

Getting Intentional About Your Screens

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Austin Egbert:

Greetings and welcome to Mind Matters News. It's no secret that we live in an increasingly digital age. Between the ubiquity of smartphones and the advent of virtual reality, it's easier than ever to be constantly connected to an astonishing degree. How have we reached this point and what are the side effects of these developments, whether intentional or not? To answer this and more, we have Doug Smith, author of the book, *Unintentional: How Screens Secretly Shape Your Desires and How You Can Break Free*. Now, here's your host, Andrew McDiarmid.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Greetings. I'm Andrew McDiarmid, your host today on Mind Matters News. Our obsession today with screens is often unintentionally taking us to places we regret. We use these windows into the world for hours every day, often unaware how intentional content creators and app designers are in shaping our decisions and forming harmful habits. Thankfully, we can begin anytime to go from unintentional with our screen use to intentional, flipping that and balance back into our favor, reclaiming our thought lives and living out our potential to positively impact people and the world around us. Here to talk about that with us today is Doug Smith, a popular speaker, mentor, and author of the book, *Unintentional: How Screens Secretly Shape Your Desires and How you Can Break Free*. Doug offers an insider's perspective on the impact of technology informed by over two decades of web programming experience. Doug, welcome.

Doug Smith:

Thank you so much, Andrew. It's so great to be with you today.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, it's great to speak with you. Well, your book, *Unintentional* was first published in late 2018, and you put out an updated edition last year, 2021, so it's coming right as we're going through the Covid 19 pandemic, hopefully the endemic stages of it. Lives are being upended and tech trends are changing, as we've seen. A lot of us are doing some soul searching these last few years thinking about different ways to live our lives. So it's a great time to release a book that helps us reverse some of these harmful screen habits we may have gotten lulled into. Can you tell us, first of all, how you decided to write *Unintentional* and what the writing journey was like?

Doug Smith:

Yeah, thank you. It's so true, Andrew, all of that that you said. We are living in a very unusual time, and the pandemic didn't bring out the best of us with our technology as I think we've seen. But yeah, just a quick background. I'm a Christian, a husband, a dad to four grown daughters, and a lifelong software engineer. It's bumping up against 30 years now.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Wow.

Doug Smith:

So wearing all those hats, I've experienced a lot of changes in technology over that time, both as a consumer and behind the scenes as a developer. So it's hard to remember a time that there was before the internet or smartphones, but for those of us watching ourselves and others, we've seen these changes, these habits that have been forming, these obsessions, or even some might say clinically addictions. I mean, it's the families at the restaurant all looking at their screens instead of looking at each other. It's the near misses on the interstate, because somebody was on their phone.

I saw people of a photo recently of people in Ukraine that were waiting for their train to escape the trials there, and they're all on their phone. I have a friend that's a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and they have trouble with YouTube over there. So it's a worldwide phenomenon, and it wasn't always this way. So anyway, I've been taking notes, gathering research, seeing the impact on me and my family and my friends. And finally in 2016, I felt the call to really change some of my scheduling, change my job so that I could invest, what ended up being, I thought it was going to be a year, but it ended up being two and a half year research project into this book so that I could make the case that I felt needed to be made in this time.

Andrew McDiarmid:

While you've done a great job bringing these things together. It packs a powerful punch. In the introduction to the book, you tell us it can be divided into three sections, awaken, examine, and overcome. So let's start with awakening. I like how you talk about Truman Burbank in chapter one. And actually you weave this through the whole book. He's the main character in a movie called The Truman Show. As the story goes, he's the first baby ever adopted by a corporation, and they turn his life into a reality show. He's got fake parents, a manufactured childhood. He's married to an actress who's only pretending to be his wife. Everyone in town is acting on cue for the cameras, and Truman is entirely unaware of all this. Tell us what happens next in the story and how that relates to our immersion and screens and content today.

Doug Smith:

Yeah, that's really great question, thank you. Yeah, the Truman Show really does capture what I believe is happening today in ways that I don't think most people realize. In the movie, what starts happening is that he's been living in this virtual environment essentially for what's bumping up against 30 years, and things are starting to fall apart. Things like a light falls from the sky and they try to cover it up, and he goes into the wrong place at the wrong time, and a door opens that shouldn't, and an elevator reveals a hidden room. So he's starting to wonder what's going on here? And it turns out that Truman is a truth seeker. He won't give up trying to figure out what's going on. We see him even risk his life to find out what's going on. The real world, his world that he thought was real was really a virtual world created for him. And what I believe is that many of us are really in a similar boat today.

