. The TV may have distracted from the important, but there were only three TV networks and broadcasting ended some time after the news! Today the urgent takes on many forms: a text, a Facebook or Instagram notification, a tweet, an email, YouTube, Netflix - the list is endless. Each notification demands your attention and entices you away from anything or anyone you need to be present to. Hummel continues:

We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that many important tasks need not be done today, or even this week. Extra hours of prayer and Bible study, a visit to an elderly friend, reading an important book: these activities can usually wait a while longer. But often urgent, though less important, tasks call for immediate response—endless demands pressure every waking hour.

Hummel points us to the life of Jesus to help us with this dilemma. Jesus' ministry was only three short years, yet near the end of his life he prayed, "I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4). Though suffering, disease, and injustice were still rampant (and urgent), Jesus was at peace knowing that he had accomplished that which the Father had given him to do.

What was the secret of Jesus' ministry? "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mk 1:35). He prayerfully waited for his Father's instructions. Jesus had no divinely drawn blueprint

or schedule; he discerned the Father's will day by day in a life of prayer. Because of this he was able to resist the urgent demands of others and do what was really important for his mission.

Ironically, it's our *dependence* on God that brings freedom to keep the urgent in its place and recognize and pursue the important.

When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength, we are saying with our actions, if not with our words, that we do not need him. How much of our service is actually a "going it alone"? The opposite of such independence is prayer in which we acknowledge our need of God's guidance and empowerment.

4 steps to prioritize what's important

Decide what's important. Examine your personal relationships and your personal needs to come up with those things that are most valuable in your life.

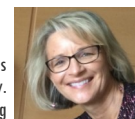
Discover where your time goes. In a typical week, keep track of how you spend the hours of your day. Take a separate inventory for your hours at work. You may be surprised what you discover! Compare this time inventory with your list of priorities you made in the first step.

Budget the hours. Use your calendar to block required activities and their time commitments. Choose one high priority item that you need more time for and decide what you can eliminate to make time for it. Don't try to make too many changes at once. Only choose one or two priorities at a time.

Follow through. Take action to turn off technology that distracts from what's important. Don't say "yes" to a request until you've had time to evaluate if your involvement is indispensable.

The Tyranny of the Urgent by Charles Hummel. Available at Amazon.com and at ivpress.com

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God isn't present in the past or future. The great 'I Am' is in the present moment. When I claim that presence, I can get through anything today.
Regina Brett



Good vs. Best

by Susan Miller

I can't tell you how many times I've heard over the years, "Susan, get out of that kitchen and come here! You've got to hear (or see) this!" Whether it's the kitchen, backyard, or garage, we've all been absorbed somewhere else when something good was going on.

I can certainly relate to the story of sisters Mary and Martha, as told in Luke 10:38-42. Here's how it all played out:

Martha had invited Jesus to dinner at the home she shared with Mary, her younger sister, and their brother, Lazarus. I'm sure their home was swept, dusted, cleaned, and tidy. Martha wanted everything just right for Jesus. She might have had candles lit and fresh flowers on the table. (Oh, how many times I've spent the whole day getting my house ready for friends coming for dinner!)

Martha seemed to be so preoccupied and worried about every detail. She wanted to please Jesus, to serve Him, and, of course, to do the right thing for Him. In the back of her mind, she was probably thinking about how important it was to live up to any expectations of being the perfect hostess. She was way too caught up in the details of *doing* and lost sight of the importance of just *being* with Jesus. She was missing out on the gift of His presence.

While Martha was busy in the kitchen with all the preparations, Mary was in the other room listening to Jesus. How could her sister be sitting in there, relaxing and listening, when there was so much to do? I can imagine that she angrily marched out of the kitchen, ready to let everyone know she was knocking herself out doing everything, while they were all enjoying themselves.

Well, you can imagine what happened next as the stress and pressure of preparation came to a head. Martha was ticked off and chose to vent to Jesus! She said, "Doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me" (Luke 10:40).

He didn't rebuke Martha. Instead Jesus replied calmly, "Martha, dear friend, you are so upset over all these details! **There is really only one thing worth being concerned about.** Mary has discovered it—and I won't take it away from her" (Luke 10:41-42). The one thing that Mary had discovered was that spending time *with* Jesus was far more important than the busyness of doing things *for* Jesus.

Notice that Jesus didn't get upset with Martha for what she was doing. There was no doubt that she had a servant's heart. She just needed an attitude and a priority adjustment. (Oh yes, Lord—so many times I do too!) Whereas Martha was task-oriented; Mary was Master-oriented. Martha was interested in what she needed to get done; Mary was interested in who she was becoming.

From *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* by Susan Miller. Available at JustMovedShop.com

After the Boxes are Unpacked

If you have a heart for newcomers OR you are a newcomer and don't want to go through this transition alone, we make it easy to start an *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* group.

Whether there are 2 or 20 in the group, women make friends, feel more connected to the community, and grow spiritually as a result of going through the study together.

The helpful staff at Just Moved will guide you every step of the way. You invite other newcomers you meet or are new to your church and we provide everything you need to get started! Military installations, through the Chapel or PWOC, can have study materials donated through our Operation Hope program. (Learn more at justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study/free-to-military) or call 480.991.5268.)

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