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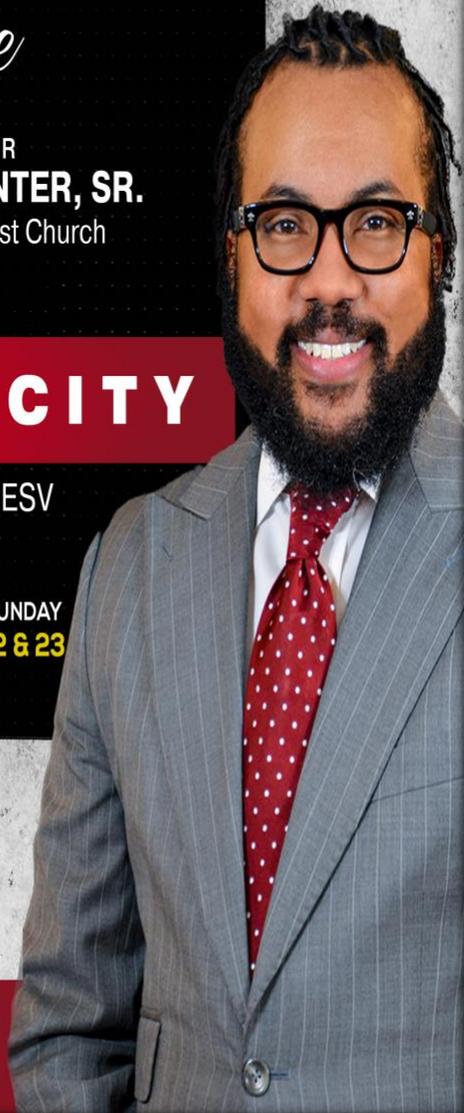
GUEST SPEAKER
REV. DR. PHILLIP L. POINTER, SR.
*Senior Pastor, Saint Mark Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas*

AUTHENTICITY

1 CORINTHIANS 15:10 ESV



SATURDAY & SUNDAY
OCTOBER 22 & 23



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Date: October 22-23, 2022

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Philip Pointer
St. Mark Baptist Church – Little Rock, Arkansas

Sermon Title: Authenticity

Scripture: I Corinthians 15:10a

But by the grace of God, I am what I am. . . .

SERMON SUMMARY

Did you know that people who work in banks and other financial institutions are trained to recognize the difference between counterfeit paper money and the real thing by touch? Rev. Dr. Phillip Pointer makes this point as he opens his sermon, *Authenticity*. Focusing on the importance of distinguishing between fake and authentic paper money leads our preacher to encourage us to differentiate between fake and authentic persons and even between the fake and authentic personas we present to the world.

Authenticity, he declares, is a non-negotiable requirement in God's plan for our lives. Even though it can be difficult to do, authentic Christians must take off the false faces life sometimes demands we wear. Only when we walk in the authenticity of how God created us can we be our true and best selves.

Dr. Pointer points out three essential lessons using the Apostle Paul's life and witness.

First, an authentic Christian's identity is based not on what they accomplish or accrue but in the cross of Calvary. Who we are is based on Christ's love for us. We have a new identity because of Calvary. We were one way before the cross, but on the other side, we are made new, whole, and righteous. Christ's love for us imposes on us a sense of our worth, a sense of our true selves, and a new identity.

Next, ***authentic Christians live their best lives because their lives are based on the grace of God.*** God's grace is not applied to our lives in a cookie-cutter fashion, nor in vain. It is given to us to address the particularities of our lives and to change us. In I Corinthians 15:10b, the Apostle Paul says, *and his grace to me was not without effect.* Because God gave Paul grace, Paul was changed,

grateful, and willing to work hard for the Kingdom of God. An authentic experience of God's grace comes to us as unmerited favor, as the outworking of God's predisposition to love us, despite us, and as the impetus for us to live lives committed to God.

Finally, Dr. Pointer notes that ***one's authority is based on one's sincerity***. To be an authentic Christian, each person must accept the call to operate in the fullness of God's design for their lives. The ability to be who you are, sincerely, without any masks, is the only way to accomplish the assignment God has given each unique person. Dr. Pointer reminds us that God does not need another one of "them." God needs "you"!