We're all on our screens all the time. And as you look around, we think it's always been this way. But the problem is it's falling apart. The real world is suffering as a result. We're seeing epidemics of anxiety and depression and suicidality even on people that are ... And as you watch the trend lines, a lot of those trend lines come from the adoption of some of these technologies, but everyone else is doing it so we accept it just like Truman accepted his world until it started falling apart. But there are some of us that are finding out there is a better way and trying to put our lives back on a path more along the lines of what we were made to live.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, so true, and Truman makes the perfect name for that character.

Doug Smith:

It does.

Andrew McDiarmid:

You share some really sobering statistics in the first part of your book. One of them is a 2021 study from E-marketer that found that the average US adult had increased their time on digital media in 2020 to nearly eight hours a day on average. Is that right? How did they match that?

Doug Smith:

It's a shocking statistic, really. And that's consuming digital media. We're talking about social media, video games, streaming video. That's more than a full-time job each week. Now, some of that time does happen because of multitasking. So think about binging Netflix while you're scrolling Instagram, but that is the average. So you think some are even more, some are less, but that ends up being the average. So the thing that really is poignant to me is that nobody really signed up to do that. We didn't, as a kid, go, "Man, I just wish I could spend my life, the better part of a full-time job giving all my time and attention and precious data to the most powerful corporations in the world," that wasn't what we really signed up for. So that's why I called my book Unintentional, because we didn't mean to sign up for that. But it is the true average the stats show.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, great name. Well, this increase in screen time can be linked to 2007, a year for me that lives in infamy. It's the year that Steve Jobs and Apple unleashed their iPhone, the world's first smartphone. And as of 2021, they'd sold 1.65 billion units, which makes it one of the most successful products ever made. So how did having a screen in our pockets and hands change us?

Doug Smith:

Oh, my. Isn't that isn't amazing? We think 2007 is the date, which is 14, 15 years ago now. So again, some of the kids that came of age in that time don't know a world without it, but we can remember. Turns out that 2007 was also the year that Facebook launched. So we had this perfect storm of the invention of social media and the internet connected device on every person. So yeah, there's obviously tons of changes. I call out just a few and I'll just mention a few here. But yeah, obviously, we're distracted, constantly distracted. But not only are we distracted, we almost have to be distracted. And by design, these apps are designed to cause us, if we have five seconds to wait in line, the first thing we think about is to pull out our phone and see what happened on Twitter.

And that's by design. The other things we know about is online discourse is notoriously uncivil. We all know people with what we would call maybe digital courage. They say stuff online they'd never say in person. The idea that we know that, especially among the younger, the mocking, the bullying, it's epidemic there, especially among the kids and young people there. As a dad of four daughters, another aspect that's really tragic is how sexualized everything has become. Young girls thinking by what's online, that's what women are made to be, what's on TikTok is what kind of defines the visual of what we're supposed to be instead of so much more. So with all of that, I recognize that our lack of focus is really ruining our ability to think clearly at all. And if we can't think clearly, then who are we at the end of the day? And that's what really pushed me to want to try to help people with this.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, and you actually talk about the dopamine pleasure cycles that these screens can induce in us, similar to those who are taking serious drugs. I mean, it's really tricking the brain into this cycle of pleasure. Now, there's a section in chapter two of your book called Do What You Want or What They Want You To Want. So this tech doesn't really form desires or create addictions in us by accident. What are the builders of apps and tech gadgets and streaming platforms know about us that we often don't even realize?

Doug Smith:

Oh yeah, that's such a great question. I first have to say that as I mentioned in this book, I'm a huge believer in the concept of free will. And in fact, if Dr. Egnor has a fan club, I'd want to join it because he does such a fantastic job in all that he does, defeating materialism, and especially the lie that free will is an illusion and so on. And I've studied on that. I've blogged a little bit, but nothing like what Dr. Egnor does, so shout out to Dr. Egnor. But how we use our free will can be exploited. So that's why these companies that are making the devices we all see and the software we all use, hire the top behavioral psychologists, neuroscientists, and apply this technology in what Adam Altar, in his book, Irresistible, It talks about weaponizing these ideas to manipulate us. And so what do they do?

