

Reader's Guide Introduction

For many of us, going online has evolved from an occasional, recreational activity into a daily part of life. We now surf the Net as a business and personal imperative that seems to demand our attention on a 7 x 24 x 365 basis. But as our work and home lives blur together, we're struggling with ethical and moral questions in cyberspace. Although there are thousands of great things to do online, maintaining personal values in a digital world can pose significant challenges.

We can experience online temptations towards the dark side of the Net, with enticing and sometimes innocent-looking opportunities to engage in lying, cheating, stealing, and various lusts. Sometimes, even respectable activities can monopolize our lives and become problematic. And virtual experiences often lead to very serious real-world consequences. How can we enable the good and disable the bad as we surf the Internet?

Dan Lohrmann has a unique approach to this vital topic. As a committed Christian, married father of four, and nationally renowned computer security expert, he wrote *Virtual Integrity* for Christians and others who want to live out their religious faith and surf the Internet with virtue at home, school, or work. Rather than simply rehash old ideas, Lohrmann offers new solutions for both now and the future.

This guide will help you probe deeper into some of the hard questions and the corresponding answers that you will find in *Virtual Integrity*. These discussion questions are designed to be used in a group setting with two or more readers. The guide will be most useful to book clubs and reading groups or in church settings such as Sunday school classes.

Introduction and Chapter 1 Integrity Theft: How e-Temptation Targets You

Discussion Questions

- 1) In the Introduction, Lohrmann describes his online situation at home and work. Following his example, discuss your own online life in general terms. On average, how much time do you spend connected to the Internet each week at home, school, and work? What are your favorite Web sites, TV shows, or net activities? Do you have a blog, *Facebook*, *MySpace*, or other personal Web page?
- 2) In both the Introduction and chapter 1, the author provides examples of inappropriate conduct online. Are you aware of any similar situations with family, friends, or colleagues? What happened and what was the outcome?
- 3) In the Introduction, Lohrmann describes his battle with all types of virtual “appeals [that] try harder than ever to undermine my purpose-driven life. These assaults threaten my faith, my personal reputation, my marriage, my children, my career, and the effectiveness of my entire department at work” (p. 13). Do you agree with this statement, or is it an exaggeration? Explain why or why not. If you basically agree, can you think of personal examples of challenges in cyberspace that have threatened you?
- 4) In chapter 1, Lohrmann describes how Web page designers “tempt the click” (pp. 18–19). Have you ever experienced detours in your Web surfing? Do you have strategies to help overcome temptation or to know when you need to disconnect? If so, what are they?
- 5) The author introduces the term “integrity theft” (pp. 21–22). Do you agree with the assertion that *integrity* theft is more troubling and pervasive than *identity* theft? What online actions do you see others renaming that, in reality, equate to breaking one of the Ten Commandments?
- 6) Lohrmann defines integrity as “doing what you say and saying what you do” with a sincere heart. How do you define integrity? Read Proverbs 10:9 and Job 2:3 and discuss whether your description of integrity fits with these Bible passages.
- 7) The author provides a variety of ways that users can “surf their values” on the Internet right now (pp. 25–29). How might you express (or live out) your values when you go online? What choices can you make that enable you to “opt in” to integrity in cyberspace?
- 8) Lohrmann says, “I made wedding vows to be true to my wife Priscilla ‘until death do us part.’ I hope and even expect that anyone and everyone that has my best interest at heart will support my vows” (p. 28). Is this a reasonable expectation? Should Web merchants, advertisers, and others online and offline respect marriage or other vows? Why or why not? What challenges do you see in making this happen?

Chapter 2 — Why Filtering Is Not Enough: Problems with Parental Controls

Discussion Questions

- 1) What has been your experience with Internet filtering software? Is it easy to use and maintain? Is it effective? Why or why not?
- 2) Lohrmann describes common perceptions and technical realities in Table 2 (p. 33). What is your view on the limitations of current approaches? Who administers the PC at your home? Is anyone monitoring him or her?
- 3) The author describes the need for action in three core areas: people, process, and technology (pp. 34–37). Have you ever thought of online integrity being so broad? Is Lohrmann correct in making this issue so all-encompassing? (For example, he even raises issues with “flirtatious emails” and viewing advertisements.)
- 4) Do you use parental controls on your TV? Discuss what you do or don't do regarding the use of technology and Internet safety in your home. What formal or informal “rules” do you follow? (See Russell Research's statistics at the bottom of page 39 as a reference.)
- 5) Lohrmann questions whether or not we currently have genuine (virtuous) choices in cyberspace. Do you believe that there are enough choices today? Why or why not? How important is this issue to you? Would you pay extra or go out of your way to receive programming that respects your values?
- 6) Read the restaurant example on page 43. What is your response? Can you think of situations in your life where programming violated your values? What did you do? Would you act differently if a similar situation occurred again?
- 7) Read James 4:4–8. How do these verses apply to this topic? How can humility help overcome temptation? What other Bible passages provide direction in this area?

