

I. Counter 2: An Authentic Faith Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor June 15, 2008

- A. Last week I shared that Jesus challenges us to a higher law, to *Love to the Maximum*. Today we are going to look at the *Motivation* that compels us as we serve Jesus Christ and participate in the ministry of the Church.
- B. There are two values that many of us share at CrossRoad: Relevance and Authenticity.
- C. As you hear leaders speak, Church Leaders in particular, these two values are quite common, they have almost become buzz words and may have lost some of their meaning.
- D. These are not new concepts being birthed in strategy sessions for churches, these are the core of every Christ follower, because there was none more relevant to the needs of humanity and more authentic in meeting the needs of humanity than Jesus.
- E. As he continues to preach this sermon from the hilly northern banks of the Sea of Galilee, he challenges our motives, what is relevant, what is authentic.
- F. (Mat 6:1-NIV) *"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*
- G. Erwin McManus, *Uprising: A Revolution of the Soul*, challenges some of the pop thinking about authenticity: In recent times in our culture we have put an increasing value on authenticity and a decreasing focus on integrity. This is strongly influenced by a disdain for the pretentious and a longing for anything that is real. In principle, I wholeheartedly embrace the shift, except where authenticity is romanticized. When calling for authenticity, we need to take seriously the brokenness and sinfulness of the human heart. If to be authentic means to be who we really are or to express what we really feel, then in most cases I'm going to vote for hypocrisy. Our prisons are filled with men and women who acted on their feelings and impulses. If authenticity is about being true to yourself, these individuals should be our models of inspiration.....
- Our claim that we are committed to being authentic can actually be a façade for self-indulgence. If we're not careful, authentic can be the new word for arrogance.....Authenticity can establish a self-righteousness that justifies abuse. Is it really OK to do something because you want to, to say something because you feel it?....
- Authenticity without integrity is lethal. To be authentic when our hearts are dark and corrosive is equivalent to opening Pandora's box....
- We are well aware of our weaknesses and shortcomings. Integrity is not about being flawless, but being "falseless." When you watch a person of integrity, you can know exactly what's inside him or her. That individual is transparent. You can see inside the heart and witness the light emanating from within.

H. *An Authentic Faith demonstrates the righteousness of God, not self-righteousness.*

- I. There are *Three Great Demonstrations of Authentic Faith* that we see Jesus talks about from his Jewish tradition.

1. *Compassion for and support of the Needy*
2. *Prayer*
3. *Fasting, Self-discipline*

- J. In the message he delivers, he lifts up these values, but challenges the integrity of His listeners to not participate in any of these as signs of Self-Righteousness.

- K. (Mat 6:2 NIV) *"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. {3} But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, {4} so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. {5} "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. {6} But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. {7} And when you pray, do*

not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. {8} Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. {9} "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, {10} your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. {11} Give us today our daily bread. {12} Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. {13} And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' {14} For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. {15} But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. {16} "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. {17} But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, {18} so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

L. Jesus warns his followers that each act of faith has its own set of pitfalls.

M. We have all been turned off by showy acts of compassion. Acts that looked to be very generous, but seemed to be more self-serving.

N. We have all seen people who seem to be very eloquent in their public prayer, but there is not always a consistency in their lives.

1. I have often warned against thinking that people who pray well publicly may actually just have better verbal skills and that it is not necessarily the indication of a person's relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
2. It may not even be an indication of how deep their faith is.

O. Fasting is seen as one of the Spiritual disciplines that is common to people of faith. Fasting can be a wonderful discipline that increases the strength of our faith muscle.

1. I have seen it unify churches and small groups around a single focus of prayer.
2. It can be used to help people learn self-discipline.
3. I caught something on the news about a group that is encouraging people to slow down and fast from their cell phones, blackberries, email, text messaging and slow down and get engaged in personal activity with family and friends.
4. But there is a smacking of self-righteousness when a person begins to use their self-denial as a means of producing righteousness.

P. Jesus gives two groups of warnings that challenge the authenticity of our faith and that can lead to hypocrisy.

Q. Jesus describes two areas to watch out for:

R. *Hypocrites expect a reward.*

1. *(Mat 6:2 NIV) "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.*
2. *(Mat 6:5 NIV) "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.*
3. *(Mat 6:16 NIV) "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.*

S. *Hypocrites look for the limelight.*

1. *(Mat 6:4 NIV) so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*
2. *(Mat 6:6 NIV) But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

3. (Mat 6:18 NIV) so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

T. These are the obvious. In the final analysis, who can judge!

U. We have to be very careful about reading this scripture and thinking that it gives us any occasion to judge the motive of a person's generosity, their piety, their self-discipline.

