

SOCIAL MEDIA RESET

A 30-Day Guided Journey to
Unplug, Reconnect with God,
and Reclaim Your Joy

ALLIE MARIE SMITH

Advance Praise for *Social Media Reset*

With so much research tying social media overuse to increased depression, anxiety, and addiction, it's never been a better time for a guided journey to unplug. In *Social Media Reset*, Allie Marie Smith takes you by the hand on a thirty-day program that will boost your mood, calm your stress, and enhance your life. And what a beautiful life it can be when you aren't tethered to your devices.

DANIEL G. AMEN, MD Author of *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*

Allie Marie Smith has the voice of a wise guide, a relatable writer, and a compassionate friend. Her newest book is more than a rest from social media; it's also a reset for your soul that will help you realign with what matters most to you. Allie offers spiritual truth, mental health insights, practical strategies, and more in this little book that's sure to have a big impact on your life!

HOLLEY GERTH *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *You're Already Amazing* and *The Powerful Purpose of Introverts*

This book is such a radical joy journey! It should be annual required reading for every woman of every age who participates in social media. As a personal friend (and an adventure partner) of Allie's, I see firsthand the beauty of someone who puts social media in its place. Each chapter is relatable and filled with truth, and will make you want to run hard after good and beautiful things. Get this into the hands of every girl in your life who uses social media!

KATE MERRICK Author of *And Still She Laughs* and *Here, Now*

Did you know that if you spend a handful of hours on social media every day, it can add up to fifteen years of your life? It's time for a reset. You don't have to fill your time with constant scrolling and comparison. Start this journey with Allie instead. There's so much more God has for your life!

ARLENE PELLICANE Author of *Calm, Cool, and Connected* and host of the *Happy Home Podcast*

This book is a necessary wake-up call to silence the relentless noise of our screens and lean into the still, sacred presence of the Father. With tender wisdom, Allie unveils a vision for a life brimming with true peace, joy, and connection—not found in the glow of a screen but in the radiance of God’s love. For anyone longing to break free from digital distraction and cultivate a deeper, more vibrant intimacy with the Lord, *Social Media Reset* is a beautiful road map to renewal and reconnection.

BRITTANY MAHER Two-time bestselling author and founder of Her True Worth

Allie offers the honest yet compassionate guidance we all need to put down our phones and wake up to the beauty of life happening around us. *Social Media Reset* is timely, practical, and transformative. Do your soul a favor by reading this book and putting it into practice. You’ll be so glad you did.

ROBIN LONG Founder of Lindywell and author of *Well to the Core*

We have all heard about the mental, emotional, and relational costs of social media. But what do we do? Allie is both an inspiration and a guide as she teaches us how to not simply *think* about change but *practice* the change we long to experience around social media! If you’re looking for a resource that’s rooted in wisdom and offers practical steps toward lasting growth, look no further. After reading this book, I can confidently say that this is a book we all need *and* want!

NICOLE ZASOWSKI Marriage and family therapist and author of *What If It’s Wonderful?*

What Readers Are Saying

I'd known for a while that I was using social media to numb out, and I'd tried deleting these apps from my phone and taking breaks, but nothing changed . . . until this book. Each short chapter gently exposed the roots of my unhealthy relationship with social media, equipped me with a grace-filled perspective, and left me feeling refreshed and connected to God. This is the reset I was waiting for.

JENNA SPRADLEY

Before reading *Social Media Reset*, I found myself “quickly” checking social media all throughout the day. While reading Allie's book, I was convicted to examine my heart. I still have social media, but I've set healthy boundaries and I no longer have the desire to check it like I once did.

CHERI HULST

As a new, expectant mother, I was feeling extremely overwhelmed by the Instagram algorithms showing me what all new mothers “have to” have or do before baby comes. This book challenged me to really think about why and how I use social media, and how I can approach it differently moving forward. *Social Media Reset* offers a great mix of biblical truths and practical tips to help women in all life stages discern how they want to interact with social media and how else they can spend their time in a way that's aligned with purpose and value.

MOLLY HAYES

Reading this book and taking a break from social media was not just a reset—it was a transformative journey. Each day, I was invited to embrace a full and rich life, free from the distraction of social media, and rediscover my joy in a way I never thought possible.