Well, they do all kinds of things, but among them is they run thousands of experiments on us individually with all the buzzwords of the day, the big data, the AI, the machine learning algorithms we hear about. So they, they're doing whatever they can to keep us engaged, and that's the key engagement, is to keep us on their platforms as long as possible. If we didn't click the button, why didn't we? Try a different experiment until they literally weaponized the experience so that we'll do what they want us to do. And what I say is that's shaping our desires. And so our desires end up forming how we make our decisions and we apply our free will to the desires that they have created in us.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah. And where else do we see this, the kind of behavior that these apps and games are trying to continue in us? We see it in casinos. And these apps and game development companies, they take some cues from casinos.

Doug Smith:

They sure do, yeah. They know that casinos know how to make people keep on playing. They know that, "Oh man, I might just win the next time if I put in just one more dollar," one more whatever. How do they do that? They employ a system of variable rewards because it's not a predictable reward that really works. It's the, maybe that'll happen. So they vary not only the frequency of rewards, but also the intensity of the rewards. And so the tech companies know exactly the same thing. They know that, "Okay, if I'm going to show us certain post at a certain time on social media, or if the video game is going to show a certain loot box or a certain maybe a power up feature at the right time," it never happens in a exactly a predictable way because they know that if it's unpredictable, we'll keep on trying to find out what happens next. And again, casinos have been doing that for a long time, and big tech is just applying it on a much more massive scale.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah. Now, these developers and tech companies know that we are impatient these days. We have self-gratifying as the order of the day, We want instant, and we're getting it a lot. So how does this impatience in us lead to compliance?

Doug Smith:

Right. That's such a good question. I mean, it used to be years ago as a software developer, we talk about making things user friendly, which used to mean let's make things easy to use, make it so we don't have to type in cryptic commands to make computers do what they want. But today, the idea is that the easy thing to do is biased towards what they want us to do. So we're talking about, it's the shopping sites with countdown timers. You'll miss out. Or it's the three choices, but the big one in the middle with the higher price is what they want us to want, so that's what we do. It's the buy now button. It's like, click that. Or it's the streaming video platforms that have autoplay. We don't even have to make a decision, so we just binge watch and all of a sudden we're up all night watching whatever, because we didn't have to make a decision. We're even just too impatient to make that decision to change or to adapt. And so-

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, don't even get me started. Don't even get me started on those autoplay features. I think Netflix was the first to put that in. And oh, it just makes me so mad that they take away people's right to have a little bit, just a few seconds of time to think, "Okay, is it wise to watch another episode?"

Doug Smith:

It is tragic and Netflix-

Andrew McDiarmid:

And you can't turn it off.

Doug Smith:

You can't turn it off. No, you can't. And not only that, they also recently added, I think a play something feature. Not only are we binge watching, but we don't have to want to choose what to watch tonight. So just let Netflix not only choose how long we watch their platform, but choose what we watch to begin with. So again, shaping our desires masterfully.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Wow. Yeah, I knew there was a reason we came off of Netflix a couple of years back. I just didn't like the way it was going.

Doug Smith:

Me too.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Not to mention 90% of the product is unwatchable.

Doug Smith:

Yep.

Andrew McDiarmid:

So in the second episode, we'll look at some of the solutions that you've come up with, where we can go from unintentional to intentional with our screen use. But before we close this episode up, I just wanted to get some clarity on who is shaping these desires of ours and why. As we live our lives online, our digital footprint becomes what you would call and what you did call in the book, an epic digital biography, an instruction book for anyone or anything to learn what works on us and what doesn't. So all that past history is leveraged towards our future decisions, and big tech is making full use of it. So tell us a little bit about who big tech is. Who are these people? Why are they doing it?

