

Chapter 3

I'LL TRADE YOU TWO FAKE SMILES FOR A PRETENTIOUS “I'M PRAYING FOR YOU”

When I was in school, I remember how some people I thought were my friends suddenly decided they weren't. One day I was in the clique, and the next day I was out. I remember that I asked one of the girls to her face if she was mad at me. Her body language said it all. The angered expression and standoffish attitude were apparent, and I was trying the best I could to cope with the change in friend status. She responded “no” to my face, but then pretended to stretch and whispered something about me to the friend beside her. They both laughed, and I watched helplessly, realizing my friends were no longer my friends and I could now do very little to save my reputation. While this kind of stuff happens when we're kids in school all the time, it shouldn't happen

in churches. One would think we'd all be a little more mature. However, things like this happen in the Body of Christ. It's sad. It's not God's will or way.

I believe that compassion in this nation as a whole has been seared. To *sear* something means to burn it. If you were to suffer an injury, you have to sear or cauterize the wound. Once a wound is cauterized, that means it won't re-open in that place. It's like the compassion in this nation has been cauterized, and unless a miracle happens and we wake up from our slumber, we won't realize it.

We used to live in a society where if we saw one person struggling in our boat, we'd all stop what we were doing and help that person. We'd all work together as a team. In today's world, we see that person struggling in the boat, feel glad it's not us, and pick them up and throw them in the water. We just don't really care about each other anymore. As long as an issue doesn't affect us and our own, then we don't spend any mental thought on it.

We've become very good in our churches today at faking our concern when really we couldn't care less about the people around us. I think Matthew 6 in the Message Bible words this well.

Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be

applauding. When you do something for someone else, don't call attention to yourself. You've seen them in action, I'm sure—"playactors" I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that's all they get. When you help someone out, don't think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out. And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat? Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace (Matthew 6:1-6 MSG).

Stop being fake and start being real. Start being real with the people around you, and start being real with God. Churches are not Broadway musicals where we play the role of the Christian. You may think you can

play a role with people and get away with it, but I tell you today that you can't play that role with God. He sees through your plastic smiles and fake veneers.

STOP ACTING!

I taught a new believers class at our church for a period of time, and I was contemplating the concept of being a new creation. I was putting nacho cheese flavoring on some popcorn for my kids, and suddenly the Lord dropped into my spirit the question—*If I put the same cheese on a piece of poop, would it still be a piece of poop?* My reaction was, *Ewww, but yes.* He said it was the same with the believer. So many times people think they can just put on a new coat of paint and play a part in salvation. They can play the part of the saved person well. They pretend that they're really sold out for God, but deep down they've never really given their lives to the Lord. They're still in the old creation—they're still a piece of poop unless they allow Jesus to come in and truly make them a new creation. When you ask Jesus into your life and mean it, you're new. You still have some moments of the old, but you're a new creation. You can't think that by putting a new coat of paint on a barn it's going to give you a new barn.

But sadly, Christians act this way in church. You can't pretend to play a part and think that'll get you into Heaven. God looks at the heart.

*But God told Samuel, “**Looks** aren’t everything. Don’t be impressed with his **looks** and stature. I’ve already eliminated him. God judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; God **looks** into the **heart**” (1 Samuel 16:7 MSG).*

We must stop playing the part of a Christian and start living the life of a Christian! Too many leaders, even in the Body of Christ, are so busy trying to be the perfect individual or have the perfect family that they’re strangling themselves in the bondage of this fake world they’ve invented. We have to stop being so superficial with everyone. Be real! We have to stop trying to hide our mistakes! I will be the first person to tell you that I am not perfect. I have sinned, and I have fallen short. I only get the chance to teach you from the Word because it’s the calling on my life and I’ve allowed God to mature me. But I’m not perfect.

*If we claim that we’re free of sin, we’re only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—He won’t let us down; He’ll be true to Himself. He’ll forgive our sins and purge us of **all** wrongdoing. If we claim that we’ve never **sinned**, we out-and-out contradict God—make a liar out of Him. A claim like that*

only shows off our ignorance of God (1 John 1:8 MSG).

I have a confession to make—fake people, especially Christians, really annoy me. But then again, they really annoyed Jesus too. He had a word for them. He called them *hypocrites*.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth (Matthew 6:1-3 KJV).

*Thou **hypocrite**, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matthew 7:5 KJV).*

*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in (Matthew 23:13 KJV).*

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess (Matthew 23:25 KJV).*

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness (Matthew 23:27 KJV).*

Stop being hypocrites! Stop trying to play a part and start just accepting the fact that you aren't perfect. You've made mistakes.

