

# THE ONLY "LIKE" THAT MATTERS IS GOD'S

Using The Bible to Transform  
Your Life on Social Media

TERYN GREGSON

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## Author's Note

The Holy Spirit prompted me to write this book back in 2020, when my life was a picture-perfect Instagram profile online. My career was soaring, my husband and I had just welcomed our first child into the world, and everything seemed absolutely perfect, especially to those scrolling through my social media feed.

However, it all came crashing down in November 2021, when I lost my sports media career, resulting in public backlash. I also lost my book agent and all prospects of this writing finding the shelves.

God always has a plan, especially if you remain faithful to Him through your highs and lows. The trials I've endured since, including being canceled online, have added to this book in ways that I pray will help you through any sacrifice or online struggle you may be having.

God's timing is perfect. So, I know this is finding your hands exactly at the time He ordained.

## Prayer

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And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

—2 Corinthians 3:3

Each time I sat down to write, I prayed that God would give me the words He wanted me to share with others and a miraculous thing happened. He would point me to topics and verses that shaped this book. It is, therefore, written and guided by the Spirit of the Living God; I owe all the glory to Him.

I pray that His message will be written, not just in this book but on your heart, and that you will share His message with others. So that we can escape the shackles of social media and turn to Christ to set us free.

Amen.

## Devotional Note

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Whether you are going through this book on your own, or as a small group, class, or book club, I pray that you will take the time to dig deeper, open your Bible and answer the devotional questions provided at the end of each chapter.

Get out your pen, mark it up, and don't be afraid to highlight or make notes in your book and devotionals. A few years later, you'll love seeing what really hit home for you when you originally went through this text.

A good book is well loved. And studied scripture is well marked.

God bless!

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# Introduction



Do you feel that tug? That urge to pick up your phone and browse? Like you have a few minutes to spare and can't help but pass that time on your device? Maybe you'd rather spend that time present, in the moment, taking in the world around you. But . . . You. Just. Can't. Help. It.

Social media feels like it has taken over. From dating to our careers, it is so ingrained in how we operate. It feels impossible to avoid using, even if we wanted to give it up altogether. We have to be meticulously intentional or exert extra effort to use more traditional means of communication or information consumption instead of social media in most areas of our lives:

- People utilize apps to meet their prospective partners. I can't say that I have ever used a dating site, but I've definitely scrubbed ex-boyfriends from my social media profiles.
- Anybody else refresh their page multiple times to see how many likes their recent post received? Or is that just me?
- Is your device the main or only place you get the news and information you need?

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- Have you gone from reading books you can hold in your hand to just consuming the scroll?
- Does looking through the comments section make your blood boil?
- Or maybe you are like me, and your entire career is now online!

Have you begun to wonder how we got here? How did we get ourselves to the point where social media, news, or whatever else we consume on our phones seems to draw us in without even thinking about it? Like it’s beyond our control? We’re all facing a similar struggle, to strike a healthy balance between being the consumer and being consumed. We suspect that what the world out there is consuming isn’t filling us up, that there’s a missing piece.

Do you feel something else quietly calling you?

Countless times in history, God has allowed His people to stray from Him, only for them to realize they need Him more than ever. God uses everything for His purposes and, I believe, He’s actually using social media to bring us closer to Him. Social media has left us empty, but He’s using it for good—to bring us closer to the Truth and to help others see it, too.

If you feel that struggle inside, that means you’re closer to the Holy Spirit than you think. You are likely feeling all these things because you sense there’s a difference between the way the world uses social media and the way you would like to. You feel that tug because God is calling you down a different path. His Son tells us repeatedly throughout the Gospels that Christians are called to be different from the world. He’s tugging at our hearts right now, telling us to use and consume online content in a different way than the rest of the world does. And for social media to be the catalyst that allows



us to realize we are longing to get back to a closer relationship with Him.

The age of social media may be young, but the obstacles it presents to us are nothing new under the sun. TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and other social media platforms may have been invented nearly two thousand years after Christ was born, but the Bible is still our handbook for how to participate in, consume, and combat this uncharted era of social media. Influencers are not new. Comparison and boasting are not new. The promotion of false ideas and idols is not new.

