

Voices: Wear your mask this time

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If I had a dollar for every youth camp and Disciple Now I've participated in over the years, I would buy a beach house in Port Aransas.

I've been a camper, counselor, preacher and parent. I was in Dawson McAllister's big tent. I stood up when Al Denson told me to. I vividly recall Al Fike playing music with his hands and talcum powder in Panama City.

There are a number of things I laugh about today, but I'm mostly just grateful for the tired adults who tried to help us find Jesus in all of it. That's why I became one of the tired adults.

Hypocrisy

One of the most popular youth camp sermon topics was hypocrisy. They were trying to coax some genuine Christianity out of the soil. Their main opponent was the Deep South cultural version of "the faith once delivered."

Some of the messages had elaborate props. We were told the word "hypocrite" came from a Greek word for "actor." Camp preachers are often seminary students who like to show off their Greek a little.

Actors in Jesus' day wore masks. We were told hypocrites wore spiritual masks at church. They were fakes. We were passionately told to take off our masks and never put them back on again. Masks = Bad! This message is part of the mixed cassette tape playing in my soul.

Masks today

I'm many years and miles away from Dawson's big tent revival.

Today, I'd like to encourage you, with the same vigor we encouraged Mark Matlock—an evangelical version of David Copperfield—when he tried, once again, to break out of the straight jacket, to **put your mask on when you go to church**. Leave the spiritual one off, but put the cotton one on your face.

A recent study published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* finds that among all the strategies for reducing transmission of COVID-19, [wearing face masks may be the central variable](#) that determines the spread of the virus.

This is encouraging news. Imagine the upside. Consider the minimal investment for the maximum good.

Coaching advice

In my former life as a tee ball coach, I learned not to draft Texas boys named Nolan. There are plenty of them to choose from. Being named Nolan does not guarantee any measure of baseball ability, but it does guarantee a baseball dad with visions of Nolan Ryan's namesake beginning his long march to Cooperstown on your tee ball team.

Who doesn't love Nolan Ryan? He recently did a little life coaching for us. In case you missed it, here is [what he said](#):

"As we open Texas for business, we all need to work together in the fight against COVID-19. As Texans, we need to be responsible. We need to be smart. So, when you leave the house, don't be a knucklehead. Wash your hands, socially distance yourself from others and wear a mask. Do the right

things. Look out for your fellow Texans, and together we'll make it through this."

We are living through a series of "next normals." We likely are going to be engaged in a prolonged balancing act. There are many elements of the common good that must be considered at the same time. Let's be wise and do the best we can. So, friends, wear your mask when you go to church.

Matt Snowden is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Waco. This article first appeared as a [Monday Meditation](#) on the First Baptist Waco website. The views expressed are those solely of the author.