

# Authentic or Synthetic?

by K.P. Yohannan

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*K.P. Yohannan's sermon challenges believers to examine the authenticity of their faith and motivations in serving God.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:6, Isaiah 29:13, Jeremiah 17:10, Revelation 2:1

**Topics:** "Authenticity in Faith", "Motivation for Service"

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## Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the distinction between authentic and synthetic Christianity, using the metaphor of a vibrant synthetic plant to illustrate how many Christian activities may appear genuine but lack true spiritual life. He warns that zeal and good works can be motivated by a desire for personal gain or recognition rather than a pure heart for God. The church at Ephesus serves as a cautionary example, having lost their first love despite their hard work and dedication. Yohannan urges believers to examine their motivations and seek God's approval rather than the praise of men, reminding them that only authentic faith can produce lasting fruit. He concludes by stressing the importance of inner purity and sincerity in all acts of service to God.

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## Transcript

The plant in the clay pot looked so vibrant with such lush green color. The blooming flower was so attractive, so beautiful. I began to gravitate toward this plant. Other people in the room were engaged in conversation, but I was determined to touch the leaves and smell the flower. As I got near, the scent that came from the plant was even more inviting. As I leaned over to touch the lush green leaves, someone from behind said, "Brother K.P., that plant is not real. It is synthetic."

"No, it can't be," I said. "Then you see for yourself," he replied. Sure enough, to my shock and surprise, the plant was man-made and the fragrance artificial. It had fooled me for sure. Today so much that passes for Christianity--Christian ministry, serving the Lord--is like this plant, that is, not authentic. It looks real and smells real, but the life of God is not in it. Man creates and sustains it by his own cleverness and strength. Great zeal in serving God, giving money, worshiping the Lord--it all looks wonderful, yet the motivating factor is not from a deep-down inner reality.

It is all for show and to gain something for the self . . . even just a word of praise from men. People who seem to have great zeal in serving God, giving money for a worthy cause or worshiping the Lord with devotion and joy easily impress us. Although we look with awe at the outside appearance, God searches hearts and judges motives (Jeremiah 17:10). He will reject even the best of Christian activity as a show--a

means to gain glory and praise from men--if the motivating factor does not come from a pure heart.

These people "draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me" (Isaiah 29:13). God is looking for those who are pure in their heart to serve and worship Him. He longs for a bride whose only goal is to please Him and be approved by Him. Her deep devotion and singleness of heart toward her soon-coming Bridegroom are reflected in her overwhelming desire to do His will. Her heart's cry is, "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6).

The church at Ephesus was such a bride. It had an incredible beginning. These pagans turned to the Lord with all their heart. They made a clean break and publicly burned all their false religious books and idols. Their love for Jesus didn't come cheaply. They had to pay a heavy price in following the Lord. But with joy they endured great persecution and suffering. To them, Jesus was worth the loss of all their possessions. He was more important than the whole world. God was pleased with them because their love for Him was authentic.

Yet as time went by, the Lord told them that He was going to put out their light and walk away from them. Why? Revelation 2:1-4 tells us the answer. They were fundamental in faith, they gave freely, they were fully involved in ministry, and they worked hard. Their lives were filled with tremendous labor and activity. But it was all out of their own fleshly energy, not out of love for the Lord Himself. For this reason, Jesus rebuked them. He didn't say, "Stop all your activity."

He told them to repent of their inner carnality and shallowness and then to do the same work with a motivation that He could accept. If all this could happen to a church that was doing so well, what about us? It is vitally important that we take a good look at ourselves and honestly examine our motivation. Is the activity we claim to do for Jesus in reality done for personal gain or honor from men? Jesus rebuked the Pharisees not for the "ministry" they did, but for the reason they did it: "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44).

Why do we so easily fall into the trap of seeking our own gain and consequently lose our pure and correct motivation? Paul explains in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 that it is the spirit of the Antichrist, through the mystery of lawlessness, which is at work all around us, even seeking to infiltrate the Church. This spirit displays Satan's foremost desire: to exalt himself over God and take His place. Whenever we listen to the deception of this spirit, we will also seek to exalt ourselves above others and draw attention to ourselves through our excellent preaching, teaching, healing or music ministry.

Jesus encountered the temptation of this spirit as well, but He always refused to yield. Throughout His life on earth, Jesus did everything for the glory of the Father. He did not do one thing of His own or for Himself (John 6:38). His motivation was absolutely pure. God wants us to become like Him in all things, and that's why He is deeply concerned about the motivation behind our service. So often we are careless and undiscerning when it comes to our Christian activities. We are easily fooled into thinking that if it looks good it must be real.

But only a pure, authentic life can produce fruit that remains for eternity. All else will turn into ash. You may be able to buy a bushel of apples and tie them onto a barren tree. To an onlooker, the tree will appear fruitful. Yet time will tell. Eventually, the fruit will all rot and fall to the ground. Likewise, all that is done through our carnal reasoning, human ingenuity, talents and money may appear great and authentic in the sight of men. Yes, it may be done in the name of Jesus and for His kingdom; yet in the day of testing, this all will be turned into a pinch of ash.

"There is going to come a time of testing at Christ's Judgment Day to see what kind of material each builder has used. Everyone's work will be put through the fire so that all can see whether or not it keeps its value, and what was really accomplished" (1 Corinthians 3:13, TLB). Our motives for giving, preaching, sacrificing, and doing all that we did will be exposed and examined by the Lord Himself. Only authentic life can produce fruit that remains for eternity. Let us not forget that what is great in man's sight, God despises (Luke 16:15). Seek only God's approval in all that we do.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/kp-yohannan/authentic-or-synthetic/>

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