Mankind has faced all of these issues in various forms, since Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, nothing is new to God, and nothing is a surprise to Him. His Word is complete and sufficient. Social media might not be mentioned specifically in His text, but that doesn't stop the Living Word from telling us exactly how to use it. We, as people, made in His image, have been following social influencers for centuries! And, without a doubt, the most important "follow" of our lives is Christ. Move over, Kim Kardashian; Jesus Christ has way more followers throughout history than you and your entire family combined!

Even better news, Jesus doesn't care who or how many follow you, he only cares that you follow him!

So I pray this book takes the pressure off of you to collect a certain number of followers; that it allows you to let go of the anxiety that comes from comparing yourself to what you see in other people's Instagram feeds; that it takes away your desire to get countless "likes" on your post; that it gives you the tools to limit your time scrolling on your device and that it instead moves you to glorify Him. With Christ, you have the power to escape the tempting

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influence of society. Instead, you can turn your attention to influencing others for eternity. You can glorify God through how you present yourself, consume, and operate on social media, regardless of your social media status.

Because the only “like” that matters, is God’s.

“For the eyes of the Lord roam throughout the earth, so that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”

—2 Chronicles 16:9 NASB

# CHAPTER 1

## The Simultaneous Birth of Social Media and My Career

Take a moment and think of a time before social media. What was life like? How old were you? What sort of troubles did you have? Was it a more joyful time? Now fast forward in your memory to when you created your first social media account. What platform did you choose? Why? What troubles or worries came after? What highs and lows did you experience because of it? Do you like your life better before or after it? Regardless of how you answer that last question, the reality is social media is here to stay for the foreseeable future. You can't control that, but you can control how you use, consume, or to what extent you take part in it.

I came into social media kicking and screaming in 2007. Facebook, which had been created a few years prior in 2004, began picking up steam at that point, while I was in high school. At the time, because of how new it was, I had no interest in getting involved. But my friends refused to let me go away to college without it, so I gave in and made a profile. They swore it was the only way we'd stay in touch.

"What are phones for?" I said.

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Receiving my own cell phone as I went away to college felt like an accomplishment in and of itself. Prior, I had to borrow my mom's phone anytime I left the house. Phones, at this point, were not engrained in a teen's rite of passage yet. My phone plan didn't even have text messaging. (Again, what are phones for?! If you want to talk to me, call me!) Fast forward to my sophomore year at the University of Missouri Journalism School. A lot had changed. I had given in to peer pressure, yet again, and gotten unlimited text messaging for my cell phone. I had hundreds of photos and Facebook posts to my name. I lived in an apartment off campus, and I started working at the local NBC television station as a producer, photographer, and reporter at the age of nineteen. I thought I was dominating!

So, when my professor and news director came into the newsroom, and declared all reporters were required to get Twitter, I bet you can guess what my reaction was. (Remember, I was dominating life at this point, I thought I knew it all!)

"There's no way," I said. "Why do I need Twitter? All anyone does on Twitter is tell people about what they had for lunch."

"Going to the grocery store today."

"Just saw a movie!"

"I haven't washed my hair in three days."

You're either laughing because you remember the ripe young days of social media, or you were not out of diapers yet and this sounds ridiculous. But this is what people were tweeting about when Twitter first came out. No one knew how to use it back then, and I would argue many still don't today.

I'll never forget what the news director said to the entire group of objecting young reporters.

“You are going to be tweeting about something far more important. You are going to be tweeting about the news.”

It was like the studio lights were pointing on him and he was Ron Burgundy himself.

“You are going to be tweeting about THE NEWS!”

Genius! Why hadn't I thought of that?

I also never thought social media would become my career either. The advent of Twitter and my first news director's forethought to utilize it for news, you could say, was perfect timing. I graduated with a degree in journalism and entered “the real world” armed with my limited knowledge of social media. Turns out, that limited knowledge was far more than most companies had. Deep down, I had this feeling that the media industry was about to drastically change, and I wanted to be a part of it. Finding a job in media after college took several years of networking, but eventually, I landed at the St. Louis Cardinals as their first in-house digital reporter. It was a dream that kick-started my career in mainstream social media. In-house content creation was a revolutionary concept at the time. In 2014, news outlets were still the content kings. Newspapers, radio and television stations, and a few independent websites were the main outlets creating content. The industry changed quickly. Everyone jumped on the bandwagon and in just a matter of a few years, it became the industry norm for organizations to have their own content and social media teams. My career changed just as quickly, too. I went from the St. Louis Cardinals to CBSSports.com to PGA TOUR media in less than two years. The industry was changing so fast, we could all hardly keep up!

