

# MASKS & SECRETS

Is it possible to have secrets and not be wearing masks that hide who we really are or how we're really feeling? When we talk about removing masks and becoming real to others, do we mean that we shouldn't have any secrets at all?

1. What do you think?

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The kind of masks that we need to take off are those that cause us to present a dishonest appearance. Some people are profoundly driven to succeed in life or business because some influential person said to them when they were young that would never amount to much. They put on a tough mask that says they don't care what others think, yet they live in such a way that pleads for the accolades of others.

2. How would applying Proverbs 29:25 help us to avoid putting on the above kind of mask?

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3. If someone has said or done something to us that has hurt or offended us causing us to put up a mask, what should we do? (Matt. 6:12-15; Col. 3:13)

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4. What if you've done something in the past that has had a deep affect on who you are, should you tell everyone? (Note, Phil 3:13)

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5. What would you do if you had someone trust you to the point of telling you their deepest hurts or fears?

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May God give us the grace to remove our masks and accept others who dare to.

*Amen.*

# THE REAL ME

From childhood we are taught to hide our true feelings and thoughts, and adopt different ways of thinking and reacting which mask our true selves. Often we also experience things that cause us to put on additional masks. For example one person grew up with an intense fear of the dark because when they were a child, it was night time when he heard his parents fighting violently. Another person grew up with a fear of the evening meal because it was the tensest time of the day.

1. Read Colossians 3:9. What are we to put off?

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2. According to Colossians 3:10, what are to put on?

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We wear masks that hide our true selves. We put these masks on either because we were hurt, embarrassed, or humiliated at some time, or we are afraid that something might do this to us now.

3. You've heard the expression, "*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.*" But according to Proverbs 12:18 is this really true?

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Sometimes it can be a little cutting comment that someone makes at the wrong time, that can cause someone to put on a defensive mask. I remember hearing of a girl that became anorexic because he father made an off-the-cuff comment to her when she was quite young that she was looking a little solid.

4. How does Proverbs 14:13 describe the masks that some people wear?

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The problem with wearing masks, is that we end up losing our integrity because we're not being honest with others or ourselves about who we really are. As Christians we know that God sees behind our masks (Heb. 4:13), and loves us anyway. He has also placed us into a community of fellow believers who also ignore our masks and love us as we are truly are.

*Amen.*

# WHO AM I?

The problem with wearing masks is that they hide who we really are. Another problem with them is that we need so many of them, depending on who we're with. A deeply lonely person might wear a smiley mask. A fearful person might put on a brave mask.

1. According to Proverbs 27:19, how can we see beyond someone's mask?  

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2. Because our heart reflects who we really are, what are we told to do with it in Proverbs 4:23?  

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When we harbour hurts, grievances, unforgiveness, and offences, in our hearts, we put up masks to hide our hearts from further pain. But by doing this we hinder the good things that need to be put into our hearts that can make us more prosperous (Prov. 17:20; 28:14).

3. What does Ephesians 4:25 have to say about Christians wearing "masks"?  

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4. Why do you think some people might be fearful to simply be themselves around others?  

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Who are you? Is there someone who really knows the real you? While God is omniscient (All-Knowing), some people try to wear masks when dealing with Him. That's why He can say in Matthew 7:23 that there are some that He never really knew. Are you real with God?

5. How can Colossians 3:13 help us to remove our masks?  

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*Amen.*

# REMOVING MASKS

The Church Community is the one place where we can remove our masks and be accepted for who we are really are. This means that we can find love acceptance and forgiveness from other believers who have also removed their masks.

1. How does Proverbs 20:5 teach us to help others remove their masks?  

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Understanding someone is one of the most powerful exercises a person can experience. When a person feels that they are understood by another, there is tremendous healing. This is why "counselling" is not always necessarily *telling* someone what to do, but seeking to first understand that person: *seeing their heart beyond their masks*.

2. Why could the gift of the Word of Knowledge (1Corinthians 12:8) be seen in this way? How is it then different to the Word of Wisdom?  

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We can help people take their masks off if we seek to truly understand them. We can let them see us, without masks, and thus encourage them to be more real with us. In the story *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, the hero often wears disguises to rescue people from unfair French death penalties. He marries the woman he loves, but then suspects that she is a spy. The day after they are married he puts on a 'mask' of being a very wimpy, almost effeminate man. Of course in reality he is a strong, manly, hero. The climax of the story is where he realises that his wife is not a spy but the hapless victim of blackmail, and he can then reveal to her his secret identity as the Scarlet Pimpernel super-hero.

3. If we make ourselves slightly more vulnerable to others by removing our masks, won't we be hurt like we've been in the past?  

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4. How does Colossians 3:14 instruct us to treat those who remove their masks?  

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*Amen.*