


#NOFILTER

A HEART STUDY WITH
A SOCIAL MEDIA LENS



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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!

Week 2: Living in the Light

Read Matthew 6:1-4.

Our Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading verses 1-4 again, what are the human intentions displayed?• In verse 2, the Greek word for honor means to magnify, glorify and celebrate.• What is the significance of using trumpets?• Have you ever been in a conversation where someone always manages to bring conversation back to themselves? What does that feel like?• Why do we want others to see the good deeds we are doing?• When you meet someone, what are things that you want them to know about you? What are topics that naturally come up in conversation for you?
God's Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is Jesus's heart for those listening to what he is saying?• Why does God desire secrecy in this way?• Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. What is the overlap between these verses and this section of Matthew?• What does it mean for us to live a quiet life?• How do we see God's idea for modeled in the life of Jesus?
Social Media's Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do we see all of this connected to social media usage?• How do we see the world captivated by their own glory?• What do you often post about social media? Or look at on social media?• What would it look like to shine the light of Christ on social media profiles?
Kingdom Intersection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read John 8:12. Jesus is the only one worth of glory. We are called to carry his light and live out His love.• Read Matthew 5:16. What is the contrast between light and trumpets?• Read Psalm 16:2. What does this verse mean?• How do we remind ourselves that God is the only one worth of glory?• Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. How should these verses inform the way that we live?
Implications for Us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we be people that carry the light of Christ?• How can we use social media to carry this light?• In terms of social media, what sorts of posts are trumpet posts? How do these types of posts affect others? Do your posts bring light or do they bring trumpets?• As it says in Jeremiah 9:23-24, how can we boast in our understanding of knowing God? How do we pursue this understanding of God each day? <p>*Emphasizing the importance of discernment among all of this. Not super black or white answers, but asking God and knowing him more in the midst of it.</p>

Heart of the Matter: *God wants us to practice righteousness, but not in front of others. His desire is for us to live a life of servanthood and quiet humility. Let Jesus be the sustaining source of your light. His light in you is what brings the Kingdom of God.*

Week 3: Hidden in the Lord

Read Matthew 6:5-15.

Our Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What seem to be the intentions of the people praying?• Verse 5 reads, “they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others.” The Greek word for seen means “to bring into the light, cause to shine.” Why do the people want to be seen?• As human beings, we want to boast about our goodness in the light, while often hiding the pieces of us that are less than attractive. What things are we quick to bring into the light? What are things that we rather leave in the darkness?• In what ways do you people want to be seen and known in your life?
God’s Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does God desire for people in regards to prayer?• What is the purpose of prayer?• Read verse 6. Jesus seems to emphasis a need for secrecy. Why would this be important?• What does it mean that God will reward you? What is he rewarding you for?• <i>Prayer is about orienting your heart first towards God; out of that alignment with God comes a sincere love for others. In the private space with the Father, it is not about earning His favor or saying the right things to get what you want. It is ultimately about knowing how He really feels about you.</i>
Social Media’s Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you see these themes relating to social media? (if they can come up with their own connections, explore them!)• What kind of things are you posting on social media (posts and stories)? What do you find yourself looking at most often?• What do we want to bring into the light? What do we want to keep in hiding?• We have created a sparse margin for privacy in our lives. People post how they are feeling, what they are eating, where they are going and everything in between. How could this be impacting our relationship with God?
Kingdom Intersection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Colossians 3:2-4. What does it mean to be hidden in the Lord?• God sees you and desires time alone with you. What does it mean to cultivate private, intimate time with God?• If you were pursuing a romantic relationship with someone and rather than being present, you posted every intimate moment on social media... it would take away from the power of your time together. How could this relate to time you spend with God?• Read Psalm 139. How can you find comfort in being seen and known by God in this passage?

Implications for Us

- God wants to show you sunsets that were just for your eyes. God wants you to rejoice over a beautiful plated meal just between you and Him. In these moments of sweetness, intimacy is cultivated with the Father.
- How can you find ways to cultivate this kind of intimacy with God?
- In what ways do you really want to be known?
- Why is it important to have people in your life that you can be real with? People that know you and love you as your most honest self? Do you have those people in your life?

Heart of the Matter: *God sees you and desires time alone with you. When you are hidden in Him, you feel the most seen and loved. The world might offer you temporary attention and affirmation, but God sees every part of you and satisfies your innermost self.*

Week 4: Longing for Glory

Read Matthew 6:16-18

Pre-work: What is fasting? What is the purpose? What is the difference between refraining and fasting?

