

The Mask Writing Enclosure to help you write your mask.

One mask that I wear is that of “The Sacrificial Lamb”. This mask has been a mask that has probably followed me all through ministry; however, it has only been just recently that I came to terms with it. Often I find myself burning the candle at both ends. Much of the real reason is that I find great satisfaction in two things:

#1 the adrenaline high that comes from pulling off time management miracles

#2 the sympathy I receive from others when I express the sacrifices I make for serving God.

This mask links extremely well with another mask that I wear that of “Super Christian”. Let me first describe this mask and then explain the tie. Super Christian is seen by everyone. I let this one be seen when I am preaching, when I am doing Teen Encounters, when I am doing Campus Training. This mask covers up much of the Spiritual turmoil that I battle with. This battle comes from the lack of time spent in personal devotion time with God. Therefore the link of Super Christian and the sacrificial lamb. I in my own mind will create numerous excuses for my devotion time negligence like; I don’t have time because I am too busy sacrificing for God. These masks do not benefit anyone, especially my family and myself. My family receives the excuses of lack of time with them because I am sacrificing for God, God hears the excuses, I am too busy to spend time with you today. It’s a vicious circle, one that tends to be impossible to get out of unless I prioritize my life. That is exactly where the Lord has me. Unfortunately this mask has been a part of me for a long time and the habits are strong and not easy to break. Especially when you get the strokes and the adrenaline Highs. Mostly, these masks hurt God; I know that He often waits patiently for me to spend time with Him. Tears must flow down His face much like the disappointment I see in my sons face when I tell him I can’t come out and play because I am too busy. If I am too busy for God and family who really is my God. I guess you could say it looks a lot like me. This mask has absolutely no good side to it. It hurts me and those I’m around. The reason I share it with you, out of embarrassment, is because of accountability that is uncured by sharing it and it keeps the need for change in front of me on a regular basis.

Another mask that I wear is that of “Mr. Perfect”. I want people to look at me and see the perfect Youth Alive Director, husband and father. I want those that I am around to see me as the ideal person who has all the right answers for every question and never makes a mistake. I want to say and do the right thing in every situation. Deep down inside though I question my abilities to lead and why God would choose me. Sometimes I get so frustrated with myself I make myself sick or my mind begins to shut down. All this hurts deep inside, because I truly want to be the best that I can be. When the real side of me begins to get found out. I run and hide or close up tighter than ever before. However, after this many years of covering up, I have become very proficient at it. Generally my errors go unnoticed, because of that I feel like a farce, a fake. Because of these failures, there have been many times I have thought of quitting the ministry. Yet I acknowledge my call, and in running I would be running from God.

The mask of “Mr. Perfect” hurts the people I love and minister too, because I’m always on guard trying not to let them discover my failures. However, lately in a desperate cry for help I have placed myself in accountability with a number of people. This helps me recognize my failure areas and causes me to try to correct, rather than suppress them. I used to keep quiet and inward, unless talking about something I truly knew, which helped keep me from looking like a fool. It would make people think that I was a snob, or that I didn’t want to listen to them. This kept me from developing close relationships with other people. This hurt the people I loved the most because I would get frustrated and take it out on my family. Now, with the help of doing Teen Encounters regularly I don’t try to hide my feelings. However, if we really got personal today there are two areas that I hide because of the fear of what others will think. I still wear the “Mr. Perfect” mask but it is not as thick as it used to be.

I have worn this mask for a long time and it has become even stronger since I have been in the ministry. I remember as a teen wanting my parents to see only Mr. Perfect, I remember doing whatever I could to make a good impression on them and to hear those most important words. I am so proud of you. I remember early on my Dad pushed my brother and I to be a part of Boy Scouts and I started in Cub Scouts, my Dad had been an Eagle Scout. I was doing well as a Cub Scout and wanted to even do better so I forged my Dads name on some of the pages to gain greater acceptance from my Father. When I was caught I remember it being the blackest day of my life, not because of the deserved whooping or the apology I had to give my leader, but the disappointment I saw in his eyes. In High School I found myself cheating on tests to get good grades, to please my Parents. It was much later that I realized that my Dad and Mom didn’t need me to be perfect and get strait A’s; they needed me to be someone that gave his best and tried his hardest. They just needed someone they could talk to, love as a son and be proud of.

