



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 70 “An Authentic Life of Ministry”
By Pastor Jody May 03/10/2024

Acts 20:17-21 ESV

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[READ THE TEXT]

Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”

People – “Thanks be to God.”

[PRAY]

[ILLUSTRATION]

When it comes to eating Cheesecake, one always wonders, “Is that Authentic Cheesecake?!”¹

“The year was 1872...

Before the invention of cream cheese in 1872 by a New York dairy farmer, most cheesecake recipes were firmer and richer than we know them to be today. The invention of lighter, fluffier, more workable cream cheese paved the way for a new style of this already popular dessert: New York style cheesecake.

The true meaning behind authentic cheesecake

More than just the recipe, authentic cheesecake also comes down to how it’s served. If you’re expecting a true slice of New York style cheesecake, get ready for cheesecake in its plainest sense. There are no fruits, nuts, chocolate or caramel on a New York style cheesecake—not even on the side!”

Authentic Cheesecake means it has substance, it has weight, and its’ glory is in its’ simplicity based on basic ingredients, it’s all about what you see is what you get with no fluff, no extras, no toppings.

¹ <https://hotelseymour.com/2021/02/what-makes-a-cheesecake-authentic/>



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If we are honest with ourselves, we would all say we like our people the same way, don't we? When we make a new friend or when we become romantically involved with someone, we aren't looking for fluff or extra toppings, we just want someone that is the same when no one else is looking. We want to befriend and love people that don't need anything added to them, we don't want people that are made up to look better than they are, we want **authentic people**, because we want to come to care about them without wondering, have we been sold a false bill of goods.

Some of you know that I am a John Wayne fan, and this time of year I always watch the same movie, “The Quiet Man”². This was a short story adaptation by the famous director John Ford, about a retired prize fighter that returns home to Innisfree, Ireland³. When you watch it, you will be lulled into thinking Sean Thornton is a sexist, but Maureen Ohara gives one of the strongest female portrayals I have ever seen. All of this to say that when you watch John Wayne in that movie what is portrayed in that film, from his desire not to fight, his desire to be loved, to have a family, to want children, to live peaceably with his fellow neighbor, his sense of patriotism, his religiosity, and sense of fairness, all of that is John Wayne, it's not a show. That was who he was him in real life. I'm not saying he was a saint; I am just saying he was authentic, what you saw is what you got.

An even better example of an authentic human, as a Christian, was the pastor, sociologist, and film maker Francis Schaeffer and his spiritual juggernaut of a wife Edith. Francis spent his early years pastoring and teaching in America, as a Presbyterian minister but developed a heart for overseas missions witnessing the vacuum of practicing Christians in Europe after the World Wars. 1948 they set sail for Europe winding up in Switzerland, developing a community called L'Abri, which we could describe as a Christian commune whereby all people of ethnicities, ages, and religions could come and ask the hard questions about God, while living in a Christian Community, experiencing authentic Christian life, totally dependent on the HS and prayer.

² <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0045061/>

³ <https://www.go-to-ireland.com/what-to-see/innisfree/>



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When asked to describe L’Abri it was mentioned by Edith, “To show forth by demonstration, in our life and work, the existence of God.”⁴ She gave 4 partitions in particular, listen to this authenticity.⁵

- We make our financial and material needs known to God alone, in prayer, rather than sending out pleas for money.
- We pray that God would bring the people of His choice to us and keep all others away.
- We pray that God will plan the work, and unfold His plan to us, day to day instead of cleverly planning out our future.
- We pray that God will send the workers of His choice to us, rather than pleading for workers in the usual channels.

The Schaeffers lived authentically, relying on God for all things, so that when it came to real world interactions how they lived in private was displayed in public, of which no one has ever said anything contrary. That means all the good work that Schaeffers have done is to be contributed to God alone, because He answered their prayers.

MP:

Authentic living grants the ability to give God greater glory.

This morning the Apostle Paul, before he departs for Jerusalem and imminent danger that cannot be escaped (Jewish assassination club), Paul gives a farewell address to the Elders of the Ephesians. In his epilogue to this third journey Paul’s message (vs. 17-38) can be split up into several different topics all of which are very rich theologically with vast repercussions for our daily life. We will hit the first of the 5 sections today, entitled, **An Authentic Life of Ministry (vs. 17-21)** and we will witness what has made Paul’s life, like the Schaeffers so authentic, what gave his life weight, what was it he did to bring Jesus even more glory, because we as Christians should want to do the same. This morning, we have three points: Living Authentically, Serving Humbly, and Declaring Faithfully, all of which add to the credibility and **authenticity** of the Christian life. If you want a strong Christian testimony among your neighbors,

⁴ Edith Schaeffer, *L’Abri* (London: Norfolk Press, 1969), 13.

