

# Cutting Through the Clutter

BY STACEY SCOTT

Anyone who has ever read the “Velveteen Rabbit,” by Margery Williams, knows there is a difference between real, and *really* real. It’s true love — and true sorrow — that divide the two. In the story, the Boy’s toy rabbit becomes “real” when the Boy loves him, but it isn’t until the rabbit is rejected, heartbroken, and cries a real tear, that he becomes *really* real to the rest of the world.

The challenge of being really real — about what we believe, what we face in our daily walk with Christ, how we portray our faith to others — is one of authenticity. And it is daily.

Drew Marshall, radio talk show host on Joy 1250, hopes his weekly show will help Christians understand how to meet that challenge. *The Drew Marshall Show* is said to be Canada’s most listened-to spiritual talk show. Weekly guests include an array of writers, thinkers, actors, and everyday people who are engaging in discussions of faith and life with God.

Marshall had what some might consider a strange childhood, helping with the family’s funeral-home business. As a struggling teenager, he went to Teen Ranch, a Christian camp, where he learned what it means to have a relationship with God. At 17, he surrendered his life to Christ. But his spiritual journey hasn’t been an easy one, and he’s intimately aware that Christians can and do struggle.

According to Marshall, there is too often a discrepancy between the image Christian communities reflect to the world, and what people truly need and



are longing for in their lives. Many look at the church and see people who seem to have it all together — and who have the same expectation of others. The broken, struggling, and unsure are tempted to steer clear. The reality is that none of us, inside or outside the church, has it all together. Few of us have our walk with God fully sorted out, and Marshall challenges us to be open with each other about these struggles. This openness can lead to a greater connection, not only with one another, but with Christ. We yearn, he says, for a thinning of the great divide between our humanity and our Creator.

Marshall wants to see a heightened sense of authenticity within the church. His concern is for those who feel they have to hide their pain and struggles from the faith community. For those on the outside looking in, that hiding can make Christians seem suspect or hypocritical.

As the Church in Canada opens itself up to the pain and brokenness of the people in its midst, Christians will become more real — to themselves and to those around

people”) who have been alienated by some aspects of the way our current western Christian culture packages what it means to be a Christian. “What I’ve discovered is there is a massive underground church of spiritually uncoordinated and spiritually wounded people who are in the middle of deciding what to do with this Jesus they bought into so long ago,” Marshall says. “Is He making a difference? Is He real? Is He the only way? They’re battling with those sorts of infantile questions that we all were supposed to have ironed out in our first year of Jesusville.”

In the process of exploring these questions, Marshall has ruffled feathers. Some have called him unconventional, even labeling him the Howard Stern of Christian talk-radio. Some are offended when he challenges pat answers and simple steps to overcome complex human and spiritual issues. “I go into the Christian book store and I see all these books about how to live successfully and how to overcome this, that, and the other thing in 12 easy steps. I don’t understand that stuff.”

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them. Churches will become more willing to admit mistakes and shortcomings.

People today are desperate for something real. Christians know that immanent reality is found in Christ. Marshall calls on the Church to reflect the really real truth of what is meant to walk with Christ.

“It’s not that the world wants to see a higher level of morality; they want to see a higher level of *reality*,” Marshall says. “I think the world wants to see us own up when we screw up instead of justifying and deflecting. Just own it. Just be real about it. They don’t want to see perfection in us, because they’re smart enough to know that’s not reality. But we need to be able to point to a perfect Christ.”

Through discussions with callers and guests, Marshall has found that there are Christians (he calls them “Jesus

Although he does discuss things others are unwilling to talk about, he constantly affirms that his goal isn’t to tear down. His mission is to prod the Church to think about how it can be more effective in reaching Canadians for Christ — both inside and outside of the church walls. “The only person who gets any victory from darkness is the Prince of Darkness,” Marshall says. “So if we keep this stuff hidden, that’s when he wins. And that’s how we feed our lives of sin.”

Marshall believes unexamined cultural Christianity can hinder a true relationship with Christ and that we need to work to reflect God’s love beyond the walls of the church. “We’re lazy,” he says. “We’re lazy with everything. And there’s a relational risk. I think we need to shut up and unconditionally love. That’s the bottom line.”  ©2008 BGEA