LIES UNTOLD

Don't tell the truth.
The headline read, “Study: 100 percent of Americans lead secret lives.” The story from The Onion, an online news source, cited a study released by the University of California-Berkeley that “100 percent of Americans fail to disclose the full truth about what they think and do in private.”

The article continues, “While startling and often embarrassing revelations about the private lives of politicians, professional athletes, and celebrities surface on a routine basis, our research indicates that Americans out of the public eye also have a lot to hide,” said Berkeley sociology professor Dr. Mia L. Greene, who headed the 10-year study. ‘Surprisingly, famous people aren’t the only ones participating in shady business dealings, substance abuse, and peculiar sexual activities.’ Even the average person engages “in strange and obsessive behavior that, if revealed, would humiliate them.”

Though The Onion isn’t a legitimate news source, it does poke fun at an uncomfortable truth. Everyone has secrets; everyone tries to hide the parts of themselves that shame them. Is that really true? Does everybody have secrets?

How do you respond to this article? Are there parts of your personal life that you wouldn’t want leaked to the tabloids?

What you do in private matters because it reveals the true you. My prayer for you while working through this session is that you will learn from Samson’s secrecy and the effect his private sins had on his life. Together we can commit to reversing his curse and live lives that publicly and privately honor God.

SAMSON’S SECRET LIFE
Samson definitely had his fair share of secrets. He was a man of incredible physical strength, but he tried to hide his personal and spiritual weaknesses. Samson failed to follow the demands of his Nazirite vow and generally made poor choices when pressed by his enemies or led on by lust. But it was his uncontrolled spirit—he how he acted in those moments when no one was around—that paved the way for his public failure.

“Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Suddenly a young lion came roaring at him, the Spirit of the Lord took control of him, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done. Then he went and spoke to the woman, because Samson wanted her” (Judges 14:5-7).

Watch the Samson video for Session 2, available at threadsmedia.com/samson.
You can bet that if something this extraordinary happened to me, I would tell everyone I know. But Samson had a superhuman encounter with a lion, and he didn’t tell anyone about it. He seems to have withheld the information intentionally. For whatever reason, he didn’t want anyone to know he had been in the vineyard. Going to the vineyard doesn’t automatically mean Samson was guilty of breaking his Nazirite vow not to drink wine, but this story doesn’t read like he’s innocent either.

In the last session, we read that Samson demanded his parents go get the girl he desired. He wanted them to know he was in love with a Philistine “fox,” but didn’t want them to know he ravaged a roaring lion. Samson may not have told a direct lie, but he was guilty of the sin of omission.

Can you remember ever withholding information from your parents to avoid the consequences of your actions? How did it turn out?

If the first encounter with a lion was an “accident,” the second encounter was Samson’s fault, without a doubt:

“After some time, when he returned to get her, he left the road to see the lion’s carcass, and there was a swarm of bees with honey in the carcass” (Judges 14:8).

Samson wanted to see what had happened to the animal he destroyed with his bare hands. Like all of us at times, curiosity and pride got the best of him. Had he just looked, pride would have been all he was guilty of, but Samson didn’t stop there.

Samson’s olfactory system kicked in—his sense of smell. Something inside his brain caused his saliva glands to secrete, and his mouth started watering. His stomach began growling, and he felt hungry. Samson’s body began working against his brain, all because of an “innocent” glance. He knew what he shouldn’t do, but in the moment of temptation, his mind was racing against him.

The longer you look at what’s forbidden, the closer you come to craving it and eventually caving to it. That’s the way it is with any temptation. The longer you linger, the lower you go.

In what areas of your life are you tempted to “just look” at something or someone? What words or phrases do you use, or have you heard others use, to justify “just looking”?

Lions, a proverbial symbol for strength, are mentioned approximately 135 times in the Old Testament.
Samson went to see the lion's carcass, but was overcome with temptation. He wasn't prepared for the carcass to have a swarm of bees in it. In that moment, Samson had to choose between walking away or breaking his vow:

"He must not go near a dead body during the time he consecrates himself to the Lord. He is not to defile himself for his father or mother, or his brother or sister, when they die, because the hair consecrated to his God is on his head. He is holy to the Lord during the time of consecration" (Numbers 6:6-8).

Giving in to the temptation, Samson bent down and cupped his hands to eat a fist full of forbidden honey.

"He scooped some honey into his hands and ate it as he went along..." (Judges 14:9a).

Samson's decision had further ramifications than breaking his Nazirite vow.

"...When he returned to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it. But he did not tell them that he had scooped the honey from the lion's carcass" (Judges 14:9b).

