

## 2 - "Being Authentic"

*"Why are you trying so hard to fit in when you were born to stand out?"*

— Ian Wallace

Of all the things the world wants out of church, authenticity may be the most important. Nobody likes a fake. Even in our airbrush culture, we despise counterfeits and crave authenticity. **Everyone wants to be real!**

But what does it mean to be real? No one really knows. Or so it seems. In our increasingly post-Christian culture, where confusion about what it means to be real abounds, and where distrust of organized religion has reached an all-time high, the church needs to **get real**. We must clarify for ourselves, and for a watching world, what it means to live a life of authentic faith.

While Christians are confused about what it means to be real, Jesus is not. *"Thus you will recognize them by their fruits,"* He says (Matthew 7:20). You know you're real if you bear fruit, He tells us. **Fruit is the telltale sign of authentic faith ... because fruit doesn't lie!** *"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush."* (Luke 6:43–44 ESV)

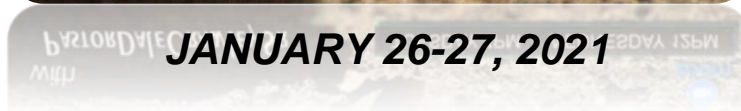
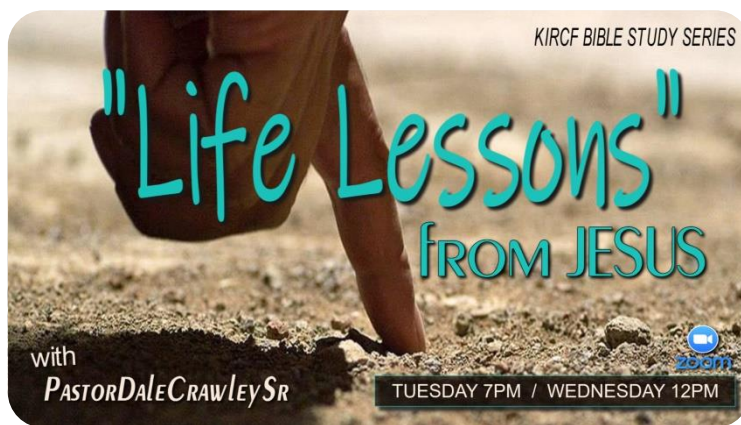
**Authentic is what we should be.** Hypocrisy, pretensions, and other deceitful ways of living shouldn't be in the life of a Christian. After all, we were all saved from the father of lies ... and now belong to the Father in heaven in whom there is no darkness at all.

But what is authenticity, really? Is it about acting according to what you truly feel inside? Or is it living according to what you think you are? Before we try to answer that, let's talk about some important things first.

Jesus said, *"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:32). He later called Himself *"the truth"* (John 14:6). The two most important people you can ever truly know – Jesus and yourself. Knowing the truth about each will set you free!

There are two things I've learned about this:

- Being perfect is unrealistic – so stop trying to convince people that you are.
- You Can't Make Everyone Happy – so be who you are and let the chips fall where they may.



According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word "**authentic**" means "**true to one's personality, spirit, or character.**" It also means "**made to be or look just like an original.**" By these definitions ... we can safely say that being authentic means being "**true to the original**" ... **NOT FAKE!**

We need to understand that being authentic doesn't mean acting in line with how you feel. It means making your feelings follow your true identity. We need to understand that being authentic means ... living out the real identity that we have as saved people – a creation made in the image of God.

Simply put ... if we want to be authentic we need to live according to how God sees us, what He made us to be. The Bible tells us, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27)

- **Our identity is rooted in God. It simply follows that being authentic means living according to how He designed us, how He created us to be.**

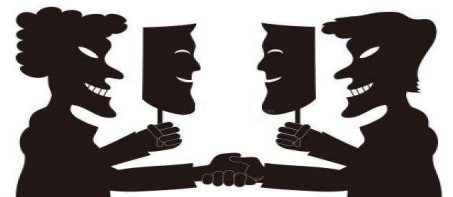
## WAYS TO BE AUTHENTIC

### 1) *Imitate Christ*

While that sounds difficult to do, we should realize that God wants that. **Jesus never behaved one way in the Temple and another way in the streets!** The Bible tells us that Christ is the Firstborn, and we are to conform to His image as His followers (Romans 8:29). **Christ-likeness is the goal of being a Christian** ... and so we must do our best to be like Him in what we think, believe, say, or do.

### 2) *Live in the light*

Next, we are to live in the light. This simply means living with nothing to hide. No sin, no hypocrisy, no pretensions, nothing!



Ephesians 5:8-12 tells us we used to be sons and daughters of the dark ... but in Christ we are children of the light. We are to live in the light, doing away with and exposing the "**unfruitful works of darkness.**" Our real identity ... is that we are children of God, and we owe it to God to live like that!

### 3) *Walk in love*

Lastly, we should walk in love ...

- First ... we love God above all.
- Second ... we love the people around us: family first, then others next.
- Third ... we love our enemies.
- Fourth ... we love those who don't know. We do this because our God is love, and He loved us.