

Get Real: Insights for Becoming Authentic Christian Women

By Teresa Beck

What does it mean to be "authentic?" When purchasing a gemstone, it means "genuine" or "real." It is the same with people. Often, Christian women think that they have to put on a "Super Christian" show every Sunday, looking especially pious in their dresses and makeup with their hair just so. What message is conveyed to women in the world or new Christians when we pretend to be "Super Christians," acting as if we've never experienced an extreme emotion or had sex or argued or made mistakes? The message is that we are superficial, fake, and hypocritical.

We must be authentic, or true to others, and ourselves as we serve Christ. We need to be real so that the world will not see the outside, but the heart of Christ that lives in us and through us. It has always been faith that saves through grace, not good works or pious looks. We need to stop being the "whited sepulchers" (Matthew 23:27) that Jesus said the Pharisees were and begin being the "earthen vessels" He intended us to be. (2 Corinthians 4:7)

I realize that Christian women who put on the appearance of being very pious have good intentions. They want to be an example of godliness and purity. We have learned through tradition how to "act" like Christians. We need to learn through Christ how to "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12) What did Mary, the mother of Jesus, say when she visited Elisabeth? She made it clear that her soul "magnified" her Lord and that her spirit "rejoiced" in God, her Savior.

Was she "acting" like a Christian, or was she being authentic? The authentic Christian woman needs to *be* humble, not *look* humble. If Mary were with Jesus when He defended and forgave the adulteress in John 8, would she have gawked at the disgusting sight and tried to get the woman to put on some "decent" clothes, or would she have bent down and brushed away the woman's tears as she embraced her? I think the latter. Mary, in my opinion, was an authentic Christian woman.

If we are to be as the women of old, true followers of Christ, we must look at ourselves honestly in the bright light of the Word of God. We must strive to do the will of God without allowing ourselves to think and behave as if we've arrived. We must let others see our struggle and the faith that pulls us through. We must let others see our flaws and the grace of God that forgives and heals. We must live our lives as a light on a hill, not as a dim flame under a decorative bushel.

My hope is to share with Christian women what I've discovered and am discovering in the journey toward heaven. I want my sisters in Christ to know that they can be real; they don't have to fear the consequences of not "keeping up appearances:" and, they can live a life of honesty with themselves, God, and others so that Christ will be revealed in their lives and so that they will grow toward the perfection that will occur when we meet Jesus.

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