Again we see that Samson was guilty of the sin of omission, withholding critical information from his parents and compromising their religious cleanliness. Even if they never asked him where the honey came from—meaning he didn't have to directly lie—he still defiled them by serving them honey from a corpse. We'll read later that Samson never told his parents the truth, whether they asked or not, and this second sin of omission would catch up with him.

"Since you put away lying, Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another" (Ephesians 4:25).

Paul urged us to put off our old, sin nature, and to put on our new selves in holiness. This verse is often referred to as Paul's "put off/put on" principle.

How does this principle apply to lies of omission like Samson committed?
Are there circumstances when lies of omission or "white" lies are appropriate? Explain your response.

If telling the truth is a fruit of a regenerated person, to whom do you need to tell the truth today? Write his or her name below.

How many times have you said a little white lie? I was an all-star on my high school football team. I'd love to go volunteer with you, but I've had plans for weeks. No officer, I didn't realize I was going over the speed limit. It's not you, it's me. Of course you look awesome in that dress! I sent you an e-mail invite; you didn't get it? I would've been on time but there was a wreck on the interstate. This gift is exactly what I wanted. You're such a good cook. I only bought it because it was on sale. Of course I wanted a purple basket-weaving set; I love it! And often we've convinced ourselves that little white lies are OK. They ease us out of awkward conversations or maintain the feelings of another person.

But maybe your truth is more complicated.

Maybe you've been keeping secrets from someone you love. Maybe you've been lying to make yourself feel better. Or maybe you've just plain been lying to yourself. We've all caught ourselves in little white lies, told stories that make us look better, said things that weren't true, or made mistakes we don't want shared with the world. So let's stop kidding ourselves. What we say and do matters.

HIDDEN AGENDAS
We often do the same thing as Samson, allowing curiosity and arrogance to get the best of us. We carry on conversations with a coworker that are full of innuendo and flirtation. I'm not hurting anyone, we think. I'm just messing around. Sure, we text sometimes, but it's innocent, I swear! We peek at pictures on the Internet. It's no big deal. It's not like it's lusting, right? Just a quick look. Or we convince ourselves that temptation is OK, regardless of what our credit card bills look like: The store is having a great sale. Besides, just one more pair won't matter. I'm just gonna go look.

Temptation itself is not a sin, but giving in to the temptation is. Hebrews 4 reminds us that Jesus was tempted to sin but didn't give in.

Struggling with looking at inappropriate things on the Internet? Get some help! Here are a few software recommendations: XXX Church (x3watch.com), Covenant Eyes (covenanteyes.com), or Safe Eyes (internetsafety.com/safeeyes).
"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time" (vv. 15-16).

The choice is ours whether we give in to temptations or not.

Where's the line between temptation and sin? How do you know when you've crossed that line?

We typically think of lust as a sexual desire for another person. What else do people lust for?

A lot of people are hiding things in their lives. Are you erasing the history on your computer, padding your expense report, lying to someone about where you're going and what you're doing? Are you deleting calls and texts and making sure you beat your spouse to the mailbox for the cell phone bill? Are you convincing yourself that "what happens in Vegas"—or Birmingham, Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Dallas, Memphis, Panama City Beach, Rome, Paris, or Stockholm—really stays there? Do you have a secret account or credit card you're hiding from your spouse? Are you calling all your doctors, friends, and doctor's friends in pain needing a few more pills? Have you been truthful about the motivation behind your decisions?

Hiding sin is almost always more dangerous than the sin itself. When we sin and then lie about it, we double our grievances, while continuing to act like everything is OK. Secrets keep things in the dark, and without the light of God's grace shining on those dark places, the secrets just fester and grow.

When we keep secrets, it's about image management, a gap between who we are and who we want others to think we are. When we keep secret sins, we care more about being thought of as spiritual, honorable, charitable, and so forth than actually being those things.

Social media is a great experiment in painting a picture of who you want people to believe you are. Do you post the ups and downs of life, or do you portray a perfect image?

The Bible praises the virtue of confidentiality. See Proverbs 11:11; 25:9.
Nothing is wrong with being able to keep a secret, but some secrets aren’t meant to be kept. Secrets that lead to duplicity, a compromised version of Christianity, and the loss of all we hold dear need to be revealed and renounced. God doesn’t want us to be that kind of secret keeper. He wants us to live lives of integrity and openness that He can bless and that will bring us joy.

“How happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways! You will surely eat what your hands have worked for. You will be happy, and it will go well for you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house, your sons, like young olive trees around your table. In this very way the man who fears the Lord will be blessed” (Psalm 128:1-4).

What does this passage promise for the person “who fears the Lord” and “walks in His ways”?

