



## small groups *Discussion Guide*



# Authenticity vs. Performance

Exodus 32:22-32

### **Ice Breaker** (10 minutes)

#### **Discuss**

This will be the last discussion guide until the fall. Look back over the past 10 or 20 weeks. What have you learned? What has changed about your life? Are you practicing any new habits like Andy's 10-minutes-1-thing?

---

### **Lesson Review** (35 minutes)

This week's sermon dealt directly with one of the core values of our church and our small groups ministry: authenticity.

#### **Read Gen. 32:22-32**

This story is about the moment that God changed a character's name from Jacob (deceiver, impostor) to Israel (wrestles with God). Andy used this story to illustrate how God deals with the impostor in us all. He wants to expose our self-sufficiency and give us a new name that glorifies him, not ourselves.

#### Confession

Sometimes we employ the impostor to hide our sin.

#### **Read James 5:16 and 1 John 1:5-10**

Don't be intimidated by the adjective "righteous" or the category "man". James is not saying that males without sin have effective prayers. He's saying sincere people have effective prayers. People who are confronting their impostors. James seems to link the act of confession in the first half of verse 16 (literally, agreeing with God about our sin) to righteousness in the second half.

*The power possessed by prayer is not limited to “super saints”; the righteous man simply designates one who is whole-heartedly committed to God and sincerely seeking to do his will.*

— Douglas J. Moo, James

*Christians who remain in hiding continue to live the lie. We deny the reality of our sin. In a futile attempt to erase our past, we deprive the community of our healing gift. If we conceal our wounds out of fear and shame, our inner darkness can neither be illuminated nor become a light for others. We cling to our bad feelings and beat ourselves with the past when what we should do is let go. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, guilt is an idol. But when we dare to live as forgiven men and women, we join the wounded healers and draw closer to Jesus.*

—Brennan Manning

### **Discuss**

- Is there repeated sin in your life that you need to confess? If you’re comfortable sharing it with the whole group, do so now. If not, commit to the group that you will contact someone one-on-one this week to confess.

Duplicity

Sometimes we employ the impostor to hide things that aren’t necessarily sinful.

### **Read James 4:4-10**

In these verses, James addresses his audience with three titles: adulterous people, sinners, and double-minded. “Adulterous” and “double-minded” indicate someone who is hiding secrets, pretending, living a double-life, wearing a mask, putting on a show. While James seems to be thinking of sinful acts (he uses the word “sinners”, after all) duplicity itself prevents us from being fully alive. It is something from which we should repent and wash our hands.

*And so, like runaway slaves, we either flee our own reality or manufacture a false self which is mostly admirable, mildly prepossessing, and superficially happy. We hide what we know or feel ourselves to be (which we assume to be unacceptable and unlovable) behind some kind of appearance which we hope will be more pleasing. We hide behind pretty faces which we put on for the benefit of our public. And in time we may even come to forget that we are hiding, and think that our assumed pretty face is what we really look like.*

—Brennan Manning

### **Discuss**

- What parts of your past or personality are you most likely to hide?

---

### **Application** (15 minutes)

Throughout this “Fully Alive” series, the obstacles we’ve studied have contrasted with childlike virtues. Rather than shamed, children are free; rather than fearful, children are often trusting and fearless (we might call it naive); because they’ve not yet been wounded, they are whole. Children are also genuine. They don’t learn to wear masks until they get older. They genuinely admit their ignorance and embrace their helplessness. Such may have been the prototype Jesus had in mind when “he called a little child to

him, and placed the child among them. And he said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:2-3)

Children who are loved by their parents may have an easier transition into the kingdom of heaven, because being beloved children of God is at the core of our identity in Christ.

*Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "Beloved." Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence.*

—Brennan Manning

### **Discuss**

- When and where have you most deeply experienced God's love?
- Do you agree with Manning that "being beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence"?

### **Further Study**

The quotes above are from *Abba's Child* by Brennan Manning. For a deep, artful and challenging discussion of the impostor, consider adding *Abba's Child* to your summer reading list.