

## **BECOMING AN AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN**

**Titus 1:1**

**By Andy Manning – 6/6/17**

The title of this sermon is “Becoming an Authentic Christian.” One of the scariest passages in the Bible is when Jesus said that on Judgment Day many people will assume that they are Christians, they will assume they are saved, they will assume that they are heaven-bound, but when they meet Christ face to face He will say, “Depart from me. I never knew you” (Mt 7:21-23).

In other words, there are many people who think they are Christians but are not. There are many people who think they are saved, but are not. There are many people who think they are living a life that is pleasing to God, but they are not. There are many people who call themselves Christians, but they are not. There are many people who think they are Christians, but they are not. You might call these pseudo Christians. They aren’t trying to be hypocrites; they think they are authentic Christians; but they aren’t.

### **Three Problems With Pseudo Christianity**

And there are three big problems with pseudo-Christianity. **First, you might miss heaven.** It’s possible to be saved, but to totally miss the point of the Christian life. If that’s the case then you will go to heaven, even though you didn’t live the authentic Christian life. But in many cases there are people think they are Christians, but they are not saved, and when they die they will be shocked to find themselves in hell.

The second problem with pseudo-Christianity is that **you miss the abundant Christian life.** In John 10:10 Jesus said that He came to give us not just eternal life, but abundant life; a full and meaningful life; a fulfilling life. He has an awesome plan for your life. But if you are a pseudo-Christian, then you will miss out on the abundant life that God has for you.

A third problem with pseud-Christianity is that **you damage God’s reputation.** How does the world learn what Christianity is all about? By looking at the lives of people who call themselves Christians. If you call yourself a Christian, but are not actually practicing authentic Christianity, then you are giving the world a false impression of the Christian life. You will call people to have the wrong ideas about God, and Christ, and the Christian life. You might cause people to reject Christ, when they would have accepted Him if they had been shown Christ for who He really is. Or you might cause people to think they are accepting Christ, when in reality they aren’t;

they are just adopting your version of pseudo-Christianity. In other words, you can actually be the cause that some people go to hell.

So what does it mean to be an authentic Christian? Today in Titus 1:1, we're going to see three pillars of authentic Christianity. A pillar holds something up. A pillar is a tall vertical structure that holds up a building; it keeps a building from falling over. In this same way, these three pillars of authentic Christianity are so important that if you take any one of them away, you don't have authentic Christianity. Think of these three pillars as the legs on a stool. If you have a three legged stool, then you need all three legs to hold it up. If you take just one leg away, then the stool will fall over. If you take just one of these pillars away, then your Christian life collapses. You don't have the real thing. You're not an authentic Christian.

So let's take a look at **Titus 1:1 (CSB 2017)**. "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness..."

In this verse Paul identifies himself as a servant, or a slave of God. Then he says that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word "apostle" means one who is sent out. So Paul is saying that he is God's servant, sent out on a mission by Jesus Christ. And what is the mission that Jesus sent him on? The mission is three-fold. Jesus sent Paul to do three things. First, for the faith of God's elect. In other words, lead people to put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Second, "and their knowledge of the truth." In other words, lead people to know God's word. And third, "that leads to godliness." In other words, lead people to be godly. So these are the three pillars of authentic Christianity. Saving faith. Biblical knowledge. And godliness.

The reason that so many Christians are actually pseudo-Christians is because they are lacking one or more of these three pillars. You have some Christians who have a lot of Bible knowledge, but they don't have saving faith, or they lack godliness. You have a lot of Christians who have saving faith, but they lack knowledge and godliness. And you have a lot of Christians who are godly, or they strive to be godly, but they lack saving faith and Biblical knowledge.

I see it all the time. I see people who call themselves Christians, but they couldn't name one of the Ten Commandments; no Bible knowledge. Or they call themselves Christians, but they don't know the gospel. Or they call themselves Christians, but they are living in obvious disobedience to the Bible. But to be an authentic Christian you must have these three pillars – saving faith; Biblical knowledge; and godliness.

So let's take each of the three pillars a little deeper. Let's learn what they are; how to know if you have them; and how to develop them so that you can become an authentic Christian.

### 3 Pillars of Authentic Christianity

#### 1. Saving faith.

**Titus 1:1** says, “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness...” What does Paul mean that he was sent for “the faith of God’s elect.” He was sent to lead God’s elect to have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

What is saving faith? Saving faith is relying on Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Faith is the only means of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It is the only means of salvation, forgiveness of sin, and eternal life.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** says, “8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift— 9 not from works, so that no one can boast.”

What is this verse saying? We are saved by faith, not by works. What does that mean? God doesn’t choose to save you because of your good deeds, or because of your performance, or because of your effort, or because you tried your best to be a good person and live by the Bible. God doesn’t save you because of your good works; He saves you because of your faith.

Faith in what? Faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. God saves you not because of your good works, but because of your faith in Jesus Christ and what He’s done for you on the cross.

**John 3:16** says, “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

God created us for a relationship with Him, but we are sinners, and our sins separate us from God. But because God loved the world, He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. He suffered our penalty. He took our punishment. And then Jesus rose again, proving that God accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. And now, we can be forgiven, we can have eternal life, we can be saved, if we will have faith, or believe in Jesus and what He did for us.

But the problem is that many people believe in Jesus, but they don’t have saving faith. What’s the difference? The devil believes in Jesus, but he doesn’t have saving faith. Faith is not just believing the right things about Jesus; faith is trusting in and relying on Jesus for salvation.

Saving faith is when you are trusting in Christ, and not yourself, for salvation. Many people believe in Jesus, but they are trusting in and relying upon themselves for salvation.

Let me show what I mean. Answer this question in your mind: Why would God let you into heaven? If your answer to that question has anything to do with your good works, or your performance, or your effort, or how hard you've tried, or how good you are, or all your accomplishments, then your faith is in yourself, even though you might believe in Jesus. But if your answer is totally focused on Christ's work on the cross, and all that He's done for you, then that shows that you have saving faith.

Saving faith is the first pillar of Christianity because it's how you get saved; it's how you enter the kingdom of God; it's how you get born again; you repent of trusting in yourself, and you begin to trust in, rely on, lean on Christ for salvation.

If you're not sure if you have saving faith, then I'm going to give you an opportunity to put your faith in Jesus Christ at the end of the sermon.

## **2. Biblical Knowledge.**

**Titus 1:1** says, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness...." The second aspect of Paul's mission was to lead those who have been saved to the "knowledge of the truth." What is the truth? Jesus said in His prayer in **John 17:17**, "Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth." God's word is the truth. The truth is the Bible. So Paul's mission was to lead those who have been saved to the knowledge of the Bible. The second pillar of authentic Christianity is Biblical knowledge. Authentic Christians know the Bible.

Why is Biblical knowledge so important to live the authentic Christian life? Look at **2 Timothy 3:16**. "16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." The word "inspired" is the Greek word *theoktonos*; it's the only time it is used in the New Testament. It literally means God-breathed. Paul is saying that all Scripture, the entire Bible, is God's word; these are the words of God. Now if the Bible is God's word, then I must believe it, and I must obey it.

Now notice the benefits that we get from the Bible. It gives us five. (1) The Bible is profitable for teaching – it teaches us what to believe. (2) It is profitable for rebuking – it teaches us what we are not to believe. (3) It is profitable for correcting – it teaches us what we are not to do.

(4) It is profitable for training – it teaches us what we are to do. In other words, if you don't have Biblical knowledge, then you can't know what to believe and what not to believe; and you can't know what to do and what not to do. And then notice the fifth benefit: (5) So that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. The Bible equips us to serve God effectively and fruitfully. The Bible equips us to serve. It equips us to serve our spouse, our children, our church, our customers, our community. Without Biblical knowledge, you aren't equipped to do any good in this world. Not in God's eyes.

A lack of Biblical knowledge is the reason that many Christians have unhealthy marriages, and kids who are wild and rebellious, and financial stress. It's the reason many Christians vote for abortion, and have pre-marital sex, and look at porn, and vote for socialist politicians. The lack of Biblical knowledge is the reason so many students abandon Christianity when they go away to college. It's the reason many Christians only go to church once or twice a year. Without Biblical knowledge you are incomplete and unequipped.

But I know many pseudo-Christians who have little to no Biblical knowledge. Sure they believe in Jesus; and maybe they even have saving faith, but they don't know Scripture. And if you don't know Scripture, then you're not complete; you are not equipped to serve God and others. You are not equipped to fulfill God's purpose for your life.

Let me quiz you on your Biblical knowledge. This is a **Bible Knowledge Test**.

- a. How many books are there in the Bible?
- b. What's the last book in the Old Testament?
- c. Name three different literary genres in the Bible?
- d. Name all Ten of the Ten Commandments?
- e. Where in the Bible are the Ten Commandments?
- f. Where in the Bible is the Sermon on the Mount?
- g. What is the difference between justification, sanctification, and glorification?
- h. On which day of creation did God make people?
- i. Who are the Hebrew patriarchs?
- j. Which books of the Bible make up the Torah?
- k. What is the Great Commandment?
- l. What is the Great Commission?

Those are elementary questions that every Christian should be able to answer without any difficulty. And if you can't answer those questions, then that tells me that you are either a brand new Christian, or you are not studying your Bible.

Do you realize that all you have to do to grow in Biblical knowledge is to read your Bible every day, and listen to the word preached on Sunday? Just do those two things, and you will grow deep in Biblical knowledge. I recommend that you wake up early every day and read the Bible. You can find several good Bible reading plans on our church website.

### 3. Godliness.

**Titus 1:1** says, “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness....” The third reason Paul was sent by Christ was to lead people to godliness; to live godly lives.

What is godliness? Jerry Bridges wrote a book called *The Practice of Godliness* in which he went into great detail to explain the meaning of godliness. I’m going to rely upon his work.

Godliness involves two aspects, and you can see them both in the Old Testament character Enoch. If you remember, there are only two people in the Bible who never died: Enoch and Elijah. **Genesis 5:24** says, “Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him.” Then in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11, or what is called the Hall of Faith, it says this about Enoch in **Hebrews 11:5**. “By faith Enoch was taken away, and so he did not experience death. He was not to be found because God took him away. For before he was taken away, he was approved as one who pleased God.” So the Bible says two things about Enoch. First, he walked with God. And second, He pleased God. These are the two aspects of godliness.

**Godliness is a devoted relationship with God that leads to a life that is pleasing to God.** It is an devoted relationship with God in which you fear Him, You love Him, and you desire Him more than anything else; and then the result of that devotion to God is a life that is pleasing to God.

Godliness is the third pillar of the Christian life. 1 Timothy 4:7 says to “train yourself in godliness.” 1 Timothy 6:11 says to pursue godliness. The word “pursue” means unrelenting, persevering effort. An authentic Christian has a devoted relationship with God that leads to a life that is pleasing to God. He is godly.

I meet pseudo-Christians all the time who claim to believe in Jesus, and they may even have a lot of Bible knowledge, but they lack this third pillar; they lack godliness. They are not devoted to God. They don’t have an intimate relationship with God. And they don’t live a life that is pleasing to God.

So let me give you a test to help you determine if you possess godliness. This is a **Godliness Test**.

- a. Do you have a daily quiet time in which you get alone with God for prayer and Bible reading?
- b. Do you attend church on a weekly basis?
- c. Do you participate in church through tithing and volunteering?
- d. Do you tithe?
- e. Do you regularly pray for the lost and seek to reach them for Christ?
- f. Do you sing with heartfelt passion when the church gathers for worship?
- g. Do you feel intense remorse when you sin against God?
- h. Do you have a strong desire to please God with every arena of your life?
- i. Do you regularly give of your time, energy, and money to help people in need?

The answer to these questions should be “Yes” if you are godly. But the answer to the following questions should be “No.”

- j. Are living in outright disobedience to any of God’s commands?
- k. Are you being honest, ethical, and legal with your finances?
- l. Are you committing adultery – either with your mind, your eyes, or your body?
- m. Are you having pre-marital sex?
- n. Do you get drunk or high – either regularly or occasionally?

You may know all about Jesus, and you may believe in Jesus, but if you are not godly, then you are not an authentic Christian. You are a pseudo-Christian. You’re fake.

## **CONCLUSION**

So there are three pillars of authentic Christianity. Saving Faith. Biblical Knowledge. And Godliness. If you don’t have all three, then you are not a real Christian.

And that’s not good. First, that could mean that unless you repent, you are going to end up in hell. Second, it means that you are missing out on God’s plan – the abundant life that He has for you. And third, it means that you are misrepresenting God. You are committing false advertising. You are claiming to represent Christ, but you don’t. And you are giving Christ a bad name.

And so today I urge you to repent. Maybe you need to repent of ungodliness. Maybe you need to spend more time in prayer, or get more involved in church. Maybe you need to repent of Biblical illiteracy. Maybe you need to start reading and studying your Bible more. Or maybe you need to repent of trusting in good works, rather than Jesus Christ.

Let's bow our heads for a moment as I lead us in a time of prayer. If you are not sure that you have saving faith, that you have been saved, then I encourage you to do that this morning. You need to stop trusting in your good works, and put all of your faith in what Christ has done for you. And you need to personally call on Him to be your Lord and Savior right now.