⁵ William Edgar, [*Schaeffer and the Christian Life*](#) (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Publishing, 2013), 62.



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coworkers, family, and friends then you want to take to heart what you will learn today for **Authentic living grants the ability to reveal God’s glory**, and the revealing of God’s glory is the path in which God saves men.

1. Living Authentically

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and **called** the **elders** of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves **know how I lived among you the whole time** from the first day that I set foot in Asia,

As we learned from last week Paul was in a hurry to get home, he was focused on encouragement all the same, and he was avoiding the Jewish death group hot on his trail. He therefore skirts the place from which this group would most likely have agents looking for him, Ephesus. He goes to Miletus that’s about 30 miles to the south, on the coast, and he calls for the elders of Ephesus to come to him, like an official summons. The fact that the elders drop what they are doing to travel 30 miles to spend who knows how much time away from homes, jobs, and ministry, **gives credit to the authenticity of Paul** in their lives; *He wouldn’t have called unless it was important.*

Perhaps today you feel like no one listens or responds to you, instead of thinking people are jaded and rotten perhaps you need to ask yourself this question, do people feel like they really know me? People like authentic people, not fake, and **The more you work at hiding your true self the more people will refrain from getting to know the fake you.** Authenticity is important if you want to make the type of friends that stop everything when you need them.

The elders stopped everything for him because of the TRUTH in his qualifying statement in v. 18 – “**You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia,**” Paul was like, thanks for being here today, thanks for coming all this way, thanks for putting your important lives on hold, and let me start with why you would even do that for me, because you know exactly who I live for, Jesus the Christ, BECAUSE of how I was in front of you every moment of everyday! Paul is stating for everyone, through Luke, for over 2,000 years, how the body perceives an authentic



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follower of Christ. **Authentic believers are not people who live perfectly but they are people who portray the perfect one all the time.**

That is Paul did not hide when he was scared for his life, he did not hide when he was anxiety driven over the welfare of the church, and he did not hide when he was feeling alone ([1 Cor. 2:3](#)). Paul displayed his weakness as a man so people could see the strength of the Christ. Paul displayed his faults so he could elevate the perfectness of Christ in him. An Authentic Christian is someone that doesn't hide because their faults are evident and on display, no, they let people see themselves, so that Christ may receive glory by working in spite of them.

It is also important to note that he calls the elders in v.17, (presbyteros) πρεσβύτερος, so this confession he is about to make is to church leadership. Now that is important to consider because we can take Luke's account here and for the rest of chapter 20 interpret this as something solely for Pastoral Leadership in the church **OR** is it something for us all to consider today for our lives. The two things that help clear this up on how to relate to this passage is to see first, there is a section where Paul addresses the elders as elders in their function in the church (overseers) and that is in vs. 28-31. That means there is a specific point where this talk is advice specific to the office of elder, 4 verses of it, but that is not the intent of the address for the other 4 sections of this speech or the other 17 verses. So even though Luke is recording this as a speech given to the elders it is not entirely just for male leadership in the church, in fact the majority of it is for everyone and here's the second reason why.

This is Paul's confession, not just for elders, giving a formula of how he lived life as a minister of the gospel which is something we **'ALL'** are called to do.

Ephesians 4:11-12 ESV

¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the **shepherds** and **teachers**, ¹²to equip the saints for the **work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ,

This verse answers a couple of things for us, 1st the reasoning behind Paul calling elders, because they are the ones to give the instruction. 2nd the



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elders are to instruct the church for what – **works of ministry** v. 12, to build up the body of Christ. Paul, here in Ephesians had written a letter a few years after their encounter (AD 60-62) to remind them about why he had given them the speech, and that is to teach the people how to be ministers of the GOSPEL! That means we all have the same job around here, to be a minister, to do the work of the Gospel. Let's take this one step further in understanding this passage is for us, and let's give one more reason why this is an instruction for all the church and not just the elders.

1 Corinthians 11:1-2 ESV

Be **imitators of me**, as I am of Christ. ²Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and **maintain the traditions** even as I delivered them to you.

Paul also practiced living authentically in front of others because he viewed his life as a lesson on how a Christian should be. Being the main Christian leader in the Gentile world, where people **were not** brought up in Jewish culture and traditions, these folks needed someone in which they could model. What a blessing that was, Paul lived out of Grace and not works anymore, so the Gentiles were blessed to have examples of repentive living instead of arrogant living as modeled so well by the Pharisees and the synagogue.

