



# TOTALLY AUTHENTIC

**Theme Resource Pack**  
**June 2025**  
**(1 June - 5 July)**

## Introduction

You have got nothing to prove and everything to gain! You are totally authentic!

You do not have to prove yourself to God. You are marked already with the maker's seal, the Holy Spirit already walks with you, knows your heart, knows you at a cellular and a soul level. You are a 100% original, 100% the genuine article. We are living through times that are a bit of a double edged sword. Unstable, unpredictable and unprecedented... and yet constantly updating with new information, analysis and insights. We know more than ever what we don't know!

There's a lot of noise and it's easy to lose ourselves in it, to forget who we are, to feel flimsy and insubstantial in the face of current events and global crises. In arts and culture and across society there is a hunger for authenticity, for something genuine to cling to in the face of news overload, sensationalism, and disinformation. It can be hard not to feel like just another cog in a wheel, or another line of code in an algorithm — pushed around by business interests, big tech, media personalities and politicians. Indeed sometimes we literally find ourselves having to prove our humanity in the face of machines wanting to ensure that we are not frauds. We are increasingly drawn to the authentic and genuine, both within ourselves and in the world. To prove that we're still here, that we still matter, that we have a stake in the planet. That we're not just another voter, or consumer, or user, or data point.

But God already knows you're authentic. That you're unique.

Because God made you that way.

How can we let this truth ground us in these uncertain times? As we rediscover in Ephesians 1: 3-14, we *already* belong, we are *already* accepted, we are *already* being gathered in. We *already* have our humanity as a gift from God! The approval, esteem, recognition, personhood, we strive for is something we can already find in Christ. How does it change our lives when we begin with the principle that there is already a place where we belong, where we are understood, where we are loved, where we matter? How can this help us to shape authentic communities of love and respect where others can discover that they belong, that we are understood, that they are loved?

## Weekly Overview

- The longing that never goes away
- The revolution will be subtitled
- What is integrity anyway?
- Always more questions
- A genuine person

## Format

Every month we have a God-given theme delving into different aspects and areas of faith. Over the course of 2025 these themes connect and take us on a faith journey out into the wonders of life with Jesus. Our themes shape our Daily Worship, live streams and all sorts of other creative things we get up to! Each week runs Sunday - Saturday and each has a series of daily Bible readings and prompts for reflection.

# The longing that never goes away (Week 1, 1 June)

**Introduction:** It is human nature to seek guidance and direction — it's an essential survival trait from birth and as we grow older there are no shortage of people and things we can turn to. (For some that is all that 'God' is, an abstract concept that we can point all that longing towards. A symptom of human development, a quirk of psychology, nothing more.) We can fill this longing with all sorts of things, but it never goes away. This makes us vulnerable to those who would manipulate us, and yet often the things that we elevate above all else are *good* things — great things even! Family, artistry, altruism, activism, scientific endeavour. These are all wonderful things — that God celebrates in us — but whenever we worship some such thing to the exclusion of all else, the cracks will start to show. Both good and bad motivations can easily become idols — giving us standards of perfection we can't hope to live up to. But in the person of Christ is a selfless love that is big enough to take our longing and go on loving us back.

**Setting the scene:** A neolithic scene of someone carving... a smart speaker.

**Seeds to sow:** What does the word 'idol' make you think of? What do you associate with it?

- 1. Psalm 97:1-7 What image do you serve?** Have we made idols out of success and achievement? Do we serve the image of the perfect family? Or the image of the model employee? Do we serve the almost messianic promises of big tech? Do we serve the image of a political ideal?
- 2. Exodus 20: 3-6 Carving Images 2.0** What are the tools we use now to carve idols? While we still have chisels and hammers we have expanded the toolbox. How are we using AI, social media, digital voice assistants, VR, next day delivery, drones, face recognition, the list goes on — to carve objects of worship and adoration that supplant God in our worship?
- 3. Psalm 115: 4-8 Uncanny valley, the promise and the peril.** The psalmist slams idols with their silent, frozen expressions. But what do we do when we start to idolise technology that has an uncanny ability to see and hear us, speak to us even? How do we embrace the promises of tech while being mindful of the peril of falling into the familiar trap of creating our own gods?
- 4. Isaiah 44: 9-10 Absurd satire or everyday reality?** Isaiah wants us to see the cognitive dissonance at work here. The same tree that he was merrily chopping into firewood has suddenly become his master. Isaiah says 'Look at this eejit' But are we not the eejit? Do we not devote vast resources on pointless schemes that end up controlling us, trapping us in our own creations?
- 5. Isaiah 45: 18-25 Gods that cannot save them.** Many are the idols or gods of security we establish to keep us safe which ultimately fail us. But if we say that God saves us, that God hears us, why do our cries for help often seem to go unheard? How do we trust God as the genuine article when we've been let down, hurt or abandoned? This question doesn't have a quick or an easy answer.
- 6. 1 Corinthians 10: 23-33 Yes/No, Both/And, Partake/Abstain** How do we stop ourselves wittingly and unwittingly contributing to the worship of idols? Maybe the answer is less a strict code and more fine tuning a sense to know when to participate and when to withdraw.
- 7. John 17: 20-26 The Genuine Article.** One of the ways the world gets to know God is through Christ's followers. Not because we are trustees of an arcane, privileged knowledge, but because Christ's love is alive in us and spills out of us.

