

**Technology and Theology**  
**Lesson 5: Getting to (Know) God**

**Digital Technology**

1. While it has been profitable to consider the way technology works, it is digital technology that causes our greatest challenges.

- a. Information Overload

- i. 700+ social media sites – [stats on them](#) (9/22/2014)
- ii. 4.59 million articles on Wikipedia
- iii. 50 million websites
- iv. 75 million blogs<sup>1</sup>
- v. 255 million Twitter users (4/29/2014)
- vi. 1.317 billion Facebook users (7/23/2014)

- vii. The Effect?

1. Instead of knowing one infinite person, we see to know an infinite number of finite people.
2. We value information over wisdom. We confuse knowledge with virtue. We trade breadth of information for depth of understanding.
3. [Data Smog](#) – having a mind cloudy with information
4. ADD – our minds constantly shifting gears (every 3 minutes)

- b. Fatal Distractions

- i. The Dumb Phone – phone, text, email, FB, Twitter, “push notifications,”
- ii. The Internet – endless invitations to click on the next thing
- iii. Social Media – an endless feed of mixed information

- iv. The Effect?

1. Instead of delighting in the endless joys of eternal life, we are invited to trek through an endless maze of pages and portals.
2. The eternity which rests in our hearts encounters a kind of finite eternity in the Internet. For a time, its expansiveness can replace God.
3. How many people inquire of Google, when they should be asking God for wisdom?

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<sup>1</sup>Maggie Jackson, *Distraction: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age*, 2013.

c. Becoming Like What We Behold

i. Screens are Shaping Our Lives

1. They are eliminating personal interaction.
2. When we do interact, we quickly look for the minimize or exit button the persons forehead.

ii. Entertainers Twist our Convictions and Emotions

1. The emotionless reporter models disinterest in humanity
2. The mixture of trite and traumatic (e.g., the Facebook feed) makes it impossible to know what to feel when we see pain, war, injustice
3. The values of entertainers exceed that of pastors, experts, etc.

iii. Amusements Arrest the Development of Our Affections

1. Fun and funny videos crowd out a willingness to think
2. TV and movies minimize our ability to follow complex arguments
3. Appetites are created for light and easy, not heavy and serious

iv. The Effect?

1. Christians who are supposed to love their neighbors don't know how to interact with people. Worse, when we lose ability to interact with people, we lose the ability to ask good questions. Losing this ability will negatively impact our Bible reading.
2. Faith is not simply a matter of believing facts; we are to have an emotional response to God—"delight yourself in the Lord" (Ps 37:4); "taste and see that the Lord is God" (Ps 34:8); etc. Those who are discipled by Hollywood may believe the Apostles Creed but have no abiding joy in God. Meanwhile, they hoot-and-holler for their football team and drop everything to watch their favorite show.
3. The format of television and movies has a negative impact on the Christians ability to think. Thinking is a key part of the Christian's process of discipleship and therefore, if they have difficulty thinking or disinterest in thinking, they will naturally remain shallow in their walk with God. Hebrews 5:12 will stand against them!

2. What can we do?

- a. Retreat into a monastery. Problem: Doesn't deal with the heart (ILL: Jerome)
- b. Create an Amish community. Problem: The Great Commission
- c. Self-Discipline. Problem: Unless you are born again, self-discipline will lead to despair or pride.
- d. Look to Christ.

