

**NEW YEAR
LET'S KEEP IT REAL!
REVELATION 3:1-6**

Introduction:

We will get to this Scripture in a minute...but I have a rather long intro today!
When you were growing up did you ever play any imagination games?

Illustration

My older brother, Ronnie, is only two years older than I am. So as we grew up together we played a lot together. We would often play imagination games. I can remember that for Christmas one year I got a tractor that you pedal and my brother got a wrecker that you could pedal.

Right after we got those, the State of Georgia began to work on the Highway 341 in Brunswick, Georgia, that was also known as the New Jesup Highway that ran in front of our house. As we saw those workers working on that highway, my brother and I would pretend that we were working on our driveway. Now we weren't really doing anything but playing. We put forth a lot of effort, but it wasn't real, it was all just play.

Illustration

My two brothers and I were privileged to grow up in Church! I don't ever want to take that for granted. We were blessed! And by the way, we are all still in Church today serving the LORD—ALL PRAISE BE TO HIM!

Our parents were always down at the Church involved in doing something for God. If something was happening down at Church, my parents were actively involved in it! If something needed doing, my parents were involved in seeing that it got done! They didn't have to be cajoled or manipulated into doing something for God that needed to get done. Many times they would see something that needed to be done and they would just do it without anyone ever asking them to do it. And by the way, that is the way it ought to be! You can say Amen right there because it's so anyway!

My Mom, who went home to be with the LORD two years ago, would tell some stories of me and my older brother playing games as she and my Dad would be doing some things down at the Church. One story she tells is how my brother and I would often "play church." I would make believe that I was the song-leader and the entire congregation and my older brother would make-believe that he was the preacher.

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I would imitate my Dad (who was our song leader) in leading the singing and then I would sit down in the congregation.

My brother would imitate our preacher and preach to me and tell me I was going to burn in hell if I didn't repent and get saved. And then we would reverse the roles and he would lead the singing and I'd preach to him. But it wasn't real. It was all just make believe. In fact it didn't become real until February 17, 1971.

Sadly, a lot of what is going on in too many Churches today isn't a great deal better than what my brother and I were doing as kids.

Let me say first of all that I thank God for many fine Believers that I have been privileged to know and serve along side whose faith is genuine and real. Their faith is real both to them and to others who come into contact with them. In other words, they have a good testimony both in the Church and outside of the Church of being a Christian!

I love to be around those kind of people because **they are my kind of people!** Amen! To them **Church isn't a game, it is serious business!** They are **serious about the Christian life!**

They are NOT perfect (none of us are!), but they are pressing toward the goal of becoming more and more like Christ and it shows in their life. When the preaching and teaching of God's word goes forth they are moved by it and they respond accordingly. It is evident in their life that the Lord is changing their lives more and more into His image His image!

I'm talking about **folks whose faith shows by how they conduct themselves both in the congregation as well as out in the world! They are not one thing in Church and something different at home and in the world!**

I praise the LORD that I have been pleased to know many fine Believers like that and I have even been blessed to pastor some in each Church that I have pastored.

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However, there are also those who are in Church, but they are just “*playing Church.*” **It’s not real to them or to those that are playing with them! It’s kind of like it was with my brother and me when we were “*playing Church!*” It’s just a game! It’s not real!**

Listen, Church is NOT supposed to be a game we play! But rather Christ is to be the life that we live!

Generally speaking there are at least four kinds of people in most every Bible preaching Church:

1. There Are Some Folks Who Are Church Attenders.

In every Church we’ve been a part of we’ve had some folks who were **NOT** members of our local assembly, nevertheless, they still came to one or more services of the Church. **And some that fit that definition have been more faithful to both come and give** than some whose names are actually on the Church roll!

We even have some folks who have been faithful attenders for a long time...some for the whole 11+ years of my time here.

Whether you are a part of this local assembly or not, we **try to treat you** as much as possible as if you were a member of our Church and we will continue to do so!

Now, its good to attend Church whether you are a Believing non-member or an unbeliever! I’m not knocking it! Its good to stay close to the Gospel and the preaching of the Word! (e.g. Kent Harvey)

Having said that, I do hope you know that the LORD wants us ALL to be MORE than just Church attenders! If you’ve never been Born Again, the LORD wants you to be! If you have been Born again, the LORD has so much more that He wants for you!

So, There Are Some Folks Who Are Church Attenders...

2. There Are Folks Who Are Church Members.

These are people whose names have been added to the Church roll.

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Unfortunately, even though we try to prevent it, this can even include some who are not true Believers.

Are you a Church member? Christ died for the Church and once we are saved He wants us to be baptized in identification with Him AND to identify with Him by being an integral part of a local Body of His people who have been organized for the purpose of carrying out the Lord’s commands, especially the Great Commission! (A local Church)

The next class of folks might be a part of either of the first two kinds.

