

Why Jesus Wants You to Be True to Yourself

It's been over 400 years since Shakespeare wrote the words, "To thine own self be true." A more updated version reads, "Be true to yourself." We all get the gist, right? Being a people pleaser is a barren and tiresome road to travel. I need to be the authentic me. I heard one Bible teacher sum it up like this: "Be yourself. Everybody else is already taken."

Being True to Christ

Just to clarify, being true to yourself does not deputize you to go rogue whenever you feel like it and only be concerned with how "you" feel about things. There is a responsibility we have to walk in love, and our greatest role model, the most authentic human being ever, left us a clear example to emulate. Jesus was not a people pleaser, was not bound up with insecurity or fear, had total confidence in Himself, and yet walked in obedience to His Father's mission and lived sacrificially. Bottom line: *Being true to yourself is being true to following Christ, hearing His voice and living for His glory.*

True or False

I'd like to add a little muscle to our topic. Let me rephrase it to say, "Be true to your *true self*." Wait, is there actually a *false self*? There is. The Bible calls it your *old self*.

"Put off the former way of life in the old nature. ... Put on the new nature, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:22-24).

"Put on the new [spiritual] self who is being continually renewed in true knowledge in the image of Him who created the

new self" (Col. 3:10, AMP).

A Surrendered State

The true self emerging requires continual renewal, and the old self doesn't always succumb easily. It necessitates our living in a surrendered state. Think of a sculptor and his unformed piece of stone. You use dynamite, drilling and hammering to bring a separation and a freedom from the old structure. The stone is free from the mountain, but it's not free from itself. Becoming a Christian is like a precious stone being released from a mountain. My eternal destiny is changed in a moment when I'm born again, and then the spiritual formation continues in earnest.

Choosing Rightly

God is the master sculptor. My true self emerges, ever-increasing, as I'm conformed to the image of Christ. So He chips away everything that isn't Jesus. The false self will never be on display in the finished work. Unlike real stone, we have a voice—the ability to choose for or against the sculptor's intentions. Sometimes the false (old) self is clearly dark and unhealthy, giving us a clear choice to make. Other times it's more like a prison that one does not know how to escape, or worse yet, that one does not even realize they are inhabiting.

Trusted Allies

In my experience, both personal and in pastoring others, the false self (impostor) is rooted in childhood. Emotional wounding and trauma are a potent force against authenticity. In order for the child to survive, the only option is to *become* somebody safe. There are at least two sides to this coin, with many variations. Some go inward to build their fortress of safety, while some become aggressive to ensure that they will have control over their life. Because the false self may have been the only friend one had, it almost feels

unnatural to detach one's self. We need trusted allies on the journey.

German pastor and author Dietrich Bonhoeffer appeals to our need for family: "God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of man. Therefore the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged. ... The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is unsure, his brother's is sure."

Self-Deception

Bonhoeffer continues to explain that "what I have trouble believing about myself, my friend can see and easily believe. When it comes to self-perception, the Christ in you is stronger and more accurate than the Christ in me. That's no reflection on Christ; it simply reflects the power of self-deception. I need the freshness of your perception, and the reverse is true. The Christ in me is stronger when it's you that needs the accurate word."

Living surrendered, in the midst of those who are like-minded, is a great impetus in our walk with God. I'm thankful for all those who have challenged me over the years, calling me higher into God's purposes for my life. Gifted pastors and counselors have carried me through some rough patches, and I have endeavored to do the same for others. Most of all, my beloved wife has been a faithful friend to see me through.

More Glory

We are "fearfully and wonderfully made"—respected by God and distinguished by Him from every other person ever created. Everything good in me is in the image of God. Thus, when I *self-reflect*, my goal is to *Christ-reflect*.

"And we all, with unveiled face, continually seeing as in a

mirror the glory of the Lord, are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18, AMP).

Be true to yourself—to the ever-expanding *true you*.

Where do you need help reflecting Christ? {eoa}

Mike and Anne Rizzo have been in pastoral ministry for over 35 years and currently serve as directors of marriage and family ministries at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. They carry a passion for personal mentoring, teaching and raising up marriages that exalt the name of Jesus. Mike and Anne have three grown children and two grandchildren, and are the authors of *Vertical Marriage: A Godward Preparation for Life Together* and *Longing for Eden: Embracing God's Vision in Your Marriage*.

This article originally appeared at .