

Counterfeit Christianity

by Bill Rudge

We hear much about signs, wonders and miracles but very little about the need for discernment. So this issue is dedicated to developing discernment.

As a new Christian, I did not expect to uncover deception in churches and ministries such as I found in researching the realm of the occult. While I have witnessed genuine miracles and prophecies, there is often too much "flesh" and "fraud" being propagated in Jesus' name. Consequently, as a new convert, I quickly learned the importance of discernment and integrity.

For instance, a popular evangelist who amazed young and old alike with his knowledge of Bible prophecy had a part in my coming to faith in Christ. A short time later he left his wife, ran off with his secretary, became an alcoholic and embezzled ministry funds which resulted in prison time. Early experiences like this – that could have easily turned me back to the world – actually proved to be of profound benefit to my life and ministry. I had a crucial choice to make: Do I build my life on man or on God? I chose to build my life and ministry on Jesus Christ and His Word – **and that has made all the difference.**

In stark contrast, a pastor who had significantly contributed to my accepting Christ, has faithfully served Him all the days of his life. His example has been an inspiration to many.

Then there was the popular Christian singing group who performed at a large camp meeting I attended as a young believer. They sang, cried and moved many to tears with their songs and testimonies. Shortly thereafter, this same group went secular and began performing some raunchy songs. It was hard for me at that time to understand how they could sing about Jesus with such passion, and so quickly turn, performing songs that led youth and adults down a path away from Him. It was not surprising to discover that even while on their Christian circuit, they had many illicit relations with girls and women who idolized them.

As a young Christian I had to make yet another important decision: Will I be influenced by surface appearance and emotionalism and use my position of leadership for personal favors or will I follow the path of wisdom and discernment? I chose to seek



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Prior to a three-week mission to Mexico, God had impressed on Karen and me to go to Bible college. Upon our return from the mission trip, preparations were underway for our move when a so-called prophetess prophesied that we were to go back to Mexico. I said to her, "I'm still a relatively new Christian and do not know the Word very well yet, but I do know that if God told me to go to Bible college, if God told me to buy a mobile home, if God enabled us to find the very last mobile home lot on which we could put our mobile home in the city, then God wants me there. And that's where I'm going!"

I had to decide: Do I follow the voice of someone telling me God's will for my life, or do I follow God's Word and what His Spirit has led me to do? I chose to follow what I *knew* to be the clear direction of the Lord – **and that has made all the difference.**

While attending Bible college, I worked at a window factory with several other students who had been Christians much longer than I. However, it didn't take long to see the shallowness of their commitment. They mocked others, swore, used vulgar expressions and stole small

items from work. So as a young Christian I had to make yet another crucial choice: Do I follow the crowd and live a compromised Christianity or do I, by God's grace and power, live a life of integrity and discipline? I chose a life of integrity and have sought to honor the Lord in every aspect of my life – **and that has made all the difference.**

Many times I have reflected back on how ineffective my life and ministry could have been had I not chosen to follow the direction of the Lord during those crucial decisions. But because I obeyed God's voice, He has produced tremendous fruit through our lives, done the impossible through our ministry and blessed us greatly.

What Then Shall We Do?

Over the years I have encountered in various "Christian" groups: false teachings, erroneous prophecies, faked healings, counterfeit miracles, financial misappropriation, lies, gossip, sexual immorality, drug and alcohol usage, and other un-Christlike behaviors. Some of this could be explained as weakness of the flesh;

however, many were using the name of Jesus for personal gain while fleecing the people of God who, because of their lack of discernment and biblical knowledge, enabled them to do so. I have encountered countless people who said they rejected Christianity because of fakery and hypocrisy; for some theirs was a lame excuse, for others a true stumbling block. Turning anyone from the Gospel or hindering someone in their walk with Christ because of our example is something we must all, as believers, strive to avoid.

While I believe in the supernatural power of God and the gifts of the Spirit, I have witnessed too much imitation, manipulation, even demonic phenomena in Jesus' name. Truly, the Church needs the power of God's Spirit today – not the flesh or the counterfeit, but the authentic moving of God's Spirit.

Does fakery and hypocrisy practiced in Jesus' name mean we ought to reject Him and Christianity? To the contrary, His Word warns about such people and practices. You can be certain that those who resort to deception and manipulation will be held accountable for the Lord “will bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

I have spent more than two thirds of my lifetime on an amazing adventure of discovering the truth, reality and faithfulness of the God of the Bible. Scripture encourages believers to be Bereans (Acts 17:10-12) – exercising discernment and examining all things by God's Word.