Chapter 3— Who's Fooling Whom in Cyberspace? Overcoming Online Deception

Discussion Questions

- 1) At the beginning of chapter 3, the author references the story of the teen mayor of Hillsdale, Michigan. Lohrmann writes, "No matter who you are or what you've accomplished in life, your cyber sins will eventually find you out." Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 2) Lohrmann lists many examples of online deception and misinformation throughout chapter 3. What has been your experience with Internet deception? Have you been misled or have you misled others in cyberspace? What were the consequences, if any?
- 3) Do you generally trust information you read online or see/hear in the media? Why or why not? What Web sites do you trust or find yourself going to for information? Why? Have you ever suspected something was misleading or wrong on the Internet? How did you respond?
- 4) On page 50, the author writes, "More information is coming at us faster than ever from various people who may or may not be truthful or forthcoming with their intentions. It creates new possibilities and new problems requiring shrewdness." How do you deal with the flood of information online? What priority-setting mechanisms, if any, do you use in your online world?
- 5) Lohrmann describes a *CNN Money* article entitled, "How to Lead Your Customer into Temptation" (p. 51). What is your reaction to this experiment? Have you ever felt as if you were being led into temptation in cyberspace?
- 6) Do the statistics quoted from Dr. Michael Conner (p. 54) surprise you? Why or why not? Discuss your answers to the questions listed under the section "Are You Addicted to the Net?"
- 7) Discuss the two examples of deception found on pp. 56–57 regarding fake snow days at an Ohio school and Montgomery acting as Tommy. Are you aware of similar stories within your family or circle of friends? If so, what happened? Is the deception continuing? Did those involved learn a lesson?

Chapter 3 (continued)

- 8) Are you less inhibited on the Internet than in face-to-face interactions? Do you find yourself writing things or going places online with your “e-Me” (p. 59) that would seem wrong in the “real world”?
- 9) Lohrmann lists various “Christian responses” (pp. 60–62). What do you do to help maintain online integrity? Do you think these suggestions are helpful? What other strategies might help?
- 10) The author quotes C. S. Lewis’s *Screwtape Letters* at the beginning and near the end of the chapter (pp. 45, 59–60). “All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Are there positive or negative examples from your online or offline life that you can share?

Chapter 4—Do the Ends Justify the Means? Cheating on the Web

Discussion Questions

- 1) Were you—or are you now—ever tempted to cheat in school? How did or do you deal with temptations to cheat on tests, papers, or other assignments?
- 2) Reread the quote from David Callahan's "The Cheating Culture" (p. 64). Discuss the statement that "Americans seem to be using two moral compasses." Is Callahan right? Why or why not?
- 3) Have you taken an online course at school or work? What are the pros and cons of distance learning or self-paced courses? Do you like computer-based training more or less than instructor-led courses? Has technology played a role (positive or negative) in temptations to cheat?
- 4) Lohrmann provides examples of Web sites that can help students cheat or facilitate life experience degrees (pp. 66–68). Do you think these Web sites and/or easy-to-copy materials on the Internet encourage more cheating? Alternatively, do you think these students would cheat without the Internet? In your experience, is cheating getting more common? Support your answer.
- 5) Do the reported statistics by ADP Screening and Selection Services (p. 68) surprise you? Have you ever known anyone who falsified credentials or padded a resume? Did the deception work? What happened? How does this trend hurt others?
- 6) The author describes Christian responses to online cheating (pp. 71–73). He offers suggestions to combat the powerful temptation to cheat. Discuss this list. Where do think most people go wrong? Why? Is Ron Yasbin (p. 63) correct in his assertion?
- 7) Lohrmann lists numerous Web sites, university programs, and other organizations that offer help to parents, students, and educators (pp. 73–75). Why do you think the majority of people never utilize these resources, even if clear benefits are discernable?
- 8) Discuss the biblical standards for honesty and integrity (start with the list on pp. 75–76). Lohrmann says, "As Christians, our faith and trust in God enable academic integrity." Do you agree? Why or why not? If you agree, can you share a personal example of a time that your faith helped you overcome the temptation to cheat?

