

# The Power of Secrets

## *in your life*

By Dave Batty

What place do secrets have in your life?

What disaster would explode in your life if certain secrets of your past were revealed?

Some secrets have powerful feelings of fear or shame connected to them. Others generate great curiosity.

What are the secrets Tiger Woods has learned to become such a great golf player? What is the secret to success that enabled Bill Gates to become the richest man in the world?

In your life, what are the secrets that seem to elude you—that keep you guessing, searching?

If you could have a face to face conversation with Jesus, what questions would you ask Him?

Or are you driven by a different power—the fear of exposure? Does

this fear drive you to strategize how you can keep a secret?

### **The power of secrets**

One teen told me how much pain his family experienced when his 24 year old brother committed suicide. His brother never told anyone about the secret struggles he was having—so no one was able to help him. But the tragedy went beyond the suicide. His younger brother struggled with

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*Secret sins are often a path to self-deception. We convince ourselves that we are safe if our secret is safe.*

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deep pain and bitterness toward God for years—wondering why God would allow his brother to commit suicide.

Some secrets bring much greater destruction into our lives than if they were revealed.

Did your childhood include times when you were blackmailed by your brother or sister?

Their threat of “I’m going to tell Mom what you did,” forced you to negotiate the terms to keep this secret from Mom. Their secret had power over you, so you paid them off, whatever they demanded.

- ❖ **What is the destructive power of secret sins in your life?**
- ❖ **How can you find the way out of secret sins in your life?**
- ❖ **Who needs to know about your secret sins of the past?**

More than one enterprising child enhanced their weekly allowance with this kind of blackmail.

One child who had done wrong, went and confessed it to her mom. Later that day her younger brother threatened to tell Mom if she didn’t pay him off. She responded, “Go ahead and tell Mom. I don’t care—because I already told Mom!”

The power of the secret was broken because she had already confessed it to Mom.

### **The destructive power of secret sins**

Other children have faced a far more destructive kind of secret—when they have been sexually abused by an older person. They have been manipulated to keep this a secret—“If you tell anyone, I will kill you.”

One daughter told her mom that her dad was sexually abusing her, and her mom said, “Don’t you dare tell anyone! If you do, the police will take your dad to prison, and then we won’t have anywhere to live.” So the secret was kept, and the abuse continued.

Some who have experienced the tragedy of sexual abuse have kept this a secret for many years. The shame of their past ruled the present. What they failed to realize is that the longer this secret remained hidden, the more damage it caused in their life.

## The fearful path out of secret sins

Revealing this kind of secret can be a painful and fearful experience. However, it opens up new opportunities to experience God's healing.

Brian had supported his drug addiction through stealing. His criminal activities finally landed him in front of a judge, facing charges that could send him to prison for 3-5 years, or more. Through the help of a Christian, Brian was allowed to enter Teen Challenge. The judge suspended his sentence and placed him on probation.

While in the Bible classes at Teen Challenge, Brian learned about the importance of living out the teachings of Jesus in his daily experiences. The Holy Spirit convicted him about the time he had stolen money from an ATM machine.

He talked to one of the Teen Challenge leaders who encouraged him to make plans to save up the money and return it to the bank. After Brian graduated from the program he joined the Teen Challenge re-entry program where he got a job.

The thought of going to the bank and returning the money made Brian fearful. "I considered sending the cash in the mail with a note explaining that I was returning the money I had stolen," shared Brian. "But the Holy Spirit said, 'No.'"

With the money saved up, he called the bank and asked to make an appointment with the president. When the secretary asked why, Brian explained that he wanted to return the money he had stolen. She quickly set up the appointment for him.

Thirty minutes later she called back to say that they couldn't just accept the stolen money—they also had to report it to the police. Now Brian was even more fearful. Since he was already on probation, this admission of stealing money would be a violation of his probation. Not only would he be facing the original 3-5

*The fear and shame of revealing our secret sins or failures often rob us of the blessings God has in store for us.*

*When you live in obedience to His plan for your life, God can take the failures of your life and turn them into stepping stones for growth and blessing.*

years in prison, but also additional time for this bank robbery.

But Brian followed through with what God had told him to do. On the day of the appointment with the bank president, the director of his re-entry program went with him. As soon as Brian handed him the money, the president asked him, "Why are you doing this?" He assumed that Brian was trying to stay one step ahead of the police.

Brian explained that as a student in Teen Challenge he had given his life to Jesus, and now wanted to make restitution for the money he had stolen.

What Brian thought would be a quick 3 minute appointment with the president turned into a 45 minute meeting. The bank president had all kinds of questions for Brian.

"When I walked out of that office, it felt like a 400 pound weight

## Secret Grudges

Have you ever given someone the "silent treatment?" Even if they asked you, "What's wrong?" you simply shrugged your shoulders and said, "Nothing."

When we hold a secret grudge against someone, we prevent a quick resolution to the problem that created the hurt.

As you feed on the silent hurt, the perception of the wrong often grows. You keep adding to the pain, and the wound grows deeper.

This secret not only increases the damage in you, but it also causes damage in your relationship with the other person.

