

Do you have FOMO? Maybe you're looking around, "Oh no another virus! It's 2020...what's next?" FOMO is simply the "fear of missing out." It's a real phenomenon that's common and can cause significant anxiety in your life. It can affect nearly anyone.

What is FOMO? It refers to the feeling or perception that others are having more fun, living better lives, or experiencing better things than you are. It's often worsened by social media sites like Instagram and Facebook (**pictures**). It can apply to anything from a weekend party to a promotion at work. It involves a feeling that you're missing out on something significant.

Dr. Dan Herman (**picture**), first coined the term in a 1996 research paper and in 2013 the term, FOMO, was added to the Oxford Dictionary (**picture**). With the advent of social media, FOMO has become more obvious. It provides a platform where you're comparing your regular life to the highlights of others' lives. Your sense of "normal" becomes skewed because you seem to be doing worse than your peers. Social media is where things, events, even happiness itself seems to be in competition at times. People compare their best, picture-perfect experiences, which may lead you to wonder what you're lacking – FOMO.

But FOMO has been around since the Garden. FOMO led Adam and Eve to sin in Genesis 3. Satan convinced them that God was holding out on them, though they had Paradise. FOMO caused Jacob to barter for his brother, Esau's birthright. There are many biblical examples of FOMO.

One that stands out to me is in Genesis 19 with Lot's wife. You may remember the account. As Lot and his family, his wife and two daughters, flee God's judgement on Sodom, Lot's wife looked back. Genesis 19:26, *"But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."*

In answer to his Uncle Abraham's prayer, God sent angels to rescue Lot. Judgment was about to fall on this wicked city. Lot flees Sodom, but his family had Sodom in their hearts. Apparently, Lot's wife can't take it any longer. She looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Her turning back indicated where her heart truly was...back in Sodom.

It's noteworthy that that area of the world has large natural asphalt pools with crusted salt around them. Some believe it was a glob of fiery brimstone or asphalt that fell on her and encrusted her with salt, killing her instantly.

But why did she turn around? I'm going to suggest FOMO. She feared what she was going to miss out by leaving Sodom. Genesis 19 tells us Lot had a place of prestige in Sodom, something equivalent to the mayor.

In Luke 17:32, Jesus used her as a warning, *"Remember Lot's wife!"* Here's a woman who'd had angels in her home warning her judgement was coming mere hours before. It wasn't that she *looked*, it was what she *loved*. It was a fatal attraction. Like those killed today who are too close to an erupting volcano, she lingered when she needed to flee. She's on her way to safety, yet because her heart is still in Sodom, she dies along the way. She doesn't want to miss out. Sodom was more important to her than even her life. FOMO has a high price. It's costs us God's will and best. Instead of FOMO, we want to develop **NOMO FOMO** (No More fear of missing out).

1. FOMO only grows. FOMO isn't something you just outgrow. As we get older, our choices multiply, but so do our fears that we could be missing out on something amazing. FOMO is a sin for many reasons.

Like most sins it grows. James 1:13-15 warns of sins' progression, *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."*

Often we're like the guy who was on a new diet and he was really struggling. He had to go downtown and as he started out, he remembered that his route would take him by the doughnut shop. As he got closer, he thought that a cup of coffee would hit the spot. But then he remembered his diet. And that's when he prayed, "Lord, if You want me to stop for a doughnut and coffee, let there be a parking place in front of the shop." He said, "Sure enough, I found a parking place right in front—on my seventh time around the block!" As Robert Orben said, *"Most people want to be delivered from temptation but would like it to keep in touch"* Like an ad guaranteeing that new clothes, cars, or houses will instantaneously make us happier, FOMO promises that a simple change is all it will take to fix our problems.

Please understand, there are desires that are good. God wants us to use our gifts. He wants us to have a healthy sense of goals and ambition. It's when this drive gets out of whack then we have a problem because...

FOMO breeds discontent. The discontented person looks around and says, "I deserve more than this." No wonder Benjamin Franklin (**picture**) declared, *"Contentment makes a poor man rich, discontent makes a rich man poor."* Discontent is a cancer of the soul. It eats away our joy, corrodes our happiness, destroys our outlook on life, and

produces a terminal jaundice of the soul so that everything looks negative to us. We can't be happy because we will not be happy. We can't be satisfied because we won't be satisfied.

