“If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.”

CHARLIE PARKER

At 15 years old, I set the record straight between God and me. On a lonely walk, I told Him, “God, if you exist and you are like any of the people I know who claim to represent you, then we have nothing in common.”

It would be seven years of periodic highs but far more frequent lows before I would crash-land as a suicidal, embittered atheist. Growing up with an authoritarian dad and living at a sterile Catholic boarding school had done its damage. Religion suffocated any desire for a relationship with God.

I was not the only one.

Today there are millions of spiritual refugees fleeing from the menagerie of churches and religions encircling the globe. Many of these now deeply wounded and un-whole individuals stand jeering on the sidelines, fully enraged over the abuse, hypocrisy, and outright misrepresentation of those who claimed to have a relationship with God.

Too many individuals asserting to be born again followers of Jesus have failed to live honest and sincere lives consistent

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1 Jazz saxophonist
Lack of authenticity is the biggest stumbling block facing Christians today. The secular masses have not been oblivious to this lack of integrity. The hypocrisy demonstrated by pretend Christianity is obvious. The double-minded lives of professing Christians have been the elephant in the room for quite some time. Lack of authenticity is the biggest stumbling block facing Christians today.

Authentic has been defined as, “conforming to fact and therefore worthy of trust, reliance, or belief.”² Is our relationship with Jesus so real, so authentically factual, that those around us want to trust, rely on and believe in the God we follow?

This is the question of the age.

In the first century Peter warned of those who would not take God’s Holy Word seriously. He said they would twist and torture the truth to their own destruction. Every age has had them, and there is no shortage today. Peter wrote that these “untaught and unstable people twist [torture or pervert] to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”³

The misrepresentation of God’s heart and recorded Word by Christians continues to be the greatest distraction and hindrance to people finding Jesus, especially in the post-Christian Western world.

Jesus’ original intent was that His followers would surrender to the transforming Word of God. If not, they could never be taken seriously and would eventually be lumped together with false religions and cults. Now, at the climax of the age, more people believe in the supernatural yet believe less in God.

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³ 2Peter 3:16a, NKJV
What is heaven’s answer to this greatest of all anomalies?

It is the resurrection of the genuine Christian. The real disciples of Jesus Christ will rise to reclaim their stewardship as salt and light on the Earth.

In the days of Jesus, He passionately drove out gross misrepresentation of God from the temple in Jerusalem. Once again, the Spirit of God is rising to drive all disingenuousness out of His Church.

Likewise, prior to the first coming of Jesus, John the Baptist challenged the religious leaders of his day to, “Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.”

Today, anyone desiring an authentic relationship with God should be able to meet Christians who are sincere, open, transparent, loving and caring representatives of Jesus Christ—especially if they’re coming to church.

This is what Christ always intended, and it will come to pass prior to His return. It is our dying to self and living for God that will help heal those who were once wounded and are longing to see a pure demonstration of the legitimate life of God in the Spirit.

In this book, I am crying out to you who hear His call to rise up and receive the destiny preserved for those who live desperate to know God. We are called to be an honest expression of His genuine life. We are birthed in reality, sustained in humility, and destined to bring glory to His flawless name.

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4 Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15
5 Matthew 3:8,10
PURE REJECTION

“And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him and reflect His glory even more.”

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

In the next and most challenging season of all time, Christ’s followers will be faced with an important question: Will this generation fully reflect the glory of God?

God has given every person on Earth a deep, inner longing to experience and express His true heart—to live from the inside out. This alone will genuinely represent Him and turn the world upside down. Will we rise to claim our true identity and inheritance as sons and daughters of the Creator of the universe, or will we settle for being cultural clones, moral zombies, and counterfeits of all that He created us to be?

It is my conviction that many of us who claim intimacy with God have seen enough of His heart to reflect Him. After all, we have been rescued from death, salvaged from destruction and fully redeemed!

Yet, each day the world groans in agony, having suffered senseless wounds at the hands of those who distort God’s image.

The danger of this level of deception was evident from the beginning of creation and will always lead to perhaps the greatest of all evils—knowingly misrepresenting God. This may be the sin that most damages the trusting human heart and

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6 Acts 17:6
brings the severest punishment. Scripture, as we will examine later in this chapter, strongly implies this.