3. There Are Church Pretenders—There are two classes of these:

a. Some are Lost—there are some people who attend Church and may even be on the Church roll, who have never been truly saved. They may know “*Church speak*” and know how to act the role of a Christian, but they ain’t one. They may even have made a “*profession of faith*” at some time, but they don’t have any “*possession of faith*” (i.e They aren’t truly born again!)

b. Some are Saved—Some folks who are truly born again never seem to move very far beyond the point of salvation. For the life of me, I don’t understand how a person can be born again, but live such a nominal, mediocre life as a Believer.

Many of these folks can give a good testimony of how they were born again, but their lives inside and/or outside the Church show that they have never grown up. They are satisfied with **mediocre brand of Christianity (By the way, “*mediocre Christianity*” is an oxymoron)**. The folks around these folks—family members, friends and those that they work with and/or socialize with— may even think that their faith is a joke. (They live a lot like Lot! Their “*tent*” is pitched in a direction that it should not be pitched toward!)

It is obvious to those around them that their faith is not very important to them.

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4. There Are Christ Pleasers!

These are people who are born again and show it! They are active Church members who show their Christianity at Church, in the home, on the job, at school or wherever they may be out in the world! They are the kind of person that Christ is looking for each of us to be! THEY ARE REAL!

Listen, God not only wants us TO BE REAL, but He wants us TO KEEP IT REAL and NOT BE like those who are just playing Church!

Here at the beginning of this New Year is a good time for us to do some self-examination and see –Are we KEEPING IT REAL or are we just playing Church?

Read: Revelation 3:1-6

A study of the seven Churches of the Book of the Revelation can be a real eye-opener, as far as what Jesus expects of His Churches, and what He finds!

In studying these seven Churches, you'll find some surprising things going on, that we would not think would be going on in Churches, but they are.

Every Church has problems in it. That's because it is made up of people. Only our foundation, and structure is perfect.

Jesus Christ died to obtain His church – His bride – His people. He expects us to be:

1. Alive – a living organism, not an organization.
2. Supernatural.
3. Full of faith and confidence in Him, not ourselves.
4. Sound – real – not fake "Christians" - not counterfeits - not hypocrites.

When we allow ourselves to just ACT out our Christianity, instead of LIVING BY IT, then we need to REPENT and get back to being the BRIDE Jesus loved!

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This Church in Sardis had a name that they lived, but they were dead. Just as Christ knew their works, He knows our works!

Just as Christ was not pleased with that Church, He is not pleased with those who emulate them.

Just as Christ called on them to remember what they were supposed to be and to repent, He calls on us to remember what we are supposed to be, and if need be, to repent!

Let me share some things that will help us **KEEP IT REAL** and ensure that we are what Christ would have us to be:

I. TO KEEP IT REAL WE MUST FIRST MAKE SURE THAT WE ARE REAL! (Matthew 7:21-23)

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves...

Have you truly repented of your sin and trusted in the provision of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary alone for your salvation?

Acts 16:30-31–“...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

Ephesians 2:8-10–“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Do YOU profess a good profession?

TO KEEP IT REAL WE MUST FIRST BE SURE WE ARE REAL...

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**II. TO KEEP IT REAL WE MUST WALK A REAL WALK!
(i.e. A CONSISTENT FAITH WALK!) (Colossians 2:6-8)**
We've heard the phrase "*Don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk!*"

A. A Consistent Walk Is A Faith Walk!

- 1. We Get Saved By Grace Through Faith!**
- 2. We Must Also Walk By Grace Through Faith!**

B. A Consistent Walk Is A Pure Walk!

1 John 2:6– "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

1 Peter 1:15-16– "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

C. A Consistent Walk Is A Persistent Walk!

1 Corinthians 15:58– "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

D. A Consistent Walk Is A Progressive Walk! (i.e. Growing)

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

III. TO KEEP IT REAL WE MUST PRESERVE A REAL CLOSE FELLOWSHIP!

A. We Must Not Lose Fellowship With The LORD!

1 John 1:3– "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

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1 John 1:6-7– "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

James 4:7-8 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

**B. We Must Not Lose Fellowship With Our Brethren!
(Philippians 2:1-4)**

Romans 12:10– "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"

1 Thessalonians 4:9– "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

Hebrews 13:11– "Let brotherly love continue."

1 Peter 3:8-9– "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: 9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

John 13:34-35– "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

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Conclusion

Where do you stand in your walk with the LORD?

Are you real?

Have you begun to walk in earnest with Christ or maybe you have just been playing Church all along?

TO KEEP IT REAL WE MUST FIRST MAKE SURE WE ARE REAL!

If you have begun to walk with Him, are you keeping it real?

TO KEEP IT REAL WE MUST WALK A REAL WALK!

(i.e. A CONSISTENT FAITH WALK!)

Is your walk a faith walk?

Is your walk pure walk?

Is your walk persistent walk?

Is your walk progressive walk? (Are you growing?)

TO KEEP IT REAL WE MUST PRESERVE A CLOSE FELLOWSHIP!

Are you walking in close fellowship with the LORD?

Or did you somewhere along the way stop walking in integrity and start playing Church? If so, you need to realize that the LORD is not pleased with that.

Get back to where you need to be with the LORD!

Are you walking in close fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

If there are strained relationships with brothers or sisters in Christ realize that we can't keep it real until we make things right with one another!