

Modern Media

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[0 : 00] Now, if you will, turn in your Bibles with me to Revelation chapter 20. Revelation chapter 20. Today and next week, we will discuss technology and media with a particular emphasis on social media.

Now, Revelation 20 may seem like a very strange place to begin, but I think you'll understand why I've chosen this passage in just a moment. Revelation 20 begins, Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit in a great chain.

And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the pit and shut it and sealed it over him so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended.

After that, he must be released for a little while. Now, this is probably the most debated passage in all of Revelation, but I'm not here to teach eschatology this morning.

I'm not here to teach you about the end times. Sometimes my application of the text will be a bit more narrow. In this passage, the Apostle John sees an angel coming down from heaven. He arrests Satan and essentially throws him into a prison for a long period of time.

[1 : 32] The text says a thousand years, but I personally believe that's symbolic rather than literal. Regarding the timeline, the important thing to see is that Satan is bound for a thousand years, a relatively long period of time, before he is released again for a little while.

When we compare the two, we see that he's bound for a long time and released for a short time in the end. Now, what happens when Satan is given freedom? What did he do before he was bound, and what will he do when he's released again, according to this text?

Well, the angel seized Satan and bound him for a thousand years, threw him into the pit, shut it, sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended.

1 Peter 5.8 says, Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Now, destruction. Deception. This is what the devil wants. This is what he's after. This is what he does whenever he has an opportunity.

[2 : 54] I think of the devil as a dog on a leash. He's rabid. He's vicious. He would love nothing more than to eat us alive. But he's on a leash.

Meaning he can't go any farther than what God allows him to go. Now, unfortunately, some people think of God and Satan as locked in a cosmic battle with one another as we all wait to see who's going to win in the end.

No, that's not the case at all. Satan is merely a dog on God's leash. He can't go any farther than God allows him to go. Even so, notice what happens here in Revelation 20.

The devil is relatively free. Then we see God yank back that chain. He holds it back for a long period of time. And then he lets it loose again for a little while.

Now, what happens when God lets the devil run a bit farther? He deceives the nations, right? He deceives the nations.

[3 : 59] His influence infiltrates most, if not all, the nations on the earth. On what is presumably a mass scale, he leads people away from the truth.

He keeps them in darkness. He destroys them through lies and through unrighteousness. Now, regardless of how anyone interprets Revelation 20, I am convinced that God must have pulled back on Satan's leash after the death and resurrection of Christ.

Jesus asked in Matthew 12, how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man?

How was the gospel able to spread so freely and so quickly in the early days of the church unless Satan was bound to some degree, right?

When Bible scholars and historians studied the spread of the gospel in the first few centuries of the church, and keep in mind that it spread against all odds, it spread against a lot of even violent opposition.

[5 : 13] They almost always point to innovations within the Roman Empire. They talk about how the empire brought all of the different nations together under one political rule, which allowed people to travel from one nation to the next and to the next without much hindrance at all, if any.

It was like crossing the border between Indiana and Michigan. You're not going to reach a checkpoint where somebody's not going to allow you to cross that border like you would if you were trying to travel into another country, say Mexico.

Now, the other thing scholars often mention is the innovation of Roman roadways. In more ways than one, the Roman Empire made travel relatively easy.

It was remarkably easy compared to prior days. So, in other words, God's providence in history ensured that the church could carry the gospel to the ends of the earth at precisely the right time.

Of course, Satan would have loved to stop it. He tried to stop it through the persecution of Christians, if nothing else.

[6 : 28] But he was mostly powerless. Despite his best efforts, the gospel continued to spread. The kingdom of God permeated the nations all over the known world and continued to be a predominant influence throughout the world for the next 2,000 years.

Now, personally, I believe that's what Revelation 20 describes. I'm not going to argue with anyone over it, though. Regardless, the gospel's spread is, at the very least, an example of God restraining the devil to some degree.

If Satan had full and free reign, I think we'd have to assume the nations would just remain in darkness because that's exactly what he wants. That's what he's striving for. That's what he's trying to accomplish.

We would be in darkness. End of story. If he could have what he wanted, the nations would be altogether deceived. No one would know the truth. No one would see the light of the gospel.

No one would do what is right. Now, with that in mind, what do you suppose it would look like for God to release Satan from his prison?

[7 : 38] Let's say, modern times, today. How would the devil go about deceiving the nations? How could he effectively reassert his influence over the world at large?

