

Are We Authentic Christian Believers or Just Faking It?

Many of us are collectors. We collect silver, gold, guitars, watches, comic books, stamps, figurines and a variety of other treasures, which can be extremely valuable to a truly committed collector.

But as with anything of value, the promise of a quick buck lures counterfeiters to the industry. These are people who study the authentic subject in order to recreate an imitation with the sole purpose of **defrauding** or deceiving people.

During the time of Christ, the counterfeiting of coins became rampant. It seemed as if everyone had their own currency. The Romans, the Greeks, the Syrians, the Jews and many others all created coins (by Roman edict, the Jews were only allowed to trade in bronze). Silver, gold, copper, bronze and an array of other metals were utilized in their design. They were known as the stater, the denarius, the drachma, the shekel, the talent, mnas, perutah, lepton, assarion and quadrants. Many of these coins were crude, at best. Some were struck, but most were molded.

All the while, those with ill intent found it easy and financially gainful to replicate currencies.

This extreme confusion brought about a great need for an expert who could decipher the genuine from the fraud and one who could expedite the trade values of all—namely, the “money changer.”

As time went on, the **counterfeiters** compiled their knowledge. They replicated coins to the point that it was impossible to discern the real from the fake.

But then Christ Jesus triumphantly entered the temple.

We know the story. He overturned the tables of the money changers as well as those who bought and sold. I wish I had time to break down each event, but the bottom line is this: Jesus was making a point that the Father's house was a place of communion with God and His people. However, the fakes had so proliferated that one could not distinguish the real from the fake.

The question we are immediately faced with is this: How are we to distinguish an authentic believer from one who has made it his life's ambition to appear **godly**?

The answer is simple: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV).

The religious-minded man would conclude that we gain God's approval by studying and accurately dispensing the *logos* (what is written) in Scripture.

The secret in this passage of Scripture lies in the word *approved*. It is the Greek word δόκιμον (*dok'-ee-mos*). It is defined as "accepted as legitimate regarding coins and money." This word denotes authenticity.

What this particular Scripture says is that we are to study God's Word in order to learn how to present ourselves to God as an authentic believer. This is the only way we are free to live a Christian life without shame. The reason so many Pharisees are so condemning is that shame drives them in religious preoccupation.

If we wanted to authenticate a Rolex watch, for instance, there would be several telltale signs of a cheap copy. Does the hand sweep or tick? After removing the band, is the model number and serial number stamped and confirmed? After removing the back plate, is the movement a genuine movement?

The same applies in Christianity; however, there is only one

simple test to verify authenticity. It is the word *agape* (**unconditional love**). An authentic New Testament believer's witness begins and ends with love. Every step out of love is a step into the darkness. Every step in love is a step in the light: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Just as a car has a speedometer and a plane has an altimeter, so we need a meter to inform us if we are truly an authentic believer or just another Pharisee.

Authenticity and God's love are always determined in the midst of challenge. The degree of Christ's love in our hearts is manifested when presented with a difficult situation. Do we love the socially unacceptable? Do we respond in a healing and redemptive manner when every other believer has turned their back on a brother because their horrific sin is exposed? Do we love the person who betrays us? Are we truly applying a redemptive gospel to those who don't deserve our love? It seems as if the current church most often defines love as "I will love those whom I like."

As each of us learns to **deeply love** every person we come in contact with, we prove that God's love abides in us. Be that person today. Love the most unlovable.

Let's be **patient** and **kind**; let's not envy or boast or be arrogant. Let's not dishonor others. Let us not be self-seeking or easily angered. We will keep no record of wrongs. We won't delight in evil but rejoice with the truth. We will always protect, always trust, always hope and always persevere. If we do this, we will never fail. By this, we will show ourselves to God as **authentic** New Testament believers.

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