



Addicted to Our Algorithms? Mark 2:27-28

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Group Leader Notes

Today, we're beginning a new sermon series, *Under Pressure: Faith in an Anxious Age*, focused on modern-day pressures we feel and that influence every aspect of our lives – the inexorable march of technology, mental health, loneliness, and isolation, raising kids, work, meaning and purpose, and even end of life. Something is wrong. But we're not sure how to fix it. Here's the good news. We have ancient wisdom to turn to. And Jesus spoke to the pressures of his day that also speaks to us today.

Questions:

Are we addicted to our algorithms? How do you use your technology? Does it help you to form deep connections in life and faith? Does it enable you to solve problems and/or create new ones?

Bottom Line:

Sometimes, we must disconnect from technology to reconnect with God and people.

Memory Verse: Mark 2:27-28

²⁷Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Take Home Message:

We feel more anxious today because of our technology, specifically our phones and screens, and how our algorithms distract us. Technology is a wonderful thing, but it was made for you, not you for it. Jesus focused on sabbath because it actually rewires our brains, our bodies, and our faith. It's about our connection with God and with people. Let's begin 2025 by making technology our servant, not our master, and exercise sabbath and rest.

Other Scripture References:

John 13:34-35

John 4:20-21

Mark 3:4-5

Exodus 20:8-10a, 11

Teaching Points:

- Technology is applying knowledge to create tools that make possible what was previously not possible or which make tasks and life easier and better.
- For Jesus, the sabbath is a practice, a way of living that's meant to fill us up, restore us, give us healthy rhythms, and connect us to the source of life.

- The sabbath is the ancient wisdom and a way to rewire our brains and change the algorithms in our lives. It has a positive impact on our mind, body, and spirit.

Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. How do you deal with the anxiety of your life?
 - The American Psychiatric Association found that 18–34-year-olds report their average stress level a 6/10. How would you rate your stress level?
2. Experts point to factors like poor sleep habits, work stress, financial instability, diet, social media, and rapidly changing technology. Psychologists point out that more people live alone today than in previous generations; there is loneliness, isolation, and disconnection.
 - Do any of these factors resonate with you? If not, what, specifically, are you most worried about?
3. Have you ever felt that technology is running your life too much?
 - How do you feel when you realize that you are without your cell phone?
 - What steps and practices do you take when realizing that you are on your technology too much?
4. When Pastor Joshua asked students and group leaders for ways that they break free from screen use, one student mentioned that deliberately putting your phone away for a tech-free period requires discipline.
 - Read Galatians 5:22, which characteristic is mentioned last?
 - Given that the AI-generated algorithms on your screens provide ever more content for your personal areas of interest, what measures or practices will you utilize to safeguard from added time and attention on your technology?
5. Take a few minutes to think about how your use of technology competes with or distracts you from spending time in relationship with God and with others.
 - Check your phone to find out which apps you spend most of your screen time.
 - Discuss with your group one or two practical ways that you can introduce sabbath rest into your technology use.

Let's Pray

Dear Lord, as we start a new year, give us the wisdom, strength, courage, and discipline to disconnect from our screens daily so we can spend time focusing on our relationship with you and others. In Jesus name, Amen.