

SEPT - OCT 2022  
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Vol. 24 No. 5

# # # FOMO

# Fear of Missing Out



# LOOK

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Look, the birds are being  
provided

So why are you wearied  
my soul?

Look the wildflowers are being  
cared for

Why are you worried my soul?

Dont drown in distress

Seek first that is crucial

See the obedience of the  
winds and waves

Why is your faith so small,  
so fragile?

Look, the oceans are being  
ruled

So who are you to think you  
are lofty?

Dont lean on your own  
intelligence

Humble yourself before thy  
Lord

Look, the hills and mountains  
are singing

Why are you silent still?

Look, even the rocks are  
praising

So why dont you delight  
in Him?

Dont be quiet

Let your voice resound

Look to the Lord

Not the battleground.



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# First Things First

FOMO or 'Fear of Missing Out,' is the anxiety and worry that something exciting will happen and you won't be a part of it. Fear of missing out is common in our fast-paced world where you have too many attractive things around and you don't want to miss anything.

Today social media culture has deceived people with too many fake realities that we want to identify with, the seemingly ideal lives, which makes us discontent with what we are and always striving to be somebody else! This leads to unnecessary stress and anxiety pulling us to always stay connected with what others are doing. In other words, a feeling of insecurity creeps in if we miss anything!

According to Brene Brown, FOMO's greatest weapon is comparison, it kills gratitude and replaces it with 'not enough'. We tend to say YES when we mean NO and every time we say YES because we are afraid of missing out, we say NO to something. That something may be a big dream or a short nap.

King Solomon, the wisest and the richest King tried all the pleasures of life - without missing out on anything - just to find that everything is meaningless and chasing after the wind! (Ecc. 2.10,11). Yet he concluded that remembering the Creator while in youth is the antidote to life.

God created us in His image with self-worth and our identity is in Christ! If we are sure of this truth, we will have the joy of missing out on certain things to gain what is important and purposeful. Setting our priorities right and saying NO to the time-stealing activities to fit into the crowd will give us a life of contentment; for "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Tim. 6. 6). First things first gives us a sense of fulfilment in life.

I invite you to read more on the topic by a variety of writers with different perspectives. A glimpse of it is here:

"FOMO makes life increasingly miserable as one progresses to . . ."

"FOMO is often born out of a sense of insecurity . . ."

"Daniel was one to experience JOMO - the Joy of Missing out . . ."

"What if they become closer to each other and I'm left as an acquaintance?"

and much more as you unfold the pages!



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## DEPOSITING SUBSCRIPTIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

A/c Name: **UESI Publication Trust**

A/c No: 1229135000004997

Bank: Karur Vysya Bank,

Branch: Purasawalkam

IFS code: KVBK0001229

Inform details of deposit to  
campus.link@uesi.in

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**“Y**ou totally missed out!” This sentence apparently strikes fear and anxiety in the hearts of many teens more than anything else. The acronym that describes this, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) – is defined by a group of researchers “as the pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, ...characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing”

While studies indicate that FOMO is more prevalent in people whose ages range from 18 to 33, most of the youth indicated they felt anxious if they did not know what their friends were doing and more so if their friends were having fun or doing something more interesting

without them. Researchers have also highlighted a real correlation between the number of hours spent on digital technology (social media) and higher levels of FOMO leading to stress, anxiety, and depression. Social media causes us to keep our attention focused on what others are doing or experiencing – even those we do not know personally and from anywhere across the globe. The endless feeds and reels reinforce the need for our life to be filled with idealistic scenarios making it seem others are leading perfect lives. This has the potential to further redefine our identity, with constant comparisons leading us to lower levels of self-content. FOMO makes life increasingly miserable as one progresses to mid-life and beyond as the realization of lost



## Lead

opportunities with the passage of time hits harder. Inevitably, all of this has been shown to impact our mental health.

Though the acronym FOMO was coined in the early 2000s and research has linked it to social media, various biblical scholars have been right in pointing out that FOMO has its birthplace right in the garden of Eden. FOMO was the crafty Serpent's tactic to sabotage the relationship between God and man resulting in the fallen world with sinfulness abounding. Every day we are enticed by the empty pursuits of attaining levels of self-sufficiency where God will finally become unnecessary. The same underlying principles are even exploited in running successful marketing campaigns the world over!!

The word of God is timeless and relevant and offers us perspectives even on the aspects of FOMO and fallouts that we face today. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, narrated by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31, is a story that highlights the reversal of FOMO. The rich man has everything but Christ and after he dies, he realizes he has "missed out" on what was essential. In a world where relativism abounds, sin is celebrated, and with many deconstructing their faith, this

parable provides us the perspective that impacts us for eternity. The most important FOMO is that we do not miss out on knowing Christ, walking with Him, living for Him, and being the fragrance of Christ. We can also take comfort that in eternity, God makes up not only for whatever we genuinely "miss out" but also whatever loss or suffering we experience in this momentary life.

The wisest King, Solomon, confesses to not "missing out" and experiencing everything the world had to offer (Ecc. 2:3-4, 8-11). Finally, he concludes that being good, content (Ecc. 3:12,13), and fearing God (Ecc 12:13) is what matters in the light of eternity.

In a world of constant comparisons and onslaughts on identity, we need to be on a constant vigil and coach ourselves to enjoy our identity in Christ and not on our accomplishments, experiences, or what we have missed out (Phil 3:8). Instead of living our lives comparing ourselves with others, we are to enjoy our Identity in Christ in comparison to what we are without knowing Him. In addition, practicing the joy of being content in all circumstances (Phil 4:11b-13) can be the perfect antidote to anxiety and dissatisfaction. We can do this when we recognize that

God is Sovereign, and uses every aspect of our life for accomplishing His purposes and for His glory (Rom 8:28). His grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor 12:9) and His presence is promised in our lives (Mt 28:20). As John Piper says, “God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him”.

Jesus narrated several parables towards the conclusion of his public ministry that is recorded in Matt 24, 25 – the focus is on being faithful, wise stewards, even as we anticipate the Master’s return. We need to ensure we are investing and multiplying what the Lord has entrusted to us. In a world where we are constantly distracted with curated idealistic pursuits and accomplishments, we need to evaluate what matters in the sight of the master when He returns. Our plans, priorities, and pursuits need to be gospel-centered and missional, having a larger purpose than just pleasing ourselves.

It is also crucial to recognize that FOMO impacts our mental health. Counselors recommend the need to evaluate our social media usage, schedule technology breaks, mute all notifications, and pursue mindful practices where we ensure our complete focus on the task at hand. In a world of increased distractions and endless streams, the steward-

ship of our attention needs our focus and can be rewarding.

Just as the adage – “looks can be deceptive”, photos, reels, and seemingly idealistic lifestyles that we see can just be a trailer of high points and good times, but cannot provide us with comprehensive and accurate insight into every aspect of other’s lives.

