

No More Masks

by Joyce Meyer

So many times we struggle to be real. We act one way on the outside, but we're actually different on the inside. Because we have weaknesses, faults and fears—things that we think make us less likable or desirable—we'd rather hide them from other people.

Over time, we devise masks to effectively hide our blemishes and give others a different perception of who we really are. In fact, we've become so comfortable with our masks that we forget we're wearing them.

But pride, shame or fear keeps us from taking off the disguises and revealing our true identities to others—even those we love. The thought of shedding the layers of deception and defenses and standing exposed to the world is more than many of us can bear.

The desire to be accepted and liked is so strong in us that we will do almost anything to feel validated.

When we were children, if we felt that we were not being loved or accepted for who we were, we would change. We would completely reinvent ourselves. Like a chameleon, we would change our outer appearances and attitudes so we could fit in better with our surroundings. But inside that chameleon stays the same—it can't change what it is.

The same is true of each of us. We can change the outside, but we can't revise who we really are deep down inside.

The danger of wearing a mask, of course, is that it misrepresents us. What other people see is a lie. It's not who we are or who we were born to be.

By the time we reach adulthood, we've had years of experience

in role-playing and covering up. Our masks have become as comfortable as an old pair of slippers—and we've lost touch with who we really are. We have spent so many years hiding that we've forgotten those things about ourselves that make us different and special.

What a waste! A loving Father who rejoices in our individuality uniquely created each of us. In fact, it's the distinctive things about us, not our "sameness," that make us special to Him.

The little girl with freckles, the young man with dimples and the beloved gray-haired grandparents with the sweet smiles—they all stand out because they are special. And you are special too!

We all have fears and weaknesses. We're all less than perfect and wish we were better. But we need to realize that God loves us just the way we are right now, and His love for us will never diminish.

And there's more good news. Second Corinthians 3:18 says that "all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another" (Amplified Bible).

This means that when we believe and cooperate with God's good plan for our lives, He will help us to let down the defenses we've had up for so long. God knows how badly we want to fit in, but His love is powerful enough to reach beyond our willingness to hide our faults in our effort to gain acceptance.

Trust Him enough to take off your mask and look into the mirror of His Word. You will find as I have that you are being changed, little by little, into the very image of your Lord.

Eventually, all the good things that God has done in us will begin to show on the outside and cause others to become hungry for what we have. As we continue to follow Jesus as our example, people will want to follow us. This is the higher standard that we are called to live by as Christians.

God wants us to honor Him with our lives and our love toward others. As genuine worshipers of the Lord, let us resist the temptation to “play the imposter” and endeavor to be real.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times best-selling author and one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She has written more than 70 books, including the popular *Beauty for Ashes* and *Battlefield of the Mind*, and her most recent, *The Power of Simple Prayer* (all FaithWords). She is also the founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. and the host of *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide.