

**Begin Again**  
**Week #5: Real and authentic**

To begin, we need to **reset the target** or **secure the foundations**. We can't just decide to do something or shoot the arrow into the drywall and then **draw the bull's-eye** around it. We can't **simply ignore the foundation** and start building an addition onto the side or a second floor.

- We want to be **outwardly focused**. Accepting Jesus' mission as our mission.
- We want to develop people **who represent Jesus** out there. They are ambassadors, or **human bridges**.
- We become a church of **disciples who make disciples**, not programs that we hope, by default, will make disciples.
- We want to **build bridges into our community so that people can walk across them and find their way back to God**. Like **Cultivate at the Midland Mall and a new campus in Beaverton**. By the way, we are set to launch on November 23.

These are all good things, noble, outwardly focused, **but if the culture of Eagle Ridge Church of God is defensive, consumer oriented, ingrown, focused on feeding the people here first, focused on our comfort** because we know everyone, then what will happen? **When a vision of what we could be and a strategy to get there comes into conflict with an established culture to the contrary, here's what happens.**

**Culture always wins.** It's not even a fair fight. It's the freshman football team playing the varsity at Dow high or Midland High or Bullock Creek.

**"Culture eats strategy (vision) for breakfast!" Peter Drucker**

**One of the ways to confront and change the culture is to define key values that represent the culture we want.** Then you make the attitudes and behaviors reflect those values. That's what we call **core values**.

Example...Hospital in **Colorado Springs**. One of their core values had to be service. Everyone is there to serve our customers or guests. How do I know? Because there were a list of commitments that scrolled across a screen with their mission statement with this phrase, "At \_\_\_\_\_ hospital we never point." I left the waiting room looking for the restroom; an employee in a lab coat stopped and asked if he could help me. That man stopped where he was going and walked me to the men's room.

The first core value we want to permeate our culture is **Real**. People who are **authentic**, not pretending or trying to **manage** how people see them: You know, real.

**Everyone says they want to be real**. People **criticize the church** as being full of hypocrites who aren't real. **Millennials are staying away** in part because of this perception.

**It sounds easy, but it's harder than it looks**. Some attempts at being real are just people trying to demonstrate **who they want people to think they are**.

Here's some questions about what it means to be real in our culture.

- Is it saying or **posting** every thought?
- Is it expressing every **emotion**, regardless of the fallout?
- Is it **speaking your mind** without a filter?
- Is it **dressing** differently from the mainstream?
- Is it listening to **indie** music?
- Is it **finding a cause** and diving into it? (meet my cat, she's a shelter rescue)
- Is it a lot of "heart to hearts" in a **coffee shop**?
- Is it that you must have a **dark past**?

**Those are some of the things that people are tempted to focus on in an attempt to be real, not phony.**

**Listen to Paul**, writing to a new church in Corinth and see if this is a guy being real. **It's different** from what we think is "real". And it's not what is described as being real or authentic.

**But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor. 12:9-10**

**In America, power is powerful and weak is weakness.** Those two are like **oil and water**, they just don't mix. But Paul says that he boasts about his weaknesses. He goes on to say that when he is weak, it is an opportunity for not his power to be perfected, but God's. **That is a far cry from trying to use makeup or polish or bondo or grout to cover those up.** Paul flaunts his cracks.

**If we are going to create a culture** where we are real then it begins with...**Exposing my brokenness.**

**Marie and I were making the facebook video** for this week. I encourage you to share those videos; that's why we put them out there. But I was sitting, and she was recording it from a standup tripod. When I looked at the video, there were some reflective surfaces exposed. And when I turned to look down at my Ipad, there was a thin spot revealed.

**If this were a Hollywood movie**, that would have been reshot to cover up all of that. Tom Cruise is like 60 but he looks like he's thirty-five on screen. **I've earned that gray and loss of hair. There's mileage. There's wear and tear. It's part of who I am. It's real.**

**There is a part of me that would like to manage how you perceive me instead of exposing my brokenness.** Will people follow my lead if they know too much about me?

**I used to say that I have bouts of, or from time to time. Now I say, "I struggle with depression." I said when Quinten was killed that I struggled with anger. I still have anger over Quinten's death. That is real, I'm not propping up a false self or façade.**

**The congregational level...**

**There are things you need to know about me or I'm not being real. You can't know me and I can't be an example of God's grace. My preaching would lack credibility. And I steal from you the opportunity to pray for me.**

**The relational level, life on life...**

**In my builder group and with a confidant I would be more specific about that depression and how it is affecting me as well as how the anger is revealing itself in my life. That is real. I'm not putting on a façade.**

- **With these people who I am sharing my life, I go to a deeper level of openness.**
- **There are things those people need to know about me, or I'm not being real.**

**You need both. You need to come here even if you don't believe all of this and that's ok. "I have some real doubts." I'm not sure about Jesus as the only way. You also need to share your life with people and talk about your brokenness on a different level. That is why some of you refuse to get into a small group, because you don't want that type of real.**

**To be phony is to have a preconceived idea of how I'm expected to act. Then managing people's perception of me. I need to be viewed as being ok. Being in lockstep with everyone else who believes.**

- **"Marie, let's shoot that scene again without exposing my thinning hair." Get the camera down lower. Oh no, then you'll see right up my nose!**

