

Authentic Faith in Real Life

Practices of an authentic believer in a performance-driven Christian culture.

Dr. J Rodriguez, Founder, Troika Ministries • 2026-07-09 • NIV84 (primary)

"Authentic means that you are transparent and honest, that you are you and not a cheap imitation of someone else... Authentic means you realize that you are never 'all together' but are in a perpetual pursuit for improvement, striving to live a righteous and holy life."

— Dr. J Rodriguez, *Authentic Faith: Practices of an Authentic Believer*

o. The Epidemic This Paper Answers — and Predates

Symptom 02 — A Famine of Formation. This is the last paper in the series, and unlike the other eight, it is not a new argument written to answer the epidemic — **it is the epidemic's diagnosis, written six years before the epidemic had a name.** Dr. J wrote the original manuscript this paper distills in 2020, with this exact opening: *"We are living in a post-Christian world. The faith of many has been weakened. It has become more difficult to differentiate between believer and unbeliever. It is as if the waters have been muddied. People have been conditioned to accept anything and anyone that has the 'Christian' label."* That is Symptom 02 — competence and title abundant, trustworthiness scarce — described in full before this series' Epidemic Preface existed to formalize it. This paper distills that manuscript into the series' voice, closing the nine-paper arc where it should close: with the oldest and most personal of the nine convictions.

I. The Thesis

Being a Christian was never meant to be a title a person claims for themselves. It was a name given by outsiders to people whose actual lives left them no other word to reach for. *Christian* is a noun that only ever had force because it named a verb — a way of living that unbelievers, watching closely, could not account for any other way. Somewhere across two thousand years, the church learned to hand out the noun freely while quietly disconnecting it from the verb that earned it. Authentic faith is the recovery of that connection: **not perfection, but the same verb — lived, not merely claimed.**

II. The Vocation This Protects — Rooted in Original Intent

This series has repeated one doctrinal floor from its first page to its last: the Father prepared a garden, the Son prepared a place, the Spirit is preparing us now, so that we might prepare a people for it (Luke 1:17). Every other paper in this series has approached that vocation from architecture, instrument, or framework — the ABC Model, the Troika Score, the Covenant House. **This closing paper is where the vocation stops being described and starts being lived**, because "preparing a people" was never an abstraction Dr. J built a platform to formalize — it is the same conviction he wrote by hand in 2020, in his own testimony, about his own life, before any of the rest of this architecture existed. The manuscript this paper distills is not theory retrofitted to match TaMOS. TaMOS is the platform later built to carry what this book already believed.

III. The Biblical Case — A Name Given, Not Claimed

The manuscript's central move is etymological and theological at once: the believers did not call themselves Christians. The name was given to them, by outsiders, because their lives left no other word available:

So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:26, NIV84

The label was not chosen. It was *provoked* — a byproduct of a life outsiders could not otherwise categorize. And when the same label later became a charge that could cost a person their life, the instruction was not to hide from it but to wear it as evidence:

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

1 Peter 4:16, NIV84

A name that costs something to hold is a name that means something. A name that costs nothing has usually stopped meaning anything. This is the manuscript's diagnosis of the modern crisis in a single line of reasoning: when the label becomes free, it stops functioning as evidence of anything, and the church loses the very mechanism — costly, visible distinctiveness — that made the name worth giving in the first place.

James supplies the verb/noun distinction in its sharpest biblical form:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1:22, NIV84

And Jesus supplies the test that outlasts every claimed title, already cited twice earlier in this series and returning here at its natural home:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad

fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 7:16–20, NIV84

Fruit, not self-designation, is the recognition mechanism. This is the same argument underneath Paper 2's treatment of the ABC Model and Paper 6's Troika Score — this manuscript simply says it first, in plainer language, from personal testimony rather than framework.

IV. The Verb, Not the Pronoun

The manuscript's most durable phrase is worth preserving in its original form: **"the believers did not give themselves the title Christian... they were the 'verb' of being a Christian, not the 'pronoun' — the title of Christian."** A pronoun Christian wears the label as identity without cost — attends occasionally, invokes the name publicly, and lives privately indistinguishable from anyone claiming no faith at all. A verb Christian is recognized the way the earliest believers were: not because they announced the label, but because observers, watching closely and without being told, ran out of any other word to use.

This is not a call to perfectionism — the manuscript is explicit that authenticity "does not mean you are without error," only that when error occurs, "you acknowledge them, repent, and change your actions." The distinction is not sinless versus sinning. It is performed versus lived — precisely the same distinction Paper 2 draws between sentiment, performance, and genuine formation, arrived at here through pastoral testimony rather than theological argument.

