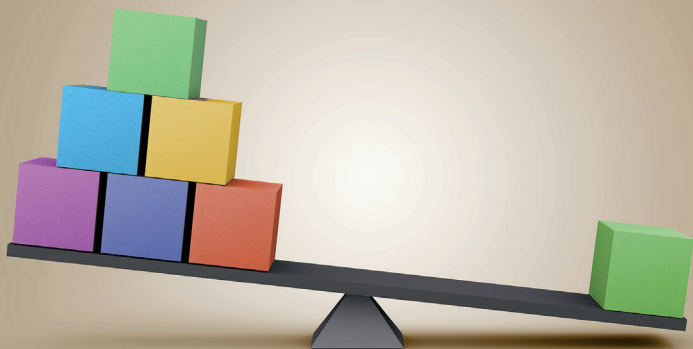
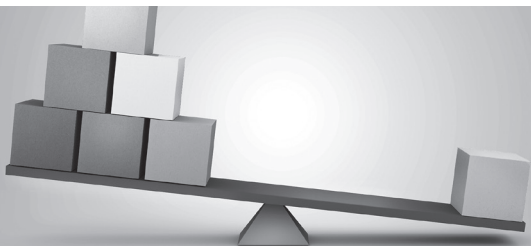


# COMPARISON

The Thief of Joy



**Jennifer Grant**



*introduction*

# Comparison

## The Thief of Joy

**W**hat robs us of joy? Author Jennifer Grant says that our inclination to comparison is a prime culprit. No matter what we value in life, we humans can't help but compare ourselves to each other.

We're all susceptible to this trap. And when combined with the allure of social media, this universal problem becomes a 24/7 pitfall. While offering us a chance to connect and share

meaningful moments across the globe, our postings can also serve as vehicles to showcase only our most polished efforts.

We publish the illusion that our families, our career paths, our workout programs, and even our food choices are flawlessly following a script of our own writing. Instead of bringing us together, social media can be a trophy case for our accomplishments. The imperfections that ought to reveal our shared humanity remain buried in a calculated obscurity.

It doesn't have to be this way. Grant calls for a realistic approach that includes honest self-examination and a realignment of our priorities, deliberately using social media for the good of friends, neighbors, and ourselves. For it is only as we acknowledge the One who created us and put his desire in our hearts that we can learn to pursue the things that last.

### *Our Daily Bread Ministries*

# *contents*

## *one*

### **Living in a Culture of Comparison ..... 5**

## *two*

### **Escaping the Comparison Trap ..... 17**

## *three*

### **Strategies for Embracing Joy ..... 27**

---

**EDITORS:** Tim Gustafson, J.R. Hudberg, Peggy Willison

**COVER IMAGE:** Mediamodifier via Pixabay.com

**DESIGN:** Steve Gier

**INTERIOR IMAGES:** (p.1) Mediamodifier via Pixabay.com; (p.5) Aline Dassel via Pixabay.com; (p.17) Thanapat Pirmphol via Pixabay.com; (p.27) Susanne Jutzeler via Pixabay.com.

The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®). ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. The ESV® text has been reproduced in cooperation with and by permission of Good News Publishers. Unauthorized reproduction of this publication is prohibited. All rights reserved.

© 2020 Our Daily Bread Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI

All rights reserved.

Printed in USA



*one*

## Living in a Culture of Comparison

**P**ostmarked February 17, 1927, the envelope has browned with age. Its damp, musty smell tingles my nose. I carefully remove the letter inside, unfolding two sheets of delicate stationery bearing news from Harry Kerr of Coggon, Iowa. In neat cursive, Harry writes to his cousins in rural Illinois about the state of his tractor, trouble at the local bank, and the jackrabbits who feast “like hogs” on his corn.

He then writes:

Was glad to hear you had a radio. You are right in touch with everything now, and you will hear all manner of things.

