

Read these selections from *Living From The Heart Jesus Gave You* and *The Cure* and consider the ideas you've heard about in the video about boundaries. Think about the masks you may be tempted to wear, and why you may wear your masks.

Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You

by James G. Friesen, E. James Wilder, Anne M. Berlin, Rick Koepcke, and Maribeth Poole

“Will people grow up to be life-giving or life-draining? The family and community are the people who create the environment that nudges offspring in one of those two directions. One of those directions is guided by love bonds; the other is guided by fear bonds. That preparation for becoming a person, life-giving or life-draining, is then passed on to the next generation. We are all trained in this way to give others life – or to drain it from them.

But do not think that nothing can be done to correct faulty training. People create history – they become an active part of their world. The word “create” packs a lot of meaning. People can overcome shortcomings that result from faulty training, they can receive repair for traumas, and they can introduce improvements into the lives of those who are still in training. That is good news. People can help one another get unstuck and begin to mature once again. No wonder the Bible is so emphatic about loving one another, bearing each other’s burden, and being an active participant in the family of God!” (p. 49)

The Cure

by John Lynch, Bruce McNicol, and Bill Thrall

“I will – each of us will – be tempted to return to my mask each time I lose the confidence of my new identity. Daring to trust who Christ says I am, who He says He is in me, even when I feel I least deserve it and the old shame sweeps over me. This is the only way to keep the mask off, to keep feeling the cool breeze on my face.

There are times when it seems like those of us who believe in Jesus are wearing more masks, and we seem to wear them more often than those who don’t believe! What’s with that? The truth is, we face even more pressure as followers of Jesus. We are tempted to don our masks even more if we haven’t trusted our identity.

All of us are tempted to wear a mask when –

- we want to prove to others that we’re worthy of their love;
- we want to prove to ourselves that we’re worthy of being loved;
- we want others not to feel sorry for us;

- we fear if others see us truly, they won't want to know us;
- we want to be seen as great.

Believers in Christ additionally are tempted to wear a mask when -

- our failures tell us the experiment of grace didn't work;
- we want to prove to God that we're worth His choice to love us;
- we believe God wants us to fake it too, so He looks good;
- we want God to make our life work and our behavior seems like the price tag;
- we think God cares more about right behaviors than our trust and dependence;
- we think we're in competition with others, graded on a spiritual curve;
- our shame makes us believe we must assuage God's disgust in us.

Can you remember the first time you felt free enough to talk to God honestly? When you discovered you weren't hiding anything or pretending, no longer talking to Him in manufactured religious jargon? Maybe you just met Jesus, or maybe you first saw Him for who He truly is, in all His majesty, glory and goodness. It's a moment of freedom and raw unguarded hope like you'd never before imagined. It's like you could feel your own blood pulsing through your veins, so brightly alive! God waited an eternity for this moment. He knew He couldn't fully reveal Himself until He could cause you to risk trusting Him with who you really were. It was stunning. It took fear away. It broke lifelong patterns of dishonesty. People couldn't figure out what happened to you. You were wildly free, but safe. You were unguardedly alive, but more caring. You were full of life-giving joy, but more deeply sensitive to the pain in others. It painted your world in colors you didn't even know existed.

I had this same experience. But something happened in the following months and years. I lost confidence in His delight and new life in me was strong enough to haul away that giant mound of rotted cat food and mayonnaise, the failures I presumed stood between Him and me. I could point to aspects of my life that weren't changing fast enough. So, I gradually bought the sales pitch I'd have to find something else, something miraculous and mystical I'd receive if I could only prove I cared enough. I set about gallantly propping up my world.

Only now, because it was about God, the stakes were higher. I represented something other than just me, and the pressure was greater. Much greater. Soon, I was back trying to impress a God I imagined was growing more and more impatient with me. I learned to bluff, manipulating, and managing my persona to appear better than who I feared I was.

No one told me this two-faced life would severely stunt my growth.

Or that it would break my heart. No matter how many titles and accolades I accumulate, I remain wounded and immature – long on “success,” but short on dreams and substance. I admire people who live the truefaced life, but my loss of hope forces me to scramble for safety from behind a mask. The cost is horrific.

No one told me that when I wear a mask, only my mask receives love.

We can gain admiration and respect from behind a mask. We can even intimidate. But as long as we're behind a mask, any mask, we will not be able to receive love. Then, in our desperation to be loved, we'll rush to fashion more masks, hoping the next will give us what we're longing for: to be known, accepted, trusted and loved. This is no new phenomenon. Remember its source? God came in the cool of the day to be with Adam and Eve. He called out to a hiding Adam, “Where are you?” Though He knew very well where Adam was. Adam responded, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”

Afraid. Naked. Hidden. These were the first steps of a dance we've been stumbling to ever since. We become afraid because something we did or was done to us makes us feel naked. This nakedness cannot endure remaining uncovered. Nothing is more embarrassing or vulnerable than nakedness. Not knowing another option, we hide ourselves. Our dance now follows nearly identical steps. This shame – this self-awareness of their “uncleanness” – prompted Adam and Eve to fashion masks from leaves to hide what they now feared was true about them. It wasn't just that they had done something wrong. They were both convinced something was now uniquely and terribly wrong about them, with them. This is how shame works, and it's different from guilt. Guilt wants to lead us to forgiveness, to be cleaned. Shame drives us to hide, convinced we cannot truly be forgiven or made clean. It forced them and has forced us to cover ourselves with whatever is available at the time.

So, Adam and Eve covered their nakedness with fig leaves. And it worked. No more shame, no more hiding. And they lived happily ever after...

Umm...no.

They still hid! This is the earliest record result of sin management. It will not work. It hasn't ever worked. When I discover I'm still hiding, that probably should be the hint that whatever I've tried to cover my shame with hasn't taken.

It wasn't until they trusted that God did something – providing His own covering for them – that they could be free from hiding and condemnation. This is still true for me, many centuries

later. Any time I hurt another or make wrong choices, the way home is not by attempting to cover my failure through something I can do to pay God off. The way home is not effort, not amends, not heroic promise. The way home is trusting what God paid to cleanse me.

This life in Christ is not about what I can do to make myself worthy of His acceptance, but about daily trusting what He has done to make me worthy of His acceptance.

Back to the garden. On that day, all humanity learned how to look over shoulders; to dart glances; to say one thing and mean another; to hide fear, deceit and shame behind a nervous smile. That day, we learned how to give the appearance we're someone other than who we actually are.

We begin to lose hope we can be "fixed." So, we cover up. We put on a mask and begin bluffing. After a while, we can barely remember how to live any other way." (pp. 27-31)