

# Being Real

REMOVING OUR MASKS



LARRY DEASON

*Loving Relationships That Last Series*

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# **Being Real**

*Removing Our Masks*

*“Real people  
have an awareness of  
and a hold on reality  
because they  
are not preoccupied  
with masks.  
They can see clearly.”*

To the *wife of my youth* Helen,  
Affectionately known to me as “Muffie,”  
Who, through the years, has stood by my side  
and has been  
*The wind beneath my wings.*



## **Being Real**

### *Removing Our Masks*

#### ***To Be Or Not To Be***

Out of the West comes a masked man riding upon a white horse with a hearty, “Hi-yo Silver...” *The Lone Ranger!*—I loved that show. My pulse raced to the background music: *The William Tell Overture*. It was the story of the masked man, enforcing the law and defending justice with his faithful Indian comrade, Tonto. I especially liked the closing theme. You would see someone pick up the conspicuously laid silver bullet, curiously exclaiming, “A silver bullet!...Who was that masked man?” I thought about this masked man as I contemplated *realness*. He was concealing his identity to uphold justice as one of the rangers of the old West. But true identity is often masked for various other reasons.

The masking of oneself can become a serious source of distress in one’s life. In fact, it contributes to most of our problems. We conceal our true identity and mask what we really are, whether good or bad. We hesitate to reveal our true selves for fear of what others might think of us. If we are going to have good, solid relationships with God and others, we have to take off the masks! We have to come to grips with realness. We have to become authentic.

*Real People* was another very popular television show that became a great success. People were found who were willing to be themselves. This program had an appeal; it had something that attracted people, and that “something” was *reality*. There is a certain magnetism in realness.

Jesus Christ was real! No pretense—He was *Himself*: “I Am Who I Am.” No one ever found Him to be a counterfeit in any way. As He lived and taught the truth, people were drawn to Him. And He calls us to be real. He is our perfect example. By looking to Jesus and following Him as our model of realness, we can take off our masks and eliminate the myriad of problems unrealness causes in our lives. Jesus’ conversation with Pilate gives us helpful insight:

*“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”*

*“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.*

*Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to **the truth**. Everyone on the side of the truth listens to me.”*

*“What is truth?” Pilate asked.<sup>1</sup>*

Truth was personified before Pilate's very eyes! But he did not wait for an answer from Jesus. He was satisfied with his assumption that Christ was not a king. So he turned and walked away from the answer that only Jesus can give.

This question (what is truth?) had been a source of great disturbance and controversy to the schools of the Greeks and philosophers throughout the ages. Jesus would have given Pilate the answer had he not turned away. Thousands ask the same question, but are unwilling to investigate the Word of Truth, the Bible, for the answer; they, like Pilate, walk away in their self-willed ignorance and sins.

Simply stated, Jesus is the embodiment of truth. He is "truth" in its purest form. The word *truth*, translated from the Greek, means "real, genuine, authentic." The apostle John states:

*I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is **real, not counterfeit**—just as it has taught you, remain in him.<sup>2</sup>*

The apostle is warning of those who would lead us

astray and seduce us from the truth which is real.

When it comes to antiques or monetary things, we desire the authentic. We do not want counterfeit articles. We demand the *real thing!* If we buy an object of art, we expect it to be the genuine article. If we find that it is a duplication of the real, we are troubled. Isn't it amazing how displeased we can become over the phoniness of material things—yet, when it comes down to the unrealness of our own person, we seem not to mind? Our dishonesty with ourselves doesn't even deserve a second thought. All of our relationships suffer when we live deceptive and pretentious lives.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is seen talking with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. She repeatedly tries to distract Him from her deepest need: *the revealing of her real self*. However, Jesus quickly unmask her. She then perceives that He must be a prophet; with further exchange she comes to believe He must be the Christ. Jesus' comments to this Samaritan woman give us great understanding of God's thinking regarding *being real*:

*“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the authentic worshipers will worship the Father in a genuine spiritual attitude without the pretentious wearing of masks, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father*

*seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in genuineness of heart and in realness.”<sup>3</sup>*

Jesus is not concerned with the old forms of worship, such as ritual and place; He gives special emphasis to the *quality* of worship—*authenticity, realness, and genuineness*. God is not impressed by those who praise Him in a phony, pretentious, or hypocritical way. He seeks *real* people, *genuine* people, to worship Him. The Father looks for those who worship Him in a spiritual way—not merely in an outward, ritualistic way. He desires worship that emerges from the heart, not that which comes merely from the lips, as that of mask-wearers!

