

I'M TIRED OF FAKING IT IN CHURCH!

Dear Dr. Phillips,

I cannot seem to drag myself to church anymore. I just can't stand the hypocrisy. Every Sunday, I walk in with great awe and I have to fake my conversation with everyone. The sad thing is—inside I am deeply depressed and no one even notices. If they are so spiritual, why don't they notice?

Signed, Tired of Being a Fake

Dear Tired of Being a Fake,

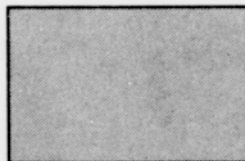
You didn't say whether or not you had accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. This is the primary reason you become a part of the church. You will notice that I said "a part of the church." Becoming or being a member of a church is not the key to having joy in one's life or, in your case, being real. We have often heard people say and even watched them as they "joined a church." You can join a church and not change, but when you become a part of the church you cannot remain the same. Nothing ever said in your question about seeking a relationship with the Head of the church: our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Joining a church is not like joining a club where the membership has similar social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Joining the church makes you a part of a group made up of people of dissimilar backgrounds who are not connected because the entertainment is good or even because they are good. The agenda is not fake, it is real. The program is not what holds them together. It is not a unit of flesh—it is a oneness of spirit, having the same bloodline. Everyone in "The Church" has the same Father. There are several reasons why you might feel like a fake and you should consider the reasons why you are in this church. Ask

yourself the following questions. Be honest with your evaluation of yourself. When you are, you will discover why being in this church does not meet your needs.

1. Have you completely surrendered your life to Christ?
2. Do you have a personal relationship with the Savior? Do you spend time in the Presence of God—praying, confessing meditating, and listening?
3. Do you spend time reading the Word of God which is your directive? Do you understand what you read and how the Spirit of God operates within you?
4. What are your motives for attending this church? Do you go because it is a tradition in your family? Did you join because you felt it was the right thing to do or because you wanted the support of faithfilled people?
5. Are your expectations of the church folk not being met? Oftentimes, we want church people to be perfect when God chose and forgave us all in our imperfections. Perfection is not pleasing everyone, but it is an unconditional love that accepts each person as they are. Real love is non-judgmental. Each member of a church is in a certain developmental stage and growing.

If you feel fake in church, then perhaps you are there for the wrong reasons. You don't have to be super-spiritual: God chooses ordinary people as his Ambassadors. Church is not in a building. It should be in you and you must carry it wherever you go. Check your relationship with Christ and find out if you know Him or simply know about Him. He makes the difference between the real thing and the fake. ■

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