



Portion:

SCRIPTURES

- Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9
- Matthew 4:8-11
- II Corinthians 9:6-15
- Hebrews 4:11-13

Title:

IMPERSONATING

A CHRISTIAN

- Who Owns Your Worship?
- Who Owns Your Possessions?
- Who Owns Your Allegiance?

It can be very funny to watch a talented comedian do impersonations. They are skilled at capturing the essence of someone who most people would recognize. They accentuate their mannerisms, facial expressions, voice, body language and talk about subjects this famous person is known for. They truly capture the outer expression of a person's character. It might be said that imitation is a great compliment. Of course, this is true if it is all done in clean fun, as the Bible warns us against course jesting.

Yet, it is far from funny and rather offensive, even dangerous, when we find someone impersonating a Christian. What does that even look like? Too often, you cannot easily identify such "comedians" simply by their mannerisms, facial expressions, voice, body language or the subjects they talk about. Those all appear authentic. But it's their inner character that ultimately exposes them. Out in the open they appear as Christians, but in the secret place of the heart they are just frauds.

I'd invite you to use a few key parameters and see if you can spot them. They are much more popular than you might think; they are actually everywhere, lurking just below the surface. They love their idols. You'll notice what's most important to them on the inside by what gains most of their time, attention, and resources. Another key giveaway is effort. It takes a lot of effort to be accomplished at anything; and you will recognize counterfeits by their cheep imitations; they simply never put God first, never give Him their best of anything. Something else is always more important than God. And we all know that actions speak louder than words, so if you keenly observe what people are doing, you will know.

In this high tech world in which we live, virtual reality and social media have become major brands of entertainment. Strap on the headset and dive into a wondrous and expansive fake world.

Fabricate any persona you desire and propagate it on your channels, feeds and posts. People have become experts at fake! Practice your fake Christianity in that world and no one will care; no one gets hurt. But, when you take off the blinders and step back into reality, you will get exposed. The divinely inspired words of the Bible insure you will have no plausible deniability if you say one thing and do another. It's there in plain sight, so you do not turn aside from God's ways to the right or to the left.

"Catch Me If You Can" was a movie released in 2002 in which the main character successfully performs all sorts of cons. He convinces everyone that he is someone else, someone he's not. He is a great impersonator, an imposter. It seems like an exciting ride all along, but deep inside he is actually tormented by his true identity. In the end, all his pretense is exposed anyway. You can't hide the truth forever! Is that you? Others may not have noticed yet, but deep down inside, you know! Are you impersonating a Christian?

THEME: MAIN SCRIPTURE(S) THAT HAS INSPIRED MESSAGE

"You shall not **plant** for yourself any **tree**, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the Lord your God. You shall not set up a **sacred pillar**, which the Lord your God hates."

Deuteronomy 16:21-22 NKJV

"You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God a bull or sheep **which has any blemish or defect**, for that is an abomination to the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 17:1 NKJV

"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that **he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book**, from the one before the priests, the Levites." Deuteronomy 17:18 NKJV

OUTCOME: MAIN TAKEAWAY(S) I AM HOPING FOR PEOPLE

"And whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Colossians 3:17 NKJV

"And whatever you do, **do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men**, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; **for you serve the Lord Christ**. But **he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done**, and there is no partiality." Colossians 3:23-25 NKJV

WHO OWNS YOUR WORSHIP?

1. New Idols to Replace Old Idols

A. Cheep Imitations

(1) Counterfeits and Substitutes: Is Yahweh just one of many gods in your life?

- (a) The pagans have their Gods and spiritual practices. DO NOT imitate them!
1. “You shall not **plant** for yourself any **tree**, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the Lord your God. You shall not set up a **sacred pillar**, which the Lord your God hates.” Deuteronomy 16:21-22 NKJV
 2. “You shall not plant for yourself an **Asherah** [sacred poll] of any kind of tree or wood beside the altar of the Lord your God, which you shall make. You shall not set up for yourself a **sacred pillar** which the Lord your God hates.” Deuteronomy 16:21-22 AMP

(2) Sacred Pillar

- (a) This is not a new warning.
1. “**You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods**, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And **you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things.**”
Deuteronomy 12:2-4 NKJV

(b) Yahweh makes it absolutely clear!

1. “When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, **you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations**. There shall not be found among you anyone who **makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord**, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. **You shall be blameless before the Lord your God**. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your **God has not appointed such for you.**” Deuteronomy 18:9-14 NKJV

(c) God was well aware of the temptations that would shipwreck His people.