Because he rejected the outstretched arms of God, Lucifer was cast down from Heaven. Having been created to bask in the splendor of God’s radiant presence and reflect His transcendent beauty, the “son of the morning” chose instead to exalt himself above God. This senior worship leader of Heaven openly resisted God’s love, inflicting an endless wound upon his formerly blessed life and becoming the most tragic misrepresentation of all that is good.

He had seen so much but understood so little.

Later on Earth, a similar misdeed took place. Judas, one of the original twelve apostles, spent years witnessing firsthand the kindness of God through the life of Jesus. He, too, foolishly chose to live a lie and betrayed the Son of man with a kiss. Of him, Jesus lamented, “It would be far better for that man if he had never been born.”

Like Lucifer, Judas was given so much and appreciated so little.

In a comparable way, two of the first disciples mentioned in the Book of Acts, Ananias and Sapphira, vainly attempted to deceive the Holy Spirit. They fell over dead for such blatant deceit.

They, too, had seen so much and yet learned so little.

For each of these attempts to deceive the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, these once-favored creations of God received swift and final repercussions. Any fully informed and honest court on Earth would have issued the same verdict. It is painfully obvious that they knew better. Even today, the damage of dishonesty and duplicity can be life-long. In a world of imitations, there is no substitute for the genuine.

7 Matthew 26:24
8 Acts 5:1–11
Either we who claim to know the truth must live lives that authentically represent the God who is Truth, or we will inadvertently become co-conspirators with the father of lies himself. Should our own misrepresentation of the truth make us any less culpable than Satan? Jesus emphasized the opposite as true when He said, “But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.”

The long-term dangers of misrepresentation become even more alarming upon closer examination.

On a few occasions, the disciples of Jesus openly asked which of them would be the greatest in Heaven. This gave Jesus a perfect opportunity to not only correct the twisted motive behind their misguided question, but also to sum up the grave consequences of intentionally stumbling one of His innocent children. Without mincing words Jesus warned His followers of the severe punishment awaiting those who wound vulnerable yet sincere followers of Jesus: “But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

In my own youth, it was the misrepresentation of God that caused me to hate Him and spend seven empty years as an adamant atheist. But a single, authentic encounter with Jesus saved me. My life was transformed when I saw Jesus genuinely reflected in a person I trusted.

While on Earth, Jesus Christ was the perfect representation of the character and heart of God. After Jesus’ ascent into Heaven, the Holy Spirit was then sent to inhabit the spirit of each sincere follower of Christ. This strategic plan was designed to

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9 John 8:44  
10 Luke 12:48  
11 Matthew 18:6
secure an authentic incarnation of God’s goodness and kindness on Earth. God’s original strategy is still best: “For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: ‘I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people.’”\textsuperscript{12}

I am completely convinced that before the final harvest and the end of the age, there will be a pure representation of God’s intended church. God’s Word will not return without accomplishing His original purpose.\textsuperscript{13}

“For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing His glory.”\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{HOPE SPRINGS}

An empty heart is the damaged fruit of hopelessness. Half-heartedness is the distracted fruit of deception. Whole-heartedness is the enlightened fruit of a heart fully embracing the grace of God.

This whole-hearted acceptance of God’s grace is the backbone of authenticity. “Partially authentic” is an oxymoron. Authenticity and integrity go hand-in-hand. Together they release a spiritual endorphin, providing a deep sense of inner wellbeing.

So why are single-minded, whole-hearted, authentic Christians hard to find?

Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize Elie Wiesel writes, “Only one enemy is worse than despair: indifference. In every area of human creativity, indifference is the enemy; indifference of evil is worse than evil, because it is also sterile.”

\textsuperscript{12} 2Corinthians 6:16, Jeremiah 24:7, Ezekiel 37:27
\textsuperscript{13} Isaiah 55:11
\textsuperscript{14} Colossians 1:27
He should know. He was a Holocaust survivor.

Half-heartedness can only creep in due to some level of indifference. And while the half-hearted are trapped in indifference, the empty-hearted are searching long and hard for any vestige of genuine hope on Earth.

They find many counterfeits. Imposters on Earth offer the false hope of their political, social, or even spiritual agendas. A closer examination of man-made hope reveals mere wishful thinking—a dreamscape of humans playing God. It always ends badly. From the Tower of Babel to the Titanic, facing the unexpected without the God of Hope leads to hopelessness.