The world has had it with "fake Christians." They want to see real people with real struggles. They want to see people who aren't perfect and for whom everything isn't hunkey-dorey. They need to see Christ in us, not a fake persona that says, "Once you come to Christ you'll have a perfect life and no rocks in your path." People in the world need to see a real Jesus! We no longer live in a "leave it to Beaver" world. Let's face it—our culture has become jaded in the last 50 years. We need to be real! What if God were to be fake with us?

Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I

mean this. When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, My Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of Me, you can be sure that I'll be there (Matthew 18:18 MSG).

What if God were to say things to us and put up a front, but deep down He didn't mean it? How could we ever learn to trust Him? We wouldn't trust Him. This is why we've stopped trusting each other in the world and in the Church. We're so busy trying to act a certain way around one another that we've lost sight of what it means to be a family! God wouldn't do that. Why? Because God is truth. He cannot lie. When God says something, it will happen. God doesn't put up a front for us, so why then do we do it with each other?

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

It's been my ongoing joke for years to point out the differences between how men and women deal with things. Men will have disagreement and just punch each other and that will be the end of it. Women are very different. I always say we argue in subtext. We say something, but really it wasn't what we said, it was the paragraph of words behind it that was implied. It's time we put the subtext down and just be real with people.

We do what we say we're going to do, and we say what we mean.

Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? (2 Corinthians 1:17 NKJV)

Stop trying to make the outside exterior always fit into what you think it should. We're living in a culture where the younger generation is so hungry for the things of God, yet they are so turned off by the hypocrisy in the Church. We preach love and acceptance, but if someone comes into our church with spiked hair, a nose ring, and 50 tattoos, how are we going to treat them? We have to catch a fish before we can clean it. We have to show the world love no matter what they look like or what they're doing. They were trying to do that in the Bible, too. John the Baptist and Jesus certainly didn't fit the molds of what people thought they should look like or act like. God loves to mess with people's religiosity. Drop the hypocritical act and start acting like Jesus! If you claim Jesus, you'd better start acting like Him.

When people ask us to pray for a situation, how many of us merely tell them we will and then shrug it off? I am just as guilty. I've been in situations when people have called me and gone on and on about the same issue over and over again, and I think, *I don't have time for this. Get over it!* But if these people are our brothers and sisters in the Lord, we must genuinely

start loving them and showing them compassion. I've made it a habit that, if someone asks me to pray for a situation, I do it right then and there, so then if I don't remember about it later, I already prayed and haven't lied to them or shrugged them off.

I had an instance once when my father was hospitalized and we weren't sure what the prognosis would be. My daddy is a very soft spot with me, and this particular instance was the first of many issues we've dealt with physically with him. At the time, I called all the members of the small ministry that I was leading and asked if they would pray for my dad. When I got to the girl who at the time I thought was my best friend in the world, she paused and said, "Yeah, I probably won't pray." I was so hurt by this at the time. Here was this person I thought was a dear friend, pursuing a life after God. It hurt that she said that. By bringing this up, I'm not saying I now hold animosity to her—I don't—but my point is essentially that we tell our brothers and sisters this all the time in the Kingdom by our actions. We just don't usually have the nerve to say it out loud like that. We have to start having compassion for the people around us!

We have to stop having a seared, non-caring attitude toward those around us and start having compassion. Jesus had compassion!

*The Lord is gracious, and full of **compassion**; slow to anger, and of great mercy*
(Psalm 145:8 KJV).

*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with **compassion** on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd (Matthew 9:36 KJV).*

*And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with **compassion** toward them, and He healed their sick (Matthew 14:14 KJV).*

*Then Jesus called his disciples unto Him, and said, I have **compassion** on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way (Matthew 15:32 KJV).*

*So Jesus had **compassion** on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him (Matthew 20:34 KJV).*

*And Jesus, moved with **compassion**, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean (Mark 1:41 KJV).*

*And when the Lord saw her, He had **compassion** on her, and said unto her, Weep not (Luke 7:13 KJV).*

Do you notice there is an ongoing thread here in the ministry of Jesus on the earth? He was compassionate. *Compassion* is defined in the *Microsoft Encarta College Dictionary* as “showing sympathy; showing feelings of sympathy for the suffering of others, often with a desire to help.” Jesus had the desire to help others. He genuinely cared for them. He didn’t just put on a show to make people think He cared—He really did care. If you want the miracles, signs, and wonders to operate in your life, you have to stop being fake and start having compassion.

