

Lesson 12 | November 19, 2023

Use Technology Wisely

Study Text: Genesis 11:1–9; Exodus 31:1–5; 2 Chronicles 26:15; 1 Corinthians 10:1–13,31

Central Truth: Our actions must glorify God, not ourselves.

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (KJV).

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (NLT).

Learning Objectives:

- Students will recognize the many gifts and responsibilities God has given to them and other people.
- Students will evaluate the ways they are using technology in their daily lives.
- Students will choose to express Christlike attitudes and messages in their online activity.

Introducing the Study

Say: Technology has completely changed how the world shares information and ideas. With the rise of digital communication, handwritten letters and face-to-face meetings are becoming things of the past. As technology continues to advance and evolve, Christians must be careful to represent Christ in everything they say and do, whether in-person or online.

Opening Activity—Daily Technologies

Ask: *What are the ways you use or interact with technology in your daily life?* Write students' responses on the board. Examples might include credit/debit card transactions, video calls, text messages, phone calls, vehicle GPS, wireless vehicle key, digital registers at the store, Bluetooth or wireless hearing aids, smart home devices (locks, lights, assistants, etc.), Facebook or other social media, online news feeds, and online tithing or charity donations.

Say: Whether they consider themselves technologically savvy or not, people interact with technology more than they realize. Christians are called to represent Jesus to the world, and it has never been easier to share that message of hope than in today's interconnected world. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The people who built the Tower of Babel had one goal in mind: to glorify themselves. "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves. . . . This will make us famous" (Genesis 11:4, NLT). Instead of obeying God's command to "fill the earth" (9:1, NLT), their plan would "keep [them] from being scattered all over the world" (11:4, NLT). When God

confused their language, they learned a valuable lesson we would do well to remember: His plans cannot be thwarted and His glory cannot be shared.

Part 1—God Gives Abilities to Create The Worldwide Platform

Exodus 31:1–5

Say: In this Internet Age, all kinds of creative people—from athletes and gamers to musicians and preachers—can create platforms to share information and entertainment worldwide. Whether the scope of our influence is large or small, God has given each of us a unique ability to share with the world to bring Him glory and accomplish His purposes. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

February 2020 statistics¹ indicate YouTubers uploaded more than 500 hours of video content every minute, a growth of 40 percent since 2014. This may seem staggering, but the supply is a reaction to the demand. More than 2.1 billion people used YouTube in 2020, and 27 percent of Internet users worldwide watched over 10 hours of online videos per week. YouTube is not the only media company experiencing explosive growth. With new platforms constantly being created, there are more ways than ever to communicate with people, whether they're next door or around the world. The possibilities are endless!

God has always given people special abilities to imagine and create new technologies and methods of communication. In Exodus 31, God filled Bezalel with His Spirit, “giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts” (verse 3, NLT). Indeed, Bezalel was “a master at every craft” (verse 5, NLT). God empowered and anointed him to use his skills to lead the team that built the tabernacle and created its contents, including the ark of the covenant. For generations, these objects would facilitate worship, serving as a meeting place between God and His people.

God also anoints creative people today to share the gospel and bring about positive social change via countless powerful online platforms. The message of Jesus can be quickly and inexpensively presented in a compelling way, leading millions of people to Jesus in a surprisingly simple way.

Discuss

? What are the potential risks for Christians with an online presence? What are the potential rewards?

? Do you know anyone who is anointed in online media and digital communication? How can you encourage and support their ministry?

1. “Hours of Video Uploaded to YouTube Every Minute 2007–2020,” Statista, accessed March 31, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259477/hours-of-video-uploaded-to-youtube-every-minute/>.

Unique Abilities

2 Chronicles 26:15

Say: God has given certain people the unique anointing to utilize technology to reach others in exciting and impactful ways. As with any gift God gives, the recipient is responsible for using it in a way that glorifies God alone. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Centuries after anointing Bezalel and his team to fashion the tabernacle and its components, God gave King Uzziah and his military experts the ability to build structures of warfare that protected Jerusalem from invading armies. Uzziah’s “name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong” (2 Chronicles 26:15, KJV). Unfortunately, Uzziah’s power gave way to pride, which led to his downfall (verse 16). When God gives us gifts for His glory, we must be cautious to remember that any success we have comes from the Source himself. We must not become prideful, enamored with our own accomplishments, for that could lead to our destruction (Proverbs 1:18).