Many would say that false hope has never been more plentiful, but I am convinced that the genuine article is closer than we think, once we know how to get it.

Years ago when I was globetrotting the world, racking up millions of miles on many an airline, I noticed that almost every restaurant carried Tabasco sauce. One day, upon taking a closer look at the tiny bottle, I read that Tabasco sauce was produced and bottled in one place: an island made of salt—Avery Island, Louisiana. One hundred and forty miles north of New Orleans, swamps and marshes surround the pepper fields of Avery Island. Since the first time I read the fine print on its tiny red bottle over a quarter of a century ago, I have picked up many additional bottles of Tabasco, knowing that the original still comes from just one place.

So too with eternal hope!

While the poet wrote with flowery speech and all sincerity, “Hope springs eternal in the human breast,” never forget that genuine hope is produced and dispersed from only one source: the river of life, flowing from the throne of God in

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15 Matthew 22:5
16 Alexander Pope, English poet from the eighteenth century
Heaven. Hope springs from one source alone: God. Unless it is bottled in Heaven, earthly hope eventually dries up.

So where can the empty-hearted find hope? It is from God alone that we receive and then freely give the hopeless masses the elixir of life: Heavenly hope. The Authentic Church carries the answer to a hopeless world. Christ in YOU is the hope of glory!

Without personally receiving our daily dose of the hope that refuses to disappoint, we will inevitably lose the wind of assurance in our sails. The result will be, for a season, that we will continue to live the charade of believing we still retain God’s priceless gift of life, even though its true value has long since evaporated. Or, worse yet, we will give up—wallowing in the depressed caverns of discouragement, unable to rescue even ourselves.

Only God and those who trust in Him have the right to be eternal optimists. The rest of the planet will scavenge for hope until at last they realize God owns the rights to all of the hope that has ever existed. It is being freely offered but on God’s terms. Heavenly hope in the hands of the earthly minded will lose its lift, having been detached from its source.

I have been empty-hearted without God, half-hearted due to a lapse of relationship with God, and thankfully, now for many years, whole-hearted, drinking from the artesian well of Heavenly hope continually emanating from the God of hope.

Draw close to the well and open your heart.

There’s plenty of hope for everyone.

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17 Revelation 22:1
18 Colossians 1:27
19 Romans 5:5
STARVED SURRENDER

The literary genius Victor Hugo once wrote, “An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come.”

The time has come for each of us to make a massive move toward absolute surrender to the will of God.

In 2 Kings 6, it was also the time to surrender.

A king named Ben-Hadad surrounded and attacked the city of Samaria. The siege was intended to prevent all intra-business and trade in order to eventually starve the population into surrender.

“As a result,” the Bible says, “there was a great famine in the city. The siege lasted so long that a donkey’s head sold for eighty pieces of silver [a year’s wages], and a cup of dove’s dung sold for five pieces of silver [a month’s wages].” These people were so starved for real food that they spent inordinate amounts of money for imitation food.

When Hannibal besieged Casiline, France, in 200 B.C., a mouse was sold for the equivalent of $4. These events parallel our present-day culture and even what is taking place within the Church in the Western world. In this age of moral compromise, we see a culture that is increasingly overreacting, under-reacting, or just plain “acting,” as it is surrounded and besieged by unprecedented evil.

Both the world and the Church are equally starving for the genuine article: real humility, real authority, real integrity, real honesty, and real love and compassion—in short, the real presence of God.

20 2Kings 6:25
Frankly, this is what is missing in everyone’s life. It’s priceless. We’re so hungry for these authentic dimensions of life that we unknowingly pay exorbitant amounts for false love and intimacy.

The story in 2 Kings continues: “One day as the king of Israel was walking along the wall of the city, a woman called to him, ‘Please help me, my lord the king!’ He answered, ‘If the LORD doesn’t help you, what can I do? I have neither food from the threshing floor nor wine from the press to give you.’ But then the king asked, ‘What is the matter?’ She replied, ‘This woman said to me: “Come on, let’s eat your son today, then we will eat my son tomorrow.” So we cooked my son and ate him. Then the next day I said to her, “Kill your son so we can eat him,” but she has hidden her son.’ When the king heard this, he tore his clothes in despair. And as the king walked along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing burlap under his robe next to his skin.”

It may seem hard to believe that this event could have actually happened. But living in today’s unthinkable age, we can easily see how once the spiritual, moral and ethical foundations within a society are destroyed, all levels of depravity are fair game.

Anarchy has been defined as “a state of disorder due to absence or non-recognition of authority.” It is derived from the Greek word anarkhos, meaning “without a chief ruler.” Once we choose to remove ourselves from the protective covering of a loving and faithful Creator, we are plunged into the abyss of relativism, uncertainty and compromise. As the psalmist once wrote, “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

21 2 Kings 6:26–30
23 Psalm 11:3, NKJV
Either we return to the foundation of being under the rulership of our Creator, or we eventually compromise every dimension of our lives.

One of the saddest seductions of all is the obsession to look for the solution to life’s dilemmas in the heart of man. From capitalists to communists, socialists to secularists, no political or economic system can keep self-indulgence and hypocrisy from raising their ugly heads. Excess and deceit are lodged in the human heart. Man playing God only makes it worse.

When people grow weary of the greed of unscrupulous capitalists, they naively accept the thievery of socialists. The former system tends to seduce those who have to get even more, at times making little provision for the less fortunate. The later structure penalizes the diligent, rewarding the indolent. Either path is a ticking time bomb if the inner man is not transformed. The Bible clearly asserts it is the “heart that is deceitful above all things.”

24 Only a commitment to follow the heart of God can bring the compassion and community that are essential to create the society God intended, and man longs for.

24 Jeremiah 17:9
BORING YOURSELF TO DEATH

German philosopher and renowned atheist, Friedrich Nietzsche, candidly admitted his tedious life experience when he penned, “Against boredom the gods themselves fight in vain.” Tragically, Nietzsche did not link his self-inflicted dullness to a lack of connection with his Creator.

Spiritual boredom is the root of many sins.

It rejects reality for fantasy and forsakes illumination for illusion.

Only the Creator of all things establishes reality. Nothing has substance or value outside of His divine intention. Though man-made creations appear to have meaning in this momentary, transitory world, they have no lasting consequence.

When Lucifer refused to embrace the reality of his exalted yet subservient position before an all-powerful God, he was thrust out of God’s eternal reality into a self-inflicted exile from all that he truly longed for.

Likewise, Adam and Eve left fact for fiction, ceasing to fight for what was true and authentic in the Garden of Eden. They allowed their marvelous imaginations to become intoxicated by the promise of an imposter. The corrupting allure of something beyond what the perfect God had so graciously provided for them jettisoned the chosen first couple outside the reach of the Tree of Life, where they forsook their eternal destiny. Deluded and dismayed, they lost touch with their Father.

An angelic sentry was placed at the entrance of the Garden to prevent their return. “After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And He placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

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25 Nietzsche F. The Anti-Christ (1895).
26 Genesis 3:24
God will not let reality be contaminated by delusion. He will protect and preserve His perfect plan. Only submitting to the God of reality will allow our reentry into the original relational bliss He intended. Anything less than intimacy with our Creator will consign us to aimless toil day after day, conjuring up alternate endings to our lives that will frankly never come to pass.

This is why so many Christians today are bored to death plodding through their predictable lives. Having forsaken the spontaneous adventure of walking hand-in-hand with their Maker, they vainly attempt becoming gods of their own lives.

Do they settle for a make-believe god because they have never experienced the exhilarating relationship of actually knowing Him, or have they ceased to pursue the One who alone can fulfill their deepest longings?

Being genuine has always required a whole-hearted commitment, a passionate focus on peeling back layers of repetitive behavior for a fresh experience in God. Compared to knowing the living God, the cruel drudgery of this world is but a painful hallucination, a throwback to an ancient rebellion that has long since failed.
MISFIRE

I will have greater impact on people when I humbly admit I’m wrong than when I’m consistently right. We can only meet the God of forgiveness when we admit we have sinned against Him. Since knowing God is a universal need, this is the primary relationship people want to see working in us. Yet owning our mistakes is often one of the most difficult things for us to do.

Until I can freely admit I have been wrong, I am firing blanks in my Christian life.

A man named John Corcoran never learned to read or write in grade school and had to hide it from everyone when he got to high school. “I started cheating by turning in other peoples’ papers,” he confessed. “(I) dated the valedictorian and ran around with college prep kids. I couldn’t read words but I could read the system and I could read people.”

