

# “Accept NO Imitations”

*Written June of 2011*

## Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5:17

### Introduction

The Message I bring to you today was given to me by the Holy Spirit for the youth here today and also to every person who has ears to hear (*Spiritual Hearing*). I promise you it will be short, simple and to the point. But I pray that it will help you reflect on your life and see a deeper picture of Christianity. Before I begin today, I want to define for you the word:

- **Imitation** = copy, mimic of or reproduction of something.

I wanted to make sure you understood the definition of the word **“Imitation”** so that we can truly see what the title of today’s Message is implying to all of us. Before we enter into the Message, I would like to have my five-year-old daughter Ariana to pray, so that the Holy Spirit can open our hearts, minds and spirit.

### Sermon

Have you ever seen a knock-off or an imitation of an item or something? For example, in the 80’s and 90’s the big thing was knock-off Rolex watches. A real one would cost about \$5000 but a knock-off cost you about \$50 to \$75. The knock-off looked just like the real one; just don’t put it under water or bang it too hard because it would get damaged right away. Here are some other examples that probably you have come across:

- Louise Vitan purses
- Prada knock-offs
- Gucci knock-offs
- Chanel knock-offs

The list can go on and on but you get the idea, right? There are also generic brands like: Publix brand or Walmart brand, you know what I’m talking about. Let me give you a different perspective.

Last year (*May of 2010*) I was fired from my job for refusing to work Saturdays; it’s all good though because God gave me a better job which gave Saturdays and holidays off. But I learned a very important lesson during the (6) months I spent without work. My Wife and I were trying to save money wherever we could; but let me give some advice from my life experiences during that time period. There are **THREE** things you shouldn’t ever use a generic brand on:

1. **Dollar store Q-tips** *“Almost left me deaf”*
2. **Cheap deodorant** *“Thought something had died; was smelling around then I realized that it was me”*
3. **Toilet Paper** *“Avoid sandpaper like toilet paper, trust me it is very painful; and most definitely avoid single ply toilet paper”*

These are the top (3) things I learned the hard way you should never accept any Imitations on. The problem is that an imitation can never achieve the quality of the original. Nothing compares to the original and nothing compares to the genuine product, right?

Nothing compares to the original or the Brand name genuine product. Even though on the outside it may look like it's genuine and real, on the inside you can truly see its flaws and eventually the truth will be uncovered.

You're probably wondering why I'm talking about fashion accessories, generic brands, knock-offs and imitations right. Jesus talked about this same concept in: **Matthew 7:21-23.**

***“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”***

Christ put it plainly right here in this text that an Imitation, knock-off or generic brand Christian just won't cut it. He says it right there in **Verse 21 & 22**; there will be many that look like Christians, Dress like Christians, cast out devils and do wonderful works in Christ name like Christians. But as Christ says in **Verse 23**, ***“DEPART FROM ME, FOR I NEVER KNEW YOU”***.

**God is saying He accepts NO imitations!!!**

In case you didn't catch this, Christ is talking about Judgment day here in these texts. Don't worry because in **Verse 21** Christ tells how we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven; He puts it really simple only those ***“that doeth the Will of my Father”***. So, I guess the all-important question you are probably asking yourself is:

**How can we know the Will of God?**

**How can we have a genuine Encounter and Relationship with God?**

I'm going to give you the answer to both of these very important questions today. There is only one way we can begin to know the Will of God, so that God can be REAL in our lives. The answer is found in **John 3:5-7** which is the encounter Christ had with Nicodemus. Christ told Nicodemus **You must be Born Again!!**

It's the Holy Spirit that makes the Sacrifice of Christ effective in our lives. It's the Holy Spirit that Changes and Transforms our heart. As Paul put it in: **Romans 12:2** the Holy Spirit ***“regenerates (renews) our mind, so that we can know the Will of God”*** We have to invite Christ into our hearts and be Born Again, this is the only way we can begin to reflect True Genuine Christianity.

There are a lot of quote/un-quote “Christians” now-a-days that are living as my favorite group “Casting Crowns” put it; a **“Stained Glass Masquerade”** simply because they have chosen to live an Imitation Christianity.

**Look at it this way.** Imagine there was a person that just finished rolling around in rotting stinky trash; then he gets dressed putting on an Armani suit that cost \$5000. He looks like a guy from GQ magazine, but is this guy clean? He looks clean and looks great from far away; but as you get closer you begin to smell that stench of rotting trash. Even though he looks clean on the outside, underneath he is still filthy and dirty.

No one in their right mind would do this, it just doesn't make sense logically that someone would spend \$5000 on an Armani suit and put on over a dirty, filthy, rotting smelling body. Am I right or wrong, what do you think?

