

DOWN HOME: Life lessons from Angry Birds

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About half the time—or more, on a bad day—I’m angry at the birds.

Somehow, I got started playing Angry Birds, the most popular smart-phone “app” in the universe. I’m not much of a gamer. With two daughters and no sons, we’ve never owned video games for our TV. When I played them at friends’ houses, I demonstrated I’m probably the worst video-game player with opposable thumbs.

But for some reason, I downloaded the Angry Birds app for my phone. I figured it would be something to do when I get stuck waiting somewhere and don’t have a book or magazine nearby.

What I didn’t figure was those blasted little birds would be so addicting.

Here’s how you play: Every level of the game features several green pigs on the right side of the screen. They’re protected by houses and other structures made of wood and glass and rock. On the left side of the screen is a little flock of red, yellow, blue and occasionally black birds, hopping around a slingshot stuck in the ground.

The purpose of the game is to shoot the birds from the slingshot so they fly across the screen and hit the structures, causing them to crash down and blow up the pigs. If you blow up the all the pigs, you move to the next level of the game. And if you have any birds left, you get extra points. (I’m not sure why you need points. Really, who’s watching and keeping score?)

Hang on, I’ve got to get out my phone and play a game to see if I’m leaving out any important “facts.” ... Nope, that’s it. But I’m proud to say I just

blew up four pigs, a beach ball and two rubber duckies. (And the compulsive part of me compels me to tell you I'm writing this from home, late at night, and I didn't play Angry Birds on Baptist Standard time.)

What I like about this game is it's not timed. You don't need lightning-quick reflexes and three pair of eyes. After awhile, it's more like a game of logic, and you try to figure out exactly where to sling each bird in sequence to damage the structures and blow up the pigs.

What I don't like about this game is I'm lousy at it. Like when I got stuck on level 21 of the Poached Eggs stage. I tried it 379 times. Finally, I got my son-in-law David to play it for me. He destroyed the pigs right off. Watching David, I realized I should've paid attention, because somewhere the game people must've indicated you can make the little blue birds multiply and you can send the big yellow birds into warp speed, both of which mean death to the pigs.

My inattention to Angry Birds rules and all-around lousiness at video games ironically remind me of our spiritual condition. Often, we go around stinking at life because we haven't paid attention to the little details that give us power. Like depending on the Holy Spirit and refreshing ourselves with prayer and Bible reading. You don't have to fly through life like an Angry Bird.