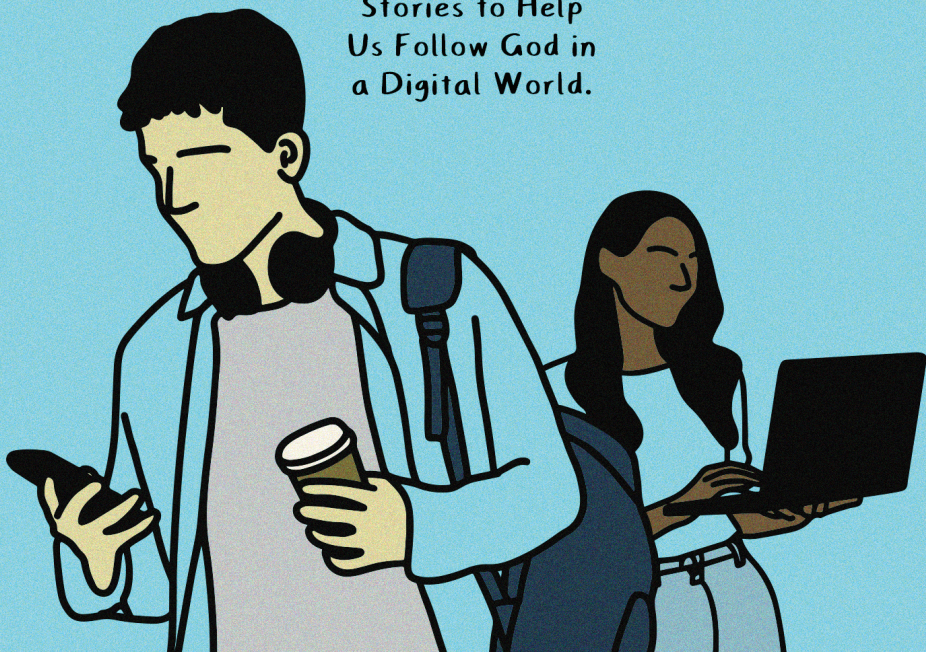
 Our Daily Bread Ministries®

# Technology in the Bible

By: Daniel Ryan Day

7 Ancient  
Stories to Help  
Us Follow God in  
a Digital World.



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# Technology in the Bible

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For the best experience with this study:

1. Grab another copy of this study for someone you want to grow deeper with.
2. You'll need a Bible (a phone is okay; a printed Bible is better).
3. You'll probably want a journal too. It's a great way to reflect and process through these stories.



# Technology in the Bible?

I have yet to meet anyone who wishes they spent more time on their devices.

“Hey! How are you?”

“Doing well. Just wish I had more time to doomscroll.”

It's hard to put devices away. What are we going to talk about if we do? How will we stay connected? What if someone needs us? It's also fun to scroll, look up random facts, and laugh at fail videos. We don't want devices to disappear; we want more freedom from our phones and healthier boundaries with tech in general.

But it's difficult to find guidance, especially because there can be tension between generations. It's a stereotype, but older people are seen as more sceptical of technology, and younger people as more accepting. Parents, pastors, and youth leaders often feel ill-equipped to help younger generations navigate a complex, digital world. Meanwhile, younger generations are often suspicious when older adults want to talk about devices.

Maybe you remember a conversation like this:

“I don't want you on your phone.”

“Why?”

“Because it's not good for you.”

“How is it not good for me?”

“It's just not, okay? When I was your age, we didn't have smartphones!”

“This is how I connect with my friends.”

“Put it away or I'll \_\_\_\_\_.”

New technology creates possibilities and struggles. It impacts our relationships with God, others, and the world. It has an upside and a downside. New tech can save or destroy lives. And it's something that has transformed cultures for centuries (Don't you wish we still had stone tools?).

So, how might the technologies we're using now be shaping our culture? Maybe you relate to a few of these struggles people experience with devices . . .

- Struggling to focus
- Feeling anxious
- Not able to enjoy simple pleasures
- Feeling incomplete, or lost, without your phone
- Surrounded by lots of information but struggling to know what's true or false
- Struggling to pay attention to the people in front of you
- Spending more time on devices than with people
- Concerned that if phones are put away, there may be dead space or boredom
- Experiencing a decrease in mental health, or a loss of identity and purpose
- Feeling an urgency to check your phone when you think about it
- Seeing the time and realising you've been distracted for longer than you thought
- Forgetting why you picked up your phone
- Realising you're on a different app, website, or video than the one you intended to use

Did any of these ring true for you? If so, what can we do about it?

This might sound crazy, but technology shows up in the Bible and plays a vital role in God's story.

The Bible is an ancient set of books, set in ancient times, with different people, places, and cultures, so it's not always easy to notice technology. The Bible doesn't mention phones, smartwatches, or video games. We won't find references to apps or downloads. And when

one of the poets featured in the Bible wrote about not being afraid of modern warfare, he wasn't talking about a first-person shooter game. Instead, he wrote, "Some nations boast of their chariots and horses, but we boast in the name of the LORD our God."<sup>1</sup> Just a bit removed from today's stealth bombers. But if technology is simply taking something that exists to create something new to solve a problem, Scripture references many such innovations.

Obviously, the Bible isn't a how-to manual for using tech wisely. It doesn't give you a step-by-step guide for building better tech boundaries with devices. But there are several stories where technology plays a role. As we read them, we may find wisdom and freedom for how to use tech well in our modern world; and more importantly, we can draw closer to God and others. In fact, I recommend going through this with someone you want to grow deeper with.

Before you start (spoiler alert), here are the most important lessons I've learned through these studies. Technology isn't the problem, but how we use it can build us up or tear us down. It can draw us closer to God and others or further away from them. It can help us do amazing things or feed our worst impulses. Basically, it can lead us to be more human or less human because it shapes who we become. An important set of questions to ask as we use devices is: How is this shaping me? Who am I becoming when I use \_\_\_\_\_? Am I controlling it or is it controlling me?