Here's the crazy thing my dear Brothers and Sisters; there are a lot of people that do this same thing everyday in their Spiritual lives. **They put on the honored name of Christ by calling themselves Christians**, which by the way was purchased at a Great price, and they/we put it over their Spiritual Body that has not fully been baptized by the transforming Power of the Holy Spirit. It's complete insanity to put on an Armani suit that cost \$5000 on a dirty person, yet many live this Imitation Christianity. Again, this is why Paul said in **Romans 12:2** we must renew and transform our mind to a Spiritual Mind.

This illustration relates to the Bible as well, when Jesus talked about this same concept in: **Matthew 23:23-28** I'll give you some of the highlights of these texts.

***“Woe to you Pharisees, you blind guides, you hypocrites, you are like white sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful on the outside, but are within full of dead man’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even though you outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”***

There are a lot of churches that I go to that the Youth and Non-Believers have gone because they have tried to force religious ideals and manuals upon them. I see so many church leaders trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit, and trying to change Young people and Non-Believers into a religious ideal. The fact of the matter is, it's only the Holy Spirit that can make **TRUE** changes that begin from the inside out. Religion teaches the opposite; that if you dress a certain way, eat a certain way and act a certain way, then you're a good little Christian boy or girl.

**“Christ says come as you are; but if you are truly Born Again you will NOT stay as you are” Samady Rivera**

Here's the sad reality, though they conform to the religious standard and look like Christians and may even talk as Christians (*just like our example of the dirty person wearing the Armani suit*), on the inside underneath it all they don't really know who Christ is in their lives and are Spiritually dead, because they have never had a true encounter with the Holy Spirit. That to me breaks my heart, and is the reason why I speak a lot to the youth and young adults in my Ministry.

**Brothers and Sisters, we must pray for our youth and young adults, that the Holy Spirit convicts them to begin that change.** The issue is that most Youth and Young Adults have been taught to have Religion with God, instead of having a Relationship with God.

They've been put in a religious cage, and when they turn (18) years old, they fly out of that cage to see what the world has to offer. The Devil has many vices and tools he uses to deceive us. In closing I would like to share with you a story, it's titled "**From Hell and Back**".

### **"From Hell and Back"**

*The story begins in 1985, an 8-year-old boy starts smoking for the first time; Every Parents worst nightmare, to find out their adolescent son is smoking. In the hopes of creating a better environment for their children these two Parents moved to a different State.*

*Time went by, troubles became worse, and this Boy now 12, was dealing drugs, and was always in trouble in School; The Parents of this boy definitely did not believe in sparing the rod which led to an environment of physical abuse. He would fall asleep every night listening to Heavy Metal Rock music, which eventually resulted in him becoming demon possessed one Saturday afternoon in the church gym. It came time for this young Man to go to High School, because of the recent problems of drugs and smoking, the Parents sacrificed and sent him to a Christian High School. They prayed that something would change, that somehow God would bring him back to the right path. At 15 years old he got baptized.*

*It was December, 1993 a year later this now, 16-year-old young man stood before a Congregation to Preach for the first time, his Parents praised God for this miracle. Little did they know that the following year, he would fall into Alcoholism as a High School Senior, and lose his Faith in God along the way and become an Atheist.*

*The year is 1995, this young man wasn't able to graduate with his High School class. In September of that same year, he got into a fist fight with his Father, and leaves home at age 17. The dysfunctional environment had reached its boiling point. He got a tattoo and his tongue pierced.*

*Those first 2 years living in the real world were the hardest this young man would ever experience, working (3) jobs (7) days a week just to survive. Harder still was having to see his Parents after (19) years of marriage get divorced.*

*This young man decided to go to Vocational School to try and do something with his life. He moved to a different City, further away physically and emotionally from his family. The career he chose was very high stress, where smoking, alcoholism, and drugs were common things to do in this environment.*

*He started using illegal drugs such as: Marijuana, Ecstasy, Cocaine, Prescription Drugs, just to name a few; and when one of his closest Cousins was killed by her husband on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in front of her five-year-old daughter. The flood gates to Hell literally opened. He came to the conclusion that there could be no God, if God had allowed all this to happen, along with everything he had lived as a child, including physical and emotional abuse, there couldn't be a loving God, and so this young man started accepting Atheism and would make fun of and taunt Christians in their beliefs.*

*There wasn't a single day that the hole of that hurt and pain didn't consume him, along with the inner pain he carried since childhood. Though everyone thought he was fine on the outside, he was slowly dying on the inside, mainly his soul was lost. The only challenge this young man faced every day now, was how to damage his body with Alcohol and Drugs. He taunted God to let him die, by trying to overdose several times and committing suicide. Yet God spared his life; He cursed God for letting him live, he couldn't understand why God let him live.*