Sentences like that, rich with historical undertones, are why I collect old letters. I love to imagine what life was like for people like Harry Kerr and piece together parts of their stories from clues in their correspondence. *Letters like this one also give me perspective on the blessings—and potential hazards—of the moment in time in which we live.*

That owning a radio in 1927 made a person “right in touch with everything” makes sense. After all, it would be thirty years until half the country would own television sets. Radios were the sole form of in-home media entertainment, and they were one of the few means by which Harry and his cousins could get glimpses of a world far from their cornfields, chickens, and neighbors down the road.

Thanks to radio, they could hear news about Charles Lindbergh’s flight across the Atlantic, or listen to Scrappy Lambert sing “Me and My Shadow,” or learn about the influenza epidemic far away in the United Kingdom. Radio afforded them a rare chance to get a peek into other people’s lives, and—as Harry so charmingly put it—to get “right in touch with everything.”

Imagine if Harry could have spied our world with its glowing screens and chiming phones. Oh, the “all manner of things” he’d experience!

## Practicing Dissatisfaction

Unlike the old-time radios housed in large wooden cabinets around which whole families gathered, the tantalizing devices that provide our news and entertainment fit into the palm of our hand and are almost always within reach.

These little screens nimbly broadcast colorful, high-definition images, allowing us to scroll through thousands of images and to read countless messages throughout the day and night.

Short of making a personal visit, a farming family in the 1920s likely had no way of knowing what the lives of others looked like. Porcelain dishes, matching rocking chairs, the Double Wedding Ring quilt folded neatly at the end of their bed, perhaps—all of that remained shrouded in mystery.

In contrast, with the click



**With the click  
of a button ...  
we can see  
nearly every  
detail of the  
lives of others,  
from our next-  
door neighbors  
to our favorite  
celebrities.**

of a button or the tap of a finger we can see nearly every detail of the lives of others, from our next-door neighbors to our favorite celebrities. This ability has brought people together around the globe and opened new opportunities for business and education, but, as with everything, the dark side is just beyond where we focus.

---

A few years ago on Christmas afternoon, I noticed my teenage daughter intently swiping through photos on her phone. Curious, I sat down beside her. She turned the screen toward me and told me that a girl at her school had posted pictures of the presents she'd received that morning. Neatly displayed on the girl's bed were an iPad, new laptop, a pair of expensive headphones, a mountain of new clothes and shoes, and more. The comments and "likes" from peers came fast and furious. "Jealous!" "OMG!" "Lucky!" There was giddiness in these comments and in the speed with which they were posted; they were likely fueled by a potent mix of curiosity and envy.

The tenth commandment forbids envy or wishing to possess anything that belongs to our neighbors (EXODUS 20:17), but isn't that what we find ourselves doing when we scroll through social media, noting how happy this family seems or how stylish that



renovated kitchen looks or how successful that friend is? One recent study, published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, looked at the effects of time spent on social media versus “face-to-face time” with another person. When we are present with others, self-esteem and life satisfaction are raised. However, observing other people online can have just the opposite effect, the study suggested.

And that negative blow to our sense of well-being has to do with envy.

It’s unlikely that we ever visit a social media platform with the *intention* of experiencing envy, or even comparing our lives with others. But given the ever-increasing amount of time we spend on social media, it seems inevitable we will feel it.

What God wants for us is *joy*. In John 15:11, Christ says he tells us “these things”<sup>21</sup> in order that we will have *joy*—and have that joy in great abundance. Left unchecked, comparing our lives, possessions, and accomplishments with what we look at online can rob our joy. It’s probably safe to assume that on that Christmas day a few years back, my daughter and her friends experienced less joy after seeing their friend’s massive holiday haul.

21 **“These things”** that Jesus told his disciples are, among other things, to obey his commandments and to be aware of God’s great love for us (JOHN 15:1–17).

## Truly, to echo the old maxim, comparison steals our joy.

This thief not only has access to our homes, but we give it the keys and leave all the doors and windows open. By broadcasting pictures of the latte we sipped at breakfast or the outfits we're trying on in dressing rooms or those picture-perfect scenes from our family vacations, we open the door, however unintentionally, for others to compare their lives with the *highpoints* from our own. In return, we hungrily view everyone else's posts, tempting our own discontent.

