

How to Spot Imitation Christianity

Our American culture is one of emulation. People emulate athletes, movie stars, celebrities and so on. Emulation is rampant in our culture. In fact, it is so rampant that for decades it has become pervasive within the American church.

American Christians often emulate worship leaders, pastors, teachers, “Christian celebrities” and more. The problem is that God does not want us emulating people; He wants us emulating Him.

Just as each person has unique DNA, so too does each person have a unique spiritual DNA. God has created each person to have a unique spiritual expression which can only occur through them becoming who He created them to be. It doesn't come through emulating who God created another person to be. This understanding is vital to the Christian life. No one can ever truly be comfortable or happy trying to be someone God did not create them to be

One of the definitions of “emulate” is “to imitate.” When we imitate someone, we follow them or pattern ourselves after them. Essentially, emulation is an attempt to create ourselves as a copy of someone else. Even the most mature believer is still in process. Those that are often emulated have weaknesses and struggles just like any “normal” believer. I once saw this firsthand with an older minister who has had one of the most globally impacting ministries of the last 60 years. I was volunteering for him and saw his humanity firsthand. There was a line of 300 people who wanted pictures and books signed, and I could clearly tell he felt tired. It was a struggle for him to sign books and meet people for the following two hours, especially since it was already after a service that had lasted three to four hours.

We often want to emulate what we see on the stage, without realizing what we see on the stage is only a picture of the person in front of us. We are not exposed to the day-to-day responsibilities and drudgeries of people's lives.

There is only one perfect person, and that person is Jesus Christ. Emulation of anyone other than Jesus Christ can be spiritually stagnating at best and spiritually detrimental at worst.

Emulation can usually be spotted by a mature believer that has "been around the block a few times." In a person's journey, there are often times we go down the path of emulation. The problem is that this road always leads to some kind of pitfall. Maturity in Christ, in this instance, is learning that emulation is a path that should not be walked down again.

The truth is, God didn't create you to be a carbon copy of some big-name preacher or Christian leader. He made you unique. Sadly, emulation is a way people normally compensate hidden or uncovered weaknesses. When we can be someone else, we do not have to deal with our own wounding or spiritual inadequacies.

Whenever money is copied, it is called "counterfeit." Counterfeit has the appearance of that which has value without containing that which makes it valuable. God does not want us to live counterfeit lives. However, when we try to emulate people, our lives do, in fact, become counterfeit, and we do not allow God to bring forth the value that He created us with.

God wants authenticity. Being an authentic person is a very important part of the Christian life. God has given each believer a unique spiritual identity with unique ways through which they can demonstrate His love and His glory to the world. Emulating others gets in the way of this. Jesus calls each person by their own name, He desires to reveal Himself to

them in a personal unique way, and has a specific calling and destiny he wants them to fulfill.

We are not to fix our eyes on people, even if everyone else is doing it. We are to fix our eyes on Jesus and emulate Him and Him alone. That means surrendering to the Holy Spirit, who is the infinitely creative and unique God and who seeks to move in us and through us in each situation of our lives. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit in every way. When God created you, He broke the mold. So resist the pull to emulate others and press into your unique relationship, calling, and gifting that God has given you.
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