Know who you are in Jesus. Know how the work of the cross has shaped you. Know that grace is given to you and you are enough, just the way God made you. Know that as you live, being the authentic you, you gain your authority to accomplish the assignment God has given your hands to do. Just be the authentic you!

KEY POINTS

1. The primary points of the sermon are:
 1. One's identity is based on Calvary.
 2. One's expression is based on grace.
 3. One's authority is based on one's sincerity.
2. To be all God has called us to be, we must get beyond the fake faces and the root of who we are in God.
3. We must not be "off the rack Christians." We are designed to be tailor-made according to God's assignment for our lives. However, sometimes the most challenging thing is to be ourselves.
4. God's grace is a gift, and we must not waste it. We are called to be good stewards of God's grace.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS

1. When you were a child, what were the three things you liked about yourself? Are those things still present in your life?
2. Why do you think it is essential to be authentic? What's the cost of inauthenticity?
3. The Apostle Paul admitted to persecuting Christians before becoming a follower of Christ. Describe how your openness and honesty to God's grace has changed your life for the better.

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Pointer notes that Paul never walked with the earthly Jesus. Paul's original name, Saul, means ***desired***, in the Greek. His new name, Paul, means ***small or little***. In Acts 13:9, his name is changed with no ceremony or announcement. But after his experience of Christ, no one again

addresses him as Saul. What are your thoughts about this name change? How would you explain it?

2. Early in the sermon, our preacher notes he intends to preach from a portion of a single verse. However, in the sermon, Dr. Pointer sets his chosen text in its full context. Why do you think he did this? Why is it important for any text to be placed in its full context?

Village Members and Facilitators,

The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions. We ask the facilitators to choose the best questions, in each section, for your Village.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Human beings hide behind masks. We hide behind masks of silence when we have something to say. We hide behind masks of acceptance when the cost is high. We hide behind masks of “I’m fine” when we are not. Is hiding the same as being fake? What’s the difference? When/how can we step forward with our authentic selves?
2. We are urged in this sermon to get to the root of our real/true selves. At the core of your being, who are you? What three characteristics would you use to describe your authentic self to someone who did not know you? How do you want this list to change as you mature in Christ?
3. The temptation to shapeshift, to be like those around us, is strong. Have you ever put on a phony exterior to fit in? What did it cost you? How did it benefit you? What did you learn?
4. Dr. Pointer notes that our identity is based in the cross of Calvary. What does the cross teach you about your identity? How does the cross make a difference in who you are?
5. Were you ever told you could be anything you wanted to be? Dr. Pointer seems to take exception to this maxim. He reminds us that who we are is not determined by our aspirations but by God’s assignment. What do you think about this statement? Does God’s assignment of your gifts, talents, skills, birth order, birthplace, etc., shift your aspirations? Should it?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS

1. When you think of the institution that Jesus founded, the church, what would you say are the authentic characteristics of the church? List a few. Now, think back on your church experiences. How many of these characteristics is the church *missing*? What might the church work on to be more authentic?
2. Sometimes we expect our leaders (including pastors) to wear masks of perfection. Why is this mindset dangerous? How can we allow our leaders to be their authentic selves?

ACTIVITY

In 1976 Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes recorded a song, *Be for Real*. With Teddy Pendergrass on lead vocals, the song calls his partner to *be for real*. Taking gender out of it (because the lessons are universal), when you listen to the song (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBM6bg_RyCg), or review the lyrics ([teddy pendergrass be for real lyrics](#)), what does it call you to do differently in your life? How can you be more authentic, more real?

SPIRIT WORK

Hold a mirror up to your face; describe what you see as you look at yourself. Juxtapose this to what other people see. Which of these descriptions holds the most truth?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Within the structure of Village there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions, especially for the individual groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit so moves.