Bring those questions with you as you read these stories. And maybe memorize this short prayer as a way to start noticing why you're reaching for your phone:

## A Prayer Before Picking Up Your Phone

Present God, as I pick up this phone may it help me draw closer to you and others. If not, please point my attention to things that will.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 20:7





## Story 1:

# Shame and Fear

What is the last thing you did on a device that led to shame and regret? I'm not writing only about porn, although, statistically, just about every person over age eight has seen it. Maybe you posted something you wish you hadn't, sent a text while too emotional, or spent money you didn't have.

We've all been there.

The Bible has a story about people creating technology to cover their shame, but God reacts in a surprising way.

Before you read it, here are some helpful details.

## First, the characters:

- **The LORD God (Yahweh God):** Notice the small capital letters. Later in a book called Exodus, someone asks God, "What's your name?" He responds: "I AM WHO I AM," or shortened, "I AM," or "Yahweh." To some people this name is so sacred (set apart) they refuse to say it out loud. It implies that he's the source of life and breath for all creatures, and very personal and relational in nature.
- **The Serpent:** Although created by God, he represents the opposite of God's best. He uses questions and trickery to convince the woman and man that God's holding out on them.
- **The Woman:** She's the first woman, later named Eve, which means "life," because all descendants of the world will come from her.
- **The Man:** He's the first man, Eve's husband, and his name, Adam, basically means "Dirt-man" because he was created from clay and the LORD God's divine breath.
- **The Trees:** One is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the other is the Tree of Life.

## Second, the historical context:

In ancient history, there are different stories of gods creating the world. Typically, they include violent scenes of war, and the world is formed from the body parts of a dead deity. Gross? Yes. Weird? Probably. Scientific? Not so much. People are then created to make life easier for the gods, like slaves.

## Finally, the Bible's context:

The Bible's account of creation is unique. There's only one God. He doesn't cause chaos but creates the world with order and beauty.<sup>2</sup> The LORD God creates people and gives them a purpose—to work together with him to take care of his beautiful and abundant world. He warned them to avoid the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because it would harm them.

### **Open a Bible and read Genesis 3:1-8.**

Discuss these questions or journal your responses.

1. What did you notice in the story? Was there anything surprising? Anything that didn't make sense or bothered you? Anything hard to believe?
2. How does the serpent convince the woman to eat the fruit? Where was the man during this interaction?
3. Take note of these words in verse 6: convinced, saw, wanted, took, ate, and gave. Do any of these words relate to your experiences of regret and shame?
4. Where did you see technology, something created to solve a problem, in the story?

The man and woman took fig leaves and created clothing to cover their nakedness. They then hid from the LORD God in the trees, afraid. Today, we might do something like quickly close an Incognito tab.

If you're like me, your heart beats faster when the desire to do something wrong seems impossible to resist. We're also hyperalert to anyone who might notice. Waves of shame, fear, and regret move in afterward. And when others are involved? We blame each other and try to cover our mistakes.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:2

But the LORD God's response to people doing the opposite of his best (the Bible calls this sin) is surprising. For Adam and Eve, the LORD God searches for them, points out what's wrong, and provides a plan to restore them. He even creates real clothes to cover their shame and fear. There's also a promise embedded in the story: a future son of the woman will hold the serpent accountable.<sup>3</sup> This points to Jesus, the LORD God as a human, centuries later when he's stripped naked, publicly shamed, and executed on a tree<sup>4</sup> to make right the wrongs of evil, sin, and death.

When we do something wrong, God responds the same way to us: he comes close, addresses sin, forgives, and restores.

End with this prayer and these invitations:

## A Prayer for Freedom from Self Destructive Habits

*God of compassion, please forgive me for my self-destructive and compulsive behaviours. My Savior, who rescues me from shame and fear, remind me that you do not condemn me, and help me not condemn myself. My Shield, please defend me from temptation and deliver me from evil. Surround me with your grace that is sufficient for my weakness, your love that covers my sin, and your kindness that invites me to find freedom and victory.*

1. **Use tech well:** Turn off your phone and put it in another room at least one hour before bed.
2. **Draw closer to God and/or others:** Instead of your phone being the last thing you interact with at night, memorize Psalm 4:8 so you can say it after the lights go out: "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe."

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3:15, <sup>4</sup> Galatians 3:13





## Story 2

# Famous

If the stats are right, 26 percent of teenagers expect to become famous one day.<sup>5</sup> Social platforms make it seem possible for anyone to make a name for themselves. Even if you aren't interested in becoming an influencer, most of us have a desire to post things people "like." And if you're not on social platforms, consider ways you use technology to curate your image (an email signature counts).

This isn't new! The desire to "make a name for ourselves" shows up in a very old technology story.

Before you read it, here are some helpful details.

### First, the characters:

- **The People:** All of them. In one place. Speaking the same language. And that's part of the problem.
- **The LORD (Yahweh):** The same personal name for God as our last story, indicating his relational nature and regarded by some people as sacred. Instead of only up in heaven, he's often found among the people he created.

### Second, the location:

- **East:** Humanity migrated "east" of the perfect garden, where they had a close relationship with the LORD (Yahweh).<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, the theme of going east in the Bible shows movement away from God and his good plans.<sup>7</sup>
- **Shinar (Babylonia):** The region's name depends on your translation; it's the future home of the great city, Babylon (located in modern-day Iraq). It often represents the opposite of God's best. Much later in Israel's history, the Babylonians will invade and take everyone captive.

<sup>5</sup> David Kinamen and Mark Matlock, *Faith for Exiles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 151.

<sup>6</sup> See story 1. <sup>7</sup> Genesis 3:24, 4:16, 13:11

## Finally, the context:

God gave humans a unifying purpose: work alongside him to care for the world and fill it with more people made in his image.<sup>8</sup> He also warned them of what to avoid for their protection.<sup>9</sup> But they didn't listen and created major problems—they were separated from God, from one another, and accomplishing their purpose became more difficult. It gets worse. Instead of seeking God's best and following his plan, people keep pursuing what they think is right. When they do, evil flourishes, violence increases, people are more divided, and they move further from God.

### Open a Bible and read Genesis 11:1-9.

Discuss these questions or journal your responses.

1. What did you notice in the story? Was there anything surprising? Anything that didn't make sense or bothered you? Anything hard to believe?
2. Why did they build the city and tower?
3. Name some situations where people being united is a bad thing.
4. Did you see technology in the story?

The people took clay and made bricks to build a ziggurat (a rectangular tower-temple). Picture a stairway for the gods to descend from the heavens. They're also concerned about separation from one another, so they try to fix this by building a city. If they pull off creating access to the gods and building the city? They'll be famous.

But the LORD (Yahweh) wasn't in the "sky" waiting for the stairway to be finished. He was walking around the construction site. In their effort to reach God, they missed that he was among them. They wanted to make a name for themselves, but they already bore the best name: image bearers of God. And by unifying around the wrong goal, they missed the purpose for which they were created.

Sometimes we use technology to make a name for ourselves, like carefully curating a profile. Other times, we try to fix discontentment by buying something, or disconnection by looking at things we shouldn't. We might even try to fix our sense of separation from God by searching for the perfect song to feel his presence again. But instead

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 1:28, <sup>9</sup> See story 1.

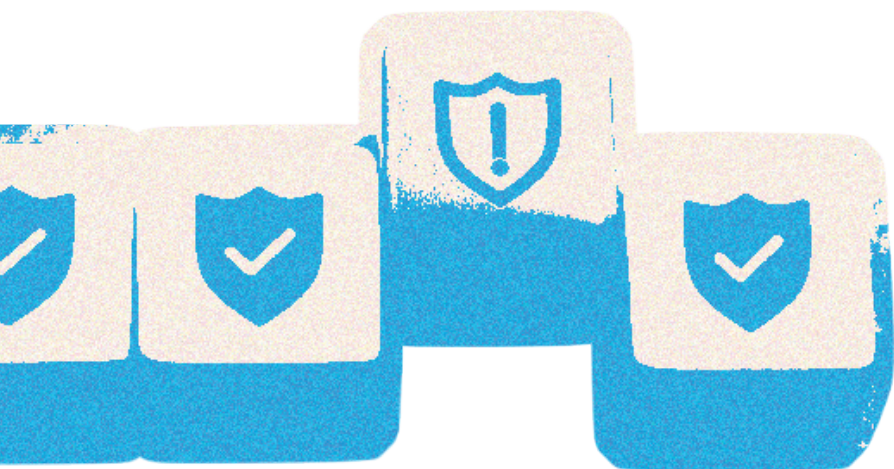
of trying to fix problems on our own or “find” God, he’s already among us, and has given us this purpose—to bear his name (identity and character) and care for the world. It may not make us famous, but it leads to a life of greater contentment through a deepening relationship with him and others.

End with this prayer and these invitations:

## A Prayer for When I Feel Far from God

*God who draws near, help me draw near to you. Please give me a tangible sense of your presence and help me know you’re close even when I don’t feel it. Help me believe that you will never leave me or forsake me. And give me patience, trusting that you’re doing something good in this feeling of space between us.*

1. **Use tech well:** Pick one day per week and one month per year to go off socials. If you’re not on “socials,” what version of tech do you wish you had more freedom from (i.e., email)? Try that instead. While taking a break, notice how you feel, what you think about, and how you fill time.
2. **Connecting with God and/or others:** During your day of no socials, intentionally talk to God about what you’re hoping for and desire. Also, have at least one device-free meal or coffee with a friend.



## Story 3

# For the Sake of Others

What are some examples of technology that keeps you safe? Seatbelts? Fire alarms? Weather alerts? Push notifications asking you if you just swiped your bank card? There are lots of innovations around protecting us or others, whether it's our bodies, finances, or information. In fact, caring for others is a really good reason to innovate.

There's a story in the book of Deuteronomy of new technology being invented to protect other people. Before you read it, here are some helpful details.

## First, the Characters:

- **Moses:** The leader of Israel who spends a lot of time going back and forth between God and the people. It's his job to help the Israelites understand who God is, remind them of what he did for them, and lead them to follow and obey him. In this story, he's the one talking.
- **Joshua:** A successful military leader who isn't directly mentioned in our passage but referenced in other parts of Deuteronomy. He will take over leading Israel and was chosen because he trusted and obeyed God when most people didn't.<sup>10</sup>
- **The People:** Moses's audience, a new generation of Israelites who are being invited into the special relationship (covenant) with God their parents had. Most of the older generation died, and this generation is now invited to obey and follow God.
- **The LORD God (Yahweh):** The same personal name for God as our last two stories, indicating his relational nature and regarded by some people as sacred. He rescued Israel from slavery, led them through the wilderness, provided food, and is instructing them to be his people and live the fullest and best life he's created for them.

<sup>10</sup> Numbers 14:6-9



## Second, the Context:

Moses is really old and will die before Deuteronomy ends. He's reminding the next generation of all God has done for them and how much God loves them.<sup>11</sup> He's also reminding them of the LORD's (Yahweh's) expectations and gives them the chance to trust him for themselves.

## Finally, the Genre:

Deuteronomy is book five of the Torah, a collection of Israel's five most sacred (set apart) texts. Torah means "instruction," and it includes key stories about the LORD's (Yahweh's) desire to bless the entire world through the nation of Israel. It also describes what it means for them to follow God, be his people, and do what's best for them and others.