Upon graduating, John got an athletic scholarship to Texas Western College. He cheated his way to a diploma and, ironically, received a degree in education. Even more astounding is the fact that he was hired as a teacher. For 17 years, John taught in high school, and yet he had no ability to read or write. He recounts, “What I did was I created an oral and visual environment. There wasn’t the written word in there. I always had two or three teacher’s assistants in each class to do board work or read the bulletin.”

After a career in education, he became a real estate developer. Only much later in life did he acknowledge the lie he had been living and finally learn to read and write. Not surprisingly he became a spokesperson for improving our educational system.

How many Christians go through the motions of Christianity, parroting what they believe, but not living it? The great British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “When you see a

great deal of religion displayed in his shop window, you may depend on it, that he keeps a very small stock of it within.”

Is there consistency between what we say and who we are?

Do our parents, spouse and children see the same person our church friends and co-workers see?

Are we bored to death, suffering from a lack of actual spiritual life?

It seems empty talk is more prevalent in the church than we would care to admit. But we all strain to see actual life, honest humility and someone who is really walking the talk.

At the 1924 Paris Olympics, Eric Liddell was the fastest man alive. The Scotsman won a gold medal, but victory wasn’t the high point of Eric's life. His ultimate destiny was to go to China as a missionary. He eventually died while in a Japanese Concentration Camp during two years of internment in World War II. Eric Liddell emerged as its “…most outstanding personality. The one with a permanent smile.”28 One Russian prostitute said he was “the only man who did anything for her without wanting to be repaid.”29

Can patterns of ineffectiveness be changed? Absolutely!

Focused attention to transform what seems to have little value can lead to the creation of that which is priceless. If you don’t believe me, ask U.S. automakers if the identification “Made in Japan” still makes them laugh.

29 Ibid.
THE CURSE OF COMPROMISE

Noah Webster defined hypocrisy as “a simulation; a feigning to be what one is not; a concealment of one’s real character or motives. More generally, hypocrisy is the assuming of a false appearance of virtue or religion; a deceitful show of a good character, in morals or religion; a counterfeiting of religion.”

What a striking definition! How profoundly clearly this man, known as the “Father of American Scholarship and Education,” recognized hypocrisy. It is a simulation, a fake, a sham, concealing the real person. In particular it refers to someone who professes a spiritual conviction but lives a double life.

Originally, hypocrisy was derived from the Greek word hypokrisis, which meant, “play acting.” It was a theatrical term used in ancient Greece to describe those acting out.

Centuries later, hypocrisy is the one sin Jesus most aggressively exposed. He repeatedly rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees of His day, chastising them for their duplicity. Frankly, it puts the fear of God in me to read the many verses in the Gospels where Jesus refers to the religious leaders of His day as phonies.

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You won’t go in yourselves, and you don’t let others enter either.”

To think that my actions, or lack thereof, could literally keep someone from spending eternity in Heaven shakes me to my core. My responsibility to authentically represent the Lord has eternal consequences; both for my own life and for those I have been called to shepherd. This is why Christian leaders

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30 Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary
32 Matthew 23:13
and teachers will receive a much greater judgment for their words and deeds than will their followers.

James, the brother of Jesus, candidly wrote, “Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.” It is God alone who will judge what is in the heart of man. John Milton wisely mused, “For neither man nor angel can discern hypocrisy, the only evil that walks invisible, except to God alone.”

This modern age is littered with once-gallant vessels who fell prey to compromise, losing their ministries and even families in exchange for that which would not satisfy. Pastor Charles Swindoll writes of the effects of this deception, “The swift wind of compromise is a lot more devastating than the sudden jolt of misfortune.”

Somehow the misfortunes and adversities that each of us endure leave no blemish on our character or integrity. Compromise, on the other hand, can unravel the trust and respect attained over an entire lifetime. As the psalmist wrote in desperation, “Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don’t let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin.”

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33 James 3:1
34 Romans 2:16
37 Psalm 19:13
THE “JESUS-LITE” BACKLASH

Living less than Jesus intended always brings a backlash. It will eventually lead to disgrace and regret.

When Barry Bonds hit his 756th home run, breaking Hank Aaron’s longstanding record, his veracity was called into question by allegations that he used performance-enhancing steroids to accomplish the feat. Many sports enthusiasts thought there should be an asterisk next to his name in the record books footnoting that the record was in some way tainted.

