



## **My Amazing iPhone**

**Colossians 3:1-5**

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**MY AMAZING IPHONE**  
**Colossians 3:1-5**

My iPhone crashed recently and I had to buy a new one, and I'm amazed at all things it can do. The first iPhone came out in 2007, but before that we had to rely on a lot of other gadgets to get through life, many of which the iPhone has now made obsolete.

We no longer need a landline phone or an answering machine. We no longer need a road map, the Yellow Pages, or a newspaper. We don't need an alarm clock, a calculator, a flashlight, a rolodex, a dictionary, a note pad, and we rarely use an envelope and a stamp anymore. We no longer need to carry a camera around and don't need a photo album, because all the pictures are in the phone. The iPhone has made obsolete the radio, boom box, video camera, and the GPS device in your car. We no longer need business cards or paper airline tickets or movie tickets. We no longer buy music CDs; we have access to all the music in the world on our phone. Books are becoming obsolete because we can download any ebook we want. And when it comes to a set of Bible commentaries, the Bible software on my phone gives me instant access to over 2,000 books. And even though it can't cook dinner or do the laundry, I love my iPhone and can't live without it.

For all the conveniences of our phones, something else is happening that we may not realize. Listen to this interview of a Google programmer and then let's come back and talk about the use of our phones. [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Did you hear him call it "a war for our attention"? That's exactly what's happening. As benign as it may seem, everything on this phone is fighting for your attention. He also said that our phones put "a choice on life's menu that is sweeter than reality."

The choices on this phone offer the good, the bad, and the ugly. ***The good*** is amazing. The ways an iPhone makes life easier and more productive are amazing. The iPhone has become the way we work, the way we live, and the way we play.

***The bad*** is that it is a constant interruption and distraction, and addiction. So, I know this may be hard, but I want you to take your smartphone and give it to someone else. That's right, for a few seconds you will not have your phone in your hand. Research shows that the average person checks their phone 150 times a day, that's every 6 minutes of our waking hours. The average person will tap, swipe, or click their phone 2,617 times a day. Not all of that is being productive. A lot of that is watching silly videos posted on Facebook. But most people are not honest about how addicted they are to their smartphones. Now be honest. You're sitting in a church and God is watching. Statistics also show that 41% of people use their smartphones will in the bathroom. Be honest, raise your hand if that includes you! Now return the phone to the right person. Yuke!

And ***the ugly*** is that our phones have made sin just a click away. Our phones provide a gateway to a world of temptation. In 2018, 61% of all cellphone use was for pornography. And besides that, phone use is addictive. As the Google programmer said in the video, it's like pulling a slot machine giving us small doses of dopamine with every click.

I'm not bashing smartphones. I love my iPhone, and I'm going to tell you to get rid of yours. *Time* magazine called the iPhone the most influential gadget of all time. It's has become the

way we work, the way we live, and the way we play. But never before has the battle for our minds and our attention been so intense.

At the Linger Conference in 2017, the former leader of Breakaway at Texas A&M, Ben Stuart said, “I’m not against you having access to the world wide web, but I am very concerned about it having access to you.” The access that a smartphone gives us is amazing. But Ben also wondered how many “lost prayers” had not been prayed, because instead of praying, we reached for our phones instead.

For all the benefits, there are downsides. Distraction. Interruption. Temptation. Addiction. And the fear of missing out is causing us to miss out on the most important things in life. For all the good a smartphone can do, it cannot help us have a deeper experience with reality, because it distracts us from observing what is around us and experiencing wonder. It cannot help us have deeper thoughts. With a phone in our hands, there is no downtime. No time to think, to ponder, to dream, to meditate. Our phones cannot help us have deeper relationships with our friends and family. “But I keep up with my friends on Instagram and Facebook, and I text my friends all the time.” That’s true. But a text is not the same as a face-to-face conversation, going deep with those who matter to us. And a phone cannot help us have a deeper relationship with God. “But I have a Bible app on my phone.” That’s great, but go to Screen Time and see how much you use it compared to all your other apps.