### **Open a Bible and read Deuteronomy 6:1-12 and 22:8.**

Discuss these questions or journal your responses.

1. What did you notice in the story? Was there anything surprising? Anything that didn't make sense or bothered you? Anything hard to believe?
2. Who is instructed to keep the laws (Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 7)? How can they make them easy to remember (vv. 7-9)?
3. Verses 4-5 are considered the summary of the law. What does this imply about God's reason for giving commands to his people?
4. Where did you see technology in the story?

First, the people were instructed to attach the law to their foreheads, and at some point, they took this literally. They invented ways to keep the law ever before them. To this day, you can find Jewish men at morning prayer with phylacteries (small leather boxes with the summary of the law inside) attached to their foreheads.

The people were also commanded to build railings on their roofs.<sup>12</sup> Flat roofs were common in ancient cities, and although the people hearing these laws didn't have houses yet, God was painting a picture of his desire for their new homes—a place to proactively care for others.

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 4:36-37, <sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 22:8

This story is challenging. We often use technology in a very me-centred way (noise-cancelling earbuds anyone?). My house is, well, mine! We don't often think about it in terms of other people. But what might it look like to use tech communally? And what if we walked around our homes, apartments, or office spaces proactively looking for ways to protect others?

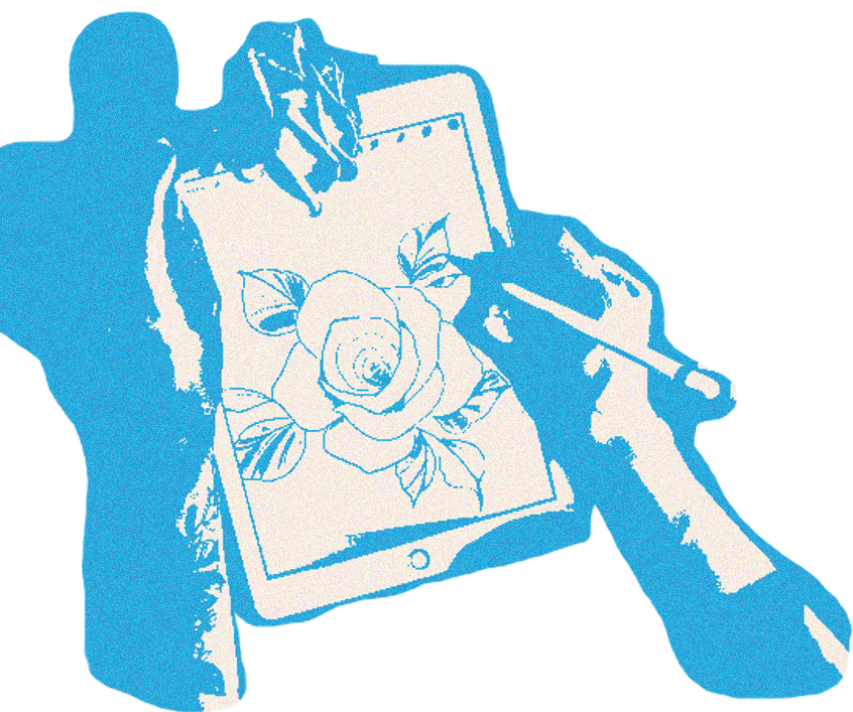
Obviously, we can't think of everything, and even if we did, accidents would still happen. But it's significant that Jesus later quoted these words from Deuteronomy. When he was asked to give the most important law in the Torah, he summarized what life is about: love God above all else and love others as yourself. And innovation and technology are at their best when they lead us to love God and others better.

End with this prayer and these invitations:

## A Prayer for Putting Love into Action

*Faithful God, who loves in both word and action, please help us see the needs of those around us, regardless of their backgrounds or beliefs, and to feed, clothe, and defend them. May we be defined by who we are for, and not by who we are against. Please help us be like you, and not just love in word or speech but in action and in truth.*

1. **Use Tech Well:** Find a close friend who wants to set up healthy boundaries for devices. Create a few shared goals and check in with each other weekly.
2. **Draw closer to God and/or others:** Walk around your home, apartment, or office and find one way to make it more hospitable to others.



## Story 4

# Make Something Beautiful

During Easter, an orchestra near me performs an oratorio (a symphony with choir parts—think Handel’s Messiah). Lamb of God is a retelling of Jesus’s last week on earth. There are narrators, solo singers for specific characters, and parts sung in Aramaic, Jesus’s own language. I’m not a super emotional person, but the thunder of the timpani, the soaring violins, and the singers telling the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus moves me to tears. The best word to describe it is holy.

There’s a story in the book of Exodus where God invites people to use the technology of their day to make something holy (which means “set apart”).

Before you read it, here are some helpful details.

## First, the Characters:

- **The LORD (Yahweh):** The same, personal name for God used in our first three stories, indicating his relational nature and regarded by some people as sacred. By this point, Israel was coming to know him as their rescuer, who saved them from the oppressive empire of Egypt and is leading them safely through the wilderness.
- **Moses:** The first leader of Israel. It was his job to guide the people, ensure justice, facilitate worship, and act as an ambassador of God to the Israelites.
- **Bezalel:** An artist, craftsman, and mason who God empowered to make beautiful things for the tabernacle (described below).
- **Oholiab:** A man God appointed to help Bezalel. He and the other workers were given special ability by God to complete the tabernacle.

## Second, the backstory:

Moses led the people out of Egypt, and now they're in the wilderness. God has provided for them in amazing ways: bread falling from the sky, flocks of edible birds swarming the camp, and water coming from desert rocks. Physically, God's led them with a protective cloud by day (it's hot in the wilderness), and a pillar of fire by night (always nice to see in the dark). Two months after Egypt, they're camped at the base of a mountain called Sinai.

