

Steps toward Digital Asceticism:

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 We learn that the WAY we can become all things to all men is to pursue self-controlled, trained mastery over our bodies. In 1 Thessalonians 4:4-7 We are told that in Christ we must learn to control our own bodies, because we are not called to live in impurity, but to “live a holy life”. In 1 Timothy 4:7, we’re told not to pay attention to vanity and worldly nonsense, but, instead, to “train yourself to be godly”. It is not a rejection of God’s grace and love to pursue spiritual growth and real godliness. Godliness is the necessary RESULT of God’s Spirit and power operating in us through our knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 1:3-11).

Asceticism is training and hardening the weak and wounded areas of ourselves, often rooted in our senses and bodily instincts and impulses, so our embodied life serves the good instead of its fleshly impulses. You could also call this simply: **self-control**; a major Christian virtue.

A detox is usually necessary:

For most people, a period of time (usually a month) is needed to get the hold of the technopoly at a distance needed to really take stock of what is important to you and God’s will for you. I plan to do a series in the fall where we will all do this, but you can start right now. If you tell most people you needed to do it for your “mental health” haters will usually back off.

Steps toward Digital Intentionalism:

1. **Turn off all notifications** – on your smart phone and other devices. Or limit them to the very minimum needed for work. I received notifications on 2 apps: slack and texts. I also have DND hours where I do not get any notifications unless a profile is marked a favorite.
2. **DND schedule** – set to automatically activate on your phone, and favorite the contacts you want to be able to get through when your phone is on do not disturb. These would be people who would call you in family emergencies. They should also be people who know when you are in do not disturb.
3. **Unfollow everyone** – unfollow everyone on the apps on which you follow people. On an app like Facebook, select five or six family members, and unfollow everyone else. Your fee will now be something to look at once, weekly for about five minutes.
4. **Minimize apps – radically minimize the number of apps you use, move apps off of your home screens, or uninstall entirely.** Some apps do not have a productive purpose. Human rating apps, games like candy crush (most games are dopamine mis-trainers), all apps with infinite scrolling.

5. **Use a digital measurement**- use an app or additional methods to measure your digital use so that you can assess your use honestly. Measurement often immediately improves performance. It is ever present accountability.
6. **Email auto-response** – (mainly for detox periods, or restorative retreats or days off) notify people of the parameters of how and when you will check email, and which ones you will be able to respond to.
7. **News digests** – simplify news acquisition down to a couple of newsletters, or a couple of Substacks that you check once a week. There are lots of news digests out there, and almost nothing in the news becomes history. It usually only adds to anxiousness and curmudgeonly-ness. We usually only want to know about it so we can “be in the know” and feel the pleasure that creates. It is highly unproductive.
8. **Unsubscribe manually** – unsubscribe from as many emails as possible. Block those that persist. Seek to massively simplify what is coming into your email inbox.
9. **Dumb down** – consider getting rid of your smart phone entirely, and using a dumb phone and a tablet.
10. **Eliminate impulsive online shopping** – limit the urge to shop and buy online by creating a “Wanter list”- a list that you put things on when you are tempted to buy them. If they stay on that list 30 days, and you still think that you want to buy the thing – then you can shop for it and buy it. This will cause you to miss “sales”, but will save a lot of money and time in the long run. Ads and prices are now tailored to your online profile and psychological data – to maximize your interest and to charge the exact price point they think that you will personally pay based on your last purchases. There are very few “sales” anymore – the prices are increasingly selected based on maximizing what you will spend based on previous purchases.
11. **Make device grayscale** – grayscale makes our phone screens much less adjusting to our eyes. Many phones have a grayscale toggle button also, allowing you to easily switch back and forth between color and grayscale. This way you can keep your phone and grayscale 90% of the time, but still switch to color if you need to see the color of an item you’re going to purchase, or wants to see a picture in color to show someone. For some people, that is too easy an obstacle to come back to color, but if you have a strong mental understanding of what you are doing to yourself when you toggle color, that comedians can keep you on board with grayscale knowing that you can use color the moment you need it.
12. **Bedroom ban**- keeps smart phones, screens and televisions out of the bedroom. Make the bedroom as no digital as possible. Read a physical book before you go to bed – reading a physical book helps you sleep, looking at your phone keeps you from sleeping.
13. **Social watching**- only watch streaming services with someone else – making it a deliberate social activity. Deliberately premeditate what you will watch and with

whom, so you know when to stop. Save time to talk about it with those people afterwards.

