

“My Secret—Sexual Secrets”

Today is week number three of “My Secret.” The premise behind this series is that we are only as sick as our secrets. God’s invited us to bring our dark secrets out into the light so that we can experience mercy, and grace, and forgiveness and healing. Lifechurch in Oklahoma City started a website www.mysecret.tv as a way for people to find a place to let go of some of their baggage. It’s only for people over 18, but it’s a safe place to confess anonymously and take a step toward freedom.

A foundational scripture for this series is Proverbs 28:13. It says, **“Those who conceal their sins do not prosper, but those who confess and renounce them find mercy” (Proverbs 28:13, TNIV)**. That’s what this series is about. Finding mercy, finding freedom, finding healing in God’s presence.

I want to clarify the kind of secrets we’re not talking about. You may keep it a secret about how loud you like to sing by yourself in the car, or that you dye your hair, or bleach your teeth, or shave your back, or listen to the Carpenters. Those are not what we’re talking about. We’re talking about the dark stuff that robs us of life. Jesus said, **“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10, NIV)**. This series is about having life to the full, and in order to do that we bring things into the light. And this is not about shame, or guilt, or embarrassment. It’s about freedom.

Today we’re talking about sexual secrets, and you may think, “We can’t talk about sex in church!?” Not only can we, but we should. Because God invented sex. God created us male and female for each other. It’s not like he’s looking down on us saying, “Oh my goodness, I had no idea that they would put tab A into slot B! How did they think that up?” Come on! Sex is God’s idea and it’s meant to be a healthy part of our lives. And if sexuality is God’s idea, then we need to get over the idea that our sexuality is dirty. And here’s why, because if we view it as dirty it stays a dark secret that festers in us and that just leads us in becoming an orgasm-centered people. And that’s idolatry. As Christ-followers, let’s reclaim and proclaim the fact that God invented sex and he invented it to be enjoyable and enjoyed!

But wait there’s more! At the same time the inventor of our sexuality, the creator of this gift, has given us directions on how to use it the way it was intended. We are wired to be sexual throughout our lives. But sexual intercourse is meant to be reserved for marriage—that’s what the inventor of sex has told us.

Picture a fire in a fireplace. It’s warm, it’s romantic, it’s comforting. But you take that fire out of the place where it’s supposed to be, you take that fire and put it in the middle of your living room floor, and the whole house burns down! Sex is similar. In its proper context in marriage, it is a good gift to be enjoyed, but outside that context of marriage it can be destructive and devastating.

We don’t have any trouble using our sexuality, where we have trouble is enjoying it the way the inventor intended it. And when we use our sexuality in ways that God does not intend it leads to broken hearts, broken lives, broken bodies, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, pornography, feelings of being dirty, ashamed, guilty and worthless. And that’s not really living. So today I want to talk very candidly about sex. As I said earlier, if you have kids with you and you think it’s not time for them to talk about this yet, you may want to take them down to the kids’ wing.

There are two big issues I want to hit today, pornography and promiscuity—and by promiscuity I mean sleeping around if you’re single, having affairs if you’re married—these seem to be major sources of secrets in our lives.

So let’s deal with some info about pornography. The internet has led to an explosion of porn usage. Where there were once roadblocks to porn use, or at least speed bumps, now there are almost none. Where once a person had to go to an adult store, or order through the mail and risk being seen, or intercepted, with the internet those barriers, those things that used to prevent people, are now virtually gone.

I read last week that porn revenue is larger than all the revenues for ABC, NBC, and CBS combined. And that ninety percent of children between the ages of eight and sixteen have viewed porn online. Using pornography is predominantly a male issue, but not exclusively. A recent survey of college students found that 50% of men and 3% of women view porn weekly. Approximately 15% of all websites are pornographic.

Please give me some grace here as I talk about this, because I found a lot more information than I can possible convey here, but I did find an interesting debate about porn. On one side there are those who have no doubt that porn in all its forms is evil and a gateway to other things like sexual addiction, promiscuity, adultery and even rape.

On the other side are those who say that men are going to look at porn, period and that our culture should simply accept that. They point to evidence that suggests that as porn use on the internet has spread, sexual crimes have decreased. Some even argue that use of pornography is a healthier outlet than having an affair or prostitution.

That may be true, but it doesn't make it right. Here's my view: Pornography is simply dangerous. It can so easily become an obsession and a full-blown addiction. And that is idolatry. It can quickly and easily push out the things in life that bring life, friendships, hobbies, prayer, worship, recreation. Porn interferes with relationships by making wives feel betrayed, insecure, inadequate, unloved. It creates a fantasy world that no one in the real world can live up to. Porn creates a self-made barrier of guilt between you and God. If you mess with fire you're going to get burned.

As for promiscuity in young people and singles. More and more young people are becoming sexually active earlier in life. Partly because they are maturing faster, partly because they are exposed to more and more sexually-oriented material, and partly because sexual activity outside of marriage is becoming more and more acceptable. But if you're single and having intercourse, you're being unfaithful to God, and to your future spouse. Just call it what it is.

