

“DIGITAL DRUGS”

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According to one source, Americans were projected to spend \$34.2 billion on technology gifts during the 2015 holiday shopping season. Did any portion of those consumer electronics find their way under your Christmas tree?

While digital devices can be useful tools to make our work and leisure lives more efficient and enjoyable, there is plenty of room for caution on a personal level, and as parents.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) lists warning signs for drug addiction, but it is not insignificant to note that many of the warnings can be directly applied to “digital drugs” such as smart phones, tablets/laptops, and video games: loss of control; neglecting other activities; drop in attendance & performance at work or school; relationship issues; secrecy; ever-increasing use; anxiety over withdrawal; and ongoing use despite bad consequences.

The Bible addresses at least three spiritual principles related to overuse of digital drugs. The first is the scriptural term **temperance**, meaning self-control. Temperance is a component of the fruit of the Spirit listed in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the churches of Galatia:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” — Galatians 5:22-24.

Christians are to exercise control in their lives, yielding to the indwelling Spirit of God, as opposed to giving in to the affections and lusts of the flesh.

A second Bible principle applied to digital drugs is the wasting of **time** that could be used for something more productive – and spiritual! We read in James that our life is likened to “*a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” — James 4:14c. Consequently, the Apostle Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to exhort the church in Ephesus to redeem (i.e. rescue from loss) the time:

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” — Ephesians 5:15-17.

A third (but by no means last) scriptural principle that warns of digital drugs is summarized in the word **togetherness**. Personal electronics tend to withdraw users from others into self. In contrast, the Bible teaches us to, *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”* — Philippians 2:4. Notice our tendency to automatically react to anything incoming electronically, and ignore anyone with whom we’re currently communicating in the process.

You might indeed be digitally drug dependent if in the physical presence of family and friends, someone or something on a mobile electronic device draws and demands more of your attention.

So what are we to do if we notice warning signs of digital drug dependence within our families? Call in the **Drug Enforcement Agency** (DEA); and escape the temptations of uncontrolled, time-wasting, self-centered digital drugs (I Corinthians 10:13):

“D” — **Delete** tempting and distracting games and applications from your electronic devices;

“E” — **Employ** scheduling rules (such as prohibiting electronic devices at the dinner table, and shutting down electronics after a certain time in the evening); and

“A” — **Apply** the biblical principle of replacement (Romans 13:11-14); whereby the removal of electronic habits and entertainments are replaced with wholesome and profitable activities such as reading, exercising, and interacting face-to-face with loved ones.