

Week 1: In the Beginning

Let's get a look at our own social media usage...

- How many of you have some form of social media?
- What types of social media do you use the most?
- How would you define social media?
- What connotation does that definition of social media have (negative, positive or neutral) and why?

Heart of the Matter: *We know that social media is anything but neutral, wholly positive or wholly negative—it's a mixed bag! It can be very positive, but also extremely negative, but this simple definition does not get to the complex nature of social media. During this study we will be exploring why social media is complex and how do we as followers of Jesus navigate that complexity.*

Read Genesis 1: 26-31.

- What does it mean to be created in the “image” of God?
- Is an image the actual thing? (ex. Copycat paintings, playing the video game Madden)
- So, what does this mean for us as human beings, what is our purpose if we were created to be images?

Read Genesis 2:15-18.

- What was the one thing God Commanded Adam and Eve?
- What do you think God's heart was behind giving this command to humanity?
- What does it mean to have the knowledge of good & evil?

Read Genesis 3:1-6.

- What did Adam & Eve really do by eating the fruit?
- How did Adam & Eve abandon their purpose and God's original design for them?

Heart of the Matter: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...” as it says in Genesis 1. Soon after the creation of the world, the story of man unfolds with the creation of Adam and Eve. In this garden of perfection, Adam and Eve were to work it and take care of it. They were given one instruction: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for you when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:18).

The fall from perfection began with a human's pursuit of her own glory. In his deceit, the serpent told Eve that if she ate the fruit, she would be like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:1). God's intention was always for humanity to bear the image of God – resemble Him in character and rule with Him over creation. Never was God's intention for humanity to be God – to carry the weight of the world and create a kingdom of their own. Yet, ever since The Fall, humanity has been navigating the power of the Spirit and the work of the flesh. The power of the Spirit advocates for a Heavenly Kingdom in which God rules and reigns. The work of the flesh advocates for our sinful desires as we strive to put ourselves on the throne.

- What happens when a whole society rejects their “image” status and decides to be God?

Read Genesis 11:1-8 (give background for Tower of Babel story).

- Three things to take note of in this story:
 1. Unified form of communication
 2. They had a new form of technology (brick and mortar)
 3. Their pursuit or purpose was to “make a name for [themselves]”

Heart of the Matter: Social media platforms have become an incubator for self-centered kingdoms. We have tried to become all knowing, all powerful, eternal, infinite and unique (incommunicable traits of God). In our social media kingdom, we are trying to see what it is happening with others at all times of the day, we decide what attributes of our lives we want others to see, we judge others based on what they display, we desire glory for ourselves. We have elevated ourselves in a way in which we resort to the brokenness of humanity's first fall: to be God. In Genesis 11, we see a similar struggle for human glory in the story of the Tower of Babel. The human heart is in continual pursuit of its own praise.

Read Genesis 11:1-9. Verse four reads, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves..." So that we may make a name for ourselves. Don't we sit in the same tension of wanting to make a name for ourselves today?

Key Points as it pertains to social media:

- Nothing has unified our language or moved society closer to a universal language than social media.
- We have new technology—Phones, iPad's, tablets, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, the internet, computers, cameras, TV's, etc.)
- We have been using these things to make a kingdom where we are the King and no longer an image of the King. How do we use those two things to make a name for ourselves or how do those things help us or hurt us in our purpose to be images?

Read Genesis 11:9.

We are headed for the same destiny as Babylon. Have we already seen these consequences in our society today?

The Heart of the Matter: Social media is a technology that has amazing power but when everyone in the world has access to this same powerful technology at the same time, the same sin nature that lives in all of us will seize that technology to use for its own advantage. In verse three, we see that the people have access to a new "technology" – brick and mortar. Technology isn't the problem, but when it is in the hands of everyone in the world at the same time it becomes a massive tool to be manipulated by our sin nature.

The unity of language and technology in the story of the Tower of Babel is the same as social media in our world today. We are setting ourselves up for the same destruction – division, scattering, disconnection, confusion, chaos, not able to understand each other. Also, God says that if the people continue down this road "then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them" (verse 6). This phrase means that whatever selfish desire arises in their hearts, they will use this technology's power to try and fulfill it. It means that whatever evil they devise in their hearts to hurt others and promote themselves, they will use this technology's power to do so. Social media has done this to our world and to us as individuals; it has caused disconnection, chaos, confusion, division, inability to understand each other, and ultimately leading us to a world where everyone is seeking to "make a name for [themselves]".

Our heart in this study is not to demonize social media, but rather raise awareness for the way that we engage it. We want to be wise followers of Jesus that make His name known about our own selfish ambitions. It is not a matter of behavior modification, but an assessment of the heart.

- What source is fueling our desire to engage with the world through social media and how can Jesus be our ultimate source for satisfaction?

Framework for the Study

Creating Our Kingdom vs. Bringing God's Kingdom

Every day you have a choice to make. Will I take a brick to build a kingdom for my own glory or will I leverage my life to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth? In the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7, Jesus unpacked what it meant to bring the Kingdom of God. He shared with religious people, the marginalized and his close followers the secret to a full life of faithfulness. Jesus's words were revolutionary in their time, and in many ways, they still are to this day.

The format of this Bible Study walks you through God's heart as it is portrayed in Matthew 6-7 in the Sermon on the Mount. By understanding God's heart, we can correct our actions. We are not here to give you a list of do's and don'ts for your Instagram profile, but we do hope that you seek God's heart in discerning His best for you. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to know God's heart in greater depths than when you began. We will use social media as a tool on the surface to navigate the deeper matters of our hearts.

Each section of scripture will break down in 5 I's:

- Our Intentions: Humanity's often skewed pursuit of what God intends.
- God's Idea: God's heart and wisdom as found in the Scripture.
- Social Media's Influence: How has social media made us think about this topic?
- Kingdom Intersection: What is the truth that God wants to communicate to us in the mix of our social media saturated world?
- Implications for Us: Discussion questions, further exploration in scripture, etc.

We encourage you to find a group of people and process these topics in community. Vulnerability meets vulnerability as you open yourself up to the realities of your heart. Our prayer is that you can take control of social media in your life rather than it having any stronghold over you.

Analyze your social media usage throughout the next week and throughout the duration of the study...

- How often do you use social media (you can check your usage in the settings on your phone)? What were your top social media platforms?
- What emotions or desires were you experiencing when you turned to social media?
- How did you feel when you got off social media (same, worse, better)?
- What things did you post or have the desire to post, what was the motivation for posting or desiring to post what you did

A time of prayer:

- Pray for our hearts during this study
- Pray God would reveal to us the heart behind our social media usage
- Pray for each other that we would grow closer to each other and God, through this study and we would learn how to navigate our social media usage for the glory of God!