

## **Ready. Set. Stop.**

### **Ready:**

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:23

### **Set**

Competing is about performance. We prepare hard and we quickly learn there are two outcomes: perform or perish! As competitors, we step onto the field or court, set everything aside and perform our best! Regardless of what is going on inside, we are expected to play well. We train ourselves to not let the inside struggles affect the outside performance. We are still expected to compete at a high level.

*The show must go on. Fake it until you make it.*

We master this skill during competition, and we quickly learn how to apply it to everyday life. The performance mindset in sports becomes the way we do life. Life becomes a show. We want others to see us as better than who we really are. The front-stage (false-self) contradicts the back-stage (true-self). This battle rages within us daily, which creates an enormous amount of inner-tension.

Our life becomes a daily show to impress others. The lie that drives us is the better the performance, the more they like us—and the less likely others will discover our true inner selves. Our prayer is that nobody will ever discover the pain, insecurities, weaknesses, wounds and sins in our lives. We keep it in the dark where it belongs. It must not make it to the front-stage.

*If the back-stage is revealed, we think it will embarrass us and shock others.*

The front-stage controls the back-stage. However, as long as the front-stage is in control, we will live in bondage. Jon Foreman of Switchfoot belts out it in his song, Free: “Come set me free. Inside this shell there's a prison cell.” Freedom is lost for the sake of protecting the back-stage. We think if the back stage ever becomes the front stage, it would take too much work, cause too much pain and bring too much regret.

*We believe duplicity is easier than authenticity.*

Performance-based living produces legalism and destroys grace-based living. Chuck Swindoll says it well: “Being real is a lot better than looking religious. Pursuing holiness is biblical. Acting all holy stinks.” Is there hope for the back-stage? The cure is found in pursuing wholeness of soul and letting the love of Jesus invade our hearts. This brings healing that is desperately needed!

The back-stage and front-stage is replaced by Christ's stage.

No more pretending. Sacrifice your image and restore your heart. God does not need our performances to advance the Kingdom of God. But He does need our hearts. He wants us to pursue one stage--Christ's stage. He loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to let us stay the way we are!

### **Ready. Set. Stop.**

Stop performing. It's time to get real and be honest about your back-stage. We all have one. Tear down the curtain and let Christ reign in your life.

### **Go**

1. As competitors, why are we so good at performing in life? How does this possibly set us up for bondage off the field?
2. How would you define your back-stage? Do you feel like you are living in a prison cell? Why or why not?
3. Why do we think we would be embarrassed and shock others if the back-stage was revealed?
4. Are there sins in your life that you do not want others to know? If so, repent of them and God will forgive you (1 John 1:9) and confess them to a trusted friend for healing (James 4:5).

### **Workout**

Romans 12:2  
Hebrews 4:12  
Titus 2:14  
2 Timothy 2:21

### **Overtime**

"Lord God in Heaven, I confess I have a back-stage. It doesn't honor You. There's some stuff that I keep from others. It is in the dark, and I know You desire for it to be in the light. My back-stage can glorify You only if it becomes Your stage. I ask that You would do Your work in my life to bring wholeness. In the name of Jesus, I pray, amen."



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