We must admit that the more time we spend looking at our phones, the less time we think, the less time we read, the less time we listen, the less time we talk, the less time for sex, the less time we pray, the less time we share our faith, the less time we talk and listen to God.

Again, I love my iPhone and I’m not telling you to get rid of yours. But I am saying that by giving us access to everything in the world, our phones are constantly distracting and interrupting and tempting us, and preventing us from deeper experiences with reality, deeper thoughts, deeper relationships, and a deeper relationship with God. ***By giving us access to everything, our phones are distracting us from the most important things.***

## IDENTITY

Research shows that smartphone use affects how we see ourselves. The greater the use, the greater the feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. There’s something about smartphone use that affects how we feel and how we see ourselves.

Colossians 3:1-4 speaks to our identity in Christ. “Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Jesus is seated in heaven. Our lives are hidden with Christ. That means, unseen, yet to be realized. Theologians call this the “now and the not yet.” Paul assured the Colossians and assured us, “You have (already) been raised with Christ” (3:1). “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ” (3:3). And “when Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (3:4).

Identity can be defined by a lot of things. As Christians, our identity is defined by God's love for us. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is who we are!" (1 John 3:1, NIV).

Not only are we loved and accepted by God, we are changed by God. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV). Your history is not your identity. You are not defined by your past or by your failures. Yes, memories remain and so do scars. You can't erase your past. But your history is not your identity.

This is how Paul explained our new life in Christ. "God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead ... For he raised us from the dead along with Christ *and seated us with him* in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 2:4-6, NLT). That's written in the present tense. We are already "seated with him." It's the now and the not yet.

There is a seat beside Jesus that is reserved for you. It has your name on it. That seat is so real and certain that you can act like you are already sitting in it. And when you sit in the seat of eternity you realize your identity is in Christ.

Who you are – your identity, your worth, your value – is not determined by how many followers you have on Instagram, how many friends you have on Facebook, or how many people liked your post. But over time, those things blur how we see ourselves. I've heard so many young moms talk about the pressure of Facebook, comparing themselves to the perfect mom who has a home-based business, does cross fit three times a week, and posts perfect pictures of her perfect kids. For all the good of a smartphone, it can blur how we see ourselves and keep us from living our true identity, as children of God already seated by the right hand of God.

### **PERSPECTIVE**

For all the good of a smartphone, it can also blur our perspective on life. Remember the Google programmer saying that our phones put "a choice on life's menu that is sweeter than reality." "Sweeter than reality"? But what are we looking at? Silly videos on YouTube. Instagram pictures of someone else's vacation. Some political commentary by a Facebook friend. There is nothing on my phone that is sweeter than reality. Yet, constant connection and constant distraction can blur our perspective on reality.

Again, when we sit in the seat of eternity, we gain a fresh perspective. Paul said, "Set your hearts on things above" and "set your minds on things above" (Colossians 3:1, 2).

When I was in seminary, theology students were required to take a class in church music. This turned out to my favorite class, because the professor, Dr. Bruce Leafblad, turned it into a class on worship. What made it more fun was that about ten of my best friends took the class together. And today, every one of us would say that was our favorite class in seminary. Dr. Leafblad's definition of worship left a mark on all of us. He defined worship as setting "your mind's attention and your heart's affection" on God. And the phrase comes from Colossians 3, where Paul said, "Set your hearts on thing above ... set your minds on things above."

Paul was not telling us to ignore our responsibilities. We have to work, we have to eat, we have to go school, and we have to do certain things to survive. But he was telling us that when we set our hearts and our minds on God, “on things above,” when we sit in the seat of eternity, we gain a different perspective.

Setting our minds and hearts on things above, brings eternity to bear on our present. The thought of eternity motivates us to do certain things and restrains us from doing certain things. An eternal perspective motivates us to make life count and not waste our hours and our days. But an iPhone does just the opposite. It interrupts our priorities. It wastes time. It blurs our perspective on reality.