Doug Smith:

Yeah, that's such a good question. Well, big tech is certainly our ... I call it our household and our handheld names. But I was really surprised as I looked at the ... It's hard to remember 20 years ago, but 20 years ago, the top companies on the market were more diverse. We're thinking about GE and Microsoft and Exxon and Citigroup and Walmart, kind of a smattering of different industries. But today it's Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Tesla. But in 2021 it was Facebook. Facebook's had a bit of a hard year. But all that to say, it's the big tech companies. And why are they winning? And they're winning by optimizing their growth on our willingness to completely reorient our lives and whole societies around what's happening next on their platforms. And this drive of growth, this growth imperative, I call conquest. Let's just call it what it is, they've conquered. Amazon has conquered by dominating and exploiting the size of their platform to just take out whole other industries. So it's truly a conquest model, and we've been overrun by it.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah. Well, in your book, you discussed the ideas of Edward Bernays, nephew to Sigmund Freud and considered the father of public relations. I just want to share a quick story that you include in your book, because it's just so indicative of what's been happening. He combined ideas he learned from his uncle on psychoanalysis with new insights on crowd psychology. And he pioneered methods of influencing the public. In your book, you describe one of his notorious public relations achievements of influencing women in the late 1920s to buy more cigarettes from his client, American Tobacco Company. Tell us how he did it.

Doug Smith:

I'm so glad you asked about that, because as I say, Edward Bernays is the most influential person in the 20th century that nobody's probably ever heard of before because he was so successful behind the scenes. But yeah, this thing with influencing women to smoke, first of all, in the 1920s, it was a social taboo for women to smoke. Women didn't smoke. If they did, they didn't smoke in public. So what did he do? He didn't create an ad campaign that was like, "Hey, women, you should smoke more." What did he do? He made it news instead, he made a newsworthy event. In this giant parade, I think it was the Macy's Parade, downtown parade in New York, he hired fashion models and contacted news outlets who were informed that at a certain time, there's going to be some newsworthy event.

And what was the newsworthy event? These fashion models would take out, not cigarettes, but torches of freedom. He rebranded them or relabeled them to just really exploit the spirit of the age, which was more women's liberation, more women's rights, which is all good. All good for equality, but pointing it towards an intentionally addictive and deadly product like cigarettes, that's manipulation and exploitation. And that's exactly what he did. And the companies today, big tech companies today, are using the same strategies.

Andrew McDiarmid:

We've taken a lot of cues from him as well. He once said, "In almost every act of our daily lives, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind." And that is very much going on today as we're seeing, and as you've laid out in this book.

You explained how our screens are secretly shaping our desires and who is behind it. In the first part of your book, you're helping people awaken to this understanding. Then you show readers how to examine their lives and then overcome this intentionality imbalance, as you call it, to live out their potential. Let's just briefly summarize the problem and then move into some of the solutions you present. So what are some of the ways that our screens are secretly shaping our desires?

Doug Smith:

Well, the list is really long, Andrew, but the long and the short of it is it's ultimately they use the most powerful technologies the world has ever seen to manipulate us into spending more time than a typical full-time job looking at our screens. They hire top behavioral psychologists and neuroscientists to exploit weaknesses and apply massive algorithms to learn what makes us keep doing what they want us to do. And they're super good at it. And we know that by looking around at our society today

Andrew McDiarmid:

And who is behind this desire shaping? Do they know what they're doing and why are they doing it?

Doug Smith:

So yeah, it's all the big tech companies we know. We can list them all, the social media, the video game companies, the streaming media platforms. All these companies have become these giant entities because they know exactly what they're doing. They're some of the most intentional companies in the world. They didn't become super successful by accident. They've built some of the biggest platforms in the world by making these things automated. They're doing it ultimately for the growth imperative of the stock market, to conquer their space, whatever that space is, and just win big financially, but also powerfully. In every way that companies want to win, they are doing it by really total domination of the technologies that they've invented.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Now, one thing I do like about your book is that you do actually go beyond the typical things that would make a tech company desire this information and desire this control. You know, talk about the stock market and how growth is just the main thing that's driving these companies. And it is, it's the bottom line of money. Power can play into it, certainly growth. But as you say in the book, there's ultimately an unseen, pervasive, yet often forgotten evil at work that seeks to distract, to deceive and ultimately destroy. Can you speak about that just a little bit?

Doug Smith:

Absolutely. Yeah, I'm a Christian and I wrote my book from that Christian perspective because the solutions that I offer are all based on my own. What has really helped me and what's helped those that I've helped, the people I've mentored and the places that I've spoken, it's really been this idea of that this biblical worldview has really informed how to respond to our screen saturated world. And one of those aspects really is a recognition that there are unseen spiritual forces, which is not a real

comfortable subject to most Western people. We've kind of made our world more materialistic. We don't really think about spiritual forces or anything like that.

