

## **Image vs Substance Small Group Guide**

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

1. What was the thing you were praised for most when you were a child (academics, sports, obeying your parents, art, etc...)?
  
2. What is the greatest accomplishment you've ever witnessed?

**Read the following passage:** Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

In this passage, Jesus contrasts public acts of spiritual devotion (giving, prayer, and fasting) with private devotion. He calls those who practice them publicly with the intention of being seen hypocrites. Hypocrite is the Greek word for an actor in a play, someone who wore a mask and played a character to entertain a crowd. The greatest reward an actor can get is applause and Jesus says so it is with a religious actor. Instead of being people of image who act for crowds Jesus wants us to be people of substance who focus on being seen by God.

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

1. We live in a world dominated by "image management". How do you see the influences of society, culture, family, work, and friendships influencing your actions?
  
2. Most people's alone time is spent in some kind of entertainment. How do you spend your alone time? What would it look like to spend your alone time with God?
  
3. Jesus highlights the importance of a private devotional life with only God as the audience. How are you doing specifically in the areas of generous giving, prayer, and fasting?
  
4. Read Matthew 5:14-16. Jesus did not see a rich private life with God and a bright public witness for him as contradictions. How do we know when to shine publicly and when to go to seek God privately? Which comes more naturally to you?

5. Read John 14:42-43. In what circumstances does the external pressure of people's opinions keep you silent about your love for Jesus? What would it look like to be free from their opinions and speak motivated by Jesus' love and truth in those environments?
  
6. Read Luke 6:45. Take a minute to think over your interaction with different groups of people (family, friends, work, church, strangers, etc.). What would you say the condition of your heart is judging by what you draw out of in in different circumstances?