

[**Author Note:** I opened this lesson on a humorous note by sharing some funny cell phone memes I found through a quick google search. I would have included some for you, but they’re copyrighted. Sorry!]

How true do you think some of these memes are? Cell phones are a huge part of our culture now, to the point that it would be hard to imagine what life would be like without having a phone near us all the time.

Raise your hand if any of the following are true of you.

* You sent at least five texts today.
* You checked social media at least five times today.
* You played a game on your phone today.
* You watched a video on your phone today.
* You spoke on the phone today [this one might be funny].
* Your phone was the first thing you touched this morning when you woke up and will probably be the last thing you touch before you go to sleep.

One high school girl who wrote an article on cell phones for her school newspaper said, “When I broke my phone and went without it for a week, I don’t know how I survived. I felt like I was on a deserted island all by myself.”

Raise your hands. How many of you, if you lost your phone for a week, would feel just like her? If not, how would you feel?

Last week, we started off this series by going to Colossians 3:17 and talking about how technology should be something that helps us worship God, not something that gets worshiped.

Let’s look again at that verse:

**Colossians 3:17**

*And whatever you do, in WORD or DEED, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

If you think about it, smart phones are nothing but WORDS and DEEDS. We use them for talking, searching, playing, taking pictures, posting pictures, and, of course, texting. And on rare occasions, we even text full words.

Last week, we asked the question, “Is technology an idol in my life that I am loving more than God?” Today, we’re going to get specific to cell phones and smartphones and ask, **“Do my words and deeds that take place on my phone bring God honor and glory?”**

To answer this question, we’re going to examine just one verse by Paul in 1 Corinthians.

**1 Corinthians 6:12**

*“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.”*

To better understand this one verse, let me tell you about some background stuff going on with the Corinthian church.

Paul has to address a lot of things that the Corinthian Christians were doing. They were taking each other to court, complaining about each other, and even being really, umm, “inappropriate” with each other. Do you guys get what I mean? Some people were sleeping together who shouldn’t be sleeping together. Hopefully, I don’t need to paint too much more of a picture than that. You get it … naughty things were happening in this church.

But, here’s the worst part. The people doing these “naughty things” were using this really lame excuse. They were saying, “All things are lawful for me.” In other words, they were saying, “Hey, my body was made for sex, so obviously it’s OK for me to do this.”

To put that into perspective, that would be like if I stole money out of your pocket and said, “Hey, pockets were made to be reached into, so this is totally legal!”

Basically, the Corinthians were starting to sound like Outback Steakhouse: “No rules, just right.” So, before getting into a discussion about sexual immorality (don’t worry, that’s not what we’re talking about today), Paul quotes their popular excuse back to them and corrects it.

So, their popular excuse, again, is, “All things are lawful for me.” Now, believe it or not, this is actually true for Christians in a sense. In the Old Testament, followers of God were required to keep a lot of laws, which forbade them from doing certain things, hanging out with certain people, and eating certain foods. Today, because Christ has fulfilled the law and made the final sacrifice for our sins on the cross, if we believe and trust in Him, we are no longer “under the law,” so we have freedom to eat what we want, hang out with who we want, and even use whatever devices we want.

But, of course, all of those things should be done to honor God. So, it’s not that “all things (including sins) are lawful to me,” which is what the Corinthians were saying. The truth is that for Christians, there are no longer any restrictions on how we live for God. Everything we eat can be for His glory, every relationship can be made to point to Him, and everything we do on our phone CAN BE done to honor God.

This brings up an important fact about the cell phone in your pocket. It’s not evil! It’s not the problem. A cell phone is just a tool. The problem is how we use it.

**“Not all things are HELPFUL.”**

A cell phone can be helpful. Last week, we talked about all the benefits that technology can bring.Does anyone remember some of the positive benefits we said that technology can bring?

But, a cell phone can also be harmful.What are some ways cell phones can be harmful?

We can post the wrong things on social media, we can talk about people behind their backs, or just ignore them altogether by blocking them. We can run up bills and cause huge expenses to bank accounts that don’t even belong to us. That’s basically stealing, by the way.

