



TAKE OFF THE MASK GROUPWORDS

In any leadership role, including Small Group leadership, it is tempting to wear your “perfect Christian” mask. But those who have led groups for a long time know that people respond best when we are authentic. Here are some ways you can remind yourself to take off your own mask and enjoy genuine intimacy with your group members.

BE TRANSPARENT IN PRAYER — Instead of sterile prayers, learn to pray honest, humble prayers where you share your own neediness before God and your group members. People need to see that it is healthy to admit neediness as long as we remember that God will meet our needs.

USE EXAMPLES FROM YOUR LIFE — Stories are powerful illustrations of truth. Jesus knew this and constantly used stories. Since you will probably use stories anyway, appropriate examples from your own life will make your point much more personal. After all, this is the direction you want your group to go — towards a personal application. I have found that my transparency draws people closer and encourages them to open up.

ASK FOR HELP — Often we can wear a mask of self-sufficiency and think we have come only to serve and never to be served. But we all have both strengths and weaknesses. Since there are many different areas of Small Group life, admit the places where you are not gifted. Ask for help. And then, allow others to provide the help that both you and your group need.

LEARN TO SAY, “I DON’T KNOW” — There was a time when I felt that I had failed as a leader if I didn’t know an answer. Now I’ve learned to say, “*That’s a good question, but I don’t really know.*” This opens the floor to others, and together we search for answers. It’s OK to say, “*I don’t know.*”

SHOW EMOTION — We’ve all been tempted to hide our pain, especially if we are in a leadership role. But what’s the point of having a Small Group of Christians if we are not free to share our own pain and heartache? In addition to receiving the comfort of your brothers and sisters, you also set the example for them to share. In this way we learn to “*mourn with those who mourn*” (Rom. 12:15).

POINT TO GOD’S FAITHFULNESS — The whole point of removing our masks is not to highlight our sinfulness but to demonstrate God’s faithfulness. Transparency reminds group members that any holiness they see in us is simply the result of God’s continuing work in our lives.