As for adultery, it's still looked down on, but not nearly as severely as it used to be. Because it happens so often people have begun to look at it as a normal part of life.

But pornography, promiscuity, adultery are all ways of breaking faith. Breaking faith with God, with others, with ourselves.

In order to get a handle on what we do about these temptations let's look at the book of James in the Bible. It says, "**...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived...**" (James 1:13-16, NIV).

Notice the word "enticed." The word entice comes from a Greek word "deleazo [del-eh-ad'-zo]." It means to entrap, to allure, to hook. With that in mind, let's look at a way we identify and overcome the enticement, the hook, of sexual sin.

It's important to know how we get hooked in the first place. Craig Groeschel talks about three stages of becoming hooked. And the first stage is **Exposure to sexual impurity**. Every single one of us at some point has been exposed to impurity. Maybe as a little kid your friend comes over and says, "Hey, let's play doctor. I'll show you mine if you show me yours." And you were exposed to something that is impure.

Maybe you were at your buddy's house and you find the dad's stash of magazines. Maybe you came across an adult website. Maybe you were thirteen or fifteen or seventeen in the back seat of a car and someone pushed you to do something sexually. Maybe, and unfortunately this is true for way too many, someone molested you growing up. At that moment, you are exposed to sexual impurity.

I was in the third or fourth grade. My grandfather had a stash of magazines in his attic that my brother and I found—whoa. My brother had to tell me what I was looking at. Later a friend found a bunch of Playboy magazines stashed somewhere. We read every single article. Actually, we didn't even know there were articles. There was all of this text in the way of the pictures, and so in the third or fourth grade, my little mind was exposed to impurity.

Now, a lot of women won't understand this, but most men will say, "Yep, I understand." Here I am, over thirty years later, and to this day, I can reach into my mind and pull up some of those images. They were burned on my mind.

What happened is, I was exposed to sexual impurity, which leads to the second phase that we all go through, which is **You sustain a mental injury**. As a little boy, I sustained a mental injury. I didn't think about women the same after that. It injured the purity of God's plan in my mind.

So, you are exposed to impurity. Then you sustain a mental injury. Third, **You become sexually confused**. And here is what happens. In the fourth grade, I enjoyed looking at these pictures. There was a rush. There was a hit. There was a thrill, and at the same exact moment, there was shame and guilt and this feeling of being dirty. At the same time, still wanting to look, but knowing that I shouldn't. It's a lot like what Paul said in Romans 7. He said, "**I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do**" (Romans 7:15, NIV).

There's this confusion that takes place. Then a lot of us will experience waves of self-hatred. "Well, I'm bad. I shouldn't do this," followed by seasons of justification. You know, "Hey, I'm single and this is how I relate, this is how I know I'm loved." Or "This is just how I cope, you know." And if you are married, your justification goes like this, "Well, if my spouse wasn't so stingy, would kind of help a fellow out, you know, or just meet my needs, then I wouldn't have to do this." Justification. There's confusion. There's the rush and there's the shame. There's this cycle that leads to secrecy whether that's an affair, or promiscuity for singles, or pornography. You think, "I've already gone this far. I can't go back. I might as well go further."

But the truth is, you've got an injury of your mind that hasn't healed. Think about this for a second. What should you do with an injury? A physical injury? When I was in 7th grade we were high-jumping in the gym during P.E. and after I jumped over the bar I bounced off the mat and hit the floor. It knocked me unconscious for a few seconds but then I wandered around the school dazed and confused until I finally called my dad to come get me. They took me to the doctor. I had a concussion and mild amnesia. Once you've had one head injury you are more susceptible to others and it's happened several more times to me over the years. I know you're thinking, "This explains so, so much." But I know that I have to protect my injury. Now why is that? Because if I don't protect the head injury, it will get worse.

Now, God heals wounds. He set up our bodies so they can heal, but it takes time for God to heal. You had an injury in your mind. I was in the fourth grade. I don't know how old you were. We've got to protect the wound, the injuries, so God can heal them.

Three thoughts on how we are going to do that. The first one is that we're going to **train our eyes to bounce**. We are going to bounce our eyes off of looking at things that are impure. Adultery and promiscuity always begin in our minds. It's not something that happens to you. It's something that you allow to happen. That's why Jesus said, "**You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart**" (Matt 5:27-28, NIV). I can't speak for the women here today, but I can speak for the men. We're all guilty of this!

But listen, lust is not glancing at an attractive person of the opposite sex. Lust is not feeling aroused in the presence of an attractive person. Lust is allowing those natural feelings to consume you to point where you begin to plan and scheme to be near that person again. Lust is encouraging sexual thoughts and dwelling on them to the point that they preoccupy your mind.

It's only natural to look at an attractive body, but to go back for that second, third, fourth look and obsess on that is lust. And Jesus is saying that if you go that far you've already committed adultery.

You're going to have thoughts that cross your mind about a coworker, friend or neighbor—it's true for both men and women. It's not a sin to have those thoughts, but when we take those thoughts and roll them around in our minds and play with them, well eventually those thoughts are going to want to be acted upon.

