



Everyone here has, at some point, experienced something like this before: where you expected something to look one way on the outside but, on the inside, you experienced something totally different from what you anticipated.

That was me in high school when it came to my faith. I grew up in the church. Everyone knew me as “the church kid,” but in reality, I was fake. It wasn’t until my senior year that I began to take my faith seriously, and I wish I hadn’t waited so long.

[Teaching Note: Show a picture of a coffin.]

We have all seen one of these. From the outside, they actually look really nice, almost like a piece of furniture. But if you were to lift it up, it contains a dead person. The outside looks good, but on the inside, something is rotting.

Jesus talked about these kinds of people in the Bible. So, we are going to explore what He said from Matthew chapter 23.

In Jesus’ day, there was a group of people who looked a certain way on the outside, and Jesus said they were like coffins. They looked good and religious on the outside, but on the inside, they were rotting.

Matthew 23:27-28

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

This is what Jesus is saying to the fake people in His day: "Hey, you look a certain way on the outside, but on the inside—like a casket—you are full of dead men’s bones." Why is that? They were obsessed with appearing like they had it all together. They were fixated on looking a certain way. It’s literally like they were polishing the outside of the coffin to make it clean, but on the inside, everything was dead and rotting.

What I want to talk about tonight is that for some of us, this is the reality of our relationship with Jesus. Jesus was talking to the religious people, and essentially He said, "Your religion is like this casket. From the outside, it might look squeaky clean, but on the inside, it's dead."

This is what I want to look at tonight when we talk about being fake, where we project ourselves to the world like life is one way, but really, it's not.

Here's how I want to approach it. I want to talk about fakeness as if it were a disease. I want to discuss the signs and symptoms of being fake and, more importantly, the solution to it.

I believe there are three groups of people listening:

1. The first group: you have had a real-life experience with Jesus before, but over time, things have faded.
2. The second group: you grew up in church. You know all the right things to say. You know what to put in your bio on Instagram. But on the inside, you feel like this is fake. *That was me*. I wish I had known that wasn't true. I wish I hadn't faked it.
3. The third group: church isn't really your thing, and you have no idea if this is real or not. I'm glad you're here. I just want you to listen because maybe you're not a Jesus follower simply because you've known people who say they are Christians but act like hypocrites. Hang out for a bit.

For all of us, I want you to ask yourself: "Am I fake?" Are you like the people Jesus talked about—like this coffin? On the outside, you look squeaky clean, but on the inside, you're dead.

I'm hoping that as I'm talking tonight, you'll examine yourself and see if these three symptoms are present in your life because they were in mine all throughout junior high and high school.

1. No Peace

One of the symptoms of living a coffin-Christian life, where you fake being alive on the outside but are dying on the inside, is that you don't have peace.

[Teaching Note: Insert a personal story to illustrate the point.]

At a family party a few months back, I heard my little cousins talking in the other room about me. One of them asked, “Do you think Justin’s tattoos are real, or does he just draw them on every morning?” They wondered if I woke up every day and applied temporary tattoos in the exact same spots to maintain the *appearance* of tattoos.

If that were true, it would be exhausting. I wouldn’t be able to keep that going for long.

For so many of us, maybe this is the reality of our relationship with Jesus. We are exhausted and have no peace because we are spending way too much energy trying to be someone on the outside who we are not on the inside.

Maybe for you, coming here—or coming to church—feels exhausting. If you’ve been faking it, you have to be tired. It’s exhausting. You have no peace.

2. No Passion

I am *not* passionate about country music. I just can’t do it.

But if I were to wear a cowboy hat, a flannel tucked into my jeans, a belt buckle, and boots, I could *look* like I love country music. But on the inside... I would be dead inside.

I could force passion on the outside, but if it’s not who I really am on the inside, it’s going to show eventually.

It’s the same with Christianity. You can force yourself to come to church, read your Bible, and pray because you know it’s what you are *supposed* to do. But if it’s not who you are on the inside, it’s going to feel forced instead of passionate.

So, the second symptom of being fake is a lack of passion.

3. No Power

Like a car without an engine, it might look good, but it goes nowhere.

If you don’t have the Holy Spirit in you, you have no power.

2 Timothy 3:2-5

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