

Project Topic

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In a world where technology is the most accessible it's ever been, sitting still has become increasingly difficult. Books are being replaced by e-readers, physical stores are being replaced by online shopping, and in-person communication is being replaced by social media, texting, and video calls. While these developments offer convenience and connectivity, they also contribute to a constant state of stimulation. With this rapid advancement in technology, it is important to take time to slow down, get off our devices, connect with others, and with God. Technology has a way of intruding on our daily lives and detracting from activities like pausing, reflecting, praying, and engaging in meaningful conversations [1]. It is important to note that technology is not inherently bad or harmful to spiritual life, in fact it has been helpful in spreading the message of the cross and the gospel by providing more information to more people in a shorter amount of time [2]. With that being said, this project aims to ask how technology can be beneficial, as well as detrimental to someone's relationship with God. The mobile application that will be built to support the research will encourage users to take breaks from their devices and engage in meaningful activities that promote mental well-being and spiritual growth. This research matters because while concerns about distraction and spiritual attentiveness are frequently discussed, there is limited research that examines how everyday technology use shapes these experiences. While research on digital Christian practices and online worship has begun to emerge, much of this work focuses on communal or institutional forms of worship rather than everyday habits of attentiveness and silence in personal spiritual life [3]. This work seeks to give insight on the beneficial and detrimental effects of technology on spiritual life, as well as asking the question of whether intentional technological design can support attentiveness rather than detract from it. In order to gather data for this project, professional interviews with pastors will be done to see the effects that technology has had on their spiritual lives. There will also be surveys sent out to a variety of people to get a broader perspective on the everyday Christian. In addition to gathering data, the study will include the implementation of a minimalistic software application focused on protecting periods of stillness. Unlike existing faith based applications that often bombard users with notifications and spiritual content, the app's focus is to reduce digital stimulation by limiting notifications and interruptions during user-defined periods of quiet. This application functions not as a guide for prayer, but as a tool to create space for users to engage in their own spiritual practices without technological distractions. The application will also serve as a research tool, allowing participants to engage with intentional periods of stillness over time. Its effectiveness will be evaluated through pre and post-study survey responses that will assess changes in users' attentiveness, frequency of distraction, and

comfort with silence during spiritual practices. Rather than measuring spiritual outcomes directly, the study focuses on changes in users' attentional habits that many Christians find important for their spiritual life. This study is limited by its reliance on self-reported data and a relatively small participant pool. Additionally, spiritual attentiveness is a deeply personal experience that cannot be fully captured through quantitative measures. Despite these limitations, the project offers meaningful insight into how technology can be intentionally designed to support stillness and reflection. By combining research with software design, this work contributes to broader conversations about attention, faith, and ethical technology design.

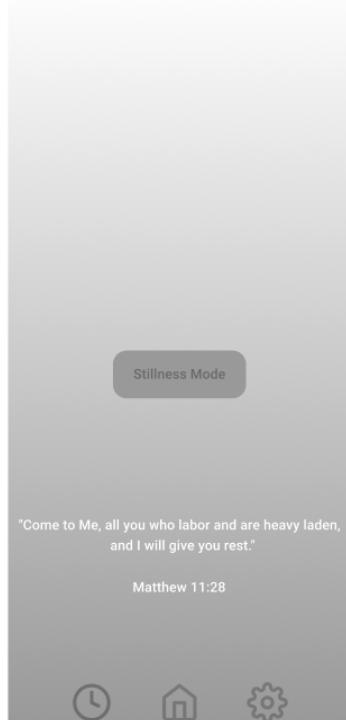


Figure 1:

Appendix

- Intentional Stillness Windows: Users schedule periods of quiet explicitly for spiritual attentiveness, reflection, or prayer. Session length, frequency, and interruptions are logged for study.
- Smart Notification Management: Selectively blocks nonessential notifications during stillness windows while allowing critical alerts. Tracks which notifications are silenced or bypassed, creating quantifiable data on digital interruptions.
- Uninterrupted Focus Timer: Measures duration of continuous attention during stillness sessions. Provides users with visual feedback to reinforce habit formation. Data collected supports the research goal of assessing how technology impacts attention.
- Minimalist Interface: A clean, distraction-free UI that minimizes cognitive load. Reduces temptation to engage with other apps during stillness periods, aligning with the goal of promoting attentiveness.
- Reflection Prompts: Brief, optional prompts appear after sessions to encourage users to reflect on their experience. Prompts can be customized or general.
- Session Analytics Dashboard: Provides users with insights into their patterns concerning session length, frequency, and interruptions. Supports analysis of how consistent quiet time affects attentiveness over time.
- Customizable Stillness Modes: Users can choose different modes that tailor the app's behavior during quiet periods. Each can have unique settings for notification blocking and session tracking.
- Device Activity Logging: Tracks phone pickups or app usage during stillness windows to measure real world distractions. Provides objective metrics to complement the self reported reflection prompts.
- Journaling Feature: Optional feature where users can log thoughts or reflections after stillness sessions. Supports qualitative data collection.
- End of week Summary Report: Provides users with a broader summary of their habits over a week period. Highlights improvements in attentiveness and consistency.

Stretch Goals

- Social Sharing: Allow users to share their progress or reflections with a community. Encourages accountability and communal growth. Would not make it the main focus of the app, to keep it minimalistic and focused on personal spiritual growth.
- Longer Use Logging: Extend the study duration to several months to assess long term changes in attentiveness and spiritual practices.

- Sabbath Mode: A special mode for longer duration periods of disconnection, like a few hours or a full day or more.

References

- [1] HINIKER, A., AND WOBBROCK, J. O. Reclaiming attention: Christianity and HCI. *Interactions* 29, 4 (June 2022), 40–44.
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- [3] WOLF, S., MOERIKE, F., LUTHE, S., NORD, I., AND HURTIERNE, J. Spirituality at the Breakfast Table: Experiences of Christian online worship services. In *Extended Abstracts of the 2022 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (New York, NY, USA, 2022), CHI EA '22, Association for Computing Machinery.