As the idea was tossed around, the highly successful entrepreneur who bought the famed ball asked baseball fans in an Internet poll what he should do with the record-setting baseball. The poll indicated that the fans wanted the ball branded with an asterisk and donated to the baseball Hall of fame—and that’s exactly what he did.

Throughout the ages, some of Christ’s followers have cut corners and lowered the bar of commitment to Jesus. This “easy-believism,” or “Jesus-lite,” as it’s sometimes called, diminishes the level of transformation in their own lives, leading to a gradual distortion of the way, the truth, and the life God intended us to live. In time, it always brings a reproach and taints the impact our lives can have as true representatives of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave us an irrefutable equation, “What you say flows from what is in your heart.”

Perhaps, there are even eternal repercussions. The last book in the Bible emphatically states that in the Final Judgment, “Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

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38 Luke 6:45b
39 Revelation 21:27
On the other hand, Jesus promised, “All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before My Father and His angels that they are mine.”

Paul the martyred Apostle also wrote, “And having chosen them, He called them to come to Him. And having called them, He gave them right standing with Himself. And having given them right standing, He gave them His glory.”

May there be no asterisk next to our names in the Lamb’s Book of Life. May we finish well as Paul did when he wrote, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to His appearing.”

THE SPIRIT OF CYNICISM

We live in the age of cynics. Sarcasm is king and mockery his queen.

Someone once defined, “A cynic is a man who, when he smells flowers, looks around for a coffin.” For the cynic, nothing is sacred, and all things foul are fair game.

The plague of taunting and teasing begins as early as possible and has become almost a rite of passage within the youth culture. No one escapes its debasing effects. Everyone is deflated in order to elevate the cynic.

40 Revelation 3:5
41 Romans 8:30
42 2 Timothy 4:7-8
A preacher once said, “The cynic is one who never sees a good quality in a man, and never fails to see a bad one. He is the human owl, vigilant in darkness and blind to light.”

Because cynics inherently believe the worst about other people, they’ve been described as those “who believe that everyone is motivated primarily by self-interest rather than by acting honorably or for unselfish reasons.”

Jesus warned us to not allow a critical spirit to overtake our lives when He said, “And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own?” If I want to be critical of someone, let me start with myself. But even then, John the beloved disciple wrote, “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.”

It’s pretty clear from scripture that Lucifer, the rebellious archangel, is the father of all cynics. He duped and probably ridiculed one-third of the angels in heaven to buy into his doomed coup and now he spends his time surfing the globe, ridiculing as many unfortunate victims as possible.

The word ridicule is derived from the Latin *ridiculum*, where we also get the word ridiculous, meaning “laughable.” Jesus rebuked the ridiculing leaders of His day, saying that this negativity identified their true father and misrepresented His. “For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. So when I tell the truth, you just naturally don’t believe me!”

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46 Matthew 7:3
47 1John 3:20, NKJV
48 Revelation 12:4, 9
49 John 8:44–45
The infection of condescending, belittling, derogatory humor within all aspects of contemporary culture is epidemic. Talk shows, sit-coms, blogs, comedians, pundits, and every venue of social networking provide a daily barrage of deprecating and destructive hate-speech, which, like cursing, devalues the God-given dignity of both those who say it and hear it.

This avalanche of negative communication destroys marriages, families, friendships, and even churches. Cynicism is a cancer polluting the planet. It was birthed in hell, so to hell it will one day return. Until that liberating day, we must be vigilant to “Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.”50

As Paul, the once embittered Pharisee, so eloquently articulated near the end of his well-lived life, “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”51

God intends for authentic followers of Jesus to rise, becoming a pure, lovely and admirable Authentic Church!

50 Colossians 4:5–6
51 Philippians 4:8
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you been hurt by other Christians who have not represented Jesus in an authentic and healthy way? In what ways did that experience affect you?

2. Have you personally misrepresented Jesus in a way that you know has hurt another person’s Christian faith? How did your misrepresentation affect that person?

3. What dimensions of authenticity are most important to you? (E.g. integrity, honesty, humility, genuineness, etc.) Why?

4. Are there areas in your life that need to be transformed in order for you to represent Jesus in an authentic way? What are they and what is your next step?

5. Are there people you need to ask to forgive you for misrepresenting Jesus? If so, write out their names and a plan for going to them and asking for forgiveness (in person, a letter, a phone call).