## Self-Discipline Begins with the Heart

**Question:** What will free you from the soft, warm glow of you iPhone 6?

**Answer:** The greater glory of God shone in the face of Jesus Christ.

1. When digital technology was first created . . .
  - a. It was functional (think: WordPerfect 1.0 and the DOS operating system) and clunky (think: *Pele's Soccer* and *Asteroid*).
  - b. The word processing had a certain utility to it; the games had a kind of amusement (ILL: [Sopwith](#)).
  - c. Somewhere in the 1990's they became alluring, beautiful, and cool.
2. Today, we are attracted to digital technology, not only because it works for us, but because it gives us a sense of identity, purpose, and enjoyment.
  - a. **Entertainment.** For the better part of the 20<sup>th</sup> C., entertainment has been at the center of American culture.
  - b. **Industrial Revolution.** With the Industrial Revolution came increased leisure time. It is insightful to see how people used their free time:
    - i. Religion
      1. During the 20<sup>th</sup> C., big tent revivals gathered large crowds to hear Billy Sunday; stadiums filled to Billy Graham.
      2. Today, similar numbers scour the Internet for spiritual answers.
    - ii. Sports
      1. Bigger arenas were built for sporting events (Indiana HS gyms)
      2. Today, stadiums are emptying, but online gaming continues to rise.
      3. Likewise, per advertising, you can now watch games on your phone.
    - iii. Music
      1. Whereas Rock Concerts used to gather thousands
      2. Today, most music is downloaded and enjoyed in private
2. How can we compete?
  - a. We can't win the culture by creating bigger events, better games, cooler music.
  - b. In fact, most of the church is so immersed in culture, we would only look like off-brand imitations if we turn to large events and cool
3. We need a greater vision of God.
  - a. The only thing that will liberate us from the alluring, beautiful, coolness of digital technology is the more alluring, more compelling beauty of Christ.
  - b. It is the gospel, as a revelation of God's beauty that will liberate us from enslavement to digital technology.

## The Beauty of God and the Gospel

### 1. In Creation

- a. Psalm 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies above proclaim his handiwork.
- b. Psalm 65:9–13 – The earth is filled with the Lord's joy.
- c. Psalm 104 – The Lord touches the mountains and they smoke. He has created his universe as a temple to dwell in (1 Kgs 8:27)

### 2. In History

- a. Psalm 136 – We see the beautiful love of God in his redemptive history of Israel.
  - i. Joseph – What men meant for evil, God meant for good (Gen 50:20).
  - ii. Ruth – We see the beautiful providence of God when Ruth just so happens to enter Boaz's field. There is no chance step. God orders all of our days, and weaves them into his multi-millennial, multi-ethnic, multi-billion story.
  - iii. Esther – We see the beautiful justice of God when on genocide, the seed of the serpent is destroyed and Israel is exalted.
- b. Ephesians 1:10 – We see the plan and purpose of God to unite all things in Christ
  - i. Romans 8:30 – From predestination to glorification God is working
  - ii. Revelation 12 – From creation to the kingdom of Christ, God is working

### 3. In the Incarnation

- a. John 1:14 – The Word of God tabernacling among men –
  - i. Exodus – The Tabernacle/Temple was the most beautiful dwelling in Israel
  - ii. Colossians 2:9 – In Christ, God has become the dwelling place
- b. Matthew 1–2 – The Word of God is fulfilled in Christ
  - i. There is beauty in the way God keeps his Word
  - ii. There is beauty in the way he brings light into darkness

#### 1. The darkness:

- a. The Word of God has not been heard in four centuries
- b. The people of God were under Roman rule
- c. Israel was fracturing—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots
- d. Birth came through a virgin—What a scandal!
- e. The census brought Mary to Bethlehem—What an imposition!
- f. The inn was full—What a difficulty!
- g. In attacking God's seed, Herod killed many children

#### 2. The light

- a. God arranged all these events to bring
- b. God sent his son to redeem his people
- c. Jesus came in humility, to suffer, and to die for the sins of the world

#### 4. In the Cross – Here is where beauty is defined, or better redefined.

- a. **Beauty defined:** Beautiful is that which bears a resemblance to God; ugly is anything that contradicts the righteous perfections of God. So, sin defines what is ugly; righteousness defines the beautiful.
- b. Hollywood
  - i. Beauty is merely a visual property. What Hollywood means by 'beautiful' should just be labeled pretty.
  - ii. And so often pretty people do ugly things, but because the lighting, the skin tones, and the shapes of the people doing them is attractive, it is beautiful.
  - iii. Isaiah 5:20–23 – The world calls *porneia* beautiful and purity ugly.
- c. God's Holy Word
  - i. Isaiah 6 – God is the most beautiful being in creation—uncreated beauty
  - ii. Genesis 1:26–28 – He created us in his image, to reflect his glory
  - iii. Ezekiel 28 – moral perfection comes complete with radiant beauty
  - iv. Revelation 21 – 22 – the new creation will be infinitely beautiful; the most hideous Christian glorified; if they came to earth today, they would be worshiped
- d. With that in mind, consider the cross
  - i. The cross is not pretty, but it is beautiful
  - ii. It's beauty is seen in multiple ways
    - 1. God's provision of a spotless lamb
    - 2. The Son's willingness to die for his bride
    - 3. The efficacy with which the cross redeems sinners and creates new beautiful people
    - 4. The wisdom of God is seen as the justice and mercy of God meet
- e. The Cross is the genesis of the Gospel
  - i. All the Old Testament pointed to this moment
  - ii. Everything since stems from this event
- f. The Gospel (i.e., message of the cross) is most beautiful message ever conceived
  - i. It elicits endless praise – Revelation 4:8ff.; 5:9–14; 15:3–4
  - ii. It fires the imagination of angelic beings – 1 Peter 1:12
  - iii. It liberates sinners from their lusts and passions – Rom 3:23–26