## The revolution will be subtitled (Week 2, 8 June, Pentecost)

**Introduction:** The revolution may not be televised but we do need to put the subtitles on! This week we celebrate Pentecost — a theological, multilingual revolution that shocked and comforted, confused and inspired and goes on shocking, comforting, confusing and inspiring us!

**Setting the scene:** Subtitles racing to catch up with a crowd of voices praising God in countless languages.

**Seeds to sow:** How could you use another language to praise God this week? Perhaps you could learn a simple prayer in another language (ideally one you don't already speak) or could read a translation of the Lord's prayer in a different language?

- 1. Acts 2: 1-11 Put the subtitles on!** Authenticity here is multi-vocal, multi-lingual, multi-cultural! This is *monotheism* not *monoculture*. Real authentic truth is not tied down by one language, truth is beyond language and it can be expressed in all languages.
- 2. Acts 2: 12-13 'Right, shut this down!'** A common reaction to peaceful revolution — in this case the Holy Spirit speaking love — is to try and shut it down! Do the sneerers really think the apostles are drunk? Or is it a pretext to get them to move along? To get them to haul their wheesht?
- 3. Acts 2: 14 -21 Poetry and prophecy.** Peter speaks poetry and prophecy into the drama of the moment. Into the multilingual explosion of Pentecost Peter rises to the occasion. In our strive to be authentic and relatable do we sometimes miss the vivid and poetic and fail to capture the imagination of those who hear us?
- 4. Genesis 11:1-9 Rewind, subtitles on!** We keep the subtitles on but rewind to an earlier scene, from the Old Testament. The story tells us that monotheism — one God — is not the same as monoculture. Monoculture is harmful in nature — upsetting the balance and resilience of ecosystems. God can see the danger in the impulse for empire and world domination. This is Pentecost the Prequel, where rather than giving the gift of understanding, we are given the gift of confusion.
- 5. 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23 All things to all people?** So how authentic is Paul? If he keeps being all things to all people?
- 6. Ephesians 4: 1-7 One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism... and countless languages...** Unity is not everyone looking the same and sounding the same. A heap of red thread piled up is not united, it is in fact a tangle, a snarl up, ready to happen. Red, yellow, and blue threads woven together to tell a bigger story — that's unity. Our unity gets its meaning through our difference, not in spite of it.
- 7. Ephesians 4: 11-16 Five words to live by.** 'Speaking the truth in love.' (Of course in other languages this same sentence could be less or more than five words!) How do we live authentic lives? By pairing love with truth and communicating it. Truth without love is cold and will freeze us. Love without truth is scalding and will burn us. Love and truth unshared will wither and wilt. They all need to work together in motion.

## What is integrity anyway? (Week 3, 15 June)

**Introduction:** Often tied up with our feelings about authenticity is how we understand integrity. Sometimes we use authenticity as a shortcut to integrity. Living with integrity is consistently doing the right thing, the selfless thing, the fair thing, the just thing, the merciful thing. Which is hard work! It's easier to pose at authenticity: "I'm just an everyday guy", "I'm just like one of you", "I just say it like I see it", "I call a spade a spade", "I'm just saying what everyone else is thinking." But authenticity and integrity are not the same thing. You can be an authentic jerk! All people of integrity are authentic — true to themselves and their principles — but not all authentic people (or people who pose as genuine, unvarnished, authentic people) have integrity. The difference is wisdom.

**Setting the scene:** Stars shining brightly in constellations above.

**Seeds to sow:** What does someone of integrity sound like in conversation?

- 1. Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 Wisdom, personified.** Being wise is not so much about spouting profundities, and more about listening to the one who calls us, who has been calling to us since the beginning.
- 2. Psalm 8 Conscious of consciousness.** Not only are we conscious, we are conscious that we are conscious, and we are conscious of that! What does it mean to live with integrity in the world conscious of our privileged sentient position in that world?
- 3. Romans 5: 1-5 Character produces hope.** Part of having integrity is appreciating the enormous truth that Paul writes about here. There are roads we have not walked down, words we have not heard, worlds we have never visited. Just as we have been shaped by our own suffering, which has produced our own endurance, character and hope — the same is true for everybody else. While we are never limited to our personal history, it undeniably contributes to our sense of self. We should never limit other people to their history — but we should respect that they are their own trajectory from suffering to hope.
- 4. John 16:12-15 We are not left to our own devices!** God didn't drop the Bible on the world and walk away. Christ did not come among us on an internship and then return to heaven to take over the family business. Our instinct for truth, our dissatisfaction with lies and insincerity does not come from nowhere! The Holy Spirit guides us! God has not left us, Christ is still near, the Spirit is with us!
- 5. James 1: 22-27 Forgetting our own reflection.** We are made in the image of God, reflections of the love at the heart of the universe... and yet we forget our own reflection don't we?
- 6. Philippians 2: 1-3 Humility or futility?** The choice is there — humility or futility!
- 7. Philippians 2: 14-18 Ready to shine like stars?** Stars shine all the brighter in the darkness of night! In a time of inauthenticity and dubious claims we can shine in our authenticity as God's children.

