

“The Levels of Fellowship”

1 John 2:12-17

Introduction

Have you ever had a fake I.D.? A fake I.D. is normally used to give the impression that a person is older than they really are. Many Christians come to church with a fake I.D., giving the impression all is well when all is not. We show an I.D. of harmony when our lives are really in discord or an I.D. of control when nothing in our lives is actually together at all. However, God saved us and invited us to walk in truth and love to have authentic relationships and fellowship with one another.

Believers should lay down the façade and be honest because this enables us to progress in our spiritual maturity and not be lured away from God by the world. We often wear masks because we don't know who we are or are ashamed to let others see who we are or what we are going through. In our identity, we must be in fellowship with our Creator. The first step towards growing in fellowship is accepting Christ as our Savior and beginning to know who we are in Him. This is the most important and progressive step in our goal of fellowship. Next, we must know our identity in Christ, as our personal identity is a direct reflection of our knowledge of God's Word. The more our identity reflects God and His Word, the more others will witness our spiritual development over time.

The stages of development for the believer occur in three phases: spiritual infancy, spiritual adolescence, and spiritual adulthood. Our level of development varies within the body of Christ in correlation with our dependence and reliance on God's Word. When we do not rely on God's Word, we tend to rely on the world. However, the world operates in opposition to the person, passions, and permanence of God. Wrong alignment will quickly stunt the growth of the believer, thus disallowing the progression to the next spiritual level. The problem is if we are in church but not growing, we don't want people to know. So, instead of pursuing growth, we put on our masks or operate with a fake I.D., hoping we can fake it until we make it. This way of life settles for a temporal rather than a permanent approach to abundant life and ultimately leaves you out of fellowship with the Father.

God desires so much more than fake Christianity for His children. Our commitment to growth in the knowledge of the Word leads to an authentic and powerful walk with our Father and others.

Getting Started

1. Have you ever wished or pretended to be someone else? Why?
2. Have you ever been deceived into believing something because you lacked knowledge?

Let's Get Personal

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your knowledge of God's Word?
2. What stage of spiritual development are you in? What evidence of that stage exists in your life?
3. After hearing this week's sermon, are you operating with a "fake I.D." or wearing a mask? If yes, share why that is with your group. If not, what makes honesty and authenticity possible for you?

Take the Next Step

1. In what ways has your identity directly impacted your level of spiritual development?
2. Are you spiritually developing in an evident way? If so, how do you see development in your fellowship with others? If not, how can you start growing to the next level of fellowship?
3. How can you encourage someone who is not in the right fellowship with God? How can you draw them towards God's word?
4. Want to go deeper? Take time to look at the following passages: Hebrews 5:11-14; Hebrews 6:1-11; 1 Peter 1:1-11; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Corinthians 2:9-3:3; 2 Peter 3:17-18; James 4:1-10; John 15:18-19; Galatians 1:4; Galatians 6:14; Romans 12:2

Renew Your Mind

"I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,³ for you are still fleshly."

1 Corinthians 3:2-3