Chapter 5 — Identity Theft and Integrity Theft: Partners in Crime

Discussion Questions

- 1) The author quotes David F. Wells at the beginning of chapter 5: “We live precariously on the knife-edge between chaos and control. What was once an open space between law and freedom, one governed by character and truth, is now deserted” (p. 77). Discuss this quote. In what ways does law now do what character neglects on the Internet?
- 2) Describe your current use of email, instant messaging (IM), or other online messaging techniques provided by Internet destinations such as *Facebook* or *Twitter*. How reliant are you on these technologies in your daily life? What would happen if these tools were instantly and permanently removed?
- 3) Has your identity or the identity of a close friend, family member, or colleague been stolen? Describe what happened. (Note: Identity theft can range from unauthorized credit card transactions to someone buying a house or more in your name.) Do you know how thieves obtained your personal information? What do you do to protect the kinds of information found in Table 3 (p. 81)?
- 4) On page 84, Lohrmann says, “There is an explosion in personal shenanigans in cyberspace that many are reluctant to label as ‘stealing.’” Do you agree? What steps do you take to comply with laws and ensure that you do not buy, sell, or use pirated music or videos?
- 5) Looking at Table 4 (p. 86), which cyber activity listed do you think is the most serious? Which is the least significant? Why? Do you think one or more of these acts can lead to others? Where do you draw lines and why?
- 6) Lohrmann describes virtual worlds and avatars on pages 88–93. Do you have an avatar in *Second Life* or another virtual world? If yes, describe your character’s attributes. (For example, is your avatar young or old, male or female, tall or short, an animal or a human, similar to you or different?)
- 7) What do you think is the greatest danger with virtual worlds? Why? If you don’t currently have an avatar, do you plan to create one and go exploring soon? Is this appealing to you? Why or why not?

Chapter 5 (continued)

- 8) The author provides Web sites and guidelines for a personal online risk assessment on pages 93–95. What is your biggest weakness or risk area in cyberspace? Are you more vulnerable to identity or integrity theft? Why?
- 9) Discuss the quotes from C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters* found on pages 94–95. Why are we prone to think more about combating “spectacular wickedness” than the cumulative effect of small sins in cyberspace? Why do you think lasting change in this area is so hard?
- 10) How do scripture and your faith guide your thinking and actions in cyberspace? After reading this chapter, what simple steps can you take to help practice faithfulness online over the next week?

Chapter 6 — This Is Looking Like Work: How Cyber Ethics Impact Your Business and Career

Discussion Questions

- 1) Describe your online situation at work. What devices (such as a Blackberry, iPhone, desktop computer or laptop computer) do you use on a regular basis? What Internet surfing activities are allowed? Do most employees follow prescribed policies? Is training provided?
- 2) The author quotes Spurgeon at the beginning of the chapter: “Watch constantly against those things which are thought to be no temptations. The most poisonous serpents are found where the sweetest flowers grow” (p. 97). What online temptations seem greatest to you at work? Why?
- 3) On pages 98–100, Lohrmann describes twenty-first century pressures to multi-task and work longer hours to get work completed. On average, how many hours a week do you work (including emails and/or other business-related work done at home)? Is this enough time or are you always feeling a need to catch up? How has technology changed your work/life balance over the past decade?
- 4) Referring to Diagram 1 (p. 100), which task(s) from each row do you perform at work? Do you think (and act) as if your work PC or laptop is your own or only for the use of official business? Is lost productivity (wasting time) a problem for you? How about for your colleagues or friends?
- 5) On pages 102–103, Lohrmann lists ten “excuses” that are sometimes used by managers for not addressing cyber ethics at work. Is this true at your office? Are you aware of colleagues or friends who were disciplined for inappropriate conduct on the Web?
- 6) After reviewing Table 6 (p. 108), which person(s) or type(s) do you most identify with? Why? Discuss how your behavior may have changed over the past few years, if at all. For example, would you have chosen to identify with the same type five years ago, or at your last job?
- 7) To help decide if you have online integrity problems, Lohrmann lists five self-examination questions on page 109. If you feel comfortable doing so, discuss the answers to these questions with the group.

