



Family Values (Part 3)

Live in the Moment, Not on Technology

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Today, we are going to be continuing in the series that we kicked off the year with, which is Family Values. I've been tasked with walking us through Part 3, which is *Live in the Moment*, not on Technology. Just by a quick show of hands, is anybody still using a flip phone? That person right there is living in the moment. That person has it figured out. We're actually going to be walking through what it looks like to wrestle with this well. The whole series is kind of rooted in Deuteronomy 6, which tells us that these things that God commands of his people, that we are not just supposed to say them to one another, but we are actually supposed to live that out. It's supposed to be a part of our everyday, ordinary, lives. That's kind of how values are developed over time. I don't know about you, but whenever I think of the values in my home growing up, I can close my eyes and walk into my childhood home and over the top of our door frame, I remember seeing ***as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord***. And then, if I go into my living room, I think there being something on the wall that's something like, **but these three remain: Faith, Hope, and Love. And if I ever had the opportunity to get disciplined, I remember seeing Honor Your Father and Mother written on the paddle.**

I tried not to see that very value very often. But chances are most of us realize that values were passed down to you one way or another. Some, good and Some Bad. If you are in the camp this morning of saying Well the values that I was given are things that I would never depart to my kids or would never depart in anyone else, I would encourage you to just sit well with the fact that we are going to be able to look at values through a biblical lens today about what God calls us to us to speak over our family. I think it's important to always go back and revisit the definition of these values.

and here's how we are defining them as a church: Family Values are shared beliefs that establish our priorities, guide our decisions, and determine how we treat each other. In my head, values are kind of the unspoken rules that if someone was just simply observing the way you went around your life, they would say, "That's what that person is about." In other words, by just watching you, they would say, "We know who that person is, what they are doing, where they're going, why they are going there and how they are going to do it."

I love how my buddy, Josh Stewart says it. He says, *It's important to articulate family values clearly. And when we fail to do so, it leaves the door open for others who care much less to clearly articulate the opposite values.*"

I think that it's important for us to sit with for a few reasons, but one in particular is that as a parent or as a guardian or, grandparent, you have been entrusted with the responsibility and the role of imparting values on your kids and your kids' kids. But if you're not going to be the one to step up to the plate, then the world gladly will.

We see that play out all the time, that if you're not going to be the one to say those values, they will still get values, it just won't be from you. They will get it from a lot of other sources...

Ted has so much credibility in the marriage and family space so, when he asked me to be a part of this series and in particular, the message on technology, I said, "Ted, why not you?" And he just decided to confide in me and he said, "Ever since he made this post on social media, it's gone to his head a little bit."

He kicked it downfield to me because the hole in one has changed things. I'm appreciative of that. All kidding aside, this is an intimidating message for me to preach because I am the youngest guy on the teaching team. Distraction and technology looks vastly different in my life than it looks for other people's lives.

So, you might be asking why not Ted, Why not Scottie Mac, or Shay or Donyes or Brawner. That's a fair question. But I actually enjoy technology. A lot of my life has been immersed in it, and my career is built around it, so I have an appreciation for technology. The other guys on the teaching team grew up watching this guy play some basketball. This is Michael Jordan hitting what is iconically known as the *Last Shot*. But, this isn't about Michael Jordan. If we zoom in on the crowd, do you guys notice something?

What's everyone doing? Watching intently. Focused. No screens, no phones, just in the moment, watching history being made.

I grew up watching this guy play some basketball. This is LeBron James. And this is also a record-breaking, career defining moment for him, but if you zoom in on the crowd here, you'll notice something very, very different. Everyone is watching history unfold through a glowing screen about a foot in front of their face. Everyone except for this guy. But look at what generation he comes from He's just fully living in the moment. And I want to be very careful here because this is not going to be a phones are bad, technology is evil, and you're a bad parent type of message. That is not what this is going to be. This is just simply an observation that for some generations, it was easier and natural to live in the moment. And for the current day and age, it's gotten a lot harder for every generation to live in the moment.

Barna does some phenomenal research, and they recently asked parents, "What is it that makes modern day parenting harder than ever before? And 65 percent of those parents said Technology and Social Media. are the most challenging part of them being a family unity, of them parenting, of them putting rules and regulations in place to try to manage that well.

I love how Andy Crouch said it. He's done a lot of the technology space when it comes to the family dynamic. He says, "Technology is in its proper place when it helps us bond, that we've been given to love.

I love that statement because what he's saying is that technology does have a time. Technology does have a place, and it can be used for good.