Deeper, meaningful, personal relationships with family and friends need to be valued, prioritized, intentional, and cannot be traded for the virtual. The pandemic has led to an abundance of spiritual/biblical content online, which we can passively consume. This can make us weary in pursuing fellowship where we are to be challenged and sharpened as we do life together with His disciples and not in isolation (Heb 10:24, 25).

Being pragmatic enables us to realize that we can’t pursue or experience everything given our time constraints and priorities. While we bear the burden of constant intrusions, living wisely enables us to recognize that time is valuable and needs to be redeemed (Eph. 5:16). Instead of fighting FOMO, we can embrace reality by opting for JOMO – the joy of missing out. We need to define our lives by what we are doing rather than what we have





## Lead

missed out! The potential to spread the contagious disease of FOMO by heaping guilt on others for missing out on something we have already consumed and flaunting our relevance needs to be avoided too.

As we continue to address issues confronting us today, being salt and light, Christ-Centered, and shaped by scripture, we can seek to be relevant by taking the lead in addressing prevalent issues such as FOMO on our campuses. The trends and issues of the day are also

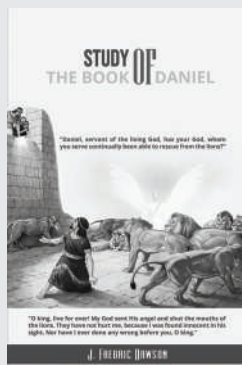
opportunities for us to share how the word of God has enabled us to overcome these in our lives. The impact of enhanced digital reliance, on our behavior and mental health, cannot be ignored. Sharing our struggles and finding strength through the fellowship that we enjoy with his disciples should help us find resilient scripture-based solutions. May God empower us to be those who understand the times, guiding us with the knowledge of how to respond and act (1 Ch 12:32).



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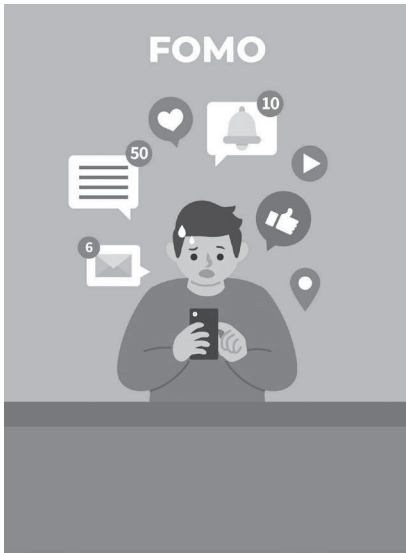
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## The First FOMO and the Courage To Miss Out

**B**rrring! Brrring! Kabir's hand instinctively stretched out seeking for his cell phone. He finds it and with one flick shuts off the alarm. Argh!! Why should the morning come so soon? His body screams, "sleep some more". But he knows it is time to get up. He picks up the phone and ...

We all know what Kabir does next! He checks out his social media page to see what happened while he slept. Kabir is not alone in this habit of starting the day with a scroll down the social media pages. It's the new morning ritual, but why do we do it? We may have our own reasons to justify this habit but what is undeniable in this is that

we want to see what's new - new posts, views, likes and so on. We don't want to miss anything. This desire to not miss out is described as FOMO – Fear of Missing Out.

The term, FOMO is new but not the fear. In fact, we see it displayed by Eve in the garden of Eden. But first, let's get the context right. God creates the world and makes humans in His image. He blesses them and calls them to be the caretakers of this created world. Then in Genesis 2:16 and 17 we find a command -

*And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not*



*eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."*

God is lucid in His statement. In simple words He meant, 'you must not do this, if you do it the consequences won't be good'. Yet, in the very next chapter we find both Adam and Eve breaking this command. Let's see what happened!

We are introduced to the serpent, and it is characterized as being "more crafty than any of the wild animals" (Genesis 3:1). This crafty serpent talks to Eve and begins with a seemingly innocent enquiry, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

### **Can you spot the exaggeration?**

If we compare this statement with what God commanded, we can clearly see the lie. The serpent's intention here was to get Eve talking about God's command so that it can be questioned. The serpent was able to sow doubts into Eve's mind. Notice how Eve also exaggerates God's command when she said, "but God did say, '*We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.*'" (Genesis 3:2, 3) The serpent wanted her to think of God's command as being oppressive and he succeeded.

Next, he starts to plant the seed of doubt by appealing to the Fear of Missing Out. He begins with a statement, "*You will not certainly die*" (Genesis 3:4) and follows it up by enticing Eve with possibilities, "*For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" (Genesis 3:5) Did you notice the attractive offer – you can be like God!

Hope is a powerful thing, and the serpent dubiously abuses the power of hope through the possibility of being like God, knowing good and evil. Eve now faces the moment of decision; how will she respond? One can already see doubt spreading the lie in the next verse.

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.* Genesis 3:6

The chain of thought above brings out the problem, she is now battling with the Fear of Missing Out. She sees and perceives the fruit to be good and desirable. She could be thinking, "What would happen if I say no? What would I miss out on? Let me see what happens!"

We all know what happens next – tragedy!

FOMO is described as a sense of fear or anxiety. In 2013, a group of British psychologists defined it as a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent.”<sup>1</sup> In one sense, we can see the first humans having a similar experience in relation to God.

The fear of missing out is ironic in the sense that it blinds us from cherishing what we already have. We don't need to go and seek every experience to be fulfilled.

FOMO is often born out of a sense of insecurity. The serpent created that insecurity in Eve, and later on in Adam and they wanted to decide what is good and bad – not God. They want to be their own gods. In their attempt to do so they lost that close union with God and took themselves down the spiral of sin.

What God had revealed to Adam and Eve was sufficient for them, but alas they didn't feel so.

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1. Przybylski AK, Murayama K, De-Haan CR, Gladwell V. Motivational, emotional, and behavioural correlates of fear of missing out. *Comput Human Behav.* 2013;29:1841–1848.

As their descendants, we carry on the same behavioural legacy of seeking fulfilment somewhere else. We are never pleased with what God has given and are always on the hunt for more. Hence, the FOMO keeps feeding itself.

In this context, one can learn a lot by paying attention to the practice of fasting. It is an act of saying, “No, I don't need that now.” Fasting displays the opposite human impulse to FOMO, in my words, Courage To Miss Out (CTMO). It's not just about fasting, the decision of Daniel and his friends to say ‘no’ to the royal food displays the same CTMO. Thus, it's very much possible to overcome FOMO, and all that's required is the right perspective.

We need to remember that God will never let us miss out on anything that's important for us. He knows best and we don't need to know everything. This calls for faith but then again that's the basis for any and every relationship with God. May God help us to have the Courage to Miss Out.