BONNIE NICHOLS

In *Social Media Reset*, Allie shares her personal experiences and useful tips for taking a break from social media. This book paints a new and exciting picture of what a flourishing life can look like. As you embark on your own thirty-day social media reset, Allie will challenge you to pray more, reflect honestly, and live out truths from the Bible. This is a reset you don't want to miss!

DANIELLE CEKANOR



SOCIAL
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RESET



SOCIAL MEDIA RESET

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Unplug, Reconnect with God,
and Reclaim Your Joy

ALLIE MARIE SMITH



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To Paul, my surf cowboy.
Thanks for a life of laughter, adventure, and joy.
Here's to forever.

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INTRODUCTION

Is It Time for a Reset?

Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

The golden California sun kissed my face as I paddled through salty water on my ten-foot single-fin longboard. Dolphins danced in the distance, showing off with aerial twists and tricks. In a colony of six, brown pelicans gracefully glided three feet above the water, waiting for the right moment to completely submerge themselves and scoop up dozens of sardines for breakfast. I was enveloped by the beauty of our Santa Barbara coast, but rather than soaking in the splendor of it all, I was distracted and restless. My thoughts turned to another place—a pixelated, virtual world called social media. The refuge and peace the sea usually brought me were stolen by the chaos of a digital world I wasn't even in. Ironically, here I was in a perfect “Instagrammable” moment when the last thing I should be doing was thinking about Instagram, obsessing about Instagram. I was in a mental tug-of-war: part of me couldn't resist the pull of social media, and part of me wanted to quit altogether.

I should go off social media forever. But I'll miss out on so much, and I want to keep in touch with friends. I need to be on it for work and to grow my following if I want to publish another book. I should probably start making reels—they get a lot more views than just posts. Why doesn't she follow me back? I can't believe they didn't invite me to the rodeo. I want to

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buy that pair of cognac leather boots I saw in that ad. I can't believe I posted that selfie. People probably think I'm self-absorbed. But everyone posts selfies. No, I should take it down.

I appreciated how social media allowed me to reconnect with old friends and stay in touch with people. I enjoyed posting photos and sharing updates. But over time, as the features and algorithms changed and I continued to overuse it, I began to hate the way social media made me feel. It left me with feelings of inadequacy, making me discontent and self-conscious. It became a means through which I searched for connection and human approval but never found it. The comparisons it brought out made me fail to see the beauty and wonder in my life and kept me from being fully present with the people I love most.

With every uninteresting moment or lull in my day, my thumb would instinctively tap my apps in search of an addictive dopamine hit caused by the notification of a new like, comment, or friend request. I would compulsively toggle between all my social media apps and refresh my screen in search of another hit. I would often fall asleep to the endless scrolling of photographs posted by friends and strangers. If I woke up in the middle of the night unable to fall back asleep, I would hide my phone under the covers and turn onto my side away from my husband to not wake him while I scrolled until the drum of thousands of pixels rocked me back to sleep. The next morning, I would wake up, immediately reach for my phone, and open the apps to see what I had missed while the world was sleeping, and the cycle would start over again.

I knew something needed to change, but I didn't want to go off social media completely. I tried to create a healthier relationship with it. I would delete the app immediately after I posted a photo and caption so I wasn't tempted to obsessively check and recheck my posts to see if anyone had liked or commented on them. Then, I would redownload it from the app store the next time I wanted to post another photo. It went like this: Post. Delete. Redownload. Post. Delete. Redownload.

I give you this glimpse into what my relationship with social media became to reassure you that you're not alone if you can relate. It's a

common experience, but be encouraged, friend—this reset will help you break free from the obsession with social media and help you enjoy a better life.

As an introvert who thrives on having a peace-filled life, I think I am especially sensitive to the effects social media has on my mental well-being. The noise and chaos that come with it give my spirit a sense of angst and heightened anxiety. Even with the positive content I look at, I can often feel worse about myself and my life after using it. But when I'm unplugged and fully present in my life and the people and things I love, my spirit is at rest. I feel peaceful, grateful, and calm.

Over the past several years, I've set boundaries for myself that allow me to use social media in a way that mostly adds value to my life. I master it; it doesn't master me. Because I've really struggled with my mental health in the past, I do everything I possibly can to safeguard it. This is the number one reason behind my decision to minimally use social media. I also decided that being engrossed with and envious of others' lives is an insult to the God who gave me mine. I no longer fear missing out on what everyone else is doing, but I fear missing out on my own life. I'm also very intentional in my purpose for using social media. I enjoy using it to encourage others, keep up with friends, talk about my work, and share special moments of my life. Knowing my purpose for social media helps me avoid using it mindlessly.

