

ESSENTIAL  
CONNECTION

## Rush of Fools

LIVING FOR JESUS & MAKING  
MUSIC THEIR MISSION FIELD

## ALBERT PUJOLS

How faith fuels his passion  
to change the world

**12** YOU & YOUR PARENTS  
things you can do  
to regain your parents' trust

FAITH ISN'T JUST FACTS. IT'S

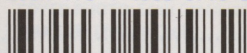
# WALKING IN THE WAYS OF JESUS

WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE:

- AT SCHOOL • AT HOME • IN YOUR  
RELATIONSHIPS • IN ALL YOUR  
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

WWW.LIFEWAY.COM

FEBRUARY 2012 // U.S.A. \$2.95  
ISBN 978-1-4300-0798-2



9 781430 007982

 LifeWay  
Biblical Solutions for Life



# Checking In

{ AN INTRODUCTION }



## AUTHENTIC FAITH

### It's worth the cost.

Most of you know how easy it is to get your hands on a reproduction. A “designer” handbag—or something that looks like one anyway. A poster of that famous painting. That look-alike laptop or those almost Ray-Ban® sunglasses. As appealing as the price may be, the problem with a faux whatever is that it can't live up to the standard set by the real deal. Imitation leather cracks. Posters tear. Cheap TVs break. Over time, anyone who looks at it can see that it's nothing but a pretender.

So what do fake purses, art prints, and cheap reproductions— things that have been masquerading as something far more valuable and costly—have to do with you or your faith? As it turns out, a lot.

We live in a Christian nation. At least, that's the label we've given ourselves, but in many cases, we are Christians in name only. In no area is this truer than the Bible Belt, where good boys and girls faithfully attend church with their parents and say grace over Sunday lunch every week. They go to church, sing hymns, and even pray on occasion, but it's all a façade. Their faith is practically nonexistent, and it's evident in the choices they make.

### ★ THE REAL DEAL

The problem with this type of faith is that it's shallow and rootless, and as we've learned from replica handbags,

a label doesn't necessarily reflect authenticity. Just as imitation leather cracks, rootless faith perishes. As seams split, shallow beliefs falter, and as straps break, resolve weakens. Over time, it becomes apparent that there was never any real faith present at all.

Hear me out: I'm not saying that those who have authentic faith necessarily have it all together. No one becomes a Christian and never makes a mistake again. We sin; we falter. The beginning of our relationship with Christ is going to lack depth, because it's just that: a beginning. It takes time and effort for any relationship to grow and that's just as true for your relationship with Christ as it is for your relationship with your best friend.

That's really the difference between shallow faith and authentic faith. Authentic faith grows stronger





© THOMAS BARWICK / GETTY IMAGES

as it ages; shallow faith, on the other hand, never really grows into any sort of depth. True Christians know that a faithful life is a surrendered life, which means that they're willing to give up everything, even their hopes, dreams, ambitions, popularity, possessions, and social status for the sake of the gospel. They faithfully attend church, sing hymns, and pray regularly out of reverence for the Lord. Their main goal is not to please themselves, but to please God. They live to serve Him.

#### ★ TRANSFORMED LIFE

The good news is that God is more than able to transform us. Are you willing to be transformed? If your faith really is shallow and rootless, He can transform it into authentic faith. Maybe you are a believer, but you've never taken much time to really get to know Jesus. The

beautiful truth is that God has created you for something far more fulfilling than inch-deep faith. If you can muster the courage to throw in all your chips and run shamelessly after Him, you'll receive something very precious in return.

You'll get your life back. Your real life. The one you were meant to live from before time began. But before you can live that life, you have to give up the one you're living now (Luke 9:24). It's easy to settle into the same old life of stale faith because, just like an imitation purse or laptop, it's cheap. It doesn't cost you anything. But as the old saying goes, you get what you pay for. Faith that costs nothing gives nothing in return.

A real life of faith will cost you everything, and it's worth every penny. True Christianity is bursting with meaning and purpose. Once you've had a taste of it, you'll wonder

why you ever settled for such an empty and poor substitute.

There are some things that are worth paying for. Authentic faith is one of them. So stop chasing after the things that won't last and walk in the ways of Jesus. You won't be sorry—because He's definitely worth the cost. —*Leslie Ann Jones*