**Shashank S. Rawat** a UESI staff based in Santiniketan, West Bengal along with his wife Asa and son Caleb.



# J.O.M.O: THE JOY OF MISSING OUT



Even if you miss out on what most of your peers are doing...



...Don't miss out the things that really matter.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. (Romans 12:2)

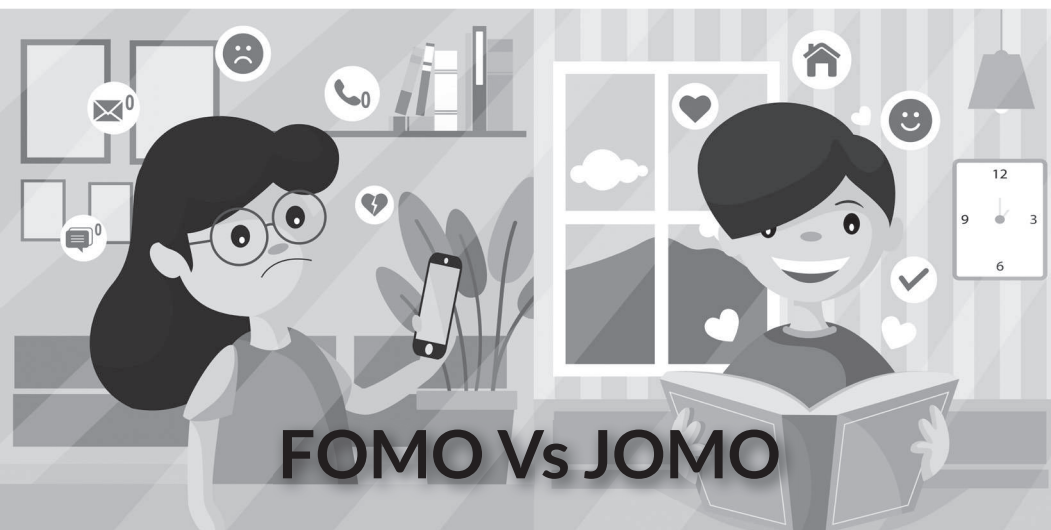


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## Readers' Response

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**Hon. Editor**



## FOMO Vs JOMO

Riya was apprehensive for the first day in the new college hostel in Chennai. It was the first time she was away from her family in Kerala and she wondered how she would adjust to a new life. As weeks passed, Riya began interacting with other students in her hostel. She found it fascinating how they would all introduce themselves... Tisa from Thanjavur, Kin from Mizoram, Jashni from West Bengal, Vidhya from Tirupati . . . everyone was proud of their place of origin. Over the next couple of months, she began observing how there were so many cultural differences that arose among them- from the kind of food they liked to their body language and facial expressions and their sense of humor. Over time, Riya found herself understanding Tamil words and phrases, and enjoying

their delicacies . . . Tamil eventually became part of Riya's identity.

As part of society, we often act like cultural sponges incorporating cultural changes and trends as part of our constantly evolving identity. Our identity becomes our signature to the world, something that defines who we are. We get caught up with trendy Instagram bios - Sam; She/Her, Feminist, Delhi University, Pro-Life, dog-lover, Foodie, YOLO XOXO. The desire to be accepted by the community often influences how we identify ourselves and we face FOMO when we are unable to do so.

Be it the use of drugs, pornography, vulgar language, aggressive behaviors, overspending, extramarital affairs, premarital sex, disobeying parents, materialistic lifestyle... The list seems endless, the effects of



FOMO remains the same, and everyone wants to give it a try.

the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) directs us to adopt new behaviors and attitudes getting swayed easily by trendy Insta bios. But the effects of FOMO don't just end there.

In the Bible, Daniel faced similar challenges. Like Riya, Daniel was a youngster when he moved from Jerusalem to Babylon. He had to quickly learn a new language, adjust to a new diet and learn to survive in a culture drastically different from his own. Daniel and his friends met with an identity crisis in a new land. They had to forgo their identities and adopt a new identity serving a new king with loyalty. It became the survival of the fittest in the king's palace and to survive, you had to become a Babylonian.

The youngsters who were with Daniel quickly shed their old identities and began eating, drinking, and behaving like the Babylonians, the classic effects of FOMO. Daniel and his 3 Friends however found it difficult to do so. They realized how the food they ate was given to idols, and they refused to eat it, restricting themselves to fruits and water. In a race to win the favor of the king, what made them take such a stand?

Daniel and his friends were clear about their core identity. When their land, their language, their family, and their community was taken away from them, they held onto their faith in God. For them, their love for God was their core identity. Even when faced with insurmountable peer pressure to bend to foreign ways, they refused to let go of their faith in their God, speaking up even when what they believed in clashed with that of the king's commandment. So proud were they of their faith that they were willing to face death rather than renounce God.

The song "Dare to be like Daniel" calls us to stand alone in a world where everyone is rushing to become part of the crowd. Daring to have your Identity in God firm, and daring to make it known to others. Daniel was one to experience JOMO - the Joy of Missing out because he held himself firmly in the Lord. In a world where it's trendy to abuse power, to live without any restrictions, to drink and make merry, where do we center ourselves? Where do we stand?

Moving to a different city, adjusting to a new culture, interacting with our peers and colleagues, we too face similar challenges like Daniel, to blend in and be part of the crowd. And while standing firm for your

faith might often result in social isolation, bullying and loneliness, the God who saved Daniel from the lions den, continues to be the same God who takes care of each of us today. Thus, even though Daniel has to face the repercussions for his identity in the Lord, God used him as a testimony of his faithfulness.

Constant encouragement in my life is to remember the testimony of students like me who by their faith made an insurmountable impact on those around them.. As students, let each of our lives be an encouragement to one another as Christ is our identity.

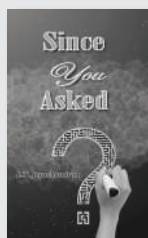


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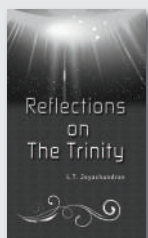
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College fests, cultural events, theatre nights, hanging out with friends, dinners, lunches, or just going out for a cup of tea/coffee, all College students are involved in activities that are meant for a time of refreshment and fun. However, considering the huge number of extra-curricular activities, it may not always be viable for students to go to every single event due to lack of money and/or time, or any other reason. And yet they try. And they try very hard indeed. Sometimes even at the cost of sacrificing what is more important. Why? What is this unseen pressure that makes students not want to skip any activity? It's not just peer pressure. It's much more. It's FOMO. The Fear

Of Missing Out. 'What if I don't go for dinner with friends and they have a really good time? I'll miss it'; 'What if I don't go for this movie and the others end up having a great time? I'll miss it'; 'What if I don't go for the group study and miss discussing important questions?'; 'What if I don't go for EU and all of them go have food without me' ? The list goes on. The Fear is real and is threatening the peace and joy of many students, both young and old.