### ***The Confusion Of The Unreal***

Masks are worn for every occasion. Masquerading can cause our lives to deteriorate, many times even to the point of developing abnormal behavior. The problem in refusing to be real is this: *we lose sight of what is real and what is unreal*. When life is not faced realistically, confusion follows.

As painful as it may be—and it will be painful—we must face ourselves *as we really are*. Take off the masks! For how else can we begin to deal with

the real and sometimes threatening actualities that exist: withdrawal, frustration, depression, and suicidal tendencies?

Individual lives may become so entangled in the web of unrealness that they may need psychiatric assistance, as well as ongoing spiritual guidance, to learn to acknowledge their true feelings and face their real selves. Relationships become so torn and distorted that people need involved and arduous help in learning to become open, honest, and real with others.

Wearing masks begins in childhood. Many parents do not want to know the truth about their children's real feelings. They have a standard of social behavior that *they* want to believe about them. As a result, the children sometimes feel forced to put on a mask in order to be accepted. This way of hiding from reality is reinforced as the child continues to mature. Are the rising suicide fatalities among our young linked, in some way, to this?

We must learn to be sensitive to troubled people in the same way that Jesus was. He took the time to *see* the real and true person, and the problems that existed in the vulnerable and wounded, with a loving and giving response.

## *Ending The Masquerade*

No matter what we are, we are human, which means that we are going to possess some good and bad traits. We are going to manifest some strengths and weaknesses; we will have some pluses and minuses. But if we will not take off our masks, we cannot grow in overcoming our areas of weakness.

Who really wants to be phony or an imitation? Why do we, so often, insist on being unreal? We have a mask for any situation that might arise—all kinds of masks! We must remove the masks in order to be real.

We must *devote* ourselves to being real, if we are going to have healthy, open, and full relationships with God, ourselves, and others. We must own up to what we truly are. This will involve the *painful* experience of peeling off our masks. We've been hiding behind them for most of our lives, so self-disclosure will be very difficult to accomplish.

Are we human beings perfect, to the point of making no mistakes? No, but we would never admit it by the way that we present ourselves. We never say we are perfect; we just pretend that we are! We put on the "I am perfect" mask, but deep down inside we know the truth. As a result, we live fragmented lives, and wonder what is wrong.

One may be great, prestigious, wealthy, powerful, popular, and dignified in the eyes of men. He may be intelligent, wise, world renowned, and magnificent, not only in his own eyes, but in the eyes of many. But do all these things make him *real*?

Some of the most unreal people are those who are multifaceted, famous, and popular. The old expression, “all that glitters is not gold,” is a true statement. We are pretty good at “glittering.” But remember, it may not be gold, it may not be the real thing—not genuine! These people appear to be happy and satisfied, but are they? They have an *image* to protect. They formulate the image in their minds, imagining what they would like others to think of them. Consequently, these self-portraits are not their real selves. They ultimately lead distorted and frustrated lives. By not being real, one will suffer many painful consequences.

Years ago George Benson recorded a song called *The Masquerade*. One’s entire life can be a masquerade. Those who wear masks will never know the confidence and fullness they could experience by being sincerely themselves.

### ***The True Jesus Versus The Masked Hypocrites***

We *must* take to heart the reality of living that Jesus Christ teaches us. The greatest need for followers

of Jesus is this: to not be hypocrites, but to be genuine, to be real. Hypocrites don't wear buttons that say, "I am a hypocrite." It is not something one deliberately broadcasts. We shield our phoniness, we keep it deep down inside. But sooner or later, it comes to the surface!

As God's people, we come together to learn of Jesus' love and the qualities of His being. Many times, we mechanically fellowship with other Christians—going through the motions, instead of truly showing His love and His characteristics. Then we leave one another and go home, treating our families with a lack of love and Christlikeness. In other words, for the outside world we have put on a mask! But remember, hypocrisy exposes itself. This is a grim state of affairs for anyone claiming to follow Jesus. But this wayward person can find help.