#### 5. In Heaven and Hell

#### 6. In the Trinity

#### 7. In the Manifold Perfections of God

When, and only when, these realities fill our hearts and minds, the grip of digital technology is broken. It is the all-consuming beauty of God and his Gospel, that alone frees us.

## **A Regenerated Heart Seeks to Renew Its Mind**

So the only power to escape the alluring, beautiful, cool snare of digital technology is to be born again—which gives you eyes to see the beauty of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:5–6 – For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The new birth gives you a new appetite

Ezekiel 36: 26–27 – And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Jeremiah 32:40–41 – I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

But once you are born again, you must cultivate a delight in that beauty, or you will be miserable.

Psalms 27: 4 – One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

1 Peter 1:8–9 – Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your soul.

So you will need to pursue the mind of Christ.

1. The mind of Christ is not something you achieve; it's something you receive when you are born again.
2. 1 Corinthians 2:16 – It is the spiritual perception to understand God and his Gospel; it is the spiritual affection to do the things God's word demands.

Without the mind of Christ, you can do nothing (cf. John 15:5). With the mind of Christ, you can look to the saints of old and imitate their faithfulness

1. The discontentment of Solomon

- a. Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 – Living for self is vain and fleeting
- b. Ecclesiastes 6:1–12 – Living for the material world is vain and fleeting
- c. While we should give thanks for all we have (1 Tim 4:1–4), we should always remember that this \_\_\_\_\_ *will not* satisfy me.

2. The materialism of John the Apostle

- a. John 1:14; 1 John 4:1–6 – Jesus took on flesh. The material world is good. Beware of discounting the material presence of Christ or ourselves.
- b. 2 John 12; 3 John 13–14 – To be present in the flesh is better than to communicate through any other medium.
- c. The kind of materialism I am stressing here is personal presence.
  - i. Matthew 8:3 – Jesus touched the leper
  - ii. Romans 16:16 – Paul called us to greet one another with a holy kiss
  - iii. Galatians 2:9 – We offer the right hand of fellowship
  - iv. As the body of Christ, we are to join together and build one another up – this can't be done without meeting together, breaking bread together, etc

3. The wisdom of Paul

- a. 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 25 – The wisdom of God is a bloody cross and an army of weak preachers telling the world about Christ; the wisdom of the world offers better, newer, cooler technology. Don't be fooled.
- b. Colossians 2:8 – Beware of philosophy that begins and ends with men. Philosophy doesn't have to quote Plato; every advertisement sells a philosophy of life.

#### 4. The self-discipline of Joseph

- a. Genesis 37:10 – When pursued by Potiphar’s wife, he refused himself *for the sake of God*; so too we must say no to indulgences (whatever form they might take) not by sheer will power, but awareness of God.
- b. Self-discipline only lasts when it is driven by a greater desire, love, or pleasure
  - i. Matthew 10:38 – 39 – You say “no” to yourself for the greater “yes” of God.
  - ii. Galatians 5:16 – Walking in the Spirit is a matter of pressing into God, not just saying no to immorality.
  - iii. Titus 2:11-12 – The grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness
- c. RE: technology, we need to discern where we need to say ‘no’ and why.
  - i. Pornography
  - ii. Email
  - iii. Pictures
  - iv. Movies

#### 5. The industry of Bezalel

- a. Exodus 31:1–11 – Bezalel is filled with God’s spirit to make and lead others in making the tabernacle and its furniture and instruments. God gives his Spirit to enable the construction of his world. Cf. Isaiah 28.
- b. Once we rightly perceive the tendencies and trademarks of a ‘tool’ we must use it for the purpose of glorifying God (Col 3:17, 23)

#### 6. The tenacity of Ezekiel

- a. Ezekiel 4:1 – 17 – As a watchman for Israel (ch. 3), Ezekiel is called by God to lie on his side for 390 days. Imagine the pain, difficulty, and temptation it would have been to get up. Yet, he persevered.
- b. We too must learn to be still and know that he is God. And we must persevere in waiting on the Lord. Such a command fills the Scriptures and grates against our digital world.
- c. So long as our minds flitter about the Internet, we will be unable to meditate on God. This is a spiritual discipline, but one that is also psycho-somatic.
- d. Like Ezekiel, God is calling you proclaim his word, it takes a painstaking attention to detail. It takes tenacious concentration to think about God. And if your mind is trained to bounce from one thing to the next, it will negatively impact your ability to think Big Thoughts of God.