V. It is a very slippery slope.

W. If we stopped here, all we know is what hypocrisy looks like.

X. Our goal is the authentic, what does it look like?

II. ***Authentic Faith is Natural.***

A. Are any of you ambidextrous? That's not a denomination, can you do all things as well left or right-handed.

B. I have a few left-handed friends who can do some tasks right-handed, but I don't think I have ever known anyone who is truly ambidextrous.

C. Groucho Marx said, "He would give his right arm to be ambidextrous!"

D. This is what Jesus says, (Mat 6: {3} *But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, {4} so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

E. This is tied in with Jesus telling his disciples not to be showy with their generosity, but I think it applies to the way we live our lives.

F. Have you ever seen one of those jugglers who can do something with one hand and something totally different with the other.

G. I can't even pat my head and rub my stomach at the same time.

H. We use the term to be critical of organizations that don't communicate well. The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.

I. Authentic faith is when you show acts of mercy and compassion and never have to give a thought about your intentions or motivations, when you pray, it is not asking God for anything specific, it is not complaining to God about how rotten your life is, it is a natural conversation. You are not enamored by the sound of your own voice, but you are intensely aware of the authenticity of your heart.

J. Authentic Faith is when the disciplines of the faith do not seem like discipline. If you are called to fast from something, it is a privilege. If you are called to a ministry that takes you into the jungles of Costa Rica, the slums of Soweto, or the suburbs of Jacksonville, you have joy no matter what.

III. ***An Authentic Faith is in the Righteousness of God.***

A. (Mat 6: NIV) {9} "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

B. Bear with me, at first this sounds like I am stating the obvious or just repeating religious rhetoric.

C. It is much more than that.

D. The reason Jesus encourages his followers to pray to God as Father is because it keeps us in the mindset of our total dependence on God.

E. (Start Godtube Video with music in background) A few years ago I shared the story of Dick and Rick Hoyt. At Rick's birth in 1962 the umbilical cord coiled around his neck and cut off oxygen to his brain, leaving him so severely disabled his parents were advised just to put him in an institution. As Rick grew, and through the incredible love of his family, he began to develop and through a computer he is actually able to communicate his thoughts, allowing him to graduate high school and college. The father and son team began competing together in a five-mile benefit run for a local lacrosse player who had been paralyzed in an accident. Dick, far from being a long-distance runner, agreed to push Rick in his wheelchair. They finished next to last, but they felt they had achieved a triumph. That night, Dick remembers, "Rick told us

he just didn't feel handicapped when we were competing. From there they began to do marathons and iron man triathalons.

- a. Recently, I have seen this Youtube video showing up in emails.
 - b. I watched it this week and I tell you it really reminded me of how dependent I am on God who is pulling me, pushing me, carrying me.
 - c. I have no righteous of my own.
 - d. My right hand isn't even capable of working with my left to produce any righteous.
2. There is a hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness..."
 3. Authentic Faith is based on a Loving Father God who is carrying us, who declares us righteous!

F. Every father, every man, every person here today, is challenged by the love of Dick Hoyt for his son Rick; and certainly, we are all convicted to love like that.

G. Authentic faith recognizes that we are Rick. We are disabled, imperfect, or maybe self-righteous; and God's solution is for us to get into the raft, the handlebar seat, the cart and to let him carry us.

IV. ***Authentic Faith Forgives.***

A. *(Mat 6:14-15 NIV) For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. {15} But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

1. Gallup Poll:
 - a. Percentage of Americans who pray to forgive others: 86.
 - b. Who pray for forgiveness for themselves: 92.
 - c. It is easier to ask God to forgive our sins, but much harder to forgive others.
2. In keeping with Jesus' teaching, even forgiveness must be done in secret.
3. It is done without apologies.
4. If you are waiting for an apology before you forgive someone, you are not practicing Authentic Faith.
5. If you get an apology, you have been paid back.
6. Authentic Faith, faith that moves Counter to the way of a fallen world, forgives the smallest and the largest wrongs done against them, because they know that their debt has been paid by the Son of God, Jesus.

V. Erwin: The divine transformation that God seeks to bring is nothing less and nothing more than making us truly human. What it means to be human has become so foreign to us, and God's original intent so lost to us, that we experience it as a new way to be human. It is an actuality, a return to the authentic. God literally turns us inside out. When the box is opened, we see that God has transformed the contents. There is a resonance between our actions and desires. How we live becomes a genuine expression of what we care about. We are no longer guided by laws, but by values.

A. It is God's desire to do His work from the inside out. To turn us into authentic human beings, no plastic piety, but true Christ-centered human beings.