

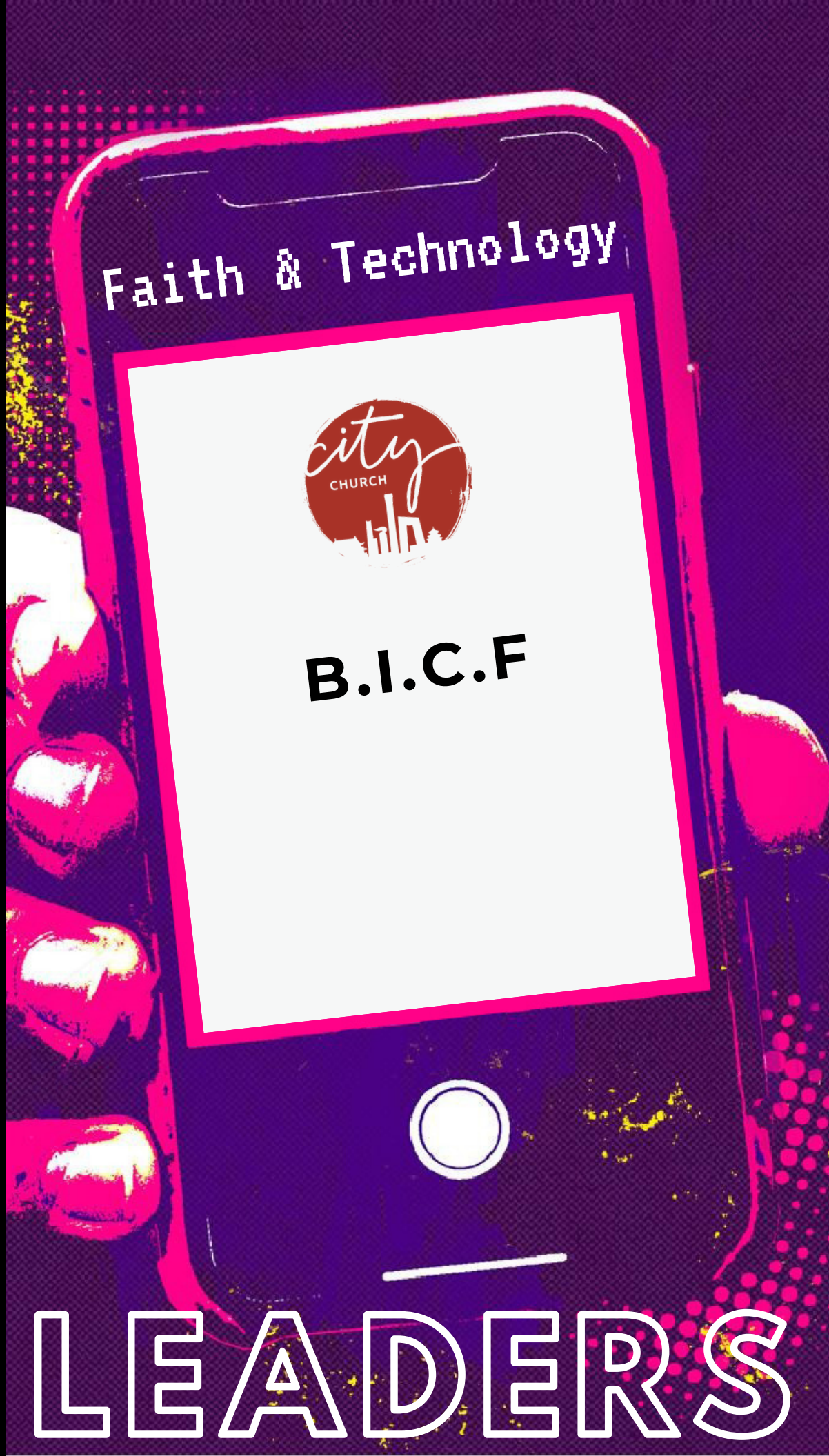


A SERIES ON TECHNOLOGY

May 29

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Jun 19



# LEADERS



# FAITH & TECHNOLOGY

## A STUDY

*on technology*

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**May 29 - June 19**

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Written by TJ Johnson

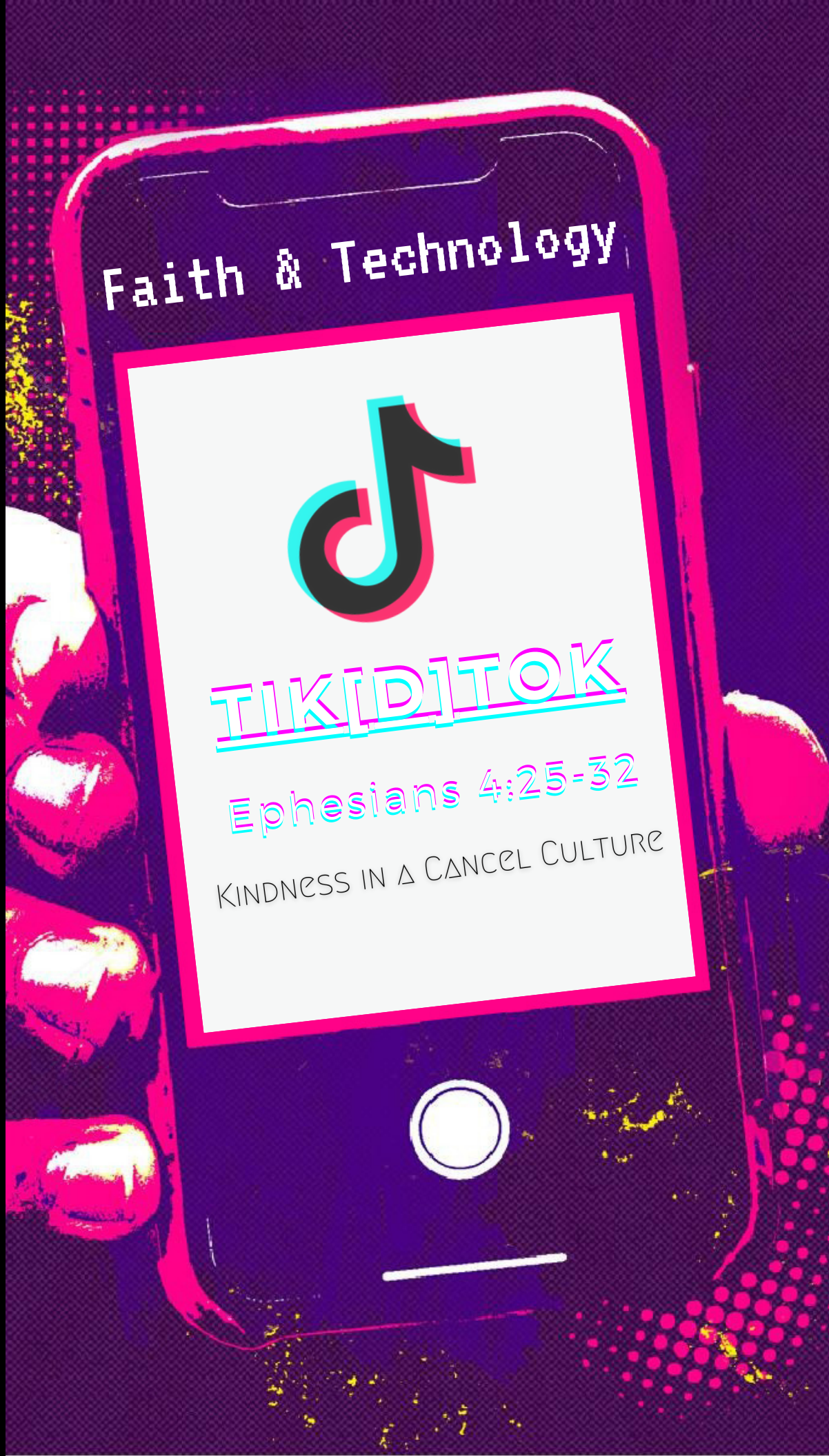
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A SERIES ON TECHNOLOGY

May 29



# Kindness in a Cancel Culture

Ephesians 4:25-32

25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

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# Kindness in a Cancel Culture

J.K. Rowling once said, “Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic. Capable of both inflicting injury, and remedying it.” It’s true; words are powerful. In fact, they’re so powerful that James 3 reminds us, “Every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue.” As we begin a new series on Technology and the Bible, there are some very serious questions we as Christians should be asking about how modern technology might be influencing our words.