Like Jesus said, some much of it starts with our eyes. Over the years I've trained my eyes to bounce. And that's not easy because honestly, my eyes drift toward sexually pleasing things. But over time with a lot of self-discipline, I have trained my eyes to bounce and now it is second nature. To see and look away. Whether that's a person or an image on the screen. With the power of God, we can do this.

The second thing that we are going to do is, we are going to **capture sinful thoughts**. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says "...**we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ**" (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV). We are going to capture sinful thoughts.

Now how does this happen? At some point, you are going to have a bad thought. Someone is going to walk by and you are going to be like, "Ohh, oooh, uh, uh, uh. Get me some a dat." Capture that thought. Or you're alone with time on your hands and you start to fantasize, or you are tempted to look at something you shouldn't look at. Capture and replace that thought.

Now, what does that mean that you might have to do? You may have to stop what you are doing and call a friend. Say, "Hey, pray for me. My mind is going this direction." Or you might turn off your TV or unplug it, or get up and go for a walk, or read a book, or whatever, but you have to stop what you are doing and replace those sinful thoughts. This is where it's great to have a hobby, something that is a fun distraction that will help capture sinful thoughts. Paul, in Philippians 4:8 said, "**Whatever is true and noble and right and pure and lovely and admirable. If anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things**" (Philippians 4:8, NIV). Capture the sinful thoughts.

We are protecting the wound by bouncing our eyes, by capturing sinful thoughts, and the third thing that we are going to do is, whenever sexual temptation comes around, we are going to **Run for our life**. 1 Corinthians 6:18, speaking of sexual immorality, says, **“Flee from sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18, NIV)**. You look at some other sins in the Bible and the Bible will say, “resist it” or “fight it.” When it comes to sex, we are told to do what Forrest did. Run, Forrest. Run, flee for your life, because this temptation wants you hooked!

How do you do it? Here are some practical things to do. Destroy your stash, whatever that stash is. Magazines, DVDs whatever. It may be your Victoria’s Secret magazines you put out on your coffee table that your eight-year-old boy can look at. Get rid of that stuff. Or your Cosmo 473 ways to drive your boyfriend wild in bed. Do you think that’s leading to Godly thoughts? Destroy whatever will lead you to impurity.

Another thing is this. Insure accountability when traveling. This is where a lot of people get into trouble. Have somebody who will call you to hold you accountable. Or call ahead and say, “Deprogram the adult channels,” or “take the TV out of my room.” Whatever, plan ahead to be safe.

A third thought is protect your internet usage. Protect it. You can go to a website www.xxxchurch.com. They offer free accountability software that will monitor your online usage and send a log to an accountability partner.

Another thing you want to do is avoid all dangerous places. What is a dangerous place to you? I don’t know. You know. It may be the strip club. Maybe the gym. The bar. Whatever it is, avoid it! Stay away from whatever is dangerous. Why? We are protecting the wounds. We are radically protecting the wound so that God can heal it. Bouncing our eyes, capturing simple thoughts, and running for our lives. Okay?

As you protect the wound from further injury or infection, God will heal your mind. Romans 12:2 gives us some serious hope and power. It says, **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2, NIV)**. Our minds can be healed, our minds can be transformed, our minds can be renewed. But you are not changed by conforming in your own strength. You are changed by the transforming power of God. We tap into that power through worship, through daily times with God in prayer, and through having a group, or a person we can confide in. That’s how we tap into the transforming, healing power of God.

As we wrap up today I have to bring up a couple of things. One is that this series is shaking some things loose. People are bringing their secrets out into the light and they are experiencing some healing. So let me warn you, that somebody might be calling you to confess, to find healing. And when they do, be prayerfully ready. You may hear some confessions that shock you, that anger you, that break your heart, and if that happens, get on the solution side. Somebody has taken a huge risk, a huge leap of faith, a huge step toward healing by confessing to you, don’t betray that act. Even if it hurts and angers you, listen and respond with love. Take part in the healing. You may be tempted to take it personally and think, “What did I do to cause this? What’s wrong with me?” Just let that stuff go—it’s not about you. Take part in the healing.

Final word. Despite what pornography, and promiscuity and adultery do to us, they are forgivable. God alone is able to heal and forgive and restore what none of us can do. That’s what happened with King David in the Old Testament. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and did terrible things to cover it up. He was confronted with his sin and pleaded with God for forgiveness. He blew it big time, but in the end God restored him. And he became a great king and a friend of God.

In John chapter 8 we read about the adulterous woman brought to Jesus by the Pharisees. They had stones in their hands ready to stone her to death—that was the legal punishment for an adulterer. And Jesus looked at them and said, “You who are without sin throw the first stone.” And one by one the stones were dropped. Jesus lifts up that woman and says, “where are your accusers? They are all gone. Neither do I condemn you. Go and do not sin again.”

This is God’s word to you. I know a man who can heal broken hearts. I know a man who can save us from the depth of our sin and give us the power to overcome. I know a man who is a savior who can save you. His name is Jesus and he is ready. Take him your secrets and find mercy. And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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