

# The Internet and Christians

by Jay C. Wingard

You have to admit that the internet has undoubtedly changed the way people communicate more than any medium in history. It is truly an amazing technology that allows people all over the world to gain volumes of information, check up to the minute news and of course communicate in just about any way you can imagine from a "tweet" to full motion video.

As a network administrator and web designer, I have spent the last twenty years of my life working on the internet. I have been blessed to be able to really see the underpinnings of the technologies behind much of what the populace uses on the internet. I have found the internet to be an amazing, almost living thing that has allowed me to learn, grow and at times be dismayed. That being said, I have found the internet to be one of the most dangerous technologies ever created - and a technology that continues to be even more dangerous. Being one who makes a living designing web sites I know the seriousness of my statement about the internet being dangerous but it is just for that very reason that I can say so with such boldness. If you have followed my blog for a while you'll noticed that I normally don't write on this type of stuff but I just feel so strongly about it as I continue to watch parents allow children to have unfiltered access and Christians who take absolutely no precautions what-so-ever when it comes to internet usage.

If we could hook up some kind of super device to the internet that monitors all traffic on a given day I would be extremely surprised if the majority of the internet's bandwidth was not used up by pornography. The amount of pornography on the internet is hideously massive and because it is so easy to get to it is all but knocking on your computer screen. With television, pornography was harder to get to given that you would either have to subscribe to a premium channel or order it by calling the cable TV station. The internet, because of its openness, has made pornography "channel 1" on the internet dial and the saturation of it on the internet is terrifying.

Television is similar to the internet in that the typical American family spends way too much time in front of the tube soaking in mindless babble and an increasing amount of sexual content that 10 years ago would be quickly deemed pornographic. I have heard some excellent messages by folks like [Paul Washer](#) and [Pastor Tim Conway](#) on the dangers of television - and they are spot-on in their assessment. But are we overlooking what is pervasively more dangerous? Is not the internet potentially eons more dangerous than television ever was or ever will be?

Before you label me some fundamental nut please know that I also see good in television and the internet. There are several television programs my wife and I enjoy together (with the help of Tivo to bypass commercials that are often soaked in sexual images) and of course I love to browse certain blogs and write on my own blog on the internet. What I have learned (and by God's grace continue to learn) is that we must constantly be vigilant of the use of media outlets such as the internet. As one who deals with internet technologies every day in my job it has allowed me to really assess some of the major issues Christians should tackle with regards to how we use these technologies in our lives. In doing so, I decided to jot down a few observations of how the internet, while having some good qualities, can be dangerous if not detrimental to the Christian walk:

- 1. "Open" internet connections (those without any kind of filter or parental controls) are nothing but trouble waiting to happen.** I firmly believe that no Christian should have a computer connected to the internet that does not have some kind of internet filter installed. It is a) way too easy to get access to inappropriate sites and b) inevitable that as you are browsing the internet an ad, link or video will pop-up. If you are a parent and allow your children open access to the internet they will, not might, but will be exposed to inappropriate material. When Jesus tells us to cut off our right hand He wasn't joking. He is telling us that we are to do whatever is necessary to protect our souls - and that may mean getting rid of the computer all together. There are several internet filters available. I personally have used a combination of [OpenDNS](#) and [SafeEyes](#) although there are others out there I am sure. Internet filters are not just for children - they are important for all aged Christians.

- 2. The internet can be distracting.** I have noticed more and more in my own Christian walk that if I am at my desk and have all intentions of prayer, studying or reading Scripture that the computer screen beckons me with the latest twitter updates, latest blog post or my email inbox. Honestly, take an inventory of how often the screen calls out to take you away from time with the Lord over such trivial things as twitter and email. In this way, as a guise for a tool for study and information, the internet actually becomes more of a distraction than television. I think this is where Christians need to keep things in check with regards to use of the internet. Again, I am not saying the internet is the epitome of evil. The point is that if something, even something good, distracts and takes time from prayer and study of God's Word it should be looked at with all seriousness.
- 3. The internet can be addictive.** I would not be surprised if modern psychology terms some new medical condition for those who sit hours at a time on the internet and deem it a "condition". What the Bible would call that is not an addiction or a condition but *sin*. It would be the sin of idolatry. Oh how sites like Facebook and Twitter literally become the life of people. Do an inventory of your time you spend on the internet and compare it to the time you spend in prayer and in God's Word. For many (including myself) this will be a humbling assessment. From that baseline idolatry of the internet as a whole often follows the idolatry of sexual immorality through online pornography - which is a dismal spiral into graver and graver sin. Christians should have one magnificent obsession and that should be Christ and everything that points us to Him including prayer, worship and His Word.
- 4. The internet can be misleading.** It amazes me how many people will get information from a web site on the internet and believe every single word they read. The way the internet is designed allowing anyone, anywhere to post anything they want it would be the same as taking what someone wrote on a bathroom wall in a local restaurant and believing it to be serious stuff. Honestly, this is what it is like. We need to be extremely (did I say *extremely*) discerning when it comes to what we read or watch on the internet. It is important to rest on only trusted sites by trusted theologians and writers. In addition, always be aware that it is VERY easy to take someone out of context. Seeing a snippet from a video clip or reading only a few sentences

from an entire transcript can easily (and often is) taken way out of context often to the demise of the author. In lieu of this we should be cautious, discerning and careful on many of the "watchdog" Christian sites. While these sites do provide an excellent resource to protect Christians from false teaching we must always be vigilant of snippets and clips from messages and materials and check the source carefully. Again, trusted sites and authors make a world of difference when it comes to gathering information - especially negative information.

With all of the wonderful things the internet offers (and there are many) there are also a slew of problems that we as Christians must tackle and mortify if we are to live for our Lord in a world already full of distractions and roads to no where. Accountability amongst Christians is nearly non-existent. We are to hold each other accountable and there are great software tools out there that send reports to accountability partners so that everything is out in the open for discussion and gentle rebuke.

I see in my own walk a need to continually address these issues and by His grace to stay focused on the Author and Perfecter of my faith. May we continually realize a need to make war with sin all the days of our lives here on earth. May we always seek our Lord in prayer and Scripture study above all worldly distractions - even those that are innocent in themselves for if we do not we are moving down a crooked road called idolatry.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*