

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Ep 96 – Screen Time (“Be Careful Little Eyes”)
Final Transcript

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:00 On today’s episode of *Fearless*, we’re gonna be talking about our phones and our computers and our tablets, and how my son Austin, who’s 6 years old, my husband, and even you, the listener of *Fearless*, have helped me stay on track and to refocus where I’m spending my time and the dangers of what we’re seeing on our phone.

MUSIC STARTS

00:00:21 Hi, I’m Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:00:41 Welcome back to another episode of *Fearless*. If you’re watching on our YouTube, then you would know that I’m back in my office in Charlotte, North Carolina, at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and it is my first time back since having my little girl, Georgia. And I will say traveling again, it’s a little more difficult to leave all three kids behind and for mama to get out the door, but we’re here. I’m so thankful to be back in the office and with my team of *Fearless* and I wanna say thank you to all of those who have sent encouraging notes.

Recently, I got a message on Instagram from a girl, where she had just said that she had listened to my most recent episode of *Fearless* and that she had been away from God for about 20 years, that she’d grown up in a Christian home, and her dad had led her to the Lord when she was 6, but pretty much walked away from Him after high school. And she got married and had three kids and then COVID hit and she said, “I started small, getting back into the Word, and I found your podcast, which has really spoken to me and helped me see my need for Christ and my kids’ need for Christ. I have since led all three of my kids to the Lord and we have found a wonderful church we belong to. Personally, I’m thankful you obeyed the Lord in the startup of your podcast. It really set me down the path of finding Christ again, and the peace I feel because of Him is exactly what I’ve longed for, for almost 20 years.”

And, I guess that’ll make me teary and a little bit emotional because sometimes after recording a podcast I’m like, “Ugh, maybe I did that wrong. Maybe I didn’t say the right thing,” and, “Who wants to listen to that on their own personal time?” So I’m so grateful for all of you who have sent encouraging notes and especially ones like that, that my prayer is always that *Fearless* will encourage you and strengthen your relationship with the Lord for this crazy culture that we’re living in and these days that we’re facing. But as we’re looking forward, these next two podcasts I’m gonna do and these episodes are kind of conversations Corey and I have been having in our own home, and I know that we cannot be alone in having these conversations as we’re trying to navigate our family and how we do this. We have this competition between sharing our screen time and

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how much time we spend on our phones to each other. And to be honest, that can kind of be a vulnerable thing to show how many hours a day you're spending on your phone and it can be quite embarrassing. So that's the conversation we've been having.

And just as a side note, there was one day I lost that; I had more time than him and I had to look—my clock—if your clock is running on your phone like your timer, it counts as screen time. So actually when I deleted that, I beat him and I had less screen time.

But we preach it to our kids all the time, like, be careful what we're looking at, be careful of what we're doing. And I know as parents we're trying to navigate when do we give our kids a phone, what are they allowed to watch on TV? And that is so hard in the time period we're living in; it's 2023 when our jobs are on our phone, schoolwork half the time is on an iPad or a tablet and our computers. It's hard to navigate that.

And my heart for this episode really also kind of—I was challenged with the content that we're watching, but it really just kind of bloomed into more of the conversation of how much time are we looking at our phones and our TVs and the screens. And the book *Four Thousand Weeks* by Oliver Burkeman unpacks our relationship with time and how we use it. Four thousand weeks is 80 years and that's the average lifespan of a human.

And to think we have 4,000 weeks: that's 4,000 Fridays, 4,000 Saturdays, and 4,000 Sundays, which for some of us, you know, when I was talking to my producer here in the room, he is a little bit older than me, so his time has gotten a lot shorter [laugh]. But when you start thinking about that and Oliver Burkeman says when you get to the end of your life, the sum total of all the things you paid attention to will have been your life. And I wanna ask, what are we paying attention to when we spend an average—Americans spend an average of seven hours and four minutes on our phone a day? And I know this one's hard to navigate because it is our job, our emails, our job is on our phone, it's on our computer. Many of us are working from home. If our boss sends an email, we're expected to look at it at 10 o'clock at night and to respond to it, and so it's a really hard time to adjust.

For an example, the other night at the dinner table, I'm really trying our rules not to have our phones at our table, and my husband picks it up, and my son goes, “Uh-uh, no phones at the table,” and it was something really urgent he had to respond to in that moment. So it's hard to find this, and so we're gonna try to work through this together. But I said the average, for Americans, was seven hours and four minutes, and 41% of adults say they struggle with managing their screen time. And of course, I'm one of 'em, sometimes it's just out of habit—your phone's sitting next to you and you just pick it up and you just start scrolling on Instagram or you're looking on YouTube and researching something and you don't even realize you're doing it. And so I am one that struggles with managing their screen time and I'm trying to figure this out.