I want to live digitally disconnected so I can be spiritually connected to God and my life. In addition to protecting my mental health, I believe using social media minimally will help me live a more productive life, accomplish my goals, and have deep relationships. Detaching from my phone helps me enjoy my life so much more—and makes me so much happier.

Even though I have overcome my social media addiction, I haven't arrived and still wrestle with it at times. There are many benefits to using social media, and it can add a lot of value to your life, which is why stepping away from it even for a little bit can be so difficult. But I promise that this thirty-day reset will improve your life. This journey will empower you to cultivate a more flourishing life, and at the end

of your reset, you will be inspired to implement your own boundaries with social media to help you thrive. I will share many options for boundaries in the back of the book that you can choose for yourself. By the end of this thirty-day experience, you will be empowered to take control of your technology and live a full, abundant life. Your best life is waiting for you off your phone, and this guided journey will help you find it.

How Did We Get Here?

While social media offers us the revolutionary ability to connect with anyone in the world virtually, it is questionable if these platforms have deepened our sense of true community and brought humanity closer together. We are hyperconnected but emotionally disconnected and isolated. We are digitally connected but more polarized than ever. It is possible that humanity has never been more anxious, afraid, divided, depressed, suicidal, and lonely.

The constant flow of notifications, likes, follows, and messages from social media give our brains hits of dopamine and cause the same kind of chemical reaction seen with food, gambling, and drugs. Through these dopamine hits and the infinite scroll, our phones have become like handheld slot machines. The thing about dopamine is that it doesn't last long, so it's easy to get addicted to finding it. Eventually, the dopamine hit you get over time lessens, which makes you want to use social media even more to get the same amount of pleasure. Before you know it, this dopamine-induced loop catapults you into an unhealthy dependency on it, and your happiness and quality of life suffer.¹

One of the most damaging components of social media for women is the chronic social comparisons it prompts. Comparison is a core part of human psychology that causes us to evaluate others, ourselves, and our external environment and circumstances. Comparison can inspire and motivate us to improve ourselves, but it can also give us a false bar for determining how we measure up, leading to either pride or insecurity and low self-worth.

Before the onset of modern media, we could only compare ourselves to people we knew in real life. But today, we can compare ourselves to the world's richest, most famous, and most beautiful people. Doing so lowers our self-worth, causes insecurity, and makes us feel discontent with our lives. While there is a trend to share more authentic content, the overall nature of social media is for it to be a highlight reel and showcase only the best parts, which never reflects reality. We compare ourselves not only to celebrities and influencers but to friends and acquaintances—and specifically, to the highly curated aspects of their lives. These well-known, timeless words stand true: “Comparison is the thief of joy.”

A Destructive Toll

We are experiencing an unprecedented and preventable, technologically induced mental health crisis. The onset of social media has coincided with steep increases in anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide among young users, especially girls.²

Social media users access an average of 6.7 accounts a month and spend about two hours and twenty minutes daily on social media platforms.³ Thirty-nine percent of US online users admit to feeling the addictive pull of the digital rabbit hole that is social media, with 9 percent of these users agreeing completely with the statement “I am addicted to social media.” It appears a sizable proportion of users find the dopamine-fueled allure of social media difficult to resist.⁴

Teen girls spend more time on social media than adults and use it for an average of 5.3 hours a day, with many girls spending up to seven to nine hours on it daily.⁵ Including social media usage, teenage girls spend an average of approximately eight hours and two minutes on a screen.⁶ Given the clear evidence that excessive social media use worsens mental health, this means that girls and women can experience unnecessary mental health issues throughout their lives as a direct result of using social media.

While it can be harmful, social media in and of itself is not bad. It

has no morality. It's about how you use it, what you look at and share, and how much time you spend on it. Social media can be used for a tremendous amount of good. It can be fun and add value to your life if you use it intentionally, with wisdom. It can be used to build relationships, start a business, share God's love and hope with other people, bring attention to causes you care about, allow you to express yourself creatively, and make others feel important and less alone. It can add value to your life and even make you a better person if you use it carefully and with intentionality.

