



## The Digital Temptation: How Social Media Hijacks Our Purchasing Decisions and What Faith Teaches Us About Wise Consumption

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### Abstract

The proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed consumer purchasing behavior, creating new psychological triggers that drive impulsive buying decisions. This article examines how social media utilizes sophisticated algorithms, social proof mechanisms, and emotional manipulation tactics to influence consumer decision-making. Drawing on consumer choice theory, neuroscience research, and biblical scholarship, this analysis synthesizes findings from over 20 peer-reviewed sources to examine the phenomenon of “digital impulse buying” and its underlying psychological factors, including social proof amplification, emotional hijacking, and cognitive load reduction. Furthermore, this analysis integrates a Christian worldview perspective on stewardship and ethical consumption, offering practical guidance for consumers seeking to make more intentional purchasing decisions. Case studies of faith-integrated businesses, including federal contracting firm Inspired Solutions, Inc., demonstrate how biblical principles can guide marketplace success. The article concludes with ethical, actionable strategies for consumers and businesses to navigate the digital marketplace and social media platforms responsibly.

*Keywords:* Christian stewardship, consumer choice theory, social media marketing, consumer behavior, impulse buying

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### The Scroll-to-Purchase Pipeline

Picture this: It is the middle of the day, and you are mindlessly scrolling through Facebook during your lunch break when a beautifully made post catches your eye. It is “Styles by Shar,” an influencer you follow, who is showcasing a sleek new gadget that promises to revolutionize your morning routine and save you time. You are convinced that you need this gadget because it will improve your morning routine. Within three clicks, you have purchased the item, justifying the expense as an “investment in productivity.” By evening, you wonder what possessed you to make that purchase.

You are not alone. In our hyperconnected digital age, this scenario plays out millions of times daily across social media platforms worldwide. Recent research reveals that 71% of consumers are more likely to make purchases based on social media referrals, and a staggering 29% of social media users make purchases on the same day they encounter products online (Deloitte, 2024). Even more striking, research shows that consumers influenced by social media spend four times as much as those who are not exposed to these digital influences.

This phenomenon goes beyond clever marketing; it reveals a fundamental shift in how consumer choice theory operates in the digital era. Traditional models of rational decision-making, where consumers carefully consider different pricing options, rent products, weigh their choices, and make deliberate decisions, are being disrupted by sophisticated psychological manipulation techniques embedded in our daily digital experiences.

As we continue to research and examine this transformation, we must ask critical questions: How do social media platforms influence our purchasing decisions at a neurological and psychological level? What does this mean for our financial well-being and personal values? Moreover, how can we reclaim intentional decision-making in an age designed to short-circuit our rational thought processes?

## **The Psychology Behind the Purchase: Understanding Digital Consumer Behavior**

### **The Shortened Customer Journey**

The traditional customer journey, which includes awareness, consideration, evaluation, and purchase, once unfolded over days, weeks, or even months. Today's social media-driven purchasing decisions significantly compress this timeline. According to recent research, the customer journey has been significantly shortened by the immediacy of social media (Little et al., 2024). With social media, consumers can now discover a product, read reviews, compare options, and complete a purchase within minutes of their initial exposure.

This compression is not accidental, as meta-analysis confirms social media significantly influences purchasing decisions (Tung et al., 2023). Social media platforms utilize sophisticated algorithms designed to create what researchers refer to as "purchase urgency." Features like limited time offers, countdown timers, and social proof indicators ("23 people bought this in the last hour") trigger our fear of missing out (FOMO) and override our natural tendency to conduct thorough research and deliberate.

### **The Neuroscience of Social Influence**

Modern consumer choice theory must account for how social media platforms exploit fundamental aspects of human psychology, with both active and passive

social media use impacting well-being differently (Ding et al., 2017). Research has identified several key mechanisms.

### **Social Proof Amplification.**

Humans are inherently social creatures who look to others for cues in decision-making. Social media platforms that utilize social media characteristics amplify this tendency by showcasing peer purchases, reviews, and recommendations in real-time streams. When we see friends or influencers endorsing products, our brains process these endorsements as personal recommendations from trusted sources, even when they are paid partnerships.

