

"A Third Evidence Of Walking With God Is Authenticity"

How many times have you heard someone say something about "hypocrites in the church"? Authenticity means we speak truth in a generation with no absolutes. We live what we say as much as possible; we wear no masks. We consider the impact our words and actions have on those watching. We are even willing to be vulnerable. Those are risky actions. We could be misunderstood, disapproved of, even shunned or taken advantage of. But we wouldn't be hypocrites. We would be true, real ... authentic. And lived-out authenticity is a powerful witness. May we live out the Gospel with Love, Grace and Authenticity so that people will actually see Jesus in us.

"Showing Christ To The World By Living The Ordinary Christian Life"

"Most Gospel ministry involves ordinary people doing ordinary things with Gospel intentionality". If we can understand this, then we might see an 'Extraordinary movement' that involves Ordinary Christians, not just 'Super Christians'. Christians to simply care about what God cares about. The ordinary Christian life looks like love for neighbor (Matthew 22:34-40). The question isn't how famous you are but whether or not you care for those around you. Quoting Francis of Assisi ("Preach The Gospel And If Necessary Use Words") Ordinary Christians will love their neighbor through acts of kindness and mercy while sharing the Good News of Jesus.

"Ordinary Is Radical"



How often have you heard people ask how they can plug-in to their church? Should they join a committee, sign-up for a mission trip, or coach an Upward basketball team? Maybe. Or, they may simply, "Eat with lots of people this week" In other words, mission isn't always astonishing. It might look like a barbeque, or a neighborhood basketball game, or going grocery shopping for your neighbor. Ordinary Christians befriend people and are like Jesus, "friend[s] of sinners" (Matthew 11:19). As we open our hearts and our doors we show hospitality by caring for foster children, ministering to veterans, or bringing a homeless person to the house for dinner. In short, "Hospitality is what we extend to outsiders, strangers,

and those in physical and spiritual need." You don't have to move to the jungle in order to live radically for Jesus. That might be what Jesus calls you to do with your life. Or, Jesus might simply call you to invite the single mom at church over for dinner. In other words, living radically for Jesus might not look that radical at all. And you might never be recognized for your ordinary Christian life. But that's ok. The ordinary Christian life is about the fame of God's Name, not yours.



Nothing is more critical than a true understanding of the Gospel. The Bible declares that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is only by the Gospel that we come into fellowship with God. Apart from the Gospel, we are all left

destitute and without hope. But the Gospel is not only the power unto salvation. As Christians we must remain faithful to the gospel in order to grow. The Bible also describes our walk of faith as a constant holding onto the Gospel message that we believed unto salvation. Therefore, there is nothing more important in your life, whether you are a Christian or not, that a true understanding and belief in the gospel. While the Gospel contains many details that are, at first, difficult to comprehend, it is also a very clear, simple, and understandable message. It is one that we can learn about and grow to comprehend. Although the Gospel goes very deep, the basic message revolves around four major points: God, man, Jesus Christ, and man's response.

"The Gospel Calls Us To Put Something Bigger Than Ourselves Above Ourselves"



Christians believe that truth and love are fused together. And in that, is hope. If your truth doesn't look like love, it's not truth. If your love isn't anchored to truth, it's not love. When Christ is truly present and working in your life, truth and love are never separated. The Gospel is the antidote to a post-truth, post-fact culture. The objectivity of the

Gospel functions less like a sledge-hammer (I'm right... everyone else wrong) and more like an anchor (in this storm of uncertainty, let's tie ourselves to what's true). If your truth doesn't look like love, it's not truth.

"Love People Who Oppose You"

The tribalism that's emerging (I only hang out with people who look like me, sound like me and agree with me) directly threatens our ability to value people different than ourselves. Jesus said our faith would not be characterized by how deeply we love our friends. It would be characterized by how deeply we love our enemies. Hung out with any enemies lately? Not to argue, but to listen? To love? If your version of the Gospel doesn't include loving your opponents, it's not the Gospel.

"We're All Accountable to Someone Other Than Ourselves"

Also entering the endangered species list is accountability. If you listen to the current public dialogue, few people seem willing to be accountable to anyone other than themselves. I'm right. Everyone else is wrong. If I become the arbiter of truth, then I'm not accountable to anyone. Not to you, not to others. Not even to God. If something doesn't go my way, I don't need to take responsibility... I can just blame someone else or hold others accountable. I just don't need to be accountable. Do you see where this takes us? Think about what that does to those of us in leadership. Leadership is a trust... it's a stewardship. We hold our positions on behalf of those who don't. We're accountable to others. Even more than that, we are accountable to God. It's easy enough these days to create your own tribe. To surround yourself with people who say what you want them to say. Who give you only what you want to hear. But think about this. The leaders who take accountability seriously rarely have anything to account for. Those who don't, do

"Confession is One of Our Most Important Disciplines"



Who knows what people pray about these days? You and I aren't privy to what God hears. But my guess is that He's hearing fewer confessional prayers than He used to. In a culture where truth has died, we don't have to be sorry for much. After all, if you create your own truth, there's no need to confess anything. The most extreme repetition of this is that you're not wrong, God is. If you think that's far-fetched, just

scan the headlines. It's truth that helps us see falsehood. It's the right that helps us see the wrong. And when what's right is whatever we define it to be, well, we're always right. Even when things don't go great for us, it was never our fault anyway. We were victims. We're just misunderstood, and one day everyone will see how right we are. At the heart of confession is this idea that you and I are not the ultimate arbiters of right and wrong. Confession acknowledges that we are flawed, that we make mistakes, and that we're accountable. We are not the author of what is right. Rather, we are subject to it. Jesus never asked us to confess the sins of our enemies. He told us to confess ours. Listen to the public dialogue. Watch social media. The death of confession has led to the rise of the opposite of confession: Blame and Accusation.

The Gospel: Is Anchored In The Idea That Truth (And Even Love) Is Objective And Available To All.

- ❖ Calls Us To Die To Ourselves So That Others May Live.
- ❖ Values All People.
- ❖ Calls Us To Confess, To Repent, And To Put Something Bigger Than Ourselves Above Ourselves.
- ❖ If The Church Starts To Mimic Culture In This Seismic Shift We're Seeing, We Will Tear Ourselves Away From The Very Thing That Will Save Us.

"Let The Gospel Carry You Into The World"



When we tell someone who doesn't know us about Christ, God can use the combined power of the truth of the Gospel and His grace to open a heart to repentance and salvation ... even using imperfect vessels like us to communicate His message. But often winning takes time and relationship, especially in a generation where relationship is supreme. We must live out the

Gospel before them even as we tell them the truth. What does the lived-out gospel look like? God gives us many characteristics of the Spirit-filled life as evidence of this. Three stand out to me as key: Without question, the first is Love. The Lord Jesus Himself said the first commandment is to love God, then others. He even said we are to love as He loved, which was to lay down his life. Are we to literally lay down our lives for others? Some of us may be asked to make that sacrifice. But most of us give our lives to people in love by giving of our time, our abilities, our finances. Sometimes love is just being there. Other times we love by listening, encouraging, praying. Sometimes we give the shirts off our backs, or buy a meal or provide shelter. This lived-out love is a powerful witness.

"A Second - Witness Is Grace"

A second witness is Grace. Grace is often an unclear or vague concept for us, so here are a few synonyms to help us grasp the meaning of this essential truth: mercy, forgiveness, benevolence, charity, clemency, compassion, favor, forbearance, generosity, goodwill, goodness, kindness, leniency, pardon, reprieve, responsiveness, tenderness. Grace doesn't hold a grudge, or refuse to forgive, or demand what's due or insist on its own way. Grace does overlook an offense, extend time or help, speak kindly when verbally attacked, believe the best about another. Lived-out grace is a powerful witness.