



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I am **28**
God's message

?

did you know...

Every man has three characters – that which he exhibits, that which he has, and that which he thinks he has.

- Karr

Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.

- Mother Theresa

There is no wisdom save in truth.

- Martin Luther

We lie loudest when we lie to ourselves.

- Eric Hoffer

"The truth is more important than the facts."

- Frank Lloyd Wright



photo: sxc tofii

who am I really?



the facts of his story

Jesus is coming very soon. But just before he arrives, there is a final message of warning given to prepare the world. It is found in Revelation 18:4, "Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues". This call to "come out" is an echo of earlier calls to come out all through the Bible.

1. What was the problem with the current culture that caused these preachers to call their hearers "out" from it?

a) Noah (Genesis 6:11-13) _____

b) Elijah (1 Kings 18:21) _____

c) John the Baptist (Luke 3:3 & 7-14) _____

d) Peter (Acts 2:36-40) _____

2. If these preachers encouraged for their hearers to "come out" what were they to come "into"?

While driving my boys to swimming lessons, Michael, age eight, saw a book my husband had left in the car. He picked it up and read the title. "What's this book about?" he asked. "It's a book to help us become authentic Christians," I replied. He said, "Oh yea, that's what we are, right, Mom! Pathetic Christians!"

Connie Schmotzer, Bellingham, Wash., Today's Christian Woman, "Heart to Heart."

When I am finishing a picture, I hold some God-made object up to it—a rock, a flower, the branch of a tree or my hand—as a kind of final test. If the painting stands up beside a thing man cannot make, the painting is authentic. If there's a clash between the two, it is bad art.

Marc Chagall, 1887-1985



thinking it through

1. What is the most important lesson you learned from the texts you have just studied, and why?

2. When you think about your own culture, what are some of the things you need to be separated from? Why is this important, and how can you do this?



habits for reflecting the work of Jesus ~ living the message

“the medium is the message”

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan wrote, ‘The medium is the message’. For example, if we listen to a lot of music on an ipod, we are influenced not just by the music we hear, but also by the fact that we have headphones in our ears and can’t really talk to people and listen to our music at the same time.

If we apply this idea to us as Christians, we would say that what we share about God is shaped by the sort of people we are (for in this case, we are the medium). For example, if we say that God is love and he can change us to be like him, but are not loving ourselves, people will tend not to believe us. However, if we say God is loving and can change us to be like him, and we are also loving, we (the medium) harmonise with our message (God is love). This is what it means to be an authentic Christian. When we are authentic, what we share about God is communicated with power.

Jesus was “the message”

God speaks to our world most powerfully through who we are. This is what Jesus was trying to say to his disciples. He wanted them to see that they could know his father by seeing him.

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” (John 14:6-10)

It is exciting to think that Jesus wants people to know the Father when they meet us too.

truth is a person

Jesus says that when people meet him, they can know his Father. It was not a question of people meeting people and telling them about his Father. His life was an accurate reflection of the Father. So when Jesus says, “I am... the truth”, what he meant was, “who I am is really what my Father is like.” Truth is a person. Truth is not simply a right idea, but is linked directly to who God is.

We reveal truth to others in the most important way by revealing who God is in our own lives. When we (the medium) match the message (the truth—who God is), there is a great power in our witness to others.

preparing the world for Jesus’ return

As we prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus, the most important thing that people need to know is that God really does exist, and what sort of God he is. They will understand this most powerfully when God reveals himself through us. There will be times when the message that God wants us to tell others with our mouths may appear difficult for them to believe. But when our lives reflect the truth about who God is, the Holy Spirit is able to convict their hearts when we speak.

a God-revealing authentic life
+
a God-given message
=
powerful impact

am I authentic?

Am I authentic? That’s a very important question to ask ourselves. Is what I say and do the same as who I am? I tell people this or that about God, but is God able to confirm that “truth” through who I am?

making the habit

Make a list of all the things you want to share about God as you work to prepare others for the return of Jesus. How will you will, in your own life, show others that what you are saying really is

true? You can use a table like the one below to help you.

Sample table:

things I want to share about God	how will I show this is true with my life?
eg. that God loves everyone, even those who don't care about him.	I want to grow in showing love to those who don't necessarily like me by...



putting the pieces together

In "did you know" we began to look at the idea of authenticity. Does what I say and do match with who I really am?

In "the facts of his story" we saw how God has been sending prophets to call his people to live a life of authenticity—to truly live the values of the kingdom of God, even though the culture around them has chosen a different way of living. 1a) Noah called people out of a violent society that had abandoned God. b) Elijah called out people who were compromising with other gods to make a clear decision for the true God. c) John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by calling his listeners to moral living—to treat people with compassion, with honesty and sacrifice. d) Peter called his hearers to separate themselves from the corrupt religious government of his day. Through these four men, God was calling his people to live a life of integrity which went against the way the whole of culture was thinking and behaving. God was calling for counter-cultural living. 2) He wanted his people to separate themselves from everything that was against the values and principles of his kingdom. This is a call we must make to everyone today—to come out from a culture that is increasingly turning it's back on God, and live the values and principles that represent God's Kingdom.

In "habits for reflecting the work of Jesus" we looked at how God wants to communicate through us—not just using our lips to speak, but becoming authentic witnesses who reveal in themselves, the character of himself.



my time with God

What more can you learn about the problems in the culture that the following people faced?

1. Noah (Genesis 6)
2. Elijah (1 Kings 18)
3. Malachi (Malachi 4)
4. John the Baptist (Luke 3)
5. Peter (Acts 2)
6. God's people living before Jesus comes (Revelation 14 & 18)



pass it on!

Can you explain why truth is a person, and why this is important when it comes to preparing people for the return of Jesus?



extra help