You might find a lot of joy and fun in using social media, but overuse and comparison will hurt your well-being and rob you of a fulfilling life. Given its upsides and downsides, you can decide what kind of relationship you want with it—if any—and how you would like to show up on it. You can use it in a way that brings you joy and brightens other people's lives, and then you can happily ditch all the junk that comes with it. This social media reset will help you break any dependence you may have on it, reset your brain's pathways, and help you gain perspective on its influence on your life. These next thirty days will give you time to step away from your screen, refresh your soul, and recover your life.

Do You Need a Refresh?

There are social media users, and there are people with an unhealthy addiction to social media, which is the group I used to be in. I knew social media had become a problem when it became hard to go without it, began to decrease my happiness, and became something I thought about obsessively throughout my day. What motivated me to cut back on my social media usage was thinking about how much time over the course of my life I would spend on it instead of doing more important things.

Before we get too far in this book, it will be helpful to get some perspective on your use of technology and social media by doing a

IS IT TIME FOR A RESET?

brief inventory. Grab your phone, go to its settings, and locate where you can check your screen time and app usage (if your phone has this feature).

Write down your average daily phone usage over the past week.

Write down the highest number of phone pickups or unlocks you have had over the past week.

Now, look at all your app usage and website activity. Write down the social media accounts you use, and next to each one, list the average daily time you spent on them during the last week.

SOCIAL MEDIA	TIME SPENT
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Add up the average daily time you have been spending on social media.

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Now multiply this number by thirty and write it down. This totals the extra free time you will have in the next thirty days.

Now, to figure out how many years you are on track to spend on social media until you turn eighty (the average lifespan of a woman), complete the formula on page 157, taking into account your daily average use. Or look at the estimates provided below (based on someone who began using social media at thirteen).

Keep track of how many hours you use social media in an average day. Write your answer here:

If you use social media for one hour a day, you will end up spending roughly three years of your life on social media.

If you use social media for two to three hours a day, you will end up spending roughly six to eight years of your life on social media.

If you use social media for four or more hours a day, you will end up spending roughly eleven or more years of your life on social media.

Write down other apps or websites you frequently visit and list the time you have recently spent on each one.

Apps/Usage:

IS IT TIME FOR A RESET?

Write down your goals for your phone usage over the next thirty days, which will not include time on social media (since you will not be on it).

Goals:

Total phone usage:

Number of pickups or unlocks:

Time spent on non-social media apps and websites:

If you have a phone and social media addiction, this reset is going to be hard, but I know you can do hard things, and this time away can change your life. It will be worth it, and you won't regret it. Be warned that you might experience withdrawal. For several days or even weeks,

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you will probably find yourself instinctively reaching for your phone and tapping the screen to access your accounts. You might feel restless or irritable when you can't access them. You might find yourself experiencing uncomfortable feelings such as boredom, sadness, and anxiety, which social media has temporarily soothed in the past. This is normal and to be expected, so don't be hard on yourself. Learn to sit with these emotions and deal with them in healthy ways. As your reset unfolds, you will experience a new sense of freedom and calm.

Here are some tips to set you up for success. First, ensure you have your username and password for all of your social media accounts. Then, delete the apps from your phone and other devices (you can redownload them after this reset). If you are tempted to access them, ask a trusted friend or family member to change your password. After thirty days, you can redownload the apps. Do everything you can to make it impossible to access your accounts. If you slip and check your social media, have grace with yourself and start again. Just do the best you can.

Consider putting the Bible app where your social media accounts used to be so you begin to tap it instead. When you have the compulsion to check your accounts, call a friend, go on a walk, journal, or do something fun for yourself. Every time you do something else that's more positive and life-giving, your happiness muscles will be strengthened, and you will have more joy.

Set yourself up for success by doing this thirty-day life-changing experience with as many friends as possible. Pause here and text them right now to invite them to join you. This will give you accountability and create space to cultivate memories and meaningful face-to-face relationships. Get together for dinner, grab a coffee, go on walks, and have memorable experiences together that foster a genuine community you won't find online.

Avoid the temptation to swap out the time you've been spending on social media for other types of media, which will likely also negatively affect your well-being and distract you from this transforming experience. These types of media can include gaming websites, YouTube and

other video streaming and photo-sharing sites like Pinterest, games on your phone, and excess TV shows and movies.

I recognize that many people rely on social media to support their businesses and careers. If you believe it is necessary to be on it for professional reasons, you can still choose to take a break from using it for personal and non-professional purposes. But to get the absolute most out of this life-changing experience, you'll want to take thirty days away and stop using it cold turkey.