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But I think of Gen Z, your screen time averages nine hours per day. And that’s not just—you think of how many hours they go to school, then nine hours in front of a screen, whether that’s watching TV, that’s gaming, that’s their social media. And just today on my way to work on the radio they were talking about a new study that just came out and the damage it’s doing to teenagers as their brain is developing at a young age, and it’s having long-term effects, being in front of a screen for so long. But experts say that we should spend less than two hours a day outside of work on our screens, and you think two hours, that’s still a lot of time. And in a recent sermon, Craig Groeschel, of Life.Church in Oklahoma, he shared that if you spend four hours a day on your device for 60 years, you will have spent 10 years of your life staring at a screen.

You think, 10 years, when we stand before God one day—and I’m not trying to like over-spiritualize things, but God gives us time and we’re to be good stewards of our time—and if we’re to stand before God and say, Ten years I spent my life in front of a screen looking at a stranger who lives out in Utah and their life on Instagram and what they post of their family. That’s almost like a gut punch to me when I read that. I know another day I was looking on Instagram of this family I love to follow, and my son, who’s 6 years old, is looking at it with me and he goes, “Mom, why is she telling us all that stuff?” And I looked at him and I said, “You know, Austin, that is a really good question. I don’t know why she’s telling us all her personal information or worse, why is Mom listening to it?” And listening to it when my son is sitting right there?

But we all know life is fleeting. We talk about that all the time. There was this man that worked for my dad for many years and he would pick me up from school sometimes, and he would, every time he’d pick me up, he would say, “Oh, Cissie, life goes by so fast. Enjoy these days.” You know, when he is talking in this slow tone, and I can remember, I’m thinking, “Life is long. I got a long time to live.” And by the time you hit your mid-30s and your forties, you start thinking, “Wow! I can remember when my parents turned 40.” And life is flying by and it’s fleeting and we’re spending so much of our time every day on our phones.

In Proverbs 6 it says, “*Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest.*” But let’s think about this verse with the word—if you switched it to “screen” and you inserted the word “screen” into it and it says, “How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your screen?” And when we look at our screen, one of the problems is it’s not real life. A lot of these are fantasies we’re looking at, whether they’re real people and we’re following them and they live out in Utah, we’re comparing our lives. We only see the good parts of their lives, and it’s a fantasy that we’re chasing, and many times I think it can leave us to even coveting one another.

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You covet, you see these people’s big beautiful houses and you think that’s what we should look like, a house that came right out of a magazine, and many times I can lie in bed and I’m looking on my phone and I can become discontent with what I have and what God has blessed me with. But it’s not real life, and Proverbs 12 says, *“Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense.”* And I think how often many of the nights we are looking at fantasies of other people’s lives that are not even comparable to ours, but also of what we might be watching on Netflix and all the streaming services that we have out there now. But we have a responsibility to use our time wisely and we also have the responsibility to set that example to our children.

The other day, we were doing Bible study devotions before we put our kids to bed and we’re talking about love is patient and love is kind, and my son, once again, 6 years old, goes, “Mom, do you wanna know when I’m not patient?” I said, “Sure, tell me when you’re not patient.” And he says, “When I’m trying to talk to Dad and he’s on his phone and I’ll say something over and over and over and he looks up at me and goes, ‘Huh?’ I don’t have patience for that,” he said. [laugh] This is a 6-year-old. And he didn’t even know I was preparing this, of course, to speak on *Fearless*, but we have a responsibility as parents to set that example, to use that time that God has entrusted with us with our own children.

In Colossians 4 it says, *“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.”* And when I think about that, I think of how often we’re just on our phone, whether we’re walking in the parking lot, whether we’re sitting in the line at the grocery store, or walking through the mall, wherever we are, we’re on our phones, we’re looking down, and how often we might be missing opportunities that God’s putting in front of us to engage with somebody, to be an encouragement to somebody. I think—I’m from the South and I grew up with a mom who talks to everybody. She doesn’t meet a stranger. My brother Will does not meet a stranger. He will talk to you if you’re in the parking lot, he’ll talk to you at the cash register, and he’ll know your name by the end of it.