### RESOLVE

So far, we’ve talked about two things – identity and perspective. Let me put it in an equation. ***Identity plus perspective equals resolve.*** Identity (who we are) plus perspective (how we look at life) equals resolve (how we actually live). Yet sadly, for all the benefits of a smartphone, it is also very good at temptation and weakening our resolve. With one tap, we can indulge any lust we have.

There were no smartphones in Paul’s day, but his words are just what we need to hear today. “***Put to death*** whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry ... ***put on the new self***, which is being renewed into the image of the one who created you” (Colossians 3:5, 10).

Paul urges us to set our hearts and minds on things above, because constantly looking at our phones will blur how we see ourselves, blur our perspective, and weaken our resolve to resist temptation. The phrase “put to death” is violent. It’s aggressive. There is resolve in that phrase. There is deliberate action.

Resolve requires two things. ***Resolve requires discipline.*** Paul said, “I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27, NAS). It takes discipline to “put to death” the things that are distracting you and keeping you from fully living for Christ. It takes discipline to say no to things that distract and tempt us. And it’s going to take discipline to break the habit of reaching for your phone with every free second.

***Resolve also requires delight.*** Paul admitted that he was not perfect and had not attained full spiritual maturity. And for that reason, he said, “I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14, NAS).

It takes discipline and delight to “put to death” the things that distract us and tempt us, that blur our identity and blur our perspective, and that weaken our resolve.

***Identity plus perspective equals resolve.***

The reality for most of us is illustrated by the classic story of Mary and Martha. “Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. But Martha **was distracted**” – because she was in the kitchen on her iPhone – “was distracted with all her preparations” (Luke 10:38-40). We want to be like Mary, but end up being more like Martha. Martha “was distracted,” and so are we.

In his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney says spiritual disciplines are the ways we place ourselves before God.<sup>1</sup> He says if you are not under the influence of God, you will be under the influence of something else. Call it discipline, devotion, or a quiet time, it doesn’t matter what you call it. The point is spending time with Jesus. ***It’s not about doing something; it’s about being with someone.*** I’ve said it a thousand times, grab a Bible and grab a chair. And when you get in that chair prepare to meet God. The Bible is the word of God. It is the voice of God. He says, “Hear my voice, listen and hear my words” (Isaiah 28:23, NAS). He promises, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go” (Psalm 32:8, NAS). Put down your phone. Grab a Bible and grab a chair and prepare to meet God and expect Him to speak to you.

And let me urge you to use a real Bible. Yes, I have a Bible app on my phone, and I use it for convenience. But with all the distractions on our smartphones, it is wise to separate the Bible from all the other apps on our phones. My most treasured possession in my study Bible. I have used this Bible for 40 years. It is special, separated, and sacred. It has only one use. But if you usually read the Bible on your phone, at any second you could be interrupted. But with just a Bible in your hands, you’re saying this time is reserved for God alone.

Solitude is a lost discipline. We don’t even try to talk about it anymore. In his book *Hearing God*, Dallas Willard writes about experiencing and enjoying a conversational relationship with Jesus. And that’s exactly what Jesus promised when Jesus said, “Abide in Me.” When He said, “Abide in Me,” He was inviting us to experience a personal, intimate, day-by-day, and moment-by-moment relationship with Him. But how can we hear His still small voice, as the Bible describes it, if we are tied to our phones? How can we feel the burning of His spirit, as the Bible describes it, if we are tied to our phones?

Mark 1:35 is a snapshot of Jesus. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” If Jesus made the time to be alone with His Father, then so should we. To maintain our identity, to maintain our perspective, to maintain our resolve, we must turn off our phones, turn off the distractions, and turn off the noise so we can listen to our Father.

## CONCLUSION

Again, I love my iPhone and I’m not telling you to get rid of yours. But I am saying that by giving us access to everything in the world, our phones are constantly distracting and interrupting and tempting us, and preventing us from deeper experiences with reality, deeper thoughts, deeper relationships, and a deeper relationship with God. ***By giving us access to everything, our phones are distracting us from the most important things.***

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1991), page 18.