God anoints people with talents that span the array of creativity. Some are found in the traditional church setting—like preaching, teaching, and singing—while others thrive online where countless people can benefit from them. Lots of people know how to post videos online, but some are uniquely gifted to captivate their viewers and grow their influence. As their platform broadens, they are able to spread God’s Word in increasingly unique and powerful ways.

Discuss

? What are some creative gifts God has given people in your church? How do they add to the effectiveness of your ministry?

? Are there any creative people online whose ministry you enjoy? Explain how others could access their content if they were interested.

? Jane Austen wrote in *Pride and Prejudice*, “Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us.”² How does this relate to the discussion above?

Resource Packet Item 1: Unique Abilities

Distribute the worksheet and give students a few minutes to respond. If time is short, suggest they take it home and prayerfully consider their gifts and how they are using them for God.

Part 2—When Abilities Are Used to Glorify Self Focused on Followers

2. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Whitehall, London: T. Egerton, 1813), 31.

Genesis 11:1–4

Say: Social media influence is measured by number of followers. The drive to increase views and likes can lead content creators to become so focused on feedback that they forget their reason for posting in the first place. However, the gifts God has given are intended to fulfill His purposes and glorify Him—not build an army of online followers. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The people gathered in Babel had extraordinary building skills. They knew how to fire bricks instead of simply drying them in the sun, greatly increasing their strength and durability. They also used tar bubbling up from underground pits near Babylon to bind and seal the bricks. The structure they built was unlike anything humans had created before. Using new skills to accomplish a common goal unified the people. This sounds like good news, but the people’s motivation—to become famous and build one civilization rather than filling the earth as God had commanded—led them astray. They had missed God’s purpose.

God gives extraordinary gifts for specific reasons. Public gifts like speaking or singing can minister powerfully to people, but they can also distract from God himself. It’s all too easy to get caught up in other people’s feedback and forget the reason God gave us a sermon or song in the first place. The people of Babel chose to abandon God’s purpose and use their gifts to elevate themselves. Christians today face this same danger. We must focus on giving all the glory to God and keeping our motivations pure, remembering that God’s purposes may be completely different from ours. “‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ saith the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isaiah 55:8–9, KJV).

Discuss

? How can you tell the difference between ministry motivated by trying to impress others and ministry focused on honoring God alone?

? What are the dangers of focusing too much on an individual’s gift in a corporate church setting?

Kingdoms that Crumble

Genesis 11:5–9

Say: Great ability may lead to a large following, but it also leads to greater responsibility. As Jesus said, “When someone has been given much, much will be required in return” (Luke 12:48, NLT). People who build followings and kingdoms on the weak foundation of their own abilities must bear the impossible weight alone until inevitably crumbling. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The people of Babel constructed their tower with the intent of making a name for themselves (Genesis 11:5–9). Such a lofty and superficial goal was bound to create problems. In fact, selfish pride has led many kingdoms to destruction. Pharaoh defied

God's command to let His people go, and his entire army was swallowed by the sea (see Exodus 14:21–28). King Belshazzar threw a royal party for himself using cups stolen from the temple. The kingdom of Babylon fell to the Persians that same night (see Daniel 5). The legendary pride of Moab crumbled when their kingdom was invaded and the people were forced to flee (see Isaiah 16:6–14). Those who build online kingdoms with the intent of self-glorification and advancement are following the same path, essentially constructing their own virtual towers of Babel.

In Romans 2:6–8, Paul made it clear God will judge everyone based on their actions. For those who seek God's honor and glory and continue to do good, there is the promise of eternal life. However, God "will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness" (verse 8, NLT).

Christians may fall into the trap of living for themselves, even in a church setting. When we focus on people's gifts and abilities instead of the message of Christ, ministries collapse and leaders fail. Paul said, "I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me" (2 Corinthians 12:9, NLT). He understood an effective ministry and a godly life could be built on God's power alone.

Resource Packet Item 2: Kingdoms that Crumbled

Distribute the information sheet and, if time allows, briefly summarize the reason each kingdom fell.

Discuss

- ? What can happen if a ministry is built on a person's abilities alone?
- ? What does it mean to boast about our weaknesses? How can doing so allow the power of Christ to work through us?

Part 3—Do Everything for the Glory of God

Do Not Test Christ

1 Corinthians 10:1–13

Say: Paul warns the Corinthian believers not to end up like their ancestors who scorned God's blessings and grumbled against Him in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:9–10). God has blessed us as well. The way we use all He has given us reflects our attitude toward Him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul compares the Israelites' journey in the wilderness with our Christian walk. We have been given great mercies and received miraculous gifts from God just as the Israelites did. But it is up to us whether we will repeat their mistakes and test God with habitual sin and selfishness. As Paul explained, "These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age" (verse 11, NLT).

Christians in this age have been given the remarkable gift of technology. Anyone with Internet access can send a message across the world in the blink of an eye. Hundreds or even thousands of people might see a photo or video someone posts. Smartphone users can access any version of Scripture and dozens of commentaries whenever they want. These gifts don't exist for our own promotion or indulgence, but as effective tools for spreading the gospel.

When God told Moses to speak to the elders of Israel with the eventual goal of leading the people out of Egyptian enslavement, Moses argued, “What if they won't believe me or listen to me?” . . . Then the LORD asked him, ‘What is that in your hand?’” (Exodus 4:1–2, NLT). God would use the shepherd's staff in Moses' hand to perform miraculous wonders and convince the Israelite elders that the prophet's message came from God himself.

What is in our hands? It is up to us to decide how we use the technology on our desks and in our pockets. Some people might see only evil potential in such technology, but we can choose to use what is in our hands to lift up or tear down, to represent Christ well or give the Church a bad name. Technology is not our enemy. As Paul wrote, “We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12, NLT).

Paul finishes this section of his letter to the Corinthians with a warning against pride: “If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12, NLT). But he goes on to share one of the Bible's greatest promises concerning temptation: “The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure” (verse 13, NLT).

Discuss

? What specific gifts or tools has God placed in your hand? How can you best use them for His glory?

? Describe the ways God kept His promise to “show you a way out” during seasons of temptation.

All for His Glory

1 Corinthians 10:31

Say: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NLT). These words from Paul are so simple and yet so instructive. They perfectly summarize how Christians should honor God with their lives. If actions as ordinary as eating and drinking present opportunities to glorify God, how else could we be bringing Him praise every day? (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Romans 12, Paul further explores the concept of glorifying God, calling for Christians to be living sacrifices—people who offer every part of themselves to God “because of all

he has done for you” (verse 1, NLT). As simple as it may sound, Christians miss opportunities every day to have an impact for the sake of the gospel. Many believers post memes on Facebook, share opinions on Twitter, upload videos to TikTok, or even comment on their local news website without ever considering how they might reflect the glory of God. On the other hand, liking or sharing content that is hurtful or glorifies evil behavior detracts from our witness. Whether we are interacting with people online or face-to-face, we need God’s wisdom (see James 1:5).

Christians have a responsibility to use their many gifts to further the kingdom of God. Every post does not need to be a sermon, but we would do well to consider how we can best represent God in every aspect of our lives. When using the powerful tools of technology, Christians should use godly wisdom and speak life. In the words of Paul, “Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them” (Ephesians 4:29, NLT).

Discuss

- ? What digital tools can Christians use to help them continually focus on God’s Word?
- ? How could you change your online habits to bring greater glory to God?

Resource Packet Item 3: Israel’s Wilderness Lessons

Distribute the worksheet and have students complete the matching exercise individually or in small groups. Then read aloud the verses at the bottom of the page and identify the truths they tell us about God.

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Christians today enjoy blessings and conveniences that believers in the past could never have imagined. In 2021, 97 percent of Americans owned cell phones, indicating that—like it or not—technology is everywhere and it is here to stay.³ As Christians, we must take the blessings God gives us and use them for His glory. You could start with something as simple as posting a testimony or sharing a video of a sermon that impacted your life. What matters is that you are using technology wisely to further the kingdom of God. Our Heavenly Father will keep His promises and reward those who continually seek His glory and honor Him above all else (Romans 2:7).

Living It Out Ministry in Action

- Recognize and thank God for the natural abilities and generous blessings He has given you.
- Examine your online activity to make certain you are not focused on glorifying yourself or your talents.
- Look for opportunities to use technology to share the message of Jesus Christ.

3. “Mobile Fact Sheet,” Pew Research Center, accessed March 31, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/mobile/>.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

New Package; Same Ideas.
Ecclesiastes 1:1–11

Tuesday:

Do Not Worship Human Ingenuity.
Isaiah 44:9–20

Wednesday:

A Prophecy about Knowledge.
Daniel 12:1–4

Thursday:

Reflecting Jesus.
Acts 4:8–13

Friday:

Foolishness and Wisdom.
1 Corinthians 1:18–25

Saturday:

Deceived by False Power.
Revelation 13:11–18