Now, if the gospel was able to spread because the Romans developed easier ways to travel in the first century, how might Satan accomplish something similar in our day?

Granted, all we can do is speculate. But if your mission is to influence as many people as possible in a relatively short amount of time, I cannot think of a better tool to use than media.

Right? By media, I mean radio, television, movies, music, the internet, social networks. The speed at which a message can spread in the 21st century is just incredible.

Incredible. Occasionally, you know, I'll hear about some obscure event that took place in some unknown little small village on the other side of the world.

[8 : 51] That's impressive enough. But then I'll come home from work and find out my wife's already heard about it. I might come here and find out you've all heard about it. How is that even possible? Well, before I go any further, let me pause to clarify.

First of all, I don't know whether God has released Satan from his prison as Revelation 20 describes. I would not be surprised. But I don't actually know. And secondly, I realize these technologies we're talking about are really neither good nor evil.

By themselves, anyway. They are tools that can be used for good. They can be used for evil.

They're kind of like a toy hammer in the hand of my two-year-old son. He may quietly pretend like he's fixing something.

Or he may hit his sister over the head with it, depending on his mood. It could go either way.

Obviously, I'm not going to blame the hammer if he hits his sister. Modern technology can certainly be used for all kinds of good.

But it has inherent dangers. And that's the first thing we really want to talk about. The devil is real.

[10 : 06] The devil is real, and he wants nothing more than the ability to deceive and destroy.

That's his mission. That's his purpose. Mass media and the World Wide Web are tools for deceiving

as many people as possible in a short amount of time if the Lord allows the devil to get his hands on it.

Which is the first major point I want to make to you. Now, throughout this study, today and next week, I have a series of bullet points. I'll spend more time on some than others. But I will strive to emphasize each point as we go.

So if you're taking notes, here's my first. Number one, modern media is potentially very dangerous. Modern media is potentially very dangerous. By the way, I'll continue to use that term, modern media, to encompass everything from TV to the internet to social networks.

It includes the devices we use to access these many things, such as smartphones, computers. I'm really talking about all of the technology we use to connect, to communicate, to spread entertainment, to spread information.

[11:28] So it's just a catch-all term for all of this stuff. Modern media is potentially very dangerous. And to be candid, I'm comfortable dropping the word potentially.

I think it would be entirely appropriate to say modern media is very dangerous. Theoretically, these technologies could be used to spread the truth, but experience tells me they are much better conduits for evil.

I often come across graphs that will show the rise of various problems, particularly among young people.

Anxiety, depression, drug use, sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, transgenderism, violent behavior, suicide, and so on.

And most of these charts are very similar to one another. In the 1960s and the 1970s, we see a slight uptick in these problems, followed by the slow and steady increase over the next few decades.

[12:39] Then in the early 2000s, approximately 2003 to 2010, we see these sharp spikes. It's as though someone just flipped a switch, the floodgates opened, and outpoured all of these devastating trends with very little restraint at all.

So what happened? Most of the adults in this room are familiar with the countercultural movements of the 60s.

Think of the Woodstock Music Festival, things such as that. Sex, drugs, radical feminism, free love, the mainstream adoption of Eastern religious practices, young people asserting autonomy and rejecting their parents' traditional values.

many things began to change in little pockets of our society. But they didn't remain in these little pockets of society. They spread.

Now how do we export what a minority of teenagers and young adults are doing in places like New York or San Francisco? How do we export that to small, rural, conservative towns all across America?

[14:03] The answer is mass media. That plays a huge part in it. So all of these godless ideas and behaviors of a minority spread quickly, more quickly than they ever would have, without radio and television.

For the first time in history, virtually any aspect of the outside world could stream into private living rooms day after day, night after night.

So what corresponds with the drastic spikes in depression and suicide and other problems in the early 2000s? Well, you won't be surprised. Personal computers, the internet, social media, smartphones, they're all widely adopted during this time period.

Suddenly, the outside world could stream into more than our living rooms. It comes right into our pockets. It goes with us everywhere.

Apple released the first iPhone in 2007. By then, most people had already gotten personal computers at home. The first social networks were up and running.

[15:24] Young people were already adopting them en masse. Then, all of it just could follow us everywhere we went. We could access the good, the bad, and the ugly anywhere at any moment.

