

Purging Your Life of Synthetic Spirituality

Everything that glitters is not gold. Just as there are synthetic materials like polyester, there are authentic fabrics like cotton or wool. The synthetic and authentic can look a lot alike. The same is true in Christian leadership: There are synthetic, man-made leaders and there are authentic, God-made leaders.

When I was a bachelor, I lived in a little 720-square-foot bungalow on a dead-end street. I worked eight or ten hours a day while going to school and doing my ministry studies. I had no idea how to decorate a house. My mother would come over and say, "You need to put some flowers around this house!" I didn't care about flowers. I would just as soon put in gravel than to deal with watering anything. But every time mom came over she would tell me, "David, you need to get some greenery and flowers around this house. It would make it so much more beautiful."

One day, I was at a discount department store and saw they were having a special on plastic flowers, a nickel apiece. So I bought 40 flowers of all different colors, took them home, shoved them into the ground and within five minutes had a "flower garden." My mother drove by and happily said, "David, you have a green thumb, and you didn't know it."

Then the snow came. Mine was the only house in the neighborhood with flowers peeking out of the snow. From a distance, they looked like the real thing. But when you got up close, you could see that each one was exactly alike. They all had come out of the same press. They were flawless and didn't have those little brown veins or ragged edges you see on real flowers. But they also could not emit a beautiful aroma, or offer tenderness to the touch.

The same applies to leaders who are synthetic. They look good from a distance, but when you look more closely, you find they rarely, if ever, admit any flaws. Authentic leaders are open about their flaws, yet being shaped by the Holy Spirit, not pressed by a human mold.

One of the most important decisions you will ever make in your life is when you answer the question: Will I abide as an authentic or synthetic leader? This decision will transform your life and everything you do. It will determine if your efforts are fruitful or fruitless. It's critical to your success as a Christian leader, whether in ministry or marketplace.

Authenticity means to live in the perspective, principles and power of God's kingdom. The synthetic operates in the perspective, principles and power of this world. John the Baptist said it this way: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2). Jesus preached the same message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17b). They were encouraging us to live the only authentic way, from the perspective of the Kingdom of heaven.

Jesus talked a lot about living from God's Kingdom perspective. In the Sermon on the Mount, He started with, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). He then gave parables about the kingdom. After He had been raised from the dead, He taught the disciples about the kingdom for 40 days (Acts 1:1-3).

If Jesus spent so much time teaching about kingdom ways, it must be important! Understanding how to live from God's kingdom perspective is the key to authentic living. {eoa}

*Charisma House has just released Dave's latest book, **Hope in the Last Days**.*

Dr. Dave Williams served for over 30 years as pastor of Mount Hope Church in Lansing, Michigan, with over 500 outreach

ministries around the world. Dave led the church in giving over \$40,000,000 to world and local missions. His leadership training course, The Art of Pacesetting Leadership, is credited with catapulting one church from 226 to over 4,000. Another church went from 8 to over 1,000. His all-time best-selling book, The New Life: The Start of Something Wonderful, is a practical, step-by-step guide to help new believers become established in their Christian walk and has sold over 2.5 million copies. His latest book, Hope in the Last Days, is published by Charisma House. Dave now focuses on helping young ministers whenever he has an opportunity.