I remember my mask coming crashing down around me in my second Youth Pastorate. My Pastor was a very loving individual and very much in control. He expected total compliance, and if I did I would receive the strokes that I needed as “Mr. Perfect”. The youth group was going well, we were seeing kids get saved, and we were on 4 different Middle Schools and High Schools with Clubs. There was a couple in the church that would invite the youth group to go water skiing every year and I continued the tradition. Pastor asked me to comply with his wishes, which were to not water ski. Water skiing had always been a passion of mine. So we went out and I complied right up to the end of the day. I was on the boat and we had finished everyone else and it was time to come in. The owner of the boat asked me one last time, do you want to ski in. I thought what could that hurt so I jumped out of the boat and got ready and yelled hit it. As I came up out of the water my shorts remained at my ankles in clear view of the youth group that was waiting on the shore, and just then my Senior Pastor pulled up to join us for our evening service. You can imagine the embarrassment when I got back to shore to have him look at me so disappointed. My “Mr. Perfect” mask could not save me this time. We worked out our relationship but I don’t believe he truly ever trusted me again. Can you blame him? Another occasion for my mask to be ripped right off my face was in front of my peers in a recent missions trip to Belize. Our DYD, Jay Anderson and two other Youth Pastors were asked to come to Belize to speak at their National Youth Convention. I was to be the opening night speaker. I have a message that I preach about Gideon and the battle against the Midianites, at a certain part of the message I break a clay pot. I was so excited to be their and in this wonderful situation, on top of it the floor was solid concrete and I new the affect of smashing the pot would accentuate my message, because I knew that the pot would disintegrate if I smashed it with enough force. The moment of the illustration came and I reared back with all the strength I could muster and brought the pot down on the floor with a resounding crash only to wrap myself up in the mike chord and loose my balance to compensate for the forward motion I pulled back only to throw my self backwards and out of control, within seconds I was crashing through the pulpit, flattening it and headed for what I thought would be a concussion and broken bones. When out of nowhere I regained my balance. Millions of thoughts passed through my mind in split seconds. I new I couldn’t quit to apologize for flattening the very poor churches pulpit. So I continued, shock was on all their faces. I just briefly caught a glimpse of my peers only to see them all but wetting their pants with laughter, shock and embarrassment. My mask was destroyed and nowhere to hide, at the point of the altar call. It’s still difficult to face those guys as I know that somewhere in the midst of our time together the pulpit fiasco will be brought up again.

There are many masks that we wear. We wear masks to get people to accept us. The masks come in many shapes and forms. Men sometimes wear the mask of Macho Man, which says I’m superior; I’m in good shape. Mr. Cool mask, or the “Mr. Spiritual Mentor” (when they don’t have it together), “Mr. Jokester”, Mr. “Leader” mask. Women often wear, “I’m sweet”, “I’ve got it all together”, “Miss Blonde”, “Ms. Goody-two-shoes”, “Ms. Superficial”, “Miss Tough Girl”, “Miss Preppy”, or in the church “I love God more than you” or “Miss Super Spiritual” mask. Some even wear the mask of “No Mask”. A mask can be anything that we use to gain acceptance. Masks are not put on or off. They are a part of us. Let me illustrate how a mask works. Lets say I was going to a costume party and wanted people to think that I came as Michael Jordan. What would I do? I would wear everything I could that would make me look just like Michael Jordan. People would look at the Black, blue and silver Uniform with the number 23, the face and arms painted black, Washington Wizards Uniform, and the Nike Air Jordan’s on my feet and people would say “You came as Michael Jordan.” They would see me, as I wanted them to see me. The mask we wear works very much the same way. We want to be the person that the mask portrays. I want to be Mr. Perfect. There is nothing wrong with the mask. The mask of the Superman or Batman didn’t make them bad guys, in fact to the contrary they are very good people. Masks are part of us and we do not put them on and off. We have developed these behaviors over the years. They are the way we want others to see and accept us. The kind of person we believe ourselves to be, and the way we feel most comfortable in relating to others. But in our effort to mask our real inner feelings about ourselves we exaggerate the successful behavior pattern even to the point of irritating, disappointing and possibly alienating others.

THE HARM IN MASKS COMES FROM INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR TO MAINTAIN THE MASK AT ALL COST. The clown becomes rude to get the laugh he needs to feel accepted. The Mrs. “Good-listener”, becomes a gossip to gain power. We are more than the mask we present to others so it is important that we look beneath our mask and encounter the self that we really are.