These passages teach us definitely, that what Paul is talking about in these 17 verses is that they are for us, we are ministers of the gospel and we too should work towards being authentic ourselves. AND since we are ministers of the gospel let me offer one more thing for us to consider, **There is a necessity to living authentically because the Gospel is impossible to fake.** If you don't live with the blessings of the Gospel in your own life, free from condemnation and guilt, a forgiving heart, a life of love according to [1 Corinthians 13](#), you will not be able to display it in front of others negating your ability to portray Christ. Practicing ministry to others (encouragement) is how we begin down this road of authentic living and that's what we want because **Authentic living grants the ability to reveal God's glory.**

Point one taught us the call to live authentically as Paul did: to be careful not to hide your authentic self for people may refrain from trying to befriend you,



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authentic believers don't live perfectly but portray the perfect one, and we need to accept this call because the Gospel is something you can't fake in front of others, all of which robs glory from Christ. Now let's jump to our second point so we can learn how to be real and authentic.

2. Serving Humbly

¹⁹**serving** the Lord with all **humility** and with **tears** and with **trials** that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;

v.19 now shows us the path to authenticity, how to practice being a Christian at all times and it all starts with a right attitude of the heart. It starts with an action, that of **serving** and that of serving the Lord. **We practice authentic living remembering that all we do we do in service to Jesus.** You know the Puritans used to be really good at this. They took all their daily practices and looked at them as if they were doing it for Jesus.⁶ You are peeling potatoes, please understand your peeling spuds for Christ so do it well! Like a puritan you are driving in traffic, then please remember before honking your horn and gesturing to other drivers in the most debase means, remembering you are driving for Jesus. I always tried to distill that in my kids, no matter if it was doing homework, doing dishes, vacuuming floors, cutting straight lines in the grass, or even personal hygiene we do all things to the glory of God (or as I taught my kids you play how you practice). **We practice authentic living by first remembering that all we do we do in service to Jesus,** this contributes to the development of authentic life that glorifies our Lord.

Next Paul mentions how he served the Lord and that is with **humility**. This for Paul was no bogus attempt at being humbly, the guy really thought of himself as less than all others.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 ESV

For I am the **least** of the **apostles**, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

⁶ <https://www.apuritansmind.com/the-puritans-all-of-life-to-the-glory-of-god-by-c-matthew-mcmahon/>



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Unlike his peers like Peter, James, and John, Paul had been trained as a Pharisee/scribe and instead of seeing the Messiah when Jesus was on earth (as he should have), all he saw was a man trying to take away his way of life. Paul had to learn through the hard lesson that he had fallen short of God’s glory through not accepting the only one that displayed it. God used Paul’s love for his grace, after his conversion, and his passion for the gospel of Jesus, after receiving it, to make much of Him, **it fueled him for service BY making humble**. But this humility didn’t just stop with comparisons to the apostles.

Ephesians 3:8 ESV

To me, though I am the very **least** of all the **saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Paul held to this thought, that **he would be lost if not for Christ**. At the foremost spot in his mind to remind himself constantly, he remembered that he was not saved because he was smarter/better than everyone else. No, because of his intelligence it had caused him blindness. Jesus had taught that the meek and lowly inherit the earth ([Mat. 5:5](#)). Paul knew his Salvation was the most gracious gift of all, for Jesus had saved a privileged, prideful, persecutor of the church. There was nothing in him that deserved Christ, nor the brotherhood of the church, and the love that comes with it. **We practice humility by remembering if it was not for grace we would still be lost.**

Family I do not care who you are and what you have done, there is only one that can call Himself good and that is God ([Mark 10:18](#)). We may have been a Christian longer than others, we may have a long list of good works and a short list of sinful acts, but all have fallen short of the glory of God ([Rom. 3:23](#)) for none are righteous no not one ([Rom. 3:10](#)). Loved ones, you cannot practice humility in this room if you think you are better than anyone else, and if you can’t practice humility, you can’t be authentic, keeping you from bringing glory to Christ.



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Lastly to serve humbly in pursuit of authenticity look at what this does to Paul, and perhaps you and I can glean some insight in what it looks like when we are actually doing it, being authentic.

(v.19) with **tears** and with **trials** that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;

Serving the Lord is a humbling experience, for just as in Paul’s circumstances the world despises when you attempt it. Your attempt to live authentically, to live in private as you do in public, will require you to endure both privately and publically. As in v. 19 **tears are the representation of what you feel in private**, it’s isolated because no one can experience your tears for that pain is your own. **Trials are a public apparition of the suffering** you endure in front of others, people tend to understand that better. **We display the learning of humility, by demonstration of our tears and trials, making us authentic.**

Tears are usually a sign of a quiet inner turmoil, the culmination of emotions, the realization of failures, and the agony of loneliness. The tears of Paul were the results of being hated by a people he loved; the Jews. There is nothing more humbling than loving someone and that person not love you in return, especially when you have done nothing to warrant their hate.

Romans 9:2-3 ESV

that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

All Paul wanted to do was love his brothers, to see them embrace their Lord as he had, to be saved, even at the expense of himself, and all they wanted was to be done with him and never hear the name of Jesus again. That is what caused Paul’s tears. These were signs that Paul was suffering through some very personal and deep hurt.

