

“My Secret--Lying”

Today we're starting a new series of messages called “My Secret.” I've heard it said that we are only as sick as our secrets. And in my experience, it's true. So in this series we're going to name some of the areas of life where we keep our deepest secrets, the stuff that keeps us afraid, the stuff that keeps us ashamed, the stuff that keeps us from living the full lives that Jesus said we have the potential to live. We all have secrets. Or do they have us?

Now having said that, I have to admit that this series scares me a little bit. It may scare you a little bit. But let me start off by clearing the air. This is not about shame, this is not about guilt, this is not about embarrassing ourselves or publicly airing our dirty laundry. It's about us allowing some light in. It's about us being honest with God, and honest with ourselves.

We're only as sick as our secrets. We can even think that we can hide things from God. And honestly, sometimes, I want God *not* to be around. Does anybody know what I'm talking about?!

Just look at little kids when they're doing something they know they shouldn't do. If you're a parent you've seen it. Your kids are doing something they know is wrong and you happen to see it and they'll just tell you, “Don't look at me, Dad. OK?” They're making a mess, or a mess in their pants. They're cutting their own hair, or have gotten into mom's makeup. They didn't want anyone to know, “Don't look at me, Mom.” Kids just reveal how all of us want to be unobserved in our wrong. Most of the evil and darkness in our lives requires hiddenness to continue to exist.

I'd bet we all pray this prayer once in a while: *Don't look at me, God.* A businessman on the road checks into motel room late at night. He knows the kind of movies that are available to him right there in the room. No one will know. His wife won't find out. His kids won't see. (He knows the drill and that hotels have a disclaimer, “The name of the movie you watch won't be on your bill.”) Go ahead. No one will know. But first he has to say a little prayer: *“Don't look at me, God.”*

A mom with an anger problem decides to berate her kids because she's so frustrated, because she will get a twisted rush of pleasure from inflicting pain—But first she has to say a little prayer: *“Don't look at me, God.”*

- An executive who's going to pad an expense account
- An employee who is going to deliberately make a coworker look bad
- A Christ-follower who makes financial decisions that will keep him from tithing, keep him from being the kind of steward he knows God wants him to be
- A student who looks at somebody else's paper during an exam

First you have to say a little prayer. You don't say it out loud, of course. Probably don't admit it even to yourself. But it's the choice your heart makes: *Don't look at me, God.* We try to keep our dark secrets from everybody, including God and they just sit inside of us and fester and rot and make life stink.

But we're told over and over by God in scripture that when we bring things out into the light with God, there's healing, hope, forgiveness. Proverbs says, **“Those who conceal their sins do not prosper, but those who confess and renounce them find mercy” (Proverbs 28:13, TNIV).** So we're going to look at our secrets, face them, and find some healing.

As we talk about this subject, I want to let you know about website that may help you. It was set up by Lifechurch in Oklahoma City. It's www.mysecret.tv. It's a site where hundreds and hundreds of people have confessed their secrets. You can go to that site—if you're 18 or older, that is. If you need to unload a secret and you feel like you can't tell somebody, this site might help. I also encourage you to really pray for the people as you read some of the things they've let go of there. A lot of them are asking for prayer, and really pray that God would do a significant work in people's lives as they are confessing.

Today we're going to look at a key ingredient in almost all of our dark secrets and that's lying. What's interesting about this to me is that we don't seem to have to learn to lie. You don't have to bring your kids in and say, “Today we are going to have lying lessons.” We seem to have a tendency to just lie. Take a look at a home video I found. **[VIDEO: Kid caught lying]** You know, it just comes way too naturally.

But even if it comes so easily and naturally to us, lying is a killer. Let me read a few real confessions by people who are battling with lying in their life. This first person says this, "My whole life, I've struggled with telling the truth. My problem is, I hate to disappoint people, so if I've failed them, I lie about it. I also lie because I am trying to impress people and convince them to do something that I want them to do. I've even lied in the past to women to get them to have sex with me."

Another person admits, "I struggle with lying on a daily basis. I don't know why I do it, but I do. It kills me because I am lying to the people who I love the most. I guess I just do it to impress them, but that's a stupid reason. I think it's like an addiction. I've done it for so long now that I can't stop."

Here's another person. "I pretend that everything in my life is perfect, but the truth is, I hate myself and most days, I wish I would die. My family and friends don't have any idea."

This man says, "For several years, I've lived two different lives, one as a husband and father, the other as a homosexual."