Obviously, what we are wrestling with this morning is how do we make sure that we're using it well. The question that we are not going to ask is do we use technology. Of course, we use technology; it's very much a part of our culture, it's very much a part of our society and unless you're planning on living under a rock or going off grid, you'll probably have to interact with technology in some way, shape, or form. But the question that I want us to unpack is a little bit of a deeper and better question which is how do we follow Jesus in a world where it's never been easier to be distracted. The message today is going to be about distraction with technology, but we can be distracted in so many ways. From work to hobbies or fill in the blank. But the question that we should all wrestle with this morning is how do we follow Jesus in the midst of a distraction, in the midst of the noise, in the midst of everything thing going on.

When I got tasked with this message, I remember thinking, Wow, this is going to be difficult to preach because I don't know, I'll have to double check, but I don't think Jesus ever had to deal with his disciples being on their phones too much. I realized very quickly that whenever we read about the perspective on this in scripture, it's not from a standpoint of Do this, or don't do this with technology. Jesus wasn't really concerned with technology. He was much more concerned with how we live, with how we spend our days. T

That's Why we read in Ephesians 5 to ***be very careful with how we live, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.***

In other words, the time that we've been entrusted with is going to slip through our fingers faster than you realize, faster than I realize. What we are called to do is not necessarily set up better screen time, it's to be intentional and wise with what God has entrusted us with: The resource of attention, the resource of time with the people that he has put directly in front of us.

And I think something that has been really helpful for me is to realize that every generation has struggled with distraction that technology causes in one way, shape or form. Thanks to Steve Jobs, we all know that we now carry anxiety and information in our pockets 24/7. But I think it's important to realize that before it was him, there was this thing called a Blackberry, and this was an important time in technological advancement because it was the first time that you could take work home with you.

Before it was Blackberry, it was actually Atari, *Nintendo*, and, believe it or not, even back then, parents were worried that kids were spending too much time addicted to a video game rather than outside playing with their friends.

But it even goes further than that. There was this thing called a *Walkman*. I hear that that was cool. But Walkman was really important because it was the first time that technology allowed entertainment to go mobile. It went with you wherever you went.

But before it was Walkman, it was this thing called Television. Before that Family rooms were set up for conversation. And were set up for you to have discussions with one another.

All of the sudden, the Television comes and we start moving our furniture to look at a square box in the room. Before that it was the radio. The radio was the first time that an outside voice actually got to come into your house. We were now listening to broadcasters. We are now listening to news stations; we are now listening to voices that were impacting our family dynamic.

And before it was radio, it was actually Newspapers. And believe it or not, there was a time where people worried that conversations would cease to exist at all because everyone had their nose in a News Paper.

The point is the issue has never been and will never be about technology. The issue will always be what technology does to our attention. And what it does to our attention is hijack it. It reeks absolute havoc on our attention. So, I can already tell in a room like this, that there are two types of people when it comes to technology half of the room is saying technology is powerful, it's helpful, it connects us, it equips us, it entertains.

The other half of the room is saying technology is powerful, but it's harmful, it isolates us, it distracts us, and it numbs us. The harsh reality is you're both wrong and you're both wrong, because it's not that simple and it will never be that simple.

We are going to walk through things quickly today, but just three observations about technology as a tool, not a master. This is a really important differentiation for us to make from the get go because a tool is something that is meant to serve us, but a master tells us who to serve. I don't think a lot of us like to admit it, but somewhere along the way, somewhere in those series of pictures, we got off track. And we are realizing that technology used to be something that we used, but now it's started to use us. Has anyone ever felt that tension before. Because it's hijacked your attention, it's hijacked what you give your focus to.

In my favorite book of all time, John Mark Comber writes this: *What you give your attention to is the person you become. Put another way, the mind is the portal to the soul and what you fill you mind with will shape the trajectory of your character. In the end, your life is no more than a sum of what you gave your attention to.*

