KEEPING THE FAMILY SECRET
2 Samuel 12:1-14

"It's a secret!" "We don't tell anyone outside the family about this!"

Wilson: Beth came from a prominent and well-respected "Christian" family. In fact, her father was the pastor. All the while, Beth was being physically abused by her father. She recalls: "Honestly, there were times when my arms and legs looked like a Picasso! When the bruises were really colorful, the solution was always the same–wear leotards and long-sleeved dresses. (My mother and father were too spiritual to allow girls to wear slacks!) Even during miserably hot summers, I had to wear long sleeves and thick leotards to hide my bruised arms and legs."

"I used to wonder why mother was more concerned with my father's reputation and ruining the family's testimony in the community, than she was with how much pain I felt. . . . I don't really remember being told to keep quiet about Dad's abusiveness. I just knew what was expected of me. Besides, I loved Jesus and sure didn't want to be the one to ruin our Christian witness."

"Keep the family secret!"

2 Sam. 12 tells us about a "family secret" that David was going to keep quiet.

The period of the judges was over.
For far too long everyone had done just as he or she pleased.
Lawlessness and individual independence were the spirit of the age.

Then God gave them a king.
At last they had a strong national leader to follow.

Saul, the first king, was a good choice from man's viewpoint,
Saul was the kind of king the people were looking for.
but he failed to depend on God. Therefore, he was rejected.

God then provided another king, David, a man after His own heart.
David was *God's kind of king–"a man after God's own heart."*

- He submitted to God's authority in his life and in his kingdom.
- He sought to know and obey God's will.
- Therefore, God blessed David and established his kingdom forever.

God brought David at a critical time to unite and deliver them from the Philistines.

As David trusts God and remains faithful to Him, the nation prospers and expands (2 Sam. 1-10)

Then came a catastrophe – David's sin with Bathsheba (11-12)

The results of David's sin turn triumph to tragedy. The tragic effects harm his personal life, his family, and the nation as well (13-24)

As we look in, Nathan, God's spokesperson, has just entered the royal court.
2 Samuel 12:1-14

Though David confessed and God forgave him, sin brought tragic consequences:
- His house would be characterized by violence.
- His wives would be publicly taken by members of his own family.
- The most direct consequence: the death of the child.

The event was a turning point. The remainder of the book describes his affliction

This is a story about the consequences of sin.

But **it is also a story about love** –
– God's love for David – Nathan's love for David

Nathan loved David too much to allow him to go on without addressing his sin.
Psa. 32:1-5; Job 31:4, 33-34; Prov. 28:13

I'm glad this story is in the Bible!

It's all too easy to "keep the family secret"
This is one "family secret" that God doesn't want to keep secret!

In fact, *God never tries to keep the family secrets from getting out.*

Try to name a biblical leader concerning whom there is no family secret to hide!
Adam Abraham Isaac Jacob Moses David Solomon Elijah Hezekiah
They all have them!

How do we know? Because *God didn't keep the family secret.*

I especially appreciate the story of David–He's "the man after God's own heart".
And he failed! Murder Adultery Disobedience and rebellion

You can fail colossally! You can sin deliberately!
There is room for sinners like us, to be "people after God's heart"

IF ALL WE EVER KNEW ABOUT THESE PEOPLE WERE THE GOOD SIDE, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RELATE TO THEM! They were sinners!

That means there is hope for us!
All families have problems!

Healthy families <u>expect problems and learn to deal with them honestly.</u>
Healthy families develop good problem-solving skills.

Unhealthy families <u>see no problems–sweep them under the rug –explain them away.</u>

Their problems are too painful, so they deny them and say "there is no problem."

The children learn that when daddy's passed out on the back porch: "He's camping out!"

They learn to look right past what others think is obvious. They've accepted the questionable behavior as normal . . . and excusable. In fact, they often label it as *admirable*. Patterns of denial are deep-rooted and family defense systems are incredibly creative.

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN UNHEALTHY FAMILY:
An unhealthy family–<u>deals with externals rather than internals</u>–*"APPEARANCE MANAGEMENT"*
"We're in good shape–good house, nice car, kids get good grades, good job"

- **<u>deals with symptoms rather than causes</u>–treating symptoms with band-aids and skin ointments–when they need surgery.**

- **<u>projects the blame for their problems on someone else</u>–"if only *they* would do what they are supposed to, I'd be fine!"–Gen. 3**

  If someone suggests you're partially to blame for the problem, retaliate with a fierce counterattack so the individual will never again say such a thing!

  Until we're ready to quit passing the buck–stop projecting the sin onto other people–and claim it as our own, there will never be healing.

  <u>Job 31:33-34</u>
  People sometimes conceal sin (repress or internalize guilt) because they are afraid of what other people might think–the possibility of ridicule.

When a family does this, we don't let other people get close–they might expose something we don't want to face about ourselves–we keep them at arm's length. Then we rationalize to avoid the truth.

A BASIC TRUTH: *UNTIL A PERSON IS OPEN TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO SAYS WHAT; HE OR SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO HEAR IT!*

Today people can talk openly about the abuse behind closed doors in families–even Christian families––as long as it's *someone else's* house!
- wives who didn't really fall down the stairs
- children who aren't really "emotionally disturbed" but suffering the pain of parental abuse–sexually, physically or emotionally.
- adult children who build unhealthy families because mom or dad was a "closet" alcoholic–or a "rageaholic"–or a "workaholic"–and no one could ever admit it.

