

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Newsletter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 KJV)

Volume 4, Issue 11

November 2006

Imitation of Life

Art Nelson

I am not referring to the old movie “Imitation of Life” with this title but rather the state of the people of God and the Church. Jesus even said this to the church of Sardis in Revelation.

Revelation 3:1 NASB

- (1) "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'

They had an appearance of life but actually they were dead; in other words, they had an imitation of life. How was it known that they were dead even though they had a reputation of being alive? By their deeds. An imitation of life produces an imitation of work, that is, dead works. Only life can beget life; imitation life can only produce imitation.

When Jesus said that He is “the life” in John 14:16, He meant it. Jesus is the only source of spiritual life; anything else is only an imitation. In Him we are born again, which gives us life and in order to maintain life that He gives, Jesus said that we must abide in Him, that is, remain in Him.

John 15:4-6 NASB

- (4) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me.
- (5) "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.
- (6) "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

The life of the branch comes from the vine. If the branch is detached from the vine, it dies. It doesn't look dead at first but, over time, it becomes obvious that it no longer is alive.

The Two Issues

In the realm of science, one of the criteria to determine if something is alive is that it grows or changes; especially in relation to its environment. When something is alive, its growth is not only physical but also functional; that is, it *matures*. This is also true of us both individually and corporately.

Therefore, the first issue is that if we have life, *we must mature*. The scriptures say a lot about personal maturing and most of us have had many sermons preached to us about the necessity of growing up. However, this is also true of the corporate body of Christ. The Church in every locality needs to grow up: **“but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even Christ*,”** (Ephesians 4:15 NASB)

The organism that is the Body of Christ is destined to grow up. It is built into the nature of what and who we are. The Lord, Himself, has provided all that is necessary for us to mature. He has given us His Holy Spirit to be our Helper to do this. He has also provided for us His ongoing ministry in the form of His ascension gifts to help the corporate body.

And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even Christ*, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16 NASB)

Every organism must have the proper nutrients in order to grow. The Lord has provided these nutrients through several sources. And like any proper diet, you must partake of the various sources to receive balanced nutrition. These sources are the Holy Spirit, the popularly called five-fold ministry, and the joint supply according to the proper working of each individual. Without partaking of all three of these sources, you are subject to nutrient deficiency, which can cause various problems. This issue is the major problem with the real Church of Jesus Christ.

The second issue is our subject with this teaching letter—the imitation of life. We have reached a point where the Institutional Church is functioning in an imitation of life. It is like a mannequin when compared with the real Church.

The mannequin is artificially constructed to look like the real body from which it is modeled. Its appendages can be moved by external forces to position it in the way desired by the circumstances. However, no one mistakes the mannequin for the real thing.

Not only is the Institutional Church constructed as a mannequin, it is now functioning as a marionette with the ambitions and traditions of men pulling its strings to dance to the tune of worldly desire. It is fast becoming a candidate for Mystery Babylon as described in Revelation.

There has been a lot written lately about the number of people leaving the traditional Church.

The implication in some of these articles has been that these people are leaving The Church and are in violation of scriptures by forsaking the assembly. Actually, most of them are simply looking for something real. They are tired of the imitation of life.

Jesus said, “. . . **I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.**” (John 10:10 NASB)

Step into any of the typical Institutional Churches. Is there life and life abundant? Or is ritual and tradition substituted for life? Is the fellowship real with life-flow between believers or is it simply an imitation of life?

As I said earlier, Sardis' imitation of life was exposed by its deeds or works. It seems like a contradiction, but it appears that *activity* is substituted for real life. If someone can see all of the activity, it obscures the fact that it is not life but an imitation of it that is driving all of the hustle and bustle. This type of activity is powered by natural, soul life and not by the spirit. That is why there is so much burn-out in the Institutional Church. We have a limited supply of soul life; however, if the work is done by the spirit, there is an endless supply of life.

It is very easy to become pre-occupied with activity and preparations about things related to the Lord. But, these activities do not provide life even though they might be good or even necessary. We have a good example in Mary and Martha and how they acted when Jesus came to their house.

Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up *to Him* and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but *only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.***" (Luke 10:38-42 NASB)**

The One who is Life and came to give Life was with them and talking to them. Mary was at His feet to not miss anything that He might say and Martha was busy getting things together. Martha was irritated that she *was doing all* of the work and Mary *wasn't doing anything*, just listening to Jesus. Martha even appealed to Jesus to command Mary to help her! Does this sound a lot like the attitude of some of the Institutional Churches?

Genuine Faux Church

I remember a television commercial from the seventies. It was when cubic zirconium was first being used in jewelry. The commercial opened with “genuine faux diamonds”. The word *faux* is a French word that means fake or imitation. So, the commercial was saying that you could buy “genuine fake diamonds” from them. How's that for honesty in advertising?

We have the same type of deceptive promotional hype today as it relates to Churches. I have seen a number of church signs lately that advertise that in their services they have “contemporary worship music”. Why put that on their sign? It is the same principle as “genuine faux diamonds”, contemporary worship music has a reputation of life and is sought after by those looking for life and intimacy with the Lord. However, a church operating with an imitation of life that performs “contemporary worship music” is actually performing “faux worship music”.

It takes life to produce life and if the life of the Lord is not there, then it doesn't matter how “contemporary” your music might be, it is still imitation worship.

Of course, this should not be surprising since we operate in a spiritual artificial environment anyway. We have a faux house of the Lord patterned after the Roman basilicas rather than the real house of the Lord that is made without hands as a habitation of God through the Spirit. We have pumped up worship “leaders” who create an “atmosphere” and exhort us to “enter in”, while they entertain us with their songs. We have preachers who strut across a stage yelling and screaming in an emotional outburst to motivate us to give to “God's work”. They manipulate hundreds or thousands with their rhetoric and we leave emotionally drained but content that we “had church” today. Compare this scenario with any of the descriptions of the Church gathering in Acts or Corinthians. What was just described as a contemporary church service was an “imitation of church” because it did not have the life of the Spirit in it.

That is why so many who are looking for the Lord and the life of the Spirit are leaving the Institutional Church. They can't stand any more of the “genuine faux church”; but, instead desire to see the real Body of Christ functioning organically, accomplishing the purpose of the Lord in the earth.

I am tired of the imitation, the fake, the dry, twisted wine skin that we call “church”. I cry out to the Lord for a new wine skin, filled with fresh, new wine of His Spirit. I cry out for living water flowing out of the innermost being of those who believe, the water that brings life eternal. I cry out for the Lord to tear down all artificial environments and bring His people into Truth, Reality. I cry out for the Lord to raise up an army that will tear down and grind to powder the idols of the Institutional Church and to raise up His *Ecclesia*, to the glory of God. Amen and amen!!

© 2003-2006 by Art Nelson and [Lifestream Teaching Ministries](http://www.lifestreamteaching.com)

Previous issues of Present Truth are on the website: www.lifestreamteaching.com

For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com

You have permission to copy and distribute these materials provided:

1) no changes are made to the content, and, 2) they are not sold.

Removal instructions:

This is a free newsletter, without cost or obligation. If you have received this newsletter in error or if you desire not to receive "Present Truth" teaching newsletter please reply with "remove" in the subject area.