## Finally, the context:

Moses treks up the mountain to meet with God and receives the Ten Commandments along with other instructions. Some of these are for the people to build a tabernacle, an ornate tent where God would dwell among his people. It would need to be beautiful to reflect God's holiness, and portable as he travelled with Israel through the desert.

**Now that you have some context, open a Bible and read Exodus 31:1-11.**

Discuss these questions or journal your responses.

1. What did you notice in the story? Was there anything surprising? Anything that didn't make sense or bothered you? Anything hard to believe?
2. What was the role of the Spirit of God?
3. What skills do you have that God could do something cool with?
4. Where did you notice technology in the story?

God asks Bezalel, Oholiab, and others to use the technology of their day, tools for working with precious metals, rare gems, wood, and cloth, to make a beautiful tent. This includes filling the tent with innovations like an oil lamp that never goes out.<sup>13</sup> When complete, the tabernacle represents God's love for Israel, reflects the beauty of God and the world he created, and becomes the place where he's worshiped. It also reflects God's tangible presence and relatability—he dwells in a tent with his people.

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 27:20-21



This story shows that God cares about beauty and that we can use technology as a tool to create things that honour and reflect his holiness and character. But the most amazing part of this story is God's desire to come closer to people's day-to-day lives. He even used the technology of their day—tools, tents, and clothing—to meet them where they were at.

I think God looks at many of the beautiful things people have made with technology—music, murals, and software—and smiles in approval. And even if you don't think of yourself as a creative, when you use technology to faithfully complete your job, serve others, or to enjoy things that draw you closer to God, you're living out the heartbeat of this story.

End with this prayer and these invitations:

## A Prayer for Noticing Beauty

*Father, you're beyond my imagination, in power, justice, and kindness. Please help me remember that although you're perfect in every way, you're not surprised by my imperfections. Thank you for taking steps toward me. Spirit of God, please fill me with your creative power, to see beauty in my daily life, and to point other people to your beauty.*

1. **Use tech well:** Consider what “crafts” are available to you. An old sketch pad? A laptop? Spend an afternoon drawing, writing, or doing something that engages your imagination with God.
2. **Draw closer to God and/or others:** Find a beautiful church in your area and spend unhurried time in the sanctuary. If you've got a willing friend, bring them along. Ask God to reveal his heart to you as you take in the artwork and architecture. No beautiful churches around? Any quiet place in nature will do.

Unknown

Text Message Received  
Friday at 11:23

Congratulations! You have won in our LOTTERY! Please respond to this message to claim your prize!

Thank you very much! That's unexpected.

Thank you for getting back to us! Now we just need to schedule the delivery of your prize!

Ok. Exciting. What shall I do to receive the prize?

Please be advised that prizes are limited, so act quick to get one! To arrange delivery [click here](#)

Your Message...



## Story 5

# Where Do We Turn for Help?

Think about ads you've seen for apps. A food delivery app promising to satisfy your cravings? A dating app promising to fix your loneliness? A crypto app promising to make you rich? Some are useful, but hunger, loneliness, and money struggles will always be around. Tech makes lots of promises, but if you're like me, I normally set down my phone feeling less connected, content, and relaxed.

There's a satirical story in the Bible of technology being used to create something that overpromises and underdelivers.

Before you read it, here are some helpful details:

### First, the Characters:

- **The LORD (Yahweh):** The personal name for God used in many of our stories, indicating his relational nature and regarded by some people as sacred. He was Israel's rescuer and king, but also their judge when they did harmful things to themselves or others. He's also described as a rock—a strong foundation to stand on amidst life's challenges.
- **Isaiah:** A prophet (truth teller) chosen by the LORD to warn the people and point them toward true hope for the future.
- **His Audience:** The people of Jerusalem and broader Judah, who were accused of forgetting the LORD, creating and serving idols (false gods), and oppressing the poor.
- **The Woodcarver:** A craftsman who makes idols.

### Second, the backstory:

After a complicated history, God's people became a nation, Ancient Israel. The story is full of kings, wars, betrayal—perfect for a hit show. Because of political struggles, they split into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

The Northern Kingdom was destroyed by Assyria.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, a nation called Babylon threatens Judah's security. Through all the drama, we meet prophets like Isaiah, truth-tellers sent to remind the people of their commitment to follow God's instructions, warn them about self-destructive behaviour, and offer hope for forgiveness and rescue if they turn back to God's best.

## Finally, the context:

God gave Isaiah an intense, twofold message for Judah. First, God will sit as a judge over them and let them experience the consequences of serving false gods, while holding them accountable for oppressing the poor. Second, God's plans for their redemption (rescue and restoration) are greater than his judgment. Chapters 1-39 describe the coming consequences—the Babylonians will invade, and the people will be forced to move to Babylon (mentioned in our second story). Chapters 40-66 explore God's hope and promise to save his people. Chapter 44 shows the absurdity of using technology to create and worship human-made idols that don't have power to save them.

### **Open a Bible and read Isaiah 44:6-22.**

Discuss these questions or journal your responses.

1. What did you notice in the story? Was there anything surprising? Anything that didn't make sense or bothered you? Anything hard to believe?
2. What do you think the meaning of "feeds on ashes" is (v. 20)?
3. What are our "idols" of today?
4. Where did you see technology in the story?

The woodworker uses technology (his tools) to do a good thing—make firewood and cook. But then whittles a piece of wood and prays to it. There's a word in the Bible for treating things (even good things) as the answers to our deepest problems: idolatry. The carpenter puts hope in something he created, asking it to do (rescue him) and be (his god) something it can't do or be.

We're not surrounded by Babylonian soldiers, but we feel surrounded by mental health crises, unstable relationships, discontentment, and

<sup>14</sup> 2 Kings 17

debt. We're often bored, lonely, anxious, and angry. This story asks us to consider: where will we turn for hope and rescue?