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Why am I taking you down my career path? Because social media can be what you do, but doesn’t have to overcome you. You can go so far as to make it your career, while at the same time, remain true to your belief system, true to your morals, true to Him. Or it can simply be what you look at and consume, without changing what you believe. It can be a force for good, despite the bad. It won’t be easy, it won’t be popular, and it won’t make you Instagram famous.

It doesn’t matter how many “likes” you get. Only one “like” matters.

God’s.

And He can set you free from society’s social media shackles.

# Chapter 1 Devotional



1. Take a moment and think of a time before social media.

- What was life like?
- How old were you?
- What sort of troubles did you have?
- Was it a more joyful time?

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2. Now fast forward in your memory to when you created your first social media account.

- What platform did you choose?
- Why?
- What troubles or worries came after?
- What highs and lows did you experience because of it?
- Do you like your life better before or after it?



## The Simultaneous Birth of Social Media and My Career

3. Do you consume social media? Or are you consumed by it?
4. Are your thoughts or beliefs sometimes shaped by what you see on social media? Give an example.
5. Do you wonder what people will think of your post before you publish it?
6. Do you ever wonder what God would think of your post before you publish it?
7. Would putting His approval first change any of the posts you've published?

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8. Would putting His approval first, over what accounts you follow, or what you allow to influence you, make a difference in your social media life”? (Are there any accounts you’d unfollow?)
  
9. Ask God for forgiveness from your social media habits. Freeing yourself by knowing that as you seek His approval, you don’t actually earn it. He’s given His favor as a gift to you through the blood of His Son. Using what pleases Him as your guide, is what will have the greatest positive impact on your social media life.

## Prayer

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Dear Lord,

Your amazing relationship with me is beyond my scope of understanding but I am so blessed you have brought me here. Thank you for working to draw me closer to You by analyzing my social media habits, follows, and consumption. Help me to frame my approach to content through a Biblical worldview. And equip me to impact others through the adjustments I make to the time, people, and channels I consume on my devices. Allow the time spent in this book and its devotionals to open the door to having an eternal impact.

Amen.

## CHAPTER 2

### Faith Filter

You call yourself a Christian, but you follow celebrities on social media that post provocative photos or promote non-Christian lifestyles. Perhaps you read, or maybe even post your own, malicious comments because the content you consume sparks hatred, envy, or jealousy. All of these embody the works of the flesh, the Apostle Paul outlines, as opposites to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Paul warns that those who take part in things like sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, witchcraft, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, divisions, envy, and more will not inherit the kingdom of God [Galatians 5:19-21]. Though jarring when read aloud, the works of the flesh are easy to fall into online, usually subtly escalating over time.

While this experience is true for many, perhaps your social media troubles are seemingly more innocent. Maybe you spend more time on social media than time face-to-face with your family, friends, or neighbors, despite the Bible's call to fellowship both for your sake and for others. Or maybe you are like many around you who have allowed social media to become your source of truth, letting others shape and decide what you think. Many of us, myself included at times, have become more familiar with what's being fed to us online than the content in our bibles.

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Give yourself grace. It’s been a process for all of us.

Social media came, evolved, and has impacted our world so quickly. It’s only natural that it takes us time to figure out how to use it—likely a lot more time than it did for social media to take over the globe. Social media is a secular billboard. Depending on who you follow, you are likely doused in secular ideas left and right as you scroll. The majority of those ideas are not biblically rooted. Some of the most deceptive messaging seems good on the surface but as you peel back the layers, you will find that it’s not. The more we consume of worldly ideology, the less we are taking in God’s biblical truths.

The Psalmist in Psalm 1 speaks of a righteous person, one who is not walking in the ways of the world.

“How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked  
or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers!”

—Psalm 1:1

It may seem harsh, but the wicked are those who are not believers. Yes, we are all sinners, but those who walk in, don’t turn away from, and even delight in their sin—or mock the Bible with their unbelief—are those of the secular world the Psalmist is speaking. The ESV Study Bible puts it well, “The truly happy person guides his life by God’s instruction rather than by the advice of those who reject that instruction.” But how do you know if you are walking in the way of the Lord and not the way of the world? The Psalmist tells us, your “delight is in the Lord’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.” [Psalm 1:2] Do you seek out the Word? Do you hunger for the fruit of God’s knowledge? Then you are walking in the ways of the Lord our God and are not entranced by the world.