We look so healthy on the outside–and no one will admit the truth–even to themselves–about what is going on inside. So generation after generation no one gets help!

HOW DO UNHEALTHY CHURCHES DEAL WITH PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH FAMILY?

1. **<u>It's easier to ignore individual sin–to pretend it doesn't exist–than to deal with it</u>. Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:22-27**

We don't often stand up front, like AA and say, "Hi! I'm Ralph. I'm an addict. I have an inordinate need for approval or affirmation."

The church is structured so that openness and honesty are difficult to come by. When is it appropriate to say what you're struggling with?

"This week I had to struggle with an issue of honesty at work."
Or, "I had a problem with cheating on a test at school"
Or, "there's this guy at the office, . . ."

- You can't do it on Sunday morning with 400 people in church!
- It's not likely to be in Sunday School or Sunday night service.
- You probably can't even do it in a flock group of 10-20
- **We need a "safe place" with 2-4 people with whom we can be open and pray for one another**

That's why we need to get together with a couple of other people who we can trust and be honest with.

After a relationship of confidence is established, you may begin to hear things like:

- I've been having a real struggle with my tongue.
  I tell things I shouldn't
  I tell other people off when I should be more patient.
- I have a real problem with anger
  I'm always blowing off steam
- I have a problem with the programs I'm watching on television at night–especially on the road.
- I don't seem to be able to get control of my spending habits.
- I am having a hard time getting along with another person–sometimes I wish he'd get hurt, or even die!

In a "safe place" you can share such things without fear that your friend will turn on you. You can walk through the struggles together.

When no forum is provided to work through problems, we get used to *pretending* we're O.K.

2. <u>If the church has health problems, it is common to ignore them–to act as though they don't exist</u>.

If a church does this, it doesn't like new people; they might expose something we don't want to face about ourselves–we keep them at arm's length so they don't get too close to us.

Some churches are stagnant. People are so threatened by change that they don't want new people–they're a threat.

That's because people don't understand that *problems and conflicts are a normal part of church life.*

So, handle it when a "Family" problem does exist in the church?

1. <u>Acknowledge we have a problem</u>.

Create open lines of communication.
Create "safety zones"–where people can speak and not be threatened –immediate or postponed, physical or emotional, negative reactions.

A healthy church realizes there are problems to deal with and seeks to expose them so we can treat them. Not react defensively and fight back!

- Doesn't mean we always agree about them.
- But we give you the right to voice concerns without repercussions.
- We promise to look at the issue objectively and deal with it honestly.

2. <u>Share responsibility for the problem and resolve to work together to solve it</u>.

Healthy church families recognize that all churches have problems!

Healthy church families develop problem-solving skills.

People come to church week after week and think everybody is OK but them.
So we all stuff our family secret.

God let us see David's secret.

He wanted us to know that there is room for sinners in His family–among the people after God's own heart!

We all know that this is true among old-time saints like David and Moses.

But, that's not true any more, is it? Modern saints aren't like that, are they?

We come to church on Sunday and see everybody all cleaned up and smiling and don't realize what the person next to us is going through. We're all keeping our "family secret" to ourselves!

There's no forum for me to say: **"Hi! I'm Ralph.**
"I am struggling with approval addiction."
"I am a "successaholic""
"I have spent years trying to impress other people and be popular and accepted."
"I struggle with pride in my life."
"I have a problem with trying to manipulate people."
"I have had a real struggle with integrity in my dealings with others."
"I have had to face materialism and the desire to accumulate more things for myself and my family, nice household furnishings, a fancy car, good clothes."
"I have had a problem with financial accountability and remaining free of any shady financial dealings.
"I have had a problem with pornography, and other kinds of sexual temptations."

We're afraid to let out that kind of secrets.

These are things you don't know about me. They're pretty well kept secrets.
Most of them aren't as far back in my past as I would like them to be!

BUT–there's still room for people like me–PEOPLE WHO STILL SIN–among the people after God's own heart.

WE DON'T HAVE TO KEEP THE FAMILY SECRET ANYMORE!!!

We can tell the truth–and know we are still accepted before the Father and among the other members of the family.

I have become increasingly impressed with the words of the well known song by **Andraé Crouch**

Through It All

I've had many tears and sorrows, I've had questions for tomorrow,
There've been times I didn't know right from wrong;
But in every situation God gave blessed consolation That *my trials come to only make me strong.*

I've been to lots of places, And I've seen a lot of faces, There've been times I felt so all alone;
But in my lonely hours, Yes those precious lonely hours, *Jesus let me know that I was His own.*

I thank God for the mountains, **and I thank Him for the valleys,**
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through,
For if I'd never had a problem I wouldn't know that He could solve them,
I'd never know what faith in God could do.

Through it all, Through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God;
Through it all, Through it all, I've learned to depend upon His Word.

It's through it all that we learn what trusting God is all about.

We recognize that there's a problem.
Then we begin to trust God to use us to help resolve it!