But think now we’ve become such an impersonal society and a culture and we are not even engaging with the people that we are coming in contact with. We’re just looking down at our phones and it says we’re to be *“making the best use of [our] time.”* And in Romans 13 it says, *“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime,—I want you to remember that: “as in the daytime,” we’re to walk properly—not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”*

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And that—I wanna lead into the content that we are watching, the content that we’re looking on our phones, the content we’re streaming, and because how many, when we look at that verse: drunkenness, sexual immorality, orgies—when you turn on Netflix, every TV show now, the sexual content is horrible. Just the other day I was turning on, ’cause I was gonna watch an old show, and this new one that they were advertising, it was called *Sex Life*, and just the trailer—I didn’t even have to click on it—the trailer starts playing before I can change it. And it is this TV show now that is gonna be very gruesome about sex life, I think, within an office. I’m not really sure; that’s what I kind of got from the trailer.

But I remember this time I was watching this TV show and I’ll be honest, I was watching this show called *Outlander*, and if you’re listening and you have watched *Outlander*, you know it’s a horrible show. And I got sucked in because it was a historical kind of time piece and I like shows that are a different time period. And there’s this one scene that is absolutely horrible that I felt so uncomfortable that I had to fast forward through it, but then I kept still watching the show. And my husband came in one night and I was watching on my iPad and Corey looked at me and he said, “Cissie, would you be OK if I was watching on my iPad by myself in my bedroom watching that show?” and I sat in silence. I couldn’t put up an argument with him. He was right. I would absolutely not be OK if I walked in and my husband was watching this show that had these graphic sex scenes in it. And at that moment, I turned it off, and to this day I’ve never watched that show again.

And it was funny because I got to this point, I’d watched some pretty hard, even if it wasn’t like sexual, maybe very violent shows that we see now that are on streaming, and I would wake up with this like darkness over me. Because let’s—we’ve all now binge watched a show where we’re just like one more episode, one more episode, and before we know it’s 1 a.m. and we’ve watched four episodes and we wake up, we hit the snooze button, we’re waking up late, I’m not waking up to do my devotions, I can barely get out the door on time, I’m cranky with my children. And so it just has this impact throughout our day when we spend hours and hours of watching a show that’s not even worthy. That says to walk as properly as we do in the daytime—and that’s another thing, we’re watching them late at night, we are watching ’em in our bedrooms. The content now is on—we don’t have to be in some hotel room to have some pornography show right in front of us. It’s on our streaming devices, it’s on our phones, it’s on our computers, iPads, it’s at our fingertips, and we, as a culture, we have repackaged porn.

We have these streaming devices and these services of high-production value, these fascinating storylines of these characters that we can kind of relate to, these beautiful actors and actresses. It’s not some like low-quality thing that’s being filmed in a dark alley anymore. These are right here on Netflix, on Hulu. Every show that you turn on has vulgar language, has horrible sex scenes, probably within the first three minutes. I remember I turned on this show, once again, it was a historical piece, and in the first three minutes, it was a full-on nudity sex scene and I had to turn it off. And once we’ve

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seen those, it's kind of like what we've talked to our children about, you know, “Be careful little eyes what you see,” cuz once you see it, you're never gonna forget it. And that had an impact.

I can remember being in a hotel room when I was like 9 years old, just flipping through the channel, and of course pornography popped in, but you don't have to be in a hotel room. We all have it at our fingertips now. And it's called a TV show; it's not ‘pornography,’ and there's a lot of TV shows that maybe you're starting to think of, and one of 'em is, *Yellowstone*. Most of my friends watch *Yellowstone*. Most of my Christian friends have told me, “Hey, you need to watch *Yellowstone*.” And I turned it on and the language was so bad, the F-word was every five minutes. And probably the old Cissie, I would've watched it and just kind of shook it off, but God has really convicted my heart and that's why I'm here. I'm just sharing it because I realized watching those things, the darkness that it would have and the impact on my life the next day, whether you realize it or not. There's a reason that God warns us to be careful of what we're watching, and that's not just a command to our children, that's a command that we are to be careful what our eyes see and what we allow in our mind and our hearts.

It was funny cuz a couple, like a year ago or a couple years ago when God started convicting me of this, I was like, OK, what wholesome shows can I start watching? And I started watching *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* and I posted on Instagram one time and everybody started laughing that I was watching this show from the '90s. But it was a show that I was allowed to let my kids watch. We didn't have to worry about what was gonna be on the next scene.

And we just have to be so careful. I think this is a tool that Satan is using in our culture and it's slowly happening and we don't even realize it. And because it's been repackaged, because it's TV shows—there's another one that I had turned on because everybody was recommending it and it had a full-on sex scene. And one of my friends says, “Well, they were married, they were a married couple.” And I'm like, so let's say if it wasn't packaged as this No. 1 show on Netflix and I'm just watching it as porn and, “Well they're married, we're just watch—that's OK if I watch it.” We are coming up with these excuses of why it's OK, but we just have to remember that it's all just been repackaged. It all has a new name now in our culture.