Nobody likes all the rules. As a matter of fact most of us hate rules and don’t like being told what we can and cannot do. But God doesn’t care if we like the rules; He just wants us to obey Him because His commandments bring holiness, happiness, and freedom.

Why are God’s rules actually a means to freedom? When have you seen this to be true in your life?

What would happen right now if your private life were completely exposed? Would the fallout be extreme? In what ways might it be the best thing to happen to you?

LIVING IN TRUTH

Only God knows what Samson was capable of had he fully committed to following God’s plan for His life. And the same is true for us. We all know we should be honest, but sometimes that’s easier said than done. Let’s look at two very practical ways we can keep our public and private lives pure.


SESSION TWO LIES UNTOLD
1. Stay away from temptation.

I know you can handle it. I'm sure you won't give in. But few Christians I know started out wanting to throw away everything important to them.

Temptation is a slippery slope; a slow fade. Don't test yourself to see how strong you are and how close you can come to the edge. Instead, admit how weak you are and run away. A long look leads to a growing desire that hatches a crazy idea that culminates in a secret sin that leads to public pretending and hurt-filled lies.

Avoiding temptation altogether is the single most effective way to foil compromising situations that lead to lies and deception. But before you can avoid the temptation, you have to know where your temptation tendencies lie. If you can't spend, don't shop. If you don't want to lust, quit looking. If the doctor told you to watch your weight, stop going to the buffet and buying donuts. If you want to stop drinking, don't drop by the bar to see what your buddies are doing. If you don't want to end up crossing a line with your date, don't lay down on the couch or bed together.

We all have weaknesses that subtly draw us into a destructive pattern of sin.

"Each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desires. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death" (James 1:14-15).

"Flee from youthful passions, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

No matter your age, what "youthful passions" subtly tempt you? How can you avoid them? What needs to change?

Are those people, places, and things avoidable? If not, how can you guard your heart?

Once you've identified the things that easily persuade you from God's best, the next step is to cling to God and His Word:

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

How can the promises in this passage help you focus on living out truth?

When we’re giving all our attention to developing our relationship with God and concentrating on His ways, the appeal of our ungodly desires is greatly diminished. Temptation is real. It is going to happen. But you can prepare yourself by pinpointing those things that trip you up, and staying focused on the One who is stronger than any temptation we will encounter.

2 Get a friend.

Isolation aids secret sins. Samson had no friends to hold him accountable. Look again at Judges 14:

“His father went to visit the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, as young men were accustomed to do. When the Philistines saw him, they brought 30 men to accompany him” (vv. 10-11).

Samson’s parents brought the companions to his party, 30 of them to be exact. Of these companions, the best one of them, Samson’s best man, ends up marrying Samson’s wife (see Judges 15:1-2), as we’ll see in the next session. That shows you how close they really were. Samson was a loner. We don’t read any mention of him having a close friend.

If Satan can get us alone, he’s got us half beaten. If we want to get a leg up on the devil, we need to have authentic, God-honoring, trustworthy, call-us-out-when-we-do-wrong friends. Good friends are indispensable to a life of holiness.

In the Bible, Moses had Joshua (Deuteronomy 31; 34); Ruth had Naomi (Ruth 1–4); David had Jonathan (1 Samuel 20); Elijah had Elisha (1 Kings 19); and Paul had Barnabas (Acts 9; 13; 2 Timothy 4). In the fictional world, Tom Sawyer had Huck Finn. Gilligan had Skipper. Forrest had Bubba.

Need a small group? Just grab a friend or two and begin walking together through prayer, confession, and Bible study. If you’re not up for starting a guys group of your own, search for a Samson Society group in your area: samsonsociety.net.
What other examples of true friends have you seen?

Our ultimate example of the value of relationships is Christ Himself. Jesus had three: Peter, James, and John.

"Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

We've talked about the importance of having a close friend. But maybe you don't have any. Or maybe the ones you have aren't good for your life. Instead of pointing you toward Jesus, they only distract you.

Friend or Foe?
We've all heard the clichés: "Bad company corrupts good morals." "Don't be unequally yoked to an unbeliever." "If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas." "Misery loves company." "You're known by the company you keep." These statements hold truth. Who we spend our time with affects who we become.

"The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive" (Proverbs 27:6).

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

Does the idea of having a friend like this make you feel excited or fearful? Why?

Some of my best friends have been made on the basketball court, the running trail, or on a hunting trip. Deep friendships grow out of time spent together. It's that time together that allows me to determine if I trust you or not.

"When you have a problem, if you tell the truth, the problem becomes part of your past. If you lie, it becomes part of your future." —Rick Pitino, head coach of the University of Louisville men's basketball team
When you find the right people, the chemistry is there, you “click” with them. Your personalities, sense of humor, goals, ambitions, and outlook on life mesh together. You have camaraderie. But most importantly, if the friendships look the way God intends, you have Christ-likeness. You inspire one another to godliness.

