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12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You



Synopsis

Do You Control Your Phone—or Does Your Phone Control You? Within a few years of its unveiling, the smartphone had become part of us, fully integrated into the daily patterns of our lives. Never offline, always within reach, we now wield in our hands a magic wand of technological power we have only begun to grasp. But it raises new enigmas, too. Never more connected, we seem to be growing more distant. Never more efficient, we have never been more distracted. Drawing from the insights of numerous thinkers, published studies, and his own research, writer Tony Reinke identifies twelve potent ways our smartphones have changed us—for good and bad. Reinke calls us to cultivate wise thinking and healthy habits in the digital age, encouraging us to maximize the many blessings, to avoid the various pitfalls, and to wisely wield the most powerful gadget of human connection ever unleashed.

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Customer Reviews

“Are Christians using technology to transform the world or is technology transforming Christians in unhealthy ways? Especially since the era of Franklin and Jefferson, when inventing things and technological ways of organizing things became a way of life, Christians have needed to be alert to such questions. Tony Reinke’s reflections on the smartphone offer helpful advice as to how people today need to be vigilant regarding the impact of their favorite new technologies.”—George M. Marsden, Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History Emeritus, University of Notre Dame; author, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* “12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You is an incredibly convicting and profoundly insightful read. Smartphones have become a part of our lives, but Tony explores the

devastation to the human mind and soul due to devotion to technology. He calls us to examine not merely the use of our smartphones but the motives that inspire it. This is a necessary book for our generation, to remind us that our phone habits will either amplify or get in the way of our most important longing of all: the soul-satisfying glory of our Savior.

•Jackie Hill Perry, poet; writer; hip-hop artist
“In contrast to the television that dominates the modern living room, the smartphone is typically far less conspicuous in its presence. Perhaps on account of this subtle unobtrusiveness, surprisingly few have devoted sustained reflection to the effect this now ubiquitous technology is having on our lives. In this book, Tony Reinke plucks these devices from the penumbra of our critical awareness and subjects them to the searching light of Christian wisdom. The result is an often sobering assessment of the effect they are having on our lives, accompanied by much prudent and practical counsel for mastering them. This is a timely and thoughtful treatment of a profoundly important issue, a book that should be prescribed to every Christian smartphone owner for the sake of our spiritual health.

•Alastair J. Roberts, a theologian; blogger
“Tony Reinke’s *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* is one of the most important little books a twenty-first-century Christian could read. Highly recommended.

•Bruce Riley Ashford, Provost and Associate Professor of Theology and Culture, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
“For many, the phone is an object of increasing anxiety, exhaustion, and dependency. The wise Tony Reinke leads us practically to find freedom from the phone without requiring us to huddle away in a monastery somewhere in the middle of Montana. If you want to know how to steward your technology and your life for Christ and his kingdom, read this.

•Russell D. Moore, a president, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
“If you feel uneasy about your constant relationship with your phone (and even if you don’t, but wonder if you should), you will find Tony Reinke to be a reliable guide for how we should assess the impact of our phones on ourselves and our relationships. A marvelous book that tackles a massive subject in clear and compelling language!

•Trevin Wax, Managing Editor, The Gospel Project; author, *A Gospel-Centered Teaching, Counterfeit Gospels*, and *A Holy Subversion*
“Two things strike me about this book. First, Reinke writes with great humility, including himself in the narrative to help us see him not only as a teacher but also as a fellow struggler. Second, this is not a guilt-ridden slog through what not to do. Tony keeps pulling us up into the glories of Christ and even helps us to dream of new ways to glorify God through our digital technologies. Helpful, hopeful, humbling, and inspiring, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* is a book for this age and wisdom for generations to follow.