In other words, what he's saying is if you do choose to fill all of your time with scrolling on social media, don't be surprised when anxiety comes knocking on your door. If you do fill all of you time with the news cast, then don't be surprised whenever fear shows up at your door. Because, ultimately, what you give your attention to is the person you

become. John Mark Comber didn't think of this by himself, we actually see Solomon imparting this in proverbs 4 where he says ***Above all else, guard your heart.*** Why? Because everything flows from it. Guard your heart. I love the verb that he uses there, *Guard*, because that implies intentionality. That implies awareness. Macenzie Pitman, back stage, after the 8:15 said, "You *almost have to be just like vigilant about it, On watch.* And I love that. Because as parents, we now have this responsibility to guard this. And if you are asking yourself that question – What is my responsibility? Some of you are thinking Okay, do we go scorched earth approach with this? Do we just get rid of it altogether? Some of you are saying, "Would it be better if I just put a timeframe and made it a little bit harder to access? There are a lot of resources out there, a lot of voices out there that are offering advice. I would encourage you to do what you always do. Go to scripture. Go to scripture always. That's your first resort. I realized something that's helped Aspen and I establish rhythms and routines in our household around technology? We're rooting it in first Corinthians when Paul Tells us, "I have the right to do anything, but not everything is beneficial." I have the right to do anything but not everything is constructive. Some translations are going to say, It might be lawful, but is it actually helping you?

So, Is it allowed is the wrong question. Of course it's allowed. I will say it from the front. Social media is going to be allowed in our house at some point. There are going to be phones allowed at some point. Tablets are allowed at some point. Television is going to be allowed, but the better question that we are trying to ask is "Is it beneficial to the person that Christ Jesus is calling us to be. That's how we should all look at technology. Is this actually operating in a way that is helping my relationship with Christ? The goal is not to eliminate technology; the goal is not scorched earth approach. The goal is to go back to what you said in the beginning. Find it's proper time and it's proper place.

Does anybody know what historians chalk up to be the first piece of public used technology? It was the clock, the public clock. In 1307, this public clock went up in Europe. It's hard to imagine but before clocks and sundials and technology around this, if the sun was out, you were awake. And if the moon is out, you got to do something called sleep. Something that not a lot of us get to do anymore. Before this, the average individual's nighttime routine allowed them to sleep 11 hours a night. That would be nice, wouldn't it?

Some of you are like, "If I had both of my nights of sleep in the past two nights, it doesn't equal 11 hours.

But it was controlled by this clock. All of the sudden it started to do something to them. And over time, the historians started to document what was taking place.

I love how this historian writes as he's looking back at the clock. "It became a new kind of ruler, not just measuring time, but starting to regulate it. The machine was meant to serve people, but over time, human life started to bend around what the machine demanded. That's a pattern we still see today. Sound familiar? Sound like something we can all relate to? Because we created a tool to serve or solve a problem, but over time, we started to organize our lives around it.

What I want to ask us to do today is just ask the question of our own lives. Are we using technology or is that notification, vibration, or announcement deciding when you get on your device. Because if technology truly has moved from a place of a tool to a master, then it costs you something in that process. What I would argue that technology will cost you presence. It will take away presence with the people right in front of you. For me, social media or technology or screen time was always a personal issue. I was always like "Yeah, that's just something that I need to get better at. But what you'll realize is that presence that takes you away from your family. Your family starts to feel that. Then your friends start to feel that. Then your community starts to feel that. The people that see through it the most though are your kids. I'll just be honest with you. because your kids are not listening to what we say about technology, they are actually watching Mom and Dad, Grandma and Grandpa, how we interact with technology. *Oh, that's what gets dad's attention? Whenever his phone rings. That's what gets it.* Or, why is dad always giving me a blank stare whenever I'm trying to talk to him? His mind must be on something completely different.

The sobering reminder is that our kids are going to learn presence by watching where we place ours. They are watching mom and dad, they are watching grandma and grandpa. They are watching what we do with our time.

That's why I love Deuteronomy 6 because it tells us to ***love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength. These commands that I give to you today are to be on your heart. And then check this out. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the way. When you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your forehead, write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.***

What stands out to me about Deuteronomy 6 is how practical in everyday and ordinary that is . that's just life. Sitting at home, waking up, going to bed. In other words, your kids are learning values and what you value by watching Mom and Dad at the supermarket, by watching Grandma and Grandpa whenever they come over to play with them at the house. By watching what you do at the gym, buy watching what you do when you have friends over. That's when they are learning. That's when they are being formed, that's when they are understanding values..

Justin Whitmore Early says it really well in the Book, *The Habits of the household* He says, "When it comes to spiritual formation, our households are not simply products of what we teach and we say. They are much more products of what we practice and do and usually there is a significant gap between the two.

This has been my personal goal this year in 2026, is just close the gap. I'm trying to close the gap between what I say and what I actually do. I want the version that my kids and my wife get of me is the same version that you guys would get of me on a Sunday morning. That there is no gap between who Lain says he is and what he actually does.

