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LIFE,
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How to live
authentically
online

THE SOCIAL MEDIA ISSUE

WIRED FOR CONNECTION

Is social media driving us apart,
even as it brings us together?

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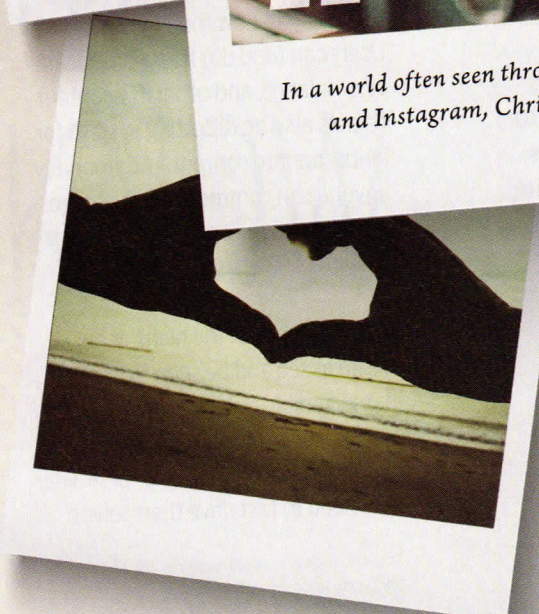
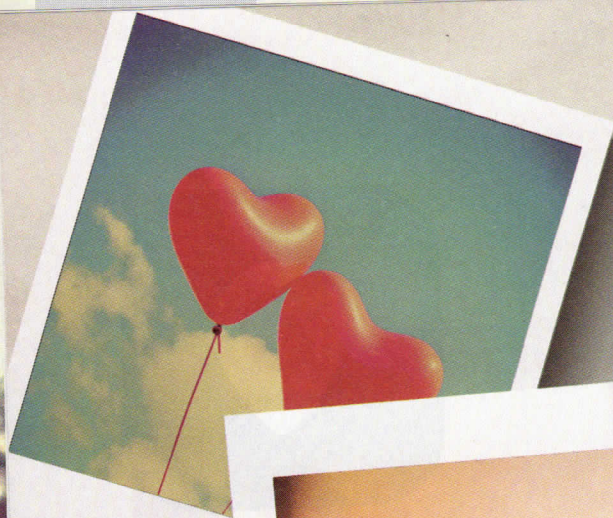
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In a world often seen through the picture-perfect moments shared through Facebook and Instagram, Christ offers another option: an authentic life—unfiltered.

By Dr. Abby Hill



God created us to be social beings, to desire and seek out relationships with other people. But Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media have definitely changed what that looks like in the modern world.

Social media has expanded the connections between people: We can see our friends, and they can see us, 24/7, online, in real-time. Unfortunately, in our "I post, therefore, I am" world, real-time is not necessarily real. Studies show that people are creating a personal reality through social media that is often far from authentic. These parallel lives are based on what pop culture tells us we need to be in order to be beautiful, interesting, and desirable to others.

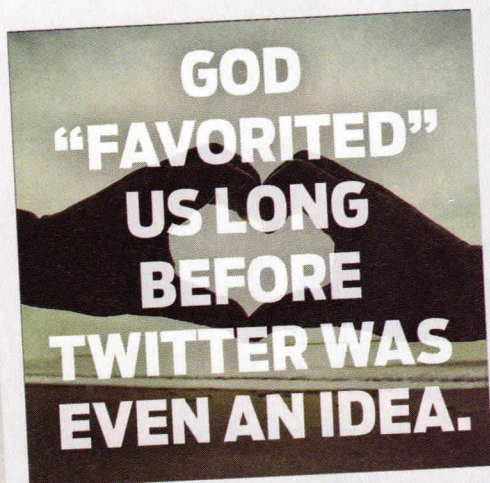
Social media is an apt venue for disseminating these messages at lightning speed as advertisers and celebrities create impossible, unattainable images that even they can't produce without lighting, makeup, and a personal staff.

Teens are especially vulnerable to those commercialized influences steering their relentless pursuit of individual perfection and mass acceptance. Yet, even adults find themselves attempting to post perfection on social media as a way to seek approval from others and substantiate their own worth.

These don't sound like pursuits compatible with being a follower of Jesus.

What can the Bible tell us about our life on social media? In Scripture, we find that there is "nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9) in that people have sought earthly status and public validation since the beginning. In other words, the only thing truly original about social media is the media.

Faith calls us to live a life of authenticity. Christ's sacrifice demands it. If you have two different teenagers—the perfect one you see online, and the human one you see every day—here are some Scriptural truths you might want to lift up.



**GOD
"FAVORITED"
US LONG
BEFORE
TWITTER WAS
EVEN AN IDEA.**

#1

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
—Romans 5:8 (ESV)



**NUMBER
OF "LIKES"
IS NOT A
MEASURE OF
TRUE BEAUTY.**

#2

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."
—1 Peter 3:3-4 (NIV)



**OUR
HEART
IS OUR
REALITY.**

#3

"As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man."
—Proverbs 27:19 (NASB)



**SELFIE
SPARINGLY.**

#4

"He must
increase, but I
must decrease."
—John 3:30



**TWEET
LESS,
LISTEN
MORE.**

#5

"Do nothing
out of rivalry
or conceit, but
in humility
consider
others as more
important than
yourselves."
—Philippians 2:3



**OUR
STATUS IS
ALREADY
ESTABLISHED.**

#6

"But when God, who from my birth set me apart and called
me by His grace..." —Galatians 1:15

SOCIAL MEDIA SELF-CHECK

It's unreasonable to expect any of us to completely refrain from social media. This is especially true for teenagers who have no recollection of life before the Internet. So, for Christian parents and teens, we need to have regular, candid, face-to-face discussions about how to live an authentic life—offline and on.

Remember, as a parent you are the primary spiritual developer of your teen. The example you set will be the one they follow. What life are you portraying online? Are you honest and real, or perfect and filtered? What does your teenager see when she looks through your Instagram account? If she only knew you through your Facebook page, would she know the real you?

We all need a reality check from time to time. Here are a few starting points to use as a self-check to help us all get real about the Insta-life:

- What is my true motive for posting? Attention? Jealousy? A need for approval?
- How long did I prepare for this post? How many pictures did I take before it looked right?
- Does this post convey who I really am? What is it reflecting about my heart?
- Am I being truthful?
- Do I constantly check my posts for likes? How do I feel when I don't get any?
- Do my comments to others lift them up or bring them down?
- Would I be embarrassed or ashamed for Jesus to read my Facebook page?

As parents, we can help guide our teenagers by modeling an authentic Christian life—not just on social media, but in daily life, on good hair days and bad. This starts by acknowledging that perfection is not captured in a picture, or a funny quote, or a beautiful video clip, but through Jesus and a real life of commitment, perseverance, and prayer—no hashtag required.

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