## 7. The Godwardness of Job

- a. Job 1:21 – The most evident Godwardness of Job is in the aftermath of losing his children. He says, “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”
- b. However, the whole book of Job depicts this righteous sufferer as looking for God’s redemption—Job 9:32–35; 16:18–21; 19:20–27
- c. We too in the congestion, confusion, and complexity must also look through the maze of technology and cry out: Come Lord Jesus.
  - i. When we lose, break, or erase technology, we must remember that our hope is in the Lord, not in our digital downloads.
  - ii. When we get new things, we ought to give thanks, and pray they do not enslave us.
  - iii. As gadgets become more powerful, more human, they will be greater temptations for us. We must recognize our tendencies (to be enslaved) and the technologies tendencies—What does it incline me to do?
  - iv. We must put boundaries in place to preserve our hearts and minds for the Lord. This is the last step, subservient to the first two.

## **Habits are the Final Step, not the First Step**

### **Spiritual Disciplines**

1. Store the Word of God in your heart – Psalm 119:9
  - a. We need truth to fight immediate temptations
  - b. We need truth to percolate so that we delight in it
2. Read larger portions of Scripture – 1 Timothy 4:13
  - a. We need the story of God to inform, shape, reorient our personal narratives
  - b. We need to spend more time with God
3. Create moments in the day to pray
  - a. Use your phone to set an alarm – When it goes off, pray.
  - b. Read prayers – don't wait to feel like praying; don't just list petitions
4. Fast
  - a. From food: physical hunger reminds you of how you should feel for God
  - b. From technology: your impulses to "feast" will surprise you, scare you, and make you aware of changes you need to make
5. Give Thanks
  - a. If you don't give thanks for the tools you use, they exist in a godless sector of your life.
  - b. If you are using these tools wrongly, you won't be able to give thanksgiving. Such awareness should lead you to make changes.
6. Confess
  - a. Hold one another accountable.
  - b. Confess to other Christians in personal time and space.
7. Gather with other people
  - a. Beware of how you isolate yourself, and find ways to be with others.
  - b. Especially in worship. Following Christ is not an individual endeavor. It is personal, but it is not individual.
8. Beware careful how you listen.
  - a. If you listen to Christian radio, beware of the false teachings that are there.
  - b. If you listen to sermons, be careful that you are giving time for your heart to respond with faith and repentance—What is the danger of listening to a sermon while you work out?

## Technological Disciplines

### 1. Limit pings, beeps, and alarms.

- a. Turn off your phone or parts of your phone: It will destroy your personal presence to always be “on.”
- b. In your work environment, create space to work without interruption.
  - i. Turn off the Internet. Or make time to be away from email pings.
  - ii. Go somewhere without Internet.
  - iii. Use paper and pen.
  - iv. Read a real book—be aware of ways reading online increases interruption.
  - v. Keep a physical journal.

### 2. Create rhythms and boundaries.

- a. Know your rhythms and when you are most susceptible to ‘zoning out,’ ‘giving in,’ or ‘breaking down.’
  - i. When you are spiritually weary, it is the hilt of foolishness to browse the Internet or channel surf.
  - ii. When you are spiritually weary, look to the Word of God, a rich book, prayer, or personal communion with another Christian.
- b. Put into your schedule designated periods of work and rest.
  - i. We become like what we behold
    1. If we behold computers all the time, its easy to keep working
    2. If we behold creation, we must recognize seasons, hours, rest.
  - ii. Create space in your work to remember the Lord. Before you say that’s impossible, wrestle with **Psalms 55:17**. How will you keep the Lord on your mind?
    1. Bring a 3 x 5 card with a verse
    2. Receive a devotional Email
    3. Have a prayer book to read
    4. Go for a walk.

### 3. Take the Lord’s Day seriously.

- a. Read extra of the Bible.
- b. Turn off your computer.
- c. Spend time with family and church family.
- d. Gather with the family of God in the morning and at night.