As UESI, it is time for us to address this need. Gone are the days when alcohol and drugs were students' only problems. Now it's 'smaller' issues like FOMO, underlying which lay a variety of 'larger' issues like low self-esteem and identity crisis

(to name a few) that are causing students much more damage in the long run. Bear with me for a few minutes as I elaborate.

The world that we live in now, is not the same world that most of us grew up in. With the rapid development of technology, there are innovations happening even as we speak. In fact, within the last year itself, there have been a series of mind-boggling inventions or updates made to improve existing technology. Drones have become the new trend with everything from birthdays to weddings being shot aesthetically right from the sky. Quantum computing is now being done to protect people from cyber threats.

While all this modernization has greatly helped the human race, it has also brought with it, its fair share of problems. Take for example the Covid era. Zoom became this popular platform for people to get connected for meetings, fellowships, camps and so much more. This gave us the capacity to be in multiple events or places from the comfort of our homes without having to do the difficult thing and choose where to be. Now while this was really useful at a time when in person meeting was made impossible, it also got people used to being involved in anything and

everything without having to say no. I remember a close friend of mine who was attending a work conference, one friend's bridal shower, and a camp all at the same time! Now here's when the problem started. Fast forward to 2022, when by God's grace the virus started to recede and people started meeting again, most of these celebrations were done in person. This same friend now like any of us could only be in one place at a time and that too only if circumstances allowed. What did this lead to? FOMO on everything else.

Let's now take a look at psychology. Psychologists have defined fear as '*a natural and primitive emotion that can be experienced by everyone to some degree*.' (<https://www.simply-psychology.org/what-is-fear.html>). It's very easy for us to say 'What is the big deal? Stop fretting so much that you can't go on that picnic'. Understand that the problem is not that the person cannot go, the real issue is the emotion that this person is experiencing knowing that everyone will be there except him/her.

"Will they miss me?", "Will they talk bad about me?", "What if they become closer to each other and I'm left as an acquaintance?" While most of this is imagined, there is no denying that many times these fears do come true.



And these fears are common to everyone. The only difference is the degree of this fear. So while some are not as deeply affected, for others it comes to a point where they keep obsessively thinking about the event they missed which further on leads to more complicated issues like loneliness and overthinking.

If by now you think that FOMO is restricted to students alone, you are mistaken. Adults go through it as well, although what makes it different is how good adults can be at masking their emotions. I know of this one couple who has Sunday evenings reserved for their friends. Now, there's nothing wrong at all with that. The problem happened when the two could not make it up one Sunday because they got late after Church and had to stay home. By night the WhatsApp group was filled with pictures of their friends having a good time. Both husband and wife felt a pang of regret that they had missed out on so much. "They had so much fun!". "These Church people always delay things so much. Why can they not be punctual". Instead of genuinely being happy for their friends, all they ended up thinking about was how they could have been there too. And how somehow the Church was responsible for their misery. Does any of this sound familiar?

Personally, I feel that all people have experienced this at some or the other time. In fact, I have often wondered how the other disciples would have felt when Jesus took his favourite 3 to certain places. Did they experience this fear? Is that fear the underlying reason behind why there was an argument among the disciples on who was the best of all of them? FOMO is therefore a very real and a very serious trend. If it is so much for adults, then we can only imagine how deep it is for students to whom campus and friends, college, Church, and EU are so important. As believing Student leaders, Staff and graduates, we play a vital role in reaching out to ALL students in the fellowship. If you know of someone dealing with FOMO, here are a few things to keep in mind.

1. Acknowledge that this fear is something that is deep rooted and the person needs love above everything else
2. NEVER judge the person and say things like "Why are you behaving like a child?"
3. Don't just teach students to choose. Teach them why.
4. Preaching is easy. What is difficult is the practical side. Help them out and do so patiently. If you have successfully dealt with

FOMO yourself, tell them what helped you at that time.

5. Be a friend and a good listener, no matter the age difference.

If you are dealing with FOMO yourself, here is what helped me come out of it.

1. Understand that you are not the only one feeling this, so you are not alone. Your emotions are valid. It is ok to not be ok. It is not ok to remain not ok. Talk it out to your mentor or any good reliable friend preferably in the fellowship.
2. Start prioritizing and understand what the important things in your life are that require your constant attention (studies, family, close friends). Everything else (parties, picnics, even camps) can be something you do when you have the time and resources to do so.
3. Do anything else to distract you. Read a book, clean the house, cook or bake, watch a movie, talk to someone, go for a run, or best- take a nap.

4. Focus on improving yourself- do a course, learn a new language, read news. At the end of the day, these are skills that will help you in life.

5. Above everything else, lean on God. Look for companionship in Him. Ask Him for satisfaction and confidence. Wrestle in prayer. The fear is strong but our God is stronger!

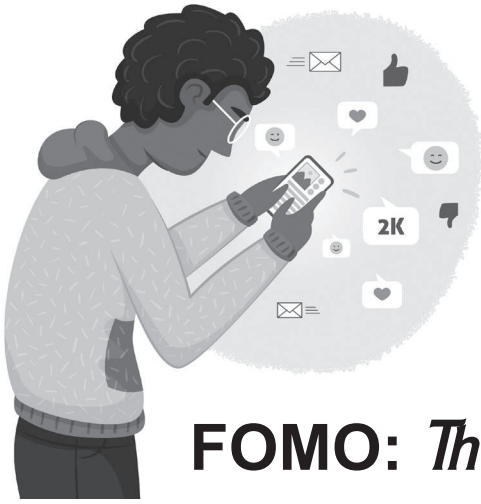
The challenge to counter FOMO is out there for all of us as members of the UESI family. Can we mould our fellowships in a way that students realize their self-worth? Can we try and make our students confident individuals capable of facing the pressures of life? Can we increase their dependence on God? Can we be the person they can trust and talk to? Or are we going to judge them as childish and needy with attention problems? Is that what Jesus would do?

I would write more but my friends are going out for a cup of coffee. And I don't want to miss it!



**Prashansa Jacob** finished her postgraduation specializing in History. She resides with her family in Chennai. She loves to spend time with people who encourage her to expand her intellect and understanding of God and His world. Her passion is to spend time with students.





## FOMO: *The Joy Stealer*

Scrolling through the Instagram feeds we often feel that others are living 'the life'. Travelling to scenic places, trying out various food items, and engaging in different adventures. The hikes and treks that I see on Insta reels make me feel that I haven't explored my city at all. Instagram sometimes reminds me how much I miss out on life's awesomeness. I'm sure those of you who are on social media might empathize with me.