Another great concern to be aware of and caution ourselves against is a *casual indifference* to the realness to which Jesus calls us. Christianity is more than just "going to church"; it is more than "praying prayers." It is much more than doing, doing, doing. A rocking horse has a lot of motion when you are rocking on it, but it doesn't go anywhere! We must come to terms with *being*, and then doing will naturally follow. Christlike actions will follow out of love, if we are genuinely seeking to be real in our relationship to Jesus.

There is an intense need to have a strong grasp on, and an appreciation for realness in an *earnest* way, as Jesus did. He constantly lived and taught authenticity and purity of heart. He challenged people to own up to their pretenses. Wherever He went, He could see the masks. He sees our masks, too, and He says to all, “Take off that mask! I will help you.” He helps us to know ourselves, recognize realness, and live the truth. Jesus reveals to us what we really are—as well as what we aren’t. He shows us what we truly can become: honest with life, others, ourselves, and especially with God. He recognizes phoniness and uncovers it; He acknowledges the real and encourages it.

### *Jesus Encounters The Real*

We can learn about being real from several characters in the New Testament. They came into the life of Jesus and expressed authenticity. They had their flaws, but they *wanted* to be real. They were willing to admit to whatever they were.

### *To Be Lowly Or Highminded*

Consider John the Baptizer.<sup>4</sup> Three things come quickly to mind concerning the quality of his life. First, he was *open* to God’s will; second, he was *obedient* to God’s command; and third, he was *humble* before the Lord.

Like this man, we need a spirit of humility. It is necessary to acknowledge the greatness of God and stop pretending to be greater than He. Earl Jabay's book, *The God Players*, discusses ways of looking at God's role in our lives. In subtle ways, even Christians fall prey to the "playing God" syndrome. Often, we believe and behave as though *everything* depends upon us. How untrue! If everything were contingent upon us, how long do you think we would survive? Let's face the truth, the reality—*God* is great and *everything* hinges upon Him! This acknowledgement should bring us to our knees and give us the humility of heart that John had.

A further look into the personality of this prophet who prepared the way for Christ shows us that he "wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey."<sup>5</sup> He did not care about maintaining a reputation with the main stream, in order to be accepted. Rather, he remained true to himself. He didn't disguise himself to be favored by others.

We need to understand that realness implies the *uniqueness* and *significance* of the individual. We must not reject people because they don't fit our mold of what we think they should be.

## *To Be Receptive Or Non-Receptive*

Reflect upon the “real” characters that are seen in the parable of the four different types of soil.<sup>6</sup> Some seed was sown on good soil, representing those who are real, open. As a result they live true lives. Open people, “like seed sown on good soil, *hear* the word, *accept* it, and *produce* a crop...”<sup>7</sup> Because of their receptivity, they live productive lives that exude realness. They don’t wear masks!

The soil called “good” was *actually* good. It was pretending to be good; it wasn’t merely presenting itself as something favorable which it later did not prove to be. It *was* good!

But how are we to know that certain soil is good unless we actually sow the seed there? We must not be soil examiners! This false concept is a violation of the teaching. The seed was thrown *everywhere*, without a judgmental attitude. I abhor the discriminating disposition of those who prejudge whether or not a certain heart will receive the gospel, don’t you? Who, but God, can rightfully judge whether or not a human heart *will* be open or *when* it will be receptive?

In order for a person to accept the gospel, he must take off the mask, and see and accept himself as a sinner. This requires being real. And as we know,

it can be very difficult and may take some time. It takes patience and understanding on the sower's part. We must not give up on people because of their first reaction. Instead, we must nurture the soil, and wait upon the Lord to do His work!

### *To Be Courageous Or Cowardly*

Another “real” person in the Scriptures is the woman who was subject to a bleeding disease for 12 years.<sup>8</sup> She spent all of her money on doctors, searching for a cure. It looked hopeless; then Jesus came. She pushed through the crowd around Him and touched His clothing, believing she would be healed. Her bleeding stopped. Jesus questioned immediately:

*“Who touched my clothes?”...Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.<sup>9</sup>*

She hid at first. Then she courageously removed her mask and revealed herself to Jesus. That took being real. Although she had spent many years seeking healing from many physicians, she held hope in her heart. She did not close out new possibilities. She was *open*—a fundamental disposition of heart that characterizes realness. In fact, she believed and expected to be helped. Jesus told her: “...your

faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”<sup>10</sup> Openness and realness frees us not only from bodily suffering, but also from inner misery. Be real! God will bless your open-heartedness more than you can imagine.

