

Summary

This sermon addresses the question 'How can I know that my faith is authentic?' by exploring the concept of authenticity as alignment between what is seen and unseen, said and done. The pastor explains that authentic faith means knowing that you know that you are known by God. Drawing from the writings of John and Paul, the sermon presents two key ways to recognize authentic faith: through obedience expressed in love and through the witness of the Holy Spirit. The message emphasizes that assurance of faith is important because it enables free love in service to God and inspires joyful worship. However, assurance can fade due to spiritual warfare or ignoring the Holy Spirit's guidance. When assurance wavers, believers should request assurance from God, repent of known sin, and remember God's covenant faithfulness, particularly through remembering their baptism.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with open hearts and minds, seeking to understand what it means to have authentic faith in You. We ask that You would speak to each person in this group today and help us to be receptive to what You want to teach us. Remove any distractions or preconceived notions that might prevent us from hearing Your voice clearly. Help us to be honest with ourselves and with one another as we explore these important questions about faith and assurance. Guide our discussion and draw us closer to You and to each other. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one thing you do that makes you feel most like 'yourself' or most authentic?

Key Verses

- 1 John 2:3-6
- 1 John 3:24
- 1 John 4:13
- Romans 8:15-17
- Galatians 5:22-25

Questions

- How would you define 'authentic faith' in your own words, and why do you think authenticity matters so much in our relationship with God?
- The sermon mentions that we live in a 'critical age' where everything is questioned. How does this cultural climate affect your confidence in your faith?
- John writes that we can know our faith is authentic through 'obedience expressed through love.' What does this look like practically in daily life?
- How have you experienced the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? What does that feel like?
- The pastor mentioned that assurance can fade due to spiritual warfare or ignoring the Holy Spirit. Which of these do you struggle with more, and why?
- When you go through seasons of doubt about your faith, what helps restore your confidence and assurance?
- How does understanding that we are adopted children of God (not slaves) change the way we approach our relationship with Him?
- The sermon emphasizes remembering our baptism as a way to recall God's faithfulness. What are some other ways we can remember and celebrate God's covenant faithfulness to us?

Life Application

This week, take time each morning to remember your identity as God's adopted child. When you wake up, before checking your phone or starting your day, spend a few minutes in prayer acknowledging that you are loved, forgiven, and secure in God's family. If you notice the Holy Spirit prompting you to do something - whether it's showing kindness to someone, confessing a sin, or serving in some way - respond immediately rather than putting it off. Pay attention to how this practice affects your sense of assurance and authenticity in your faith.

Key Takeaways

- Authentic faith is characterized by alignment between what we believe and how we live, with no significant gap between our inner reality and outward expression
- We can know our faith is authentic through two primary ways: obedience expressed through love and the witness of the Holy Spirit within us

- Assurance of faith enables us to serve God out of security and love rather than trying to earn His favor
- When assurance fades due to spiritual warfare or ignoring the Holy Spirit, we should request assurance from God, repent of known sin, and remember God's covenant faithfulness
- Our relationship with God is ultimately based on His faithfulness to us, not our performance or feelings

Ending Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for this time of discussion and reflection on what it means to have authentic faith. We are grateful that our assurance doesn't depend on our own strength or perfection, but on Your unchanging love and faithfulness toward us. Help us to live this week with confidence in our identity as Your adopted children. When doubts arise, remind us to turn to You rather than relying on our own understanding. Give us courage to respond promptly to the Holy Spirit's promptings and to live out our faith through acts of love and service. May our lives be marked by the authenticity that comes from knowing we are securely held in Your hands. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who made our adoption possible. Amen.