And it's been that way ever since. Look at a chart that graphs these problems that I've mentioned. Lay it over a chart showing the adoption of modern media and you will see they are virtually identical.

I don't believe that's a coincidence. It may not be the only factor, but I don't believe it's a coincidence. You're probably familiar with the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11.

People are sinful. They're sinful when they're left to themselves. One sinner is going to be sinful, but putting a lot of sinners together, unifying a lot of sinners has a way of compounding the sinfulness. They influence one another. They increasingly fuel one another to become worse and worse. The Lord said to the people at Babel, Behold, they are one people and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

[16:39] We watched an episode of Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman, last night. And some of the teenagers in town had the idea they were going to play this game where they run their horses at full speed to a cliff and whoever stops last is the winner.

Now that's crazy. That's a terrible idea and one of the teenagers tried to tell them this is a really bad idea. But guess who showed up to be a part of it all? Why?

Because the rest of the group wanted to do it. It's weird how that works, isn't it? Well, God had to intervene back at the Tower of Babel by removing their ability to communicate with one another because they had banded together in their sin and they were making the problems even worse. They were compounding the issues. I suspect you've heard a few lectures on the dangers of peer pressure. I know I did when I was a teenager. I once read about an experiment where people were asked a series of questions.

Very simple questions. For example, they would look at three lines on a sheet of paper. Which one of these lines is the shortest? And the answer was always really obvious. So the participants, they always got the answer right.

[17:51] It was easy. But then they filled the room with actors. They filled the room with actors and the actors were coached to give wrong answers to the questions.

All of them. But the test subject, he or she didn't know they were actors. So they're sitting there listening to all these actors give the wrong answer going, what is going on here?

And you know what the people found out? The vast majority of those test subjects would give the wrong answers when everybody else gave the wrong answers because they felt pressured to do so by the group.

when we turn on the TV or we scroll on our smartphones, we unknowingly expose ourselves to a tremendous amount of peer pressure.

And I call it a tremendous amount because of its sheer volume. Think about it. how many social media posts can you view in a single day? How many Instagram photos?

[18:55] How many TikTok or YouTube videos can you watch? How many websites or web pages can you browse? Not long ago, the people close enough to you to have influence over your behavior, your way of thinking, that was a pretty small number.

relatively few people had that kind of influence or were close enough to you. A young person's circle of weekly interactions might include their family, their teachers, their classmates, the church.

How many people is that? Not that many compared to the number of followers you might have on any given social network. Today, through modern media, a young person or an adult connects with countless people from all over the world, many of them strangers.

I think we should be honest with ourselves. How much of that influence is for the better? I didn't say indifferent. How much of it is for the better? Assuming we make wise decisions about what we watch or whom we connect with or what we view online, personal experience tells me that most of the content that we probably access and view is neutral at best.

Just neutral. Not good, not evil, just somewhere in the middle, if you will. For example, when I was recently shopping for a new car, I watched a lot of YouTube videos about some of the cars I was thinking about purchasing because I wanted to see the pros and cons.

[20:38] I wanted to hear the reviews from people who own these cars before I purchased one for myself. Now, did spending those hours watching YouTube videos help me to, for instance, grow in the Lord?

Did they encourage me to do more good? No, not at all. The influence of those strangers on the internet was mostly indifferent.

Unless we are proactively and very intentionally seeking content and seeking people that are biblically grounded and God-honoring, we're prone to spend most of our time reading and watching and hearing things that are just neutral at best.

At best. Are they harmless? Maybe. But I think arguments could be made to the contrary. The Bible often warns the appointed time has grown very short.

We don't have much time. In Ephesians 5, Paul writes, Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

[21 : 50] Now, when Paul talks about walking wisely and making the best use of the short time that we have, I doubt he means watching TV or staring at our phones for hours each day even if the content is harmless.

More to the point, though, much of the content isn't harmless. It is spiritually dangerous. Unlock your smartphone or turn on your TV and you may very well be one click away or one algorithmic suggestion away from honestly some of the worst depravity man has ever committed.

It's all out there. Now, some of you think if I saw something bad, you know, I'd shut it down immediately. I wouldn't keep looking at that.

I'd move on. And my response is, first of all, you can't unsee what you've seen. And second, Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 26, 41, watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Now, he was speaking in a slightly different context, but you may not think you would be tempted by evil, but I think it's far better to avoid that position altogether.