With technology we're normalizing the very envy that God warns us against, and we're barely aware we're even doing it. Our newsfeeds grab our attention and devour our time. A recent study cites nine hours as the average time teenagers spend on social media every day. For adults, it's upwards of two. That's more time combined than we grownups spend on personal care, at meals, or engaging with friends.

Dr. Susan Biali Haas, a medical doctor and wellness expert writes about the way she chooses to use social media. In an article in *Psychology Today*, she says that she cringes "at some of the things I have unthinkingly posted in the past."

"These days," she writes, "I think before I post: Could this provoke envy? Might this make someone feel bad about or dissatisfied with their circumstances?"

She refrains from posting vacation photos, pictures of meals at fancy restaurants, or “major professional milestones or accomplishments.”

“In some ways I’m probably a holier-than-thou social media Scrooge now, and I still might inadvertently cause negative emotions with some things that I post,” she admits. “I want to continue to participate, to stay connected to people through this medium, but don’t want to contribute to the demise in well-being and life satisfaction that occurs as a result of these platforms.”

## Connecting with Gratitude

A growing body of research, however, suggests that the cause-and-effect relationship between social media use and “a demise”—to quote Dr. Biali Haas—in well-being and life satisfaction is much more complicated than it looks. Many studies point to the *benefits* of connecting with others online.

Writer and mental health advocate Jenny Capper has highlighted the value of social media, especially for people living with mental illness.

“There are many people suffering from mental illness who don’t receive support from the people closest to them,” Capper writes. “Mental illness can warp reality and make you feel like you’re the only one experiencing the symptoms. It can be very lonely and discouraging . . . Utilizing social media for mental health purposes gives you the chance to

search for forums, articles, and videos about mental health. There is a wealth of information that can bring comfort and guidance.”

And even for those not suffering from a health issue, mental or physical, social media affords us an easy way to connect with those we love.

Harry Kerr’s 1920s letters ended with the hopeful words, “Let me hear from you soon.” Wouldn’t he have *loved* to be able to enjoy the kind of close and instant contact with his cousins that social media affords us now? (I believe he would.)

Like you, I’ve made and reconnected with dear friends, thanks to Facebook. I am a member of a few groups who pray for and encourage each other from the security of a private message thread. Many times I’ve felt sustained—in my work, in my faith, in my personal life—by their support and prayer. Thanks to Facebook, I get to watch my young niece and nephews who live across the country grow up. One of my siblings lives in the Netherlands and, thanks in large part to social media, we can remain in close contact. The benefits of using the platform go on and on.

**But obviously, there can be costs—spiritually and otherwise—to this gift of easy connection.**

I learned something about those costs a few months ago. This past summer, due to a glitch in their

software, I was locked out of Facebook. For about three weeks, every time I tried to log in, I got caught in an impenetrable security loop.

At first, I felt anxious about whatever news and messages I might be missing. (The current term for that feeling is “FOMO,” or *Fear of Missing Out*.) But then something else began to emerge out of the new blank spaces in my life. I began changing—for the better.

Now that my head wasn’t bowed down over my phone quite so often, my gaze landed on the everyday beauty around me. The sun bursting through the clouds in the afternoon. A black-capped chickadee at my backyard feeder.

Passing a field of sunflowers as my husband and I drove down a country road, I felt a sense of joy that almost took my breath away. “Thank you,” I prayed. Were it not for the Facebook glitch, I may have been scrolling through my “feed” on that drive and missed that glorious sight.

I noticed other things, too. The tall “to be read” pile next to my bed began to shrink, book by book. Also, because I couldn’t rely on the habit of going online when I was bored or needed a little emotional lift, I made friends with the silence. To evoke Harry Kerr’s phraseology, I didn’t miss being in touch with “everything” or the “all manner of things” I was accustomed to following.

Perhaps most notably, I felt fresh gratitude for my own lovely and good-enough life.

