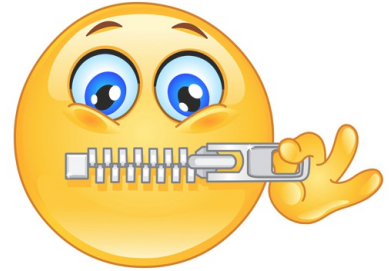




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Can you keep a secret?

You may have heard the story about three men who were good friends and agreed to help each other be open and honest. One day they said, “Let’s be open and share our greatest struggle, our greatest sin.” The first two, somewhat timidly, shared theirs, which probably would have surprised many people. The third man then excitedly said, “I struggle with gossip, and I honestly can’t wait to get to my computer and start posting this!”



The challenge, the question, “Can you keep a secret?”

Yes, we know there are some things that we can not keep in confidence morally and legally. We also know that there is a long list of excuses people use to not keep a secret, at least to themselves. For starters, the feeling of having information, of being important, the thought that it might actually help, feeling guilty for not sharing it (false guilt). Then as well, we know people know things they should share appropriately but don’t because of fear, of thinking they are protecting someone, don’t want to get involved, don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings, or want to avoid conflict and keep peace at any cost. And, of course, there are some secrets without a right/wrong factor, such as the surprise party someone is planning for your friend or family member.

Most of the Bible’s insight is indirect and through examples. But we do find some clear statements. Proverbs chapter 11 verse 13, “One who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, but one who is trustworthy conceals a matter.” Or, in another version, “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret” (NIV). Then chapter 20 verse 19, “One who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a gossip.” Or, in another version, “A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much” (NIV). Again, in chapter 25, “Argue your case with your neighbor, and do not reveal the secret of another” (9).

A key factor in this is being trustworthy.

God is faithful, He is trustworthy. As Moses declared in Deuteronomy chapter 32, “His [God’s] work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and just is He” (4). And king David in Psalm 52 declares “The faithfulness of God endures all day long” (1).

Because God is trustworthy, faithful, we as His children are also to be trustworthy.

As Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 1, “be imitators of God, as beloved children” (1).

He wrote to the church at Corinth that believers are “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

And again in Colossians chapter 3, “Do not lie to one another, since you stripped off the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created it” (9-10). If I tell you that I will keep a confidence and then don’t do that, I am lying.

So, then, how do we maintain and grow in trustworthiness, including keeping a confidence?

It starts with a conscious awareness of God’s call, His expectation that we are to be trustworthy.

It moves forward by discipline and evaluation. This is multi-faceted. For starters:

It includes evaluating requests for confidentiality. A good response to a request is that you will keep it confidential if you can, if you are not required to disclose and not keep it confidential by Biblical and legal standards.

It includes a realistic view of information sharing. An old and true saying is that everyone wants to know, but not everyone has a need or right to know.

It includes being aware that breaking a confidence can do great damage and, while trust can be rebuilt, that can be very difficult and take a great deal of time.

It includes relying on the Holy Spirit to keep building trustworthiness into our character. After all, faithfulness is part of the fruit the Holy Spirit is at work growing in us (Galatians 5:22).

So, can you keep a secret?

Pastor Lyle