

THE MASK

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Ever consider a certain trait you exhibit and wish you could maybe just tweak it a little? There comes a point when our eyes are opened to the *risk* of vulnerability — and we have a choice about what we're going to do with that reality and we tremble a little at the nakedness of our open hearts. The bombardment of certain life circumstances can leave us bruised, broken and burned. And once we have faced the drowning assault of antagonistic and angry adversaries we resurface, gasping for breath, grasping for whatever we know might shield us... and we become careful. (Not to be confused with discernment which can be a life-giving alternative).

If our enemy's goal is to steal, kill, and destroy, then wouldn't it make sense that he would steal the beauty of offering our true selves? Kill the purest passions of

personality? Destroy the uniquely intriguing way we were created to instigate impact? I think (aside from our genuine selves) there's a second very real default we embrace when our confidence isn't up to the task of being "real."

We don a mask. It covers the real thing, because transparency can be painful.

It can seem safer, somehow, right? **But when we do this we're withholding something eternal, something glorious.** When fear and cynicism overshadows the power and beauty which extends from confidence in everything we were made to be... we better start taking a hard look at who we're listening to. And likewise, if our confidence stems from anything other than the bearer of truth, the authority over our self-definition, we should probably humble ourselves into a place where we can ask if our confidence is unshakable. Because all over his Word, God pours out his intentions with the way he designed us. He meant to do it the way he did. He — and no one else. **We were intended to offer our true selves,** to shed the "safer" mask, and walk confidently in the skin we were designed in.

"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb." — Psalm 139:13

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness." — Jeremiah 31:3

Consistency in our character, in our "way," is what stems from a confidence in knowing who we are and being comfortable in our skin. You know that feeling you get when you experience the love of another? They choose you. Flaws and all. And there is something unleashed in us that is beckoned to be the best of ourselves. **We are mistaken if we believe we can muster this kind of unshakable confidence and maintain longterm relationships if we are not renewing our sense of self in the only one with the informed authority to define us.** Our spouses, best friends, and even our church (gasp) is not meant to play this role long term. If that's what we expect, we'll either don a mask, or we'll ditch the relationship. Because people are imperfect. So we need grace. Grace that says; "Take off your mask. I accept that you are not the final call on my life. Imperfect as we both are, there is something tremendous we are meant to be, and I choose to cling to that vision."

Personalities and passions are like fingerprints. We have our unique "way" that tends to make us recognizable to those who have entered into our sphere. And just as our

fingerprints are found all over the places we touch, our personalities leave a mark on the people we do life with.

Take off your mask. We want the real you.