Social media can easily pull us into that worldly trance and distract us from picking up our bibles and, instead, sucks us into our newsfeeds.

That's why we as Christians need boundaries. We need to pay attention to who and what we follow, and we need our own filter. Just like you see influencers using custom filters or the makeup filter on Instagram and TikTok to make themselves look flawless, or your friends use the silly face filter for fun, we have our own filter and it's richer, brighter, and more fulfilling than anything Big Tech could ever present us. God tells us to use His filter. Filter everything you do, even what you do on social media, through Him—through a *Faith Filter*.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,  
do all to the glory of God.”  
—1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV

Many of us consume social media just as much, or even more, than we eat or drink, don't we? Are you using social media for His glory? For every piece of content we consume, we should be asking ourselves, “is this biblical?” The Faith Filter is how you see the world, it shapes your worldview. It is the lens through which you take in every piece of content or information that you come across. Do you embrace it as biblically true, dismiss it as biblically inaccurate, or investigate it because you are unsure of how it measures up to scripture? It can also influence your behaviors and attitude and can move you to glorify God in most every area of your life.

Over time, using our Faith Filters online will become second nature. The more you practice applying your biblical worldview to your social media consumption, the more it will become engrained in you. Start by using your Faith Filter on social media and it could translate into every part of your life. Social media could actually turn out to be a blessing if the Faith Filter principle is used for spreading God's glory and adopted more broadly among people.

Even as someone who has been there since the birth of social media and grown as a young adult with it in my life, the road hasn't been

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easy for me, either. Though so much of my career has required me to know the ins and outs of social media, I haven’t always known how to navigate it personally and am still learning and trying to get better with it every day. I’m also getting braver, and I see others are, too. Even though I’ve known God my entire life, it wasn’t until the last few years of my sports media career that I became outspoken about my faith online. I received hateful comments, lost followers, and I even lost my dream job following my faith. But I found myself. Or better yet, I found myself in Christ. And an entire new community of believers who have strengthened my faith.

Jesus tells us that the path to follow him will be difficult and that we will face persecution [John 15:20]. But he also tells us that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. [Matthew 11:30]. Traditionally, a yoke was shared between a pair of oxen to pull a wagon or load. Jesus takes up the second yoke alongside you and makes the loads of life lighter for you.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly  
in heart and you will find rest for your souls.”

Matthew 11:29

When using the Faith Filter, you will be stepping out of the mainstream. Embrace it! Because you will be stepping into Jesus’s open arms, where you will find peace, strength, and wisdom. We must look to him as our model for righteous behavior and his Father’s favor is the only one we should seek. His “like” is all we need. We don’t deserve it; we can’t earn it. He gives us all His “likes” for free.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith.  
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,  
not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

—Ephesians 2:8-9

We have been chosen by a gracious God—one who has guided us through scripture to filter our lives through the lens of our faith. He wants us to consider Him in every aspect of our lives because He enriches our lives. As the bible states, we have a jealous God. Not jealous in the way that one might be jealous of a social media star, i.e., jealous of their fame and free stuff. That is a self-centered view of jealousy, meanwhile God is always considering all of us. The Hebrew word *qana* is used in the Old Testament, which suggests a deep and intense emotion that can be negative or, in this case, positive, like in the boundless love God feels for His people.<sup>1</sup> God is jealous, or—more easily comprehended by our modern minds—impassioned, “for our own good, that we may share His holiness.” [Hebrews 12:10] This is one way God has been urging us to use the Faith Filter since the Old Testament.

“Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them;  
for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, bringing the consequences  
of the father’s iniquity on the children to the third and  
fourth generations of those who hate me.”  
—Exodus 20:5 ESV

God is intensely interested in where our hearts reside because He doesn’t want us to worship other gods. Not for His selfish desires; he doesn’t *need* to be worshiped by anyone. He’s actually protecting us. This “jealousy” is for our benefit. He doesn’t want us to serve other gods or make other idols because it will only lead us to destruction. His Word gives us warnings of entire kingdoms falling because they turn away from God and allow their lives to be ruled by idols constructed by man. Paul sounds the alarm against idolatry in the works of the flesh, urging us to turn away from following such things so we can inherit the kingdom of God. Our Creator, at the throne of the kingdom cares for us. He doesn’t want to see us led astray, just like a caring father doesn’t want to see his child go down the wrong path. If we do venture down the path the world

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would like us to, our destruction could not only have consequences on our own souls, but could have a negative effect for generations to come. Aren’t we already seeing the consequences of social media? It is our responsibility, as the first generation of social media users, to stop ourselves from giving in and worshiping this unworthy idol. If we don’t? The third and fourth generations after us could suffer the consequences. As humans we are easily distracted by idols, big or small, in our lives. It doesn’t take long for people to forget about God and all He’s done for us.

The Bible warns us that the awe-inspiring fear, respect, and adoration of the Lord can be lost in a short period of time. We can heed its warnings and learn from our ancestors. The first generation of God’s chosen people to inhabit the Promised Land can be a lesson for us all. Their comfortable life of ease and distraction took them away from the God who had rescued their grandparents. They were slaves, who leaned on God in the unimaginable times of their servitude, but easily forgot about filtering their needs through their faith in the Lord overtime.

“When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. Then the children of Israel . . . forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them.”

—Judges 2:10–12

Moses led God’s people, as Egyptian slaves, out of Egypt. Those slaves groaned and complained to God on their journey to the Promised Land, even though God was saving them! Due to their lapse in faith, God punished them and Moses to wander the wilderness for forty years and then allowed Joshua and the next generation after them to enter the land He set aside for His people. The



second generation—the children of Moses’s time—saw what wrath awaited them if they did not follow God, as they knew first-hand of their parent’s punishment. Yet, the grandchildren of the slaves forgot about the enslaved suffering their forefathers endured. They were ungrateful of the privilege of being the first to live their entire lives in the Promised Land. In their comfort, they quickly allowed other idols to form in their lives. They moved on to worship other gods. It only took one generation to forget!

We are the first generation of social media users. Will we or our children soon forget, too? Have we already forgotten? Or can social media be our wake-up call to show us our need to lean on God? What came next for God’s people who cast Him aside in the Promised Land was approximately three hundred years of appointed judges like Deborah, Gideon, etc. who were temporary leaders, followed by their cries for an earthly king.

Everything written in the Bible is breathed out by God. Every word, every verse, every chapter is important. But it’s especially important when something is repeated; it means God wants you to pay close attention to what He’s telling you. Repetition is God’s emphasis in the Bible. The story of His people begging for an earthly king and going through cycle after cycle of idol-worshipping men ruling over them is repeated not just once, but twice in the Bible. Just like the Gospels are four different accounts of Jesus’s ministry on earth, 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles are the telling of the same story from different perspectives. Thirty-seven generations of Israel’s kings, starting with Saul and David, and continuing all the way through until the final reign with King Josiah worshipped false gods for four and a half centuries. The kings after David and his son Solomon did as God commanded them not to do and married and intermingled with the pagan populations that worshiped numerous other gods in hopes of bringing them rain, wealth, crops, fertility, you name it.

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From about 970 BC to 560 BC the people commonly worshiped multiple gods by building what they called “high places”—temples or altars set up on a hill, mountaintop, or the highest place in a city. The high places served as a place of worship to light incense and bring an offering to a particular god they were asking something of. Some of these temples were home to prostitutes and promoted other debaucheries in the name of pagan worship.

Of course, these Jewish kings knew that they only had one true God, but for some reason many of them let those high places remain. Some Jewish kings also participated in worship or asked these man-made gods for food, rain, wealth, or other ways to fulfill their materialistic needs. Generation-after-generation, reign-after-reign, God commanded each king to tear down the high places. Most of them would say something along the lines of, “Yeah, God, you got it. Consider it done.” Then time would pass, wars would happen, or they’d marry a pagan woman who worshiped the false idols.

“Yet the high places were not taken away,” something always got in the way. This exact same language is used numerous times in the Old Testament. [1 Kings 15:14, 1 Kings 22:43, 2 Kings 12:3, 2 Kings 14:4, 2 Kings 15:4, 2 Kings 15:35, 2 Chronicles 15:17, 2 Chronicles 20:33] God, the faithful Father, told his children the same thing, repeatedly, but they always made an excuse for the high places to remain. Yet, He remained patient.

