

## STUDY GUIDE

**Monday, September 7 – Read Luke 10:27, Matthew 6:19-21, Galatians 1:10** Most everyone seems to agree that life is getting busier, crazier, and more frantic with each passing day. We're bombarded by more information than we know how to process—news, ads, commercials, blogs, tweets, music, pics, and more ads. Crazier still is that we have more devices, programs, and apps than ever before to make life easier. And unquestionably these new innovations help make our lives better. We can text with close friends halfway around the world and let them know we're praying for them. We can share pictures of our daughter's birthday party with relatives thousands of miles away. We can check our 401k, order a pizza, or book a hotel at the beach. And yet with all the upsides, these conveniences we "can't live without" create many unintended problems. We love technology and all it offers. But we also hate it. We hate our dependence on it and how it causes us to get out of balance with what matters most to us. Although many factors contribute to why we hate it, I'm convinced it's mostly because social media makes everything all about us. We're sucked into measuring our lives by who follows us and how many online friends we have. We want to believe we're more than the total number of clicks on our last post, but we still check to see how many we have. Oddly enough, however, the more we focus on ourselves, the less satisfied we feel. And the more we're consumed with the things of this earth, the more we feel empty on the inside. The reason is simple. We were created for more—way more. We were not created for earth—but for eternity. We were not created to be liked but to show love. We were not created to draw attention to ourselves but to give glory to God. We were not created to collect followers but to follow Christ. Social media and technology are great, but it's time to be honest about our #Struggles and to regain control of the amazing tools that technology provides us. It's time to put technology back in its place. It's time to love God with our whole hearts.

**Tuesday, September 8 – Read Philippians 4:11-13, Colossians 3:15-17, 1 Timothy 6:6-7, Psalms 100:1-5** Never before in history have so many people had so much, yet felt so dissatisfied. Some sociologists point to technology and social media as significant factors in our constant unhappiness. We are the first people in the history of the world who can peek inside the lives of others in real time. We carry tiny media powerhouses in our pockets that let us voyeuristically follow other people around, through all of their check-ins and pictures and video clips. And if what we're seeing in the lives of others seems better, more interesting and more fulfilling than our own lives, we feel like we're missing out. Of course, that feed we're watching may not necessarily reflect the whole reality. Most people generally put their best foot forward, showing you only the things they want you to see. Photoshopped and cropped, filtered and edited, what we see online makes our own reality seem dingy and dull. No wonder we often feel so dissatisfied. No matter how much we have, it can't compare to what we need the most. Perhaps no one has understood this better than the Apostle Paul. When Paul was in a prison in Rome, he wrote about his experiences and what he had learned. He basically said, "I've gone without the things that I need before. But I've also had times when I had more than enough. Life happens in seasons. I've had good seasons where everything was going well, and I've had hard ones where nothing went my way. But through them all, I've learned that there's one secret to being content: I can do anything and everything—not by my own power—but through Christ. Jesus gives me the strength to handle anything that comes my way." You will always battle with discontentment until you let Christ be all that you need. You can chase after everything you've ever wanted and get it all. It won't be enough. At the end of the day, every day, you'll still feel empty.

**Wednesday, September 9 – Read Acts 4:11-12, Matthew 6:1, Haggai 1:3-9** In the pursuit of fulfillment in life, technology and social media allow you to capture every moment along the way. You're not only on the fast track to success, but you get to show selfies at each lap along the way. Which only confirms how up-to-the-nano-second cool you are. So get the biggest data plan you can, and collect wi-fi passwords at every stop. Check in at all the cool places. Share every inspirational thought you have, and every joke. Snap lots of pics. Get video clips, too, of course. And never stop uploading the whole show to the Cloud as you go. Post everything online for the whole world to see. Pile up Likes and Friends and Followers until it's all just one frenzied blur. Hustle until your real life exceeds your

dreams. And finally, once you've reached the summit, I can guarantee you this one thing: your longing for more never stops. Like the latest technology, your achievements are outdated overnight. Why? How could that be possible? Because you were not created for earth. You were created for eternity. And there is nothing on this earth that can ever satisfy that spiritual longing you feel inside—even if you can collect it all. Nothing. Many of us have heard this before: "God makes a Christ-shaped void inside every person." Nothing outside of a living relationship with Christ can ever fill the emptiness of that ache inside your heart. Your scavenger hunt for success will never be enough. Christ is what you're searching for. He is your source. He is your strength. He is your sustainer. He is your joy. He is your contentment. He is your all and all. He's everything that matters. When Christ is all you have, you'll finally realize that Christ is all you need. Christ. Is. All. You. Need.

**Thursday, September 10 – Read Proverbs 15:15, James 3:13-18, Matthew 6:31-33** As long as you keep searching, comparing, and envying what you don't have, you'll never have enough. Only when you rely on God and practice gratitude for all he provides will you be able to overcome the dissatisfaction that comes from envy. Envy causes you to resent God's goodness in other people's lives and to ignore God's goodness in your own. For people always comparing themselves to others—you know, checking their status and updating their profile—every single day brings more trouble. There's no way for them to see their blessings because the glass is always half-empty. But people who trust God as the source of their happiness have no desire to compare themselves to anyone else. They know that he loves them and remains in charge of their lives, through pleasant circumstances as well as painful ones. So enjoy what God has given you, instead of longing for what you don't have. Be thankful for what God has given you, instead of creeping on someone else's Instagram: "Oh, I wish I had their life!" Guess what? They're longing for your life in ways you don't even know about! Enjoy what you do have rather than desiring what you don't have. With Christ's help, you can win the battle of constantly comparing yourself and envying others. Social media should be a place to see what's happening in the lives of those you love—not the place to make you envy. Let's rejoice with those who rejoice. Let's cultivate gratitude. Let's worship our God, not because he gives us everything we want, but because he is worthy of our praise. Let's worship him because we've learned the secret of being content, whether we're living in plenty or living in want. That secret is that we can do all things through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who gives us strength. Because he is all we need, let's pursue him with our whole hearts. Only in him will we find true joy and true contentment. Because only he is life, and only he truly satisfies.