[23 : 24] Perhaps your flesh is weaker than you think. Again, modern media is potentially very dangerous. More than a few otherwise respectable, stable people have been unintentionally sucked into really terrible weakness and its consequences because of modern media.

The stories abound. One man, he finds a blog post about a conspiracy theory, and long story short, he's led to travel to a family pizzeria and start shooting up the place.

Another man innocently chats with an old girlfriend from high school on Facebook, and pretty soon he's having an affair. I've read countless stories of young Christians who are befriended by unbelievers online, and before long they've adopted secular worldviews, they've renounced their faith, and they're criticizing anyone who's silly enough to believe in God.

How do these things happen? Well, I'll move on to my second point. Number two, the temptations and evils of modern media can be subtle.

The temptations and evils of modern media can be subtle. Genesis 3.1 tells us, now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field the Lord God had made.

[24 : 54] That's the same serpent we read about in Revelation 20 who's on a mission to deceive the world. He wants to take our minds captive, and his approach is typically very subtle.

I read the book of a young Christian woman who became an atheist. Now, growing up, she belonged to a church with some obvious problems. The adults here will know of the Westboro Baptist.

But she ultimately left the faith because of Twitter. So, she tried to use Twitter to evangelize others, and arguably her approach erred way too much on the side of hellfire and brimstone, but her intentions were good, I suppose.

She became confused, however, because the very people she condemned to hell in her tweets neither repented nor got angry with her.

instead, they respectfully disagreed with her while smothering her with love and kindness, extending invitations, come and visit, being as nice as anyone could be to her.

[26 : 09] And the contrast was stark in her mind. She thought Christians, well, they tell people they're going to hell. Atheists, on the other hand, they expressed love and kindness to strangers, even strangers who tell them they're going to hell.

She soon came to the conclusion that she would rather be an atheist than a Christian, and that's where she stands to this day. James 4, 7 says, Submit yourselves, therefore, to God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. But what if the devil is polite and has a nice smile? What if he doesn't come to us with little red horns and a pitchfork?

What if it's not so obvious? Resisting may not seem so imperative when nothing about his temptations appear to be especially threatening. We can go back to the very first temptation for an example of this.

You've read Genesis chapter 3. In the first temptation, the serpent doesn't appear especially threatening. He begins by asking a simple question.

[27 : 24] He says to Eve, Did God actually say? Are you sure? Is that what God really said? Is that what he meant? But with this question, a seed of doubt is planted in Eve's mind, and a moment later, she looks at the forbidden tree and she thinks to herself, Now that I'm looking at it again, that

fruit actually does look pretty good.

Maybe I've been thinking about what God said all wrong. Maybe I didn't understand him. Maybe I misinterpreted him. Maybe I didn't have the whole truth. Perhaps the fruit of this tree wouldn't be so bad to eat after all.

The serpent in the garden may not appear especially threatening, but this is the same serpent of Revelation 20.

This is the same serpent who only wants to deceive and destroy. This is the same serpent at work in our world today. Paul refers to him as the God of this world.

That is why Paul writes the following in Ephesians 6. Put on the whole armor of God. Not just pieces. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

[28 : 43] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand firm. The schemes of the devil, that is his craftiness, his trickery, his subtle influence.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil. That is much of the evil we face in this world is not as tangible as we may think. For example, let's say you're flipping through the channels, and I'm talking primarily to young people, let's say you're flipping through the channels on your TV and you're sitting with your parents next to you on the couch. I'm guessing that if you stumbled upon a channel that showed extreme violence or a lot of foul language or nudity or something along those lines, you'd immediately recognize there's something wrong with this.

You'd probably feel slightly awkward because your parents are sitting right there next to you and you'd quickly change the channel. Am I right? At least that was my experience growing up. Now would you have the same reaction if you stumbled upon, let's say, an animated Disney film?

[30 : 11] Probably not. Disney movies, they're family friendly, they're G-rated. Could any harm be done watching a Disney movie? Well, let's use The Little Mermaid as an example.

It's become popular again because of the live action remake. Is there anything immoral about The Little Mermaid? Have you ever watched it and maybe sensed that the serpent is whispering subtle lies in your ears as the devil did to Eve trying to deceive you?

I doubt it. But let's test that theory. Several years ago, I spoke at a youth conference in Atlanta, Georgia and I read a list of sins found in 2 Timothy 3.

And then I said, you can actually find some of these sins glorified in family friendly, G-rated Disney movies. And I could tell by the looks on their faces they didn't believe me.

Let me read the list to you. Keep, how many have seen The Little Mermaid? I assume most people have. Well, let me read this list to you.

[31 : 20] You keep that movie in the back of your mind as I read this. This is 2 Timothy 3. The Apostle Paul says, but understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.

For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Now having read this list, does The Little Mermaid glorify or promote any of these sins? I'll give you just a moment to think about it. Well, what's the premise of the movie?

The hero of the film for whom we cheer and celebrate is a teenage girl who blatantly disobeys her father, who is only trying to protect her, mind you.

And what's the moral of the story? According to Disney, you should pursue whatever you think will make you happy. no matter how dangerous, no matter how unrealistic, no matter how impossible your dream is, if you think it will make you happy, then you should break every rule, defy every authority, and even put your life in jeopardy to achieve it.

[32 : 50] And you know what? It'll always work out. Come on, when's the last time you've seen a Disney movie without a happy ending? Now, I'm not trying to ruin one of your favorite childhood movies or anything like that, and I'm not nearly as prudish as I probably sound, but I'm trying to

illustrate a point.

Many of us may very well spend hours every day exposing ourselves to worldly ideas, to secular entertainment, and to less than godly behaviors.

As subtle as they may be, through TV, through our computers, through smartphones, and on the surface, those social media posts and those YouTube videos and those private messages, they may all seem very harmless.

Even if we recognize they aren't ideal content for a Christian to waste his time on, we still may be very oblivious to the long-term effects.

You know, we may get away with eating junk food occasionally, but if we eat it every single day, we'll soon find the consequences are pretty severe. Romans 12.2 says, do not be conformed to this world.

[34 : 08] Do not fit their mold. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Now remember that Paul wrote that long before social media, long before smartphones. Long before the world could freely stream into our lives and minds, day after day, hour after hour, Paul warns of the dangers of conforming to this world.

He urges us to renew our minds because number one, we are prone to conform to this world. And number two, the unbelieving world continually pulls us in its direction.

So Paul says, we have to work to combat this. We have to fight this. We must be very intentional about fighting the world's influence over us by actively seeking God's influence.

Well, how do we seek God's influence? We can read the Bible. We can read Christian books. We can pray. We can fellowship with other believers. We can spend time with our families.

[35 : 20] We can volunteer to help others or serve others in some way. Even going for a walk to just enjoy God's creation would be better than endlessly scrolling on a phone.

This applies to adults too, by the way. It applies to me. It applies to you. It applies to all of us. As it stands, I think most of us likely spend far more time in front of a phone or in front of a television than we do seeking God's influence, which leads me to my third point.

Number three, and this will probably be the last one we have time for today. Number three, we don't need modern media. We don't need it.

Now, I told you about speaking at the youth conference in Atlanta, and my subject was specifically social media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so on. And I talked about both the negatives and positives of it.

There are positives. I warned about the problems of these platforms and advised the young people on how to use them for good, and we'll come to that. But later that day, we had a Q&A session where people were allowed to ask me and some of the other speakers questions, and an elderly woman approached the microphone and she asked, why didn't you say anything about avoiding social media altogether?

[36 : 45] Wouldn't that be advisable in some cases? To answer a question to you, yes. The answer is yes. I sincerely believe we have every reason to reconsider our use of modern media.

Now, I've been a tech enthusiast since at least high school. I was hand-coding my first websites during my senior year. I've been an early adopter of just about every platform for the better part of 20 years.

I mean, over the years, I have really enjoyed and embraced technology, and at the same time over the years, I have become increasingly convinced that the cons of modern media outweigh the pros, and that's me being candid with you.

Not everyone feels the same way. Several years ago, I read a book called The 5,000-Year Leap, and to this day, I don't remember anything about the book other than something the author talked about in the introduction, and I thought it was just, it was good perspective.

It was very helpful perspective. He mentioned that for more than 5,000 years of human history, mankind used essentially the same tools, the same technology.

[38 : 06] We had our innovations along the way, but the technology remained mostly the same. If you wanted to travel, you walked, or you rode an animal, or you rode behind an animal, right?

Those were your options. If you wanted to farm the land, you used manpower or animal power to get the job done. Those were your only options. Some tools made the job easier, but not like our

tools today.

