

# Virtual World: Help and Hope

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*“The mind of sinful man is death, but **the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace**; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” (Romans 8:6-8)*

## Digital Use Assessment Quiz

The Digital Invasion, by Dr. Sylvia Hart Frejd

*Modified by Marty D. Couch, LMFT*

Answer yes or no

1. Do you text and drive even though you know it’s not the safe (or legal) thing to do?
2. Do you get the urge to use your smartphone when someone else is talking to you?
3. Do you ever feel something hasn’t really happened until you post it on Facebook (or Instagram or Snapchat or...)?
4. Does your family sit in the same room but not talk to each other because you are all interacting with your digital gadgets?
5. Do you find a ringing or vibrating cell phone interrupts and trumps everything else (or a post or text ding)?
6. Do you ever lie about your internet or online gaming use?
7. Are you experiencing a loss of interest in other activities you used to enjoy? (anhedonia)
8. Do you neglect yourself (sleeping/eating) because of time spent in the digital world? (under or overeating?)
9. Do you feel anxious if you are offline for a period of time?
10. Do you ever think about how you could focus better in real life without all these gadgets invading your space?

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of YES answers

Interpretation:

0: Perfect score. You are doing very well in managing your digital world.

1-3: Your digital usage is good.

4-6: You have a problem, so caution is needed.

7-10: Your digital engagement is excessive, so take immediate steps to bring it under control.

## \_\_\_ INTERPRET

(Stats from Dr. Sylvia and Arch Hart's research)

78% of teens have cell phones, with ½ having smart phones (w/ internet access)

25% of teens have tablet computer

71% of parents say they have talked to their kids about online technology

(41% of kids say their parents have talked to them.)

Tweens (ages 11-14) are the heaviest media users (Kaiser 2010 study)

\*\*Smart kids at a greater risk for internet addiction because they are easily bored.

Average age of first cell phone is 10. Often people ask, when should I give my child a phone? Training is required.

Hong Kong & China have a worse problem than in the US; cubicles where in extreme cases people have stopped eating and drinking and died.

S. Korea/Singapore have treatment centers: Gaming Recovery Center

**We need to consider our ability to cope, even coping with boredom without turning to technology. Since 2000 our attention spans have decreased by 40%**

**Boredom is good, it develops imagination, allowing the mind to wander.**

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7 out of 10 youth have a TV in their bedroom (Kaiser 2010 study)

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Why is digital technology so addictive?

Accessibility/Stimulating Content

Variable Ratio Reinforcement Schedule

FOMO: Fear of Missing Out

Facebook/Instagram (You name the social media) pitfall:

“To compare is to despair.”

## Technology guidelines

- a. Do not check smartphone until after morning devotions
- b. Try to end digital day by 9pm
- c. Do not check smartphone when having lunch or dinner with a friend.
- d. Take a digital fast every Sunday
- e. No digital gadgets at mealtimes
- f. Limit checking emails/texts/facebook to once an hour. Turn off email notifications.
- g. Try not to talk on the phone to virtual people when real people are in front of me
- h. Pray daily for God to help me become a good steward of my virtual life
- i. Make virtual contracts (i.e. Daily Stewardship Contract) with these boundaries. **Sign/date** with an accountability partner and **post** in a visible place.
- j. No internet access or TV's in bedrooms. Put computers in common areas. If a person is in a room, the screen needs to face the hall with the door open.
- k. Filters: Netnanny, Covenant Eyes(Filter and Accountability), XWatch (Accountability)
- l. Consider using clearplay.com for watching movies. They edit out adult content. PG-13 is the "old rated R."
- m. Set an alarm for the time you will be online. Don't merely use a clock. You will lose track of time otherwise.
- n. **Reinforcement rewards** (Buy new books, \$\$ for fasting social media for the month, etc.)

- Reasonable boundaries: which of the above guidelines will you try today?

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"And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell." (Matthew 5:30)

Peer groups:

Take a technology fast. Let them support (encourage and challenge) each other.

Offer a partial silent retreat. Give individuals opportunities to hear from God.

Balance your services with technology that is visual and contemplative time at the altar.

Resources:

The Digital Invasion by Dr. Sylvia Hart Frejd and Dr. Archibald Hart

Virtual Addiction by Dr. David Greenfield

## Digital Stewardship Contract

The Digital Invasion by Dr. Sylvia Hart Frejd and Dr. Archibald Hart

Because I desire to have a healthy use of technology and steward it well, I pledge the following:

1. I acknowledge that technology is a tool to be used to make my life simpler, to be more productive, and to embrace the many benefits.
2. I will be alert for how digital technology can become an idol to me and continue to ask for God's help to keep it in its place.
3. I will enlist an accountability partner to help keep me balanced and pure in my digital use.
4. I will not waste my real life on a virtual life but seek out ways to daily engage in real life and relationships.
5. I will incorporate face-to-face conversation and connections as much as possible and limit my virtual connections.
6. I will practice being present and in the moment with people I encounter during my day.
7. I will have tech-free times and take a digital fast to detox as needed.
8. I will not use my digital technology as an escape from my feelings and emotions.
9. I will protect my Godspace and daily practice spiritual disciplines that cultivate my relationship with God.
10. I will not access inappropriate content through the Internet and will get **Covenant Eyes** if it becomes a problem.
11. I will model good digital stewardship to my family, friends, and co-workers.

I agree to all these pledges:

Your signature:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_