### *To Be Persistent Or Passive*

As Jesus was leaving the city of Jericho, a blind man, begging on the side of the road, called out to Him:

*“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”  
Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet,  
but he shouted all the more...<sup>11</sup>*

In spite of their intimidating remarks, this man did not withdraw. He was not concerned about what people thought. He was himself: real.

Blind Bartimaeus was humble before the people and lowly before the Lord. He was persistent in crying out, “Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, have mercy on me!” Jesus heard his cries and called him to come. Those who had tried to quiet him now helped him! Isn’t that so like people who wear masks? But Bartimaeus wasn’t wearing one. He was honest and refused to be embarrassed. And he didn’t give up.<sup>12</sup>

I believe tribulations and misfortunes that come to us in life can cause us to be the real people we need to be. If trouble and tragedy bring us to the point of humility, enabling us to become real, then let them come!

### *To Be Aware Or Unaware*

An open and unashamed person was Mary of Bethany. She, like the others, was meek and humble: real before the Lord. She got down on her hands and knees, and with an expensive perfume, anointed Jesus' feet and then wiped them with her hair. Here is genuineness, authenticity—no phoni-ness.

It is recorded that she poured the perfume both on his head and feet. To anoint the head was common, but to anoint the feet showed a true mark of humility and love. Mary wasn't frightened into hiding her feelings for the Lord; she openly expressed them. This is, without question, *realness*.

When others who were present objected to her wasting the expensive perfume on this manner (for they thought it should have been used for the poor), Jesus responded:

*“Leave her alone...Why are you bothering her?...The poor you will always have with*

*you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.”*<sup>13</sup>

Mary was *perceptive*. Real people have an awareness of, and a hold on, reality because they are not preoccupied with masks. They can see clearly. They are not leading distorted lives, and consequently, can readily assimilate truth.

The main characteristics of the Good Soil, the Woman with the bleeding disease, John, Bartimaeus, and Mary can be concisely summarized as follows: *they were what they were*. Can we appreciate this simple fact? I have found that this non-complex description of realness is too simple for many to receive. But, think about it: who is a real person? A real person is a person *as he is*. Why must we try to be something that we aren't? Think long and hard about this, and absorb what has been learned thus far from these real people who were touched by Jesus' life.

### ***Some Of The Many Masks We Wear***

First, there is the “tough guy” mask. One day, I was driving my car (approximate weight: five thousand pounds) into my subdivision at a slow speed. As

I approached the street where I lived, I noticed a neighborhood boy, age five, (approximate weight: fifty-five pounds) jumping out into the middle of the street. He was in a “tough guy” stance. He was probably pretending to be one of those fictitious, incredibly super-strong television personalities. There he was—something *other* than himself!

I said to myself, “I am going to test this little fellow.” I wasn’t endangering his life, I would never do that, but I just kept driving at the same speed. *Reality* came crashing in on him quite quickly as I got closer and closer. He jumped back on the curb, long before I got to him. We learn to be pretenders at a very early age, but fortunately, at any age, the “pressures of life” can bring us to our knees before tragedy occurs.

Every generation of young people wears the “I am tough” mask. Back in the fifties I used to wear a “tough, I am cool” mask (two masks in one!). You had to muster up a lot of “something you didn’t have” to present this facade. You had to look “cool” and act like you really were tough. But behind the mask, you knew you weren’t. You would hope and pray that no one would pull off that mask.

I will never forget how real I became one day when one of my peers in school, wearing his “I am tougher than you” mask, drew a knife on me. Suddenly, I

became very honest! Reality shook my phony self-image upon seeing that long, shiny blade—“Okay, okay, I was just kidding; I’m not tough. Here, see? I’m shaking.” I tore off the mask without delay! Why do we have to wait until our lives are endangered before we become real?

Another camouflage is the “I know all things” mask. Preachers, elders, and teachers sometimes wear this mask. I was acquainted with a preacher who received a request from some young students to study the book of Revelation. To their expressed desire he responded, “You are not ready for that yet.” How did he know they weren’t ready for it? They were certainly interested in understanding it. Who was he to make that judgment on their intelligence? I suspected (I didn’t really know) that *he* wasn’t ready to teach it, and he didn’t want to reveal that!