And when it comes to idols in the Bible, there's also a deeper lesson: whatever has our attention shapes us into its image.<sup>15</sup> We spend hours on screens daily. Ask yourself, do these habits lead to feeling relaxed or hurried? Social or isolated? Peaceful or anxious? Devices are made to help us, but it's easy to serve them instead. They become a "lie" in our hand, promising so much more than they can deliver. The LORD is the only true Rock to turn to for safety and rescue.

End with this prayer and these invitations:

## A Prayer for Entrusting Myself to God

*God, you know I'm always looking for something to make me feel better. It's so hard to sit still and believe I have enough or that you're enough. These pursuits leave me exhausted, and the things I keep turning to for help or relief make me demanding, discontent, and isolated. Please help me release these "idols" I'm holding on to, look to you for help, and experience your joy, peace, and love instead.*

1. **Use tech well:** Turn your phone to grayscale. We're less likely to use it that way. Every time you notice the colour difference, revisit the prayer from the introduction (Intro: Technology in the Bible?)
2. **Draw closer to God or others:** Read verses 21-22 again and consider the picture this paints of God. Journal your reflections. If you're an artist, draw or paint a picture of the symbolism described.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 115:8



## Story 6

# Connection

When was the last time you used technology to connect with someone? Facetime with Grandma? Gaming with a friend? Or maybe a video call with a coworker? Communicating with others can be a good use for devices.

There's a story in 2 John where the author uses the technology of his day to connect with those he cares about.

Before you read it, here are some helpful details.

### First, the characters:

- **John, the Elder:** Many believe this is the close friend and follower of Jesus who also wrote the gospel of John. He's well-known, respected, and a leader in the early church.
- **Chosen Lady and Her Children:** Likely a metaphor for a church in another city. The Bible regularly refers to God's people as a bride,<sup>16</sup> and the author regularly refers to those he cares about as his "children."<sup>17</sup> Family is also a primary metaphor for the connection all believers in Jesus have.<sup>18</sup>
- **Antichrist/Deceiver:** A term for those who don't believe Jesus was a real person and are trying to get others to believe this too.
- **The "Children of Your Sister":** Believers in Jesus from the church where the author is currently located and writing from.

### Second, the genre:

This is one of the shortest letters in the Bible but a relatively long letter for its era. Ancient letters in the Roman world were very short because they required hiring a scribe, and writing materials were rare and expensive. John may have used a scribe for his letter.

<sup>16</sup> Revelation 19:7-9, <sup>17</sup> 1 John 2:1, <sup>18</sup> 1 John 3:1-2



## Finally, the context:

Jesus came to earth,<sup>19</sup> taught and lived as a model for us to follow,<sup>20</sup> laid down his life so we could be forgiven of all our wrongs, and then rose again to defeat death.<sup>21</sup> He then left to prepare a place for those who believe in him<sup>22</sup> and sent a Helper, the Holy Spirit, to guide us.<sup>23</sup> Since the Spirit came, the message about Jesus has been spreading around the world.<sup>24</sup> Mostly this expansion of people connecting with God through Jesus and connecting with each other is a result of leaders like John the Elder sharing the good news and planting churches.

**Now that you have some context, pick up a Bible and read 2 John.**

Discuss these questions or journal your responses.

1. What did you notice in the story? Was there anything surprising? Anything that didn't make sense or bothered you? Anything hard to believe?
2. What is "the elder" reminding them of (vv. 1, 5-6)?
3. What does he warn them about? Why?
4. Where did you see technology in the story?

John mentions using "paper and ink,"<sup>25</sup> the modern technology of his day, to connect with the people he cares about. He also acknowledges that a letter has limits for what it can do—it can send greetings and remind the reader about what matters most but is no substitute for face-to-face interaction.

We feel this, don't we? We can use our devices to connect with friends and family, let them know how much we care, or share news, but we can't give them a hug. Technology is a great way to fill the distance, but it's no substitute for being together.

This story also challenges us to not let devices get in the way of face-to-face interactions. Sometimes we use our phones as shields, and other times to avoid silence or boredom when we're with others. There's also a fear in some of us that if we put our phones away when we're with people, we won't know what to do or talk about. But our devices shouldn't get in the way of our relationships.

And that highlights the heart of John the Elder's letter: love one another as God has loved you.<sup>26</sup> Technology is at its best when it helps us connect with God and love others well.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 2, <sup>20</sup> Matthew 5-7, <sup>21</sup> See story 7 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 John 3:16; 4:10  
<sup>22</sup> John 14:3, <sup>23</sup> John 15:26-27, <sup>24</sup> Book of Acts, <sup>25</sup> 2 John 12, <sup>26</sup> 2 John 5



End with this prayer and these invitations:

## A Prayer for Creating Meaningful Connections

*Jesus, God-Friend, you do not call us servants, but friends—companions on this mission to see love, peace, and hope made known. You do not leave us to fend for ourselves but invite us into community with you and others. Thank you especially for \_\_\_\_\_. Please draw the two of us closer to you and one another.*

1. **Use tech well:** Instead of putting your phone on the table (even face down), commit to keeping it in your pocket or in the car and turning off all notifications on your smartwatch whenever you're hanging out with someone else.
2. **Draw closer to God and/or others:** Follow John's example and write a letter, text, or call someone you care about. Let them know how much they mean to you, share something you've learned lately, and if possible, commit to seeing them in person sometime soon.



## Story 7

# Technology at Its Worst

How has technology been used to hurt others? Innovations that have destroyed cities or were used in genocides? Everyday uses of technology that dehumanize us and others like watching porn? Perpetuating injustice through buying items made by modern-day slaves? Sometimes, technology is used in the worst ways.

There's a story in the Bible of technology being used to destroy, but God redeems that moment of evil for the good of the entire world. Before you read it, here are some helpful details.

