



Many have had this experience. We buy a bag of crisps, planning to eat a handful. But suddenly the whole package is gone and our body reminds us that a handful would have been better. Or maybe you prefer ice cream and you struggle to stop after one scoop.

What we consume in our mouths, impacts our entire bodies. In the same way, what we consume with our eyes and ears changes the way we think, feel, and act. Because screens have become an important part of life, we want to learn to use them in a way that leads us closer to Christ.

Two shifts in thinking can help us with this goal: Consume less content and consume better content.

Consume less

A typical internet user spends 6 hours and 40 minutes online every day. This is a lot of material filling our minds.

The mere volume takes away time we could otherwise spend pursuing deep community, discipling our families, showing love to our neighbors, enjoying God's creation, or numerous other enriching activities. Consuming large amounts of screen content also shortens our attention spans so we lose our ability to focus and do deep, meaningful work.

Setting a goal to consume less screen content, instantly opens up opportunities to pursue the abundant life God has for us.

Consume better content


A second way to be mindful of what we are listening to on our phones is to consume better content.

The Bible instructs us to fill our minds with what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). Although Paul's listeners weren't struggling with addiction to their smartphones, we can use this verse to judge the content we are consuming.

This doesn't mean that we can only consume Christian material. For some, watching a funny television show with family could be an important bonding experience. But we do want to be intentional about consuming things that lead us closer to the type of people we want to be.

Consumers of God

Finally, as endless as internet content seems - we have a God who is truly endless! He is unfathomable - too big for us to understand. He is incomprehensible - beyond our ability to fully know. Yet this amazing God makes Himself available to us. Those who seek Him will find. We could spend all of our lives consuming Him and never run out of mysteries to explore.



Devotional Study

OCTOBER

What are We Listening To?

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5. Paul uses strong language to describe how he protects the thoughts in his mind. How protective are you of what goes into your mind? How do you think this impacts you? Your family? Your ministry?

In Psalm 101:3, David wrote, 'I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.' If you were to write this Psalm honestly, what would you have to write about the things you consume? What things are you listening to that you would need to eliminate to be able to say this Psalm truthfully?

Paul prays in Ephesians 3:19 that we would know the love of God that surpasses knowledge. What steps can you take to grow in the knowledge of God? How can what you listen to or watch on screens lead to greater knowledge of God?

Read Psalm 145:3, Job 5:9, and Isaiah 40:28. God is too wonderful for us to comprehend, yet so often we are bored in our devotional times and entertained as we scroll social media and watch TV. Why is this? What can we do to encounter God in ways that awaken our deepest longings?

Psalm 37:4 says to delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Write about a time when your heart delighted in God.

What are ways that you are looking for other things to satisfy your desires?

Going Deeper - Practical Tips and Personal Reflection:

Here are some practical tips to help consume less content while consuming better content:

- Set screen-free zones and times such as 'I will not use screens between 6:00-7:30. And I will not use screens in my bedroom.'
- Don't wake up to your phone. Instead commit to reading an entire chapter of the Bible or spend 30 minutes connecting with your family before you look at your phone.
- Use screens in the home for connection. Have a family movie night and discuss it afterwards or listen to a podcast while cooking dinner together.
- Find other ways to relax and recharge that don't involve a screen so that when you are using a screen you are less tempted to waste time on uninspiring content.

The average person uses screens for 6 hours and 40 minutes every day. Did this statistic surprise you? How many hours would you prefer to spend on a screen and what steps can you take to get there?

Think of a time in the past month when you felt fulfilled. What were you doing? How did screens enhance or detract from this time?

Pick one of the tips from the list above. How will you implement it this week?

We are to think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). Think about 3 things you listened to or looked at on a screen this week. How did they or didn't they fit this instruction?