

**An eLetter to the ceCommunity
from the aGts Office of Continuing Education
June 2004**

dangerously **authentic...radically** transformed

What's Below?

ceLines - A few words from the ceDirector

ceLinks - A few web sites you can surf

ceSources - A few tools you can use

ceCourses - A few classes coming your way

ceLines:

Hello friends,

Unless you just don't watch much television, you've surely run into any number of "reality" shows that stretch the imagination as to what is truly real. Much like the old *Real People* television program of my younger years, a loose array of less-than-real, or too-real-to-believe people are paraded across the screen in a variety of "real" life situations. Reality TV even makes "stars" out of common, often untalented people like *quasi-American Idol*, William Hung. (If you haven't heard of William Hung check out this website <http://www.marketphil.com/william-hung.htm>). Unfortunately, this fame and status come at the expense of good taste and good morals (see just about any of the "reality" shows that attempt to create "real" love in a matter of hours or weeks).

This pop culture "reality" (it is pretty hard to swallow just how "real" most of the stuff on TV is these days) makes me ponder the question about how "real" our ministries truly are. In fact, the deeper question is how "real" are we? Is the stuff that we present as ministry an authentic reflection of who God is? Can people get a sense of his nature, presence, and character by watching us do ministry, or by participating with us in ministry? Furthermore, does the way that we present it demonstrate a true/real picture of who we are?

It seems to me if there is one standard by which we ought to measure the value and effectiveness of the ministry efforts that we present and perform each week, it should be that they are "real." So, let's think about this a bit. Please think along with me...Can we consider something a "real" worship experience just because we have found a preferred music style that we use to get a reaction out of the people in attendance? Is it "real"ly communion if we follow the tradition that makes the Lord's Supper an individualized event rather than a shared experience of the whole community gathered for worship? Have we presented a "real" message from the Lord, for the Lord, and about the Lord if it does not connect to the lives and needs of those who are present? Is our entire activity of service "real" if we can do it whether the anointing of the Spirit of God rests on every part of it or not?

We have all been around ministry long enough to know what "works." So, we congratulate ourselves on performing an entire service of ministry with precision and excellence, somehow believing that the sharpness of the presentation is the goal of our ministry. But don't we have to ask ourselves, "Have we presented a real God if what we are hoping for is a flawless presentation?" "Can people actually relate to the reality of God's presence and ministry through real (even flawed) people whose purpose is a real encounter with God?" If they can, then perhaps we need to re-evaluate just how "real" our ministry truly is.

A few weeks ago, I attended an alternative church service with about 300 or so mostly 20-somethings. There was nothing particularly flashy about the service or the people leading it. In fact, they were pretty transparent about their imperfections, perhaps even too much so for my

taste. In the middle of the service, I caught myself noticing all the stuff that they were doing "wrong." As I was reorganizing and professionalizing their ministry *fausse pas*, I was struck by a profound recognition that their concern for being real was more important than my concern for being "sharp." It didn't matter to them that they lacked polish; in fact I think they may have even been intentional at being unpolished. So, after I repented of my raging desire to be a "professional," I began to relax and truly enjoy an authentic and refreshing worship experience.

All this leads me to the final point ...It doesn't matter what "real" looks like when you do it, even if "real" for you is a polished, excellent presentation. What really matters is that it is "real," not some contrived or created version of it. I'm convinced that if you are real, God's reality...his real presence will shine through.

I'd love to hear from you. Got any "real" moments to share with me that brought someone closer to God?

Until next time...

Randy C. Walls, Director
AGTS Continuing Education

ceLinks:
Check out these web sites!

<http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=117> This is a link to a Pew Charitable Trust report on internet usage by adult Americans. It notes that 37.1 million (29% of the 128 mil with access) of them use the Internet for spiritual/religious information.

<http://www.trendwatching.com> This is a great web site for cultural inquisitive types. These gurus of trendwatching survey the landscape of global trends and create new buzzwords to define them. It's a fun and interesting spot to see what's going on in the world.

ceSources:

Hot off the presses...Dr. Gary McGee, aGts Professor of Church History and Pentecostal Studies, has written a new history of the A/G entitled, *People of the Spirit*. It provides a great overview of the issues that started and have sustained our movement through the decades. Its greatest contribution is the testimonies of the famous and not-so-famous persons who have impacted the progression of our fellowship at the international, national, and local levels.

Also, Dr. Barbara Cavaness, aGts Visiting Professor of Missions, and Deborah Gill, National Director of the Division of Christian Education and Commissioner of Discipleship for the Assemblies of God, have co-written a new book, *God's Women—Then and Now*. It's a great resource that surveys the Biblical data and makes an application to the contemporary scene. Everyone should have a copy of these books in your library.

I've also been reading a book from the mid-'90's by Robert Quinn, *Deep Change*. If you haven't read this yet, it is well worth your time to do so. It approaches change from a business model perspective, but it is full of insights that connect to the local church and ministry.

You can order these books and all the textbooks for your ceCourses in the aGts bookstore; just contact Arlene Dilley at adilley@aGts.edu.

ceCourses:

Here's the web-link to the ceCourses:

http://www.agts.edu/continuing_education/sites/schedules/2004ContinuingEducationSche.pdf

If you want to pick up some courses this summer, you should go ahead and get your reservation forms in today. Go to our website through this link to reserve your place in the course of your choice: http://www.agts.edu/continuing_education/ce_form.pdf.

NOTICE: If you live within commuting distance of Springfield, you should consider the M.A. in Theological Studies degree completion program. It is structured so you can earn a degree in 18-22 months by attending classes **one night a week on the Springfield campus**.

Your previous course work is applied toward the degree where applicable. You take only the courses you need which saves time and money. The classes are structured so that you go through the entire program with peers, one course at a time.

A flat tuition package rate protects you from tuition increases unless you change cohorts. Financial aid, scholarships, and tuition discounts are available to eligible participants (see website http://www.agts.edu/academics/programs/mats_completion.html).

Applications are being accepted for new cohorts that begin in September, and January. It is also possible to join an existing cohort if you are admitted and register two weeks in advance of the session dates listed: July 15, September 2, October 7, November 11, January 6, February 10, March 2.

Contact us 8am - 4:30pm CST at:

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