14. **Stop auto play-** stop the auto play feature on any streaming service like Netflix, prime, YouTube, and the like. The auto play feature was created to get you to watch all night. Turning it off is a no-brainer. It's also not that hard to do in your account through a web browser.
15. **2 steps to social media-** yet you are capable of accessing them for deliberate use.
16. **Digital curfew-** a predefined period of time in which you do not use your phone each day. "I won't use my phone between 9 PM and 7 AM" – For example.
17. **Limit Web browsing-** limit your Web browsing to just a couple of websites. Defer impulsive website reading to apps like "Pocket" to park webpages and articles you think you may want to read. Most of those will go on red, because it is impulsivity that makes you want to read the article right now. By having a place to park websites you don't need to read them right now, it will help you stay on task without your mind being distracted by fear of missing out. Not knowing something that you think you might need or wants to know for survival or social reasons is a strong incentive in our minds – on a very primal level. By putting that article somewhere, you know you can see it later. You can stop all of these instinctual mental open loops from producing what David Allen has called "monkey mind", and you can restore concentration. You will usually read less than 1/10 of the websites you save.
18. **Buy a watch-** a considerable number of times we pull out our phones is to look at the time, then we see notifications, then we are looking at it for a while. By killing notifications and buying a watch, we can minimize this dramatically. This assumes that the watch is not a smartwatch. Smart watches are developed to increase the Technopoly's ability to get your attention, and divide your concentration. In theory, they can be rendered useful if you're able to successfully control notifications and pushes from your phone to watch. But this also deletes the purpose of buying a watch to keep you from looking at the screen when you need to know the time.
19. **Intentionally question every time you take out your phone-** train yourself to ask yourself, "why am I looking at my phone really?" Do this every time you take out your phone before you power up the screen. Some people use a trigger like a rubber band, or a Post-it note to remember to do this. It's amazing how effective this can be. If you stop caring, you have fallen off the wagon.

Steps toward replacement endeavors and "liturgies of Life":

1. Actually embrace the older "evangelical liturgy"

- a. have a "quiet time" or "devotional time" every day:
 - i. Read a substantial portion of the Bible every day
 - ii. Meditate on what you read and journal a little based on it

- iii. Pray, starting with what you just learned, and into worshipful rejoicing, thankful sharing of your anxieties, and offering of petitions for God's help. (See Philippians 4: 4-9)
 - b. Go to worship every Sunday
 - c. Invest in real spiritual, Gospel, Jesus centered friendships
 - d. Seek a mentor/pastor- a mature believer that can help you as a spiritual guide and authority in your life.
- 2. The Biblical norms for everyone:**
 - a. Prayer and private worship: Phil 4
 - b. Corporate worship and Fellowship
 - c. Pursuit of good works and acts of love for the brethren, neighbors, and enemies
 - d. Killing the flesh and pursuing disciplined goods in our character
 - e. Knowing the scriptures and their message- read, memorization
 - f. Seeking out good works of service and support to others
 - g. Mentoring relationships, and placing oneself under spiritual authority
 - h. Sharing the faith as part of loving others, and making disciples
 - i. Embracing and rehabilitating the creation mandate as God's will: work-rest productivity and generosity, and raising godly offspring
- 3. HPC Summary: our ministry model**
 - a. Connect: with God and others
 - b. Grow: understand the gospel and know the Bible
 - c. Serve: serve the city and reach the world
- 4. Book: *Substance: becoming Oaks of righteousness in a world of vapor***
 - a. this book is designed to walk someone through the pursuit of godliness in the escape of worldliness. It is one read widely at High Point, and will give you common ground with many other people pursuing Jesus in this flock.
- 5. Rule of Life: a historic practice of shaping a communities life around shared methods of growing in the faith and of choices about using our time. Historically, these tended to rule monastic communities like "the rule of St. Benedict". Some are now arguing for something as rigorous as this in our world of the Technopoly.
 - a. [The Common Rule](#)
 - b. Trinity Pres Rule of Life [Instructions](#) – These are very consumeristic in the sense that the Rule is a guide and not a rule, and you control everything. This is not like the rules of the monastic period
- 6. Seriously pursue Spiritual Disciplines:**
 - a. Book: The Life you've always Wanted, Ortberg (solid and relatively simple)
 - b. Book: The Spirit of the Disciplines, Willard (More difficult and rich)

Technological tools and informational resources for control and measurement:

Tools for control and measurement:

1. Covenant Eyes
2. Unplugged hours challenge: <https://www.hannahbrenchercreative.com/unplugged>
3. [Wellspent](#)- Screen time coach

Resources:

1. Cultivate What Matters [planner](#)
2. The Tech-Wise Family, [Andy Crouch](#)