The goal is to spend as little time on your phone and all media as possible and spend the time you get back doing more restorative activities offline that improve your well-being and cultivate true community. This would be an awesome time to try new things like baking sourdough bread, taking up a new hobby, writing poetry, playing a new instrument, volunteering, or doing something life-giving to fill up all the hours you'll get back. Think about the people, things, hobbies, and activities that bring you the most joy, and fill your extra time enjoying these.

Since phone and social media use involve the excessive movement of our fingers and hands, think about some tactile things you can do to keep them busy constructively. For example, maybe try watercolor, crocheting, or jewelry making, or consider writing letters to your friends and loved ones. I think you will find doing and creating things with your hands is more fulfilling than mindlessly scrolling on your phone.

Take an audit of your life. What can stay? What needs to go? See if there is anything else that will set you up for success in these next thirty days. If you pour your heart into this journey and ditch as many bad habits, hang-ups, negative relationships, and distractions as possible, it will be a transformative experience of personal growth that will change your life forever.

Craving Something Deeper

You are made for so much more than the empty life the world offers. The world of social media isn't where we were designed to live. Our fingers were not made to swipe a pixelated screen and watch other people's

lives unfold. They were made for planting flowers in the dirt, making a meal for a hurting friend, combing through a child's hair, pointing at shooting stars, collecting seashells, creating art, thumbing through the pages of a book, helping those in need, working hard, and holding the hands of those you love. Your best life will never be found on your phone. We are so far removed from the life we've been created for, and it's making us sick.

We might think the mental health crisis today is only a result of social media, but that's just part of the story. Something deeper and more profound is happening. As we've become fixated on our phones, we've forgotten God. We have lost our way spiritually. God has been pushed out of our world, and we are suffering because of it.

More of ourselves and less of God is not working for us. As we have turned away from God, we have turned inward and to social media, where too often we have found emptiness and despair. We have failed to find answers to the fundamental questions of life, such as why we are here and the purpose of our lives. This has led to an identity crisis and a failed search for meaning. But as we return to God and find our identity, worth, and purpose in Him, we come alive. We discover our purpose; we find true connection; we cultivate hope; we overcome fear and build lives we love. Getting off social media will likely make you happier, but it won't fundamentally change your life. Only God can do that.

A Journey toward a Flourishing Life

I need to be honest with you. Some of what I share will be hard to hear. I'll be giving you some tough love. I only do this because I care about you and because I have experienced the joy and freedom that's found on the other side, and I want you to be able to do the same. I know firsthand that social media can be a real soul killer, and I want you to be happy and have the most amazing life possible. You are capable of more than you know, and you can do this reset even though it might be hard and countercultural.

This book is my attempt to inspire you to wake up to the gift of

your life and live it to the fullest without any regrets. More than a social media reset, this book is a guide to living a really good life. I want you to get excited about your life and build a life you love. I want you to have the best life you can, but you can't have it if you're addicted to your phone. This experience is about falling asleep to comparison and digital distractions so you can live wide awake to the beauty of your precious and fleeting life. It's a dare to disappear on social media for thirty days and be mysterious online so you can live wide awake offline. It's an opportunity to disentangle yourself from the digital world and walk on a path toward a life overflowing with goodness, joy, and beauty.

Through my experience coaching women, I have found that we can only make limited progress on our journey toward spiritual and personal growth while we overuse social media. But when we take a break from it, wholeheartedly invest in our lives and relationship with God, and commit ourselves to personal growth, our breakthroughs are remarkable. As you wholeheartedly commit yourself to this journey, I believe you can experience tremendous transformation that will enrich your life.

Whatever your beliefs are about God, faith, spirituality, or Jesus, I hope you will join me with an open heart and mind. I hope you will leave this experience a different woman—one who is more alive and full of joy than she was before. To do so, I am sharing the truth and wisdom I have learned from the bestselling and most life-changing book in human history—the Bible.

God saved me from the pit of depression and brought me into His marvelous light. After hitting rock bottom as a young woman, I was transformed by the perfect love of Jesus, and I've been imperfectly following Him ever since. I see every second of my life as sacred, which is why I'm so serious about this social media thing.