Imitation and counterfeit should motivate us all the more to earnestly seek the true and the genuine. Without a doubt, only Jesus Christ and Scripture have the answers to life and eternity.

There are some who use the name of Christ for personal gain or to merchandise the Gospel, and others are as deceived as the people who follow them; but there are **many more** genuine followers of Christ. Countless pastors, missionaries, chaplains and believers love the Lord with all their hearts, minds and strength. Their beliefs and lifestyles – both in the public eye and behind the scenes, the fruit of their ministries and personal sacrifices validate their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the midst of a corrupt and wicked world, an increasing number of believers desire to live committed and disciplined lives of purity and righteousness. Instead of “liberalism” they walk in obedience; rather than “legalism” they are motivated by love and a desire to honor their Lord. Not perfect in themselves, but relying on the grace of the Perfect One, they press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of them (Philippians 3:12). They will be found faithful when Christ returns and receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). How about you?

Finally: Each believer should choose to develop a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, know the voice of His Spirit, honor His Word, and walk before Him and the world in love, truth, discipline and integrity. 

Consequences of Compromise

by BJ Rudge, Ph.D.

Sermons being promoted with sexual images, worship being infiltrated by secular songs, the preaching platform shared with Star Wars characters – yes, these are just samples of the efforts taken by many churches to make Christianity “relevant” to our modern culture. Church growth experts tell us these “adjustments” are necessary if we want Christianity to survive the tides of cultural change.

However, when we approach Christianity in the above manner, three drastic results follow.

First, Christianity becomes a man-centered system of beliefs. Like a person picking and choosing different foods at a buffet, each of us can pick and choose what we want to include in our own version of *Christianity*: If church is “cool” and “fun,” then we can be cool and still have fun enjoying the things of this world – a far cry from Jesus' call of self-

denial:

If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 16:24, 25).

Instead of transforming our culture, the church is being transformed by the culture.

Second, Christianity loses its power. The focus of bringing people to Christ begins to center around the latest trends and church growth methods. These are supposedly the key to unlocking the hearts of the “un-churched.” As our culture changes, these will also change so that we can maintain a message that is appealing to our audience. Definitely a different evangelistic approach than the Apostle Paul:

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming

to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified... and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

Third, Christianity loses its uniqueness. When the Gospel is presented with all of the regalia of cultural relevance and excitement, it loses its distinction. Instead of being a channel of transformation *in* our culture, it becomes transformed *by* the culture (see Romans 12:2). Thus, the Christian faith becomes merely another system of thought that blends into the cultural landscape. What a sad result when, in contrast, we have the opportunity to share with others the unique message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed (Romans 1:16, 17).

So while we may adapt our *method* of presenting the Gospel we must never change, water down, distort or cheapen the *message*. We must not be so “open minded” that we accept virtually any practice, phenomenon or teaching. Instead, be “Bereans” who wisely question, evaluate and discern. Any methodology that alters the Gospel message itself or compromises the way we live out our faith must be rejected. The Lord Jesus will be the final judge of all methods, techniques and teachings, as well as those who propagate them (1 Corinthians 4:5). 

Behind the Words

by BJ Rudge, Ph.D.

Sometimes more important than the words we *use* are the meanings *behind* those words. Let me explain. I opened my door to two individuals who greeted me with a smile. They said they were Christians and believed in Jesus. However, after asking them a few questions, it became apparent we did not believe in the same Jesus. While I recognize Jesus as the eternal Son of God (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16, 17), they saw him only as a created being. On another occasion a man walked into my office claiming to believe in Jesus, but after several minutes, I learned that *his* Jesus is simply an enlightened individual and not the Son of God and Savior of the world (Luke 2:10, 11; John 3:16, 17).

Define terms so you understand what the other person is saying and also communicate your faith clearly. Know what you believe so you do not find yourself, like the Corinthians, being deceived by a different gospel:

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4). 

Another Jesus Is Being Offered to the World

by Bill Rudge

There is an accurate saying that Satan will use nine truths to get one lie across. The primary lie he attempts to propagate concerns the



identity of Jesus Christ – the One before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. Satan’s ultimate deception is to suggest you do not need to accept Christ, or try to cause you to follow “another Jesus” other than the Jesus of the Bible (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4).

