

October 20 – 26, 2018
Community Group Questions
“Mask Off”

Within our culture it is easy to navigate relationships without getting into the nitty gritty of how we are **actually** doing. Even in our passing greetings we ask, “How’s it going?” but rarely as a culture do we stop and engage (or share) when things are tough. As Americans, we hold a deep sense of individuality and independence. This “pull yourself up by your boot straps” expectation is deep-seated and, in some ways, creates a barrier from letting people in close enough to see our mess and journey with us to Christ.

When we allow Christ to be the Lord of our lives we are restored to the relationship that was originally intended. We live in the reality of being fully known and truly loved by God. There is a potent freedom that resides in this relationship and, if we let it, that same freedom and transmit to our relationships here in community. Taking the mask off and allowing people to see us takes a radical vulnerability, but it is the gateway to deeper fellowship and solidarity as you collectively pursue Christ-likeness.

James 5:13-20 “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.^[b] ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. ¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

- When does James encourage his readers to pray? For what purposes?
- How does Elijah’s humanity magnify the power of prayer?
- What responsibility over our brothers and sisters does James highlight in our spiritual journey?

Ice Breaker Activities: These ice breaker activities will hopefully create a space where masks are loosened. Hopefully sharing stories and fears will continue to encourage this transparent sharing of life that we are called to in Christian Community.

What you will need—Paper, Pens and a Container

- o Activity 1- Each person take a moment and share one of their most treasured childhood memories and why they cherish it.
- o Activity 2- Without signing their name, each person take a piece of paper and a pen and write one of their biggest fears in life. Collect them in a hat. Have a volunteer read them aloud and see if people have the same fears.

Questions:

- Describe some of the feelings you had when the stories and the fears were being shared? Did you feel apprehensive, was it awkward, was it liberating?
- How are you with inviting other people into fears and struggles in your life? What are some obstacles that you foresee that may make it difficult for “mask off” community?
- How can you as a group practice true belonging through “mask off” conversation?