**Friday, September 11 – Read Romans 12:9, 2 John 1:12, Philippians 2:1-4** If we're honest, we all know that while our ability to stay in touch with other people in our lives is greatly enhanced by technology, it's not the same thing as actually being together and sharing the important events of our lives. It's one thing to watch the live video of a child's first birthday party; it's another to actually taste the cake, hold the little one, feel her breath blowing out the single candle, and hear her laughter in your ear as you hold her close. As much as our tech-providers and gadget companies want us to believe that we can stay connected wherever we are and whatever we're doing, it's not the same as being there. Technology's impact on our ability to relate, to communicate, and to connect with other people also has some unintended negative consequences. If we want to be good stewards of the amazing capabilities that technology affords us today, we have to navigate this very carefully. While it's undeniable that we can connect with others in so many meaningful ways, if we invest too much of our lives into social media, and especially if we do so with selfish motives, then that can actually hurt our relationships, even robbing us of that which God values most. It really all depends on how we choose to use it. At our church, we've absolutely seen the fruits of doing ministry through social media and other forms of technology. I would even go so far as to say it's okay to love it—but we have to manage it. We have to make sure technology is enhancing our relationships, not replacing them. We need to ensure our ability to communicate doesn't prevent us from talking more while actually saying less. We must focus on loving other people more than Liking them. Today, instead of commenting on a loved one's latest pics on Pinterest, write them a note or postcard—you know, by hand—and let them know how much you appreciate them. Maybe you call someone rather than text. Or perhaps you drop by for a quick visit instead of calling. Rather than relying on technology as the conduit for your relationships, engage at a deeper level. Let others see your love by your presence, not your wi-fi coverage.

**Saturday, September 12 – Read Romans 12:9-10, Hebrews 10:24-25, Matthew 18:20** Presence is powerful. Yet why do so many of us settle for something less? If you want to improve the quality of your relationships, then focus on one person at a time. If you want to see God's Spirit present in the lives of those around you, then stop multi-tasking 24/7. If you want to show others the love of Christ, then make your presence known. Actually get together with people. Be physically present with one another. Not digitally. Not virtually. Not just in the same chat room, but in the same living room. Make the time to love people face to face, not just keyboard to keyboard. If you want to get really crazy, don't set a time limit on how long you'll hang out or what you'll discuss. In other words, just engage with someone. Give them your full attention. When someone we love is hurting or needs encouragement, most people might say it would be nice to just tap out a text to them: "Hey, just thinking about you" or "Praying for you! Let me know if I can help." But we can do better than that. If we're followers of Jesus, and we want others to know us by how much we love one another, surely we could think of something else we could do. You know that device you use to text with? It might be hard to remember, but what's something else you can do with that device? That's right! You can actually talk on that thing. It's a lot harder, but maybe you could consider scrolling through your contacts, finding that person, tapping their number, and actually calling them on the phone. But what would you say? It's just so awkward. I'd recommend starting with this: "Hey, how are you doing?" And if you want to get really crazy, then sit down with them, face-to-face. It could be for lunch or for coffee, but it doesn't have to be. Just ask them a few questions, and then just listen to them. If it seems appropriate, maybe you pray with them or give them a hug. Show them the respect of your undivided attention for the time you're together. Show them how much you care. Your presence is powerful – even if it is 6 feet apart!

**Sunday, September 13 – Read 1 John 3:17-18, John 13:34-35, James 1:25-27** Have you heard of FOMO? It's a real thing. In fact, FOMO—Fear Of Missing Out, #fomo—was just added to the latest edition of a popular English language dictionary. There's an entire generation of people who are constantly worried they're going to miss something. With the accessibility technology and social media provide, they feel pressured to stay connected all the time. But ask yourself: at the end of your life, is it really going to matter how many Likes you got? Do you honestly believe that you're going to be lying on your deathbed one day, wishing you'd posted another funny cat video? What you really should be afraid of is missing out on the person in front of you. When you stay glued to your phone or tablet, that's what you're missing out on. You may be missing out on your children growing up. You may be missing out on enjoying an intimate marriage. You may be missing out on deep friendships filled with meaning. Your fear that you're going to miss out on something may cause you to miss out on what matters most! Life will not be about how many Likes you got. It will be all about how much love you showed. The only way people will know that you are a follower of Jesus is by how well you love other people. They won't know that you're his disciple by how many followers you have. They won't know that you're his disciple by how many Likes you get. They won't know that you're his disciple by how quickly you are to respond to emails. Believe it or not, they won't even know that you're his disciple by how many Bible verses you post! No, they will know that you're his disciple when they can see your love being acted out. When you get involved in the lives of other people, when you care for them right where they are, when you open up your heart and you do life with them—that's when they'll see something in you that they really want. Others won't know you by your Likes. They will know you by his Love.

*Adapted from: <http://craiggroeschel.com/>*