•Trillia Newbell, author, *A Enjoy; A Fear and*

Faith; and United States. "Image is everything, and for a woman who has built her identity on the sands of how she posts online, the eventual letdown will come like a crash. But there is a better way forward, a way to use our phones in selfless service, to glorify God in our connectivity, and to image Christ by our phone behaviors. For this, we must evaluate our glowing screens and train our discernment to see the difference between the sight-driven habits of our age and the Scripture-lit pathway of faith. Every chapter of this book is like the right kind of push notification in our lives. Stop, read, process, and apply with care.

•Gloria Furman, author, *The Pastor's Wife*; *Missional Motherhood*; and *Alive in Him*

"As a teenager and a smartphone user, I needed this book. Tony Reinke is compelling and convicting, yet continually meets us with grace. My generation needs this book, because we need to get technology right. If we don't, the cost is great. *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* should be a must-read for every smartphone user, especially for us younger ones.

•Jaquelle Crowe, lead writer and editor in chief, *TheRebelution.com*; contributor, *The Gospel Coalition*; author, *This Changes Everything*

"It took more than a generation for the quaint horseless carriage, with all its magic and horror, to become the ordinary, unexamined car. But the device we once called a smartphone has reached its status as a phone, a common, everyday inevitability with such breathtaking speed that it has left us little time for reflection on the true power it has in our lives. Tony offers us a distinctly Christian take on the little wonders in our pockets, seeing their goodness, beauty, and power, but also applying godly wisdom and well-researched cautions to help readers use their phones without being used by their phones.

•John Dyer, author, *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology*

"Experience practical theology at its finest as Tony applies a thorough understanding of the Scriptures to a thorough understanding of our culture, resulting in a beautifully written and balanced guide to the dangers and opportunities in the palms of our hands. Yes, our phones have changed us for the worse, but this book will change us and our phone use for the better.

•David Murray, pastor, Grand Rapids Free Reformed Church; professor of Old Testament and practical theology, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary; author, *Jesus on Every Page* and *Reset*

"The more widespread and influential something is, the more Christians should think carefully about it. In this wisdom-filled book, Tony Reinke helps us do just that with the smartphone. Without descending into technophobia or paranoia, he shows the various ways in which phones are changing our lives, highlighting both the problems with this and the solutions to it. A timely and thoughtful book.

•Andrew Wilson, pastor, Kings

Church Eastbourne, East Sussex; author, *If God, Then What?* and *Unbreakable* – “Rarely is a book as practically impactful as it is theologically rich. In an age in which daily we are drawn into a digital vortex, Tony Reinke warns of the implications and challenges us to examine whether our phones have displaced our spiritual priorities in Christ. With unflinching honesty, Reinke shares his own technological struggles, and in so doing, moves us to a posture of reflection, prayer, and even repentance. Thoroughly engaging and immediately applicable, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* is a must-read for our time.” – Kim Cash Tate, author, *Cling: Choosing a Lifestyle of Intimacy with God*

Tony Reinke is a journalist and senior writer for desiringGod.org. He is the author of *Lit!: A Christian Guide to Reading Books*; *Newton on the Christian Life*; and *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*. John Piper (DTheol, University of Munich) is the founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and the chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. He served for 33 years as the senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and is the author of more than 50 books, including *Desiring God*; *Don't Waste Your Life*; *This Momentary Marriage*; *A Peculiar Glory*; and *Reading the Bible Supernaturally*.

I see it at stoplights. I see it during timeouts at my daughter's basketball games. And I even see it when I stand in the back of the sanctuary during church services. When there's a lull in action, however brief, smartphones appear, and eyes are toward them. But why must we check them so often? Is it because smartphones are such great tools for human flourishing or because they are evil taskmasters that make us less human with each use? This is the dilemma with which Tony Reinke opens his book, and if you're like most people, the dilemma isn't theoretical. Your phone is changing you. It's certainly changing me. How could it be otherwise when we apparently check our smartphones every 4.3 minutes of our waking lives (p. 16)? Reinke is the author of several books, as well as the host of the popular Ask Pastor John podcast and a senior staff writer for *Desiring God*. He's well suited to write this book for at least two reasons. First, Reinke feels the tension between the blessings and curses of technology more acutely than most. As a professional producer of online content, he must navigate reaching readers without succumbing to the click-bait, BuzzFeed-type posts that dominate web culture (to which, by the way, DG doesn't capitulate). Second, Reinke is the perfect person to shine the glare from our screens back into our eyes, not only because he is a competent researcher and a nimble

wordsmith, but because he is also a God-centered theologian. And this trait is necessary because, as he points out, “conversations about our smartphones often do not raise new questions; they return us to perennial questions every generation has been forced to ask” (p. 24). And it’s this point about how new technology always brings us back to the perennial questions—questions about what it means to be creature not Creator; about beauty vs. efficiency; about loving God and neighbor—which makes this book so insightful. Consider for just a moment our longing for approval (covered especially in chapters 3 and 6). Each generation must wrestle with this. The lore of Narcissus in Greek mythology, who fell in love with his own reflection, certainly predates the 2004 birth of Facebook. Today, perhaps, there are just more metrics to measure our beauty (likes, retweets, followers, pins, subscribers, and so on). And if you let it, your smartphone will send you push notifications for each of these so that when you wake up in the morning, you can glance at your phone to find out how many others love your face too. “When we talk about smartphone addiction,” writes Reinke, “often what we are talking about is the addiction of looking at ourselves” (p. 110). If there were something to critique about the book, maybe it would be the structure. The title and layout of the book (12 Ways . . .) could make the book seem like one giant list-article, or listicle as they’re called. Listicles tend to be the lowest common denominator of online content. I say this, by the way, as the author of several listicles. But this criticism, in my opinion, doesn’t hold. The depth of Reinke’s insights and his biblical fidelity resist formulaic chapters. One final comment. I found the book disturbing. But not because the problems created by smartphones are merely “out there” in culture or even in the church. Rather, I’m disturbed because the problems are “in here.” Despite all the blessings of smartphones (connection to others, wealth of information, and Bible apps galore), I still see the negative impact in my heart and habits. Too often my children compete with a screen for their dad’s attention. Being confronted with this change was disturbing . . . but it’s the good kind of confrontation, the kind that when paired with repentance of sin and faith in the gospel, leads to the good kind of change.

I was so excited to read this book, and it did not disappoint! I really appreciate that it is from the perspective of someone relevant in today’s culture who uses technology like the average person, and not someone saying “I remember in my day, we didn’t have phones like this”. It is also not a

book encouraging you to get rid of your smart phone, but one that teaches you how to use this technology in a healthy way that also glorifies God. There are things I expected to be in the book, but also eye-opening ideas that I have never thought about before. I find myself thinking of these principles in multiple ways that have been truly helpful. I have told many people about this book and have also wanted to buy this book for loved ones. Do yourself a giant favor and buy this book!!!!

I spend my days surrounded by teenagers who find it almost impossible to set their smartphones aside. Parents might want to think twice about allowing their children unfettered access to the digital world. This book offers great insight into the role the smartphone plays and should play in our lives.

This book is jam packed with wisdom for people like me who know their phones have become a problem and need help thinking through the "problem" and addressing it in ways that honor Jesus.

How does "loving your neighbor" apply to texting and driving? READ THIS book to find out! Tony Reinke provides great biblical insights and practical insights without being judgemental or "preachy"!

I typically don't write reviews for books, and when I say I typically don't, I mean that I never do. I felt like I should for this book though. The book was very convicting, not just about smartphone use but about how we should related to God and the things that He has created. The book was also well-written and balance. The author highlighted the dangers with giving ourselves freely to technology without discernment, but he didn't take the easy out of just telling his readers that they everyone just needs to ditch their phones or their social media accounts. I will be contemplating this book for a long time and will be sharing it with others. Thank you, Tony Reinke.

Interesting question! Lots of statements to ponder. Very good read! I would recommend this to anyone with any spiritual sensitivity.

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