While some demote Jesus to merely a great teacher or prophet, others say we all have the potential to become another Christ, still others will simply substitute Jesus with someone or something else. Attempts are made to minimize, distort, deny or replace Him: All have eternal implications (John 8:24). Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, God incarnate in human flesh and the only way of salvation can be scripturally identified as a false prophet or teacher (1 John 4:1-3; 1 John 2:22, 23). As Jesus ascended to heaven, two angels said to the disciples:

Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Please notice, it will *not* be *another* Jesus or a reincarnation of the Christ spirit, but the *same* Jesus who ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives. He will be returning in all His glory. At His Second Coming, Biblical evidence, cataclysmic signs and physical transformation of believers will undeniably confirm Jesus Christ to be the true Messiah.

The time is soon coming when “the kingdom of the world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15). Jesus will establish His righteous Kingdom wherein true believers will rule and reign with Him for eternity and inherit all God has prepared for those who love and obey Him. Do not settle for an imitation or counterfeit when you can know the TRUE ONE Who leads to eternal life. 

Spiritual Addiction

by BJ Rudge

Similar to those struggling with physical addiction there are those who struggle with *spiritual addiction*. They develop an unhealthy pattern of seeking *spiritual highs* through “experiences” and phenomena. An acquaintance of mine is on a spiritual “roller coaster” because her relationship with Jesus is solely dependent upon her feelings and emotions. Instead of focusing on the revelation and truth of God’s Word, she chases after dreams, visions, prophecies and mystical experiences. She freely admits to spending little or no time reading the Bible or praying.

Jesus used the term “deception” to describe the time before His return (See Matthew 24). Today, we often see people seeking after signs, wonders and spiritual experiences rather than seeking after God Himself. This was exactly the case when Jesus rebuked the crowd in Galilee:

Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe (John 4:48).

In the day and age we live, it is crucial to not let “experiences” or phenomena become a substitute for time in the Word of God and prayer. Christ’s Spirit, who abides in us and empowers us, cautions that in latter times some will depart from the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons (1 Timothy 4:1). Therefore, we must exercise discernment and examine everything to determine truth from error and the genuine from the fake.

First John 4:1 clearly states:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

You can experience the peace of God, the joy of the Lord and the power of His Spirit and also avoid deception and the “roller coaster” of *spiritual addiction*. Build your faith and life on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, His immutable Word and the leading of His Spirit. In Christ and Scripture you will find true contentment, essential discernment and the unlimited power. A deep and abiding relationship with Him supersedes anything the world or false religion has to offer. 

Upcoming with Bill & BJ

October 15 & 16 Elementary, Middle and High School Assemblies

October 22 Sharon Alliance Church 10:45 a.m.

October 29 Orangeville Baptist Church 11:00 a.m.

November 19 Faith Presbyterian Church 11:00 a.m.

December 17 Faith Presbyterian Church 11:00 a.m.

February 17-28 Holy Land Adventure

February 23 Calvary Chapel of Jerusalem

May 15 - October 15 Obstacle & Fitness Course at BRM

For more information on Bill and BJ’s speaking engagements, go to www.billrudge.org.

Holy Land Adventure

Enclosed is the brochure of our upcoming Holy Land Adventure. We would love to have you join us. Be sure to share the brochure with a family member or friend.

As well as a pilgrimage and adventure, this will be a mission trip. Therefore it is appropriate to raise some funds to help with the cost of the trip. Some who are going with us have received support from churches and friends or by having sandwich sales after church.

This will probably be Bill’s last Holy Land Adventure for a while, to make way for the **Around the World 3**, involving several countries where Bill will speak at conventions and conferences.

This may be your last opportunity to come with Bill and Karen on one of the most incredible trips of your life to the Holy Land. As a great Christmas gift, this trip to the very land God chose to reveal Himself through His Son will have a tremendous impact on your spiritual growth. It is the location where most of the prophetic events of the end times will be happening.

In Memory Of

Gene Greathouse
by Trinity Church of the Nazarene

Verna Hamilton

Frank Marletto

Media Design System Needed

The ministry needs updated media equipment and laser printer to continue producing E-books, web site, audio messages, videos, multimedia presentations, and so much more. We are praying in hope, that one or more churches or individuals will take on this crucial project (approximately \$4,000) to help us continue (and expand) our national and global outreaches.

“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”

1 John 4:4

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

1 John 5:4, 5

“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”

Revelation 12:11