People can tell who really cares around them and who doesn’t. Having true compassion for people isn’t about the words that are spoken and the actions that are done. Having true compassion is an attitude from the heart that can’t be faked. People can see right through the veneer.

You’ll notice many times in the Bible that whenever it talks about Jesus having compassion, it is a precursor to miracles, signs and wonders happening. In order for us to really begin to see the supernatural outpourings of the Lord like we so desire, we need to start having compassion for the world around us. Is it possible our lack of compassion as church members and leaders is hindering the level that the Holy Spirit will operate in the world? We have to see a fallen world before us before we have a desire to change it. God desires to show the world the supernatural power of His awesomeness. But if we are so caught up in ourselves, how are we, as the

representatives of Jesus on the earth, going to bring that to the people.

WE NEED EACH OTHER

I am very blessed that, in the physical, I have one of the best families in the world. I'll admit I may be biased, and I'll admit, like any family, they have their moments, but one thing they taught me well through example is that no matter what happens in my life they will always be there for me and have my back. There is a level of camaraderie there that is supposed to exist in the Church, but as a whole, it doesn't. I've lived over 1,000 miles from my immediate family for some time now. No matter what I need, if I really need it, they would get in the car or in a plane right now if they had to come down and help me. They have been there for me in my ups and downs in life. If they walked into a place and someone was belittling me, they wouldn't just join in. They wouldn't just keep silent. Those would be fighting words to them, even if I was in the wrong. They would have my back.

While the Church is supposed to be like a family, we've lost this concept as a whole. I can list you countless times when someone told me they were going to do something for me and didn't. I once walked in on someone starting to trash me in a church, and no one knew I was there, yet no one defended me. What has happened to the family in the Body of Christ? We must

unite in these last days like never before if we think we're going to accomplish what God has for us in the Kingdom.

There is a song by Hezekiah Walker called "I Need You to Survive." Here are the lyrics:

*I need you; you need me.
We're all a part of God's Body.
Stand with me; agree with me.
We're all a part of God's Body.
It is His will that every need be supplied.
You are important to me; I need you
to survive.
You are important to me; I
need you to survive.
I pray for you; you pray for me.
I love you; I need you to survive.
I won't harm you with words from
my mouth.
I love you; I need you to survive.
It is His will that every need be supplied.
You are important to me; I
need you to survive.¹*

We mustn't lose sight of the fact that we need each other in the Body of Christ. We are supposed to be a family. We must stop pretending with each other and start acting like it. The world sees our strife and divisions and just laughs. They mock, "See those people?"

They are no different. I don't want to go to that church." We are supposed to be different. We are supposed to be a family that cares about each other and loves each other. We're supposed to have each other's back. Our compassion must not continue to be seared!

Another one of the things that is spoken about Balaam is in Deuteronomy.

*For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired **Balaam** son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you (Deuteronomy 23:4).*

God is referring here to the Moabites wanting to curse the Israelites instead of offering them bread and water. In this instance, He is talking about physical bread and physical water, but this Scripture also has a spiritual application. The bread and water are very symbolic throughout the Bible. Bread is usually either a symbol of Jesus and/or the Word.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me (1 Corinthians 11:23-25 KJV).

*But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not **live** by **bread alone**, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4 KJV).*

The water is typically symbolic in the Bible of the Holy Spirit.

*He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow **rivers** of **living water** (John 7:38 KJV).*

*On the final and climactic day of the Feast, Jesus took His stand. He cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. **Rivers of living water** will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in Me this way, just as the Scripture says." (He said this in regard to the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive. The Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.) (John 7:37 MSG)*

The spiritual parallel to Balaam not offering the Israelites bread and water can be easily understood. People who see those who may not know Jesus and the Holy Spirit are casting judgment upon them instead of sharing the Gospel with them.

Jesus gave us a great commission.

*Go therefore and make **disciples** of **all** the **nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19 NKJV).*

There is a mandate that we must share the Gospel with others. I am not recommending that you shove it down their throats, but I am saying you have to care about the people of this world who are lost and dying and on their way to hell.

I wrote a poem many years ago that I believe sums this up best.

