

Book Review: *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* by Andy Crouch

It was sometime shortly after my daughter learned how to walk that she also mastered the art of scrolling through my smartphone and accessing Siri. I'm not sure but there may have been a space in her baby book to commemorate her first steps toward digital proficiency (or at least a photo slot for her first selfie!). I never sat down and taught her how to manipulate my cellphone to produce fascinating colors and shapes and sounds. I never needed to. Like walking, she just observed it's what people in the world do. The digital culture is that pervasive.

Digital technology is neither inherently bad nor inherently good, but its use does reveal something about the inclinations and tendencies of our own heart. For instance, in a negative example, perhaps no device more subtly cultivates our natural self-centeredness and sloth than the smartphone, which subtly lures us away from meaningful relationships and creative thinking. For this reason, I think Andy Crouch's *Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* deserves our attention. The book outlines how Andy Crouch and his family have sought to put digital technology in its proper place, a place that will allow them to flourish as individuals and as a family. As the Crouch family wrestled with this issue, they came to the ten commitments that make up the book.

An Appreciation | What I really appreciate about *The Tech-Wise Family* is the practical way in which Crouch prods families to explore the patterns and purposes of their technology use. If we are to use digital technology in a way that truly enhances our lives and our relationships, we will need to consciously reflect upon our priorities and our practices when it comes to our use of technology. The reality is that many families are simply overwhelmed by the digital deluge. Children, as well as their parents, are in many cases addicted to their devices. According to the Barna Group, the average teen spends 5.29 hours per day using electronic devices (108-109).

Crouch says that if we are to free ourselves from the mastery of our devices, it will require at least two things. First, it will require intentionality. At this point, Crouch introduces the concept of nudges ("nudges are small changes in the environment around us that make it easier for us to make the choices we want to make or want others to make") (33). Our world is filled with these little prompts in a particular direction (i.e. the ping your phone makes is a nudge to check it). To counter all the nudges toward our devices, we need to intentionally set up better nudges for ourselves (35).

Second, freedom from the mastery of our devices will also require us to develop personal discipline. By cultivating certain disciplines, Crouch says, we begin "to develop the strength to make good choices even when everything around us is nudging, or pushing, us in the wrong direction" (35). Disciplines that determine when and how we use our devices—and Crouch makes several suggestions in the book—can help us resist the digital pull.

Some Practical Suggestions | Let me briefly introduce one nudge and two disciplines that the Crouch family has committed to that I found particularly helpful.

First, the importance of shaping family space so that it nudges us toward character formation and creativity. Crouch raises the question: what are the things that occupy our central living spaces? Often times it is some technological device that demands little from us and does little to cultivate us as persons. Instead, Crouch argues, we should be intentional about filling our most important spaces with things that require creativity, imagination, and engagement. The nudge we need is toward activity and engagement, not passive consumption, and we can help ourselves by tailoring our family spaces to nudge us toward these types of activities. Instead of putting a television in the living room, you might put a piano, toys that require children to build or imagine, a coloring table, or a board game shelf.

Second, the Crouch family has made a commitment to cultivating a digitally disciplined life by resting from their devices for regular periods of time. The Crouches have aimed to turn off their devices for one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a year and replace device-use with worship, feast, play, and rest (83). This discipline, Crouch writes, helps us to "recognize the exact nature of our disease and, at the very same time, begin[s] to heal us from our disease" (102). In stepping away from our devices, we see how tethered we are to them, and at the same time we begin to untangle ourselves from them.

Third, the Crouch family commits to waking up before their devices do and putting them to bed before they go to bed. Nothing has been so disrupted by technology as our sleep. Our screens trick our brain into thinking its daytime. Our social media feeds our fears and fantasies so we lay awake restless. For this reason, the Crouches put their devices "to bed" in a charging station away from their bedrooms so that they are not nudged toward checking their Instagram or Facebook while lying in bed. This is something Suzanne and I have recently attempted to do. It is our aim to shut off and put away our devices by 9:15PM. We have not always been successful but when we have the freedom we have has been wonderful!

Conclusion | Though I was greatly helped by the practical suggestions found in *The Tech-Wise Family*, the strength of the book is that the Crouch family's commitments will stimulate our own thinking. I encourage you to read this book and start having conversations with each other about the proper place of technology in our lives and ways in which we, in our own families, can live in a manner that uses technology in a purposeful way that leads to our flourishing.

HELP *for* PARENTING *in the* DIGITAL AGE

Do you know what apps are on your child's phone? What are the latest social media trends? Do you wonder about how to talk to kids about online pornography, limit screen time, and protect them from digital strangers?

In the digital age, parents must be observant, engaged, and informed. That's why we've invited Protect Young Eyes, an organization that teaches students and parents about how to use technology responsibly, to give a presentation at Harvest on Monday, May 7 (7:00-8:30pm). If you have children or teens in your life, you will not want to miss this event.

