

Like Lipstick on a Pig: Putting on a 'Manly' Mask

Be vulnerable. That doesn't sound like some inspiring manhood challenge. In fact, it almost seems like the opposite ... admit weakness?

At first, that sounds terrifying for most of us—to let someone else see our secrets and struggles and insecurities. But the truth of the matter is that a man is never so bold or brave or strong as when he gets gut-level honest with himself and other trustworthy men. When he takes off the mask that he's hiding behind, the mask that lets him prop up this fake self that he thinks makes him look like he's got it all together.

The funny thing is that while all of us want to act like we have it all together, none of us really do—none of us. We all have struggles. We all have challenges. We all have idols. We all have secrets we'd rather others not know about. We all have insecurities.

Here's the deal. God's grace gives us the freedom to drop the mask, to be honest with ourselves and others, to quit playing games. God's grace is based on His nature, not our perfect behavior. It's only when we let ourselves be vulnerable and transparent and take off the mask that His grace can truly penetrate our soul. That's when we can experience the freedom that He wants us to have in Him.

Guys, we're all in this thing together. Let's quit playing games. Let's quit playing a stupid game that we think is helping us but is only hurting us. We're just fooling ourselves when we're trying to cover up with a mask. It's like putting lipstick on a pig; it's not very effective. Let's learn to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves and other men so we can enjoy God's best: the freedom to rest in His grace.

So, how do we do this? First, we have to be willing to be honest with ourselves. We have to understand our own hearts. We have to have the courage to be imperfect and stop pretending that we are. Then we need to find another guy or guys we can trust and be honest with them about what's going on with us—what we're struggling with, what we're insecure about. It's what we call in *33: A Man and His Traps* "ruthless honesty."

Yes, it can feel difficult and scary on the front end, but for guys willing to go there, it's the most freeing thing they'll ever experience in their lives. No doubt, it takes courage. In fact, the original meaning of the word *courage* in the English language was "to tell the story of who you are with all of your heart." What this really means is to have the courage to be imperfect. We all know that none of us are perfect. Let's stop pretending and give ourselves a chance to receive the better things God has for us.

Being real. Taking the mask off. It's something most guys have been conditioned not to do so they appear to have it all together—to appear to be who they think they should be instead of who they really are. A lot of guys shy away from being vulnerable, but if you give it a chance, you'll learn that it's the birthplace of real joy, connection, belonging and love. Things that all of us need.

In *A Man and His Traps*, we help men pursue this ruthless honesty that will change their lives. We even help them personally identify the things they need to be talking about with other men. In the series, our presenters—Tierce Green, John Bryson and Bryan Carter—do a great job modeling this. Each one of them shares a personal testimony that reveals some of their own personal struggles. They share some things a lot of us might be tempted to hide because they show failure and imperfection in their lives. It's absolutely refreshing and inspiring to feel the power of their ruthless honesty and how it has helped them grow personally.

It's interesting—the more vulnerable the guys become in their testimonies, the more respect I find myself feeling for them. I see guys having the courage to be imperfect. Not resting in it by any means. But their willingness to be vulnerable has given them a chance to move beyond their struggles.

I'd love to keep going and tell you what they share, but I'm going to let you experience it for yourself. Their spoken words and emotions are too powerful to try to put into written words. As you watch them for yourself, I hope that their courage will inspire you to give yourself a chance to experience the joy and freedom that comes from transparency and vulnerability. They definitely inspired me!

Steve Snider is the founder of Fellowship Associates and Authentic Manhood, which is designed to inspire and equip men to live lives of truth, passion and purpose. He loves to see men come alive and chase God's better things with their lives. Steve serves on the boards of Fellowship Bible Church and Pulaski Academy College Prep School.

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