We should have the attitude that we don’t know *all* things, because we actually don’t. Be honest. Be genuine. You won’t be scorned for admitting you’re cognizant of all knowledge; rather, you will be respected for being real.

When I lived in New Zealand, I was having an in-depth conversation with a gentleman who had been a stockbroker on Wall Street in New York City. He was very successful, but had become disenchanted

with life and was shattered over a broken relationship. He had a pack on his back and was traveling around the world. As he came through where we lived, he spent the night with us.

As we were seated on the front steps of our house, gazing at a beautiful sunset, our overnight guest presented many philosophical speculations and questions about life. I would give answers from the Word of the Lord. He would question things concerning the origin of life, the world, living, and dying; and I would respond from the principles of Truth in God's Word.

Our dialogue had gone for some time when, in a friendly way, he asked, "Is there *anything* you don't know?" I replied, "Well, yes, but we just haven't discussed it yet." That was true. I know some things; and the things I know, I know. But what I don't know, I have learned to admit. One cannot *continue* to grow in "grace and knowledge" as long as he is under the delusion that he already "knows it all"!

The sciences have a real struggle with knowledge. Human beings will never have the capability of knowing all that belongs only to God. We need to see and accept this fact and live accordingly. We cannot be omniscient; only God is. So go on, throw off that old "I know it all" mask.

Many people have become conditioned to wearing the “I’m just fine” mask. We put on a smile when we are greeted, and when we are asked how we are, we usually respond with the words “I’m fine” or “I’m OK”—regardless of what the true situation may be.

A young lady came to the church assembly one evening, *appearing* to be “alright.” When someone asked, “How are you doing tonight?”—she answered, “Just fine.” Several nights later she committed suicide. Was she really “just fine”? No—she obviously was masking an enormous amount of pain, frustration, and confusion.

A young man came to a Bible study, discussed the Scriptures, and *seemed* happy and joyful in the Lord. Before the next Bible study, which he always attended, he killed himself. Was “everything fine”?

Many are so afraid to show their *real* feelings, even in the body of Christ. They are not only afraid to reveal themselves for their own fear of what others may think of them, but they also may have real reason to hide.

Most people don’t know how to react to open expression of emotional pain. It is not what they *expect* to hear or see. How many times have we seen

someone crying, and instead of showing our concern and approaching that person, we turn away in fear or embarrassment, not knowing how to relate to this kind of transparency and candidness—this realness?

This is a problem to which we should give more attention. We must become open to seeing what really *is*, and not be afraid to lovingly respond. Sometimes, all that hurting people need is someone to genuinely listen to them. Aren't we, as Christians who are filled with the love of Christ, capable of doing that? We may not understand the situation, but we can be understanding and caring. This will make a big difference in the way people open themselves, knowing they won't be rejected or despised for being themselves, whoever they may be.

Consider yet another disguise: the “holier than thou” mask. No doubt, the Lord is painfully displeased with one who wears this mask. This person puts on a pious, snobbish air and looks down upon his fellow human beings. This is especially distressing when it happens among those who are related to each other by the blood of the Lamb.

These mask-wearers, like the legalistic Pharisees, “put on a show,” but in everyday life, they don't serve and worship the Lord from the heart. Observe how strongly the Lord rebukes those who wear this mask:

*“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their **hearts** are far from me. They worship me in vain...’”<sup>14</sup>*

Because they were only putting on a display, their worship was *in vain!* It counted as nothing before the Lord. We need to face up to our real selves, sin and all, seeing ourselves as we *truly are*. God sees through the “holier than thou” mask; we cannot hide from Him. This is a problem of the heart, making it a most difficult mask to remove; but it can be done, if we truly want to please the Lord.

Finally, there is the “I’ve got it all together” mask. This is an arrogant false face! It is indicative of the lie that “I can do all things” in and of myself. Behind this mask, people are about to break; physically and emotionally they are wrecks. These people push, push, push, to the point of exhaustion. Yes, we can do all things, but only *with Christ*.

This, too, may be a difficult lesson to learn; we resist stepping aside to give our whole selves up to Jesus and his power. But when we do, we can withstand any inward or outward pressure that life inflicts on us.

