

# Christian Woman

EST. 1933

September:  
*National Manners Month*

The Secret  
*Weapon*  
in Lasting Marriages

## Back to School

- *The Homework Monster*
- *Kids and Cliques*
- *College Beginnings*

11 | Costumes  
for Fall Fun



# What's Under Your Mask?

## *Revealing the True You*



**L**ike other kids, I went through times of wanting to be anyone but me. I went through my Marcia Brady phase – picking similar clothes and wearing my hair like hers. Then it was the Dorothy Hamill phase. I, like so many other girls my age (maybe even you), had to have the Dorothy Hamill haircut – whether it looked good or not. At one time or another, most of us

have tried to imitate the cool kid in class, a celebrity or a sibling. We may have copied her style, her mannerisms and even her character.

Today's technology allows us to be bombarded daily with images and news reports about famous celebrities. And our children want – just as we did – to imitate whoever happens to be their favorite singer or actor. Many of them are constantly comparing themselves to someone else, giving rise to

problems like anorexia, bulimia and dangerous behavior involving drugs, alcohol and sex. They fear they will not be accepted for who they really are, so they put on a mask that causes them to look just like everyone else. We are quick to recognize the problems that trying to copy others can cause for our children. But do they learn this masking trick from us?

As adults, we like to think we have outgrown the need to imitate others.



But lurking within is often the desire to be someone we are not, and we may not even be aware of it. For example, a relative of mine has a career that requires her to travel around the country, staying in each area for three months before moving on. In each new location she learns to imitate the accent of the area while never quite losing the previous accents. She

deal of time. In 1 Corinthians 15:33, Paul wrote, "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character." Whether it is something as innocuous as an accent or something more detrimental, like a negative attitude, we need to give careful attention to the company we keep – because we are apt to imitate it.

Choosing our friends wisely does

was sometimes mocked and ridiculed, and we can expect to experience the same thing. We will stand out as being different from the world, but we should remember that it is our differences from the rest of society – not our similarities – that are likely to attract people to our Lord.

It is unfortunate that churches often get caught up in imitating the world

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seems unaware of the change in her speech patterns, but everyone else in the family has noticed it.

What prompts us to try so hard to be like someone else? One possibility might be that we want to fit in with those around us. Some people spend so much time trying to be the people they think others expect them to be that they lose sight of who they really are.

### **Removing the Mask**

An example in point: Sunday morning comes, and many of us put on our good Christian masks before we enter the building for worship. It does not matter that on the way to the services we were arguing with our husband or our children. When we get to the building, the mask slides into place and remains there throughout the service. How long it will stay in place is anybody's guess. Sometimes it doesn't even make it through the car ride home. Is this really what Paul had in mind when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:16, "I urge you to imitate me" (NIV)? Surely Paul did not mean for us to put on a facade for the benefit of others.

God knows the frailties of our human nature, and through His Word He has spoken to us about whom we are to imitate. God knows we have the tendency to be influenced by the people around us and that we are apt to pick up the characteristics of those with whom we spend a good

not mean that we should never associate with people in the world. To fulfill the mission God has given us, we have to live in the world and interact with others in it. God's concern is that we not be corrupted in the process. Jesus prayed for His disciples, and for us as well, to be protected from the evil one (John 17:14-20). Again Paul wrote, "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world" (1 Corinthians 5:9-10).

If we are to be Christ's ambassadors, we sometimes will have to associate with people whose habits are not those we want to imitate. How else can we bring the world to a saving faith in Him? But we need to be careful that we are influencing others for good rather than choosing to follow their bad examples.

### **Imitating Jesus**

If we are not to be fashioned by the world, whom then should we be following? Paul answered the question in Ephesians 5:1: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children." The longer we live, the more we should be trying to become like God. No, it probably will not make us popular with most people, but Jesus did not fit into the world's mold either. He

just as people do. In an attempt to draw people in, their services start to resemble rock concerts more than worship. Programs are designed to attract more people; and although some of the programs are good, the focus is misplaced if the gospel is watered down and sermons carefully chosen so as not to offend anyone.

God speaks plainly in His Word about sin and its consequences, but churches sometimes do not speak so clearly. Some will not even use the word "sin," choosing euphemisms such as "mistake." It would seem that some no longer believe the gift of forgiveness and eternal life is powerful enough to attract people to the Lord. Do we not realize the importance of our message and its eternal implications for the lost?

As Christians, we cannot draw people of the world to Jesus by trying to be just like them. Instead, it should be our effort to become more like Him. We should strive to develop His humble and sacrificial attitude and demonstrate His saving grace by doing for others what He did for us (Philippians 2:5-8). According to 3 John 1:11, our goal is to be imitators of good, not evil. □

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