

# Chapter 11 - Keep Some Secrets

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on the story.
  - A) This story is one in which we see competing values. Jonathan owed allegiance to his ungodly father, but also needed to support his godly friend who would ultimately fulfill God's plan for the nation. Think about a time when you've been caught in similar tension.
  - B) Think about a time when you did something that might have had negative consequences for you or those you love. How did someone else's love for you protect you from needless humiliation or harm? How did this affect your relationship?
  - C) Consider what it was like for Jonathan, protecting his friend David, yet bearing the burden alone. There is no evidence that Jonathan had direct contact with David while he was on the run. Think about a time in your life where you kept a secret and then kept quiet about the secret.

2. Most of us have known people who, at some point, were keeping a secret about someone else and though they wouldn't tell us what it was, they wanted us to know that they were keeping a secret. What are some of the motivators for such behaviour?

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3. It's also true that most of us have some secrets about ourselves which we are keeping from everyone. (I think sometimes we even keep secrets from ourselves!) Most often these secrets are about things of which we are ashamed. We fear that if the facts were to be known, we'd be embarrassed at best and perhaps suffer significant loss at worst. You won't want to write those things down, no doubt, but think about the intensity of the feeling you have related to these secrets and comment on that. Perhaps you feel fear, desperation, and so on. Use your own words.

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4. Now think about some of the things in your life you'd like everyone to know about. Being as honest as you can be, jot down a few of the reasons why you'd like to spread the word about these things.

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5. You may have noticed in answering the previous two questions that the main factor in determining what we keep secret and what we make known has to do with the reaction of other people. Jot down your thoughts on the differences between how you seek human approval and God's approval.

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6. Having thought about God's approval and what you do to get it, consider how it sets you free from the compulsion most of us have to be affirmed and applauded by our peers.

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7. To keep this line of thinking going, consider how seeking the approval of people actually gets in the way of getting God's approval. Read Matthew 6:1-8, Matthew 26:31-46 and Luke 14:7-14 to get Jesus' input. Jot down what you learn from these passages about God's priorities.

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8. Let the bulleted questions at the end of the chapter challenge you. Spiritual refreshment comes from having a healthy, intimate relationship with God. We often make an idol of our reputation. If we don't get recognition for our acts of charity, we feel somehow defrauded. Yet the verses we've been looking at remind us that the praise of people comes at the price of the approval of God. Letting go of any idol can be a real breakthrough. Write down your desire to put intimacy with God ahead of recognition and approval of people.

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9. Sometimes we think that God is only glorified when lots of people are involved to see how He is moving. God is glorious whether or not there are people praising Him. Consider how God is glorified by spiritual beings in the heavenly realm as you carry out His will and receive no human attention or earthly credit for it. Jot down your own thoughts on this.

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**For Group Leaders:**

This chapter and the next touch on something that most of us struggle with - self-worship. What is most insidious about it is that we are mostly unaware of it, most of the time. Take extra time to pray for, and with, the group as they deal with this particular stumbling block.

You may want to remind your group members of some of the things they learned back in the chapter on "Confession." The release and joy which come from being clean before God is far superior to the false sense of well-being that comes from successfully keeping our sin under wraps and our successes publicized.

As you lead the discussion time, it will be clear that there is tension between the thrust of the chapter, "Keep Some Secrets," and talking about it. It's best to focus everyone's attention on the blessings of knowing God intimately and glorifying Him with our lives even if no one else knows about it.