

# The Danger of Discontentment-Induced Anxiety (FOMO)

## I. Discussion Questions

- A. What is FOMO? Is it a danger? Why or why not?
- B. What are some biblical words or categories that you'd use to describe or define it?

## II. The Danger of FOMO

### A. Defining FOMO

A heart that is anxious due to 1). Discontentment with where God has us in the present moment, and 2). A covetous desire for more (information, excitement, affirmation, outside connection, experiences, etc.). It often manifests in compulsively checking one's phone (email, texts, social media, news sites, shopping sites).

### B. The Dangers: The constellation of sins we call FOMO

1. *Discontentment* – not being satisfied with what God has given you. Thinking you need more to be able to have joy in life. (see Ahab in 1 Kings 21:1-7)
2. *Comparison* – measuring your life against what others are doing or getting (2 Cor. 10:12).
3. *Covetousness* – Discontent with what I have, seeing what others have, and now coveting it. (Col 3:5, Luke 12:15)
4. *Envy* – a painful and resentful awareness of the life situation of another person as being better than your own and resenting them for it. (Prov. 14:30)
5. *Anxiety* – a restless desire to control outcomes instead of seeking God's kingdom and trusting God's timing and provision for your needs (Matthew 6:31–34).
6. FOMO often springs from distrust in God's goodness and/or impatience with his timing. A desire to define "the good life" for ourselves instead of letting him define it.

### C. How Smartphones Represent a New Phase in The War of FOMO

1. Like the Sirens of Greek mythology, our phone sings its notification songs. It calls us to escape our present, God-ordained life to think about all the lives we could be living. Our thumbs twitch, and we grab the rudder and sail straight to the rocks.
2. They are in our pockets. The habit is easy to make and hard to break.
3. Social media apps are designed to be addictive.

## III. The Antidote to FOMO

- A. Contentment in Christ – finding sufficiency in Him alone (Phil 4:11-13; Phil 3:8; Heb 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:6–8)
- B. Not comparing, but following Christ faithfully wherever he has you (Acts 17:26; Ps. 139:5, 13; John 21:22)

- C. Thankfulness – Rather than being covetous and envious, we should thank God for what he has given us. (1 Thess. 5:18)
- D. Trust God’s goodness and timing, believing that His plans are always for our best (Prov. 3:5-6, Ps. 84:11, Romans 8:28)

## IV. Applying the Antidote

### A. Internal (Heart) Work

- 1. Go back over the list from the section of the biblical antidote.
- 2. Memorize a few passages that speak to your form of temptation
- 3. Remember that the one FOMO that is actually valid (Heb. 4:1)

### B. Suggestions for External Constraints

- 1. Suggestion 1: Adopt more of a digital minimalist relationship with your phone  
“the maximalist philosophy that most people deploy by default [is] a mind-set in which any potential for benefit is enough to start using a technology that catches your attention. A maximalist is very uncomfortable with the idea that anyone might miss out on something that’s the least bit interesting or valuable.” (Cal Newport, *Digital Minimalism*, 29)  
  
“Digital Minimalism: A philosophy of technology use in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected and optimized activities that strongly support things you value, and then happily miss out on everything else. . . . minimalists don’t mind missing out on small things; what worries them much more is diminishing the large things they already know for sure make a good life good” (Ibid., 28, 30).
- 2. Suggestion 2: Build Screen Fasts in Your Schedule
  - a. A few hours each day, a day each week, a week each year.
  - b. During these times – fill it with other good things.
- 3. Suggestion 3: Remove social media apps from your phone
  - a. Perhaps quite them all together
  - b. But at least cut off easy, autopilot access (only us on computer, timers, set days/times)

## V. Application questions

### A. Family Discussion

- 1. In what areas of life do you find your peers experiencing FOMO? What about yourself?
- 2. Read Psalm 84:11. How might this help you when you start to fear you are missing out on something?
- 3. Why do you think it might be wise to have external constraints on our access to digital technology?

### B. Personal Reflection

- 1. When do you find yourself most likely to instinctively reach for your phone?
- 2. Are there any external constraints you would like to try implementing for yourself and/or your family? What might be holding you back from trying it? Consider trying one external constraint for a few weeks and see what you learn from the experiment.