

All Our Secrets

1. Warm up: Jeff began Sunday's sermon by asking how each of us would feel if he said he was coming over to your home in 30 minutes. He told about how many things in his own home he'd need/want to tidy up before someone came over. If our Oasis Group was all going to pull into our vehicles tonight and head over to your house, what's something you'd be embarrassed about? Be honest. ☺
2. Our homes are a metaphor for our lives. We have lots of secrets – things we don't want others to know about us – things we don't even really want to acknowledge to ourselves – things that would be exposed if others could just walk right into our brains today and see the mess. As an old Jamaican saying says, "You never know if the roof leaks until you live in the house." And that saying is not talking about our homes. It's talking about our lives – all our secrets, all of the feelings we hide. By contrast, Jesus modeled for us how we should handle all that stuff we carry around inside. Let's read John 6:35-69, selected verses, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Hebrews 4:15 says, "[Jesus was] tempted in every way – just as we are – yet he did not sin." Does that mean Jesus was sexually tempted? Tempted to hate people? Tempted to be greedy? Tempted to be insecure or anxious? And if so, how do you feel about Jesus being tempted in all those ways?
 - b. Verse 66 in our Gospel passage tells us that there came a time in the ministry of Jesus when "many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him." Given that Jesus was tempted in the same ways we are, what kinds of thoughts, feelings, and insecurities would you guess were swirling within Jesus when so many of his followers complained and ceased following him?
 - c. Instead of keeping all his feelings bottled up inside himself, Jesus gathered his twelve closest friends and followers and directly asked them, "Do you also want to go away?" What does that tell us about what Jesus was feeling within himself in that moment? How does that make you feel about Jesus?
 - d. Peter responded to Jesus by saying, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life." When Jesus heard that, how do you imagine it affected him and how he felt about all he was going through?
3. In our Gospel passage, Jesus models the importance of not keeping our feelings secret, but rather courageously sharing them with others. We see that same pattern in Jesus in many other Gospel stories.
 - a. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus pulled aside Peter, James, and John and "began to be grieved and agitated." He said, "I am deeply grieved, even to death. Remain here and stay awake with me." Matthew 26:37. Try to imagine that moment when Jesus let's his three friends see his grief and agitation. What do you imagine that looked like? How do you think it made Peter, James, and John feel in the moment? Why do you think Jesus let them see this side of himself?

- b. The ultimate example of Jesus courageously sharing his feelings in a “politically incorrect” way was on the cross when he shouted, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Matthew 27:45. If Jesus was the Son of God, how could he feel that way? And why did he say it out loud for everyone to hear? Why didn’t he just keep those feelings to himself?
- 4. In Jesus, we see a pattern for how we should handle all the secret stuff that goes on inside of us – courageous sharing, rather than hiding.
 - a. Did it ever occur to you before that how we handle our secrets and inner feelings is an important part of our discipleship as followers of Jesus? Do you agree now that it is?
 - b. How would you describe the pattern Jesus gave us for how to handle our inner feelings? What’s the principle we should draw from his example for ourselves?
 - c. Have you ever known someone who kept a big secret inside for a long time? How did that secrecy affect them?
 - d. What are some of the downsides of keeping our secrets bottled up inside us?
- 5. Jeff shared a parable on Sunday about a King who routinely offered convicted criminals two different options for their punishment. One option was solitary confinement in a dungeon. The other option was to walk through a big black door, not knowing what’s on the other side. Invariably, every single convict chose the dungeon, instead of risking the door – which, it turns out, led to freedom.
 - a. How does that parable apply to how we handle our secrets?
 - b. Tell us about a time when you dared to walk through the big black door and share something going on inside you that made you feel vulnerable. What happened when you shared your secret? And how did you feel on the other side of sharing?
 - c. On Sunday, Jeff suggested four great benefits from sharing our inner feelings, which are laid out on p. 3. Read through them again, then tell us which of those benefits most resonates with you – and why.
 - d. On Sunday Jeff gave us a homework assignment. He said, “Let’s each ask ourselves this question: What’s something I’m holding inside (large or small) that I need to share with someone – for all the reasons we’ve talked about? Then let’s identify someone or someplace where we can share that certain something, because when we do so, God’s power will be released into that situation in mystical, wonderful, amazing ways.” Of course, it’s always wise to choose the time and place where we share our feelings. But for some of us, our Oasis Group might be a good place to share something we’ve been holding in. If you want to share something like that with us tonight (for prayer or just to get it off your chest), let’s do that now.

John 6:35-69, selected verses

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." ³⁶But then the people began to complain about Jesus because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴²They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" ⁶¹Jesus [was] aware that his disciples were complaining about it.

⁶⁶ And because of [what he said] many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Some Benefits of Sharing Our Secrets and Feelings at an Appropriate Time and Place

1. It frees us from the misery of isolation in ways that are almost mystical and hard to explain.
2. It allows others to get to know the true us, instead of a reputational charade of ourselves.
3. It allows others to share an "outside" perspective that gives us greater perspective.
4. It opens up space for others to also be honest about themselves.