The Bible tells us, "don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life." (Ephesians 4:26-27 The Message)

When you are faced with how to respond to someone who has hurt you, the path of the secret grudge may appear to offer the best way of getting back at that person, but it only brings more damage.

Facing that person and explaining how they hurt you is rarely easy, but it offers the best path to healing and restoration and change for the better.

was lifted off my back," shared Brian.

That day Brian learned the power of revealing secret sins. As he obeyed God, he saw God use his honesty to bring a whole new dimension of freedom into his life. Had Brian simply mailed the cash back with an anonymous note, he would have missed the opportunity to be a witness to that bank president.

And for the rest of his life, Brian will have the wonderful memory of seeing God at work in his life. Satan will never be able to use that secret sin to hold him in bondage any more.

One more thing—the police chose not to press charges against Brian for this bank robbery, so his probation was not violated.

Many others have allowed fear and shame to hold them back from taking the path Brian took. Revealing his secret sin took courage. But God's incredible rewards await those who are willing to take the hard steps to live in open honesty.

## When secrets are culturally acceptable

Our culture today sends mixed messages about acceptable secrets. "It's OK to run the red light. There aren't any police watching." As long as you can get away with it and don't get caught, our culture says, "It's OK."

If Brian had listened to many in our culture today, they would have told him, "You don't need to return that money. Just forget about it."

But ignoring sin is never the solution. We cannot allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that we can sin "safely."

And then there is the "street code of ethics." Never rat on your friends! The local culture may have different slang words to describe this, but the message is the same—don't reveal the sins of your friends.

Even among Christians it can be a real struggle to find the balance in when to keep a secret and when to reveal a secret sin—whether it is your sin, or your friend's sin.

## Who needs to know about your secret sins of the past?

It gets even more complicated for some Christians. Even if you have confessed your sins to Jesus, which sins should you reveal to others?

One young man who had been married for about a year revealed to his wife that he had been struggling with pornography. He thought this

honesty would help their marriage. But his wife was so devastated by this admission, that her distrust of him grew to the point that she divorced him.

So should he have kept this secret from his wife? Would they still be married if he had said nothing to her? There are no simple answers to these complex questions.

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*Instead of hiding your secret sins, you need to focus on discovering God's secrets to successful living—living in His freedom.*

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God clearly reveals what lies in our future. "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be

## When God keeps you in the dark

Our culture today is obsessed with knowing the future. The palm readers, astrology readings, your horoscope, and a variety of other voices all claim to give you a window into your future.

God specifically warns us to stay away from all these. See Leviticus 19:26, 31, Leviticus 20:6 and Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

Instead, God calls on us to trust Him with our future. In Hebrews 12:1-2 we are told to follow the path He has marked out for us.

The problem comes when we seem to be left in the dark. God often does not give us His 5 year

plan for our future. He wants us to learn what it means to walk by faith—taking one step at a time, and putting our trust in Him that He knows what is best.

This faith walk goes against our natural desire to be in control. Surrendering control makes us feel vulnerable.

When we allow God to be in control, we open the door to a new level of freedom in our lives. You can have the confidence that He has your best as His top priority.

Since only God knows all the future, it's a great choice to give Him full control of your future.

known or brought out into the open.” (Luke 8:17 NIV) We can’t hide our sins forever.

You may want to seek the counsel of a mature, godly leader regarding what secret sins of your past should be revealed to those closest to you. The most important thing is that you not live in denial that it’s OK to hide secret sins.

When you make yourself accountable to a mature Christian, you open the opportunity to learn from your failures of the past.

## Not all secrets are sin

The power of shame can cause us to give far too much power to our failures of the past. You can begin to believe the lie that “if others know about my failures, they won’t like me. They won’t trust me.” So we put up walls to hide our secrets, and live in fear of what will happen if others really know the truth about me.

Jesus states clearly that His arms are wide open for you. He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28 NIV)

You can’t keep any secrets from God. No matter what you have done, He still loves you. Learning to live in the light of His truth will put you on the path to healthy living and peace in your heart.

Brian discovered unexpected blessings as he took God’s path out of his secret sins of the past. You too can experience God’s surprises as you walk in openness and the truth.

Instead of hiding your secret sins, you need to focus on discovering God’s secrets to successful living—living in His freedom.

# The Power of Secrets in your life Discussion Guide

The following questions can be used for your personal reflection on this topic, or it can be used as a guide for a group discussion. If this is used in a group setting, please understand that you are not required to disclose the specific details of past sins, failures, or personal experiences.

1. Can you think of a time in your past when the fear of revealing a secret kept you in bondage?
2. Has there been a time in your past when others threatened to harm you if you revealed their secret? How did that affect you?
3. Read Ecclesiastes 12:14. How does the message of this verse affect you?
4. Read Ephesians 4:26-27. Do you find it easy to hold on to a grudge and use the “silent treatment” against the one who offended you? What have been the results of using this strategy?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:2.
  - A. How does your life measure up to the message of this verse?
  - B. How hard is it for you to handle shameful memories of the past?
  - C. How easy is it for you to use deception to keep secrets?
6. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. How hard is it for you to handle the fact that God has a plan for your future, but He often does not reveal this very far in advance?
7. What changes do you need to make regarding how you handle secrets in your life?



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