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**Key Takeaway:**
The Holy Spirit will always lead you to something better. God wants a say in how you see.

**Key Verse:**
Luke 15:8–10, Romans 12:2, Genesis 3:7, Luke 7:36–39 & 44–50

**MASTER’S OF CAMOUFLAGE**

Being lost is terrible. It’s frustrating and depressing at the same time. When we’re lost, we can hear the voice of shame whispering in our heads, and that shame can lead us in the wrong direction. But there’s another player in town that will get you even more lost, and it goes by the name of fear.

When an animal is scared of being found, it may go in to hiding. Most animals will find a hole to hide in or a cave. Others are more sophisticated in their approach and have developed a camouflage. A katydid bug has the ability to look like a leaf and can hide in plain sight. An octopus has the ability to change its pigmentation and can look like the background behind it, and completely disappear.

Fear is a strong motivator, and in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve felt it for the first time in its strongest form. If you remember, Adam and Eve decided that God was not enough for them. Their friendship ended because they stopped trusting God, so they disconnected themselves from His love. The result was this: all of humanity was disconnected from a relationship with God, and for the first time, they heard a new voice speaking into their hearts. They heard the voice of shame saying that they didn’t compare, and that they were naked and needed to cover themselves.

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.* (Genesis 3:7, ESV)

**THE MASKS WE WEAR**

Adam and Eve felt exposed, and not only did they feel shame for the first time, they felt fear. [Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com) describes fear like this: a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc. So what did Adam and Eve do? They camouflaged themselves with fig leaves and covered their nakedness. They went into hiding because they felt like they were in danger.

Maybe you’ve never dressed in camo to hide in plain sight, but I bet all of you have worn a mask before. It may not look like something you wear at Halloween, but it does disguise who you are. Every day, we wear multiple masks, and we pretend to be three different people in one day. When we go to school, we might hide who we really are. We put on the popularity mask and go with the flow with whatever people are doing. Why? So we can fit in. When we fit in, we blend in. If people never find the real version of you, they can never reject the real you.

Or maybe you put on the jock mask. Your language gets more direct and you make jokes that you know your parents would cringe at. You convince yourself that it’s just locker-room talk, but let’s be honest: it’s a mask.

Then, there’s the relationship mask. We wear dating as if it were a medal of honor. If people can see me in a relationship, they’ll see me as valuable, and I can hide how lonely I am.

My favorite mask is the church mask. It’s the mask that makes life look perfect, and if I wear it enough, people will start to think I’m perfect, and there’s nothing wrong with me. All of these masks have one thing in common. They hide us from ever being rejected, because we don’t allow people to see the real version of ourselves.

When Adam and Eve disconnected themselves from the acceptance of God, fear became very loud in their hearts. “You’re in danger! If anyone ever knew the real you, you would be rejected on the spot!” So what did they do? They covered themselves in fig leaves. The problem with masks and fig leaves is that they are temporary. Fig leaves eventually dry up and crumble, and a mask will require constant upkeep to keep the facade looking “healthy.” It can be tiring when you’re constantly pretending to be someone you aren’t.

Tiredness isn’t even the main danger of the fear of rejection. Fear and shame like to team up and attack your heart. You can’t fight one without the other attacking from behind. When you live in fear of rejection, you slowly chip away at who you really are, and it will make you lonely. Loneliness can lead you down a path of self-worth issues, and those self-worth issues lead you to keep trying to please people with a fake version of you. Eventually, this leads to depression, and you start to hate yourself. Does this sound familiar to anyone? You’re not the only person that feels this way. This is a problem. We need to admit that right now.

But the apostle Paul comes up with a plan to fight our fears and become the person that God created us to be:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* (Romans 12:2)

Our identity comes from how we think about ourselves. When we let God transform how we see, it changes how we’ll be. The way that you see yourself affects who you are. God wants a say in how you see yourself, because when you understand your value, you won’t hide yourself. Jesus knew this, which is why He tells us an important story about identity.

**THE LOST COIN**

If you’ve grown up in church, you might be familiar with the “lost and found” parables. Last week, we broke down the parable of the lost sheep, which is iconic in itself. And the last parable—which we’ll look at next week—is iconic in itself because it’s about a homecoming of a lost son. But smack-dab in the middle of these memorable stories is a strange story. It’s a story about how a coin gets lost.

*Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?* (Luke 15:8)

In this story, a woman has lost one of her silver coins. The coin represents you. It’s cold and lifeless, but it was made to be valuable. The problem is, the coin is lost somewhere in the house, and this house does not have carpet—its floor is made up of dirt. So this silver coin has slowly been covered by the dirt and is completely lost.

When you spend time covered in dirt, you lose sight of your true value, and you start to think that you *are* dirt. That’s what fear does: it makes you believe in a lie that can’t be quieted. So what does the woman do? She grabs a candle and a broom, and she sweeps every square inch of her house. Slowly, the dirt starts to be swept away from the coin, and the fire reflects on the surface of the coin.

It’s the reflection of the fire that allows the coin to be found. The Holy Spirit is the candle in this story. It’s one thing to have our masks swept away, but we need God to remind us of our value. The Holy Spirit will always lead us to better and reveal our true selves. But right now, your mask is probably whispering in your ear. Fear is coming alive at the thought of being disarmed. It wants control.

**THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS AND THE DIRTY**

You may want to keep your masks on, but it will always cost you something. This truth really comes alive when we look at an encounter that Jesus has with two people who wore their masks every day.

There was a religious leader in Luke 7 named Simon. If you looked at him on the surface level, you would think he had it all figured out. He was wealthier than most people in his city and he was a powerful leader. This guy appeared to be perfect in every way, and he *thought* he was perfect in every way. He had no need to be redeemed, which made it awkward when it was his turn to host a dinner party for this crazy rabbi everyone called Jesus.

You could tell that Simon didn’t want anything to do with Jesus’ teachings about repentance or acceptance. It was a sign of hospitality to greet your guests with a kiss on their hand—or in today’s terms, a handshake or hug—but Simon did not kiss Jesus’ hand. Instead, he just opened the door for Jesus and showed him where the table was.

The town roads were dirty and would cover people in dust, so it was customary for hosts to personally wash their guests’ feet with pure water and with the finest towel. But Simon wanted to show Jesus that he was more powerful than him, so he left Jesus at the table with his dirty feet to show that he was cleaner than his guest. If you really wanted to respect your guest, you would put a dab of the finest oil on their head to show your respect. But Simon ignored this, too.

Simon wanted to show the whole room that he was the most powerful person in the room and that he didn’t really care that Jesus was in the room. But Jesus knew this was a mask, that Simon was trying to hide his imperfections. Simon’s fig leaf was showing. So here we have a room full of religious leaders, pretending to be perfect in front of the only person that was actually perfect—and then things got even more awkward.

The Bible tells us that a sinful woman walks into the party. That’s a polite way of saying she’s a prostitute. These leaders knew exactly who she was and what she did. They knew she was sinful and dirty, so you can imagine how most of them glared in disbelief that this woman would crash their party. As she walks into the room, she can feel the judgement of every person. There’s no hiding who she is. Every eye was filled with hatred and disgust—everyone’s eyes, except one person.

I like to imagine Jesus staring at her with a warm smile. He knows who she is, but He gestures for her to come over. This acceptance breaks the woman. Every mask she’s been wearing is removed in an instant as she collapses at Jesus’ feet. This prostitute begins to kiss Jesus’ feet, and she begins to weep. Her tears begin to fall on Jesus’ dirty feet that the “righteous” refused to clean.

*And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.* (Luke 7:38)

All the “perfect” men are already whispering in disapproval, but a gasp fills the room as the woman lets down her hair. In those days, a woman only let down her hair for her husband. It would be like taking your clothes off for someone you were married to today.

This prostitute begins to use her tears and her own hair to wipe off Jesus’ dirty feet. Then, she goes a step further and takes a jar of perfume from around her neck. Every prostitute would carry these jars around to freshen up when they were done with their clients. One drop would be enough to mask them in a fresh scent, and they would use it sparingly because it was so expensive. Their careers were dependent on these jars, and it would cost them a year’s worth of wages.

But this woman takes the entire jar and pours it on Jesus’ head. All of the rich, perfect men begin to cry out in anger at what she’s done. “You fool! That perfume could have been sold to help feed the poor!” As if they really cared about the poor.

Their masks were working in overtime to cover up their hearts. Whereas, this lady had gotten rid of every mask. Simon refused to kiss Jesus’ hand to show his power; this woman kissed His feet to show her love. Simon had refused to wash Jesus’ feet. The prostitute wept openly and let her hair down in full exposure to wipe the dirt away. Simon never anointed Jesus’ head with a drop of oil to show respect; this woman pours a bottle that represents her entire career onto Jesus.

In this moment, one person protected their mask, and another person laid their mask at the feet of Jesus. Rejection wasn’t even a fear at this point. Every person rejected this woman openly, except for one person. That’s when Jesus drops this giant truth bomb to this room of masqueraders:

*Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."* (Luke 7:47–48)

**LANDING**

Your mask isn’t keeping God from finding you. Your masks is keeping you from finding God. When fear becomes our loudest voice, it keeps us in hiding. But the Holy Spirit wants to lead you to something better. God wants you to see the value He created in you, and He wants to reveal the real you. But it comes down to this: will you leave your mask at the feet of Jesus and pick up a better identity?

*And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* (Luke 15:9–10)Let’s pray.