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”<sup>15</sup> This passage does *not* teach, “I can do

all things, at one time, all the time.” Many believe they can do this, and they experience “burn out.” They stress themselves to the maximum, and can’t go on, believing themselves to be failures. But the problem is clear: they are hiding behind the belief that they “have it *all* together.” We need to follow more closely the example of Jesus. He often went aside and rested. This is something all of us need to do: pace ourselves, practice an honest balance.

A woman entered a second-hand store and bought an inexpensive, old painting for the frame. When she got it home, she and her husband began examining the canvas before removing it from the frame. They noticed that there was another painting underneath the surface. They had it appraised by an expert and it was revealed that the painting hidden underneath was worth forty or fifty thousand dollars!

The authentic was camouflaged. This is where realness is, this is where beauty is, and this is where value is: *underneath* the facade. We must shed all those masks we wear in order to honestly give our hearts and our true selves to God and others. This is crucial in becoming real—like Christ.

### ***The Tendency To Hide***

The primary cause of wearing a mask is seen in the historical account of mankind’s first pair.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden, they listened to the lies of the Devil. Satan's statement to them, "You surely shall not die," was an out-and-out denial of God's words! They chose to disobey the *truth* of God and acted according to the *lie* of Satan.

They were no longer living in agreement with the truth, but began *hiding* behind a lie. Their dishonesty with themselves caused the breakdown of a true and honest relationship with God and each other. They began to wear masks.

*Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD...*<sup>16</sup>

Sin (dishonesty, obeying a lie) causes separation and alienation. It causes people to hide from one another and from God. Consequently, we become superficial human beings. The real person is disguised.

But the true God continues to reach out to man in spite of his living a lie. God called out to Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" And Adam replied, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."<sup>17</sup>

He told a half-truth: the truth of the matter was that he was hiding, mainly because he had disobeyed the Lord and was ashamed. He was no longer an authentic human being. He did not openly communicate with God.<sup>18</sup> He tried to hide the truth of his selfishness. He could no longer be looked upon as being honest, as being real.

A separation has taken place in man's relationship with God, which causes a dishonesty in his relationship with *himself*. He no longer faces up to *his own* true being; therefore, how can he be honest with *others*?

To overcome this built-in dishonesty with oneself and others, one must search for the truth. Seeking the truth concerning oneself is both painful and humbling. For the most part, man likes to hide behind self-control and self-sufficiency. These are hard barriers to break down in becoming real with oneself, God, and others.

### ***Selfishness—The Root Of Perfectionism***

Selfish pride is usually the root of our tendency toward hiding our real selves. We want to be perfect (for our own sake); but deep down inside we know we are not. So we continue to wear the mask. We hide, or worse, deny our weaknesses and imperfections. We should rethink the concept of perfection.

We should only seek to be perfect with *God's power*, for *His glory*, not merely for our own personal achievement.

Selfish pride spills over into our expectations of others. We desire perfection in those around us. We don't accept people for their real selves, weakness and all. We become scrutinizing, ruthless judges, rather than (like Jesus) loving and accepting of others, in spite of their imperfections.

We all miss the mark at times, no matter how hard we try. The sooner we see the truth of this in ourselves, the sooner we can become like Jesus—understanding, less demanding, and most of all, *real*. Then we will help one another grow in Christ. We will build each other up on a consistent basis. This is what we are commanded to do.<sup>19</sup> And we can, if we take off the mask and admit that we need help. We are not *self*-sufficient; we need Jesus to live a true and faithful life.

### ***Becoming Real Before God***

God is truth and we must look to Him in becoming real. We cannot hide from Him; therefore we must acknowledge that all we are is exposed before Him. It is a desired relationship with God that will cause us to take on the predominant quality of Jesus' life: realness.

When we read the Scriptures and respond in sincerity and truth, learning Jesus' ways, we are then developing an *open* relationship with the Lord. Another way we can establish real communication with God is to pray earnestly and constantly. Our entire lives should be a prayer before the Lord. Everything we think, say, and do should be offered up to Him in praise!<sup>20</sup>

We should also recognize the fact that God uses others to communicate with us in His providential care. If we acknowledge this, we can then develop open relationships with others, if we *truly want* to be real before God. We must *desire* authenticity, without pretense, in our relationships, in order to be able to take off the masks and receive God's guidance through others.