The break from unintentionally comparing myself to others or filling spare moments with images that so easily led to dissatisfaction and envy and news cleared my head. I had a renewed sense of how God has gifted me with my husband and children, my friends, and my home.

This gratitude and peace continued even after I was granted access to my account again. Once I was able to log in again, I found myself less eager to be online. And spending less time online, experts promise, is the key to having a healthy relationship with social media. Researchers and health professionals encourage us to spend a “moderate” amount of time online, although few provide specific guidelines. A new University of Pennsylvania study, however, suggests that limiting social media use to thirty minutes a day improves a sense of well-being.

That’s the goal I’d like to keep. Months after I was able to access Facebook again, I still feel the positive effects of spending less time online. I’ve learned that I don’t *need* that diversion from the present moment or from the actual “everything” of my life.

## CHAPTER 1: QUESTIONS

Proverbs 14:30 says, “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot” (ESV).

Think about the time you spend on social media:

*Does time on social media platforms leave you feeling envy or other negative emotions? Can you pinpoint when this is the case?*

---

*Do you feel more tranquil and connected after spending time online? What sites help you connect with others or with God?*

---

*Do you ever consider trimming back the time you spend on Facebook or other social media platforms?*

---

Take the following quick, six-question quiz to reflect on your social media habits.

1. About how many minutes do you spend on social media, every day?
2. Why do you log on to social media?
  - a. To connect with friends
  - b. For news
  - c. To escape boredom
  - d. To see what others have posted
  - e. No reason

**3.** Does the time you spend on social media affect the amount of sleep you get? Do you ever stay up later than you would like because you are online?

Yes

No

**4.** Do you ever cut short or trade time in prayer or contemplation for time on social media?

Yes

No

**5.** Forty-three percent of Americans are described as “constant checkers” who refresh email and check social media sites and apps a few—or even several—times an hour. Are you part of this group?

Yes

No

If so, why do you think this is?

**6.** Are you happy with your relationship with social media?

Yes

No

*This quiz can't be scored objectively. Instead, spend a few quiet moments looking at your answers and considering whether your social media use is keeping you from engaging with others, sleeping well, experiencing gratitude, or more deeply connecting with God.*

*Pray for guidance regarding the amount of time and attention you give to social media.*

*If you sense that your social media habits are hurting you or keeping you from better pursuits, make a note of that mentally, or on paper here, and continue on to Chapter 2.*





two

## Escaping the Comparison Trap

**S**everal years ago, I visited an old friend in New York City for a long weekend. One of the first places she wanted to take me was a diner (aptly named “The Diner”) near her apartment. The Diner was special to her—she and her family had eaten there countless times.

Sitting across the booth from her that afternoon, drinking coffee, dipping our fries in salt and ketchup, and diving deep into conversation, I noticed the man at the table next to us. Or maybe, more accurately, I should say I noticed the *technology* that he’d brought

with him. Other customers in the restaurant tapped away at laptops, but this man also had a few external drives on his table, their bulky cords leaving the waitress few places to set anything down.

My friend and I had a lot to talk about, so initially I didn't pay much attention to our hard-working neighbor. But as the hours passed, I couldn't help noticing him click on and then enlarge images on his screen. The subjects of these pictures were obviously models. Beautiful and lithe and standing on a beach, they wore bathing suits in some shots and street clothes in others, ever flashing that icy model glare, as though they were somehow bored with, or inconvenienced by, the photo shoot.

As the man clicked through the images, I saw him tap on this one's face, drag the mouse to this one's torso or bust, or do an extreme close-up on another's hair. Click, click, click—I saw the way he artfully nipped and tucked and airbrushed and filled in each image. I watched eyes turn a brighter, almost violet, shade of blue. I saw freckles and shadows disappear. Brows were darkened, lips plumped. These already lean models became taller and thinner, right before my eyes.

At one point, he left his table and headed for the restroom.

“Are you seeing this?” I asked my friend when he was safely out of earshot. “Come look!”

On the screen was a grid of the pictures he had been modifying.

“Whoa,” she said. “I recognize some of them.”

