
FRIDAY CHURCH NEWS NOTES

GROWTH HACKERS TRYING TO STEAL YOUR TIME AND CONTROL YOUR LIFE



Tristan Harris is “an expert on how technology hijacks our psychological vulnerabilities.” He spent three years with Google before founding Time Well Spent, a non-profit initiative that, among other things, aims to catalyze a change among technology companies through “policy recommendations to protect minds from nefarious manipulation.” In “Distracted in 2016? Reboot Your Phone with Mindfulness,” Jan. 27, 2016, Harris suggested seven tips by which individuals can take control of their smartphones. These tips are meant to “minimize compulsive checking and phantom buzzes, minimize fear of missing something important, minimize unconscious use, minimize ‘leaky’ interactions (‘leaking out’ into something unintended), and minimize unnecessary psychological concerns generated by

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WHAT SOME APP DESIGNERS AND MAGICIANS HAVE IN COMMON

Tristan Harris spent three years with Google before founding Time Well Spent, a non-profit initiative that, among other things, aims to catalyze a change among technology companies through “policy recommendations to protect minds from nefarious manipulation.” Following is an excerpt from “How Technology Hijacks People’s Minds--from a Magician and Google’s Design Ethicist,” May 19, 2016, tristanharris.com: “I spent the last three years as Google’s Design Ethicist caring about how to design things in a way that defends a billion people’s minds from getting hijacked. When using technology, we often focus *optimistically* on all the things it does for us. But I want to show you where it might do the opposite. Where does technology exploit our mind’s weaknesses? I learned to think this way when I was a magician. Magicians start by looking for *blind spots, edges, vulnerabilities and limits* of people’s perception, so they can influence what people do without them even realizing it. Once you know how to push people’s buttons, you can play them like a piano. And this is exactly what product designers do to your mind. They play your psychological vulnerabilities (consciously and unconsciously) against you in the race to grab your attention. ... If you’re an app, how do you keep people hooked? Turn yourself into a slot machine. The average person checks their phone 150 times a day. Why do we do this? Are we making *150 conscious choices*? ... How often do you check your email per day? One major reason why is the #1 psychological ingredient in slot machines: intermittent variable



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the screen.” Following is an excerpt from this article: “We live in an Attention Economy. That means every app and website ... is trying to get you to come back and spend more time. **Companies literally have teams of people called Growth Hackers, whose job is to invent new reasons (notifications) and new persuasive tactics to bring you back.** I know this because I studied with the lab at Stanford that invented many of these principles. That’s why we wake up to screens that [are] inundated with notifications. Gloria Mark one of the

leading researchers on ‘interruption science’ at UC Irvine, has shown that unrelated external interruptions cost us 23 minutes before we resume focus. And it appears that the more interruptions we get, the more it increases our internal clock rates for self-interruption--put simply, the more we get interrupted, the more we interrupt ourselves. The only answer is to have our devices interrupt us less by turning off notifications” (“Distracted in 2016? Reboot Your Phone with Mindfulness,” Jan. 27, 2016, tristanharris.com).

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rewards. If you want to maximize addictiveness, all tech designers need to do is link a user’s action (like pulling a lever) with a *variable reward*. You pull a lever and immediately receive either an enticing reward (a match, a prize!) or nothing. Addictiveness is maximized when the rate of reward is most variable. Does this effect really work on people? Yes. Slot machines make more money in the United States than baseball, movies, and theme parks combined. Relative to other kinds of gambling, people get ‘problematically involved’ with slot machines 3-4x faster according to NYU professor Natasha Dow Shull, author of *Addiction by Design*. But here’s the unfortunate truth--several billion people have a slot machine in their pocket: When we pull our phone out of our pocket, we’re *playing a slot machine* to see what notifications we got: When we pull to refresh our email, we’re *playing a slot machine* to see what new email we got. When we swipe down our finger to scroll the Instagram feed, we’re *playing a slot machine* to see what photo comes next. When we swipe faces left/right on dating apps like Tinder, we’re *playing a slot machine* to see if we got a match. When we tap the # of red notifications, we’re *playing a slot machine* to what’s underneath.”

SELFIE DEATHS

From 2011 to 2017, at least 259 people died while taking selfies, and those are only the ones reported in English-language news reports. This is the finding of a comprehensive investigation by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. The average age was 23 years, and 72.5% were men. Most of the deaths were the result of drowning (70), falls (48), fire (48), and vehicles (51). The Bible prophesied the selfie generation 2,000 years ago. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...” (2 Timothy 3:1-2). (By the way, a photo of two people is not a selfie; perhaps it is an we-sie.)