### First, the characters:

- **Pilate:** The Roman governor of Judea. His job was to protect the interests of the Roman Empire, promote justice, ensure taxes were collected, and maintain order.
- **Jesus:** The Son of God who came into the world to forgive sins, model following God, heal the sick, challenge harmful teachings, testify to the truth, and lay down his life to rescue the world.
- **Soldiers:** The Roman army stationed in Judea to enforce the Empire's laws.
- **Priests, Temple Guards, Jewish Leaders:** People passionate about honouring God and teaching others to do the same. They were responsible for passing down the traditions of the elders, interpreting the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament), and defending the faith against people who would dishonour God. Sometimes, this meant being legalistic and missing the heart of God's commands.
- **Caesar:** The Emperor of Rome. If he was unhappy with Pilate, he would replace him and have him killed.

## Second, the genre:

The term gospel means “good news.” It was used by the Roman Empire to announce military victories, the birth of royalty, or Caesar’s accomplishments. People started using gospel to describe the good news about Jesus and his new kind of kingdom. Later, biographies of Jesus were titled “gospels.”

## Finally, the context:

Jesus healed the sick, taught crowds, invited outcasts to be his friends, fed the hungry, confronted religious and political power, and raised people from the dead. The last time he raised someone, the religious leaders decided Jesus needs to die.<sup>27</sup> Before he’s arrested, Jesus spends an evening with his friends preparing them for what’s coming. He prays for them, and for us!<sup>28</sup> After that, he’s arrested.

### Open a Bible and read John 19.

Discuss these questions or journal your responses.

1. What did you notice in the story? Was there anything surprising? Anything that didn’t make sense or bothered you? Anything hard to believe?
2. Who was at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified (vv. 25-27)?
3. Who are the two Jewish men who risk their lives and reputations to honour Jesus after he dies (vv. 38-42)?
4. Where did you see technology in the story?

The technology in this story is dark: they used a whip for flogging Jesus, twisted together a crown of thorns to mock him, crucified him on a cross, and stabbed a spear into his side to confirm his death. Crucifixion wasn’t new at that time, but the Romans perfected the process to inflict intense pain and humiliation on those who were political threats and criminals.

They saw Jesus as a political threat. He was too famous, and some Jewish leaders were understandably afraid the Romans would think he was leading an uprising and then destroy the temple.<sup>29</sup> Pilate also deemed it better to execute an innocent person than risk a riot.

<sup>27</sup> John 11:45-53, <sup>28</sup> John 14-17, <sup>29</sup> John 11:47-53,

Jesus was also a religious threat. He questioned misguided teachings and spoke with authority that overshadowed other religious leaders. But most importantly, he claimed to be the Son of God.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus was killed in the worst way by the technology of his day, but that was part of his plan. By suffering, Jesus relates to our pain, giving it meaning. By dying as an innocent man, Jesus defeated the power of sin (wrongdoing) that often leads us to choose what's right in our own eyes, giving us the ability to follow him instead.<sup>31</sup> And by rising again, Jesus defeated death, giving us hope of the resurrection.<sup>32</sup> The worst use of technology in the Bible, executing the innocent Son of God, becomes the moment of his greatest glory—Jesus makes right the wrongs of evil, sin, and death and shows how much he loves us by laying down his life for you, me, and the world.

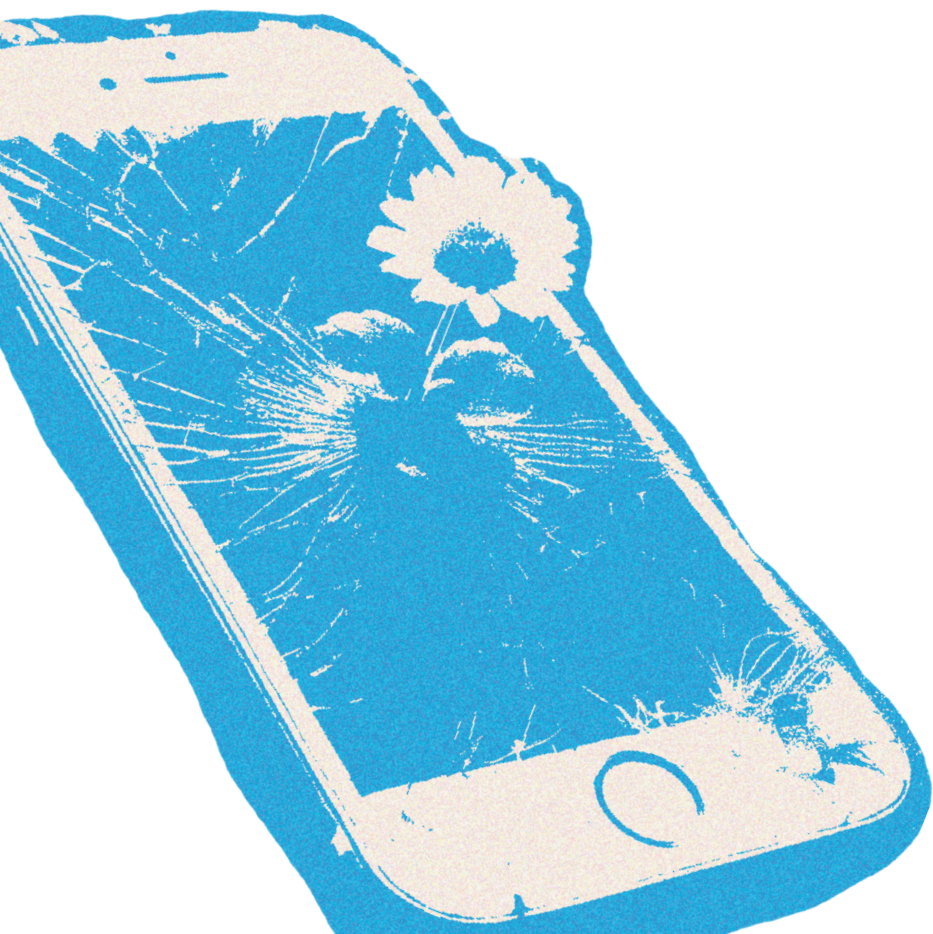
End with this prayer and these invitations:

## A Prayer to Remember the Cross

*Savior God, you hung on the cross and laid down your life for the world. By suffering, you gave meaning to suffering. By dying, you defeated sin. And by rising again, you defeated death. Please help me die to my sin today and rise to new life in you. And help me share this good news about your love with others.*

1. **Use tech well:** Where does your use of tech harm you or others? Find a trusted friend, share this struggle, and decide together to change one small habit in this area.
2. **Draw closer to God and/or others:** Pick a Friday and fast from lunch to remember Jesus's death. Instead of eating, meditate on the cross and pray the prayer above.

<sup>30</sup> John 19:7, <sup>31</sup> See story 2, <sup>32</sup> John 20-21



# The Future of Tech?

One of my favourite ancient stories in the Bible looks into the future and paints a surprising picture of what tech might look like at the end of time.

For context, remember Isaiah critiquing the idolatry in Judah?<sup>33</sup> In Isaiah 44:21-22, God reminds his people that he's forgiven them, set them free, and called them home. Another prophet named Micah picks up on this. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, writing during the same time and looking forward to God's same vision for the future.

**Open a Bible and read Micah 4:1-7.**

## Did you notice technology?

The future that God is creating is one in which weapons (swords and spears) are transformed into farming tools (ploughshares and pruning hooks). Unless you grew up farming or studying ancient agrarian societies, those tools might sound foreign. Picture ones that either dig up the earth to plant seeds, or trim bushes and vines to make them more fruitful. The symbolism here is saying that God will take the things that are literally killing us and transform them into means of creating peace, beauty, and abundance.

Story seven indicates the beginning of God keeping this promise. Jesus took on the worst technology has to offer in order to undo the long-term effects of evil, sin, and death.

But it's not just God who's working toward this future. Notice verse 3. His people are the ones transforming the weapons of destruction into tools for life. God invites us to join him in his work of creating peace, caring for the world, and enjoying the abundance of creation.

But what does this mean for today? Jesus initiated this future on the cross, but we're also still waiting for peace to rule the world. What could redemption look like now as we wait for Micah's reality to come true? Let's think back over our seven stories.

<sup>33</sup> See story 5

**Instead of**

1. living in cycles of shame, fear, and deceit (Genesis 3);
2. always trying to prove ourselves (Genesis 11);
3. harming others through negligence (Deuteronomy 22);
4. living life disconnected from God and without beauty (Exodus 31);
5. serving the things that are killing us (Isaiah 44);
6. reinforcing our isolation and loneliness (2 John);
7. trying and failing to save ourselves (John 19); and
8. living in defensive fear (Micah 4);

**we could**

1. embrace vulnerability, come out of hiding, and let God take our shame (Genesis 3);
2. release the need to feed our ego (Genesis 11);
3. use what we have to care for others (Deuteronomy 22);
4. create beautiful things and worship God (Exodus 31);
5. let go of the idols that can't help us anyway (Isaiah 44);
6. foster deep relationships with others (2 John);
7. receive the love and salvation Jesus offers through the cross and resurrection (John 19); and
8. partner with God in redeeming technology for his glory and our good (Micah 4).

So, what are the “swords and spears” you’re dealing with? Maybe a blunt way to ask this: what’s killing you? Too intense? Maybe. But then again, it’s so easy for all of us to become a slave to something meant to help us. To turn to something distracting or even destructive when life is hard or doesn’t go the way we hope.

What comes to mind for you? That porn problem you’re worried is an addiction? The fact you can’t stop scrolling even when there are other things you’d rather do? Your attachment to the image you’re trying to maintain? Constantly needing to be entertained? Struggling to enjoy the things you used to?



As you picture yourself carrying your particular struggle, where do you picture God? You might imagine him far off in heaven. Or perhaps his arms are crossed with a disappointed look on his face. But where was God in most of our stories? Already among his people, eager and waiting to rescue.

Or picture Jesus, arms outstretched and smiling. “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”<sup>34</sup> His words, not mine.

Will you let him take the thing that’s killing you and transform it to bring life? Jesus let the execution technology of his day become the means of rescuing the world. Clearly, no problem, big or small, can deter him from bringing about beautiful, lasting transformation. Your addiction can be healed. Your habits can be changed. Your relationships can be deepened. Your identity can be secured.

It all begins with surrender. Simply admit to Jesus what’s crushing you and ask for his help to become free. That’s the beginning of transformation, and then it continues with reading the Bible, walking with God in your everyday life, practicing spiritual habits that help you follow him, and surrounding yourself with like-minded believers in Jesus (a local church).

Speaking of ploughshares and seeds, Jesus used a similar metaphor to describe what he desires for all of us. He said hearing his voice and following him to find what’s best is like seed falling on good soil and producing an abundant harvest.<sup>35</sup> We hope this study is just the first step toward a new relationship with technology that’s shaped by the Bible and leads to the good and beautiful life God offers.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 11:28, <sup>35</sup> Luke 8:4-15

# Feeling burned out?

One of the wildest things in scripture is that God chose to rest after creating the world and gave his people a weekly rhythm to follow him into that same rest. If you're feeling like your life is anything but restful, we're right there with you. While you might not be able to book a 3-week trip to the Bahamas, there are ways you can lean into God's rest in your everyday life. As you do, you'll find it takes a lot of trust and humility to slow down. But there's deep joy in letting God, your shepherd "restore your soul" (Psalm 23:3).



## Rest

Slow down, practice Sabbath, and relax into God's goodness.

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