

Why Is Phubbing a Bad Thing?

“Phubbing” is the latest new word to make headlines. The term is short for “phone snubbing,” now an epidemic in the U.S. Why is this bad?

A paper published in *Computers in Human Behavior* reports that ignoring people in favor of your phone can cause them to feel depressed and less satisfied with life. Researchers discovered that the more partners phubbed, the more conflict was felt in the relationship. Of those participating in the study, 46.3 percent said they experienced phubbing from their significant other; 22.6 percent said this led to problems in their relationship.

There’s actually a website dedicated to this problem: . It includes an email titled “Your Phubbing Intervention,” which can be completed and sent to the offenders in your life. (For more on the impact of technology on relationships, see Janet Denison’s *Five Reasons to Silence Your Cell Phone*.)

We are social creatures, made by God for relationship with each other. Our Creator noted after creating us, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). John Donne was right: “No man is an island, Entire of itself.” Our deepest need is for community with God and his children.

My wife and I saw *The Martian* this week. The plot is that an astronaut is injured in a storm on Mars, presumed dead, and left behind by his crew. He revives and must learn how to survive until he can be rescued. (Mild spoilers ahead.) His greatest joy and relief comes not when he learns to create water or grow potatoes. It is when he establishes communications with Earth and first talks to another human.

The myth of the self-made hero is just that—a myth. Our culture salutes the existential loner who conquers through self-reliance while singing with Frank Sinatra, “I did it my

way.” But a turtle on a fencepost is not the only one who had help getting where he is.

Forty-four times, the Bible describes humans as “sheep.” This is the most common metaphor for us in all of Scripture. And it is not a compliment.

Have you ever seen sheep in a circus? Can be they be trained for anything? Ever seen a sign on someone’s fence, “Warning: Bad Sheep”? I once had a friend who raised sheep. According to him, they are both dumb and defenseless.

Surely this doesn’t apply to us all, you might say. But consider Isaiah 53:6: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.” Wolves attack self-sufficient, isolated sheep. We are all sheep in need of a shepherd and a flock.

God calls the church “the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27). We exist to continue the earthly ministry of Jesus to the world—and the healing ministry of Jesus to each other. We are to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). In a moral culture growing increasingly darker, we need each other more than ever.

Who is praying for you? Who knows your challenges? Who is walking beside you as you face them? Who is helping you use your gifts and influence for God’s glory?

Moses could hold the staff of God over the enemies of Israel only because “Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side” (Ex. 17:12). With this result: “Joshua laid low Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (v. 13).