Because of this, I can't just give you fluffy, feel-good words of my own making without sharing God's radical love and purpose for you. The principles, ideas, and wisdom I share are from this timeless instruction manual for human flourishing. I know the Bible can be intimidating and overwhelming, but I really think you'll find the words I share from it life-giving. Even if you're not interested in faith or spiritual

things, you'll still get life-changing wisdom. If you want to learn more about God and my personal story, you can read my book *Wonderfully Made: Discover the Identity, Love, and Worth You Were Created For*.

In addition to a spiritual journey, this is a life-coaching experience without costing thousands of dollars. As a certified life coach and mentor to hundreds of girls and women, I will share principles and practical ideas that will propel you to your full potential and allow you to experience unprecedented breakthroughs. This wisdom has allowed me to go from a girl who didn't want to live anymore to a woman who can't wait to get out of bed.

How to Use This Book

I know the thought of going off social media for thirty days might be daunting, but just take it one day at a time. If you miss a day, no worries—just pick up where you left off. Each day, I will discuss a different topic and share principles to help you flourish in that area of your life. If possible, try to read in the morning so you can spend the rest of your day reflecting on that day's content. Plan a set-aside time and consider making a designated space to read, pray, and reflect. Grab a pen and take all the time you need to answer the reflection questions. Think about how you can make this experience fun. Maybe cozy up in your favorite quiet place with your favorite morning drink in your favorite mug. Light a candle, listen to your favorite playlist, or do whatever you can to make it as enjoyable of an experience as possible. As I mentioned earlier, I recommend you do this reset with friends so you can keep one another accountable and enjoy your reset together.

In the first appendix, there is a list of 75 things you can do instead of using technology, so if you find yourself unsure how to replace your phone habit, turn there throughout this reset! Also in the back of the book you will find a social media quiz to help you gauge what kind of impact social media is having on you. You will also be able to use a formula to determine how many days and years of your life you are on track to spend on social media, given your current average usage. These

exercises can give you a fuller picture of social media's impact on your life and well-being. There is also a well-being assessment that will help you get an idea of how you are doing mentally, spiritually, and physically. I encourage you to complete this well-being assessment before day 1 and after day 30.

I also include a list of several ideas for social media boundaries. You can decide which boundaries to implement moving forward if you want to continue using social media. Lastly, there are additional reflection questions you can answer. I encourage you to take advantage of this content to get the most out of your journey.

A Brave Decision and a Better Life

You'll never find what you're really looking for on your phone. A better life awaits you if you don't conform to the social media circus. On the other side of this journey is your best life. It will never be an easy life free of hardship and suffering, but it will be a life worth living. Peace, joy, and contentment are yours for the taking as you throw yourself into this experience and lean into this journey of returning to God and reclaiming your joy. It's time to say goodbye to the emptiness and disappointments of social media and say hello to the better things of life. If you do this journey wholeheartedly, draw near to God, and begin to live out the principles in this book, your life won't be the same after these next thirty days.

Joy is a courageous decision to choose the kind of life you want to live. This decision empowers you to pursue the abundant life you were made for. Choosing joy requires hard work and sacrifices. If you want to have joy like no one else, you have to live like no one else. Joy is not something that will find you; it is a treasure you must search for daily. You must fight for it from sunrise to sunset. The fact that you picked up this book and are embarking on this journey to change your life shows that you are brave and can do hard things.

This journey is about unfollowing the world and following the ways of God, which leads to a flourishing life. This is your chance to reset

SOCIAL MEDIA RESET

your life and recover it—or truly find it for the first time. This is a chance to discover the identity and the purpose you've been created for. It's a call to return to God, yourself, and the people and things you love. I'm so glad you are here, and I hope every word will help you discover how loved and valuable you are and the amazing life you've been created for. Are you ready for a reset and a new beginning? Are you ready to get your life back? Your joy? Let's go, friend.



DAY 1

RESTORING YOUR SOUL

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

How are you really doing? Are you okay, fine, good, busy? These four-letter words slip from our mouths on autopilot like a car on cruise control. We utter them at checkout stands, in church pews, and in text messages to our friends next to smiling heart emojis. If we were honest, the words we'd sometimes like to use are *not okay*, *terrible*, *surviving*, and *exhausted*. These social pleasantries will never reveal the true state of your soul; there is always something deeper beneath its surface. Maybe you feel frazzled, strung out, burned out, and worn out. Maybe social media has made you feel like a stranger to your life. Maybe you feel like you are wasting the precious borrowed breaths God has given you.

