

Family Photos

READING

John 13

Psalm 51

Colossians 3

So then, as the selected of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Being tolerant of one another, and showing grace among yourselves, even if someone has a complaint against someone, just as the Anointed shows grace to you, in the same way, so should you be.

This article is based on a story my daughter wrote when she was 16.

Kate Middleton, (Princess of Wales), just got into trouble for editing her family photo.

Not that doing that is illegal, or even wrong. But the media is desperate for a story these days and so driven by conspiracy theories that they will overreact to anything.

And the media, so caught up in its own hype that Princess Kate is gravely ill, panicked when their AI bot detected that the family photo had been edited. And thought that was somehow proof that they were right, and she really is ill.

But any of us who has Photoshop or other editing tools would happily edit our family photo if we thought it needed tweaking a little.

Even ten years ago, we would do little things like removing flash reflections in someone's eyes.

Now we can do much more, and these days there are even AI tools which can open their eyes if someone blinked, or even turn frowns into smiles!

But even before all these amazing software tools, we always edited the family photo.

We just did it before it was taken.

It was always fake.

We always posed/staged it to make it look good.

Everyone wore their best clothes. All immaculately groomed with fresh haircuts, and perfect make up.

Everyone would always be smiling, laughing, looking incredibly happy.

We would even stand people on boxes to adjust their height to make them fit in better.

When other people see our family we want them to think it's perfect.

When deep down, it's just the same as everyone else's.

We argue, we fight and yell, sometimes we even cry.

Sometimes we even wish we were part of a different family.

(But then we cool down, and we realise how fortunate we are to be part of the one we're in).

But in our family photo we do our best to hide all that.

We are desperate to hide all the stuff going on that nobody outside the family knows about.

And we end up with a beautiful photo. A lovely memory for years to come.

It's a nice memory, but it isn't real.

Most families do the same thing with church.

We might have been screaming at the kids to get ready or we'll be late.

We might have been arguing all the way to church in the car.

But the second we step in that door... it's all smiles. Everyone is happy. We're the perfect Christian family.

But the same problem. It's not real.

And the problem with that, is that it makes everyone else feel pressured that they need to be that perfect family too.

All the time. Not just when they take photos or come to church.

If they have issues, they think they're the only ones, because all the other families at church are so perfect.

And not just families.

We all put on an act at church because we want to be seen to be "good Christians" even when we're not.

Let's stop doing that.

Being renewed is a process, and it takes time. Nobody is perfect already.

Our church is our spiritual family.

We can be honest with them.

We can tell them that it's not all perfect, and we're having issues we'd like some help dealing with.

And they will still love us.

They will still accept us.

And as a church, let's be real with each other.

And show that our love and acceptance goes beyond only being for those who pretend to be perfect.

Let's show that it extends to everyone.

Even if their family photo is unedited and a little bit scary.