We live in a time where there's no dearth of content on social media platforms. Every time we view such content, we realise that our bucket list just keeps increasing. We face an uncertain feeling about whether we are living to our full potential or are satisfied with where we are in our life. There arises a feeling that we might miss out on something. We have an apprehension that we

might find it difficult to cope with such a situation. The fear of missing out compels us to stay active as much as possible. It drives us to be compulsive active participants on social media.

This fear of missing out *a.k.a* FOMO is real and is visible among many of us. Sometimes we can see it clearly within us, but quite often, we remain oblivious to it. It is that feeling of anxiety or worry that we experience when we think that we are missing out on something very important, unique, and interesting. This phenomenon was initially seen among those engaged in the world of social media. Excess exposure and activity on such platforms lead to emotional tension, anxiety issues, inadequate sleep, and inability to control emotions. FOMO makes us impulsive, and anxious, which might blur our ability to make right

and realistic decisions. It makes us doubt ourselves. The deep desire to have interpersonal connections sometimes leads to anxiety issues.

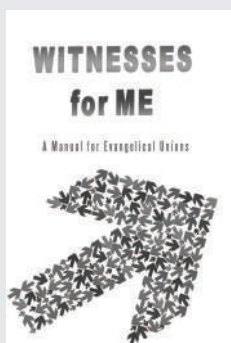
As humans, we have a deep longing to be loved and accepted. We are deeply afraid of social exclusion. Social networking platforms facilitate a feeling of connectedness with one another. It allows sharing our life experiences and milestones with others. However, they also create a distorted perspective of an individual's life.

An individual who views that distorted perspective is naturally inclined to think that they are missing such an experience. This leads to a perception that their way of life is inadequate and uninteresting which may result in a feeling of loneliness. To counter that they immerse themselves all

the more on these platforms to find out ways or ideas, which in turn leads them to the same perception of inadequacy and loneliness.

With the line between virtual and real-world is thin, FOMO is not just limited to social networking platforms alone. It is no more confined to virtual interactions alone but it has transcended to those real-life experiences that are 'glorified' on social media platforms thereby creating a deep longing to not miss the bus. The most recent case is the heavy influx of social media influencers who aggressively promoted investing in cryptocurrency & various NFTs. Millennials and Gen Z influencers talked heavily about being independent and being pioneers of this new investment type. The strong FOMO feeling led to a surge in cryptocurrency investments

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among many novice investors who wanted to make a quick buck. A few months earlier, the crypto market crashed. Many young individuals, who invested their savings, lost a lot of money. Let me be clear, I'm not against investing. I'm cautioning on the tendency to make impulsive decisions due to FOMO.

The FOMO phenomenon can be seen more clearly in our anxiety over many areas of life. The fear of missing out on hanging out with friends on a trip, missing out on the weekend party with friends or colleagues, and many more. The anxious feeling that looms at the back of our head that we might just lose some exciting fun shared experiences drives us to be at all places. If you have a wider social circle, the struggle is all the more chaotic. The desire to not miss out on anything and yet the practical difficulty of being everywhere poses a conundrum. We struggle to say no. We don't want to say no. We are afraid that not being an active participant in these groups might lead to social exclusion. We desire affirmation and acceptability from those to whom we are connected. We, therefore, push ourselves to be there as much as possible. The struggle becomes real when resources like time and money are very limited when compared to the long list of things, we want to be

in. We find it difficult to give a prior commitment to a particular event or experience because we'd prefer to keep our options open till the last moment, just in case a better and more important unique experience opens up. We perceive that such an experience might lead to better satisfaction and social acceptability. Camp and event organisers face a tough time in getting advance confirmations as many participants would be weighing their options till the last moment.

FOMO drives us to be on the lookout for every shared experience, especially new and unique experiences. It coaxes us to engage in such experiences and after such an engagement, makes us search once more for shared, unique experiences. Thus, FOMO becomes a vicious cycle of focused searching and engagement which ultimately leads to mental health problems such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and loneliness. Sometimes, intense FOMO leads a person to conform to various situations leading to a point of an identity crisis.

Even though FOMO is a new term, the feeling has been around for centuries. We see Adam and Eve experiencing FOMO when Satan tempted them. Rebekah felt the same for her favourite son Jacob and urged him to take the inheritance



from his father through deceit. In fact, Solomon penned down in words a similar struggle that he was going through in Ecclesiastes 2:4-8, 10 and felt a sense of emptiness and futility. He says in verse 11: *So, I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold, all was futility and striving after wind, and there was no benefit under the sun.* FOMO always desires for more and is never satisfied.

The desire to be everywhere, to participate in every activity, hang out with different groups, and not miss out on any important moment poses a serious challenge in deciding our priorities. We need to try out new things and create or participate in new shared experiences. But we need to also learn to strike a balance between contentment and engagement in experiences. Paul says in Philippians 4:11-13 that he has learned to be content in any circumstance. The secret to such a balance is because of his faith that Christ would strengthen him. FOMO blurs our focus in maintaining such a

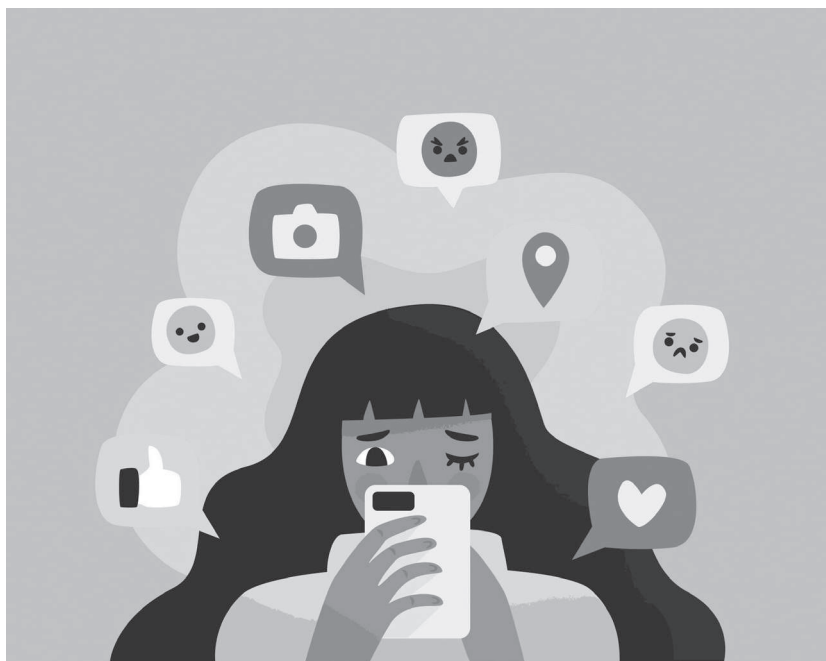
balance. Our anxiety takes control, and we forget our priorities. Our natural fear of social exclusion leads us to the understanding that we are alone, and we need to work out a solution on our own. Like Paul, we need to regularly affirm that we are part of God's family. God is very much concerned about our anxieties. We need to commit those anxieties and fears before Him. He invites us to do so. 1 Peter 5:7 says, *cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.*

We've got to learn to slow down and miss out a few experiences to learn the joy of contentment. FOMO drives us to do everything, but we fail to enjoy the experience. Solomon realized it towards the end of his life. In Ecclesiastes 3, he says, that there is a time for everything. No point in chasing everything together. There's a time to travel, a time to relax, a time to hangout, a time to study, a time for fellowship and a time to work. Realising this, helps us to slow down and enjoy whatever limited experiences we go through. That has a longer and enriching impact.