And just like the Corinthians, we can do some pretty naughty things by sending naughty messages and even pictures, or we can demand those pictures. In which case, we’re basically saying, “Hey, phones were made to do this, so it’s OK. All things are lawful to me.”

The truth is that cell phones *can* be a lawful means to honor God, but we can easily use them as a sinful means to be harmful. In other words, “not all things are helpful.”

**“I will not be dominated by anything.”**

Doesn’t this sound like warfare talk? David said something similar in Psalm 101:3, *“I will set before my eyes no unclean thing.”*

How do you know someone has been dominated?

Maybe they were pinned to the ground by a wrestler, in a straight jacket, or wearing shackles/handcuffs.

[**Author Note:** At this point, I took out my phone and held it in my hands with my wrists close to each other as if I were a prisoner.]

Does this look like you? Does a 4-inch by 2-inch hunk of plastic and glass dominate your life? Does this device give you freedom to worship God and help others, or does it make you a prisoner to your sin, your image, and your worries?

**Closing Challenge:**

You know, Jesus actually submitted to shackles. He submitted to torture, the cross, and the wrath of God FOR US so that we would no longer be slaves or prisoners to sin.

Look at what Paul says.

**Romans 6:17–18**

*“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”*

Do you feel like a slave to a phone or to social media? If so, the answer is not to just “stop it.” That won’t work. This world has plenty of things for us to get addicted to. There’s an entire app store that is constantly being filled with new creative ways to make us feel more like a prisoner.

Imagine for a moment that you were a prisoner of war in a foreign country, somewhere in some hot, jungle cell. How could you stop being a prisoner? Could you just declare it and start yelling, “I’m not a prisoner!”? No. The guards would probably just laugh. Could you just start acting like one of the guards and pretend that you’re not in shackles? You could, but you wouldn’t get very far, and you might get a beating. Could you run away? Maybe. But, let’s just assume that escape is impossible. What could you do to stop being a prisoner? The answer is nothing.

Just like salvation, there’s nothing we can do to be saved. What we need is a Savior. And if that savior were to come into the camp and start releasing prisoners, what would you do then? You would reach out your arms through the cell and start begging, “Save me! Save me!”

If you are a prisoner to your sin, that is all you can do—call on Jesus to save you. But here is the good news: He will! He is a Savior who can save! This is why the Scriptures say, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”* (Acts 16:31).

But, maybe you already *do* belong to Christ, but if you’re honest, it’s so easy to let something like a phone dominate your time and your mind. If that’s you, look again at Romans 6:18. You ARE a slave of righteousness. That means that God is in control of you and has prepared good things for you to do. It would be ridiculous to act like a slave to sin when you *are*, in fact, a slave to righteousness.

Do you know how they used to train elephants in the circus? A baby elephant, when it was put outside, would have one leg tied into the ground using a post and a rope. As a baby, it wouldn’t be strong enough to break free. But, the trainers would consistently tie the rope no matter what. And as the elephant would grow older, it would become used to it. In fact, the elephant would become so used to it that even as an adult elephant, the trainers would only need to use that same small rope and post. The elephant could easily break free, but in its mind, it would think it’s a prisoner.

Christian, do not be dominated by anything! If Christ has set you free, then you are free indeed. Don’t live like a prisoner.

The best way to fight against letting a phone or anything dominate you, is to use it for the Lord.

And that’s why my challenge for you this week is just that: for one week, text your friends some Scripture. For one week, only post to your social media what God is doing in your life and your friends’ lives. If you want, you can use the hashtag #myphoneisaslave.

For one week, don’t be a slave to your phone. Instead, make your phone a slave to Christ. Let every word and deed that comes from your phone bring God glory and bring your friends to God’s Word. Of course, after one week you’ll be left with a question: “Why not every week?”

Let’s pray.

**Possible Discussion Questions**

1. Be honest … what would life be like if you had no phone or computer for one week? Would life be easier? Harder? More relaxing? More stressful?

2. Are you going to take the challenge to make your phone a slave? What do you think would happen?

3. One of the things we were asked to share online this week is what God has been doing in your life. Let’s answer that now. What has God been doing in your life? How has He been awesome lately? What are some things you wish He would do?