V. Authentic Purpose — Witness as the Verb's Content

If the verb needs content, the manuscript names it directly: purpose, not as generic self-actualization but as the specific commission Christ gave before departing:

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Proverbs 19:21, NIV84

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8, NIV84

The manuscript's own account of what purpose actually produces — passion, courage, and order — is worth preserving as originally written: *"Passion is the byproduct of purpose. Passion will instill a never quit attitude in those who know their purpose... Courage is what one needs to remain a Christian... Purpose sets your life in order."* This is not abstract. Dr. J roots courage specifically in proximity to Christ, citing the same observation made of Peter and John: *"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and*

realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13, NIV84).

VI. What the Rest of the Manuscript Already Gives the Church

The full manuscript carries eleven chapters this position paper does not attempt to reproduce, but names so the whole is visible: **Authentic Faith** and **Authentic Believers Called Christians** (the verb/pronoun argument, §III-IV above); **Authentic Purpose** (§V above); **The Scriptures**, anchored in the same teaching-rebuking-correcting-training-in-righteousness framework Paul gives Timothy —

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV84

— **The Truth, The Gospel, A Friend, Planted in Fellowship** (the manuscript's own sharp critique of church cliques and unwelcoming congregations toward new believers — an early, personal version of this series' recurring "belonging before expectation" conviction), **Spiritual Authority, Faith Over Fear**, and finally **My Short Testimony** — Dr. J's own conversion account, closing the book the same way this whole series has insisted formation must be proven: not by claim, but by a life that became, over time, its own evidence.

VII. Why This Belongs Last in the Series

Every other position paper in this series was written to answer a named epidemic. This one predates the epidemic's name and diagnosed it anyway — because the wound this series responds to was never abstract to Dr. J. It was personal, encountered directly (a friend's cutting skepticism at his own conversion, church cliques that left him feeling unwelcome before he was saved, "scare tactics" witnessing he found ineffective, legalistic Christians who policed appearance while ignoring their own planks), years before any of it needed a formal framework to be taken seriously. **This is why the paper belongs last: the other eight build the architecture; this one is the reason the architecture was ever worth building.**

VIII. Conclusion

The manuscript ends where every position paper in this series has tried to end — not with a system, but with a life offered as evidence. Dr. J's own testimony, closing a book written years before TaMOS existed, is the same claim this whole series makes in nine different registers: formation must be lived before it can be taught, character revealed before it is credentialed, fruit shown before a name is given.

"Authentic means that you understand areas in your life that need adjustment, change, and transformation. Authentic means you realize that you are never 'all together' but are in a perpetual pursuit for improvement."

That is not a lower standard than the epidemic demands. It is the only standard that was ever real.

Scripture Reference List

- Acts 11:26 — the disciples were first called Christians (a name given, not claimed)
- 1 Peter 4:16 — suffer as a Christian without shame; glorify God with this name
- James 1:22 — be doers of the message, not hearers only
- Matthew 7:16-20 — you will recognize them by their fruits
- Proverbs 19:21 — the purpose of Yahweh will be established
- Acts 1:8 — you will be my witnesses (the content of authentic purpose)
- Acts 4:13 — Peter and John's courage recognized as evidence of having been with Jesus
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 — Scripture profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness
- Luke 1:17 — preparing a people for the Lord (the vocation this manuscript already lived before the series named it)

All Scripture quoted from the New International Version, 1984 edition (NIV84), per Troika Ministries' translation standard settled 2026-07-08. Converted from the original Lexham English Bible (LEB) citations, 2026-07-09.

Canon Alignment

Existing canon	How this paper reinforces it
The Epidemic (Series Preface)	This paper's source manuscript (2020) independently diagnosed Symptom 02 before the Epidemic framing existed to name it
Original Intent Narrative	§II positions this manuscript as the lived, personal instance of the "prepare a people" vocation, prior to and underneath the platform built to formalize it
The ABC Whole Leadership Model (Paper 2)	§IV's verb-vs-pronoun distinction is the same sentiment-vs-performance-vs-formation argument, in Dr. J's original pastoral voice
Troika Score — Measuring Formation Without Reducing It (Paper 6)	§III's fruit-as-recognition-mechanism argument (Matt 7:16-20) is the same instrument-of-honesty argument that paper builds a full psychometric case for
Authentic Faith: Practices of an Authentic Believer (full manuscript, 2020)	This paper is the treatise-voice companion and series-closing distillation of that complete, already-written book

Canonization Record

- **Originated by:** Dr. J (Jose G. Rodriguez, Ph.D.), from the full manuscript *Authentic Faith: Practices of an Authentic Believer* (completed 2020, pre-order list dated November 9, 2020)
- **Drafted by:** Shepherd (AI), at Dr. J's direction, distilling the existing manuscript into the Position Papers series voice and structure, with Scripture retrieved live from Dr. J's Logos library
- **Status:** Awaiting Dr. J's review — this paper in particular should be checked against the full manuscript for anything this distillation missed or under-weighted, given the manuscript is complete and this is a companion, not a replacement
- **Review:** Dr. J retains sole authority to amend, publish, or withhold this paper, and to determine whether the full manuscript itself should be republished or updated alongside it

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