We don't want to bother anyone with our true emotions or the soap opera of our lives, so we stay tight-lipped, put on a slight smile, and hide behind pretty and polished photos on our social media accounts.


Distraction, perfectionism, and addiction are how we cope. You might not feel like you can bring your burdens to anyone, but you can bring them to God. You might not feel like you can be your real self and share your real struggles and real emotions, but you can be real before God. He'll never block, mute, or unfollow you. You will never tire Him out with your true emotions—even those you think are ugly.

C. S. Lewis said, “The soul is but a hollow which God fills.”¹ When you return to God, He promises to bring your soul back to life: “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul” (Psalm 23:2-3, ESV). *The Message* interpretation of Jesus’ words in Matthew 11:28 says, “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” God wants you to live freely and lightly in His presence, to keep company with Him, to walk in the rhythms of grace, and to receive a real rest.


But how can we keep company with God within the company of hundreds of thousands, millions of people we’ve never met in an artificial, virtual, pixelated world? We weren’t made to watch strangers, acquaintances, celebrities, influencers, and even our friends’ lives unfold in perfectly curated filtered photos and poorly produced fifteen-second video clips. We weren’t made to listen to thousands of voices sharing their innermost feelings and documenting every moment of their day. We were made to be wide awake to our messy, ordinary, extraordinary lives.

So how is your soul, really? When we don’t care for our souls, we fill the hollowness with endless scrolling, toxic relationships, too much food, drugs, alcohol, shopping, TV shows, movie marathons, and the addiction of our choice. But your soul wasn’t made to be immersed in the vanities and shallow things of life; it was designed for depth and meaning.

The world can't offer us peace. To find rest for our souls, we must undress them of the ill fittings of this world: busyness, stress, envy, consumerism, chaos, strife, and toxic people and things. Instead, we must put on God's peace and saturate our souls with His living light. When we get weary again, we can run away from the clamoring noises of the world and sprint to His presence and find rest. We can rise again with the sun of a new day to find new mercies every morning. We can clothe ourselves with God's unceasing and steadfast love (see Lamentations 3:22-23, ESV) and walk in His grace-filled ways on the path to peace and fullness of joy. God has set eternity in our hearts, and heaven is where our souls will finally be restored (see Ecclesiastes 3:11), but even in this weary world, He is our refuge and can give us peace.



*How is your soul,
really?*



God's love is wide and deep, vast and never-ceasing. He lavishes it upon you and calls you His child, friend, masterpiece, and the crowning creation of all He has made. He is "the fountain of life" (Psalm 36:9), a fountain we are thirsting for. He stands ready and waiting to restore your soul, which needs urgent and tender care. We need more of God and less of the world. We must put on stillness, silence, solitude, worthiness, and grace. Then, we'll move freely and lightly, like a day spent in our favorite buttery leggings.

Your Creator wants you to marvel at the miracle of your existence in wonder, to slow down and guzzle in every good and perfect gift He bestows on you. There is no such thing as an ordinary life. You have been lovingly and wonderfully created with awe, dignity, and immeasurable worth. You have been made to have a soul at rest.

You don't have to clean yourself up or tidy your soul to come to God. This is your invitation to unearth the life you've been made for, to live freely and lightly in His presence. It's an invitation only you can accept. This is your one shot at life. What do you want to do with it? What does your soul need this hour, this season, and what is it searching for?

Reflect

Circle all the words that describe the state of your soul:

Joyful, Peaceful, Content, Fulfilled, Harmonious, Compassionate, Enlightened, Grateful, Serene, Connected, Purposeful, Radiant, Liberated, Balanced, Loving, Blissful, Vibrant

Tattered, Weary, Desolate, Broken, Empty, Irritable, Wounded, Struggling, Sorrowful, Burdened, Lost, Fragmented, Drained, Melancholic, Anxious, Fearful

Use one adjective to describe your mental frame of mind when you wake up.

Use one adjective to describe what frame of mind you want to be in when you wake up.

What are the burdens of your life that you need to bring to God?

Pray

God, thank You for coming to rescue me from this world. Thank You for Your promise to restore my life and renew my soul. Help me run away from the chaos of this world; teach me to keep company with You, put on Your rhythms of grace, and live whole and free in Your loving presence.

Act

Do one small compassionate self-care practice today that will renew your spirit.