**Robin** is an adventure-based counsellor. He is involved in Christian outdoor camping and leadership development. He has a keen interest in digital anthropology and explores the influence of technology on society and culture. He's a staff with UESI Mumbai and is involved in various facets of urban ministry. Robin's wife Hannah is a content writer and editor. She's passionate about working among children.





## FOMO: A Biblical Purview

It is the last lecture for the day and everyone's eyes are on the clock. Someone passed word around that the whole class was invited to their classmate's birthday treat at the campus cafeteria. The crowd is getting excited and fidgety and as the bell rings everyone gushes down one path. Now if you had to be on time for the weekly Bible study, you would go the other way, walking by yourself. You wonder if you could maybe go to the café anyway, slowly sneak away and pop in a little late for the Bible study and no one would notice.

Our everyday life is a collection of choices and decisions we make in every passing moment- some easy, some hard, some made mindlessly, some thought through and some never attended to because we buried them. And it is in these moments of choice, fear of missing out plays in. FOMO, as the millennials and Gen Z call it, is an anxious feeling associated with finding activities in one's own life uninteresting or uneventful. This feeling of inadequacy and apprehension stems from projecting one's own life onto that of others,

within the boundaries of how the said individual perceives others' lives, say through social media or general social conversations where only the highlights are shared. While one cannot say how different one's life would have been if they decided otherwise and walked a different path, fear of missing out is surely a limiting power on us in our everyday walk.

The very first instance of FOMO in the Bible is seen in the Garden of Eden. Our Sovereign God gave Adam and Eve freewill, and they knew very well what the right thing to do was. Eve's fear of what the serpent said she was missing out on, pushed her into disobedience. She knew the truth- the truth that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil will certainly bring death (Exodus 2:17). Her FOMO made her oblivious to the truth, the command, and the Word of God. Eve's disobedience gives us an understanding that FOMO is a scheme of the devil, it comes from a desire to gratify the flesh and drives us away from knowing and obeying the will of God.

King Solomon in his wisdom and grandeur pursued much in the world. He wanted to have seen and known everything under the sun, came to possess and know

much, only to realise it was vanity. In Ecclesiastes 2:10,11 he records, "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labour, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." FOMO entertains momentary gratification and is a love of the world and is of the world. Therefore, FOMO blinds the Kingdom of God and the things of heaven as evidenced in the life of Solomon. After all the Bible tells us in Colossians 3:2, "Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things." How important it is for us therefore to acknowledge FOMO as the power of the flesh and submit ourselves to the will of God?

The Bible instructs us to not fear. This is true of FOMO like every other worldly fear. In fact, Paul says to Timothy in I Timothy 2:7, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." Thus, for those of us who believe, it is important to understand that FOMO comes from the mortal flesh in which we will live in until death or the day of the Lord. But remember that "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you



live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15). We are to fear God alone. Therefore, a believer's heart ought not to entertain feelings like FOMO.

In a world that glamourizes sin and disobedience, social media has surely become the enemy's stronghold. FOMO begins in man's futile mind and darkened heart (Romans 1:21) and constantly rebels against God and fails to acknowledge God's glory. But let us take heart for Jesus has overcome this world! He renews our minds and shows us His good and perfect will (Romans 12:2). In the grace of God, our conflicted minds overcome FOMO when we lean on Him, desire His Kingdom above all else and walk in obedience. Paul writes to the Colossians in Colossians 10:3-5, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that

sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." This is the strength over our failing hearts and wicked minds the Lord has on us!

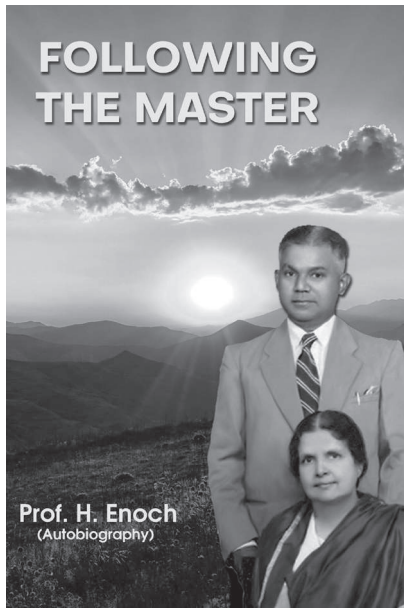
We are called to walk the narrow way. So even when everybody is doing it or when everyone thinks or acts a certain way, let our walk be one that is headed Christ-ward.

As beautiful as Sodom and Gomorrah looked to Lot, so sinful was the land and led him into destruction. Let us as Christians, who are called to walk by faith and not by sight, remember the sham that our lives are and that FOMO is a mirage. Be cautious not to use weird mental tactics to justify sin. The Truth is always counter-cultural and as believers we should be discerning. Don't under-emphasize the practical stuff! Limit your time on social media, digital detox when needed. Let not the things of the world become our idols but let everything be made the best use of for the glory of the Kingdom.



**Jannie Sanjana Stephen** is an MS student at IIT Madras. She did her B.Tech. at Shiv Nadar University at Greater Noida and was part of Greater Noida EU committee. She continues to be part of UESI and enjoys writing poetry and discourses.

# Review of “Following the Master”- Autobiography of Prof. H. Enoch



**Summary:** “Following the Master” is the biography of Prof. Enoch, a man of God who “had a transparent, simple and honest lifestyle”. He is the founder of UESI. In this book he looks at his life, different circumstances that shaped his life, his experience with academics and Bible, formation of UESI and how God led him to minister in different forums. The book is easy to understand and is written in a very lucid style. The teachings that we learn from this great man of God is wonderful. The book has a short preface and epilogue and is divided into twelve chapters.

“Born and Born Again” is the first chapter where Prof. Enoch explains his ancestry and his birth. He also dwells about his salvation experience in a meeting. It’s exciting to see how he was an active witness. He also transparently shares his experience of how he slowly started to turn away from God. The second chapter “Ups and Downs” explains his experience in college and how he became a professor in Vizag. We find him as someone who is actively involved in personal witnessing during his college days. He also shares his experience of grappling with the idea of creation and evolution.

