

# ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

## **89. The Distraction of Social Media Says, "Check This Out"**

You are listening to episode 89 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, "The Distraction of Social Media Says, 'Check This Out.'" Thank you for joining me today, and I welcome you to the podcast. For a while now we've been pondering and peering into different distractions we experience on any given day, and what God might have to say about them. In today's episode we are looking at a big external distraction that I think many of us struggle with. This is the distraction of social media. I invite you to hang with me here for the next short while and together we will find some help, hope, and encouragement when it comes to this distraction. I'm glad we're in this together. Ready? Let's get to it.

I glanced at my clock, and I couldn't believe it! Here I wasted 20 minutes as I scrolled through my social media feeds. Now, 20 minutes may not sound like a lot of time, and you and I both know how quickly 20 minutes can pass us by but knowing I had done that multiple times during the day, it all added up to be a lot of wasted time. Time I could have used for something much more valuable, much more productive.

**Anytime something takes us from the moment we're in and entices us to lose time in it, is a distraction.**

And the distraction of social media is a multifaceted one. Because it doesn't just distract us from the present, but it can negatively affect us long after we've immersed ourselves in it. It's been linked to increased loneliness, depression, anxiety, and other mental stresses. It's also been noted that some people feel less happy about their lives the more they spend time in social media.

I don't need to tell you that's not good.

The distraction of social media says, "Check this out." And it prompts us to check out what's going on in other people's lives instead of paying attention to our own. It entices us to compare our real, imperfect lives with someone else's what-appears-to-be-perfect online life. And it gives our brains a small adrenaline rush every time we open our feed, because we never know what's going to pop up first.

**No wonder social media can be so addicting!**

But there are some good things about social media, too, right? Like being able to connect with others online and stay in touch with family. It's a great way to learn new skills and life hacks without leaving your home. And when it's used for good, it can have positive psychological benefits.

And honestly, I like social media for the most part. I just don't like it when I let it become a distraction in my life. I don't like it when I allow it to pull me away from what's truly important and what's happening right in front of me. And sometimes that happens without me noticing right away. So, I always have to work at keeping it in check.

**Does the distraction of social media affect you?**

Are you on social media and how often? Do you love it or just tolerate it? Does it bring you joy or angst? Because I think our answers to these questions tell us much about this tool many of us use on a regular basis. It's always wise to pause and ask ourselves if what we're doing brings us joy, because if it's not, then maybe it's time to make a change. Maybe it's time to look at what we're doing with fresh eyes and question if we still need to be doing it. Questions are good, and they help us uncover what we may not normally see.

The thing is, a number of years ago I decided that my social feeds are mine. No one else's. So, I could choose what I wanted (for the most part) to see on my feeds. I could follow who I wanted to follow. I could unfollow those who weren't healthy for me to follow... like if they caused me to feel worse about myself, life, or others. And I could choose to make my social feeds the most positive and uplifting spaces I possibly could. So, that's what I did.

This may sound rude, but I don't mean it to. You and I don't have to let just anyone in our spaces. We can choose who has access to us, including on social media. I think it's something we should be careful with and allow ourselves to set some healthy boundaries. And those might be different for each of us.

Plus, I also turned off all my social feed notifications. All of them. Because I don't want extra dings and buzzes on my phone to pull me away from the moment I'm in. I have enough trouble with that without my phone reminding me.

### **It all begins with us.**

How social media affects us starts with you and me.

Have we set boundaries with it? Do we minimally spend time on it? Have we done all we can to make it a positive and uplifting space when we're on it? And have we turned our notifications off, so we're not enticed to spend more time on it than we already do?

Social media does not have to run us. We can have control over what we do with it and how much time we're on it. And if we find it's becoming a bigger distraction in our lives, we can do some things to change that. A number of years ago my friend signed off of all social media and never looked back. Another friend of mine signed out of all social media accounts except for one. And yet another friend only checks her social media at lunch time. No other time, so she's not absorbed in it throughout her day.

All great ideas, but we each have to find what works for us, individually.

So, yes, the distraction of social media says, "Check this out." But God says, "Seek me first."

*Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Matthew 6:33 MSG*

### **I often remind myself what's most important in my life.**

Do my actions always reflect what's most important? No, they don't. Because what's most important is my relationship with God. He's first in my life. But do I spend as much time--or more--with Him and/or reading my Bible than I do on social media? Some days, sadly, that answer is no.

Yet, He's very clear in His Word about putting anything ahead of Him in my life. Social media can easily become an idol, and I'll be honest to tell you it has before. Anything we put ahead of God in our lives is an idol. Here's what God has to say about idols.

*Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.* 1 John 5:21 NLT

*Do not turn from Me to follow useless idols or cast metal images of other gods, for I am the Eternal your God.* Leviticus 19:4 VOICE

*So then, my beloved friends, run from idolatry in any form.* 1 Corinthians 10:14 VOICE

It's wise to seek God with this and ask Him to help me keep Him first in my life and keep all the other distractions, including social media, under His control. Because I can't handle them well on my own.

**Because if we're on social media, we each desire a healthy relationship with it.**

None of us desire for it to overtake us or consume our lives. None of us want it to become something to replace God in our lives, right? But that's what distractions do. They're sneaky, they come in under the radar and take up residence in our lives without us noticing. But we aren't left without hope here. You and I can seek God with how to handle this--and any distraction--in our lives. Thankfully, we aren't alone in this battle.

We are taking this conversation over to our private Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. All week long we're discussing this subject and how we can enjoy social media without it overtaking our lives. Come on over and join in the conversation. The link to this group is in the show notes.

Also, I'd love to know what's distracting you. I created 5-minute questionnaire called, *What Distracts You?*, that will help me with a project I'm working on regarding real-life distractions. I'd love to get your feedback on it, and it would mean so much to me if you'd click on the link in the show notes below and answer the short questions. It'll take you five minutes to complete (unless you're distracted, of course!).

And if you found this episode encouraging or helpful, would you please rate it and or review it from where you're listening today? This will help others find this encouragement too. Be sure to subscribe to the podcast so you never miss a new episode.

To recap, with some dedicated effort, we can overcome this distraction of social media in our lives. We can ask God first for help and discernment, we can set boundaries and limit our time on social media sites and apps, we can make changes to help our feeds be uplifting and encouraging spaces, we can turn off our notifications, and we can even take a break from it every now and then. Which one will you try first? Friend, I'm cheering you on and am praying for you today. God bless you!

Links in this episode:

[The Effects of Social Media and Mental Health](#)

[Matthew 6:33](#) MSG

[1 John 5:21](#) NLT

[Leviticus 19:4](#) VOICE

[1 Corinthians 10:14](#) VOICE

[Encouragement for Real Life Community](#)

[Fill out the 5-minute What Distracts You questionnaire](#)

[Access my free encouragement Resources](#) designed to bring joy to your heart

*Julie Lefebvre*