



FREE TO BE A MAN

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TAKE THE MASK OFF AND RIDE THE OPEN ROAD OF GRACE!

Many men try to hide and pretend they are not broken. But this only leads to more hiding, pretending, and despair—and nothing ever changes. We fear that God is almost never pleased.

This study will lead us into the light between two very different underlying motives: our determination to please God or to trust him. One results in a striving that never feels it has done enough to please him. The other results in a trust that experiences his full pleasure.

Our motives as Jesus followers will either keep us enslaved in our hiding or free us into God's Adventure for our lives. Let's discover the Open Road of Grace together!

Ride ON!

TAKE THE MASK OFF!

Galatians 5:1 Romans 5:20, 21 Ephesians 2:8-10

TAKE THE MASK OFF – AFRAID TO REVEAL YOUR TRUE FACE!

1. **LIVING IN DENIAL** → We've lost our confidence that we will always please our audience, so we feel compelled to hide and put on a mask. *"Whew! I'm glad I'm not like that guy. Imagine, lying to people about who you are! Making up stories and almost believing them yourself! That's messed up!"* (1 Samuel 13:6-14; James 1:22-24).
2. **HYPOCRITE** → The ancient Greeks loved their theater. All the actors held a pole that carried an enormous papier-mache' mask that portrayed their predominant nature—good or evil. These performers were not called actors, but hypocrites, literally, "one who wears a mask."
3. **MASKS** → We are all performers, so we feel compelled to hide and put on a mask. We fear exposure because we have lost confidence that we or anyone else, God included, can help us (1 Sam. 16:21, 18:8,9). We have dozens of masks, including:
 1. The "happy" mask.
 2. The "I'm better than most" mask.
 3. The "I'm very together" mask.
 4. The "I'm a victim of others" mask.
 5. The "I don't care" mask.
 6. The "I am self-sufficient" mask.
 7. The "I'm very important" mask.
 8. The "I'm competent" mask.
 9. The "I'm the expert" mask.
 10. The "I'm not hurt" mask.

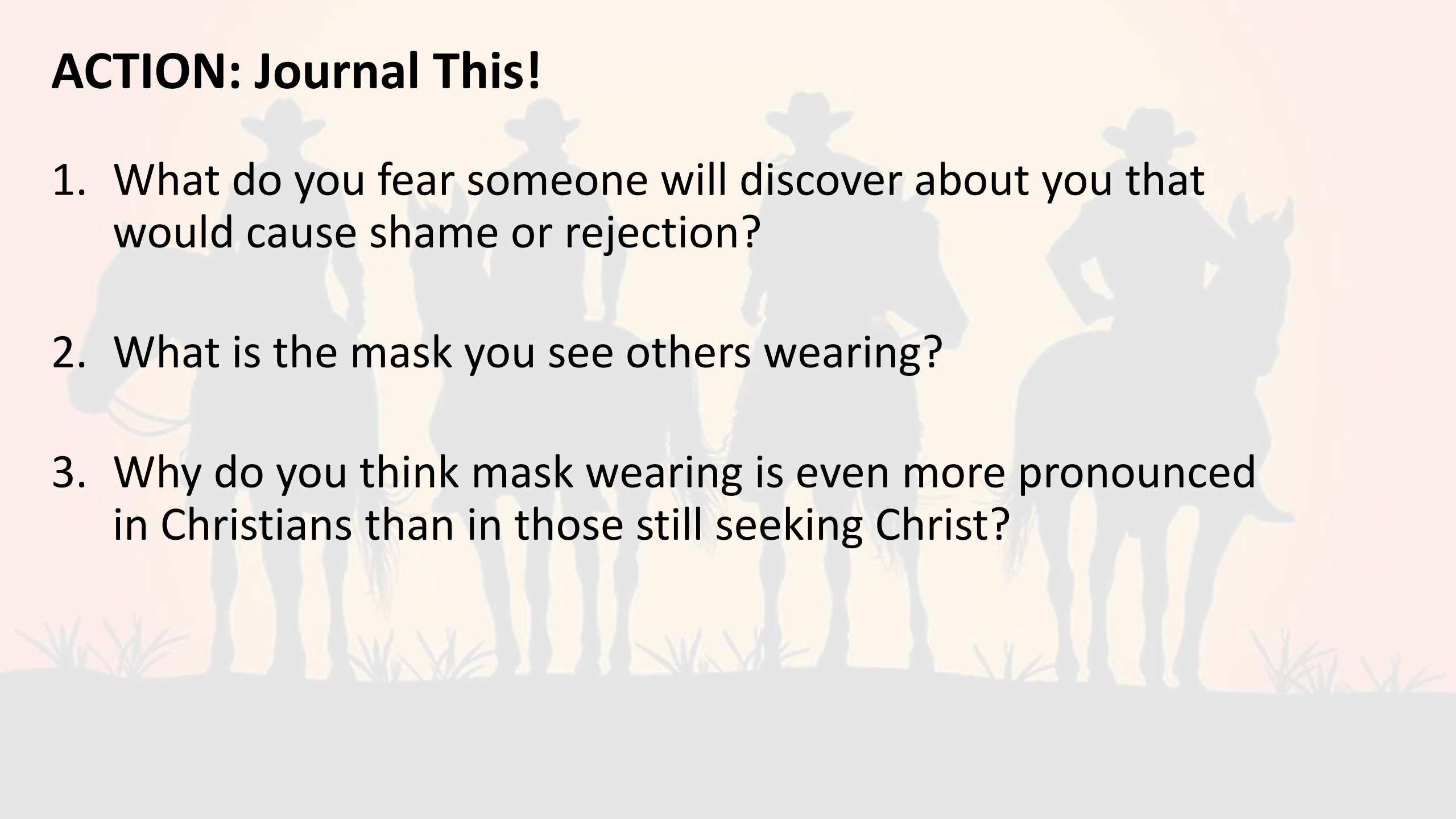
TAKE THE MASK OFF – 3 GROUPS OF MASK WEARERS!