Who have you helped “sharpen”? Who helps sharpen you? How does it feel knowing you have their love and support?

Challenge yourself: Get in each others’ grills. Somebody has to speak truth in love to you! Your life depends on it.

“But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

“Watch out, brothers, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception” (Hebrews 3:12-13).

When we don’t have friends who take care of and watch out for us, we run a greater risk of growing cold and calloused toward God. We need encouragement, and we need to give it, too. If we want to have good friends, we’ve got to be good friends.

Who have you encouraged today?

Who’s your “Jonathan” or “Elisha”? Who is walking this life with you, encouraging you, correcting you, and pushing you toward Jesus?
If you can’t honestly put any names in the space above, what small group, church, or event can you attend to begin finding and cultivating authentic friendships?

WHERE HEALING AND FORGIVENESS ARE FOUND
If you’re going to have the depth of friendship that we’re describing here, an element of active truth-telling must be involved. This develops trust like nothing else. Confessing our failures—both to God and to the people who can hold us accountable—is a necessary part of repentance and spiritual growth.

Samson kept his sin a secret. Then, as we’ll later see, he made a joke about his secrets. Then his secrets made a joke out of him.

Secret sin grows. It becomes more convoluted and complicated. The best thing you can do is be real with God, with your close friends, with those you may have lied to, and then move forward.

So why do we need to confess our secrets?

Because God knows our secrets
We worship an omniscient God who knows all things, yet we fool ourselves into thinking He doesn’t care or won’t do anything about our secret sins.

“You have set our unjust ways before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence” (Psalm 90:8).

“If we had forgotten the name of our God and spread out our hands to a foreign god, wouldn’t God have found this out, since He knows the secrets of the heart?” (Psalm 44:20-21).

When have you tried to hide secrets from God? What was the result?

Because God will expose our secrets
Whether we like it or not, those secrets we think are hidden away, locked in a vault forever, will come screaming out eventually.
“There is nothing covered that won't be uncovered, nothing hidden that won't be made known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in an ear in private rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops” (Luke 12:2-3).

When have you personally experienced the consequences of deliberately disobeying God?

*Because God will judge our secrets*

This is one of those truths that should cause us to lose sleep at night when we're sleeping on our secrets.

“When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is: fear God and keep His commands, because this is for all humanity. For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

The best thing you can do is confess your sin, repent, and turn toward integrity. The great news about confession is that we can be certain that when we confess, God is faithful to forgive—the very moment we ask. So do that right now.

Stop and pray, right where you are. Confess those sins you’ve held in secret.

What relief is felt when you admit your secrets to all-knowing God?

*Because confession heals us*

I've heard it said, “You are as sick as your secrets.” Satan works in your secrets, using guilt as a power over you.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect” (James 5:16).
How can you pray for others in your life who need healing?

A guy who knew a thing or two about secrets and the sad consequences they bring was King David. He committed adultery, then to cover up the unintended pregnancy, he plotted a murder. But God knew and He sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. David confessed, but the prophet said there would be consequences to pay. And there were. David’s family was divided, his kingdom was overthrown, and his child died.

“When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer’s heat. Selah. Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and You took away the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:3-5).

What have you learned from the secret keeping actions of Samson and even King David?

Go public with your good secrets, too! Samson seldom did. Had he been outspoken about his faith, his vow, and his purpose, I can’t help but wonder if it would have provided a positive pressure for him to behave.

“Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33).

What good things in your life—God’s calling, the gifts He’s given, the passions He’s instilled—have you yet to share with the people you’re closest to? How can you share your joy in the good things God’s done in your life?

The account of David’s affair and its tragic consequences is told in 2 Samuel 11-12.
Take a moment to encourage one other person in your life. What “good news” do you have for that person?

APPLY TO LIFE

> CONNECT: Maybe this lesson has been extraordinarily difficult because you don’t have close friendships in your life before whom you can be open and honest. Pray that God would grant you these relationships. This week, start actively seeking them out.

> STUDY: Begin this week to study Samson’s failures. In this lesson, we explored Samson’s hidden secrets that destroyed him. Write down all of Samson’s hidden secrets from Judges 14. Compare and contrast this with David’s hidden secrets in 2 Samuel 11. Do you find anything that could point to some of your tendencies?

> LISTEN: Purchase “You Are” by Colton Dixon and “Life in Reverse” by The Wrecking (see the playlist at threadsmedia.com/samson). Add these to your regular mix of music throughout the week so that you’ll be reminded of the truth of God’s Word.