

interactive with His creation. And it means belief in the personal God who hears sincere, earnest prayer and responds in ways that bring glory to Him and good to His children. It should also be noted that this faith is active. It is a faith that works, a working faith. "By faith Abel offered . . ." "By faith Enoch . . . was pleasing to God." "By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark" "By faith Abraham . . . obeyed." "By faith Abraham . . . offered up Isaac." So when we read that "without faith it is impossible to please God," we should understand this to mean "without active faith it is impossible to please Him."

In James Michener's book Hawaii, the main character, a missionary, tries for some time to convert the head woman of the island, and at last she professes acceptance of Christianity and is baptized. But at her death he discovers that she left instructions for her burial according to the rituals of the ancient gods of the islands. The missionary is appalled, feeling that she had not been a genuine believer, but had just tried to "play it safe" by holding on to both religions.

Over the years I have sometimes had the uncomfortable impression that a number of people in some churches in which I have ministered appear to be living a "pretend Christianity" instead of a "real Christianity," and that they are attempting to "play it safe" by professing the truths of Christianity while withholding complete commitment to them.

But "playing it safe" in the matter of commitment to Christ is neither safe nor prudent; it is spiritual suicide!

In this message I would like to ask and attempt to answer three questions:

- (1) What is the difference between being a "pretend Christian" and a "real Christian"?
- (2) How can I tell whether I am a "pretend Christian" or a "real Christian"?
- (3) What are some steps I can take to become more "real" in my Christian life?