For Married Couples

1. Within the bonds of marriage, authenticity is paramount. But, sometimes, it is easier to hide behind a mask in the heat of the moment. How do you create the space to be authentic with one another, especially in intimate or difficult moments?
2. Pastor Pointer tells us we should not be “off the rack Christians.” We are uniquely designed and graced. The same is true for our marriages. How is your marriage different from other marriages? How has God’s grace shown up in your marriage?

For Young Adults

1. Who among your circle is the most genuine? How do you know this? Do you admire them? Why or why not?
2. Dr. Pointer suggests there is no value in trying to “fit in” when you are called to be outstanding. Is it more like you to fit in or stand out? Why?

For Parents

1. Our children were born in the “digital age” and are “digital natives.” They have lived their entire lives in the presence of technology. In this age of screens and social media, how do you help them distinguish the fake from the real?
2. Dr. Pointer tells the story of his nephew misbehaving in a department store. After the child has learned his lesson, he uses the euphemism, “you can check my pockets.” Is there a “you can check my pockets” lesson *you learned* as a youngster? How can you teach the moral of that lesson to your children?

For Seniors

1. Dr. Pointer notes, “Authenticity is a non-negotiable requirement for God-honoring, effective living.” What have you learned about living authentically? What messages do you wish to pass on to the generations as they watch you live an authentic life?
2. The preacher says he engages in some past practices less than he used to because of God’s grace. How has God’s grace helped you move away from some of your past practices? What is God still working on in you?

For Women

1. What is the cost to your soul of living inauthentically? When have you been willing to pay that cost? If you have been able to come back to your genuine self, how did you do it?

2. Dr. Pointer suggests there is no value in trying to “fit in” when you are called to be outstanding. Is there a moment in your life when you chose to “fit in” instead of to stand out? Why did you make that choice? If you could return to that moment, would you make the same decision? Why or why not?

For Men

1. What is the cost to your soul of living inauthentically? When have you been willing to pay that cost? If you have been able to come back to your genuine self, how did you do it?
2. After telling the story of his daughter, Gabby, Dr. Pointer states that the God who owns everything and loves us will “foot our bill.” When you hear this phrase, what does it mean to you? Has God footed your bill? If so, how?

For Returning Citizens

1. This sermon calls each of us to unearth the “real you” from underneath the fake faces and facades we have stacked on. In your life, what faces or masks have you taken off? What characteristics of the “real you” were revealed by this brave act?
2. Pastor Pointer quotes the Gospel of John, 16:24, “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” Is there something you wish to ask God for that you have never asked before? Reflect on that thing. Share one word you would like your fellow villagers to use as they pray for you about this thing.

For Differently-Abled Persons/People

1. Toward the end of the sermon, Dr. Pointer suggests that if we take off the “masks” we put on, or others put on us, we can become the genuine persons God created us to be. Have you ever had to take off a mask? How did you do so? What did you learn? What changed in your life as you became more and more of the unmasked, authentic you?
2. A quote from this sermon is, “God’s sense of self imposes on me a true sense of self.” Whom does God say that you are? How do you think God sees you? Some reference scriptures are in the For Further Study section of the guide.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. How does God see us? Many scriptures point to God's understanding of us. Here are a few to whet your appetite.
 - a. John 1:12: God's Children
But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
 - b. John 15:5: Connected to Christ
I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
 - c. John 15:15: Friend
No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.
 - d. Romans 8:17: Heirs of a great inheritance
And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
 - e. Romans 8:37: More Than Conquerors
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
 - f. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: God's Temple
Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
 - g. 1 Corinthians 12:27: Part of Christ's Body
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
 - h. 2 Corinthians 5:17: New Creation
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
 - i. Ephesians 2:10: God's Own Workmanship
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
 - j. 1 Peter 2:9: Chosen
But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

2. The Night of the Hypocrites in Greek Plays.
 - a. For more information, please see <https://forum-theatre.com/the-role-of-hypocrites-in-ancient-greek-theatre/>.

3. Dr. Pointer points out the words to the hymn, The Love of God is Greater Far. The entire hymn can be found using this link, <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/28>. The words he quoted as

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell.
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky