

Below is a syllabus I've been working on for people who are interested in studying more in the area of digital technology and Christian belief/practice. It is in no way exhaustive, but the following list represents a somewhat diverse set of books that I have read and benefited from. One thing I've tried to do with this syllabus is avoid volumes that essentially repeat each other. Obviously there is going to be some overlap, but generally speaking, the books on this list present something fresh to the issue.

If you're a pastor, organizational leader, or parent, this list is especially for you. One idea would be to take 1 book from each reading level and use the summer to work through them. You might start with *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*, *The Shallows*, and *In the Swarm*. The best way to read these three books would be to make them talk to each other; trace out the ideas that each volume has in common, and see if there is any natural development from one volume to the next. It's this way of reading that has benefited me the most over the years.

For group reading purposes, the Easy and Moderate books will be more helpful than the Difficult books. The Difficult books are essentially works of philosophy that think in historical, analytical terms. The big benefit to the difficult books is that you will find explanations for the phenomena and dynamics described by the more accessible books. Our struggle with digital technology has foundational causes, and exploring those causes is what allows us to be proactive as technology changes, not just reactive.

A quick summary of the reading levels:

1. **Easy**—highly accessible resource that a teenager and 70-year old could easily understand
2. **Moderate**—mostly accessible resource, some more technical/theological language, recommended for thoughtful laypeople and college students
3. **Difficult**—less accessible resource, important high-level ideas for pastors and leaders but unlikely to be recommended broadly.

1. **Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (2010)**

1. 280 pp.
2. **Moderate**
3. Secular
4. Very important work about the cognitive effects of Internet immersion.

2. **Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. (1985)**

1. 184 pp.
2. **Moderate**
3. Secular
4. Classic book about communication and thought in the television age.
Important foundational observations about how technology shapes language.

3. **Justin Earley, *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction*** (2019)
 1. 208 pp.
 2. **Easy**
 3. Christian
 4. Very thoughtful appeal to Christians to organize their attention and their habits around objective truth and real people. Heavy on application, not as foundational/theoretical.

4. **Adam Alter, *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping us Hooked*** (2017)
 1. 358 pp.
 2. **Moderate**
 3. Secular (occasional coarse language)
 4. Eye-opening journalistic account of how digital tech is designed to be addictive. Especially good for data and excerpts.

5. **Chris Martin, *Terms of Service: The Real Cost of Social Media*** (2022)
 1. 224 pp.
 2. **Easy**
 3. Christian
 4. Accessible introduction to the nature and design of social media platforms, especially as they relate to Christian habits.

6. **Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*** (2017)
 1. 104 pp.
 2. **Difficult**
 3. Secular
 4. Hugely illuminating work of philosophy that looks at the digital self and why outrage is the normal language of online gatherings. Short but dense.

7. **Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family and The Life We're Looking For***
 1. 220 pp (TWF), 226 (LWLF)
 2. **Moderate**
 3. Christian
 4. Extremely practical insights into our Christian relationship with technology and why a screen-mediated life is unsatisfying. TWF is slightly more accessible than LWLF.

8. **Jean Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*** (2017)
 1. 338 pp.
 2. **Moderate**

3. Secular
4. Important research about the emerging generation's technology habits, the role those habits play in their formation, and how those habits shape other areas of life. Not just about technology but smartphones/internet play a major part.

9. **Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You* (2017)**

1. 220 pp.
2. **Easy**
3. Christian
4. Accessible introduction to smartphone's effects on our attention spans and emotional health, from a biblical perspective. Very practical.

10. **Laurence Scott, *The Four-Dimensional Human: Ways of Being in the Digital World* (2015).**

1. 248 pp.
2. **Difficult.**
3. Secular (occasional coarse language)
4. An esoteric volume, written in essay-style. Significant insights about the practical experiences of the digital age.

11. **Justin E.H. Smith, *The Internet Is Not What You Think It Is: A History, A Philosophy, A Warning* (2022)**

1. 209 pp.
2. **Difficult.**
3. Secular
4. Academic-leaning book about the epistemology of the web. High-level concepts.

12. **Eric Jacobsen, *Three Pieces of Glass: Why We Feel Lonely in a World Mediated by Screens* (2020)**

1. 279 pp.
2. **Moderate**
3. Christian
4. Thoughtful look at the intersection between technology and community.