Chapter 6 (continued)

- 8) The author says, "Great work is not an excuse for inappropriate actions." Why do you think so many people fall into the trap of thinking that they have earned the right to surf freely? What biblical examples can you name that portray the principle "pride comes before a fall"?
- 9) On page 110, Lohrmann describes a new role for "faith at work" programs. Do you agree with the author on this issue? What benefits might this provide? What difficulties do you foresee in making this happen? If no formal program is implemented at your business, what personal steps can be taken by men and women of faith?
- 10) Check out your "Google rep" online. (Don't forget to use nicknames of yourself such as "Dan" instead of "Daniel.") What did you find? What steps can you take to help improve your Google rep?
- 11) After rereading Lohrmann's section entitled "Losing the Enterprise to Marketers" and "Think Tank Answer: Withdrawal" (pp. 112–114), answer the following questions:
 - a. Do you feel marketing pressures when surfing the Web at work now? Why or why not?
 - b. Does Web marketing frequently violate your values?
 - c. What can employees do to prevent integrity theft at work?
 - d. How can your company be more ethical in your online marketing?
- 12) Do you agree with the statement that Lohrmann makes at the end of the chapter: "Employees can no longer wait for management to solve the problem, because it ultimately comes back to personal character, virtue, integrity, and other heart issues"? Is this statement in conflict with the author's earlier statement that online success involves changes in people, processes, and technology? Why or why not?

Chapter 7—Just Do It: Creating and Maintaining Virtual Integrity

Discussion Questions

- 1) Discuss the quote from Ken Wendle at the beginning of Chapter 7 (p. 119). How does change require discipline? Do you tend to be a procrastinator in some areas of life but not in others? Why do you think that is?
- 2) When you initially read through basic framework for surfing your values, which Lohrmann calls “Seven Habits of Online Integrity,” did this approach seem reasonable or overwhelming? Is there any easier way to maintain virtual integrity? If yes, explain your approach.
- 3) Briefly describe your worldview by answering one or two of the questions listed on page 121. (For example: How do you determine right from wrong?)
- 4) List three to five items on your online “do” list and another three to five items on your “don’t do” list (see pp. 123–126). If you are comfortable doing so, discuss why you chose these items and why they are important to you.
- 5) How does your faith in God inform these values? What do you do when your actions fall short of God’s, your own, or others’ expectations? Do you find it more difficult to practice your faith when you are online?
- 6) Lohrmann describes the importance of pledging to maintain a list of values and behaviors for online life. Do you agree that pledges (or other verbal commitments to trusted friends and family) can help or are they are waste of time? How is this process similar to or different from commitments made to exercise, diet, or “go green”?
- 7) If you agree that it is a good idea, write a personal pledge of online integrity using some of the examples or references listed in chapter 7. If you are comfortable doing so, share your pledge with the group. (Note: you may call this statement something different than a “pledge,” as noted in the book.) Describe why you chose the words that you did.

Chapter 7 (continued)

- 8) Lohrmann says, “We are wary of others’ direction in our personal lives” (p.133). Do you agree? Why do you think accountability is so popular (even mandated) at work, in sports, and in certain areas of life, but unpopular in other areas of life? Is this trend changing with blogs, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, or other new Internet destinations?
- 9) Are you willing to be accountable to others regarding your virtual integrity? If yes, name the people. (This may indicate a different set of relationships than the group discussing the book.) What practical steps are required to make this a reality? Is the end result worth it?
- 10) Lohrmann closes the chapter with a quote from Martyn Lloyd-Jones (p. 137). Discuss this quote and the verse listed from Proverbs. Does being accountable to God change the way you view accountability to others and to your virtual integrity overall?

