

Opinion

Ordinary Days By Lauren Denton

Summertime and the curse of social media

“Teach me to ... improve my talents, To redeem my time, To walk in wisdom ... and in kindness, To do good to all men.”

From “The Valley of Vision,” a collection of Puritan prayers and devotions

Social media is an on-again, off-again friend to me. Maybe more like a “frenemy.” It’s good for many reasons, as we all know. But the perfect dinner preparations, the competition of who can post the most “real” photos, the people who seem to make the most of their day in much better, more creative, kinder ways than I do — the onslaught becomes mentally exhausting.

To combat this, I occasionally keep myself off social media for the day. No Instagram, Facebook or Twitter until after the kids go to bed, and maybe not even then.

It feels awkward at first, like I’m missing something important. But then it starts to feel like a huge relief, a burden lifted off my shoulders. I find I’m able to get more done — no procrastinating by jumping on Facebook for a “quick look” that inevitably turns into a rabbit trail of nothingness. If I have a spare few minutes, I pick up a book to read rather than peruse the glossy lives of everyone I know. I don’t tell my kids, “Hang on just a sec,” so I can read about another family’s adventures instead of living our own.

Mind you, this doesn’t happen every day. Often, I slip back into the trap of frequent scrolling and reading. But honestly, I like myself and my life a lot better when I’m not on social media very much. I’m more content. I’m less



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anxious. I have more mental energy to “improve my talents,” i.e., be a stronger writer, a kinder mother, a more attentive wife. I redeem my time from the pit of constant scrolling. I find myself less easily irritated, therefore able to walk with a little more wisdom and kindness.

This summer, when the days will be long and my to-do list will occasionally be longer, I’ll need that wisdom and kindness. I need to make the most of each minute, not wasting any of them in fruitless pursuits.

You see, I’ve been waiting for summer for months, as I do every year. I welcome the heat, slow mornings, fireflies, late dinners and looser schedules with open arms. But this summer will be a little different for me. I’ll be working on edits for my first book, writing the first draft of my second book and keeping two kids entertained for 11 weeks. I’ll have at least two firm deadlines in that time frame — more if I count the self-imposed deadlines I’m sure I’ll put on myself as I creep closer to the end of Book 2. I’m fervently hoping and praying I can put the posts, photos and tweets to rest and concentrate on my own life.

I know not everyone has the problem with social media that I do. For many people, it’s probably a better friendship. But I’ve learned for my own well-being and that of those around me, I need to keep the social media beast on a short leash and occasionally tie it to a tree and walk away.

I’d love to connect! Email me at LaurenKDenton@gmail.com, find me on Twitter [@LaurenKDenton](https://twitter.com/LaurenKDenton), or visit my blog at laurenkentonbooks.wordpress.com.

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