### **Emotional Hijacking.**

Studies consistently show that emotions drive purchasing decisions more than rational analysis. Social media platforms excel at emotional manipulation through carefully curated content that triggers pleasure, excitement, envy, greed, or anxiety. Research indicates that positive emotional variables, such as pleasure, happiness, and pride, significantly influence purchasing behavior, aligning closely with hedonic values associated with impulse buying (Hashmi et al., 2019).

### **Cognitive Load Reduction.**

Decision-making requires mental energy. Social media platforms employ various techniques to reduce cognitive load and conserve mental energy, including pre-filtered product options, leveraging celebrity connections, using social media influencers, incorporating user reviews, implementing timers, and simplifying “one-click” purchasing. This convenience masks the complexity of financial decisions, making spending feel effortless and necessary.

## **The Rise of Influencer Authority**

Social media has significantly transformed consumer behavior, but no aspect has done so more dramatically than influencer marketing. Individuals who have achieved digital prominence have become modern-day trusted advisors, wielding significant influence over consumer purchasing decisions. Research shows that approximately 40% of consumers have made purchases directly inspired by influencer recommendations on social media (Singh et al., 2023).

The psychology behind influencer effectiveness is multifaceted:

- **Parasocial relationships:** Followers develop one-sided emotional connections with influencers, particularly among millennials (Gajewski, 2019), media figures, such as celebrities, fictional characters, or even pastors and YouTubers, whom they do not know personally.
- **Aspirational identity:** Influencers represent idealized versions of consumers' desired selves, with brand image significantly influencing purchase intention (Wang & Tsai, 2014).

- **Authentic authority:** Successful influencers cultivate expertise in specific niches, making their recommendations feel expert-driven, aligning with how consumers assess advertising credibility (Ducoffe, 1995).
- **Peer validation:** Influencer content creates the illusion of peer recommendation rather than traditional advertising.

## The Dark Side of Digital Consumption: Impulse Buying in the Social Media Age

### Understanding Impulse Buying Behavior

Impulse buying occurs when consumers experience unexpected, intense, and persistent urges to make immediate purchases without prior planning or consideration of long-term consequences, often reflecting self-control failure (Baumeister, 2002; Rook, 1987). Although impulse buying has existed throughout human history, social media has systematically amplified both its frequency and intensity.

Recent research reveals alarming trends in digital impulse buying:

- **Frequency increase:** Social media users are significantly more likely to engage in impulse buying than non-users (Al-Zyoud, 2018).
- **Spending amplification:** Consumers who have a social media presence and are influenced by social media and celebrity influencers spend four times more on impulse purchases than those who do not have a social media account.
- **Demographic vulnerability:** Millennials and Generation Z are particularly susceptible to social media-driven impulse buying (Nyrhinen et al., 2023).
- **Emotional triggers:** Boredom, stress, and social comparison are primary emotional states that lead to impulsive social media purchases.

### The Algorithmic Manipulation Engine

Social media platforms employ sophisticated algorithms designed to maximize engagement and, ultimately, purchasing behavior. These systems analyze vast amounts of user data to predict and influence buying decisions:

- **Behavioral tracking:** Platforms monitor geographic locations, content viewed, clicks, time spent viewing content, previous purchases, and even mouse movements to build detailed psychological profiles.
- **Predictive targeting:** Machine learning algorithms predict when users are most likely to make purchases and deliver targeted content at optimal moments, significantly affecting consumer buying behavior (Ugonna et al., 2017).
- **Social pressure creation:** Algorithms strategically show users what their friends and peers are buying, creating artificial social pressure to conform.

- **Scarcity manufacturing:** Artificial scarcity messages (“Only 3 left in stock!”) create urgency even when inventory levels are adequate.

## **The Financial and Psychological Toll**

The consequences of social media-driven impulse buying extend far beyond individual purchases.

### **Financial Strain.**

Repeated impulse purchases strain individual and household budgets. Overspending on unnecessary items can lead to credit card debt or reduced savings. Purchases made are usually not for essential items but are often influenced by current trends. Small, frequent buys (e.g., influencer-promoted deals) can add up quickly and contribute to credit card debt, particularly among younger demographics facing economic pressure.

### **Environmental Impact.**

Increased consumption rates contribute to environmental degradation by fueling overproduction and generating excess waste, as unused or low-quality items accumulate in homes and eventually end up in landfills. This problem is compounded by social media trends that drive impulse purchases of fast fashion, gadgets, and other trend-driven products that quickly become irrelevant, leaving consumers with items they no longer want or need.