1. “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘I am the Lord your God. **According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances.** You shall observe My

judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.” Leviticus 18:1-5 NKJV

B. Human Tendencies

(1) The temptation of Asherah

(a) Look at the long biblical history of violating God’s DIRECT COMMAND.

1. “They forsook the Lord and **served Baal and the Ashtoreths.**” Judges 2:13 NKJV
2. “So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God, **and served the Baals and Asherahs.**” Judges 3:7 NKJV
3. “Then the children of Israel **again** did evil in the sight of the Lord, and **served the Baals and the Ashtoreths**, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him.” Judges 10:6 NKJV
4. “Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then **put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths** from among you, and **prepare your hearts for the Lord**, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines.”” I Samuel 7:3 NKJV
5. “Then they cried out to the Lord, and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and **served the Baals and Ashtoreths**; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.’” I Samuel 12:10 NKJV
6. “For **Solomon went after Ashtoreth** the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.” I Kings 11:5 NKJV
7. “because **they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess** of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David.” I Kings 11:33 NKJV
8. “For **the Lord will strike Israel**, as a reed is shaken in the water. **He will uproot Israel** from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, **because they have made their wooden images [Asherahs], provoking the Lord to anger.**” I Kings 14:15 NKJV

9. "For they also built for themselves high places, **sacred pillars, and wooden images [Asherahs]** on every high hill and under every green tree." I Kings 14:23 NKJV
 10. "And Ahab **made a wooden image [Asherah]**. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." I Kings 16:33 NKJV
 11. "Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the **four hundred prophets of Asherah**, who eat at Jezebel's table."" I Kings 18:19 NKJV
 12. "Nevertheless they did not depart from **the sins of the house of Jeroboam**, who had made Israel sin, but walked in them; and **the wooden image [Asherah] also remained in Samaria.**" II Kings 13:6 NKJV
 13. "They set up for themselves **sacred pillars and wooden images [Asherahs]** on every high hill and under every green tree." II Kings 17:10 NKJV
 14. "So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a **molded image** and two calves, **made a wooden image [Asherah]** and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal." II Kings 17:16 NKJV
 15. "For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and **made a wooden image [Asherah]**, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them." II Kings 21:3 NKJV
 16. "He even **set a carved image of Asherah** that he had made, in the house of which the Lord had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever;" II Kings 21:7 NKJV
 17. "Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which **Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth** the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon." II Kings 23:13 NKJV
- (b) These false gods simply shall not stand!
1. "Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; And this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: When he makes all the stones of the altar Like chalkstones that are beaten to dust, **Wooden images [Asherahs]** and incense altars **shall not stand.**" Isaiah 27:9 NKJV
- (c) Read the following and examine yourself...

1. "Thus says the Lord: **"Do not learn the way of the Gentiles;** Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For **the customs of the peoples are futile; For one cuts a tree from the forest,** The work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. **They decorate it with silver and gold; They fasten it with nails and hammers So that it will not topple.** They are upright, like a palm tree, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them, For they cannot do evil, Nor can they do any good." Inasmuch as **there is none like You, O Lord** (You are great, and Your name is great in might), Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? **For this is Your rightful due.** For among all the wise men of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You. **But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish; A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine."** Jeremiah 10:2-8 NKJV

C. Yahweh Alone

(1) You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve...

(a) When you are tempted to engage in pagan practices...

1. "Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and **showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.** And he said to Him, **"All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."** Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, **'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'** " **Then the devil left Him,** and behold, angels came and ministered to Him." Matthew 4:8-11 NKJV
2. *"You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."* (Matthew 4:10)
"You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things." (Deuteronomy 12:4)
"God has not appointed such for you!" (Deuteronomy 18:14)

(2) Too Harsh?

(a) Maybe you will like James' approach better.

1. *"Therefore **submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee** from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. **Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**"* James 4:7-8 NKJV

(3) Living in Two Worlds...

(a) It's bizarre if you'd consider going back to your pagan ways!

1. “Therefore, **since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind**, for he who has suffered in the flesh has **ceased from sin**, that he **no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God**. For we **have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles**—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. **In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation**, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” I Peter 4:1-6 NKJV
- (b) Warning: Don’t get entangled in past sins (paganism)...
 1. “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV
- (c) Warning: You can’t serve two masters...
 1. “**“No servant can serve two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon.**”” Luke 16:13 NKJV

D. Questions, Directives and Obvious Differences

(4) Obvious Differences

- (a) The tares among the wheat...
 1. “Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, **his enemy came and sowed tares** among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, **‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’** He said to them, **‘An enemy has done this.’** The servants said to him, **‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’** But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. **Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I**

will say to the reapers, **“First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them,** but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”” Matthew 13:24-30 NKJV

WHO OWNS YOUR POSSESSIONS?