Jehoshaphat and Jotham were two of the few kings that truly loved the Lord and asked their people to turn their hearts to God, but they did not tear down the high places. Therefore, the cycle continued after they left power. Hezekiah was the one king who finally tore down the high places. Hezekiah loved the Lord and enacted a religious revival unmatched by all the other kings. His love and trust in the Lord led him to defeat the powerful Assyrians. Later in life, Hezekiah had a different idol. He showed off his wealth adorned

inside the Lord's temple to the Babylonians, Israel's enemy, and they came back and ransacked him later. Many today can relate to Hezekiah, idolizing their own wealth or dreaming of obtaining the wealth seen on others' social media feeds. If we don't conquer our idols, they can affect those that come after us. For example, Hezekiah's son and heir Manasseh was the most evil king to rule in Judah. Talk about forgetting God in just one generation!

Two generations later, King Josiah reigned. He was the last good king and the final king before Israel's Babylonian captivity. While Josiah was rebuilding Hezekiah's temple that the previous two kings abandoned, he discovered a mysterious book. The book—not mysterious to us today—was the first parts of the Bible! And it had been lost and forgotten in just a few lifetimes. Josiah, in awe of the truth within this rediscovered book, took swift action to return his kingdom to faith and remove pagan worship. But after he died, the final two kings of Judah forgot about the Lord and eventually the Babylonians finally brought about the destruction of Judah. Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar is infamous in history for building his lavish kingdoms and conquering anyone who stood in his way. Babylon worshipped its pagan gods until the Persians conquered them.

Have we let social media conquer us? Have we made it our high place? Is it something we put on a pedestal? It is important we know and understand our Christian history so we can glean wisdom from the mistakes that have been made by those that have come before us, those that have neglected to fully filter their lives through their faith.

You likely don't worship social media intentionally or view it as something sacred. But the definition of "idolize" is "to love and admire to excess." Do you use social media to excess? Do you allow it to consume your day? Do you open up Facebook or Instagram whenever you get an alert on your phone and then realize later that

## The Only “Like” That Matters Is God’s

you’ve just wasted twenty minutes, thirty minutes, or maybe even an hour of your time unintentionally on your device?

“I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate . . . for I do not do the good that I want to do, but practice the evil that I do not want to do.”

—Romans 7:15, 19 ESV

The Old Testament Jewish kings didn’t consider those pagan gods to be their idols either, yet they let them remain. They still occasionally went up to the high places and worshiped, while, at the same time, claiming to love the one true God. We worship what we spend our time on—intentionally or unintentionally.

Samuel was the first of the kings’ prophets, who served as an advisor to King Saul and King David. He warned the people about diverting their time from God to things of little worth, in the frame of eternity.

“Samuel replied, ‘Don’t be afraid. Even though you have committed all this evil, don’t turn away from following the Lord. Instead, worship the Lord with all your heart. Don’t turn away to follow worthless things that can’t profit or rescue you; they are worthless.’”

—1 Samuel 12:20-21 CSB

So, what’s the answer? Delete social media and stay off of it altogether? Maybe. Or you could turn to the Holy Spirit to remove it as an idol in your life and no longer let it be a high place, but a tool you look at differently, one where you use the “Faith Filter” to navigate at all times. Make a conscious decision about how much time you spend on social media and what type of content you are consuming. Use it as one of many great sources to spread the gospel, connect with other Christians, and let His light shine for others to see; not as a *replacement* for your time reading the Bible or your in-person fellowship because you consume photos of verses on Instagram

instead, or joined a Facebook chat instead of a bible study group, or watch sermons online. Online enhancements to worship are a wonderful booster to your time with the Lord, but the Bible still urges us to pick it up, read it in context, and be there with one another in Christian fellowship.

*Make social media a tool, not an idol.*

It's never too late to ask God to search your heart, help lead you down the right path, or remove any unworthy idols in your life. Because God will never leave you. He always keeps His promises. After the vicious cycle of kings led to a hostile takeover, the Jews were exiled to Babylon and Persia. Yet, God kept His promise to His people that He shared through Jeremiah's prophecy [Jeremiah 25:12, 32: 36–38] and delivered them from foreign exile.

"I have banished them in my anger, rage, and intense wrath, and I will return them to this place and make them live in safety. They will be my people and I will be their God."