This is a very very distracted world that we are living in. but distraction does not take Jesus by surprise. In fact, Jesus has one of the best responses to distraction that we get to look at in Luke 10. I'll just catch us up to the story. In Luke 10, Jesus and his disciples are journeying into the village, and they are going over to the house of Mary and Martha. Jesus is traveling with his disciples, but he also has a small crowd following his ministry at this point. And as they shuffle into Mary and Martha's house, Mary is just infatuated , enamored with words that Jesus is speaking. She can't help herself. She just sit's at Jesus' feet. A beautiful moment.

Martha is doing what I would argue any good host would want to do. She's making sure everyone has water or food and is taken care of. Somewhere along the way, Martha is just running herself ragged and she gets frustrated and she says, "Jesus, I'm over here trying to make sure everyone is taken care of and Mary is just sitting at your feet. Will you do something about this? But look at how she's described in the scripture. Martha was distracted. That word distracted is not implying that she was sinning. In fact, I would say that she was being productive, responsible, but she was distracted. And in that moment he doesn't pounce on her. He doesn't say you messed up. Get your attention back on me right now. Jesus says it in a gentle and thoughtful way – he says, ***"your intention is well meaning. Only one thing is truly necessary. The best way to serve me is to pay close attention to my words. That is the priority. That is what your sister has chosen. It is a good portion and it will not be taken from her."***

What you don't see there is yelling, condemning, you better get it right next time.

I hope what you experience, when you feel yourself falling into distraction next time is something similar. Jesus just inviting you to pay close attention to his words. Please put your presence and your focus back on him.

At our church, we do something during baby dedications, and we call it the infamous Marble Jar. The idea is simple that for every week of your child's life, every marble in the jar represents the 18 years they will be in your house. And your job as a parent is just to remove one a week so you watch yourself go from a place of control to a place of influence. But as I've been preparing for this message, this marble jar on my son's dresser is starting to look very, very different. To me because I realize that these marbles in here are not just weeks, these are moments which mean that they are also my presence, my focus, my attention. Unfortunately, it was distraction. At one point or another. This marble doesn't really care if it was a really important work email, it's just gone. This marble doesn't really care if it was just a quick post on socials. It's just gone. This doesn't really care if I had a lot going on, it's just gone.

We live in a distracted world. You might think these are the marbles that so far kind of count for my son's life who is four years old, but in this illustration, it's actually something different. The average US Adult spends three and a half hours of social time on their phone per day. That means for every 7 days of your child's life, one has gone to distraction. So, if you fast forward the clock, that means for every seven weeks of your child's life, one of those weeks was on your phone. And if you fast forward the clock over 18 years of your life, if you are not careful, 133 of your weeks are gone to distraction. Instead of being present with the people that God put right in front of us. And none of us are intentionally doing that. None of us would ever want to intentionally live a distracted life, but we realize if we are not careful, if we are not intentionally living in the moment does not happen by accident. It has to be practiced and that's where rhythms come into play. Technology requires intentional rhythms. Again, this is not a technology is bad or your phone is bad type message. In fact, we are going to leave today and you're going to use your phone. Some of us are going to watch the big game on your television today. Some of us are going to still use AI in social media and texts. That's okay.

Just remember, there is a right and a wrong way to do it. I'm simply carrying the burden this morning that maybe God has entrusted you with giftings and talents and abilities and if we are not careful, we're going to squander them on distraction rather than use them for the people God put right in front of us.

What I want to do in our remaining time is just leave us with quick hitting rhythms. And the idea is not to implement all of them at once. Maybe just pick one or two if it gives you some of your time back. If it gives you some of your focus back as we walk through these.

The first is this: Create a transition into home. The idea behind this is simple. Find a specific place, whether that's your driveway, your garage, or a road sign, where you go out of work mode and into home mode so that you can walk through your front door fully present as a spouse and fully present as a parent.

The next is to give your phone a place. I don't know if we realize this or not, but your phone does not have to go everywhere you go. You have a room, your children have a room, your phone can also have a place to life.

The next one, you'll hear us say a lot during this series. Meals are moments. Meals are sacred because meals are rare. Even just 15 years ago, the average family meal was about an hour long. Today's day and age, it's 12 minutes. So, in that meal, it's sacred, it's rare, it's not time for you to be multitasking, taking a work call. It's your job to ask, "How was your day? How are your friends doing? What's something that you are passionate about about?"

