

AUTHENTIC FAITH

IN ALL OF LIFE'S PHASES



Sermon Series Devotional

August 6 - September 2

Hinckley First United Methodist Church

Introduction

Authentic Faith is a *process*. It is a dynamic faith that is continually evolving and changing through each phase of life. Authentic Faith is *personal*. It is unique to each person and is shaped by individual experiences with God. Authentic Faith is a *partnership*. It is grown alongside others who model, mentor, encourage, and challenge. Authentic Faith is *practiced*. It is forged and fine-tuned in the day-to-day living in the world through intentionality and discipline.

Why a Devotional?

A vibrant and authentic faith is not grown merely in one hour on Sunday morning. This devotional will give you the opportunity to engage with God's word on a regular basis as you seek to become more like Christ each day. There is a daily Bible reading plan, as well as reflection questions that are linked with each week of the sermon series. You can use this devotional individually or in a formal or informal small group.

Daily Bible Reading Plan

August 6 - Hebrews 11:1-12:2

August 7 - Matthew 4:18-22

August 8 - Romans 12:1-2

August 9 - Philippians 1:3-11

August 10 - Philippians 2:1-13

August 11 - Colossians 2:6-15

August 12 - 2 Peter 1:3-11

August 13 - Luke 19:1-10

August 14 - John 1:35-42

August 15 - John 1:43-51

August 16 - Romans 5:1-11

August 17 - Psalm 34:8-14

August 18 - Isaiah 55:1-11

August 19 - 1 John 3:1-3

August 20 - Deuteronomy 6

August 21 - Acts 2:42-47

August 22 - 1 Timothy 1:1-14

August 23 - Hebrews 10:19-25

August 24 - Ephesians 4:1-16

August 25 - Ephesians 6:1-20

August 26 - John 15:1-17

August 27 - James 2:14-26

August 28 - 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

August 29 - Galatians 5:13-26

August 30 - Colossians 3:1-17

September 1 - 1 Corinthians 13

September 2 - Micah 6:6-8

- Begin your time with prayer. Ask God to speak to you, for Jesus to be revealed to you, and for the Holy Spirit to fill you as you read these words of Scripture.

- Slowly, thoughtfully, read God's Word. Pay particular attention to words or phrases that stand out to you. Write them down or take time to memorize them.

- Consider how this Scripture connects with your life today. What may God be inviting you to do, challenging you to learn, or calling you to change?

Week 1

Authentic Faith is a Process

"There is no checklist for developing an authentic faith... In fact, there is no finish line, no plaque, no medal, no, 'Congratulations! You have now achieved an authentic faith!' Instead, authentic faith is a continual process. It's not static. It is the molding, crafting, shaping, and changing of faith through time, life experience, and reflection. And this process isn't the same for everyone."

- *Lead Small* by Reggie Joiner and Tom Shefchunas

- What was your first introduction to the faith? Who first modeled the faith for you? Where was your faith first formed?

- What major life events have led to shifts in your understanding of your faith? What in your life helped you to grow closer to God? What in your life caused you to distance yourself from religion or the church? What experiences made you grapple with your faith in new ways? How has your faith evolved or expanded through the years?

- Be honest with yourself. Would you say that your faith is actively growing? Or is it stagnant? What is one intentional, actionable, thing you could do over the course of the next month to help your faith to grow?

Week 2

Authentic Faith is Personal

"I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, *even mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

- John Wesley in his journal on May 24, 1738

- The Bible frequently reinforces the idea that God knows us all by name. He knows us so intimately and wholly that he knows even the number of hairs on our head. How does this make you feel?

- When John Wesley wrote the above quote in his journal he had been a Christian for a long time by name, but on that night he actually felt his heart warmed and accepted God's love personally for himself. What do you think is the difference between being "a Christian" and personally experiencing and being changed by Christ?

- When did you first personalize the faith? When was your first personal experience of God's grace in your life?

- How have you personally felt God's presence in your life in the last week? Or, where are you personally seeking guidance from God this week?

Week 3

Authentic Faith is a Partnership

"The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion. You must find companions or make them."

- A "serious man" to John Wesley

"Directly opposite to this is the gospel of Christ. Solitary religion is not to be found there. 'Holy solitaires' is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness."

- John Wesley

- What stands out to you from the quotes above? If you were to put them in your own words, what are they saying?

- Who are the people in your life who have contributed most to your faith development? Who has been a positive example for you that has shaped your understanding of God?

- Do you currently have persons or a group who you meet with or talk with who pray for you, support you in becoming a more faithful disciple, and hold you accountable when you fall short? What is, or would be, the benefit of such people?

- Who are you currently walking alongside or mentoring in the faith? If you have children, how are you serving as a model for them as they develop in their faith?

Week 4

Authentic Faith is Practiced

"Character is, sadly, greatly undervalued today in so much church life and activity. We'd rather work out the best techniques, formulate successful strategies, and celebrate (or criticize) performance. We look on the outside and assess people by 'how they are doing,' and pay much less attention to what kind of character they have become or are becoming. But look at the qualities in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. They do not focus on what kind of *performance* we can achieve, but what kind of *person* we are. Fruit takes time. Character takes time--a lifetime, in fact."

- *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit* by Christopher J.H. Wright

- Read James 2:14-18. What do you think it means when James says, "Faith without works is dead."

- What kinds of 'works' are necessary for a truly authentic faith?

- Read Galatians 5:22-23. How does Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit relate with what James is talking about in the previous passage?

- What are ways that you cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in your life now? What are new ways you could do this?

- Why would you want to grow the fruit of the Spirit in you, or engage in the 'works' that James speaks of? What is in it for you? What is in it for others?