### **Emotional and Psychological Impact.**

Studies have linked specific types of social media use to depressed mood (Frison & Eggermont, 2016). Buyer’s remorse follows purchases that were not truly desired or advantageous. Decision fatigue from constant exposure to purchasing opportunities depletes mental resources. Research confirms that social network use significantly impacts psychological well-being (Arampatzi et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2019), which is needed for important financial decisions. Comparison traps from seeing influencers or peers showcase luxury or abundance can create dissatisfaction with one’s own life. Addictive behavior develops as the dopamine hit from buying can lead to repeated emotional spending. Identity confusion occurs as social media-driven consumption can disconnect individuals from their authentic values and priorities.

## **The Christian Response: Stewardship, Wisdom, and Intentional Living**

### **Biblical Foundations for Wise Consumption**

While secular research provides valuable insights into the influence of social media on consumer behavior, a Christian worldview offers additional frameworks for understanding and responding to these challenges. Scripture provides clear

guidance on stewardship, contentment, and wise decision-making that directly applies to digital consumption.

### **Stewardship Principles.**

The Bible teaches that all resources ultimately belong to God, and humans are called to be faithful stewards of the resources entrusted to them (Cafferky, 2015). This perspective fundamentally reframes purchasing decisions from “what can I afford?” to “how does this purchase align with my role as a steward of God’s resources?” The concept of stewardship encompasses several key principles relevant to consumer behavior: intentionality, where every financial decision should be made with purpose and consideration; accountability, where stewards must be prepared to give an account for the resources God has given them to manage; generosity, where God has given resources to everyone, not just to be used only for personal needs, but also for serving others; and sustainability, where stewardship considers long-term consequences, not just immediate gratification.

### **Contentment Over Consumption.**

Paul’s letter to the Philippians presents a powerful counter-narrative to consumer culture, offering the insight, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (New International Version [NIV], 1978, Philippians 4:11). This contentment is not passive resignation, but rather an active satisfaction with God’s provision. Research supports the wisdom of this biblical principle. Studies show that people who practice gratitude and contentment report higher levels of life satisfaction and make more thoughtful financial decisions. Contentment acts as a natural buffer against the emotional triggers that social media platforms exploit.

### **Discernment and Wisdom.**

Proverbs repeatedly emphasize the importance of wisdom in decision-making. “The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps” (NIV, 1978, Proverbs 14:15). This principle directly challenges the impulse-driven nature of social media consumption, calling believers to pause, reflect, pray, and evaluate before acting.

### **Faith-Driven Consumer Behavior**

Research indicates that faith-driven consumers comprise a substantial and expanding market segment. According to American Insights (2024), faith-driven consumers comprise 41 million U.S. adults with \$2 trillion in annual buying power. These consumers demonstrate distinct characteristics: (a) values-based decision making, where 79% believe their buying decisions are an important way of living out their faith; (b) different market needs, where 73% report having different consumer needs than the general market; (c) authenticity seekers, who actively seek out brands that align with their values and demonstrate a genuine commitment to ethical practices and environmental sustainability; and (d) a stewardship mindset,

where they view spending decisions through the lens of faithful resource management.

This demographic represents consumers who have intentionally chosen to resist the impulse-driven nature of social media marketing in favor of more thoughtful, values-aligned purchasing decisions.

## **Practical Applications of Christian Consumer Ethics**

### **The Stewardship Filter**

Before making any purchase, especially those triggered by social media, faith-driven consumers can apply a stewardship filter: prayer and reflection, taking time to pray and reflect before significant purchases; biblical alignment, considering whether the purchase aligns with biblical values and priorities; opportunity cost, evaluating what other kingdom purposes the money could serve; and long-term impact, considering the purchase's long-term effects on finances, relationships, and spiritual growth.

### **Community Accountability**

Many Christian traditions emphasize community decision-making and mutual accountability. Applying this principle to consumer behavior might involve discussing significant purchases with trusted friends or mentors, joining or forming accountability groups focused on financial stewardship, and seeking counsel from mature believers when facing major financial decisions.