The next one is give your phone a bedtime. Kids have a way of opening up right before they go to sleep. I have a working theory that it's because they want to do anything and everything except go to bed. But as a parent, don't miss these moments of "Tell me a bedtime story, or can you tuck me in because you're busy on your phone."

I'm not even going to go into the science why staring at blue light two seconds before you enter into peaceful sleep is probably not a great idea.

Rhythm number 5. Make distractions slightly harder. I wish I had more self-control than I do, but the reality is I don't. I use this thing called a brick and it locks me out of all social media on my phone until I physically tap my phone on it at the end of the day. I have a Max set at one hour on social media per day. This doesn't have to be a brick. There are so many resources I could tell you about. There is Opal, brick... you can use the screen time on your phone, just have someone else set the password so you don't override it. And then,

Rhythm number 6, practice small tech sabbaths. This is intentional time that you go against the grain of society. You going to set aside whether it's an afternoon, whether it's a one hour block, or whether it is an entire full day eventually to where you say, "Hey, we are not going to live on a screen, we are going to live in the moment.."

Rhythm 7 is the why aloud and what I mean here is rather than just saying "Because I said so." Take it one step further and say, we are about to go eat dinner with this family and we want to be intentional with the conversations at hand." Or, "We are going to come eat a family meal together, leave your phone in the other room because we want to make sure, we are not distracted right now."

And then perhaps the most important one is rhythm number eight which is repair in real time. You going to miss a moment. It's going to happen. It literally happened to me this last week in prep for this message. And when ever that happens, repair in real time. "Hey, Buddy, I'm so sorry that Dad was on his phone. You are way more important than what I've going on right now and I just want to ask if you'll forgive me." That's so important.

I want to close with looking at the rhythm that Jesus models. In Mark 1, we kind of get an insight to Jesus having a really, really busy day in his first day of public ministry. He taught in Synagogues, he healed Peter's mother in law. He heals a lot of people. There are a lot of people lined up that need Jesus.

Mark gives us this insight that Jesus goes to sleep. If anyone had the right to sleep in, it was Jesus, after this day. He had a lot going on. But mark tells us that very early the next morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place to pray.

I love that scripture because what it tells us is that Jesus had a rhythm. Why? Because he knew that Jesus was going to be fully present with the Father, so that he could be fully present with his followers.

And if that is true, then maybe the invitation for you and I today is not necessarily try harder, set up better screen time limits. Mabe the invitation is much simpler than that. I would argue that it is. stay close to Jesus. Why? Because if you are in line with the father, then your natural reflex in life is going to be present with the people around you and in front of you.

Ted has been doing something in closing every single message with a letter to his kids about family values.

I wrote one for Shepherd and Banner and I'm just going to go on the record so you guys can hold me accountable as our church family and also, they can hold me accountable as they grow up.

Shepherd and Banner, it's Dad.

I hope you are reading this someday and I hope my life at this point has reflected the values I tried to pass onto you. I hope you know how deeply I love the Lord, how much I love your mom, and how proud I am to be your dad. If I did this thing even halfway right, my ceiling is now your floor. I hope you understand that your attention is so valuable. It doesn't belong to everyone or everything. As you grow older, more and more things are going to fight for it. Not all of them are going to be bad thing, but not all of them will be worth it. The technology you grow up with is going to try to convince you that your worth is tied to what people say or think about you. It is not. You have automatic intrinsic value and it's been given to you by God, and God alone.

There are going to be moments where distraction feels harmless, but the enemy will distract you from everything that God has created you to do and what he's calling you to do. So, I pray you learn to cut through the noise. Boys, please protect your eyes, please protect your heart. Know who you are and whose you are. Don't forget to be in the moment. Sure, capture it, post it on social media if you want, but make no mistake, the moment was meaningful because you were there, not because of how many likes or comments you got.

Technology is not evil, but it's not a replacement either. I am grateful for it, honestly, because it's how your mom and I are going to keep up with you as we keep getting older. But I hope it never replaces a handshake, a hug, or a look across the table from one another. Take every opportunity the Lord gives you to magnify his name and build his kingdom.

Always in your corner,
Love Dad

Let's pray,

God, we give you glory and honor and praise. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be in your house this morning. Thank you for the opportunity to have tough conversations around things that matter. God, with a message that is easy to feel shame or guilt, I pray that you please just remind us that truly what you are inviting us into this morning is just to stay close to you.

You have a funny way of making sure that if we are close to you, then everything else kind of falls into place. Be with us as we leave today that we would be mindful and that we would give you glory, honor, and praise and magnify your name. In your name, Amen.