### ***Becoming Real With Ourselves***

How do we learn to be honest with ourselves? We must accept and change the attitudes of heart and the roots of our thinking that cause us to be self-deceptive.

We often veil our true selves with the habit of rationalization: we attempt to justify our selfish behavior. We also use the process of projection: we see our faults in others, not ourselves. There is another powerful way of being unreal with ourselves—repression.

We deny unpleasant realities. We are protecting our ego. We are not being truthful with ourselves.<sup>21</sup>

There is a solution to this problem that comes from the Spirit of God. We must listen to Him through His Word:

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; **it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.** Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.<sup>22</sup>*

The divine Word is alive to us. It is convicting, it searches for a genuineness of heart, and it discloses the real self. The searching light of God's Word discerns the motives and secret thoughts and feelings of our being.

We are not left on our own to become real with ourselves. Jesus will help us become real.

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.<sup>23</sup>*

Jesus was tempted in three areas: self, others, and God. We surely can identify with Him. Jesus set the perfect example for us to follow. He was triumphant over these temptations of the inner-self and remained honest and real!

### ***Becoming Real With Others***

If we have become real with the Lord as well as ourselves, we can then become real and honest in our communication with others. If we have realized that God is the one Being from whom we cannot hide, we then will let Him teach us to be real with ourselves. As mentioned before, the root of our dishonesty with the Lord, ourselves, and others is selfish pride. Thus, if we recognize this arrogance in ourselves, we can then have a change of heart and become real people.

As real people we can honestly communicate with others. But this will take time and effort on our part. We live in a world that is too busy. We sometimes, as a result, become superficial. It's easier; it doesn't take as much time.

*We need to take time for others*, as Jesus did. His entire life was devoted to others!

The first century believers “devoted themselves to fellowship.” They did this on a daily basis, not just

one or two days a week for an hour or so. *We need to recapture that devotion to fellowship and togetherness.*

These early believers helped one another at all costs. *We need to stop and see others where they are*, not only physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Then we must not shrink back behind a mask, but, rather, openly communicate with them and help them.

*We must see the value and worth in others.* Herein is the motivation that will help us become willing, honest, “other-people-persons.” If we have taken off our own masks, we should care enough to help others become free, and lovingly assist them in taking off theirs. Jesus did. We can too, if we take the time, and see the value in God, ourselves, and others.

Be real. Throw away the masks! Then, you’ll become unchained: liberated from living behind a false front.

*“...if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”<sup>24</sup>*

When we follow Jesus and the truth of His teachings, we will no longer be enslaved to the sin of pride (either directly or indirectly), which causes us to be unreal.

If we will dedicate ourselves to following Jesus' likeness in life, then we "will know the truth, and the *truth* will set [us] free."<sup>25</sup> Most assuredly, we will be free from hiding; we'll stand unveiled, cast off all falsehood, express our true persons—and we *will* become real!

### *Postscript*

I cannot put my pen down without encouraging you just one more time: Take off all those masks and throw them away! You don't really *need* them, do you?

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>John 18:36-38.

<sup>21</sup>John 2:26-27.

<sup>3</sup>John 4:23-24 (paraphrase, L. Deason).

<sup>4</sup>See Mark 1:4-8.

<sup>5</sup>Mark 1:6.

<sup>6</sup>Read Mark 4:3-20.

<sup>7</sup>Mark 4:20.

<sup>8</sup>See Mark 5:25-34.

<sup>9</sup>Mark 5:30, 33.

<sup>10</sup>Mark 5:34.

<sup>11</sup>Mark 10:47-48.

<sup>12</sup>Read Luke 18:35-43.

<sup>13</sup>Mark 14:6-8.

<sup>14</sup>Matt. 15:7-9.

<sup>15</sup>Phil. 4:13.

<sup>16</sup>Gen. 3:8.

<sup>17</sup>Gen. 3:10.

<sup>18</sup>J. Grant Howard, *The Trauma of Transparency* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1979), 25-30.

<sup>19</sup>Read Eph. 4:29.

<sup>20</sup>See Heb. 13:15.

<sup>21</sup>Howard, *Trauma*, 14.

<sup>22</sup>Heb. 4:12-13.

<sup>23</sup>Heb. 4:15.

<sup>24</sup>John 8:36.

<sup>25</sup>John 8:32.



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