## Always more questions (Week 4, 22 June)

**Introduction:** Part of being an authentic Christian is wrestling with doubt and ongoing questions. In the same way physical pain is giving the body important information — doubt informs our faith and it can help develop it. The Bible is not a straightforward manual for life, and Christianity does not offer a 10 stage programme to enlightenment. What it *is* is a relationship. And like any relationship, we go on asking questions and discovering more about each other.

**Setting the scene:** The quiet after the storm, sitting in a cave, deafened by silence.

**Seeds to sow:** How would you describe 'faith' to someone who had never heard the word before?

- 1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a Where do we hear God?** It is human nature to look for God in the tumult, in the earthquake, in the fire... but it is also human nature to find God in the silence. To enter that place where we ask God questions and God asks questions of us.
- Psalm 43 Questioning God, questioning ourselves.** This psalmist begins questioning God and ends questioning himself. This is often our experience of coming to the Bible isn't it? We bring all these expectations and when we don't get the answers we are looking for we either rail against the Bible or rail against ourselves. What's fascinating is that this very dynamic is played out IN the Bible itself. This is a clue that we are to have a rich ongoing relationship of discovery with the Bible.
- Isaiah 65:1-9 Repeating the same questions.** The same issues of what it means to live with integrity — to live with God and one another — have been going round and round for millennia. Is it comforting that we are asking some of the same questions — that we are not so different from our forebears — or is it disturbing that we've not moved on? Why don't some questions seem to get answered once and for all, why do God's people keep messing up? Where is the hope?
- Galatians 3: 23-29 Nothing to prove? Everything to gain?** We don't have to strive to prove ourselves as genuine — we are already 100% authentic through Christ! How does it change how we live, if we start from the basis that we have nothing to prove?
- Romans 12: 9-13 Is our love genuine?** Does it hold on to the good? Is it mutual, enthusiastic, hopeful, patient, perseverant, generous?
- Romans 12: 14-18 Are we weeping with those who weep?** Are we genuinely listening to one another, tonally sensitive, practicing empathy? Are Christians known as people who weep with those who weep today?
- Romans 12: 19-21 So piling burning coals is a good thing?** Meeting evil with evil just ratchets up the pain, but when we overcome evil with good we are changing the script, disarming our enemy, perhaps even shaming them to a change of heart.

## A genuine person (Week 5, 29 June)

**Introduction:** The approval, esteem, recognition, and personhood, we strive for is something we can already find in Christ. How does it change our lives when we begin with the principle that there is already a place where we belong, where we are understood, where we are loved, where we matter? How does it inform how we think about freedom, redemption, God's call, and living a meaningful life?

**Setting the scene:** Standing in a field, leaning on a plough, the point of decision.

**Seeds to sow:** A large part of this theme has been about appreciating our own genuineness, our authenticity as creations of God. But what about appreciating the genuineness of others? Even when we know people are putting up a front, projecting something they aren't, how can we prayerfully remember the genuine person underneath? Worthy of love as one of God's children.

- 1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21 Letting go, blessing others, setting off.** Here we see a threefold experience of calling. 1, Letting go of what we have and where we have been, 2, taking the opportunity to bless others where we have been, and 3, setting off into the new experience. Do we often skip stage 2?
- Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20 Remembering redemption.** An important part of reclaiming our personhood is calling out our experience of God to one another to keep one another rooted.
- 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14 Taking up the mantle and crossing over.** One way of reading this text is a final lesson that Elijah is giving Elisha. Perhaps Elijah is worried that Elisha has put him on a pedestal — that he is more focused on following Elijah than following God and that he is demonstrating that he will ultimately slip through his fingers and that he needs to refocus on God, not an earthly mentor.
- Psalm 16 Choosing God.** A path through life, choosing the one who chose us.
- Galatians 5:1, 13-25 A fruitful freedom.** Living by the Spirit is living in freedom, not trapped in cycles of despair and bitterness. This freedom is *fruitful* it leads to new things rather than trapping us where we are.
- Luke 9: 51-62 Let the dead bury their dead.** As we saw in the Elisha reading on Sunday, it can be important when called to take time to let go, to bless others before setting off. But Jesus, perhaps with an eyebrow raised to that very passage (which likely would have been familiar to those questioning him), spurs on these would-be-followers to get on with it, to seize the moment. Are there times when we are a long time burying things, a long time letting go, and Jesus is inviting us to leave it behind and come to him?
- Philippians 4: 8-9 Let the genuine resonate with the genuine!** In a news cycle full of the inauthentic and dubious, the insincere and the fraudulent, let us not look away but instead look *past* allowing the inauthentic to diminish and shrink in the context of the just, the pure, the loving, the commendable and the excellent!