### **Countercultural Contentment**

In a culture that equates happiness with consumption, Christians are called to model a different way of living. This might involve practicing gratitude for current possessions rather than constantly seeking new ones, finding identity in a relationship with God rather than material possessions, and using social media mindfully, recognizing its influence, and actively resisting manipulation.

## **The Intersection of Technology and Temptation: A Modern Spiritual Battle**

### **Recognizing Digital Temptation**

Social media platforms do not merely present purchasing opportunities; they create sophisticated temptation systems designed to override rational decision-making. From a Christian perspective, this represents a modern form of spiritual warfare where technology amplifies age-old human weaknesses like envy, pride, and discontentment.

**The Envy Engine.**

Social media feeds create constant opportunities for comparison and envy (Tandoc et al., 2015). Users see curated highlights of others' lives and possessions, triggering desires for things they previously did not know they wanted. This aligns with the tenth commandment's warning against coveting what belongs to others.

**Pride and Status Signaling.**

Many social media purchases are driven by desires to signal status, success, or belonging. This reflects the deeper spiritual issue: finding identity in possessions rather than in one's relationship with God.

**The Deception of Need.**

Sophisticated marketing creates artificial needs and convinces consumers that their wants are now necessities they cannot live without. This echoes the serpent's deception in the Garden of Eden, where genuine needs were twisted into destructive desires. From a biblical perspective, impulse buying driven by social media often reflects a deeper heart issue. Individuals are trying to fill a spiritual void by purchasing material things—a void that can only be filled by God.

**Spiritual Disciplines for Digital Consumers**

Traditional spiritual disciplines offer powerful tools for resisting digital manipulation:

**Sabbath from Social Media.**

Regular breaks from social media platforms allow the mind to reset and reduce exposure to purchasing triggers. Many Christians find that observing a digital Sabbath helps clarify their actual needs versus artificially created wants.

**Meditation and Mindfulness.**

Taking time for quiet reflection before purchases can help distinguish between Spirit-led decisions and emotion-driven impulses. Christian meditation on Scripture provides a foundation for wise decision-making.

**Fasting from Consumption.**

Periodic fasting from non-essential purchases can break the cycle of impulse buying and increase awareness of how much external pressures influence our decisions.

**Gratitude Practice.**

Regularly counting blessings and expressing gratitude for one's current possessions help counter the discontent that social media often cultivates.



## **Practical Strategies for Wise Digital Consumption For Individual Consumers**

### **Create Intentional Barriers.**

Research indicates that adding friction to the purchasing process can significantly reduce impulse buying. Practical steps include allocating time spent on social media (for example, 30 minutes a day, as the less time spent is the less opportunity to make unnecessary purchases), removing saved payment information from social media apps, placing items in carts and implementing a 24–48 hour waiting period for non-essential purchases, unfollowing accounts that consistently trigger purchase desires, and using browser extensions that block retail websites during certain hours.

### **Develop a Values-Based Budget.**

Create a budget that prioritizes kingdom values and life goals over impulse purchases. Before assigning dollars, clarify what matters most in light of God's Word. Set aside money for giving and generosity first. Set aside funds for experiences and relationships rather than material goods. Include categories for helping others and supporting causes you care about. Regularly review purchases against your stated values and priorities. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (NIV, 1978, Matthew 6:21).

### **Create Guardrails Against Impulse Buying.**

Apply the 72-Hour Rule: wait three days before buying non-essential items. Budget "fun money" by giving yourself a monthly allowance – when it is gone, it is gone. Unfollow temptation by muting social media accounts that promote consumerism. Pray before purchase by asking the Holy Spirit for guidance. "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance" (English Standard Version, 2001, Proverbs 21:5).

### **Practice Mindful Social Media Consumption.**

Set specific times for social media use rather than mindless scrolling. Regularly audit your feeds to remove accounts that promote unhealthy consumption patterns. Follow accounts that align with your values and promote contentment. Use social media primarily for connection and learning rather than shopping.

### **Build Community Accountability.**

Share financial goals with trusted friends or family members. Join or create groups focused on intentional living and wise stewardship. Find an accountability partner for major financial decisions. Participate in faith communities that emphasize stewardship and contentment.

## **For Business Leaders and Marketers**

### **Ethical Marketing Practices.**

Christian business leaders have opportunities to model ethical marketing that respects consumer agency. This includes providing complete, honest product information rather than manipulative emotional appeals; avoiding creating artificial scarcity or pressure tactics; designing purchasing processes that encourage thoughtful decision-making; and implementing clear return policies that reduce pressure to make quick decisions.

### **Stakeholder Capitalism.**

Consider the full impact of marketing practices on customer well-being. Measure success not just by sales volume but by customer satisfaction and financial health. Avoid targeting vulnerable populations with predatory marketing. Create products and services that provide genuine value rather than feeding artificial desires. Implement marketing strategies that build trust rather than exploit psychological vulnerabilities.

### **Technology for Good.**

Use technology platforms to promote wise consumption. Develop tools that enable customers to make informed purchasing decisions. Provide education about product lifecycle costs and actual value. Implement features that encourage customers to consider alternatives before making a purchase. Design user experiences that promote mindful consumption rather than impulse buying.

## **Case Studies in Conscious Consumption**

### **Faith-Integrated Excellence: Inspired Solutions, Inc.**

Perhaps no example better demonstrates the integration of faith principles with business excellence than Inspired Solutions, Inc. This federal contracting firm has achieved remarkable success while maintaining an unwavering commitment to Christian values. Founded in 2015 by Isabella Piña, a retired U.S. Army veteran, the company exemplifies how biblical stewardship principles can guide business decisions in highly competitive markets.

### **Stewardship in Federal Contracting.**

With over \$50 million in federal contracts, Inspired Solutions has maintained a 100% on-time delivery rate while serving critical government agencies, including the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and USAID. This track record reflects more than operational excellence—it demonstrates the biblical principle that faithful stewardship in small things leads to greater responsibilities (NIV, 1978, Luke 16:10).

The company's approach to federal contracting illustrates several key stewardship principles:

- **Integrity without compromise:** Despite pressures to cut corners in competitive bidding situations, Inspired Solutions maintains rigorous quality standards, viewing each contract as a trust to be stewarded faithfully.
- **Excellence as worship:** The company's ISO 9001 certification and multiple socio-economic certifications (8(a), SDVOSB, M/WBE, EDWOSB) reflect a commitment to excellence that stems from doing all work "as unto the Lord" (NIV, 1978, Colossians 3:23).
- **Servant leadership:** Decisions by leadership prioritize long-term relationships and ethical practices over short-term profits, reflecting Jesus' teaching about servant leadership.

### **Resource Stewardship for Kingdom Purposes.**

Inspired Solutions demonstrates how business success can serve broader kingdom purposes. The company's profits directly support Rick & Isabella Piña Ministries, which conducts mission work in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Dominica. This integration demonstrates how business resources can be effectively stewarded not only for operational needs but also for advancing God's kingdom globally. Recent mission initiatives funded through business operations include educational programs for underserved communities in the Caribbean; infrastructure development projects that provide clean water and reliable electricity; job training programs that equip local populations with marketable skills; and spiritual development initiatives that combine practical assistance with gospel outreach.

### **Ethical Decision-Making Under Pressure.**

The federal contracting environment often presents ethical challenges, from competitive bidding pressures to complex regulatory requirements. Inspired Solutions' approach demonstrates how biblical principles can guide decision-making even in morally ambiguous situations. For example, when faced with opportunities to submit technically compliant but ethically questionable proposals, the company consistently chooses transparency and honesty, even when this approach might result in lost business. This commitment has enhanced their reputation and strengthened long-term client relationships.

Inspired Solutions has been certified as a Great Place to Work for two consecutive years, with 100% of employees saying it is a great place to work compared to 57% at typical U.S. companies. This recognition reflects the company's commitment to treating employees as image-bearers of God, worthy of dignity, respect, and opportunities for growth and development.

## Corporate Examples: Patagonia's Anti-Consumption Campaign

Outdoor clothing company Patagonia famously ran a "Do Not Buy This Jacket" campaign, encouraging customers to consider whether they truly needed new gear (Patagonia, 2011). This counterintuitive approach built tremendous brand loyalty and demonstrated how ethical marketing can enhance business success. Patagonia's approach includes repair and reuse programs that encourage customers to repair existing gear rather than replace it, quality manufacturing that creates products designed to last for decades rather than seasons, environmental education that teaches customers about the actual costs of consumption, and values alignment that consistently demonstrates commitment to environmental stewardship.

