

Disconnect Anxiety: Reflections on the Internet

Provisos

- massive generational differences but also a personal struggle in link with fear and anxiety
- not for/against internet
- Christians- wholesale negation/adoption of morally neutral cultural trends dangerous
- those who need this the most will ignore/justify/defend

Significant Numbers

- over 2 billion online out of 7.6 billion population
- 3 of 4 check smartphones as soon as they wake up
- 50% have their devices within arm's length
- every 15 minutes- iGen (1995-2012)- 62% on text; Babyboomers (1946-1964)- 20% on cell

Imagine if the Bible was Rewritten Today!

Camp Grounded: Disconnect to Reconnect

Cybercide- deleting on line presence

Digital sunset- screens and sun down

Disconnect anxiety- lacking access>anxiety

Fomo- fear of missing out

*Fomsi-*fear of missing something important

Jomo- joy of missing out

Phantom pocket vibration syndrome

Social media anxiety disorder

Dark Side of the Internet

- not just habits but significant neurological implications
- deep disappointment in human beings
- decrease in empathy, alone time, and self-reflection
- overload on brain that we are not built to handle physiologically or psychologically
- generational impact (Twenge- Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?)

Anxiety and Fear Produced/Intensified

- can be created by helplessness, over-stimulation, incongruity, and unpredictability
- sympathetic nervous system > fight or flight > adrenaline > brain activity
- content of what we see and hear
- significant increase in anxiety as the number of platforms increases
- relationships- "A good friend should keep you off of your phone when you are together"; negative self-perception and less relatable
- compare & despair-others have more close friends>lower sense belonging/well-being
- phones taken away for an hour > significant anxiety
- being available for everyone = I am in control of my life and others' lives > anxiety

So What Can I Do?

- use it, reflect on it, read about it (Nicholas Carr, Tristan Harris, Sherry Turkle etc.)
- invite honest feedback about your useage- friends/spouse/colleagues/roommates
- get help especially if significant anxiety/fear being produced or intensified
- practice a 24 hour technology Sabbath/detox
- out of bedroom- not last thing at night/first thing morning- buy alarm; pray first
- off dinner table (Steve Jobs- former CEO Apple)
- meditate on the contemporary implications of Psalm 121

Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? ² My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. ³ He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Reflecting on the Internet

1. The internet promises and invites us into a 24-7 world. To what degree do you think you have succumbed to that world and have missed the fact that only God is 24-7?

2. In her book, *Reclaiming Conversation*, Sherry Turkle makes the following points:

Just as you can make a friend feel invisible by going to your phone, you can make the same friend feel important by *not* going to your phone...Don't automatically walk into every situation with a device in hand... The mere presence of a phone signals that your attention is divided, even if you don't intend it to be....To clear a path for conversation, set aside laptops and tablets. Put away your phone." (156, 319)

Do you know whether your friends or your generation share these convictions?

3. Your response to Nicholas Carr in *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*?

That was certainly how I felt when I began to worry that my use of the Internet might be changing the way my brain was processing information. I resisted the idea at first. It seemed ludicrous to think that fiddling with a computer, a mere tool, could alter in any deep or lasting way what was going on inside my head. But I was wrong. As neuroscientists have discovered, the brain—and the mind to which it gives rise—is forever a work in progress. That's true not just for each of us as individuals. It's true for all of us as a species. (38)

4. The title of Sherry Turkle's book says it all- *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*.

Do you think she is making an accurate statement about the nature of contemporary culture? Do you think she is making an accurate statement about you?

5. Would you be willing to try a 24 hour technology Sabbath/detox and then share with friends what it was like?

If you would like references/footnotes for any of the information provided on these two pages, let me know and I will send it to you.