Psalm 101 says, “*I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me?*” It says, “*I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart. I will not look with approval on anything that is vile.*” And I was reading that the other day, just in my devotions, and I thought, myself as a mom, I set that responsibility for *my* household, that I conduct the affairs of my house and what am I gonna allow in it, even if it's behind closed doors and my children are not there, that has an effect of my daily life because it's sin and sin is gonna grow, and we think it won't have a negative effect, we're just watching it, but it is so powerful. Matthew 6 says, “*The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your*

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whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” And that’s just something I personally experienced after watching some of these shows. As I said, I would wake up and it would just kind of be like this dark cloud over me, because I had watched *nothing* worthy of my time—and that’s just on the content, but when we start thinking about how much time, when we’re talking about watching, binge watching a show for four hours at night, and we think back at the quote that we would spend an average of 10 years of our life in front of a screen, how do we stand before God at the judgment of believers and say, “Lord, I spent 10 years of my life watching filth, watching orgies, watching drunkenness, watching quarreling, and jealousy, foul language.”?

Or, even if I’m scrolling Instagram and I’m watching these strangers that have no purpose in my life, how do we stand before God and answer that? And maybe you’re thinking, OK, Cissie, this is—you’re kind of over spiritualizing all of this. But no, it’s true. And this is having a heavy impact on our culture. You think of the anxiety and the depression that we are facing. A lot of it is coming from the video games our children are watching, from the TV shows that they’re watching. We know Hollywood is a mess. We know that they are indoctrinating our children with their ideologies. So why do we think it’s OK that we watch it? We’re allowing them to seep into our own hearts and our own minds. And of course, like I said, it’s all become private now. Nobody has to know we’re watching it. No—and that’s kind of how I felt when I was watching that show on my iPad other than my husband, and my husband—and I’m so thankful for him saying that—he convicted me, and from that day, trying to be careful of what we watch as a family and what I watch by myself.

And I kind of feel like a little bit of an old grandma or like my mom saying, “Be careful what you watch,” and maybe a little bit legalistic, but this is Scripture that we’re reading, you know, that we are—God commands us to be careful what our eyes look at. You see like the dangers of David, just with his eyes of seeing Bathsheba and what that led to.

But I’ll never forget when I was a little girl, there was this man, his name’s Ed Morrow and he and his wife had worked on the mission field for years and he and his wife came to work at Samaritan’s Purse. And I was watching TV one day and he walks into the house and he says, “Cissie, what are you watching?” It’s like 10 years old. I said, “Oh, some TV show about witches.” I think it was *Charmed* like back in the ’90s or something. And here, you know, looking back, he’s coming off the mission field where witchcraft has such a heavy presence and a dark presence on the mission field, and we as Americans are just making light of witchcraft. And he goes, “Oh, Cissie, you’re watching that devil block. You should not be watching that devil block,” and—that’s my horrible Irish accent, by the way—but I laugh now because it is so true how Satan has used the media. He’s used these TVs, he’s used these screens to infiltrate this content that is so against God. It is so against living a holy life. It keeps us from living a holy life and in this world, where we are continuing to face darkness, and it is getting more and more difficult to take a stand for Jesus and to live in light, but then in return we’re filling

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our heart and our mind and our soul with complete darkness. And that is Satan using his power to infiltrate our hearts in the darkness of the night when we're watching on our screens.

So that was a big part of the content, and maybe I could have done a whole episode on just the content of our screen time. But what if the screen time is a device the enemy uses to steal and to distract us from a vibrant full life that Jesus gave us? Think about even with our spouse or with our friends, like I said with my son—the word now that they say is techno-ference. That's when technology-based interference is when you're trying to have a conversation or connect with a person, but you're on a device and the device is in between you. I can't tell you how many times I've sat in or I've laid in bed, my husband's on his phone, I'm on my phone, and we go to bed not even talking. He puts his down, I put mine down, and we haven't even had a conversation.

