

## **Fear of Being Exposed Small Group Guide**

**Warm-up Question:** (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Who was (or is!) one of your favorite superheroes?
2. Describe a time you felt really out of place.

**Read the following passages:** Matthew 1:18-21.

Joseph and Mary were both in an extremely difficult position. Even if Mary had an opportunity to try to explain to Joseph what was happening (which she probably didn't), how could Joseph reasonably believe her? The only sensible conclusion for Joseph was that Mary had been intimate with another man. Joseph wanted to minimize the shame that both of them would likely experience by divorcing Mary as quietly as possible.

All of us are afraid of being exposed. Even after an angel revealed to Joseph what was happening, it's likely that Joseph and Mary had to endure ridicule and embarrassment. But they embraced this vulnerability for the sake of God's purpose. The way forward is the same for us: We need to choose vulnerability. Often, this includes exposing our sin. The more confident we become in Jesus' grace and mercy, the more willing we will be to expose who we really are.

**Questions for Discussion** (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. After the man and the woman ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they covered themselves and hid. (See Genesis 3:1-10.) What are some ways we cover up or hide in our cultural context? What are some of the negative consequences of hiding?
2. Read Isaiah 6:1-5. Being in the presence of the holy or righteous can make us feel unworthy or unclean. We may even respond by raging against the holy in an effort to tear down what we perceive to be the source of our feelings of inadequacy. What are some ways we might try to tear down the holy? Why are such attempts destined to fail?
3. Some people use social media to bring very private elements of their lives out into the open. Why is this unhealthy? What does healthy vulnerability look like? Why is it often difficult to confess our sins to one another?
4. Goals and rules, without community, usually fail to bring about real transformation. How do relationships help us experience transformation? How does the Holy Spirit

impact our relationships? How would you like to see your relationships develop in this season of your life?

5. Jesus offered radical acceptance to the people he engaged. How does the cross connect with Jesus' offer of radical acceptance? What's wrong with a message of radical acceptance that doesn't include the cross?

**Pray**