In the third chapter the author talks about his struggle with leprosy, failed marriage proposal and how God delivered him out of desolation and stress. We also see how he applied principles found in the sermon on the mount for his spiritual ministries and practical living. The next chapter talks about Prof. Enoch’s appointment in Vizag. Here we learn how he was in the centre of God’s will, a man of principle, how he responded to social needs and how he fulfilled his responsibilities in his profession with utmost sincerity.



In the chapter “living with the fisherman” he talks about how he ministered to the fishermen who lived in his neighborhood. It is interesting to note how he took care of their social as well as spiritual needs. Another important thing we learn in this chapter is about the prompting of the Holy Spirit he had for witnessing.

He also explains how God provided for his travel during his ministry trips and experiences when God miraculously healed sick people during his prayer. In the following chapter he explains how he found God’s will in marriage and a brief information about his wife.

The eighth chapter “A beginning

The chapter “Living by faith” talks about the understanding of Christian life as an adventure where we have to discover and know the Lord in fresh way each new day. Here he explains how God provided a big fish on the day when a guest was arriving and his family was trusting God alone to provide something to serving the visitor.

with students” talk about the importance of being a thinker. We also find how he wished for a time when intellectuals accept Bible as the Word of God and experience real regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Ninth chapter talks about

God’s presence and leading behind the formation of UESI. He also talks about the criticism he faced during the formation of UESI and also mentions about the pioneers who were instrumental in UESI’s formation. He very briefly talks about how God used individuals as connections to initiate the movement God kept in store for the students of India. Amazing to see the way in which God puts same burden in different groups of people. He refusing to be the member of the executive after its formation and willing to be in background and not accept any organizational position is noteworthy.

The chapter “contending with Evolution” we find how Prof. Enoch obeyed God’s call in proving how the Bible is reliable and is true historically and scientifically. He also challenged the theistic evolutionists by proving how it is impossible to believe the Bible having accepted evolution. We can clearly see how he genuinely searched to know the truth and did his research about the subject having the Bible as the focus point and he wrote about his findings in UESI’s then magazine “The evangelical Student”. He also explains his experience with writing and how he with much difficulty wrote the book “Creation or Evolution”. Recollecting about

the book Prof. Enoch says, “thus in directing me to the study of zoology, in giving me a place and position in the academic world, and in taking me through my doubts and conflicts, the Lord prepared me for writing this book. I feel I have only obeyed what God has shown me in my life. God has used it for His own glory and the book continues to speak to the younger generation.”

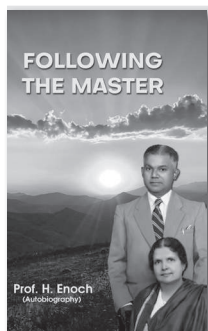
The chapter “Sent abroad” talks how God took him, and used him to minister in different countries and about his golden opportunity to talk against evolution in the midst of intellectuals in USA. We can see how God used him to be a great witness in different international forum of students. In the chapter “Ministry in Church” he talks about his active involvement

in his assembly and about the ideal church he visualized. Also he talks how after his retirement he gave his time to Jehovah Shammah assembly and to UESI. He also shares his experiences with different churches and assemblies. The epilogue talks about living life depended on God’s strength alone, moment by moment overcoming sin and failures.

Overall this is a very good book to read. We get encouraged to look at our studies from a Biblical perspective and to learn a lot about faith in God and get motivated to Work for the Lord with renewed passion. Though the new edition of the chapter has a chapter on the author’s wife I felt it would have been good if some more insights of his family was shown in the book.



**Benalin** is UESI-UP staff on study leave and is currently pursuing his theological studies in New Theological College, Dehradun. He resides with his wife Selin and two sons, Jagdeep Habeeb Lin and Kashvik Selva Lin



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# The Purpose Driven Professional of God



Our Lord Jesus Christ is not only our Saviour, but He is also our Maker and Creator God, with complete authority over our lives. When one says “The Lord is my shepherd,” it immediately implies a profound working relationship between a human being and his Maker. God in Christ is deeply concerned about us. This gives us great purpose and enormous meaning to my short sojourn upon this planet. The greater we realize it, the more vital will be our relationship with Him.

- i. His ownership of me is legitimate —because He created me and cares for me as an object of His own affection.
- ii. I truly belong to Him – because He has bought me again at the incredible price of His own laid-

down life and shed blood. This increases my worth and sense of gratitude for Him.

- iii. Jesus literally lays Himself out for us continually, by ever interceding for us, and guiding us by His gracious Spirit. The Good Shepherd spares no pains for the welfare of His sheep.

## I. GOD’S DESIGN FOR OUR LIFE

Our Creator God has had a detailed and unique design for each of us, even before He created the world (Eph 1:4). Though He has given us free will, He deserves our decision to follow Him and serve His purposes, rather than chasing earthly passions (Gal 5:13). God’s design for our life consists of the following:

**1. GOD’S PLAN:** God has created each of us with a great plan before

sending us into this world (Jer. 1:5). Living by God's plan will help us lead a life of purpose, safety, blessing, and prosperity, and anything outside His plan will be a life of lowly nature (Jer. 21:9, 27:3). The purpose of God's plan is primarily to fulfill His purposes, and that should be our prime goal, more than the thought of how it will benefit us. Nothing on earth is better than playing our little part in the fulfillment of God's plans and purposes.

- ***How do you value playing a role in God's plan specially designed for you?!***

**2. GOD'S PURPOSE:** God also has a specific purpose for creating us on earth (Ps. 139:16). According to that purpose we are born at a particular point of time in history,

in our country, into our own family. God's plan for us is an expansion of His purpose for us to fulfill. In Psalm 138:8(NIV) David hopefully sings, *"The LORD will fulfill His purpose for me"*. As Rick Warren says, "You are not an accident. Your parents might have not planned for you, but God did."

Acts 13:36 says, *"David had served God's purpose in his own generation"*. Paul was talking about how carefully a soldier will conduct himself while on duty: *"No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer"* (2 Tim. 2:4). Unless we play our role very carefully, by living our life exactly as intended by God, we will be wasting away literally. As C.T. Studd says, we have "only one life, it

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Articles other than these Themes are also welcome!



will soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."

**3. GOD'S PROFESSION(S):** God called Jeremiah as a 'prophet' and not a high priest (Jer. 1:5). He elevated the slave boy Joseph to the role of the 'Prime Minister'. A Harvard University research publication says that Moses was the greatest 'Administrator' in all human history. God told him about Joshua that the "spirit of leadership" was on him (Num. 27:18). God made David, a shepherd boy, a 'King'; the cup-bearer Nehemiah, a 'Governor'. He also made the exiled Daniel a Royal Advisor to 4 kings. He also made the fisherman Peter as a 'Fisher-of-men', and the torturer Saul to be Apostle Paul. Prof. H. Enoch emphatically said about our professions, "Wherever God places people, they should be faithful to Him 100% ... The best place and most useful place for a man to be in is, in the centre of God's perfect will for him."

