

The Filling and Spilling of Your Mind

read

Philippians 4:8

think

My 1-year-old has skills I never learned at her age. Even though my wife and I intentionally set aside screens to give our kids our best attention, my daughter has still picked up on how these machines work and tries to tap away. She even knows how to get to the camera app and say “cheese” when the front-facing camera is showing her recognizable face. Young kids have picked up on these skills ever since the dawn of this new technology. A recent video trend

demonstrated the stark contrast between how generations think of a “phone”. A parent and child standing on different sides of a wall so they couldn’t see each other would be asked to “Answer a phone call”, “take a picture”, or “dial up a phone number.” These new technologies influence our minds and attention. Have we considered how much attention they are taking?

As Paul closes out his letter to the church in Philippi, he encourages them with a well-rounded checklist of what to fill their minds with. This provides a helpful grid to evaluate what grabs our attention. Is what I am consuming true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise? In short, this list challenges us to fill our minds with things that inspire worship of God and service to others. Yet how often does what we consume on screens produce the exact opposite: worship of ourselves and the tearing down of others?

In his book, *The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt concludes that the move to smartphones brought a large increase in digital activities that has resulted in several harms to young minds such as social deprivation, sleep deprivation, attention fragmentation, and addiction. He zeroes in on these particular issues and even tackles the specifics that this screen bombardment has made in the lives of kids through social media, gaming, and other online world engagements. We are filling our minds with something. Knowing that a cup spills out whatever it is full of, what does your mind spill out?

apply

- Try the trend mentioned above where you ask a child and parent the same questions about how to take a picture, answer the phone, end the call, and dial up a phone number. Kids - What is your favorite thing to do online (social media, gaming, etc.) and why? What do you hope to gain by using it?
- Go through each item on the list that Paul gives in Philippians 4:8, thinking about what you use most online. Does it help you think about what is true, honorable, just, etc.? If it doesn’t, what does it fill your mind with instead?
- What steps can each of you take to think on things that inspire worship of God and service of others?

pray

Heavenly Father, you are the most worthy of our praise. Forgive us for when we exchange praise of you and love of others for worship of ourselves and hurting others. We need your help to fill our minds with things that glorify you. Give us wisdom on how we can cultivate healthy habits in what we consume online and from the world around us. We ask this in your true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, and excellent name, amen.