

WHAT MATTERS

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Part 3 - "The Foundation to Matter"

Small Group Material

January 22nd, 2017

Leader Guide

Bottom Line: *Authenticity begins with honesty.*

Study Verses: *Genesis 1:26-27, Colossians 3:7-10, Psalm 51:6, James 1:22-25, Psalm 1:1-3*

Define The Win: *Participants would understand how critical valuing authenticity is to the health of their relationships, both with others and with God. They would be willing to confront the places where inauthenticity might be making an appearance in their life. Group members would extend themselves a bit of grace (along with others) and realize they are a work in progress who is being transformed into image of Christ.*

Key Points

- *If you want to pursue truth, you begin by pursuing Jesus.*
- *Trust can be shaken simply by suspicion. Distrust only requires a question mark.*
- *Faith is a heart set that allows your experience to catch up with reality.*
- *Authenticity isn't about being perfect, but about identity and the image you are reflecting.*
- *Authenticity provides a standard for truth and a foundation for trust.*
- *Transparency is what you are allowed to see. Authenticity is trusting what you see.*

- *The value of authenticity requires that we are relentlessly looking for and pursuing what is true.*
- *Authenticity requires process and is dependent on grace. We're all works in progress.*
- *We are experts at retelling false narratives. We must examine the stories we keep telling about ourselves and others.*

ENCOUNTER

- **Authenticity has become a buzzword in today's culture. What do you believe is behind this push to be "authentic"?**
- **How would you describe or define AUTHENTICITY? Why is it important that our church community values authenticity? How is understanding and valuing authenticity critical in your own life?**
- **How have you seen authenticity misused and distorted into something it is not (ex. "this is just who I am..I'm being real")? What are the differences between transparency and authenticity?**
- **Is it possible to trust an imperfect person? Why or why not? What makes you answer in the way that you do?**

FORMATION

- **Read Genesis 1:26-27. Why does authenticity require a standard?**
- **Read James 1:22-25. How does this verse speak to authenticity not being about achieving a standard or perfection, but rather our identity and the image we are reflecting?**
- **Read Colossians 3:7-10. What role does process and grace play in valuing authenticity in your life and the life of other believers?**
- **Read Psalm 1:1-3. What level of security does living an authentic life provide?**

EXPRESSION

- **What false narratives do you keep telling about yourself or others? How does this story come to be? Why do you continue to tell it?**
- **Read Psalm 51:6. Where are you resistant to allow God's truth to penetrate your innermost being? If authenticity requires honesty, why does this place of your heart remain hidden and unaddressed?**

- **Are there relationships where your inauthenticity has caused mistrust or suspicion to spring up? How can you mend this relationship?**

LEADER INSIGHT: Authenticity has achieved buzzword status in our culture. Everywhere we look people are clamoring for relationships, businesses and organizations that are the “real deal.” From the boardroom to the dining room, the drive to be authentic has seemingly risen to one of our top desires. This push for authenticity has even become a trendy part of church vernacular. We search for churches that allow us to “come as we are.”

Yet, like many words that get thrown around so casually, the true meaning of authenticity has been distorted and misused over the years. A friend makes an insensitive comment and when we push back, they say, “What? I’m just being authentic.” A co-worker vents their frustration and when they notice how their words hit, they mutter, “What you see is what you get.”

In those moments when we are “just keeping it real,” “not having it all together” or “being an open book,” most of us think we are being authentic. We might be transparent, but we are far from authentic. We use authenticity as an escape clause for a bad attitude, sin patterns or areas of our heart that we don’t want to address. When we behave this way we are settling for a cheap substitute of authenticity. Authenticity never excuses sin.

The real work of authenticity isn’t just knowing yourself, but understanding the image we are reflecting. Authenticity requires a standard for truth. It always pushes us to ruthlessly pursue truth - not only about ourselves, but our creator. Authenticity requires being true to who we are. As believers, who we are is defined by Christ. We are a new creation. We are His masterpiece. We are salt and light. We are Christ’s ambassadors. This is the image we are called to reflect.

Our only hope of accurately reflecting God in everything we do is understanding that our life is found in Him. If we want to pursue truth, it begins by pursuing Jesus. The value of authenticity reminds us that all our pursuits and efforts must ultimately be about reflecting Christ’s heart to those around us. But, what do we do with our imperfections, shortcomings and failures?

The pressure one can feel about having to reflect the love of Christ in everything we do can push one towards inauthenticity. Without grace and understanding that authenticity entails a process, we can very easily fall for the “fake it till you make it” trap. Authenticity isn’t about being perfect, but where we find our identity and the image we are reflecting. Faith is a heart set that allows our experience to catch up with reality.

Pursuing authenticity is critical in our relationships, both with God as well as those around us. Valuing authenticity is always others focused. Trust can be shaken simply by suspicion. Distrust only requires a question mark. Living authentically in community allows us to share each others burdens as well as help each other walk

with God. Authentic people are individuals who always remain a student of themselves and others. They value wisdom and insight. They are willing to expose their innermost being to God's Word and let His truth shape their heart. Authenticity doesn't dwell on the past or remain stuck in the present. Instead it is focused on the person you are becoming and being an individual who lives out their values.