THEY'RE DYING

*The veil,
she tries to hide
from the pain, the hurt, the guilt inside.*

*The man,
he's trying to be
the push, the pull, he longs to be free.*

*The Shadow.
The Dance.
The LSD Trance.*

*The Need,
for Speed.
They're all down on their knees.
They're waiting, they're dying,
they're breaking, they're crying.*

*We see them,
we know
their eyes don't have long to go.*

*A cross,
A hope,
a new reason to cope.*

*Will we tell them?
Will they know
or will we walk by them and let them go?*

We have an obligation to share the Gospel with those around us. We have a mandate from Jesus Christ Himself. I'm not saying it's easy. But wouldn't you want to know if you were going to hell? You're not obligated to force it on them. But you're obligated to tell them and share the Gospel. You may be the only Bible people ever see. I love the quote from Saint Frances of Assisi: "Go out and preach the Gospel, and if you have to, use words." When you really care about people, they'll see it. They'll notice a difference.

When people aren't giving others the "bread and the water" of the Gospel, sometimes it's because they don't have it in themselves to give to others. You can't give out what you don't have yourself. Many people get caught up in doing the work of the ministry, but they forget that they need to constantly work on their own relationship with God, too. Don't be like Balaam. Share the bread and the water. If you find yourself dry, then spend time with God, go to a conference, or maybe it's

time for a fast. Really seek God on how to fill up on your bread and water bank. Do what He tells you to do. Recognize you need it inside of you in order to give it to others. If you're so busy pretending you have it and you don't, then that's not doing anyone any good.

REALLY CARE

We've stopped truly caring about those around us who are dying and going to hell. That's why we don't share the Gospel. Our compassion has been seared so much we don't really care that they're going to hell. Dear Christians, we need to care. We need to begin to ask the Lord for His compassion. We need to begin to rip the scales off of our eyes and see the world as Jesus sees it. God doesn't want one soul in hell. We have to stop pretending to care for people and really begin to care.

I don't pretend to be any better than the typical American in this area. How many of us have heard of a major world disaster and we think, *Oh, well praise God it didn't affect me?* How many times have we seen homeless people on the street, and all we can think of is how they got there and how we can avoid that ever happening to us? How many of us really don't know our neighbors and, furthermore, don't care to know them? How many of us see the little old woman in the grocery store who dropped something and keep walking quicker because we don't want to stop and help her?

How many of us avoid sharing the Gospel with people because it makes us feel uncomfortable? I personally could answer *yes* to several of these. But I have decided it's time for me to start trying to get better at this.

I can't promise I'll start caring overnight, but I have to stop being fake and start being real. When Jesus talked about knowing the prophets by their fruit, somehow I don't think He was referring to the wax fruit you put on your kitchen counter just because it looks pretty. Even bad fruit can be used in a compost heap. Wax fruit is worthless. All it will do is melt when the heat of life gets turned up. Wax fruit won't get you anywhere and will keep you frustrated because there is no substance.

It's time to start being honest with yourself. Are you masquerading because deep down you're afraid of what would happen if people found out what you're like underneath it all? Stop! The root of all of this is fear. God created you to be you. Love who you are! Treasure it! It's OK to be different. It's OK for people to know you're not perfect, and it's OK to step out of the molds of the way you think things have to be. I have news for you—you have no control over things anyway, so you might as well give it all to God. When you make the choice to start being real with yourself and those around you, it will be freeing. As a child, I remember I used to pretend I liked donuts because it was so insane to think anyone didn't like them. OK, I hate donuts. I confess it. It seems like a weird experience, but I just

decided one day that I was done pretending to be something I wasn't. It was as if I stepped into a new room and could hear birds singing. It's OK to step out of the old room. Be who you were created to be. Start loving yourself. God loves you, and He knows what He's doing.

Choosing to let the walls fall down around you can be difficult. But you have to let them go. You have to be real. One day we will all stand before God, and all of our excuses and fake fruit will mean nothing before Him. Let the walls down. Let the fakeness go. Begin to ask God to remove the insensitivity in your heart. Start to really feel again. Once the compassion returns, then you'll see the miracles, signs, and wonders in the Church. Once the compassion is restored, then the Church will start acting like a family. Once the compassion is restored, then we will stop being hypocrites and start doing what God told us to do. Once the compassion is restored, then people will see God in us and desire to come into the family of God. There is a harvest of souls coming into the Kingdom of God. Will the Church be ready?

ENDNOTE

1. Hezekiah Walker, "I Need You to Survive," song lyrics; <http://www.elyrics.net/ead/h/hezekiah-walker-lyrics/i-need-you-to-survive-lyrics.html>; accessed May 6, 2011.