We'll discuss digital realities, strategies, and practical solutions that will enlighten, equip and encourage parents who want to teach their children how to use technology responsibly. The talk will include specific recommendations for filters and detailed explanations and walk-throughs of popular apps and parental controls.

For more information about Protect Young Eyes, visit their website at www.protectyouneyes.com

Monday, May 7
7 - 8:30pm

NO COST TO ATTEND | FREEWILL OFFERING



**PROTECT
YOUNG EYES**
defending kids from online danger

ICE CREAM SUNDAES FOLLOWING

opc

23

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL

OPC FAMILY CAMP

JULY 2-6, 2018

Please plan to register for a wonderful time of fellowship and refreshment at our 23rd Annual OPC Family Camp of the Michigan - Ontario Presbytery, held at the beautiful Lincoln Lake in southwest Michigan. Our registration deadline is June 24, but space is limited, so you will want to get your registration, with payment, in early. If you have questions, please call Sandra TerHaar at 616.446.7621, or email the family camp committee at familycamp@harvestopc.org

Brochures with more details and registrations forms are available in the office or on the counter between the mailboxes.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

2 Ella Bolton	15 Jessica Alderink
2 Jon Bomers	15 Gage VandenToorn
2 Willie Friend	15 Josiah Wiarda
2 David Glashouwer	16 Kelly Barents
2 Emrey Iedema	16 Deanna Chupp
2 Jeff Shames	16 Caleb Davies
2 Suzanne Veenstra	16 Fiona Nelson
3 Owen Davies	16 Gwenda Teunis
3 Tim DeVries	17 Sue McCrory
3 Karen Hoekstra	18 Jeremy Deutschmann
3 Jesse Post	18 Gabe Farrell
4 Bill Kamp	18 Steve Vanderwey
4 Connie Prince	19 Hailey VandenToorn
4 Lilia Van Dyke	19 Mindy Weiss
5 Kendra Hilton	20 Liam Kamp
5 Barb Smith	20 Marcus Van Dyke
6 Becca Brown	21 Madison Deutschmann
8 Sarah Apol	21 Susan Vanderwey
8 Cherie Franks	23 Henry Hoekstra
9 Sunshine Friend	23 Stacy Widner
9 Jordan Gosnell	26 Dale Van Dyke
10 Aaliyah Friend	27 Steve VanStrien
10 Sebastian Scaturro	27 Joshua VanderKam
12 Ellison Lamb	28 Mary Anne Flier
12 Joe Pearce	29 Anessa Bekkering
13 Emma Bosch	29 Brandon Pyper
13 Daniel DeVries	29 Casey Vermaas
13 James Post	30 Carol Persenaire
14 Melinda LaCount	31 Grace Farrell
14 Marv Monsma	31 Jared Van Dyke
14 Oliver Nelson	

ADULTSUNDAYSCHOOL

Pastor Dale will be teaching a 3 week Sunday School class this month (May 6, 13, + 20). Please join us for this last class before the summer break!

Preaching – From God’s Mouth to Your Ear by Pastor Dale

The contemporary church has a problem – preaching. The Chamber Dictionary definition of the term describes the dilemma:

- “preach” - ‘to give advice in an offensive, tedious or obtrusive manner.’
- “sermonic” - to inflict on someone a patronizing harangue.”

Even when gospel truth is being proclaimed, it often does not sound like good news! One writer noted,

“Calvinists can’t preach. If we have the ability we have become quite adept at concealing it....We have the reputation of being gun-barrel straight and gun-powder dry. Sermons aren’t commentaries; sermons are events. Sermons are supposed to be glimpses into glory. To hear a sermon should be to catch a sight of Christ. To hear a sermon should be to feel the wind of heaven in your face. One should expect to receive an edict from the throne room because God is speaking. One should feel the tremors from the thunder of Sinai and the rumble of rending rocks at Calvary’s mournful mountain. One should not, however, think that he has wandered into Mrs. Smith’s third grade class on book report day. Calvinists will remain poor preachers until they learn that sermons are events through which people encounter the Holy.”

- Brandon Meeks

So, what exactly, is Biblical preaching? Come join me on a three-week intensive on the authority, purpose and power of gospel preaching! It really is God speaking into the world today, gathering his children, beautifying his bride, and destroying the works of the Devil.

“Through the long history of the church, nothing has won as many souls, changed as many lives, built up as many saints, and strengthened as many churches as the faithful preaching of God’s Word...His Word is powerful and, when it is proclaimed clearly and its message is applied pertinently to those who listen, it has massive, Spirit-laden potential to change lives, either suddenly and dramatically or quietly and incrementally.”

- Steve Lawson