FOMO breeds dissatisfaction. When you were a kid, did you believe in the tooth fairy? One 2nd grader had collected a fair amount of money from the "tooth fairy." Every time this little girl lost a tooth, her parents put it in a small envelope and put it under their daughter's pillow. And behold, in the morning, the tooth was gone and in its place was \$2. That was just great. Two dollars is a lot of money for a 2nd grader. At least it was until, one day this little girl visited a friend. Her friend was telling how she'd put her tooth under her pillow and found \$10 the next morning. The little girl then asked her friend's mother, "Mrs. Kraft, would you mind doing me a big favor? Would you please call my Mom and tell her which tooth fairy you use?"

God freed the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. He provided manna every day to feed them BUT it wasn't enough. They wanted more. Numbers 11:4-6: "*Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."*

FOMO breeds a fantasy of satisfaction. Since the beginning of creation, when the first creatures came from the hand of God, there's always been someone, somewhere, unhappy with his position in the universe. Someone has always wanted more and fantasizes what "more" will be like.

It began with an angel named Lucifer, the brightest star of the heavenly firmament. Lucifer wasn't satisfied to be the apex of God's creation. He wanted something more than his assigned position as the greatest of all created beings. His seething discontent caused him to lead a rebellion against God. It was the fantasy of wanting something more that led him do it.

And that's us. We think we're missing out so we want more. We imagine what it will be like. We picture it, feel it, even smell it. If we're young, we want to be older. If it's old, we want something new. If it's new, we want something newer. If it's small, we want something bigger. If it's big, we want something really big. If we have a \$100, we want \$200. If we have \$200, we want \$500. If we have an apartment, we want a condo. If we have a condo, we want a house. If we have a house, we want a nicer house. If we have a job, we dream of a better job with a bigger boss, better benefits, more opportunity, nicer people to work for, and more vacation time.

While there's nothing wrong with growth and improvement, it becomes a problem when FOMO results in a fantasy of satisfaction that results in discontent in the present and when...

FOMO breeds coveting. The Bible is filled with examples of coveting leading to other sins. 1 Kings 21 tells that King Ahab wanted the land that adjoined his property but it belonged to his neighbor, Naboth. Ahab offered to buy it for a reasonable price but Naboth didn't want to sell because the land had been in the family for a long time. Ahab is depressed over it all until his wicked wife, Jezebel assured him that she'd take care of everything. She had Naboth falsely accused of blasphemy and treason, and executed. Ahab was able to confiscate his land. Coveting birthed lying, murder, and theft.

A more modern example of this is from the end of the Civil War. John Wilkes Boothe (**pictures**), the man who assassinated President Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theater was the brother of one of America's most famous actors, Edwin Booth. John Wilkes Booth was consumed with jealousy. He bitterly coveted the popularity of his brother. He knew there was a growing hatred for Abraham Lincoln in certain regions of the United States. So he killed the President, thinking he'd become a national hero. The assassination of this beloved man started with covetousness of his brother's popularity.

Unfulfilled FOMO breeds anger & bitterness. Proverbs 27:4 says, "*Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?*" If you can't get what you think you're missing out, if you're desires are continually derailed, it usually results in anger. If you think others are getting what you think you're missing out on, it can enrage you.

Even monkeys get jealous and angry. Maybe you've seen the video of a fascinating experiment. A monkey goes berserk when it doesn't get the same reward as his pal when they do the same job. In the study, two monkeys are asked to do a job - handing a lab worker a small rock - for which one was given a piece of cucumber and the other is given a grape. The first time the monkey completes the required task he's compensated with a small chunk of cucumber and enjoyably eats it. But when he notices his pal getting a grape - obviously, valuable currency among primates - for doing exactly the same task he gets mad. Here's the clip (**Monkey video**).

Don't we do the same thing? When we have a perceived FOMO failure, we become angry. It can grow into bitterness. We must remember WHO is ultimately in control? God. So WHO are we really angry and bitter at? God.

2. No one and no age is immune from FOMO. Missing the boat, missing the bus, missing a spouse, missing a promotion, missing a stock tip, or missing a date with friends — we've all experienced missing out. The fear of missing out is a universal experience in the human condition.