EINSTEIN'S "GOD LETTER" TO GO ON AUCTION

A letter written by Albert Einstein in 1955 about his view of God is to be auctioned by Christie's in New York in December and is expected to fetch \$1 million to \$1.5 million. In the letter to philosopher Erik Gutkind, Einstein said, "The word 'God' is for me nothing but the expression and product of human weaknesses, the Bible a collection of venerable but still rather primitive legends." Einstein had a brilliant mind, but there is no evidence that he gave attention to studying the Bible for himself, so he had no proper basis on which to reject it as God's Word. His "faith" that the Bible is a mythical book was blind faith, and he gambled his eternal soul on that faith. By his own testimony, he rejected Jesus as Lord and Saviour and died in his sins. His mind was open to the universe but closed to the God of the universe. The prophecy of 2 Peter 3 describes end-time scoffers who deny supernatural creation and the Bible's teachings, such as the global flood. They are "willingly ignorant." They scoff at the righteous God because they "walk after their own lusts" and

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reject His holy laws. Psalm 2 describes the same end-time rebellion. The high and mighty of the nations will "imagine a vain thing," which is to cast away God's law. It's vain because it is impossible to successfully rebel against God's authority. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

PLANNED PARENTHOOD ADMITS "FROM THE START" KAVANAUGH OPPOSITION WAS ABOUT ABORTION

Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed as a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court on October 6 and was sworn in that evening. During the Senate confirmation, allegations were made that he committed improprieties many decades ago as a high school student, but the allegations were not substantiated and were contradicted by multiple testimonies. The following is excerpted from "Planned Parenthood Admits," Oct. 5, 2018, LifeNews.com: "While much of the Kavanaugh opposition centered on unproven and unsubstantiated claims that Kavanaugh had

engaged in misconduct decades ago, despite witnesses saying otherwise, Planned Parenthood executive vice president Dawn Laguens admitted it was about abortion 'from the start. Immediately after Kavanaugh was nominated, pro-abortion groups came out against him--saying he would be the 5th voted to overturn Roe v. Wade and its allowance for virtually unlimited abortions throughout pregnancy. Now, the top abortion chain official is admitted what everyone has said for weeks--this character assassination campaign is

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SEA LEVEL DURING THE FLOOD

The following is from CreationMoments.com, Nov. 29, 2017: "Genesis 7:19-20 - 'And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.' 'You can't possibly believe that there was a worldwide Flood. If the Ark was floating above Mount Everest, the air would be so thin that they would not be able to breathe.' This objection to the Flood is a very common one that I hear frequently. It is also one that is most easily disproved. In fact, I am always very surprised that so many people think this must be a valid argument. The statement contains two incorrect presuppositions. Let's deal with the easiest false presupposition first. This is the idea that an Ark floating above Mount Everest would suffer from thin air. But if the Earth's oceans were all combined and at that height, they would have displaced the atmosphere. Therefore, the surface of the Flood would be the new sea level and the air would not be thin; the surface would be the new sea level, and the air would be as dense as at the coast. The second incorrect presupposition is that Mount Everest existed before the Flood. Psalm 104 shows us that the mountains were raised and the valleys, or rather ocean deeps, were lowered at the end of the Flood. Therefore, pre-Flood mountains would have been quite a lot lower than post-Flood mountains. It is always interesting to notice that questions designed to ridicule our belief in the literal truth of Genesis are often based on faulty presuppositions. It is not a surprise to us that genuine science is consistent with God's word."

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really just about abortion: 'Kavanaugh's anti-abortion judicial record disqualified him from sitting on the Supreme Court from the start. We knew that Trump nominated him because Kavanaugh will cast the fifth and deciding vote to gut Roe v. Wade,' Laguens admitted. ... During the first day of questioning, Judge Brett Kavanaugh refused to say that there is a so-called right to abortion. He declined to take the bait from pro-abortion Senator Dianne Feinstein who wanted to get him to commit to upholding Roe v Wade once he is confirmed to the Supreme Court. ... Also during the hearings, a new document was released showing Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh is possibly open to overturning the infamous Roe v Wade decision that allows virtually unlimited abortions up to birth."

INFORMATION

The Friday Church News Notes is designed for use in churches and is published by Way of Life Literature's Fundamental Baptist Information Service. Unless otherwise stated, the Notes are written by David Cloud. Of necessity we quote from a wide variety of sources, but this obviously does not imply an endorsement. We trust that our readers will not be discouraged. It is God's will that we know the times (1 Ch. 12:32; Mat. 16:3) and that we be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. The News Notes remind us that the hour is very late, and we need to be ready for the Lord's coming. Are you sure that you are born again? Are you living for Christ? "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:11-14). This material is sent only to those who personally subscribe to the Fundamental Baptist Information Service mailing list. To SUBSCRIBE, go to <http://www.wayoflife.org/wayoflife/subscribe.html>. TO UNSUBSCRIBE OR CHANGE ADDRESSES, go to the very bottom of any email received from us and click "Manage My Subscription." Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org.