

Church Technology Philosophy

As members of Mount Calvary Baptist Church, we have covenanted together to “exercise Christian care and watchfulness over one another,” to “walk circumspectly and watchfully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to refrain from gossip, backbiting, and excessive anger,” and to “bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This church technology philosophy is an effort to apply these commitments from our church covenant to the issue of technology.

Creation. Technology is an inescapable part of the world that God created. When God created man and commissioned him to subdue the world, technology was the inevitable result. Technology includes not only cell phones and computers but also mud bricks and papyrus scrolls.

Fall. Technology is not only a creational good; sinful men utilize and shape technology for evil ends. At Babel, humans leveraged the technology of mud bricks to resist God’s command to spread out over the earth and to develop a center for false worship. God disrupted this building project by disrupting human communication lest mankind continue to unite its powers to do evil. It should therefore come as no surprise to Christians that communications technology is today an important concern among Christians.

Redemption. Technology can also be used to further God’s plan of redemption, such as when God instructed the Israelites to build the Tabernacle or when Christians use modern communications technology to spread the gospel.

No Neutrality. Christians recognize that good technologies can be put to evil uses. We should also recognize that technologies are not neutral; the people who design various technologies have worldview commitments that are often at odds with a biblical worldview. These worldviews shape the way they design technology and can thus shape the way we live. In addition, technology often carries with it unintentional consequences; technologies can change the way we live in ways that are hard to predict. As Christians in a culture saturated with Internet and mobile computing technology, we have to think carefully about ways in which this technology can provide powerful tools to facilitate life, aid ministry, and do good. We would also be wise consider how this technology can provide unprecedented foothold for the world and the devil to make inroads in our lives. We would also do well consider the more subtle ways that technology shapes the way we think and live so that we can ensure that we are not being subtly led away from a biblical worldview.

The wide variety of life situations and proliferation of technology make detailed prescriptive guidelines for a whole church impossible. Instead, we offer the following principles and guidelines. Every church member should carefully consider their own situation and develop a wise and deliberate approach to their own personal use of technology.

We recommend that every MCBC member memorize and meditate on the following five key Bible verses and use them to make daily decisions in this area:

2 Timothy 2:22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Ephesians 5:15–16 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Philippians 2:4 Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good.

Each of these concerns is explored in some detail in the following sections.

1. Fleshly lusts

The availability of fleshly content on the Internet is well known, and human weakness in this area is well documented. The Bible makes some blunt recommendations, including the commands to “flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22) and to “make no provision for the flesh” (Romans 13:14). In the light of these passages, we recommend aggressive action to protect yourself and your family in this area.

We strongly recommend using content filters and/or accountability software. No filters are perfect, so perhaps more important is the deterrent effect of knowing that your activity is being logged by an accountability application. If your phone/computer/ internet use is being monitored and you know it, you will naturally be more reluctant to engage in inappropriate activity. In fact, your technology use is being monitored, whether you want it or even know it. Your Internet service provider know every website you visit, and those records sometimes become public. Most search engines remember everything you search for. Your computer keeps a browsing history, and even deleted browsing histories can sometimes be recovered. But most importantly, “the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths” (Prov. 5:17). A constant awareness of these facts is an encouragement to good behavior.

We recommend that parents have frequent conversations with their children about the temptations that they are facing in this area, and we recommend that every member has someone with whom they have regular accountability.

When you stumble across inappropriate content or see advertisements for it, learn to quickly “bounce” away. Don’t use curiosity or information seeking as an excuse to indulge your flesh.

Unfortunately, an emphasis on limiting access to evil can provoke our flesh in this area and compound the temptation (Romans 7). Recognize that the ultimate answer is in the Bible’s positive advice to “walk in the spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). 2 Timothy 2:22 positively encourages us to pursue righteousness instead. People who are walking in the spirit will avoid evil and naturally bounce away from it when they encounter it. Seek to develop that kind of lifestyle.

2. Wasting time

The Bible contains many warnings about misusing our time. For example, Proverbs 6:9–11 warns that just “a little slumber” will lead to poverty. The phrase “like a robber” suggests that the harm come imperceptibly, as “just a few more minutes” turns into hours of wasted time. More positively, Ephesians 5:16–17 encourages us to make the most of our time. The emphasis is not on “am I allowed to use my time this way,” but rather “is this the most profitable use of my time.”