Chapter 8 — Surf Your Values: More Habits to Keep Integrity Going

Discussion Questions

- 1) Describe how you “keep it simple” regarding technology at home. What problems do you typically run into regarding computers, and how do you fix those problems? (For example, do you bring your PC into a repair shop when it runs slow, grab a friend, search for answers on the Internet, or call out the Best Buy Geek Squad?)
- 2) Taking a look at the five technology life-cycle steps on page 140, which step(s) seem the hardest to you? Are there areas that seem impossible to maintain? Who takes on those responsibilities in your home or work situation?
- 3) Turning to Table 9 on page 142, visit a few of these recommended Web sites. What new or interesting information is presented? What questions do they answer that can help in your situation?
- 4) Before reading this book, had you ever heard of accountability software such as Covenant Eyes (see pp. 145–147 for a description)? What are the positive aspects of using this software? Why might some not want to use it?
- 5) Writing on balancing online and offline life, Lohrmann states, “There is no secret formula to get proper balance, but like bushes in front of our house, without deliberate pruning, the Web will take over more territory” (p.153). What steps do you currently take to balance online and offline life? Are the steps working? Why or why not?
- 6) Under the section, “Merging Offline and Virtual Worlds” (p. 155), Lohrmann describes how he often meets people in real life who were first contacted in cyberspace. Have you ever met someone in real life who you originally met online? Was the person similar or different than you expected? How did your online experiences help or hurt your real-world relationship?

Chapter 8 (continued)

- 7) On page 156, the author writes, “Quick, simplistic answers can’t possibly compete with the well-thought-out methods that are constantly deployed, enhanced, and updated by expert marketers in cyberspace. . . . Didn’t click today? The temptation will be fine-tuned and slightly different tomorrow.” In what ways has pride led to a fall in your online life? What techniques have you seen deployed online that gradually lead down the path of temptation?
- 8) Are you inclined to believe that technology alone can solve our online moral problems? (See pp. 157–158 for more background on this topic.) Why do you think many people fall into this trap? How can humility help?
- 9) Lohrmann offers three practical suggestions to help develop humble authenticity online (pp. 158–162). What are the steps mentioned? What obstacles do you see in implementing change in these areas?
- 10) When do you surf anonymously or assume another identity online? Why? Are you less tempted to go down dangerous paths when you know that you are being tracked under your true identity? How can honest self-assessment of these behavioral patterns help?
- 11) Lohrmann’s seventh habit encourages us to become “cyber ambassadors for good” (pp. 162–167). Briefly summarize the four points the author mentions and offer your personal perspective on one or more of his ideas.
- 12) What are some practical ways that you are (or can become) a cyber ambassador for good in your community? What are the challenges you face? Can one or more members of your group work together on a Web project? Discuss possible strategies.

Chapters 9–10 — What If?
2012, a Cyberspace Odyssey *and* Brave New Web: A Flood of Questions

Discussion Questions

- 1) Discuss the imaginary thank you letter that Lohrmann writes to a hotel at the start of chapter 9. What is your impression of this future experience? Is this scenario appealing? Why or why not?
- 2) Do you believe the author's reasons for "surfing your values," as described in chapter 9, are compelling? Why or why not? Do you believe that companies like Microsoft, Google, or others will implement this vision? Why or why not?
- 3) On pages 177–180, Lohrmann offers a fictitious blog entry for 2012. Does this picture help you solidify the other concepts in the book regarding surfing your values? How does this vision bring together people, processes, and technology?
- 4) Should Christians and others who want to surf their values work for the Internet to head in this direction? Why or why not? Should Christians even be engaged in discussing technology topics? What are the biggest obstacles you see towards a values-driven Internet?
- 5) In chapter 10, Lohrmann discusses several challenges that critics may pose. What is your biggest fear regarding this approach—does it concern security, privacy, freedom of speech, or another matter?
- 6) How do you surf your values or bring together your faith and surfing habits today? What sites do you visit most often? Are any of these sites alternatives to popular secular Web sites (for example: visiting Godtube.com instead of YouTube.com)? If yes, do you still go to the other secular sites, or block them altogether?
- 7) Are you optimistic about the future of the Internet and media over the next decade? Explain your answer.
- 8) In chapter 10, does Lohrmann answer your questions regarding the vision sketched in chapter 9? What other questions or issues do you have regarding virtual life?

Chapters 9–10 (continued)

- 1) What topics are not addressed in the book that you hoped would be covered regarding online life? What possible resources can the group offer that may help?
- 2) Summarize the top two to three takeaways that you gained from reading *Virtual Integrity* and/or the group discussion. Looking at the personal action items in the appendix (p. 202), what items make sense for you to implement in order to assist constructive change?
- 3) Referring to the appendix, discuss other groups that you participate in that could benefit by implementing the recommended action items.