—Jeremiah 32:38

God used Ezra and Nehemiah to take His people back home to Jerusalem and rebuild the city walls and the temple. All of that led to Jesus a few hundred years later, when God would send His only Son to remove the need for a temple building. Now Christ dwells within us. Nothing can separate us from His love: Not appointed leaders, not our modern struggles. No matter what, Jesus is always with us. However, we cannot connect with the Holy Spirit living within us if we drown it out with the noise and distraction of our devices.

But perhaps social media can be the catalyst for us realizing that the fast-paced, busy structure of our modern lives is keeping us from an intimate relationship with Christ. We've been on this path for a

while, each generation making their lives more and more full of the newest activities, technologies, and distractions. Social media could be the lens that exposes how all these things are damaging our children and society, forcing us to reevaluate, slow down, and lean into our faith.

Despite Israel repeatedly straying in their faith, God remained faithful and was merciful. That was true then in 444 BC and is true today. Our devices have become the center of our existence. And because our phones are always in our hands, we think our lives are, too. But we have to find peace in trust. God loves us and gave us free will, but ultimately we can trust our lives to Him and become at peace with our inability to control *everything*. We become more attuned to God’s glorious sovereignty when we become cognizant of our surroundings, by putting down our phones and opening our eyes to the beauty of God’s creation: listening to the birds chirping and children laughing, seeing the flowers blooming and the sky glowing. We didn’t make any of that, God did. And He ordained us to be stewards of His Creation, but our devices distract us from doing so.

If our almighty Creator can make all the beauties of this world and the unimaginable glory of the heavens that await us, He can sculpt our lives in magnificent ways. He has a grand plan, one specifically designed for each of us. The sooner we realize the Creator of the Universe is out for our best interest, the sooner we are able to make room for Him to do His will. But that also involves relinquishing control and crossing over into authentic trust. We must strike a balance of putting complete trust in God’s glorious sovereignty and our call to exercise our faith, through pouring ourselves into our faith journey. We can do so by having faith that God will provide, despite sometimes being called to work our way down a path different than society glorifies. God defines faith in Hebrews 11:1 “as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” And goes on to explain:

“By faith we understand the universe was created by the word of God,  
so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.”

—Hebrews 11:3

We are encouraged to take the leap of applying the Faith Filter to our lives when we look at real examples of people who have let faith guide their discernment, actions, and decisions listed out in *the Hall of Faith* outlined in the verses that follow Hebrews 11:3. *The Hall of Faith*, as it has become known, is a summary of many of the people in the Bible that accomplished great things for God’s Kingdom through their faith. They were not perfect and their individual journeys of working on and using their Faith Filter were also far from perfect, but God still used them in extraordinary ways to carry out His great plan through their faith. Those listed include familiar Biblical figures, some of which we’ll look at in this book and chapter devotionals, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. The Bible goes on to encourage us to “run the race with endurance” like these *Hall of Faith* members, by “looking to Jesus as the founder and perfecter of our faith.” [Hebrews 12:1–2] And we can turn to Him as the source of our faith because he “endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

So how do we give “the founder and perfecter of our faith” sovereignty over the “Faith Filter” in our lives? Missionary Elisabeth Elliot, in her book *Keep a Quiet Heart*,<sup>2</sup> poignantly explains ways we *do not* let faith work in our lives. Instead, so many of us let worry consume us [Philippians 4:6], refuse to accept what God gives [Matthew 11:29], try to rule our own lives [Colossians 3:15], or carry all of our burdens by ourselves [1 Peter 5:7], so we look for peace in places like social media instead of God [John 14:27].

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Bury yourself in your bible instead of your social media feed to look up those corresponding verses in order to choose peace in the Lord. If you are in a phase in your life where everything is spiraling out of control and nothing seems to be in your control, choose to go to God—rather than modern distractions that claim they will help you, but in the end, don’t have a lasting hold. When you start to go to God for everything, even the little things, an amazing thing can happen: An inner dialogue with God bursts open. You don’t just talk to Him about the hard things, you talk to Him all day long about anything.

“Lord, help me meet my struggles today.”

“Father, my baby is crying, please comfort her.”

“Glorious Creator, how beautiful is this sunny day?!”

“Gracious God, I am so grateful for my husband’s smile.”

