

Looking to find your center of creativity? Unplug

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Dad, I want you to confiscate all my technology this weekend so I can find the creative center of myself.”

These words of wisdom from our middle child, the comedic genius of the family, brought many laughs and “likes” as I posted it to Facebook. He made this request coming home from dinner Friday night, but it was during bedtime prayers that he mentioned this was a recommendation of his second-grade teacher. It then began to make more sense to me; however, the wisdom from the mouth of one of my babes still floored me.



Jon Singletary

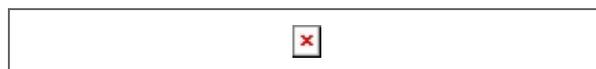
This second son of ours is our television and technology child; he’s the one glued to an Apple iTouch, Nintendo DS or Wii remote control most hours of the days. Or maybe that’s our oldest one? It’s really the youngest who comes in and picks up my cell phone to play on every morning. As you can tell, each of our children spends way too much time glued to a screen and a keyboard.

You can’t tell it from my list of electronic games the kids play, but my wife and I really were pretty good about limiting the time our children spend immersed in technology until they made the case they were the last of their friends with no access to technology.

Still, we have resisted their “need” to play games around the clock—that is, at least until the holidays came around. The holidays—that season when children gather round us to get on our last nerve until school is back in

session. Just a few days into the Christmas break, I already was done baking with the kids, tired of the complaints about spending time together as a family, and exhausted from their picking on each other about every little thing. My answer to this—movies, computers and video games. “Get out of here; go play on my computer.” “Leave your sister alone; where is your DS?” “Be quiet; can’t you find a movie to watch?” Gen X parenting at its best is what I am offering!

One week back at school, and our son’s teacher clearly picked up on how much he is missing his gaming devices. Her recommendation to find his creative center was a good reminder of how we might want to parent a little differently.



As he said his prayers that Friday night, her recommendation also became a sign of what he longed for as a child of God. His prayers included the usual litany: “God, thank you for Mom and Dad and my brothers and sister. Thank you for my friends. Thank you for our food. Help me have good sleep and no bad dreams. Help everyone who is sick and hurt.” And then the new one: “And help me find my creative center.”

Our 8-year-old was teaching his 30-something parent a thing or two. It was harder for me to rush back to my room to pick up my computer that night. It wasn’t as easy to flip on the TV after the kids went to bed. To be clear, I did those things, but I did hesitate. The next day, he was back on his technology as well, but we were all taking that prayer a little more to heart.

I’ve long thought that the image of God in which we are made is creativity. Being creative is so much a part of who we are as human beings, even though we often deny it. We run from it. We pretend not to be able to sing, draw or dance, but I really believe those creative juices run deep in our nature. We were created to be creative, and the Fall may have hindered a part of what that means, but it’s still inside us. Our son knows that at age 8.

And at 38, I know it, too.

What might it mean to find that creative center? My wife is rolling her eyes at us both right now, but what might it mean to step away from this computer, from the television that is on in the background, from the video games that have become a daily occurrence at our house? I'm not sure, but I'd like to find out, even if only for a few hours at a time.

We have friends who don't own a television; others keep a Sabbath free of most technological devices. Our best friends are holding out and not buying video games for their children. I'm not going to pretend to go that far, but I will offer my son's prayer tonight and hope I'm right about God's creative image being somewhere inside me, somewhere inside all of us. And I hope we all pray for new ways to bring it to light.

"God, confiscate a little bit of my technology as well, so I, too, can find the creative center of who you made me to be. Amen."

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