## Faith-Based Business Model: Hobby Lobby's Approach

Hobby Lobby, a major retail chain founded on Christian principles, demonstrates how businesses can integrate faith values into their operations: (a) Sunday closure, closing stores on Sundays to prioritize employee well-being and family time (Hobby Lobby Newsroom, 2022); (b) living wage policy, paying employees above minimum wage as an expression of human dignity; (c) ethical sourcing, implementing supply chain practices that consider worker welfare; and (d) community investment, using profits to support educational and religious institutions (Hobby Lobby Newsroom, 2017).

## Success Story: The Minimalist Movement

The minimalist movement represents a countercultural response to social media-driven consumption. Leaders like Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus have built large followings by promoting intentional living and conscious consumption (Millburn & Nicodemus, 2011, 2021). Their approach demonstrates how social media can be used to promote contentment rather than consumption. Key principles from the minimalist movement include:

- **Intentional acquisition:** Every purchase should serve a specific purpose and align with life values. Wilson and Bellezza (2022) identified this as "mindfully curated consumption," where consumers practice intentional, thoughtful purchasing that emphasizes being aware of what one owns and avoiding accidental purchases of duplicates or unneeded items (pp. 801–802).
- **Quality over quantity:** Investing in fewer, higher-quality items rather than constant replacement purchases. Pangarkar et al. (2021) found that minimalistic consumption highlights subjective well-being, happiness, and increased quality of life through reducing consumption to meet only essential needs based on necessity, benefit, or situation.
- **Experience prioritization:** Spending money on experiences and relationships rather than material possessions. Van Boven and Gilovich

(2003) demonstrated that experiential purchases make people happier than material purchases once basic needs are covered.

- Digital detox: Regular breaks from social media to maintain perspective on actual needs versus manufactured wants. Radtke et al. (2022) defined digital detox as “a voluntary and intentional limited removal of digital devices and/or specific subsets of smartphone use to promote health behavior change” (p. 195).

## **The Future of Faithful Consumption in a Digital World**

### **Emerging Trends and Challenges**

As technology continues to evolve, new challenges and opportunities will emerge for conscious consumers.

#### **Artificial Intelligence and Personalization.**

AI systems will become increasingly sophisticated at predicting and influencing consumer behavior, with product attributes and brand image increasingly shaping purchase intention (Naseri et al., 2025). This requires greater vigilance and more intentional resistance to algorithmic manipulation.

#### **Virtual and Augmented Reality Shopping.**

Immersive shopping experiences will further blur the line between online and offline consumption, necessitating new strategies for maintaining purchasing discipline.

#### **Cryptocurrency and Digital Payments.**

New payment methods may make spending feel less tangible, requiring updated approaches to financial awareness and budgeting.

#### **Social Commerce Integration.**

The integration of shopping directly into social media platforms will continue to accelerate, with e-WOM engagement significantly influencing purchase intention (Yusuf et al., 2020), making it even more important to develop intentional consumption habits.

#### **Building Resilient Communities**

The future of faithful consumption will likely depend on building strong communities that support wise decision-making. Inspired Solutions' integration with Rick & Isabella Piña Ministries provides a compelling model for how businesses can help build such communities.

**Faith-Based Financial Education.**

Churches and religious organizations have opportunities to provide education about digital consumption and stewardship principles. Inspired Solutions' leadership regularly speaks at conferences and churches about integrating faith with business excellence, demonstrating how professional success can serve kingdom purposes.

**International Community Development.**

Through their mission work in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Dominica, the company demonstrates how business resources can build resilient communities globally. Projects include (a) infrastructure development using business expertise and resources to provide clean water, reliable electricity, and communication systems; (b) economic development creating job training programs that equip local populations with marketable skills in technology and logistics; (c) educational initiatives supporting schools and educational programs that combine practical skills with character development; and (d) sustainable solutions implementing projects that create long-term economic opportunities rather than just temporary assistance.

**Federal Contracting as Community Service.**

The company's approach to government contracting demonstrates how serving federal agencies can be viewed as serving communities: (a) Veterans Affairs projects providing IT infrastructure and audiovisual systems that directly improve healthcare delivery for veterans; (b) defense infrastructure supporting military installations with critical technology and power systems that enhance national security; (c) intelligence community support providing secure, reliable IT infrastructure for agencies that protect national interests; and (d) international development supporting USAID programs that promote security and prosperity in developing regions.