But that isn't the way most of the world has been or was. And certainly if you read the Bible, you can see that Jesus really did believe in evil spiritual forces. There's one verse in particular that drives at home for me. In the book of Ephesians chapter two, it talks about the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in children of disobedience. And given that we're being manipulated by things that happen over the air, so to speak, thinking of wifi and data and all the rest, I wonder if some of those spiritual forces understand the irony of today's moment.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, the battle is not against flesh and blood, as the Bible does say. And it's really, really key to look at this from that perspective, whether you're a Christian or not a Christian, just understanding the reasons people are doing things. We're not calling big tech evil and just leaving it at that. These are human beings that are making decisions, trying to get a paycheck, but there's more to it than that. And if we can unpack some of that, then I think we get a richer look at what's happening and a more powerful way to rise above it. So I'm really glad that your book addresses that. Now, you and I have quite a lot in common. We certainly have a shared interest in helping people live authentically, as I like to put it, with the technology in their lives. Once we awaken to the problems that are facing us with screens, you say the next step is to evaluate your life. You relay some positive postures of evaluation that would help us with this. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Doug Smith:

Absolutely. Yeah, thank you. Most of the book, the vast majority of the book is what I've been told is really a grace filled introduction to live the life you're called to live. It's not all about, look at how bad everything is, look at how bad you're being with your screens. It's not this shaming, it's way more about there's so much hope, you can do this. It is quite countercultural and not super popular. But it is doable. But we have to approach it as we evaluate our lives and look at, am I really one of those people that spends eight hours a day on average consuming digital media? And we don't really want to ask those questions about ourselves. But this particular thing about the postures of evaluation, I really feel like was something I was inspired by God. It was better than what I could have come with on my own.

Because it's six ideas that when you think about yourself and do I really need to make a change? Is this me? I often ask people, did you think you'd be farther along in your life than you are right now? You know, thought man, by the time I was 30 or 40 or 50, I thought I'd be here or there or have this much money or have these relationships and you don't. And you ask why. Well, our screens may be part of that. And so I encourage people to approach those questions with grace for yourself, with understanding you didn't know. It's the companies that are intentional, not us. With patience for yourself, we don't have to solve everything today. We have to give it time. It's a big ship to turn. One of the things that's really important is to have objectivity, which is the idea that you look at your life almost like a scientist. What's that guy doing and is it working for him?

That idea that you look at it more objectively, not with shame, not with guilt, but just like, "Hey man, I do spend a lot of time on this platform or on this streaming video." Is that working for him? That's an objectivity question. And we look at it with openness, a willingness to see things we may not want to see, but being okay with learning, just as with curiosity. Now we look at it with optimism. The idea that, you know what? This isn't bad. It's good to learn this now because I can then become the person I was made to be. And then the one last thing I talk about is the idea of restraint, which means we might list 10 things that we're like, "Man, I really am doing too much," but we want to restrain from the idea of

trying change or change it all today. Like, okay, I'm going cold Turkey on everything today. If you do that, unfortunately you'll probably fail because there's a lot more at play, habits and addictions and things that have formed.

And so rather than trying to change everything today, all we're trying to do is evaluate and learn like a scientist would then we can take actions over time as I lead people through and the rest of the book.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Right. And I've been seeing a lot of signage and messages about self care recently for obvious reasons. But I think it's a really modern thing to say, "Oh, well, let's take care of ourselves." And I think this fits right in with that. And also we see that tech companies themselves are giving us the tools to check on this. If you know that your smartphone maker is giving you a screen time app, well that pretty much assures you that it is something worth paying attention to. This isn't just all in your head. So yeah, those are great methods to help evaluate ourselves. Well, you bring out a really important point in the book about halfway through, which is that our desires aren't the most important part of who we are. And they don't form our identity. This, I think, is so key. And it's so great that you've brought this up because realizing that you are not your desires can give you the power to change the desires that you see as harmful. Can you speak to that a little bit?