I told her what he’d been doing. Slimming the waist of that one, smoothing out this one’s skin, erasing pores. We gawked at the images for a second before she quickly slipped back to her side of the booth.

Several months later, walking through an airport, I passed a newsstand and saw one of the images he had doctored on the front of a magazine. The woman was a study in perfection: her facial features exactly symmetrical, her complexion flawless, her clothes like they’d been made just for her. (And that telltale irritated gaze!)

*Walking to my gate, remembering the before images, I was reminded of how deceiving it is to compare myself or my life with what I see in the media, online, or anywhere else.*

## **The Lies Social Media Tells**

It’s not just retouched photos on magazine covers that cause us to feel dissatisfied with who we are. Social media can mislead our followers about what our lives are really like as we carefully curate which images and news we share. Most of us aren’t even intentionally scheming; we’re just following accepted rules of etiquette.

That is, our social media posts are sometimes

called “the highlight reel” of our experiences. Privately we know all too well what is *less than ideal* about our lives, yet we continue to post pictures of that perfect birthday cake, the 25-pound rainbow trout we caught, or that grinning graduate . . . but many of us remain quiet about the first cake that burned to a crisp, the miserable early morning hours waiting for the fish to bite, and how excruciatingly difficult it was to wake that child up for school every day for thirteen years.

I recently ran into a friend from church and told her that, as I’d seen the photos she posted on Facebook, her family vacation looked like fun.

“Ha!” She laughed, rolling her eyes. She then confessed that her children had bickered incessantly, it rained every day, and that they’d had to do major repair on their cottage. “I’d call it more like a ‘vacation.’” She made air quotes over that last word, pronouncing it with thick sarcasm.

*“Vacation.”*

I’m sure she wasn’t trying to deceive her friends by what she posted—she just uploaded some happy shots from the trip, maybe to help her see the bright side of that time together or to help her, later, to remember her children at this particular moment in time. But the hard parts of the vacation were hidden from view.

In one study on the authenticity of what we post

on social networking sites, researchers found that less than 20% of users—both women and men—said that their Facebook pages displayed a “completely accurate reflection” of who they are. In the same study, respondents admitted that they only shared “non-boring” parts of their lives and were not as “active” as their social media posts indicated.

Of course, it’s understandable that, just as we wouldn’t bother sharing the news with a friend that the mail arrived late today and only contained a stack of junk mail, there’s good reason why we don’t post the most tedious details of life: they’re dull and usually not worth mentioning. I wouldn’t waste precious time with a friend talking about mundane things; I want to get to the heart of things—my struggles, hopes, and what made me feel hope or joy this week. And, indeed, sometimes the moments that lift my spirit are tiny and photographable: a good cup of coffee, a meaningful gift, or a certificate earned by one of my children.

It’s useful to remember that everyone’s life contains the same frustrating or mind-numbingly boring details that we live through every day, even if we don’t see them posted online.

Dr. Cortney Warren, who authored an article on the ways people present their lives on social media, cites research that suggests that comparing ourselves to what others post online can result in lower self-esteem

and decreased life satisfaction, if we aren't careful not to get lost in comparison.

Warren recommends:

...when engaging with social media, it is critical to remind yourself that what you see is not an accurate picture of reality. Don't compare yourself to the images of friends, colleagues, or celebrities. Remind yourself that it is just a snapshot of their life—and one they want you to see.

A recent news story is a grim illustration of this. Reporting the tragic murders of a woman and her two daughters by the husband and father in the family, the report begins with the words, "On social media, [they] were a smiling, picture-perfect couple." The article goes on to describe their active social networking presence and the family's myriad photos of happy, oceanfront vacations, and it quotes posts in which they gushed about their love for each other.

Since the murders, however, other news came to light. The couple had dire financial problems and, reportedly, he was unfaithful. A neighbor said she'd once seen them bitterly arguing, but when the couple realized they were being observed, they quickly turned on sunny expressions and waved.

Most friends and neighbors of the family seemed stunned by the murders. Their comments were

variations on one theme: “But they *seemed* so happy!” But, again, what they had posted online was simply a carefully curated version of their lives for public consumption.

Of course, not all of us exclusively post Pinterest-perfect moments of life or hide such brutal realities. For some, “getting real here” and posting a picture of the rejection letter or mound of dirty laundry, or even writing a detailed description of that embarrassing moment can alleviate stress.

A few months ago, halfway through an important presentation, the combination of a hot meeting room, *way* too much caffeine, strong cold medicine, a skipped breakfast, and a hectic morning left me standing behind a podium, sweating profusely. My heart racing, I spoke so rapidly it sounded as if I were on fast-forward. I often speak in front of groups, and this hadn’t happened to me before. Sweat dripped off me as though I’d walked through a sprinkler. I panted almost as though I’d just finished a race. In short, it was mortifying.

On arriving home that day, I described what happened in a Tweet accompanied by a GIF of a woman putting a paper bag over her head in abject shame. This little social media move helped me to take the experience less seriously and to find the comedy in it; people shared their *own* funny stories of meltdowns while speaking in public, reminding

me that I wasn't alone.

By comparing my most embarrassing moment—to date—with those of the kind folks on Twitter who offered condolences, silly stories of their own, and affirmation helped me recover from that unfortunate event.

“Social Comparison Theory,” developed by American social psychologist Leon Festinger, explains that the way we define ourselves is by comparing ourselves—our intelligence, self-worth, and appearance, among other things—to others. A description of Social Comparison Theory explains:

People are driven to acquire a precise assessment of themselves by discerning their abilities and opinions in comparison with individuals around them.

And social media gives us plenty of benchmarks for comparison. Sadly, too often comparing our lives to others makes us feel that we aren't “enough” or don't *have* enough. We can always identify someone with a better job, a bigger house, or whose talents are more celebrated.



Comparing our lives to others makes us feel that we aren't “enough” or don't *have* enough.



And, as Christians, we can even fall into the trap of being jealous about other people's spiritual lives. We might think people have deeper understandings of their faith than we do, closer relationships with God, or even are gifted with "better" (more useful, more important, more appealing) spiritual gifts.

Paul cleverly—if a bit eccentrically—addresses this kind of spiritual comparison, writing:

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body" that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. . . . Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

(1 CORINTHIANS 12:14–18, 27 ESV)

And that body of Christ requires no retouching or Photoshop work; it is perfectly created to know and love God, corporately and each in our own individual lives.

No comparisons needed.

## CHAPTER 2: QUESTIONS

Hebrews 13:5 reads, “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (ESV)

*In what ways does the time you spend on social networking sites affect your love of money or material things?*

---

---

---

*Have you ever made a wrong assumption about someone else after viewing his or her posts?*

---

---

Take a moment and scroll through pictures or updates you've recently posted. *What do they tell you about what you value most?*

---

---

---



*three*

## Strategies for Embracing Joy

**S**o, what can we do if we recognize that we might be spending too much time on social media or too often measuring the value of our material possessions, life experiences, or even our self-worth against other people's "highlight reels"? How, in practical ways, can we loosen our dependence on this way of "killing time" and more fully accept and embrace the acceptance, joy, and peace that God offers?

**1 LISTEN TO "MOM."** "Don't compare your insides with other people's outsides." Perhaps *your* mother never uttered the words, but many have recited them

when their children express jealousy about somebody else's (seemingly) perfect life. The adage succinctly reminds us that more is going on inside of us and in the lives of others than we know or can "see."

When you find yourself online—envying someone else's possessions, personality, or accomplishments—stop! You're comparing your insides with other people's outsides!

Also, be mindful of this advice from psychologist Dr. Warren. When we are scrolling through our newsfeeds, she says, it's "critical to remind yourself that what you see is not an accurate picture of reality. Don't compare yourself to the images of friends, colleagues, or celebrities. Remind yourself that it is just a snapshot of their life—and one they want you to see."

This is sound biblical advice too: practice trust in God, remembering that God provides for us and withholds *no* good thing from those who love him (PSALM 84:11). ***So if you don't have something—whether it's a relationship, an accomplishment, or a possession—you can work to trust in God's love and providence, knowing that whatever this desire is, it might not align with God's timing or plan for you.***

**2 TAKE A BREAK—DIGITAL DETOX.** In Romans, Paul writes, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God,

what is good and acceptable and perfect” (ROMANS 12:2 ESV). This seems pertinent advice for all of us as we consider what we look at and how we behave on social media. Leaving room for silence and listening for God’s leading is more likely to renew our minds than fretting over our—or other people’s—social media presence.

Bestselling author and entrepreneur Scott Belsky is just one of the myriad professionals who advocate taking regular “digital detoxes” or sabbaticals. By taking an afternoon or whole weekend off of social media, Belsky and others argue, we think deeper thoughts, break our addiction to being distracted, and experience more life satisfaction. Remember, many researchers recommend spending no more than a half hour a day on social media.

*Digital detoxes truly give us the chance to stop conforming ourselves to the world, and instead to renew our minds.*

**3 HOLD MATERIAL THINGS LOOSELY.** Walk through a coffee shop or train station or, well, any public place and you’ll get a bird’s-eye view of the top of other people’s heads. Our eyes cast down, we swipe, click, and tap on stories and posts and Tweets . . . many of which are designed to sell us something. Increasingly, we don’t even know that we’re in the middle of a sales pitch.

Now on Instagram it's illegal *not* to disclose that a post is actually “sponsored content.” A celebrity may post a picture of himself enjoying a certain energy drink or dressing his baby in a branded onesie, but he's now required, somewhere, to use a hashtag such as #sponsored or #ad. That little tag might be hard to catch, given the ten hashtags that precede or follow it. But it's there.

Advertisements are created to arouse our cravings. Be aware that when we're just distractedly scrolling online, someone is usually trying to sell us something. It's another reason to be intentional with how we spend our time online and what we choose to look at, remembering that *where our treasure is, there too is our heart* (MATTHEW 6:21).

## ***God Is Our Loving Parent***

We are beloved children of God, and—like a loving parent—God wants good things for us. The “FOMO,” depression, disappointment, and anxiety that disordered social media use can bring don't bring us the joy and peace God promises. But we can make a choice to listen for God's calm and loving voice, guiding us toward the true worth of our own gifts, beauty, and purpose.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any

excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (PHILIPPIANS 4:8 ESV).

## CHAPTER 3: QUESTIONS

Psalm 139:14 tells us we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” *What are three wonderful things about you? (Your sense of humor? Your efficiency? Your special talents? Your generous heart?)* Write them down and thank God for making you uniquely you.

---

---

---

---

*What is one way that God brings you joy?* Thank him for it now.

---

---

---

If you find yourself online simply out of habit or because you're distracted or filling up the time, try doing something else that truly brings you joy. Below, make a list of things you enjoy that you could do more of if you spent a bit less time online. (Could you go for a walk? Read a psalm? Call or write a note to a friend?)

---

---

---

---

---

---

When you go on social networking sites, be intentional about what you're looking for. *Are you hoping to catch up with friends and family? Get ideas about a new project? Learn about a topic or read the news? Connect with people struggling with the same issues you face? Make or maintain professional relationships?*

In the space below, jot down a few of the positive ways social media affects you.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





*Our mission is to make the life-changing wisdom of the Bible understandable and accessible to all.*

Discovery Series presents the truth of Jesus Christ to the world in balanced, engaging, and accessible resources that show the relevance of Scripture for all areas of life. All Discovery Series booklets are available at no cost and can be used in personal study, small groups, or ministry outreach.

To partner with us in sharing God's Word, click this link to donate. Thank you for your support of Discovery Series resources and Our Daily Bread Ministries.

Many people, making even the smallest of donations, enable Our Daily Bread Ministries to reach others with the life-changing wisdom of the Bible. We are not funded or endowed by any group or denomination.

**CLICK TO DONATE**