I want to challenge us to face the truth about our lives. Let's take a few minutes and look at some broad categories of lying. **The first category would be occasional lying.** You know, a little fib here, a little white lie. Someone says, "Do these jeans make me look fat," and you're thinking, "Yes ... No, dear. You look fine." You know, you find yourself just stretching the truth here or there to get something you want, or maybe you don't want to hurt people's feelings, or you want to impress people a little, so you lie.

The next category would be frequent lying. This is a pattern of lying. For some people this may be about finances. We look like we are okay, but we are not. Living beyond our means, really, is a consistent financial lie, isn't it? Maybe we often lie about other people to make ourselves look better. Or we lie at work really, to help ourselves get ahead. Or we lie about stuff we didn't do to make ourselves look like we did. Or the flip side, which is, we lie about stuff that we did do and pretend that we didn't. Some people lie for no reason. You start talking in a conversation and, bloop there it is! A lie. It just came out. You're thinking, "Where'd that come from? I didn't mean to do that. It just came out." Maybe you'd say about yourself, "I lie often."

A third category, that's painful to talk about, even scary, is, living a lie. A man I know is in prison today because he chose to live a lie. He hid things from family, from his wife, from his employer. He took money, wrote bad checks, tried to deceive everybody, including me. He chose to live a lie and it caught up with him. He lied so much that he started to believe his own lies.

It kills me to see that happen. But it does. I once did a wedding in Kansas City with a pastor up there. Later it was found out that he had lied about his education, he'd lied about his credentials and experiences in order to get the job. He had fabricated an entire life. When it all came to light that he was living a lie, it was so humiliating for him.

I wonder how many people have chosen to follow Christ but their lives are really no different than non-Christians. Maybe that's you. The way you handle money, no different. Marriages, no different. Morals, no different. That's just plain old living a lie. Single, loving Jesus, hopping from bed to bed. Lie. In front of our parents, "Yeah, I'm a Christian kid, mom and dad." Mom and dad aren't there, "Screw that." Living a lie. Secrets that we've got buried, covered up, just begging and praying that they don't come out because everybody thinks we are one way, but we are not. Living a lie.

Now, those of you who are saying, "I'm just an occasional liar," you're feeling pretty dog gone good right now. "Oh, thank you, Jesus. I just lie sometimes. Okay?" Don't let yourself off the hook too quickly! Let's take a look at a very sobering scripture. Proverbs 12:22, "**The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth**" (Proverbs 12:22, NLT). Proverbs 6, that talks about six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him. What's interesting is that two of the seven things that are detestable are lies.

Now, what does the word "detest" mean? This word comes from a Hebrew word. It's the word "**tow' ebah**". **This is the word that is translated as "detest"**. Literally, it means it means something disgusting. It means to make nauseous. That's what lying does to God. It makes him nauseous. Like watching my two year old pick her nose and eat it. Tow' ebah? Nasty. Lies make God nauseous.

But, why does God detest lying? Because lies cut strait across the grain of God's nature. Jesus said, **"I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6)**. Jesus is the truth. What does that mean? He is truth embodied. He lives truth, speaks truth, radiates truth. In him there's no deception, no corruption, no coercion. Because he is truth, in him there is no distortion, no shadows, no subterfuge, no subversion. He is truth, and lies simply don't fly. Jesus also said this, and let this soak in. John 8:31-32, **"If you hold to my teaching, you really are my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32)**. Jesus doesn't want us to be slaves to anything simply because he loves us. And lies enslave us and others.

Now remember, this is not about shame and guilt. Those may be cropping up on you about now, but don't let them. Talking about this today is about healing and stepping toward the light, and freedom, and forgiveness. But to get there, we have to ask a powerful question. **Why do you lie?** I'll make it personal. Why do I lie? And, yes, I lie.

I've got a good friend who says, "Everybody lies." I keep trying to prove him wrong, but I just end up proving him right! I grew up as a kid who lied all the time. And so I've spent my adult life rooting out the lies. As a kid I lied to get what I wanted, or get out of situations I'd gotten myself into. I was even proud of how well I could lie. I don't do that anymore. As I matured and worked on this my lies changed. I started to lie to protect people's feelings. Somebody from church hands me a book and says, "Aaron, you really should read this." I'm a nice guy, I say, "Sure, you bet." A couple weeks go by and they ask me, "Did you like the book?" There was a time when I would say, "Oh yes, it was wonderful." Over the years I've rooted that out too. I'll tell you up front if you hand me a book to read, "It may be a while." And when you ask if I've read it, I won't spare your feelings. I'll tell, "No."