Doug Smith:

Little bit? Yeah, Thank you for bringing that out, Andrew. Like you say, it's so important, it points back to something I mentioned earlier in the book, which what I call the double bind that the industry puts us in. We hear these messages, two two messages that play against each other. The idea that we should do whatever we feel like doing, just do it. Whatever you feel is what you should do. Be your authentic self, which always means whatever you're feeling right at the moment. But then on the other side, they shape what we feel like doing. They make us feel like doing what they want us to do. So there's this double bind. Hey, do whatever you feel like, but do what we want you to feel like.

So that's a real bind, but the key out of it is to realize that what we want isn't who we are. Our identity is way more built upon eternal things. We're people made by God for a purpose, so we shape our thinking around that concept that our desires can change. We all know that our feelings change from day to day. But it turns out that our feelings can change on purpose, not only by the intentionality of big tech companies, but by our own intentionality. We can actually renew our minds to a place where we end up desiring things that are better for us instead of the things that are leading us off track.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, so good. Well, what is the relationship between vision and purpose? You come to a point in your book where you ask people if they're ready to take on a vision. What is the relationship there?

Doug Smith:

Yeah, that's a great question. We talk a lot in the early part of the book about what you shouldn't do or maybe what's happening to us that's negative. But we don't really make changes based on negative things. We make changes, or at least better changes based on positive motivations. We want carrots not sticks. So what I encourage people to do is cast a vision. And a vision, I call a vision this idea of a hopeful anticipation of participating in a certain positive future. It's this broad idea of, wow, there's something great out there, and I could participate in that. In fact, I was made for that. And so you cast this vision. The purpose then is your specific role in the process of fulfilling that vision. So it's the nuts and bolts on the ground. In order to get to that vision, the thing that I would love to be able to do, that God-given

purpose, the thing I was made for, well, I'm going to have to take some steps. And so that's the purpose. And that's where the rubber meets the road.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Right. Well, how can we develop a life of valuable output instead of self-focused input? I've thought about a lot about this in the past, and there's different words for it. How can we be a producer rather than a consumer? How can we give rather than just use? What are your thoughts on that?

Doug Smith:

Yeah, it's such an important distinction because the vast majority of the reasons that people are spending so much time on screens is we're spending it as consumers, not as producers. But we are here for a purpose. And that purpose is to do what only we can do, to make the world a better place. And that's really the goal of my book. It's the reason I wrote it, not just to call out what was happening to us and make us aware of it, but to really change things. Because it's just heartbreaking to think about what if the person who is supposed to cure cancer is on Fortnite too much to realize their gift? Or the next CS Lewis is too concerned with her Instagram profile to study.

That kind of input that's hurting us is really robbing us of what could be such a huge potential. So we have to flip that around. And so catching that vision and reorienting our lives around our purpose helps us to understand that we're here to make a difference, to do something outward instead of focusing on what the industry wants us to desire. And our world desperately needs us to find that.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah. Well, without going into too much, because I want people to go get a copy of your book, can you help us with the five practices you come up with for living life intentionally? Can you preview those? I know you came up with five different practices that will help with that.

Doug Smith:

Absolutely. Right. Yeah, there's a lot of details. The book has 179 footnotes, so there's a lot of research and details into this that I know can be really helpful. But yeah, really quickly, the five, I call them five biblical practices. They're really classic spiritual disciplines, but they're applied to our tech focused world. And the number one thing, and these are all things that have worked, these are all proven ideas that has worked for me and for people that I've coached and mentored over the years, but the foundation of it all is this idea of surrendering to Christ. Again, as a Christian, I'm surrendering to Christ who is in the scriptures and the New Testament, he is the Savior and he is Lord. And as the king, we live surrendered like we would in allegiance to a good king. And so in that posture of surrender, we then go to the second step, which is to find and remove the things that are entangling us.

And we really trust God to help us see that. And again, it's with the postures of evaluation in mind. It's not with changing everything at once. It's this idea of surrender. Lord, what do I need to change next? And then listening and then doing those things. In fact, these five practices are really iterative. They're not one and done. They're a lifestyle, and we go through them almost every day. The next one is huge. The idea of renewing our mind, the classic Romans 12 2, which is, "Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind," which again, the industry knows renewing our mind works so well, what the Bible knew 2000 years ago, they're just replaying it. So renewing our mind is really where it's at. And just changing our thoughts and learning new ideas. And especially I encourage people into learning the scriptures, and you really are surprised. It's so surprising as we learn the scriptures, how relevant they are to today's world.

The next thing is to replace harmful habits with helpful ones. We don't stop habits that are hurting us by just stopping them because it leaves a vacuum, it leaves a void. We have to replace them with things that are good instead. And so I walk people through that process again with research and other helpful books. And then the last thing, which is really important is to use all this freedom that we built up in the first four steps to pursue your calling, which again, we talked about earlier. Pursuing your God-given purpose is what motivates you to keep going and keep doing and keep fighting against what's ultimately an uphill battle. We're against the wind in this world against all the new stuff that's being invented, VR and the metaverse and all these things that are coming out. All these things are going to take us off track. If we're pursuing our calling though, then we don't have time for that because we're all in on our positive reason for being here, and we don't then get off track because we are putting these five practices into our lives day by day.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah. It's like once you have a positive vision, you yourself will decide, "Oh no, there's just no room for that in this vision. It's not going to help me fulfill my purpose. I have to leave it out."

Doug Smith:

Exactly.

Andrew McDiarmid:

When you get to that point, you're in good shape. And I was just thinking of the slogan, Fear of missing out, FOMO. We know what that means from a tech standpoint, but it can also mean something totally different, and that is fear of missing out on a positive vision and a purpose that you could have if you were intentional about it. So that's a different way to look at it. But it's a good FOMO, a healthy FOMO, if you will.

Doug Smith:

Very good.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Well, towards the end of your book, you really, the touching story of a young boy and his mom, who you noticed in the library one day when you were working on your book. They sit down at a table, the mom gives the son a notebook, a pencil, an eraser, and a workbook. And then she sits next to him reading a book. And you noticed that there was no phones, no screens, no kid whining for video games. And then you saw the boys' eyes wander from the workbook to the beautiful landscape outside. And something filled him with wonder to the point where he got his mother's attention and pointed it out to her. What did this little scene remind of?

Doug Smith:

Oh, yeah. I'm so glad you brought that out, Andrew, because that really did bring me to tears when I saw that, because it was such a stark difference to what we normally see. We see there's car seats with tablets built in with a place to put your tablet in for your infant. There's just this push. And the classic thing is to see kids everywhere on their screen, so that was so different. And I saw this boy, this library is a beautiful library in a really nice part of Nashville. And there was this forest and trees, and his mouth was wide open, and something in there just caused him to think this is wonderful. It really put him in a

state of wonder, "Mom, look at this." And what it caused me to realize is that is how much we miss when we don't make time to build in that wonder and to be able to experience it because we miss it.

So this idea that creativity comes from boredom, it comes from space, it comes from quiet. I mean, even the classic spiritual disciplines include things like solitude and silence. Even the idea of Sabbath is really vital. It's like our intelligent designer knew what was best for us.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Right.

Doug Smith:

It's this idea that those times of quiet, those times of real reflection, or even we don't know what's going to happen, but something wonderful might. And we don't want to get to the end of our lives and think, "Wow, I really wasted it all missing these opportunities of this world around me, or the things that I could have seen." How much potential we have to improve our lives and our relationships and the ways that only we can make our world better only by becoming more intentional with our lives than anyone else.

Andrew McDiarmid:

It makes you think, what would we miss if we didn't give ourselves the gift of device free time or the chance to doodle or daydream, or brainstorm and reflect. And what would the world miss? Not just us, but what would the world miss if we miss those things?

Doug Smith:

So true.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah. Well, Doug, I'm afraid we're out of time, but I've really enjoyed unpacking the lessons of your book in these two episodes. So thank you so much for joining us.

Doug Smith:

Oh, it's such an honor, Andrew. I'm a huge fan of Mind Matters and all things Discovery Institute, so it's super, super exciting for me to be here with you today.

Andrew McDiarmid:

Yeah, thank you very much. Well, folks, as I said before, this book is coming at a really opportune time as we reflect on the last few years of craziness, the Global Pandemic, and what life is going to look like from here on out. I encourage you to begin your own journey toward Intentional Living. Learn more, and get your own copy of Unintentional at unintentionalbook.com. That's www.unintentionalbook.com. For Mind Matters News, Andrew McDiarmid. Thanks for listening.

Announcer:

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