

The Reality behind Those Picture-Perfect Profiles

When we compare ourselves on social media, we're missing the bigger picture.

By **Bárbara Rodríguez**

A little while ago, one of my followers on Instagram commented on a photo, saying, “How do you look so radiant with two kids, when I can barely handle one?” I immediately laughed and wanted to answer her with a picture of how I looked at that moment.

I responded, “I’ve always thought that I’m pretty careless in my appearance compared to other moms. That’s the effect of social media—we tend to compare ourselves with someone else, while that person is comparing herself with another. But the reality is that I don’t look radiant right now, and I don’t dare upload a photo of how I look. I usually only dress up and look ‘decent’ on Fridays and Sundays.”

I have been sharing about our lives on social media for a few years now. Mostly, I try to show what “real life” is like for members of the Church of Jesus Christ. And in doing

so, I’ve had some experiences that have prompted me to think about the virtues and the risks of social media.

Social Media Doesn’t Show Everything

This wasn’t the first time somebody had asked me a question like that. The thing is, social media shows only a very small part of people’s lives. In my case, even when I try to be authentic, it’s impossible for me to show everything. And we shouldn’t be comparing ourselves or basing our worth on one beautiful photograph. Making comparisons, especially on social media, can make it harder for us to recognize our God-given strengths.

As Latter-day Saints, we do the best we can to be like Jesus Christ. But the truth is that none of us are perfect. And on social media, we should strive not to make wrong judgments not only about ourselves but also about others. We need to remember that even when we think someone’s life is perfect, we don’t see the personal challenges they might be facing. We never really know what’s going on in people’s lives beyond what they choose to share on carefully filtered feeds.

The Reality of a Family Photo

There’s often so much happening behind the scenes of every family photo you see on social media. Some people might look at those photos and ask themselves,

“Why don’t my family pictures ever turn out so well?” But we don’t know what it takes to get those “perfect” pictures.

For example, we once tried to take a family picture after church. This can be complicated with two little children, but I really love to capture these moments and then look back at how much my kids have grown.

While we were trying to get the kids settled down for the photo, I had to take a moment to talk to my two-year-old son, Alvin, who was crying because he wanted me to carry him. I bent down, wiped away his tears, and then begged him to stand up so I could show off our outfits (which I had strategically matched that morning). My three-year-old daughter, Avril, was also asking my husband to hold her because she didn’t want to stand either. They really didn’t want to be taking pictures.

The photography session was unsuccessful—so we gave up. But when I got home, I found something better. My brother (who was taking the photos) captured the moment when all the chaos was happening. Both my husband and I were comforting our children in the photo. It didn’t really show off our outfits, but it was such a tender—and real—moment. I loved it.

When I shared the photo on social media, I captioned it “The reality of a family photo.” I never imagined that so many people would relate to it, but it made me realize that things don’t always need to look perfect. It’s OK to just go with the flow and be real. But it also taught me a larger lesson—that when we believe someone is perfect, we just haven’t seen all the details.

Don’t Let Social Media Cover Your True Identity

Social media networks are a powerful tool that we can use for so much good. But we have to be careful not to get discouraged or compare ourselves to what we see on social media. As Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Hopefully, we can learn to be more real, find more humor, and experience less discouragement when confronted with images that may portray idealized reality and that too often lead to debilitating comparisons.”¹

I know that as we remember our divine nature as children of God, we won’t leave room for painful comparisons or personal judgments. And if we stop listening to those comparisons that try to discredit our potential, we will be able to live fuller lives without worrying about all those seemingly picture-perfect posts out there. ■



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NOTE

1. Gary E. Stevenson, “Spiritual Eclipse,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 46.