Social media is a constant refresh of our comparisons with others and a constant recharge of our fears of missing out. Many of our worst phone habits are borne from FOMophobia. We want to know, we want to see, we want to Tweet. We don't want to be left out of the "cool kid conversation." We want to be "in the know," we want to hear the beeps and pings, and we want to refresh our feeds to make sure we aren't missing anything.

For the teenager FOMO drives them to be accepted. They'll do nearly anything to have friends. It's why addiction often begins during adolescence. Anyone can do drugs or booze. No one wants to miss out.

It starts very young. Christian author, Christina Embree, ([picture](#)) shares:

A 10-year-old boy I was working with was terribly unhappy with himself. "Why?" I asked. "Because I don't always get the best grades," he replied. "What's so important about getting the best grades?" I inquired. "If I don't," this sweet boy answered, "then I won't get into the best college." "And if you don't get into the best college?" "Then," with tears in his eyes, he replied, "I'll miss out on getting the best teachers, the best jobs, the best friends."

That fear of missing out will often lead to cohabitation or marrying someone you have serious misgivings about. It can lead to what's known as a *baby band-aid*, having a baby when there are serious issues in the marriage.

Middle age FOMO can motivate us to buy that dream house or dream car or new toy. Sometimes it breeds workaholicism. In 2007, Arianna Huffington ([picture](#)), media mogul, founder of *Huffington Post*, was on the phone and checking some emails when she collapsed at her desk. She later woke up in a pool of blood, a broken cheek bone, a cut over her eye. The cause of the collapse, simple exhaustion. About two-thirds of us are sleep deprived. Our priorities are out of balance. We're driven by FOMO.

How many mid-life crises are driven by FOMO? The marriage and spouse are discarded because they're in the way of our perceived better life.

Even the retirement years aren't immune. Remember the movie *The Bucket List* ([picture](#))? Both men are dying. They have a terminal illness. But they globetrot, sky dive and go see the world. At the very end they get it but they missed so much by trying to have *The Bucket List*. Finally, when they have so little time left, they spend time with their family. They missed so much of what truly mattered because they thought they were missing out. In one scene they visit the pyramids. What's in the pyramids? Dead people. They missed loving, living family and friends to see wealthy corpses.

3. We make inroads against FOMO with the most important relationship. During the summer of 2008, *New York Times* writer, Hal Niedzviecki ([picture](#)) decided to explore the brave new world of social media, specifically Facebook. He set up an account and dived in. He added friends quickly—people he'd known over the years and then relatives, friends of friends and even a few loose acquaintances. He had to admit it was a bit of a rush. He had a new, enhanced view of his place in the world.

So he was very close to having 700 online "friends," but he wondered how Facebook friends translated into traditional, real friendships. He decided to put it all to a test. So, he planned a Facebook party designed to help him convert digital friends into real, in the flesh friends. Niedzviecki invited all 700 of his connections to a local bar for a party. Facebook gives people the option of R.S.V.P. in three categories — "attending," "maybe attending" and "not attending." After a week, the responses stopped coming in and were ready to be tabulated. 15 people said they were attending. 60 said maybe. He figured about 20 would show up. It sounded pretty good. 20 potential new friends.

He was so excited. On the evening of the event, he showered, splashed on some cologne, dressed nicely and headed to his event at a neighborhood watering hole and waited, and waited, and waited. Eventually, one person showed up. He ended up chatting with his new "potential" friend, Paula, a friend of a friend. They made a little awkward small talk and she finally left. After she left, he renewed his vigil. He sat there alone until almost midnight, nursing his drink, wondering where the other 700 were. "700 friends," he wrote, "and I was drinking alone."

The Psalm most of us know by heart, the 23rd actually addresses FOMO very powerfully: *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear*
no evil,
for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Have you ever considered how personal Psalm 23 is? Our culture is very individualistic. The ancient culture in which this psalm was written was communal and tribal. Yet, Psalm 23 is written in a very personal tone. Because when you follow God, when you come to know Jesus as the Great Shepherd, and have a relationship with Him, He has a

very personal, heart-to-heart relationship with you as His child. You're adopted into His family. He parents you and personally looks after you in a very individual way.

