

What Does Love Look Like?

Ever been so good at your work that it got you in trouble? Deep trouble?

Yeah, me neither.

That was not the case for Han van Meegeren, one of Holland's best painters. Yes, he was an incredibly gifted painter—of other people's work. That's right. He was a forger.



But it wasn't his forgery that got him in trouble. It was his inability to prove he was a forger.

Early in his career (in the late 1920s), van Meegeren's own art pieces were panned by the critics. He was cheated by this, so he set out to prove he was as good as any of the masters. He studied their lives and techniques, crafted brushes like theirs, and developed paints that would mimic both color and age. He got good—*really good*—at copying the paintings of Johannes Vermeer. He copied 14 Vermeer paintings that were so good art critics praised them. The Rembrandt Society purchased one and Dutch museums showcased what they thought were original Vermeer paintings. Van Meegeren made, by today's standards, about \$25-30 million selling imitations.

But then the Nazis arrived. In 1942, van Meegeren's agent sold one of his fake Vermeer paintings, and it ended up in the collection of Hermann Göring. Now let's cut to the end of the war when the Allies were recovering stolen art and returning them to their rightful place. They found Göring's "Vermeer" and arrested van Meegeren because he had sold off art that belong to the Dutch. He was accused of being a Nazi collaborator.

The only way van Meegeren could clear his name was to fess up that the painting he sold was not an original, but a fake. Which is worse? Going to jail

for art forgery or for being in cahoots with the Nazis? Van Meegeren chose the former.

There was just one problem. **Van Meegeren was so good at his work, no one believed it was a fake.** It took six weeks to get others to step up and admit they knew van Meegeren was a forger and his works were fake.

Van Meegeren served one year in prison, but that was much better than what he could have faced as a Nazi profiteer.

"Be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph. 5:1).

That's a pretty tall order. We're not to be some cheap imitation, but like Van Meegeren's imitation Vermeer paintings, people should look at us and see Jesus. How do we get there? Let's talk to others with the same grace and truth He did. Let's model patience and humility like Jesus did. Let's love like Jesus did. First Corinthians 13 gives us a great description of love, and Jesus gives us a perfect example of what that love looks like.

What does love look like? It looks like Jesus. And that means love should look like us!

"Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another" (John 13:34).

I want to be so much like Jesus that people can't tell us apart. To love like Jesus, to see people as Jesus does, and to be gracious like Jesus is my life-long goal. I'm a far cry from it, but I've come a long way.

I'm not this yet ...



... but I'm no longer this:



And so I press on.