Our Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the hypocrites doing in this passage?• Why would they want others to know that they are fasting?• What does it mean that they will receive their reward in full?• Read Matthew 23:25-28. What does it mean that the people are quick to clean the outside of the cup rather than the inside?• Do you see places in our world where people want to portray an image on the outside that may not be aligned with pure intentions?
God's Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In verse 17, why does Jesus want them to put oil on their heads and wash their faces?• Why should this act not be obvious to others?• Read 1 Samuel 16:7. What does this say about God's heart and desires for us?• What is the reward of Father's attention?
Social Media's Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The hypocrites were masters at distorting their appearance for their own glory. How do we see others distorting their appearance or posts for their own glory?• What is the image that people want to display to others?• Social media users filter experiences to portray a specific image. Why do we do that?• What does it look like to use social media without projecting a distorted image? What are examples of a positive expression of social media usage?
Kingdom Intersection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In Isaiah 58, the prophet talks about what true fasting is. The people are wrapped up in going through the motions, being religious and doing religious things, but God is after their hearts. Read Isaiah 58.• In verses 6-7, what does God really desire from our hearts?• In verse 8, Isaiah says, "the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard." The glory of God will literally have your back, protecting you from behind. What would it mean to be protected by the glory of the Lord rather than the glory of man?• In verse 11, what is the promise and hope God gives? How is this an encouragement?
Implications for Us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our hearts all have a longing for glory. How do we live for the glory of God rather than the glory of man?• Read Psalm 8:3-9. What does this say about how God has made us? He has made us to sit under him and crown us with his glory and honor.• How do we see this week connecting to the previous weeks? 1st week: Trumpets announcing goodness vs. The light of life. 2nd week: Seeking intimacy and a hidden heart with God in prayer.• How could this teaching align our hearts with more of God's intentions for us?

Heart of the Matter: *God has put a longing in each of our hearts that can only be satisfied with his love and glory. We can try to fill it with the glory of man, but it will only leave us emptier than we began. The glory of God does not begin with any outward appearances or actions, but a surrendered heart. He wants you to bring your heart to him and pursue his glory above all else.*

Week 5: Pursuit of the Heart

Read Matthew 6:19-24.

Our Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In verse 24, what are the two masters Jesus is talking about?• The greek word for “money” means possessions or wealth. What does it mean to serve money as a master?• What are treasures that we store up on earth?• Why do you store on earth?
God’s Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does God want us to pursue? (Ultimately, God wants to pursue him).• When it says in verse 21, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” what does that mean?• Read verse 22-23 again. When it says that the eye is the lamp of the body, it means that what you fix your eyes on impacts what is going on in your heart and mind. How can you look at something in the room and not think about it? In the same way, if you are fixing your eyes the Lord, your mind will be centered him.
Social Media’s Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do we fix our eyes on in our social media? What are you looking for?• Does it influence the way you think about your possessions?• How does your social media usage impact the rest of your time or day?
Kingdom Intersection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• While Jesus is in complete pursuit of our hearts, he also desires our pursuit of His heart. Read Psalm 51:16-17. What does God desire from us?• In verse 20, Jesus says to store up treasures in heaven. We often think that God wants our good deeds as the treasures in heaven, but if our hearts aren’t surrendered to him then our good deeds are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).• So how do we bring our hearts to him? Let’s read Hebrews 12:1-3. How do we change our gaze from the things of the world to Jesus himself?
Implications for Us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Romans 12:2. What does this mean?• How do we renew our minds? (2 Corinthians 10:5, remind ourselves of the good news of Jesus, worship, surrounding ourselves in community)• We get to know God’s will by knowing him. So what does it mean to really know him?• <i>We actually serve God by knowing him. When you know him, you know how to serve others and you know how pray... everything comes out of first knowing him and his heart. By fixing your eyes on him we get to know him and experience the treasure of heaven.</i>

Heart of the Matter: *By fixing your eyes on Jesus, we get to know him and experience the treasure of heaven. We pursue what is important to us, so we must decide if we value the treasures of God’s kingdom or our own.*

Week 6: In Control of the Kingdom

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

Our Intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the people in this passage worried about?• In verse 32, Jesus says that the pagans run after “all these things.” What are “all these things?”• What are things that you worry about?• Why do we worry?
God’s Idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do we learn about God as he takes care of his creation (birds, flowers and his people)?• How have you seen God provide for you?• Read Exodus 34:6-7. What do these verses teach about God’s character?• Read Matthew 6:8. How does this verse relate to our current passage?
Social Media’s Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where do we see connections between worry and our social media usage?• In times when we feel anxious or uncomfortable, it is easy to pull out our cell phones and start scrolling through our social media feeds. Why do people do that?• How does social media make us feel in control?
Kingdom Intersection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In verse 33, Jesus says to seek first the kingdom and his righteousness. To seek the kingdom is to align ourselves with his heart, plan and vision for the world. How do we seek first the kingdom and his righteousness?• Read Matthew 8:23-27. What does Jesus model for us when it comes to encountering a stressful situation?• What peace do we find in a relationship with Christ?
Implications for Us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Philippians 4:6-7. What is God asking us to do with our worry?• Read Proverbs 3:5-6. How do we trust God with all of our hearts? How do we acknowledge him in all of our ways?• How do we practically build our faith when we’re worried? (tangible practices)

Heart of the Matter: *The Lord is trustworthy and knows what you need before you need it. Bring your heart to Him, surrender control and trust Him for the outcome.*