

### Our Stained Glass Masquerade

We live in a world that forms many views of how people should act, look, or even what they should believe. Values, like truth and respect, take a backseat to image and self-reliance: a relationship with our creator, however, is replaced by a desire for the façade that all is well, even when all is not. Because of these stereotypes, we go around troubled by what people will think of us, causing our true identities to be concealed, buried, veiled. We stress over who is looking at us when, in reality, they are fretting about the same thing themselves. Our fear taking over us, we put on masks so that no one genuinely knows how we are feeling. We shelter our pain, distress, and suffering, when all we really yearn for is comfort, encouragement, and reassurance in those times of hardship. We acknowledge God's presence in church every Sunday, but deny his power in our actions throughout the rest of the week. **This stained glass masquerade of ours is destructive, but by undrapping it we can reveal the unconditional love of Christ that relieves us from our trials and tribulations.**

Many times, we put on an act or a "painted grin" to convince people that everything is okay, that nothing is wrong. Wondering if anyone else fails or feels small at times, we feel inferior to everyone else. When we see other people doing well, seemingly content with every aspect of their life, we worry that not much time will go by until they discover our secret that we are indeed flawed. Does this performance make us truly happy? Does constantly putting barriers

around our weaknesses and plastering fake smiles on our faces honestly mask our pain? Imagine if we showed love and acceptance to everyone. Could we be open to do this no matter if our hearts have been broken? Then, maybe if we can display the forgiveness that Jesus, our savior, gave us by dying on the cross for our sins, we can finally “close the curtain of our stained glass masquerade.”

We’ve focused so much on putting on this act that we have lost focus of the true meaning of Jesus’ Grace. We may fool others to a certain extent, but we do not fool ourselves. We definitely do not fool God. We fall apart when no one’s watching and break down without the strength of Jesus Christ to help us up when we have fallen. What if we went unguarded for once, letting everyone see the people that we truly are? Would we be able to reach a shattered world with “happy, plastic people?” Or, is it possible that by being a beacon of brokenness, we can illustrate what miracles God is able to perform with hopeless people? Church should be like a hospital for the sick hurting, and broken: not a museum for the saints. When will we realize that Jesus accepts us just as we are, imperfect and full of flaws? When we come to this understanding, imagine how we can then interact with others! Sharing our fears, accepting each other, showing the unconditional love that Jesus graciously displayed to us on the cross over two thousand years ago. Might our stained glass masquerade be exposed in order to fully exhibit the life-altering power of God’s grace?

\*based on one of my favorite songs by Casting Crowns called “Stained Glass Masquerade”