1. **DOING JUST FINE** → Men who are surrounded by nicely scrubbed people who smile broadly and shake each others' hand firmly. "Just Fine" people need to acknowledge the truth: "We are not fine!" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). "Doing Just Fine" group masquerade paints a deeply dishonest caricature of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Christ came to free us of hiding pain and unresolved junk, but we choose to pretend our lives are something they are not. The risk of rejection and alienation is too great.
2. **GET BETTER** → Men who are looking for the next new technique that promises to help change us. We go from book to book, seminar, to church hoping that we can find the answer. We read about concepts and strategies that have promised to change us, but we remain ultimately unchanged ... and we know it ... and we fear that others are beginning to know it.
3. **BETTER THAN** → This is the "together" group, the postcard family: well-educated, well-heeled, well-groomed, well-assured, etc. We don't need help or answers; we are help and answers. Always well stocked with teaching for others, we have little need of anyone to teach us. We are right, and if only others could learn from us, they would be able to get on with their little lives.

TAKE THE MASK OFF – GREAT NEWS!

1. **CONVINCE OTHERS** → When we wear a mask, we convince others that:
 1. They too must present an Idealized Self and wear a mask.
 2. New life in Christ doesn't work.
 5. Self-protection is the only hope. It is better to be unknown than to risk rejection.
2. **TEACH OTHERS** → When we wear a mask, we teach others:
 1. To live in a guarded way.
 2. To live a life of comparison, envy, and jealousy.
 3. To trade vulnerability for the veneer of safety.
3. **GOD MAKES A WAY** → The Good News ... ME TOO! Almost all of us, at some time, resort to appearances, to mask-wearing. When we admit that the old answers don't work anymore, we stop reading authors with nice-sounding platitudes and slogans, and we become hungry for books that don't deny pain or tell you to keep trying what hasn't worked before. *"Father, come reveal to me my true face, reflecting yours."* See Romans 5:20, 21 and Ephesians 2:8-10.

ACTION: Journal This!

1. What do you fear someone will discover about you that would cause shame or rejection?
 2. What is the mask you see others wearing?
 3. Why do you think mask wearing is even more pronounced in Christians than in those still seeking Christ?
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- The background of the slide features a soft, warm sunset gradient. Overlaid on this are the silhouettes of four cowboys riding horses. They are positioned in a line across the middle ground, facing right. The cowboys are wearing wide-brimmed hats and are dressed in traditional Western attire. The horses are also silhouetted, and the overall scene is peaceful and evocative of a Western landscape.