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I Choose To Be Authentic

Jeff May

Have you noticed that counterfeit stuff is everywhere? There's fake grass, fake flowers, fake diamonds, etc. Television is mostly fake too. Everything from science fiction to pro wrestling (oops...did you think it was real)?

Surrounded by so many things that are not real, there can be a gap between the life we project and the life we actually practice. God hates such phoniness. God calls upon us, His people, to be real; to be little replicas of His Son. He hates hypocrisy. Someone once said, "*A hypocrite is someone who isn't Himself on Sunday.*" Such may get a chuckle out of us but not the Lord. His most scathing rebukes were given to those who wore a mask, those who were play acting, those who portrayed one life but actually lived another. There is difference between reputation and character. William Hershey Davis amplified the difference when he wrote, "*Reputation is what men say about you on your tombstone; character is what angels say about you before the throne of God.*" Amen! Well said. But I may add God needs no informants on what we really are. He knows (John 2:25; Heb. 4:13). We may manage to pull off phoniness with men but with God, never! Case in point: the Pharisees. Jesus ripped through their veneer in Matthew 23 and said, "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness*" (Matthew 23:27-28).

The crying need of our day is for our walk to match our talk. We must be people who truly love the Lord with all of our heart, strive to live holy lives and are genuine in all we do.

It is possible. The Bible is full of such examples.

First, there is Jesus. Jesus knew His life was genuine. He even called on people to expose Him if it were possible (Jn. 8:46). They never produced any sin of which He could be accused. Well, someone says, "That's Jesus. Only He was perfect." Such is true, but the point is Jesus was genuine in His pursuit to always please His Father. We don't have to have to be sinless in our lives but we do have to strive not to sin and to be real.

Then there is Nathanael. What a beautiful example of a man who was authentic. Jesus approached him and said, "*Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*" (John 1:47). Jesus knew Nathanael was the "real deal" - a man giving it his all to be what God wanted him to be. Nathanael's response is inspiring. He said, "*How do you know me?*" See this. He did not say, "Oh no. You've got the wrong man. That's not me." Nathanael knew that he was genuine.

Let's remember Samuel also. He served Israel publicly for years and came to the end of his life, old and grayheaded. He challenged Israel to name any character issue he needed to address, to name any way he had wronged them over all those years. They found nothing. Samuel said to them, "*The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.*" And they answered, "*He is witness*" (1st Samuel 12:5). How would you like more of that kind in political offices today?

Last, we offer the apostle Paul, who was scrutinized and falsely charged many times but who said, "*I know nothing against myself*" (2 Cor. 4:4). What a statement!! Paul was not claiming he had never sinned. He was simply saying that he was real. What you see is what you get. He knew of nothing that stood between him and the Lord.

This is the way Christians must live. Can you look in mirror and honestly say, "*I am genuine. I truly love the Lord. I am dedicated to living by His example and becoming more like Him. I am forgiven of all my past sins. I know nothing against myself.*" This is not cockiness. It is the confidence of the man who humbly strives for authenticity in his life.

Why is being genuine so important? Because the world is "chomping at the bits" to spot hypocrisy in the lives of Christians. It makes them more comfortable in the worldly path they have chosen. They say to themselves, "Why would I want to be a Christian? I see little difference in them and me."

Rest assured God will not deal kindly with fakes. It is serious business. When we are phony it blasphemes God (Romans 2:17-24) and anyone who has read his Bible knows that brought a death penalty all throughout history. It will for us too if we continue the masquerade. We cannot eat from two tables: the Lord's and the world's. We have to choose His table or meet the wrath of a jealous God (1st Cor. 10:21-22). Now, are you all ears! This is life or death stuff.

The beautiful thing is that a truly authentic Christian is so attractive to those who are tired of sin and looking for a better way. In fact, *only* the authentic is attractive. I heard once of a man who became a Christian and when he did his co-workers mocked his faith and gigged him in every way they could. Yet, one day one of the men came to him broken-hearted as he had just found out his wife planned to divorce him. He cried, "Please pray for me. Please pray for my marriage. I didn't know anyone else to come to but you." How interesting. The world may make fun of such faithful children of God but when life gets tough, they can easily shuck through the fake and the real. They know who to come to, and when they do, there lies our opportunity. The world may never read the Bible, but they will surely read you.

We are the only Bible
the careless world will read.

We are the sinners gospel,
we are the scoffers creed.

We are the Lord's last message,
given in deed and word.

What if the type is crooked?

What if the print is blurred?

It's time we make the choice to be real...and committed...and...keep company with others determined to do the same.