This is important to remember when you feel that you're going to miss out on living a life of significance and purpose. Your purpose with God is personalized. Let me share *two wonderful phrases of* encouragement.

When you follow the voice of the Shepherd, He leads you in His pathway for your life. God has a particular pathway for you to follow and His pathway is always significant. He leads us in "*paths of righteousness for His name's sake,*" and His name is great. God exists to amplify His name. He brings glory to Himself through our stories. He uses our lives. He uses our brokenness and our healing, our experiences of pain and recovery, our experiences of sin and repentance and forgiveness and washing and cleansing. He uses all of that to bring Himself glory.

Sometimes we think of God's pathway as this unique individual career path, or a certain school, or a certain spouse. We boil "God's will" down to specific choices. But it isn't so much about the things that you do or the things you achieve or the success you find.

It's much more about Him leading you in paths of righteousness. Meaning, His pathway is more about who you're *becoming* than about what you're *doing*. When you follow the voice of the Shepherd, His pathway for you is for you to become more like Jesus. You grow in holiness and righteousness, and you get to know Him and go deeper in your walk with Him.

If you're following the voice of the Shepherd and walking in the paths of righteousness that He's laid down for you, you're becoming what He wants you to become. You're getting closer to Him and recognizing the voice of the Shepherd more and more. You don't have to make all of the right decisions.

What does all this have to do with FOMO? If you follow Him, you're not going to miss His purpose for you. God is bigger than all of your biggest mistakes. He's in charge and knows where He's taking you.

God not only leads you in the right pathway, He leads you at the right pace. We feel a sense of panic if we don't see and fulfill His purposes for our lives as fast as possible. But the Shepherd doesn't just lead me, He leads me beside still waters. He wants us to divert daily by finding a few minutes every day to get alone with Him.

The Shepherd builds rhythm into our path. The fact is, God sometimes wants to lead us by still waters. What we want in life is to go and go and go, and then to recharge quickly! We need an energy drink, or three, or six to get through the day. And then nighttime comes and we still have more to do.

Sometimes God just wants you to stop and find some time to be quiet. This isn't a guilt trip about finding more time to be quiet. It's just a matter of making different choices about the time we have and taking time to rest in God and to recharge.

Psalms 23 isn't so much about what to do, it's about Who we follow. The psalmist wants us to understand the identity of the Shepherd and to know Him. When you respond to Him, He leads you beside still waters. When you lean into Him and depend on Him, He restores your soul. He does that through His Word, His spirit, and His people. And that's the kind of life that will lead you into meaning and purpose. It brings Him glory and brings you joy...and you won't miss out on a thing because He's leading you.

Conclusion: Someone once said that fearful people look at their lives and narrate them through the lens of victimhood. Courageous ones narrate their lives through the lens of God's providence. God doesn't want us to live in FOMO. We must grow and live in NOMO FOMO. So, let me end with something so much better, yet so simple **L.I.F.E.** Because isn't that what FOMO steals from us, L.I.F.E.?

L-Listen to Jesus. He alone has the words of life (John 6:68). He's the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). "*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life...Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*" (Matthew 6:25).

I-Instruct your heart. Talk to yourself; don't listen to FOMO. "*...Be content with what you have, for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'*" (Hebrews 13:5). "*And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19).

F-Fast from feeding FOMO. Shut down social media, turn off the TV, throw the magazine away. We need to starve our covetous appetite. "*If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.*" (Matthew 18:9).

E-Engage in kingdom work. FOMO focuses on what we don't have. God wants us to look to the needs of others. A God-given antidote to covetousness is serving others. It means getting our eyes off ourselves and on to our neighbors. "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.*" (1 Peter 4:10).

Through **L.I.F.E.**, you will never miss out. If your trust is in the "Author of life" (Acts 3:15), "*all things are yours*" (1 Corinthians 3:21-22).

The Lord Jesus has purchased for us “*every spiritual blessing*” (Ephesians 1:3) and imperishable “*treasures in heaven*” (Matthew 6:20). No fantasy will ever deliver on the happiness that He promises us. We know this because no fantasy ever has. FOMO is a false fear. It’s time for us to live in NOMO FOMO. Are you in?