**Here's what I don't mean by real.** Because I know some of **you men** in particular are saying, no thank you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l61NE0eqkw>

**Jesus did both too.** He **preached with credibility**, with openness. And then, around the fire, he gave even more of himself to those who he was going to send out. **That's how Jesus made disciples, by being real.**

Creating a culture where people can be real means that we display our brokenness and don't try to cover it up, **but also means...Allowing God to be honored by it.**

**What did Paul say about his weaknesses, his brokenness?** It's the broken spots that are weak. **He says, "that stuff that most people want to hide is the opportunity for God to be honored and glorified.**

**That thing you hide is the best thing you got going for the Kingdom.** That crack you cover up with makeup is what God wants to use. **God's power won't be mistaken for your education, your skill, your intelligence, your expertise, your natural giftedness...It will be clearly God's power on display in this broken world where God takes garbage and makes it into art.**

**When we expose brokenness in the context of God's church, we are offering ourselves to God so that he can make something wonderful in someone else with what is broken in my life.** Others can learn how we live for Christ and can be encouraged to be real too.

**People need permission to be real by those who are leading them.**

**"Shouldn't we just focus on our strengths and then thank God for them? He could be honored that way, right?"** It's just too tempting to hear the cheers and make that stuff about me.

In order to create a culture where people are encouraged to be real we must expose our brokenness, allow God to be honored by it and by...**Living with the tension.**

Do you see the tension in a culture where people are open with their brokenness?

- That makes people uncomfortable

**When we display our brokenness, there is a temptation to then give yourself a label that also can become a false self. Yes, part of what God wants to do is to use my brokenness, but he also is setting out to heal it, to put things right. If I say, "Well this is just the way I am." I can end up discounting what God wants to transform me into.**

- **I can wallow** in my brokenness. That's not what it means to be real.
- **"I'm an emotional person** so I'll continue to hurt people because I don't even attempt to in love, reign that in.

**There's tension between exposing my brokenness and allowing for God's power.**

Here's Paul. <sup>22</sup> **throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.** <sup>23</sup> **Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.** <sup>24</sup> **Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:22-24**

This tension can lead me to say, **"this is just the way I am. God accepts me this way."** Yes, and no. He accepts you the way you are with your sin (which is part of your brokenness), but he **loves you enough to not leave you that way. So you are broken, but you are also being set free. That is just as real as your brokenness.**

I found this quote in Relevant Magazine. I think it captures the tension of being real in our brokenness, but also real in the person God is making us into.

**Thus, authenticity in the church is the quality of our exposure of brokenness and adornment in God's grace. An authentic person is one who is both privately and publicly putting off the old self and, by God's grace, putting on the renewed self. Steven McAlpin, Relevant Magazine Dec. 16, 2014**

**Being real is saying that I am putting off my old self and putting on my new as God reveals old stuff to me.**

**There's another tension people that when they come into our fellowship with all kinds of brokenness, that the Bible calls sin. That tension can push us to "relativism," where everything is ok, there is no sin, or the other direction, which is judgmentalism.**

**<sup>37</sup> "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven..."<sup>41</sup> "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>42</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Luke 6:37 & 41-42**

**Openness to people being real is not in conflict with teaching a biblical lifestyle, but there is tension.**

**Accepting people, as they are, where they are in their brokenness, separation from God, disobedience, rebellion, or simple ignorance is not the same as saying there is no sin.**

**If we believe in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit and His sense of timing. It is about coming as you are and not resisting what the Holy Spirit wants to do in you and how he wants to use your brokenness.**

**It's not just who I am, but who I'm becoming (transformation). And it's the same for others who come into the church living in sin. It's not just who they are, but who they are becoming in Christ.**

**The next "R" we will focus a little more on not "resisting the Spirit" (s) transforming power in our lives.**

**In order to create a culture where people are encouraged to be real, we must expose our brokenness, allow God to be honored by it, live with the**

tension of where I am and where God is taking me, and finally...**Extend grace and patience to other broken people.**

**We want a culture that creates a safe place for people to figure it out, begin to hear Jesus, be transformed in his timing.**

**Ultimately to be real, authentic, is to expose my brokenness, tell of how God is being glorified in it and how he is transforming you into someone who looks like Jesus while directing other broken people to Jesus.**

- **What does that sound like? A bridge that someone can use to find your way back to God.**
- **Being real encourages others to do the same and that's where transformation can happen.**
- **Using makeup or managing how others perceive me will also encourage others to put on their masks.**

**(Puzzle piece pic)**

**Do I think our culture is really messed up and far from what we are talking about? No, but there is always a temptation to circle the wagons, play defense, and take care of me and mine. Our core values are to push us in the right direction and fight against sliding back.**

**Steps of Obedience.**

**Renew your mind with 2 Cor. 12:9-10 and Ephesians 4:22-24**

Figure out a way to feed on these verses regularly in the next week. Have a hard time sitting down and reading the Bible. Start here. Read these each day and ask, "God what are you saying to me through your word?" And then ask, "What do I need to do in order to be obedient to what you are trying to say to me. Read it in different translations.

Let's read these together.

**But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my**



weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor. 12:9-10

<sup>22</sup> throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. <sup>23</sup> Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup> Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:22-24

How might God want to use my brokenness for his glory and for the good of others?