

CHAPTER 8: TOTAL AUTHENTICITY

QUESTION: Have you ever revealed something about yourself and then regretted it? Have you ever revealed something and found real acceptance and connection? What made the difference?

QUOTE: Though the Church is supposed to be a "come as you are" gathering, we realize soon after arriving that for any number of reasons, we really can't come as we are. Over time we all learn how to continually read the room to determine the exact parameters of our personal mess that we can reveal without alienating ourselves. We begin to craft a Church-specific self, and life becomes about perception management more than open and true pursuit of God. Though full authenticity in our faith communities should be invited and celebrated, in reality it's often a terrible liability. p.77

TEXT: Mark 9:14-29—[14] When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. [15] When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him.

[16] He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" [17] Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; [18] and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so."

[19] He answered them, "**You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.**" [20] And they brought the boy to him.

When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. [21] Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. [22] It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us."

[23] Jesus said to him, "**If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes.**" [24] Immediately the father of the child cried out, "**I believe; help my unbelief!**"

[25] When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" [26] After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." [27] But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand [28] When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" [29] He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."

QUESTION: What are your first impressions of this story?

QUESTION: What do you think about the exchange between Jesus and the father in verses 23-24? What does this say about the father and how he feels about Jesus at this moment?

"I believe; help my unbelief!" [NRSV]

"I do have faith; please help me to have even more." [CEV]

"Then I believe; help me with my doubts." [Message]

Believe [Gk PISTEUO]—to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, to credit.

Unbelief [Gk APISTIA]—unfaithfulness (disobedience), faithlessness, want of faith, weakness of faith, disbelief (lack of Christian faith).

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QUESTION: How can your church show newcomers that they are free to be their authentic selves in your community?

TEXT Mark 14:3-9—While he was at Bethany **in the house of Simon the leper**, as he sat at the table, **a woman** came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Matthew 26—at the house of Simon the leper...a woman

Luke 7—the Pharisee's house...a woman in the city, who was a sinner

John 12—house of Lazarus...Mary of Bethany (Lazarus' sister]

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QUESTION: Does your church expect its pastorS to be "on their best behavior" or to share the messier parts of themselves? What impact do you think this has on people?