Or simply, “thank you Lord.” For just about anything that makes your heart swell.

Jesus brought joy to his faith in the perfect manner and is the one we should look to help us anytime we are struggling with trusting God. Hebrews 12:2 also states that “Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross.” Jesus, putting all his faith in God, went to the cross knowing what suffering was awaiting him with *joy*. Our Savior made the ultimate act of faith gladly. His joy that stems from his unwavering faith in God can inspire us to use the Faith Filter, despite the things in our lives that try to hold us back. Whether it’s big hurdles in our lives or common struggles on social media, like comparison and losing sight of the gratitude Jesus had, these challenges are essential for us to examine and work to overcome. As we overcome them, with the help of tools like discernment and rest, we can be grateful to God and our Faith Filter will shine through.



## Chapter 2 Devotional



1. Are there any ways that your current social media habits allow some of the works of the flesh that Paul outlines in Galatians 5:19–21 to creep into your life?

- List each work of the flesh that applies to you and how.

2. In Psalm 1:1, the psalmist warns us not to model our lives after non-believers. Do you look up to anyone on social media that embodies more of the works of the flesh, instead of the fruits of the Spirit? Who?

- Should you filter those accounts through your Faith Filter instead? How?

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3. According to the end of that Psalm in verse 1:6, will the ways of the Lord last for eternity or will the ways of those who do not live by faith?
  - Does realizing that God's Word urges us to filter in those that live by faith and be cautious of those that do not prompt you to want to make any changes to who you follow on social media? Outline who and why below.
4. What are other ways you can apply the Faith Filter to how you use your devices?

## Faith Filter

5. There are many ways we resist using the Faith Filter and *do not* let the peace of God's sovereignty work in our lives. Circle which of the following you identify with. Look up the corresponding passage.

- Resent God's ways. [Psalm 119:165]
- Worry consumes you. [Philippians 4:6]
- Pray only about things you  
can't control by yourself. [Philippians 4:6, 7]
- Refuse to accept God's will. [Matthew 11:29]
- Look for peace elsewhere than in Him. [John 14:27]
- Try to rule your own life. [Colossians 3:15]
- Doubt God's Word. [Romans 15:13]
- Carry all your burdens. [1 Peter 5:7]

6. In what ways have you made social media an idol in your life?

## FAITH FILTER CHALLENGE

7. It only took one generation for the Israelites to forget about God. Let’s take a look at how recent history has shaped *your* generation’s heart posture toward the Lord. Keeping in mind our biblical example of Moses’s generation, who were slaves, versus their grandchildren, who were the first to live their entire lives in the Promised Land: what *world* circumstances/struggles did your grandparents endure?
  - If you are a grandparent, parent, or soon-to-be parent. (Examples: Great Depression, World War II)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - If you are a teen or young adult: (Example: Prosperous US Economy of the Eighties and Nineties)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Looking back at past examples from history can help us put our own times into perspective. Keeping in mind our biblical example of Moses’s grandchildren, who forgot about the hardships their grandparents endured: what *world* circumstances have you grown up in?
  - A. If you are a grandparent, parent, or soon-to-be parent:
    - Have you forgotten the hardships your grandparents went through?

### Faith Filter

- Do you feel like your generation has left the church or turned from the Word and teachings of God?
- Do you take into consideration the legacy of social media you are leaving behind for the next generation? How do you think it has or will impact them?

#### B. If you are a teen or young adult:

- Do you feel like it is a tougher or easier time to grow up than your parents or grandparents?
- Do you feel like your generation is searching for a more solid foundation than what social media has set you up with?

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- Do you feel like some are starting to find that foundation in the Lord?
9. After looking at your grandparents' circumstances, versus your generation's circumstances, how do you assess your generation's heart posture toward the Lord? Has your generation forgotten about God? Or is it searching to return back to God as its foundation?

## Prayer

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Dear Lord,

You are the One and Only that we should be filtering everything through. Please help me to focus my eyes on you, not on my social media scroll. Please forgive all the times I've wasted on social media and help me turn away from this idol, big or small, in my life. Now, as I look to the future, reroute my habits. Allow me to use social media as a tool to glorify your kingdom. Help me to go through the steps of using your Faith Filter when I consume or post on social media. Guide me to understand what that Faith Filter looks like for Your will to be done. Thank you for your everlasting grace and forgiveness.

Amen.