

“Secret Sins” – Finding Forgiveness

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“...be sure your sin will find you out.” (Numbers 32: 23 ESV)

Pastor Thomas got caught. The fourth *desperate man* character in the book, *All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not*, Thomas made a rather stupid mistake that uncovered his “secret sin” of pornography—forgetting to close out one of the porn sites he frequented on his computer. One day when her iPad battery was dead, his wife decided to check Facebook on the computer in his study. Uh-Oh!

What she saw stunned her. As she checked the URL history in the drop-down menu, she began to weep bitterly because this was no discovery of a random act. Many of the sites led straight into the abyss known as the *dark Internet*. How could her husband, a Christian father and pastor, get involved with something evil like this? Composing herself, to the extent this shock allowed, she went in to confront Thomas—his “secret sin” was secret no more.

No one wants to get caught doing something he knows is wrong or violates a trust—especially when it brings consequences that devastate our families, as well as our own lives. But that kind of forward-thinking does not precede sins such as pornography and others from the realm of “lusts of the flesh” Satan uses to tempt us. He has one purpose in mind—enslave ours.

Jesus’ warning in the Sermon on the Mount seemed over the top when we first read it. From Matthew 5: 29, Jesus said, *“if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away...”* Surely not. But then He gave it again in Matthew 18. We know Jesus wasted no words when He taught. And when He

said something twice, it was not to get out attention—that should have happened the first time. It was to save us from ourselves. Both passages speak to the consequences of not taking sin seriously enough—Hell.

[I want to interject here I am not a licensed, professional Christian counselor. Dealing with any addiction and/or secret sin revealed (and the consequences) usually requires that level of help. If this is where you are, I strongly urge you to seek that level of help. Do not think you are strong enough to climb out of the abyss by yourself. Going downhill alone into such is not that difficult. Climbing out alone is impossible. There are many qualified Christian counselors whose methods are biblically based. Find one!]

Finding Forgiveness is a two-way proposition. Unfortunately, we only control one side of the deal. This is one of the rare times that demands we focus initial attention on ourselves. Three biblical prerequisites come to mind to facilitate the process and give it a chance to be successful. These are based on many years of working with hundreds of men from all walks of life dealing with these and related issues.

1. We must **confess our sin**. The sin most frequently discussed among Christians is *someone else's*! Admitting we may have a problem is lame. Admitting we have a problem and are willing to consider addressing it is still weak. Admitting we have a problem with sin is the correct biblical response—also the hardest. Why? Easy answer—PRIDE.

David provided the best examples of *true confession*. Despite his issues (and there were many), he was the only one God called “a man after My own Heart.” I believe that is, in large part, because David spent time confessing his sins to the Lord. He taught us to understand that our sin is first against God.

“Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil

in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.” (Psalm 51: 4 NASB)

He also taught us the consequences of holding onto or harboring sin—physical and emotional pain.

*“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.” (Psalm 32: 3 NASB)*

Confessing our sin means we own it and accept responsibility for the consequences.

2. We must **ask for forgiveness**. When our youngest son was a little boy, he came up with what he thought was a sure-fire means of avoiding time-out or a spanking. Sometimes even before being confronted with his misdeeds, he would begin running around repeatedly saying he was *sorry*. As you might have guessed, those attempts, though well-conceived for a little boy, were unsuccessful.

He was not sorry. He was just sorry he got caught!

So it is with many of us. Caught in the act or confronted with our transgressions, we respond in much the same way hoping it gets us off the hook or mitigates liability and consequences. We are not sorry—just sorry we got caught. The Apostle Paul helps us understand *true sorrow*:

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” (2 Corinthians 7: 10 NIV)

The difference is evident to all involved. A repentant heart turns from sin, seeks forgiveness, and desires to reconciliation. That leads to the final prereq.

3. We must **commit to the process** of healing and restoration. Let’s begin by stating two truths.

- *The unconditional love of God, in concert with His grace*

and mercy, makes His forgiveness immediate. He even promises to go beyond forgiveness and forget our sins. (Isaiah 43: 25)

- *Unfortunately, because we are still human, that is not often the case with those whose lives are wounded or crushed by our reckless sins.*

There are many verses about our need to forgive others—even warnings about not doing so. Here are three that focus on the keys to success.

*“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who **confesses** and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” (Proverbs 28: 13 ESV)*

*“And whenever you stand praying, **forgive**, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11: 25 ESV)*

*“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First **be reconciled** to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5: 23-24 ESV)*

God knows the human heart better than any of us because He created it—after His. He also knows most of us require time to work through the process of confession, forgiveness, and, ultimately reconciliation. I hope those verses and words of encouragement do three things for Christians:

- Draw us closer to the loving, forgiving heart of God Who reconciled us to Himself in Christ.
- Encourage those who need to engage in this painful process to do so.
- Strengthen those who are engaged to see it through to the end God intends.

This is the hardest work assignment God gave us this side of

Heaven.

Your desperate brother in Christ,

Walter

Review of previous lessons:

Thus far we drilled deeper into the lives of three of the five *desperate* men whose stories begin my most recent book, *All Men Are Desperate Whether They Admit It or Not*. One key takeaway from each is this:

We have more in common with these “desperate men” and their issues than we would like to admit.

- The Addict – The Addict and Is the Christian Man
- The Prisoner – “Not all prisons have bars.”
- The Rich Man – Taking Our Turn in the Crucible of Wealth
- The Pastor – Secret Sins