2. Second Best Might as Well be Worst

A. Actions speak louder than words...

(1) Saving your defective things for God!

(a) Do you really prefer to keep the best for yourself?

1. “You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God a bull or sheep **which has any blemish or defect,** for **that is an abomination** to the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 17:1 NKJV

(2) Blemished Sacrifices

(a) Give your best or give your junk! And FYI, God will NOT accept your junk!

1. ““A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’ **“You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’** By saying, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’ And when **you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil?** Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts. “But now entreat God’s favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts. **“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors,** So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,” Says the Lord of hosts, **“Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.** For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; **For My name shall be great among the nations,**” Says the Lord of hosts. “But you profane it, In that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’ You also say, ‘Oh, what a weariness!’ And you sneer at it,” Says the Lord of hosts. **“And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering!** Should I accept this from your hand?” Says the Lord. “But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, **But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—** For I

am a great King," Says the Lord of hosts, "And My name is to be feared among the nations." Malachi 1:6-14 NKJV

2. "You have wearied the Lord with your words; Yet you say, **"In what way have we wearied Him?"** In that you say, **"Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord,** And He delights in them," Or, "Where is the God of justice?"" Malachi 2:17 NKJV

B. Give

(1) You can't out-give God!

(a) Give what is in your heart, not out for compulsion!

1. **"Give, and it will be given to you:** good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and **running over** will be put into your bosom. **For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."** Luke 6:38 NKJV
2. "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.** As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. **For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,** and by their prayer for you, who long for you **because of the exceeding grace of God in you.** Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" II Corinthians 9:6-15 NKJV
3. **"Then the righteous will answer** Him, saying, 'Lord, **when did we see You** hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, **inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'**" Matthew 25:37-40 NKJV

C. All for God

(1) The Perfect Formula (This + This = This)

(a) This...

1. **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above,** where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. **Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth:** fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, **in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.** But now you yourselves are to **put off all these:** anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have **put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,** where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”
Colossians 3:1-11 NKJV

(b) Plus this...

1. **“Therefore, as the elect of God,** holy and beloved, **put on** tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; **even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,** to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:12-16 NKJV

(c) Equals this!

1. “And whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,** giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:17 NKJV
2. “And whatever you do, **do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; **for you serve the Lord Christ.** But **he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done,** and there is no partiality.”
Colossians 3:23-25 NKJV

WHO OWNS YOUR ALLEGIANCE?

3. No Plausible Deniability

A. You should know better!

(1) The Responsibilities of Royalty...

(a) Don't do that!

1. *“When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,’ **you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses**; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. **But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.**” Deuteronomy 17:14-17 NKJV*
2. *“But you are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” I Peter 2:9 NKJV*

(b) Do this!

1. *“Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that **he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book**, from the one before the priests, the Levites.” Deuteronomy 17:18 NKJV*

(c) This is why!

1. *“And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that **he may learn to fear the Lord** his God and **be careful to observe all the words of this law** and these statutes, that **his heart may not be lifted above his brethren**, that he **may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left**, and that he **may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children** in the midst of Israel.” Deuteronomy 17:19-20 NKJV*

B. The Word in Action

(1) Knowing the scriptures...

- (a) Cuts through all the distractions and exposes...Who owns your allegiance!

1. "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. **For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** And there is **no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him** to whom we must give account." Hebrews 4:11-13 NKJV

C. What's in the mirror?

(1) Are you impersonating a Christian? All you have to do is look in the mirror!

(a) If you are a hearer of God's word and not a doer, you are impersonating a Christian.

1. "But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only**, deceiving yourselves. For if **anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.** But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." James 1:22-25 NKJV

a) When you look in a mirror you see the old man looking back at you!

(b) If you are a doer of God's word and not just a hearer, you are an authentic Christian.

1. "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But **we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." II Corinthians 3:17-18 NKJV

a) When you look in a mirror you see the new man looking back at you!

(c) We have the exact pattern of what it looks like to be an authentic Christian.

1. "Brethren, **join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.** For **many walk**, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, **that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.**" Philippians 3:17-19 NKJV

(d) Final Analysis

1. Paul says it best; "*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*" I Corinthians 11:1 NKJV
2. John the Baptist tells us how? "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" John 3:30 NKJV