Technological innovation exploded throughout the last hundred-plus years, throughout the 20th century. We're not living on the same planet as our forefathers. It's really remarkable when you think about it.

I mean, relatively speaking, we don't have to go that far back in history to find a world without electricity or refrigeration or climate control or automobiles or radio or television or computers or smartphones.

I mean, in my short life, I can remember a time without smartphones or even cell phones. But some of you can't even remember a time without those. All of this technology has always been here, so ingrained in our lives.

[39 : 21] Well, let's say the Earth is 6,000 years old. I'll just round. 6,000 years old. If so, all of these modern technologies that are now so ingrained in our lives have existed for no more than 3% of all of human history.

We are living in a very unusual time. So, can we live can we even thrive without these technologies?

Of course we can. Of course we can. We don't need modern media. Now, I remind you of this, not because these technologies aren't convenient or aren't blessings to us in many ways, but because it's helpful to put them in their proper place as we think about our priorities.

Jesus asked, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? All of the technology in the world will never be more important than the state of our souls in the eternity to come.

Let me read another statement from Christ. In Mark 9, verses 47 and 48, he says, if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

[40 : 53] Jesus teaches us two things in that passage. First, we cannot take sin seriously enough. I know we like to classify some sins as more serious than others or less serious.

Jerry Bridges would call the less serious sins respectable sins. Jesus doesn't make that distinction. Read the Sermon on the Mount. One may say, hey, I've never committed a murder.

At least I've got that going for me. But Jesus says everyone who is angry with his brother is liable to judgment. Sin is sin and we shouldn't take any sin too lightly.

God certainly doesn't. Second, Jesus teaches us to take extreme measures to avoid sin. Isn't that the lesson here?

When you're walking through the garden and the serpent stops to speak with you, don't politely stand there and listen to his lies. Run away. Resist immediately.

[41 : 52] Again, Jesus says if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. Sacrifice your conveniences. Sacrifice your entertainment or whatever else is necessary to prevent you from potentially sinning against God.

Paul says, I discipline my body and keep it under control lest, after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified. Neither Jesus nor Paul is speaking literally, of course, but they both recommend an extreme approach to dealing with sin.

If modern media is potentially dangerous to our souls, especially if its dangers are subtle, then shouldn't we at least consider, at least consider the prospect of not using it?

In light of what Jesus says, tear out your eye if necessary, would it really be that extreme if we felt it was best to unplug the TV? Even for a while?

Unplug the TV? Delete a social media app? Maybe ditch the phone altogether? Now to be clear, I'm not suggesting at all that God commands you to stay away from modern media.

[43 : 09] That's not what I'm saying. But I am saying we don't need it. We don't have to have it. Near the end of 2020, I was feeling somewhat restless.

I think the pandemic and the politics of the year just left me feeling exhausted, slightly anxious. So I quit watching, I quit reading, and I quit listening to the news.

And then I took another step. I exchanged my iPhone for a phone that could do little more than talk and text. I deleted the last of the social media accounts I had. I locked down my computer so I wouldn't have access to a number of things that might show me the news or simply waste my time. And I'll be candid with you, the experiment was challenging at first. It was difficult. I can't count the number of times I pulled out my now dumb phone to start entertaining myself in a moment of

boredom and it wouldn't entertain me.

There was nothing I could do on it. I had to relearn how to navigate without GPS. I haven't done that for a while. I had to relearn how to think for myself.

[44 : 14] My second brain was gone. I couldn't, you know, just pull it out and take notes and put things on my calendar. I mean, I had to remember stuff but it got easier.

By the summer of 2021, I really didn't miss my phone. In fact, I felt lighter. I noticed the world around me more. I felt calmer.

I felt more at peace. It was surprisingly liberating. Until then, I guess I didn't realize what all of this media was doing to me.

I was eating digital junk food every day without even thinking about it because this is just what people do, right? We have smartphones. We look at them when we're standing in line or we're waiting.

I mean, that's what we do. And it wasn't until I stopped that I recognized what kind of toll it had been taking on me. We don't need modern media.

[45 : 12] So, as we think about going forward, the best ways to use it, we should keep that in the back of our minds. In at least some cases, for some people, maybe most, the best approach we can take to modern media is probably no approach at all.

We'll come back to this subject next week. We're dismissed.