## II. GOD'S INVESTMENT IN OUR LIFE

When the Lord calls us, He also equips us. God's design for our life also contains God's plan for 'His provisions for us' to live according to His purposes. Before creating man on earth, God already created the dry ground for him to stand, light in the day and night to see, leafy plants to produce oxygen, trees

full of fruits to eat, water to drink, shades to shelter, and a garden to work in. Let's see how God invested in us to fulfill our calling.

**1. ANOINTING & GIFTING:** God used Prophet Samuel to anoint king Saul and David for the role of the king of Israel. God anointed Jeremiah for the office of prophet. To fulfill God's purposes, He has blessed us spiritually with anointing and gifting. We also see that, the Spirit of God gives required gifts to everyone to fulfill their vocational calling (1 Cor. 12:11). For example, prophets were gifted with the gift of prophesy, teachers with the gifts of teaching, and kings with wisdom and discernment. Thus God surely equips us with all the anointing and gifts required to help us fulfill God's calling for our life.

**2. SKILLS & TALENTS:** God has also blessed us with unique skills and talents that are required to fulfill our calling. We are well equipped physically, emotionally, and intellectually so as to deliver on God's plans. Some of them are invested in us even before we were born, whereas some others we developed along the way. Many of our talents we ourselves can find out, while a few others, people can highlight. It is so important for us, not only to be aware of our own anointing, gifts, skills and

talents, but also to consciously identify them in EU students and young graduates, so that we can encourage them to enflame and put them to work for God's glory.

### **3. EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, EXPOSURE & EXPERTISE:**

The Lord also invested in us those things that have professional relevance like our education, job opportunities, job roles, favour (Luke 2:52), promotions (Ps. 75:6,7), exposure, wisdom, and expertise. In Psalm 119, David talks about having become wiser than his elders, teachers, and enemies, by learning God's precepts. Solomon talked about God's precepts as the source of wisdom. Usually, job roles come with opportunity for us to fulfill our godly calling while handling our work there. Our Lord will help us further sharpen our expertise and create right opportunities to use it so as to fulfill His purposes for our life.

### **III. GOD'S RETURNS DUE FROM OUR LIFE**

Anyone who makes investments deserves to receive back the accruing interest/dividend. In the Parable of the Talents (Mat. 25:14-30), we clearly see the following principles:

- God gives us abilities and professional responsibilities (v15).

- God wants us to deploy our capabilities in full (v16-18). We cannot afford to bury them.
- God wants us to optimally use (not under-utilize) our capabilities (v19).
- The Master eventually will call for each of us to "settle account" with Him (v19).
- While the Master will surely appreciate our good results, the reward and recognitions that will come to us will be in exact proportion of how we have performed in our job roles (v20-23).
- The one who fails or underperforms will typically blame his Master (v24). However, he will be always fearful about his Master and job security (v25).
- How much ever, a master can afford to be graceful, while appraising performance, he will choose to be more objective as well. The real performance will be rightly rewarded... either good or bad (v30).

Similar lessons can be learnt from the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11-27). God always gives us the best, and surely He deserves from us also the best possible results – be it in our professional roles, or ministry roles!



#### IV. DISTRACTION & RISK MANAGEMENT

‘Abrahamic Blessing’ clearly states that we are blessed so as to become a source of blessing for others (Genesis 12:2).

As students we strived our best to score good marks and grades. Then after getting a job, we continue to strive rigorously to get a better job, better salary, and better positions, by making any sacrifice, so as to get better possessions. Then, the pursuit goes on chasing after fun and entertainment. In this long pursuit, one realizes at the end of one’s career that they have not achieved a greater impact for God.

Nothing is wrong with obtaining possessions or reaching positions or having fun and entertainment. But the problem with them is that they are “to be just added” along the way (Mat. 6:33), than to be “direly sought after”. Providing us with them is the Lord’s role, and our role is to seek after God’s Kingdom and fulfill His purposes for our lives. It is also

important to use these possessions and positions for the sake of His kingdom. However, it is often seen that people easily get entangled in the seamless pursuit of chasing such earthly gains, while losing time and opportunity to work on God’s plan for their lives. In the Parable of the Sower, the Lord warned us about the coercing and distracting nature of earthly things, worries of this life, and the deceitfulness of wealth, in comparison with thorns that choke the eligible growth. (Mat. 13:1-23).

#### Conclusion

While we understand God’s design for our life and His investment in our life, it is our responsibility to serve His purposes yielding better results. Earthly blessings “will be added” to our life, when we realize the need to be more focused on the higher purposes that serve in our life!

*(For a further detailed study, you may read the book “Hi-Pot(ential) Hi-Per(forming) Professional of God” recently published by IVP)*



**Peter Christopher Raj**, has been with UESI since 1985, starting as an EU student for 8 years and later as a graduate in all major 6 cities of India. Currently he is part of the OPEC. He served in corporate world for 17 years in Investment Banking sector from middle to top management roles. His specialization is in Operations, Quality Management & Process Transformation. Since 2014 he is freelancing as a Management Consultant. He is married to Anne, a structural engineer and works for a USA company, being part of global Quality Leadership team. He is blessed with two daughters, Mitchell & Sharon. They are based at Chennai.



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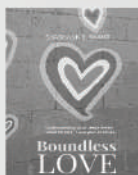
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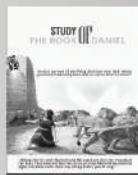
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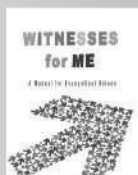
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Yes, it does, but the question is – who are you? Are you just another student who is part of the daily routine that is campus-life, do you just attend classes, do a little this and that and start over again? Well, No! When we look into the Bible, we see that we are the Salt and the Light of the World. The question now is – what does that mean?

### WHAT'S NEXT?

The next step will be to grow as his disciples. This would involve going deeper in the Word, understanding and living out the Christian world view and doctrine. Additionally, we will also see how our faith impacts the campus. But first, we will begin with the discipline of spending a personal time of devotion that will be the subject of the next part in this series.

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## UESI PUBLICATION TRUST

Published by Mr. Saji Easo & Printed by Mr. D. Devavaram on behalf of UESI PUBLICATION TRUST.

Printed at Meipporul Achakam, No.278, Konnur High Road, Ayanavaram, Chennai 600 023.

Published from New No. 19, Old No. 10, Millers Road, Kilpauk, Chennai 600 010.

Editor Mr. T. Athma Soruban.