And I think back when we first got married—I know, I've been married 15 years now, getting quite old—but our rule was we wouldn't even have a TV in our bedroom because we wanted our bedroom to be a place where we could connect. We could have conversations, wind down the night, and it was just between the two of us. Well then, you got our first year of marriage, we got an iPhone, that's when the iPhones came out. And so you can start just scrolling on your phone before you go to bed, and then we get iPads. So then it was pretty much having a TV even though I said I don't have a TV in our bedroom. I had a TV with iPad and then COVID hit and we had all this family time and my kids would—their favorite thing was to come get in our bed and we ended up putting a TV in our bedroom. So here we are, we got an iPad, a phone, and a TV 15 years later. But Corey and I have been having this conversation of what this looks like for our family. What are some rules that we can set up? Because 72% of couples have reported the techno-ference interactions in their partner, in their relationships.

Screen time can have a deeply negative impact on the amount and the level and the depth of conversations we're having with our loved ones. And it's like that story with Austin, he was trying to talk to my husband, and this is of course something that's happened repeatedly, enough for him to say he doesn't have patience for his dad. But I think the other night they were wanting to go to bed and of course I'm just scrolling on Instagram with no purpose, just watching the lives of other people, and I realized I had missed the opportunity to put my kids to bed. And if we think out of those 4,000 weeks we get to live, it's a very little amount of how much time we get to actually put our kids to bed, and I missed out on that, and I said, “Corey, we gotta get better of not even having our phone.”

So this is of course a conversation Corey and I are continuing, trying to figure out how this works for our family. So what can we do? How do we take back that time that we've allowed culture, we've allowed our social media, we've allowed these streaming services to steal and rob our time, and we're allowing culture to kind of shift our hearts and our minds? And Satan is using it in a mighty way, so how can we take our time

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back? And I would, No. 1, encourage you: Take an honest assessment of how much is on your screen. It's kind of like that conversation Corey and I were having: “Show me your screen time.” Look at it, it will—man, I guarantee it will be like just a punch to the stomach of how much time you're spending on your phone, and there are some apps out there that I think help you with that. I have not downloaded 'em, but there are some out there if you need help. But, ask your spouse where he or she thinks that they're spending too much time. What are they watching? What's the content? Hold each other accountable. Come up with a plan. And you know what, if you're a woman listening to this, I wanna be careful. We as wives sometimes can come up with these plans and these ideas in our head and we're gonna go to our husband and we're gonna say, “Hey, we're gonna do this. We're gonna say no more time at this.” And my husband's like, “I'm not on board with that.” Do it together. Because if it's not a partnership, it's gonna go in one ear and out the other.

And then maybe come up with some other rules for your family. Corey and I have been talking about maybe we have no screen time, no phone from 6 to 8:00 p.m., that's kind of the dinner time. It's the crazy time for young families when you're trying to get your kids in bed. My husband's trying to check his email and work on something and we've missed devotion time cuz now it's too late. So really make those like 6 to 8 p.m. or 6 to 8:30 p.m. kind of a screen-free time where we're really focused on family, where the family can come together at the end of the night. And then maybe make some other rules for your family, whatever that may look like.

I just wanted this episode to be an encouragement to you because we are to live a fearless life. And this whole purpose of this episode or this podcast, *Fearless*, is to help you live a fearless faith in a compromising culture, and one of the biggest places our culture has compromised is in what we're watching, what we're listening to, the amount of screen time that we have given our time. Just think, we're spending an average of over four hours a day—apart from work—on our phones and our time is so precious. God gives us a little bit of time, and a lot of those days go by so fast we're like, “Oh it was so busy I didn't even have time to pray today.” Or, “I didn't even have time to do my devotions cuz I woke up so late cuz I was exhausted,” cuz maybe you watched a TV show. I just wanna encourage you to pray about it. Reassess where we're spending our time. Stop looking at your phone as much. Enjoy your family. Spend time investing into your children, into your relationships of those people around you, and not letting culture infiltrate our hearts and our minds with their filth and with their trash.

And when I work on *Fearless* and y'all are listening to *Fearless*, that helps me stay focused of what God's purpose in my life and this season I have right now—and that's *Fearless*. And it's like the testimony I read that was sent into me, and I'm so thankful for all of you who are listening. Although you are listening on your devices, I am aware of that [laugh]. So I hope and I always use your time wisely with what God's put on *my* heart and wanna encourage you share *Fearless* with your friends or your families. Maybe these are things—I know Corey and I are not the only ones trying to navigate

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this. As our culture has shifted all to be on screens now, how can we have a healthy balance?

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:29:54 Once again, thank you for listening to another episode of *Fearless*. I normally take this time to encourage you to follow me on all my social media and to check out my website, but that might be a little bit of a contradiction since I’ve been saying *less* screen time through this episode, so I just wanna simply say thank you for listening.

CLOSING MUSIC

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