A number of strategies could be employed to help in the wise use of time in the age of connected devices. Some people avoid having social media accounts, while others stay logged out of their social media accounts so that checking social media is an intentional decision. Some use software that blocks internet usage and/or the usage of certain apps during set times or that limits the usage of time-wasting apps to only a certain amount of time per day. Consider eliminating apps that you know are time wasters from your devices. Consider setting a time limit for television watching or gaming if you do either.

3. Corrupt communication

The Bible is also full of warnings about the dangers of communication. James 3:6-8 warns that the tongue (and its modern extension, the keyboard) is a fire and an unruly evil. It can be used, Galatians 5:15, to “devour one another.” Proverbs 6:19 includes “sowing discord” among a list of things that God hates. Proverbs warns about slanderers, babblers, whisperers, gossips, and busybodies. The ninth commandment prohibits bearing false witness (Ex. 20:16). Consider whether your news consumption and social media use violates any of these biblical teachings. Be aware that false worldviews and a tendency to use falsehood for political ends spans to political spectrum and encompasses even those who profess to be Christians. Be alert to the fact that worldliness characterizes not only the entertainment media but also the news media (including sources that identify as conservative and Christian) (James 3:13-18).

Positively, Ephesians 4:29 encourages communication that is “good to the use of edifying.” Colossians 4:6 encourages us that our communication should “always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt.”

4. Pride and Selfishness

Christ said that loving God and loving your neighbor are the greatest commandments, the essence of the entire law (Matt. 22:37-40). Technology can easily push us towards a self-centered life where we pursue our own interests and ignore the needs of others. But Philippians 2:4 exhorts us, “do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

For example, there is a large difference between using social media as a channel to encourage others and using social media to construct and promote an image of yourself.

5. Attentiveness to Embedded Worldviews

Those who develop technology all live and work within the framework of their own worldviews. Many think that technology can provide the solutions to humanity’s deepest

problems. They think our problems are technical, not moral. Many think that humans are basically good and that giving everybody the power to communicate with everybody will be a force for good. Many see technology not as a way of harnessing God's creation in subjection to God but as a way of overcoming the creational norms and limitations that God has put in place. Many see technology as a way of undermining God-ordained structures of authority. Be aware that a technological society has the tendency to make old wisdom, such as that found in the Bible, seem outdated and in need of replacement. In a society like ours, information is often confused with wisdom.

Christians should be aware of these embedded worldviews and modify their use of technology accordingly.

Special Concerns for Parents

Consider carefully at what age your children need and can wisely handle access to various technologies. The fact that your child can legally drive at age fifteen (in South Carolina) does not mean that they need to or should be allowed to drive at that age. Similarly, the fact that your child can get a social media page at age thirteen does not mean that they should. Children face multiple dangers on social media, including the following.

Predators and stalkers: This has always been a risk for teenage girls, but in our gender-confused world this is an increasing risk for boys as well. We teach our children to beware of strangers, but online it is easy to pretend to be someone you are not.

Influence by harmful ideologies: Many teenage girls learn about eating disorders, self-harm, and gender dysphoria primarily through social media. Young men and women are exposed not only to pornography but also to warped perspectives of life and family and human sexuality.

Social skills: Teens are developing the social skills they need for life, and social media warps and hinders that development. Bullying and shaming and biting sarcasm are rampant and unchecked by the real-life reactions that balance and temper them.

Intellectual skills: Teens need to be developing reading skills, writing skills, lengthened attention spans, and other intellectual skills needed for life. Social media does not facilitate, and in some cases actually hinders, this development.

Worldliness: Like any advertisement-based media, your children are exposed to the commercialism and materialism of our age. But social media "influencers" are paid but subtle promoters of products too.

Friendships: Parents monitor and guard their children's friendships, but this is much more difficult on social media.

Be aware of the access to the world that a child has when they are given a smartphone and be alert to the kinds of temptations and dangers that children are susceptible to via the variety of messaging apps that are currently available. The friendships that children and teens form are formative and should be as vigilant if not more so with online friendships. Children need more restrictive privacy settings and more supervision in online activities not

only to protect them from predators but also because they need to be trained in how to wisely make use of technology.

The trendy social media platforms change regularly, and each platform has unique dangers. Be careful about giving your children access to technology you do not understand and do not use yourself.