**Alternative Business Networks.**

Faith-based business networks provide community connection without the consumption pressure of traditional networking: (a) values-based partnerships developing supplier and client relationships based on shared values rather than just economics; (b) mentorship programs connecting younger professionals with experienced leaders who can guide integrating faith with business success; (c) cooperative ventures partnering with other faith-based businesses to pursue larger opportunities that none could achieve alone; and (d) knowledge sharing using business expertise to serve non-profit organizations and ministries.

**Technology as Tool, Not Master**

The goal is not to eliminate technology or social media, but to use these tools intentionally rather than letting them use us. This requires digital literacy, understanding how algorithms work and how platforms influence behavior; intentional design, choosing apps and platforms that align with personal values and

goals; regular evaluation, periodically assessing whether technology use supports or undermines life priorities; and community integration, using technology to build genuine relationships and community rather than replacing human connection.

### **Conclusion: Reclaiming Agency in the Digital Marketplace**

The transformation of consumer behavior through social media represents one of the most significant shifts in human decision-making in modern history. The ability of digital platforms to influence purchasing decisions at a subconscious level challenges fundamental assumptions about human agency and rational choice.

However, awareness of these influences provides the first step toward reclaiming intentional decision-making. By understanding the psychological mechanisms behind social media manipulation, consumers can develop strategies to resist unwanted influences and make purchasing decisions that align with their authentic values and long-term well-being.

For people of faith, this challenge represents both a spiritual battle and an opportunity for witness. By modeling contentment, stewardship, and intentional living in a culture obsessed with consumption, Christians can offer a compelling alternative narrative about what constitutes a good life.

The path forward requires both individual discipline and community support. No one can resist the sophisticated manipulation of modern marketing alone. We need communities committed to mutual accountability, businesses willing to prioritize customer well-being over short-term profits, and faith traditions that provide practical guidance for living faithfully in a digital age. The apostle Paul's words to the Romans provide relevant guidance for our current situation: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (NIV, 1978, Romans 12:2). In a world designed to capture our attention and influence our purchasing decisions, this transformation requires intentional effort, community support, and reliance on wisdom that transcends cultural trends.

As we navigate the complexities of digital consumption, we can demonstrate that a life rooted in something more profound than material acquisition is not only possible but profoundly satisfying. Companies like Inspired Solutions prove that businesses can achieve remarkable success while maintaining an unwavering commitment to biblical values. Their \$50+ million in federal contracts, 100% on-time delivery rate, and Great Place to Work certification demonstrate that faith-integrated excellence is not only possible but also provides competitive advantages in the marketplace.

The challenge is not to retreat from technology but to engage with it as faithful stewards, using these powerful tools to build authentic community, support genuine needs, and point toward the lasting joy that comes from living in alignment with our deepest values. Whether managing a federal contracting firm, serving in

international missions, or simply making daily purchasing decisions, we can choose to be intentional participants in a global economy rather than passive consumers manipulated by sophisticated algorithms.

The choice is ours: we can allow ourselves to be passive consumers manipulated by sophisticated algorithms or we can become intentional participants in a global economy, making purchasing decisions that reflect our values, support our communities, and contribute to human flourishing. The example of faith-integrated businesses, such as Inspired Solutions and Hobby Lobby, combined with their ministry work across the Caribbean and other nations, demonstrates it is possible to achieve professional success while serving kingdom purposes. The future of faithful consumption depends on the choices we make today – choices that can simultaneously advance business objectives, serve community needs, and glorify God through excellent stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. The choice is ours!

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### About the Author

Isabella Piña is CEO and founder of Inspired Solutions, Inc., a federal contracting firm that has managed over \$50 million in government contracts while maintaining a 100% on-time delivery rate. The company holds multiple certifications, including 8(a), SDVOSB, M/WBE, and EDWOSB, and has been recognized as a Great Place to Work for two consecutive years. A retired U.S. Army veteran with 21 years of service, Isabella holds a Master's in Healthcare Management and is pursuing a Doctorate in Business Administration in Strategic Leadership at Regent University. Isabella also co-founded Rick & Isabella Piña Ministries, which conducts mission work in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Africa, Dominica, and many other Caribbean islands, demonstrating her commitment to integrating business success with kingdom purposes.

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