

Sermon Topic: **Pursue Authenticity In Light Of Who God Is, Pr Wendy Chiang-Cheong**
Sermon Text: **Genesis 3:7-10, 1 Peter 1:22**

Moral of story: A lion is not always a lion. You are not always in danger of being eaten – but be careful when PRETENDING to be someone that you are not.

Dilemma: We yearn to be authentic but mask from being authentic.

Description: What is authenticity?

- To be authentic is to be true (about yourself), transparent and tender to yourself and to others.
- It is more than just being honest, since we can be brutally honest and rip ourselves and others without ever communicating honor and value.
- It is not being 2-faced (hypocrisy).

Preacher's afterthought: Hypocrisy is not doing contrary to what you feel, but contrary to you believe. When we believe we must be authentic but act fake, that's hypocrisy.

Desperate Need: The world needs an authentic church community. Why? This world is not strong to accept what is cracked, flawed and broken. So people hide behind masks.

But the Church is **GOD'S SOLUTION** for a broken world and broken people. God uses authentic communities that are acquainted with their brokenness + assured of Christ's acceptance to bring healing to others. Go beyond the wall of superficiality.

Diagnosis: When man first learnt to hide from one another:

[After Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ...] the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (Genesis 3:7-10)

Prior temptation: no hiddenness, no concealing, no secrets but transparency, vulnerability and self-giving. "Naked and felt no shame" to describe perfect childlike innocence. Fully known, fully accepted.

The temptation: listen and obey a different script. "Can you really trust God and one another to watch over your welfare?"

The tragedy: dis-connectedness and isolation

The emotion: fear rooted in guilt and shame

The call: "WHERE ARE YOU" – a redemptive invitation from God to man, to come out of hiding, to be seen, to get real with the condition of their being.

Bad news: Yes, the FALL causes us to hide.

Good news: FATHERHOOD of God invites us to come out of shame and hiding. Believe this gospel. Align with this powerful gospel.

Always remember what DADDY did to bring us out of hiding from shame and guilt:

1. Sends His Son to seek and save the lost...lost in shame and hiding (Mtt 18:11, Lk 19:10). Christ's death provides the permanent covering over shame.
2. Welcomes prodigals back to Himself and to community to find forgiveness and healing (Lk 15:11-32). If that is the Father He is, what kind of community should we be?
3. Seals us with His Holy Spirit = He is our Father, we are His children, community is spiritual family. Know Him = no fear, no condemnation. Family can be real to each other because the sealing secures us (Rm 8:15-16).
4. Creates us to be new, redeemed community to love sincerely (authentically), without pretense (1 Pet 1:22).

***"[Authentic] Christian brotherhood is NOT AN IDEAL which we must realise; but a REALITY created by God in Christ in which we may participate."* – Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (1939)**

Dietrich's Big Idea:

In case you think it is your responsibility to create an authentic community. Pause. We don't dream up and create community. It is an **eternal spiritual reality** created by God through Christ. We are called to PARTICIPATE in it.

Five Intentional Ways:

1. Be truthful to God about yourself
Busyness keeps God from showing us the kind of person we are. We either lack self-awareness or minimize what is going on inside. When we cannot or will not take responsibility over who we are becoming, it can damage ourselves, our relationship with others, even work we do in Jesus' name.
2. Risk truth-sharing with a few trusted friends in church
It is unwise to bear your soul to those who gossip or talk too much (Pro 20:19). But trusted friends can be entrusted with the secrets of the heart. Jesus modeled deep disclosure to a few trusted friends. How are you doing with this in the community of Aldersgate?

If you want to grow as a authentic, trusted friend whom others can turn to, John Ortberg suggests that you guard against:

- Inappropriate use of humor to minimize the issue or person
- Judgmental statements or premature advice
- Violating confidentiality

3. Be available to others

Authenticity cannot be planned or programmed. To offer authenticity, you must be willing to be interrupted out of your own agenda.

4. Be gentle, humble and teachable

Take a posture of humility and teachability when others share life with you. This invites input where we can learn from others and allow them to sharpen our perspective.

5. Be forgiving

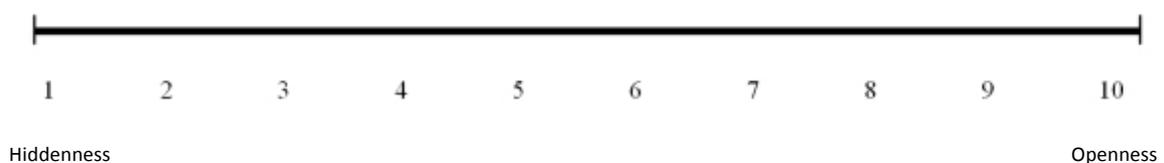
There is always potential for wounds when we risk authenticity. We may misread authentic believers as wounding us. They may actually wound us. When that happens, the Gospel invites us to keep no wrong, offer forgiveness and seek reconciliation.

Conclude: Essential to work at authenticity in Christian community. As we do, trust the Fatherhood of God who calls us family. Trust the redemption of Christ that covers shame. Trust the comfort of the Holy Spirit that secures us. May we as Christians not settle for anything less than an authentic, honest, and vulnerable community.

Cell Discussion Questions (taken from "Everyone is Normal till You Get to Know Them):

1. Was there a time someone violated your trust? What happened? How has it affected the way you relate to people now?

2. Rate yourself on the following scale:



Where are you these days? Where would you like to be at the end of the year?

3. If a mask is something you hide behind, what is your mask that prevents others from knowing the real you?

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|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| + Superficial conversation | + Humor | + Intelligence |
| + Busyness/Success | + Shyness | + Spirituality |

What is one step you could take to reveal a little more of the truth about yourself in a close relationship? In your cell group?

4. Think about your cell group. Are any dynamics present that might prevent authenticity?

- Inappropriate use of humor
- Violation of confidentiality
- Premature advice-giving
- Judgmental statements

How can the cell group address it?

5. This week and the next, notice attempts that you may make through the day to cover up. Practice freedom today. See how well you can do to cultivate a sense of transparency.