I've worked hard to install and maintain my own personal B.S. meter. But sometimes things still slip through. When I lie, what I am doing is, I am saying, I believe that my lie will work better at that moment than truth. In that moment I don't really trust truth, God. I might lie to you thinking, "Maybe you will like me better." But the truth is, we can't have a relationship that is based on lies. So the very thing that I think that I want keeps me from what I really want. If I lie, maybe I will get more of something. More security, but in reality, there is no security in anything built on lies.

What about you? Why do you lie? Why do you really lie? What is it? Now, for some of you right now, let me tell you what is happening. The Spirit of God is dealing with you right now. You're having an "oh crud!" moment. You're saying, "Oh, great. Shouldn't have come to church today," because you have got some lies going. Don't be afraid! This is about healing!

How do we find healing? How do we live as people of the truth? This is the application part of our study. Let me touch on three things that we do in order to be set free by the Truth, Jesus. The first thing is this: **Install your own personal truth meter.** Install a buffer in your mind and mouth and before anything, anything ever leave your mouth you look at and ask, **"Is what I'm about to say true, and if it is, do I have to say it?"** Do you know how many messes we'll avoid if we do that? How many lies we won't tell. How many people we won't hurt? How many traps we'll walk right over. It takes work and practice but install the truth meter. God wants to help you with this so let him.

The second thing is about your connection to God. If we want healing from the lies we've told we **Confess to God and receive God's forgiveness.** This is so powerful. This is so unbelievable. I John 1:9, listen to the power of this. **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9, NIV).**

Check out the power of that. You confess it to God. It doesn't matter how dark, how ugly, how pathetic, how horrible it was, you confess it to God and he is faithful. He is just. He will forgive you. He will cleanse you. You confess it to God, and today, I will declare to you on behalf of God, you are forgiven! In Christ, you are forgiven. As far as the east is from the west, so far has God separated your transgressions from you. In his mind, it never happened. Forgiven, clean. Forgiven, clean. In Christ, you are forgiven.

Some of you will embrace that and experience a sense of relief and freedom, and it feels so good, and you will go through for a little while sensing the forgiveness of God, then all of a sudden this “but” will emerge. “I know God has forgiven me, but something is still not all there.” You know he has forgiven you and you believe it ... but! You are still drawn to the sin. You still feel vulnerable. You still feel dirty. You feel unbalanced. Something is just not right. You’ve done part of what God called you to do, but there is another part.

The third thing to find healing from our lies is **To confess to the appropriate people so that we will be healed.** I want you to notice what the scripture says. We confess to God for forgiveness and we confess to God’s people for healing. James 5:16 says this, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16, NIV).

Do you see it? We don’t just confess to God, but we confess to each other so that we would be healed. Now, that raises the question, “Who are the appropriate people?” And let me answer most definitely, without any reservation, the answer is: It depends. Yes, it really does, because not everyone needs to know everything, and you need to know that. For some things, it’s better that everybody doesn’t know.

Here’s a quote that was helpful to me. **“Honesty means that everything that you say is true, but everything that is true doesn’t need to be said.”** So, who do you confess to, if there’s something you are thinking about confessing? Well, I can’t tell you specifically. But I will offer you a question that may give you insight, because if you confess to someone who’s affected by the lie, it’s going to hurt them. There’s going to be some pain. You need to know that. But here’s a question that may guide you. **Could the short-term pain caused by your confession lead to deeper intimacy?** If the answer is “no”, then maybe you shouldn’t confess.

For instance, if you have a secret that involves your wife. You know that when you confess this to her, it is going to hurt her short-term, but there’s a wall between you right now that she doesn’t even know that it’s there. If you confess it to her, then it’s going to hurt her, but it could lead to deeper intimacy and healing. That’s a confession you probably need to make. But as you pray about this, if you discern that confessing a past sin would do more harm than healing, don’t do it.

But right now, some of you are going, “Uh, I don’t want to do it. I don’t want to do it.” And you have a choice and God loves you no matter what you choose. Just remember that there is no freedom in bondage to the lie.

Let’s end with the words of Jesus and then spend some time in prayer. **“If you hold to my teaching, you really are my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).** It will not only set you free, it will set those around you free. And freedom is a good thing. And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pray with me. “Father, we ask in your presence, as we confess our secret sins to you, that you would forgive us. As we confess them to your people, we ask that you would heal us.

So let’s confess. It could be simply, “I lie occasionally.” It could be as big as, “I am living a lie,” or anywhere in between. Father, I pray that you do in us what we cannot do for ourselves. As you are praying today, confess your sins to God, just in your own mind. He will hear them. Confess them. Give them a name. Say, “God, here’s what it is. Forgive me.” Just tell it to God right now.

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