Trials speak to the public outcry of the Jews against him. Multiple times he had been invited to speak at a synagogue only to have been run out of town, imprisoned, beat, ridiculed, and now hunted for termination. Trials were



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public events that all could see, and in both Paul’s private tears and his public trials he was authentic because everyone was aware of them.

We **serve humbly** by remembering all we do is in service to Jesus Christ, we practice that humility by remembering if not for grace we are still lost, and we display that humility when we experience the tears of personal persecution and the trials of public defamation. Christian, are you living in such a way that people witness your disappointments and displeasure at living for Christ? Everyone shares what they rejoice over do you share what makes you sad about living for Jesus? People will embrace that, that’s real, that likable, that’s relatable, that’s authentic. On the other hand, if nothing upsets you, if nothing is a challenge to you, then you probably are not living for Christ.

If anything, if today you realize you run away from that which causes you tears of rejection and you avoid where you would endure trials for Jesus’ name, and perhaps that is exactly where you need to pray for God to help you become authentic. That God would grant you the joy of being able to bring glory to Christ by how you live for Him, by how you let others into your life.

Authentic living grants the ability to reveal God’s glory.

Now I have just one more aspect to help us all pursue an authentic life of ministry.

3. Declaring Faithfully

²⁰ how I **did not shrink** from **declaring** to you anything that was **profitable, and teaching** you in public and from house to house, ²¹ **testifying** both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul did not shrink or shy away from that which is hard. What was hard was declaring, public outcry, preaching, about those things that are profitable, and I wonder what Paul considers that which is profitable?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV



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All Scripture is breathed out by God and **profitable** for **teaching**, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Paul never shrank from the duty and joy of sharing the word of God with people whether it was in public or from house to house, meaning more in a private sense. **Authentic living is a life that shares the Word with those that need it in the places that are convenient for others.** Some people learn from public declaration and some people need to have it spelled out, so they can understand it better. To receive the Gospel it takes both, people need to have the Gospel preached to them so they can't avoid the conviction of the Spirit, but they also need it explained to them so they can have questions answered.

This is where the rubber meets the road for most of us for it means we all have a part in explaining the scriptures to those that need to hear it the most.

To be authentic means we must first rely on Christ. Let me encourage you this way preparing you to declare faithfully, by reminding us of our faith in the one who desires your authenticity so it may bring Him glory.

Fear not, you are not alone.

Isaiah 41:10 ESV

Fear not, **for I am with you**; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my **righteous right hand**. (see also [John 14:26](#) – the helper the HS)

Fear not, you will be given wisdom.

Luke 21:14-15 ESV

Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you **a mouth** and **wisdom**, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. (see also [James 1:5](#); 'just ask for it' [Psalm 32:8](#) 'the Lord is our instructor and teacher')

[CHALLENGE]



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Lastly, I want to give you three things that may also help you think about whether you really desire to live authentically or not.

Authentic Christians don’t try to make people like them. Genuine people are who they are. They know that some people will like them, and some won’t and that doesn’t bother them for they rest their identity in Christ. A person’s view of them does not determine their self-worth, besides we are to be about pointing people to Jesus and not ourselves.

Authentic Christians practice treating others as more significant than themselves.

They are generous and want others to do well. They are respectful for they know they have been changed by Grace alone. They are open minded, non-condemning, but will still call out sin for the sake of the other, because the best thing we can do for our neighbor is to be concerned about their soul.

Authentic Christians take responsibility for who they are. They just own it, they own their actions, they own their moods, they own their faults. Therefore, they are not worried about being vulnerable because the goal of their lives is not to protect their heart but to have it molded into the heart of Christ.

Wherever you are today, in whatever way this sermon has reached you please listen dear one, the thrust of the sermon was to encourage you to become more authentic so that you may bring more glory to Jesus. May we do the most effective and powerful thing we can do as a people and ask our Lord to begin to **make us more authentic granting us the ability to reveal God’s glory.**

[PRAYER]

[CALL TO OBEY]

Elder – In Acts 4, the early church stares persecution in the face but does not shrink away. Instead, they gather and pray God, "grant to your servants to



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continue to speak your word with all boldness..." Beloved, let this be our prayer today as well.

[COMMUNION]

Pastor Jody explains The Bread and the Wine
Followed by Family prayer over the Bread and the Wine – led by heads of households.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – “Christians, what do you believe?”

Congregation - Philippians 2:5-11 ESV

[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that gave us the most authentic presentation of who He really is, in the life of His Son, to know Christ is to know the Father.

Go in the name of the Son, who lived His life in full display of all, so that His people would know Him, and would put there Hope in His glorious return.



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Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that helps us to live authentic lives whereby we display the heart of Christ, blessing the church, and influencing our world.