

Oasis Core Value #2 – Authentic

By Derek R. Iannelli-Smith, August 2008

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In Luke 18, Jesus gives us a parable on what I am convinced is what true authenticity looks like. I tell folks many times that just because I say I am authentic, does not truly mean I am. For instance about 3 years ago I was deeply convicted that what I professed as authentic and transparency was in actuality the sin of omission. I chose what I wanted to share. I colored the ‘video playback’ to make myself out to be more than I was and in an attempt to facilitate authenticity, I was actually the biggest faker of them all. I realized that I needed to get real with God and others. Do I do it perfectly? No. Have I learned from my ‘conviction’ no not all the time, but I am getting there. So what does Jesus say about authenticity?

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luk 18:10-14 ESV)

At the core of this parable is motive. What is the motive of the Pharisee and the tax collector? What is the motive of our authenticity? To put on a show or get real with God and others? One is worship, the other idolatry. Authenticity is about learning and growing, not about making excuses. It is realizing that God sees it all and it is not compartmentalized. Because God has seen it all, we are free to share it with others (in acceptable ways). It is seeing the ‘messiness’ of our own lives and others, and realizing that they too are a work in progress. Authenticity is about seeing ourselves and others as Jesus sees us. It is about humility, compassion, love, grace, time, and truth.

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“Being real and authentic when you are depraved is not noble. It may be who you are, but who you are may need to change. As an authentic believer, David confessed his sin (after confronted by Nathan) and cried out for mercy. Authenticity is never an excuse for sin. Instead it is a critical element of confession. Without it, people will never confess their sins because they will be too busy covering them up.” Mark Driscoll

Authenticity is stirring people from being biblically informed to a life transformed. It is the place where gospel redemptive truth meets real life. Our gathering together is not just to “talk” about things that will not live past today or to accumulate more Bible knowledge. It is a serious submission to the authority of God’s Word by assisting each other to obey what He commands. Sometimes we are instruments in the Redeemer’s hands and other times, our community is that instrument for us. Within our community, we invite people to experience God in a personal way, no matter what their relationship with God is. People are connected to meaning rather than another meeting. Because of our authenticity, people are transported into the presence of God, because we took a risk, the risk to expose ourselves, stunned by the very gospel that transformed us.

Authenticity is a gift we give to others because of our security in Christ. I frequently tell folks when describing authenticity, that “I don’t trust you, but I do trust God, because He is the one who gave me the testimony to share in the first place, so my story was never mine.” Authenticity is going deep quickly by being the first to open up, to be honest about our dark sin and messy lives, because when we do, it facilitates an environment of trust, realness, and authenticity in others. Over time, authenticity is safer than hiding our sin or the “fantastic-plastic” smile so many call fellowship today. So many of us contribute to the “conspiracy of silence” that we inadvertently teach new believers to do the same thing. I don’t think that is what Jesus had in mind, do you?

Finally, authenticity is not optional for a community of believers. Paul states, *“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also (2Co 6:11-13 ESV).”* What is Paul saying here... Paul is saying that he gave everything he had to them because he loved them. If we truly are ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ in Christ than we give everything because everything has been given for us. To open ourselves to others is to love them as Christ loves us.

This is a frequent problem in churches today. Christians actually think it is right for them to be closed in on themselves, to be private persons, unwilling to communicate who they are and how they feel and where they are in their lives. That, of course, is the way of the world. The world teaches us to let no one see who we are. But we need to understand that when we become Christians, we must learn to open up to one another.

“Our heart is wide,” he says. He means there is no favoritism; he includes the whole congregation. He did not merely love the “nice people” among them. He loved them all: the difficult ones, the ones who were struggling and the hard-to-get-along-with ones as well. There were no preconditions that he demanded before he would love somebody in the congregation either. He accepted them as people. Though he knew their struggles, their weaknesses, their heartaches, their failures, and their resistance, he loved them.

The problem was that they did not love him in return. This is the problem in churches, in individual lives, in homes, in families, and in marriages today. It is a failure to understand the

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reciprocal nature of love. Love is a two-way street. It always is; it is inherently so. Love requires a response. (Ray Steadman)

E-mail devotional:

Saints,

I just wanted to let you know that I am thankful and praying for you. Below you will find this week's Inspirational E-mail. I pray you will enjoy it and forward this thought on to your friends as well as offer them an invitation to a 'church' this weekend. Thank you for taking a moment to read our weekly newsletter.

This week we continue with our 5-part devotional outlining the core values of Oasis. These 'devotionals' accompany articles that I will be posting on my [personal blog](#) if you desire to go deeper on the topic. This week's topic is AUTHENTIC ([click here for pt.1-OUTWARD](#)). If you ask a room of folks to define authenticity, you will have a room full of definitions. This devotional and the accompanying article do not finalize the definition of AUTHENTIC but provide some boundaries in which to grasp the concept we hope that Oasis exemplifies and embraces as a core value.

1. Something to drink...

Contrived or forced relationships are not going to reveal Christ to anyone, but through participating together in the life and truth made possible by the Holy Spirit, through our union with Christ, sharing in common on the deepest possible level of human relationship which is essentially walking out ALL the "one-another's" found in scripture (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 15:10; Phi. 2:1; Phlm. 1:6) is at the heart of authenticity. I like this quote in how it describes the environment of authenticity, "a pattern of effective behavior that flows out of core identity, character and calling, enabling one to fulfill a role with excellence by meeting the needs of the present situation to the glory of Christ and for the good of others."

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Questions to ponder this week:

- a. How would you define AUTHENTIC?
- b. When was the last time you shared your life at that deepest possible level with someone else other than a family member or spouse? If you have not, why not?

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- c. If authenticity is about ‘admitting frailty’ and ‘not pretending to have all the answers or oversimplifying complex issues’ then why does this happen so often in ‘church’ do you think?
2. Admin stuff:
 - a. We will be on week 4 of the [Future Church](#).
 - b. Saturday morning we will be “[Meeting our Neighbors](#)” again for the Aug 30th cookout.
 - c. Men’s Tribe will meet this week at 6:30pm at a local coffee shop. Write/call for details if you would like to attend. The tribe has decided this format for our time (it has been growing and changing each week...which is a good thing... 1)get something to drink 2) laugh, 3) opening prayer, 4) Whoever got asked a ‘[warm and fuzzy question](#)’ last week, gets immunity this week, but is able to ask a W&FQ this week, but must... 5) pray for the brother who was asked the W&FQ specifically, 6) what is said in the group, stays in the group.
3. Prayer Requests (PR) and Community Needs (CN):
 - a. Updated prayer requests can be found at: <http://oasisgc.wordpress.com/prayer-board-facts/>
 - b. CN: A single father needs a car so that he can take care of his kids, and get a job.
 - c. CN: A family requires some work on their A/C unit along with some parts.

stunned by the gospel,
Derek R. Iannelli-Smith

Oasis Website - <http://oasisgc.wordpress.com>

"Oasis...where relationships are a mess worth making..."

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