Have tweets made us short and to the point in how we talk to one another? Have we lost the art of the front porch conversation? Has the barrage of notifications to cell phones constantly in our hands made us poor listeners and therefore poor communicators? Have screens and avatars caused us to lose sight of the fact that our harsh online comments are to real flesh and blood people made in God’s image? Have memes and pithy one-liners caused us to lose the art of logic? Has moving from encyclopedias to Wikipedia and from college professors to YouTube celebrities caused us to lose the art of discernment in what we see and hear and what we repeat? Has the slow fade of what’s morally acceptable on TV and movies and the fast, easy, and unfiltered access to crude language on the internet desensitized us to language we should not be associated with? Have we become the proverbial frog in the boiling pot? Have the algorithms that constantly feed us only news articles and posts that we agree with completely erased from our daily lives those who are vastly different from us, thus creating a new type of tribalism? Have we forgotten how to talk with people that are radically different from us? Has the like button and record keeping of how many times a post is shared hindered us from being honest about difficult subjects because we, like the authorities in John 12, love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God?

I think the answer, to some extent, is YES! Like words, technology has been used for good and evil and it has most certainly influenced how we use our words. Join us this Sunday as we dive into Ephesians 4, to see how we can use our words to the glory of God.

In Him,  
Ps TJ



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

1. Make a list of your most used technology and then give examples of how it can be used for good or evil.

The definition used in the sermon is, the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes. This is quite broad and would include many things. Most likely people will reference electronic devices and software.

Here are a few examples:

- Television
- Internet
- Phones
- Computers
- Smartwatches
- Daily COVID tests (haha)

Apps that go with them:

- WeChat
- GPS
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Pinterest
- Reddit
- Weibo
- QQ
- Microsoft Teams
- Twitter

7 Get your group to think about items used for both work and pleasure.



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

1. Make a list of your most used technology and then give examples of how it can be used for good or evil.

(cont'd)

The sermon gave a few biblical and modern examples of how technology can be used for both good and evil.

### **Bible:**

- The tools used to cultivate animals were also used to kill neighbors.
- The bricks used to build the Temple for God's glory to rest, were also used to build a tower to become God.
- The musical instruments used to declare praises to God were also used in songs that mocked God.
- The bronze used to build the altar in the Temple has also been used to create idols and worship false gods.
- The ink used to record scripture were also used to spread lies about God.

### **Modern:**

- Hitler used radio to stir up hate. MLKJ used radio to stir up love.
- Internet has been used to save marriages through online counseling and it's been used to destroy marriages through online affairs.
- WeChat can be used to connect us together, group chats, video calls, regular messages sent to a loved one. WeChat can also be used to separate us from the very ones that we are sitting next to as we mindlessly scroll moments or the latest videos.





*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

2. Using the pattern described in Ephesians 4 (Take off the vice and put on the virtue because of this value), share with the group the three main points from the sermon. Are there any other patterns found in Ephesians 4 that were not mentioned?

- Take off the falsehood and put on the truth because of love.
- Take off the anger and put on the kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness because we don't want to give Satan power.
- Take off corrupt talk and put on edifying talk because we long to partner with the Holy Spirit and not grieve Him.
- One pattern that was not discussed is found in Ephesians 4:28. Take off stealing and put on labor because we desire to share with those in need.
- While it was not in the scope of the sermon, certainly theft is applicable to modern technology. Piracy and digital property rights could be a fruitful discussion.



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

3. Read Ephesians 4:25. What are some ways people can struggle with online falsehood and how does that manifest in our personal relationships? (get the group to think about themselves as well. Which of the listed items are they most tempted with?)

- The sermon mentioned three examples:
  - false representations of our appearance using filters, photoshop, and angles.
  - false representation of our wealth and happiness by only posting when good things happen.
  - false representation of our skills and abilities by not acknowledging the failures.
- Much more can be discussed here, particularly the ability to be anonymous on the internet. We can pretend to be anyone. We can even change our personality. One famous example would be the Tinder Swindler who cheated dozens of women out of millions of dollars by pretending to be the son of a famous diamond dealer.
- Additionally, a conversation about new agencies and tabloids could be fruitful.



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

4. What are some ways we can be intentional about using technology to speak truth?

Make a commitment to be vulnerable and honest about our failures. Post those pics that aren't Instagram worthy. Another area to explore would be speaking truth into other's lives. When we see people struggling we can encourage them with the truths of Scripture. When we see people not being honest or living false online lives, we can lovingly confront them.

5. In what ways does our love for the church empower us to speak truth rather than falsehood?

- Ephesians calls us to speak truthfully because falsehood affects more than just ourselves. Our lies hurt others. Our deceptions encourage others to be fake as well.
- **Chrysostom** once wrote of this passage, If the eye sees a serpent does it lie to the foot? If the nose smells a deadly drug will it lie to the mouth? If the tongue tastes something bitter will it lie to the stomach? If the church is really one body, then deception to one member affects all members, including ourselves. We are cutting off our own hands by living falsely.



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

6. Read Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32. What is the difference between godly anger and sinful anger? In what ways have you seen each expressed online?

- Sinful anger is when it expresses itself in unholy ways. Godly anger gets angry at right things and responds in grace and truth. For example, we should get angry over injustice, oppression, sin, abuse, etc. The school shooting that took place recently in Texas is an event that should create in us godly anger. Godly anger is meant to bring about some good result, namely justice and restoration. Ungodly anger brings about bad results, revenge and pain.
- Members should be able to give lots of examples of online anger. Twitter feeds, Facebook messages, email exchanges, news outlets, etc. It's so readily available that Jimmy Kimmel has a regular segment called, "Mean Tweets," where celebrities read hateful things tweeted about them.

7. Is technology itself ever a source of your anger? If so, explain.

- Research shows that we regularly get angry because of technology. Perhaps a sluggish computer, an electronic form that shut down, an office printer error, etc.
- Get the group to explore the effect that technology has on them personally. Is there something practical they can do to de-stress or remove the source of anger from their lives?



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

8. How would you biblically counsel someone who is struggling with bitterness?

- I believe the greatest thing we can do to cultivate a heart of forgiveness is to focus on the forgiveness we have received in Jesus. I would encourage an individual to read a few parables where Jesus taught about forgiveness and then have them focus on their own sin and how much Jesus has forgiven them. True horizontal forgiveness always flows from a proper understanding of the vertical forgiveness we have received in Christ.
- If time allows discuss the group's understanding on what it means to not let the sun go down on one's anger. How long is too long to wait for reconciliation?
- A great resource that could help people with bitterness and reconciliation is the Peacemakers ministry founded by Ken Sande.

9. Define slander and give examples of how we can use technology to slander.

- **David Powlison** defines slander as “not necessarily a false report, just an ‘against-report.’ The intent is to belittle another. To pour out contempt. To mock. To hurt. To harm. To destroy. To rejoice in purported evil.”
- Posting opinions and facts about others online can often be slanderous. Speaking against someone in a group chat or even in private messages can also be considered slander depending on the context. It could be good to have the group discuss when sharing truthful information is and is not slander. A few key things to explore would be our own intention in sharing and our own proactivity to carry this to the individual before sharing online.





*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

10. How can we as Christians be marked by kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness in our online interactions.

- Anger is compared in Proverbs to a fire. With our words we can either put logs onto the fire and increase ours or another's anger or we can take logs off the fire to decrease anger in ourselves and others. We are called to be peacemakers!
- One of the great mission fields for peacemaking today can be found online. Let us look for opportunities to speak tenderness into other's comments. And let us be quick to read, slow to type and even slower to hit send. As one edits a paper for grammar, we must edit our words for love.

11. In what ways does sinful anger give an opportunity to Satan?

- Satan can take bitterness or slander and create factions that split churches, divide families, drive off seekers. When we give in to sinful anger we are basically giving Satan a sledge hammer and saying, have at it!
- It also opens up opportunities for Satan to continue attacking us. He whispers to us to nurse our grudges, to hold on to our resentment, to not be willing to be wronged, but insist on our own way. In the end, it destroys us. Our mind is consumed with evil thoughts and those thoughts spill over into other areas of our lives and spills over onto other people around us.



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

12. Read Ephesians 4:29-30; 5:4. The sermon describes corrupt talk as filthiness, foolishness, and crudeness. Take some time to clearly define each one with examples.

- Filthiness is sexually perverse language. It could be in the form of a joke, but it could also be in the way we speak to the opposite sex. It can be in words and it can be in texts. We are called to be pure in our relationships with one another and we must work hard to make sure that there isn't even a hint of impurity in how we communicate with each other.
- Foolishness is language that stirs up controversy. It would be language that tries to make secondary matters primary matters and causes heated debates. It's very common for this to take place in small groups. Titus 3:10 is very specific about how we handle such language, warn the person once, then twice, then have nothing more to do with them, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. I'm sure we all know one person who regularly posts controversial things on the internet. The Bible's advice is that we engage with them only if they are willing to listen. But it does us no good to continue dialoguing with those who continually stir up division.
- Crudeness is literally a turn of the phrase. It is humor at another's expense. This certainly includes derogatory language, racial slurs, jokes targeting a particular demographic (think minorities, disabilities, etc.). Online, this can be most seen in hateful, stereotypical memes people share.



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

13. In what ways has technology contributed to the above three vices and how can we as Christians protect ourselves from its influence?

- Sexually explicit material has always existed but the internet makes it easily assessable. This is also true with sexual language. It's easier now than ever to have online affairs. One no longer has to meet up at a hotel or use a pay phone, the device needed is on our person at all times.
- Tabloids, which spread rumors that often lead to controversies, have been a thing for a long time, but with the invention of the internet it's totally free. What's more, a person who may never pick up and flip through a tabloid can't help but scroll past controversy in their social media feeds. YouTube is full of channels that are fully dedicated to slander and division. If we don't practice discernment we can easily be swayed to join in.



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

14. What are the three virtues that counteract corrupt talk and how can we use technology to do these more and more?

- Builds up
  - Our language should be helping one another grow in Christ. We should speak the gospel to one another. We should pray for one another. We should speak words of wisdom that will help people with their current situation. Particularly in our current circumstances, with work from home and school from home and online church, it can be quite discouraging. We can use wechat, zoom, or some other medium to send messages, have video calls, send voice messages, etc.
- Fits the occasion
  - We must practice discernment with our words. It's not enough to know if the words we want to speak are true, we must ask are they helpful in this current moment, are they the right words or should I rephrase it, is it the right moment or should I wait till later, am I the right messenger? We must depend on the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom to say the right thing at the right time.
- Gives grace
  - We must ask ourselves if our words preach law or grace to our hearers. The Law says, "do." Grace says, "Christ has done it for you." Are our words constantly reminding people of the work of Jesus? Does it remind them of the forgiveness of Christ? Are we forgiving and longsuffering in our speech with others?



*Speak the truth*

## Discussion Questions

15. In what ways does corrupt talk grieve the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit's job is to edify the church. Corrupt talk does the opposite. Grieve means "to affect with sadness, cause grief, to throw into sorrow, to offend." God loves His church and it hurts Him when He sees one of His children afflicting the other. It offends Him when we fight against God rather than team up with God to help others grow.

16. Are there any new habits you need to form with technology in order to better glorify God and love your neighbor with your word?

Various.





*Speak the truth*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports



A SERIES ON TECHNOLOGY

**June 5**



# Authentic Relationships in an Artificial Age

2 John 1:12

12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

Ruth 1: 15-18

15 And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." 18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

~~~

# Authentic Relationships in an Artificial Age

Technology is in many ways a paradox. It is akin to Charles Dickens' opening line in *The Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times."

Through technology, the world has been brought closer together than in any other era of history. In a few seconds I can video call my dad who is located on the other side of the world or log into a zoom call and instantaneously be connected with five hundred people or have a gift hand delivered to your door.

And yet, through technology the world has been driven further apart than any other era in history. We sit next to family members in silence as we are glued to our devices. We ride on family vacations, each person listening to their own personalized set list while ear buds create a barrier between the ones we are physically closest to. We have thousands of followers or subscribers on our "social" media accounts, but don't actually know what is going on in their day to day lives.

This week we will look at the Biblical command to love one another and technology's impact on our relationships. If John was alive today, perhaps he would admonish us, "Little children, let us not love in emojis or like buttons only, but in physical presence and audible words."

In this age of technology and shutdowns across the city, I have never more resonated with John's closing remarks in 3 John: I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

Longing for physical gatherings,  
Ps TJ



*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

1. In what ways does technology tempt us to isolate ourselves from one another?

- Our addiction to mobile devices can cause us to ignore the people next to us. Screens blind us from others. Earphones deafen us to others. Our social media accounts can give us the allure of friendships but offer no depth for friendship.
- Technologies like Zoom, Skype, etc. can make it really easy and convenient for us to “tune in” or “call in” to a Bible Study or church service, and if we are not careful we begin to forsake the physical gathering with fellow Christians.
- Video games and bingeing stream movie services can add up to hours of alone time that takes away from human interaction.
- Try to get the group to be even more specific than the above. Which apps or devices are most isolating for them personally? Do they have any personal stories of how technology disconnected them from the physical world?





*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

2. In what ways do Ruth and the rest of the Bible prioritize physical presence?
- From the very beginning we see that God is a physically present God. It's not enough to make Adam and Eve and love them from a distance, He comes down and walks WITH them. When sin enters the world, which separates us from God's physical presence, the rest of the Bible is the story of how God is going to physically reunite with us. The incarnation is the story of God valuing physical presence. The promise of the second coming is again, God's valuing physical presence.
  - If the above is true, then it makes sense that God would put an emphasis on our horizontal relationships, which are to flow from our vertical relationship. Perhaps the most known Old Testament passage to a Jew would be Deuteronomy 6. This passage that is repeated every day is brimming with physical connections. Walk together. Sit together. Talk together in your home. Lay down together. Rise together.
  - The book of Ruth begins with a comparison of two types of friendship. One type loves at a distance as Orpah returns to Moab. The other type loves through her physical presence as Ruth journeys with Naomi to Bethlehem. Throughout the book we see physical gathering and casual conversations. We see meals together and momentous physical events like engagements and weddings.
  - As you journey into the New Testament, physical presence becomes even more prominent. The church is the physical gathering of God's people and they gathered physically even when it was life threatening. Paul didn't just go and establish churches and then write letters to them at a distance, but made a point to travel (much harder and dangerous than it is for us today) to physically see and encourage believers. John writes to the church but reminds them that he would much rather be there with them and see them face to face. Etc.



*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

3. What are some ways you can use technology as an initiating space that leads to human connection this week?

Various.

The sermon included forming group chats to plan physical gatherings. If your small group or prayer group is an online group, then planning periodic face to face gatherings. You can use shared experiences, like watching tv or listening to music, as an opportunity to initiate a meaningful conversation about the worldview, what disturbed you, what longings did you have as you watched or listened, what was missing, how does God fit into it, what did we learn about man, etc.

4. In what ways does technology tempt us to insulate ourselves from those who are vastly different from us?

- Technology's algorithms erase a whole demographic of people, thoughts, and ideas that we might not be comfortable with. When those algorithms accidentally let someone unlike us or our interests through technology has made it easier than ever to push out the uncomfortable differences in this world:
  - Don't like something someone said on Facebook? Unfriend them!
  - Angry over that politicized photo on Instagram? Unfollow them.
  - Frustrated over the opinions of an individual on Twitter? Block them.
  - Appalled over the link shared on WeChat? Hide their moments.
  - It takes no more than two seconds to completely erase a world that looks, thinks, and acts differently from us.
- Try to get the group to be even more specific than the above. Which apps or devices are most insulating for them personally? Do they have any personal stories of how technology disconnected them from the diverse world God created? Is there a particular group they are not connected with and therefore want to intentionally engage with? This could be age, ethnic, cultural, economic, nationality, etc.



*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

5. In what ways do Ruth and the rest of the Bible prioritize diversity in our relationships?

- God created every tribe, tongue, and nation and as Revelation reminds us, He has redeemed for Himself a diverse people from each of these vastly different places and cultures.
- In the Bible you see the value of generational friendships in people like Abraham and Lot, Paul and Titus, Older women teaching younger women, etc.
- In the Bible you see the value of cross-cultural friendship in Ruth and Naomi, Paul and Timothy, Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath, etc.
- In the Bible you see the value of economically diverse friendship in Peter (a fisherman with meager means) and Joseph of Arimathea or some of the wealthy churches caring for the poorer churches or wealthy church members fellowshipping with poor church members in Corinth.
- In the Bible you see the value of politically diverse friendships in how Jesus chose Matthew (a Roman loyalist) and Simon the Zealot (a Roman oppositionist).
- In the Bible you see the value of gender diverse friendships in how Jesus had both male and female disciples or Aquila and Priscilla.
- Get the group to think about the different types of diversity that is celebrated in Scripture. Also think through not only examples but exhortations – there is therefore neither Jew nor Gentile. Go into all nations. Blessed are the poor... etc.



*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

6. What are some ways you can use technology this week to form and foster diversity in your friendships?

- I can use technology to research someone's culture, find a recipe from their home country, understand their country's history and then use that information to go deeper in our friendships.
- Technology can be used to listen and learn from people that are different from us...we have to hack the algorithm, be intentional about diversifying our feed, but it's possible.

7. In what ways does technology tempt us to make the world (including our friendships) serve only our wants, needs, and desires?

- Every story has a hero or main character and the hero in your social media or in your average interaction with technology is you. Technology caters to your wants and needs and desires. It feeds the lie that you are the most important person in the world. You come first. It tempts us with how many likes I have, how many shares I have, how many people follow me, do I have the highest streak on snapchat, do I have the most steps in our Fitbit group? Etc.
- This can have a dangerous effect in our relationships. If we are conditioned to think that everything is to cater to my desires then we begin to treat our friends like our devices, they too are meant to serve me.



*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

8. In what ways do Ruth and the rest of the Bible prioritize sacrificial friendships rather than self-serving friendships?

- Abraham is willing to go to war for Lot.
- Jonathan is willing to give up his right to the throne for David.
- Esther is willing to die in order to save the lives of her people.
- The Macedonian church was willing to give out of their poverty to care for their brothers and sisters in Christ that they had never actually physically seen face to face.
- Ruth is willing to forsake marriage motherhood. She leaves family and culture behind for friendship. She labors all day and shares her efforts with Naomi.

9. What are some ways you can use technology this week to sacrificially love a friend?

Various.

- Use social media to check up on people.
- We can use it to send flowers or food.
- We can use it to order a Didi to their house.
- We can use it to transfer them money they need to pay the rent.





*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

10. In what ways does technology tempt us to devalue, downplay, and avoid the average, non-dopamine inducing moments of life?

- Technology has hardwired our brain for constant distractions. According to a Microsoft research the average attention span is now 8 seconds. We now have a shorter attention span than a goldfish! That's a problem for real life relationship. Research says that it takes about seven minutes for a conversation to really get going.
- Have people get specific. What is their go to app when they are bored? Do they ever multitask even in leisure time? Watch Netflix and check their feed? Read a news feed while listening to a YouTube channel? Are they tempted to tune out when people are talking about something that doesn't interest them? etc.
- What did the group think about the Facebook ad? Do they ever use technology to escape from friends or family?



*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

11. In what ways do Ruth and the rest of the Bible prioritize the slow ordinary moments with friends?

- There are large swaths of the Bible that if we were writing it would not be included. God goes on and on about genealogies and land and specifications for building various objects or clothing. Much of the conversation in the Bible can be attributed to small talk. Many of the moments recorded in the Bible are eating and working and walking and talking. Apparently, God values the small things.
- Those four short chapters of Ruth that only takes us fifteen minutes to read, covers at least a year of life among friends. That's a lot of slow moments when the days seem to fade into one another:
  - 7-10 day journey from Moab to Bethlehem.
  - Three months from the beginning to end of the barley harvest
  - At least 9 months until Obed is born.
  - This friendship is centered on going to work, coming home, eating meals, giving advice, complaining, asking questions, and a lot of waiting.
- Too often we are like Elijah, expecting a fire or whirlwind or earthquake when God is waiting to be found in the small voice of a child or the whisper of a friend over coffee. The book of Ruth teaches us that God works through ordinary friendships and plain moments.



*See you face to face*

## Discussion Questions

12. What are some ways you can use technology this week to appreciate and engage in the average, non-dopamine inducing moments of life?

The sermon gave a few examples such as:

- Pull out a vinyl record and just sit and listen to side one, then flip it and listen to side two. Let it be the background for some meaningful conversation.
- Look at that Fitbit that says your pulse is too fast and listen to the call to slow down.
- Use that Didi app to take a trip out to a farmer's house, put away your phones, unplug for a few days, pull out the board games and enjoy the slow speed of God.
- Use QQ to listen to some relaxing music as you and a friend take a walk in the neighborhood.
- Use Baidu maps to navigate a fun outdoor biking experience with a friend

13. Is there anything you need to change about your daily technology usage in order to better foster Biblical friendships?

Various



*See you face to face*

## Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

### Prayer Requests

### Praise Reports