*This whole time the Parents of this young man, though divorced they still continued to pray, never really knowing why their son was so distant and cold to them. On **August of 1999** God sent this young man an "Angel" into his life, on **September 11, 1999** they went on their first date, she made him want to be a better man, so he quit smoking, drinking and doing drugs on a regular basis. She helped to save his life in essence, and gave him a reason to live again.*

***Fast forward (6) years....** This man was an accomplished and successful businessman, at the top of his career. He's married, bought a house...But **in 2005** though he had accomplished every Goal, every Title, he set for himself, and was currently working as a General Manager, it wasn't enough. **His material possessions didn't give him the fulfillment he thought they would.***

*In **May of 2005** they decided to start trying to have a baby, a family of their own was what they desired most. The Holy Spirit had used a Preacher named Joel Osteen on TV to lead them back to Christ towards the **end of 2004**. They were starting to regularly visit a small church that they felt comfortable in. **June 18, 2005** this young man was talking on the phone with his mother telling her, of their decision to serve the Lord, and how they were going to recommit their lives to God. But the young man also shared with his Mom a premonition: that the Devil was going to do something to harm him. Three Days later he walks into work, and out of the blue he is laid-off, basically fired for no reason at all.*

***One month later, July of 2005**, he finds out his Wife is pregnant, and he has no job, no income to support his family...but God has supplied every need they've had the past (6) years!!!*

***How many here think this a true story?** Well I can promise you this, Brothers and Sisters I stand before you as a **living testament** of what Prayer, Faith and the transforming Power of the Holy Spirit can accomplish, for I was that young man in the story, and this is my life in a nutshell. Because of many prayers and my Wife shining the light of God in the middle of my Darkness I am here today.*

***Six years ago (August 15, 2005)**, I was Born Again and Baptized by the Holy Spirit through a divine connection (DG). I spent **(11) years lost** in the world, and By the Grace of God I am here today, and the Spirit of God has called me here today to deliver this Message to you. Brothers and Sisters **Luke 1:37** says: **"Nothing is impossible for God"** I am living proof of this.*

**Glory be to God!!!**

I am living proof of what the transforming Power of the Holy Spirit can do. In those first couple of months after my Born Again experience, the Devil attacked me hard making me feel that I was unqualified to do anything for God because of my past sins. I started reading the Bible and realized that I wasn't the only one; check out this video clip!!

**Play Video clip: "March of the Unqualified"**

Almost all of the great men and women of the Bible had some serious flaws and issues, yet God used them mightily. One of my favorite passages and stories is when the Prophet Samuel is saying to God surely this little, scrawny, young Sheppard boy named David can't be the next anointed King of Israel. In **I Samuel 16:7** we see God saying: "***I look at the heart not on the outside appearance***".

**God was basically saying to Samuel when others see a Sheppard boy, I see a king.** My Dear Brothers and Sisters, young & old; God has a mighty Plan and Purpose for your life. He sees you as His children, as Princes and Princesses of the Kingdom. You are the apple of His eye. You are beautifully and wonderfully made. It doesn't matter what you've done in the past, the Blood of Christ provides redemption for us. Gods' Love, Mercy and Grace is ready to be poured upon you, if you ask for it.

Brethren we need the Holy Spirit in our lives; it's the only way God can be real in our lives. **Ephesians 6:12** tells us: "***For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.***" The following video clip illustrates what we are truly battling against, and also how Christ NEVER gives up on us.

**Play Video clip: "Lifehouse Everything Drama"**

Reflect on this for a moment. If you knew that something was a fake or an imitation would you still buy it and pay full price for it? Now that you know the difference between an Imitation Christian and a True Christian, which are going to accept. **I came here today to tell you "ACCEPT NO IMITATIONS". Nothing compares to Gods' original plan for your life, and the Genuine Quality you are in Christ.**

**Altar Call**

I believe the Holy Spirit has touched some of the people here today. I would like to make an Altar Call to those who would like to today proclaim that they WILL "**Accept NO Imitations**"; to those who want to begin to experience how God can be Real in your lives. Our Scripture reading found in: **II Corinthians 5:17** tells us: "***If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all thing are become new.***" God wants to give you a new beginning, a new start!

God loves you just as you are. God doesn't care about your past; He cares about right now, about this moment. If you died today, do you know where you would spend Eternity? Don't hesitate, don't look around to see if someone else is going up, this is about you, are you going to declare today, Christs' Blood over your life. Will you today, accept Gods' Grace, Mercy and Love through Christ Jesus? God Bless you all!