

The case for getting rid of your smartphone

By Noah Gerlach

In April 2013, I got a smartphone. It seemed like a logical decision at the time. It would enable me to take part in trendy activities such as Instagram and Snapchat, which was, I thought, what teenagers should do. A side benefit was its calendar, which would help me stay organized. Little did I know that choosing to get a smartphone has many side effects, not all of them apparent at the point of purchase.

For example: if you are a millennial and you buy a smartphone, you will spend some time playing games on it. I have one game on my smartphone. It's based on a TV show I like. I try to limit the amount of time I spend playing it. I don't play it a lot at home, which is a good thing. However, it has inadvertently become my preferred way to pass the time on car trips.

No matter what I bring along to stay amused, I will at some point find myself playing it. Once I start, the video game effect lures me in with high scores to beat and coins to collect. I can go until my battery is close to death or dead. However, there is an even worse side effect of smartphone ownership than gaming-the beast called YouTube.

I went through a phase a while after I got my smartphone. I wrote a commentary on this phase for my school newspaper (you can read it here-<http://www.clevelandclarion.com/article.php?a=42>). Long story short: I decided to get rid of all the apps I felt were plaguing me and demeaning my quality of life. That meant no more CNN and no more Songza. There was only one app that I couldn't get rid of (my phone literally would not let me delete it)-YouTube. If I had been able to erase it, it might not be the time-waster it is for me today.

It makes me laugh occasionally, and one YouTuber I subscribe to (ADoseOfBuckley) provides intriguing, witty commentary in addition to insensitive humor. Most of the time though, it is just something I do to fill silence. Time that I could use for meditation or reflection, time to do nothing at all, I instead replace with YouTube. Not only is it harmful physically for me to look at a screen for hours on end, it harms my soul.

When I fill silence, I am not listening for the small voice of creation. Listening to the voice of creation reminds me of my place in the universe, as well as the wonders that God works on a daily basis. If I can't delete the things that distract me from this vital task though, how can I be successful at it? Luckily, I have a plan, and I invite you personally to take part in it with me.

My plan is not a complete solution. It's just a small step towards my homo sapien roots. When April rolls around and I am due for a phone upgrade, though, I am going to downgrade instead. My life-sucking smartphone will be replaced with a true cellular telephone-one that makes calls and does almost nothing else. One that will help my life, rather than hinder it.