



Coming Clean & Staying Clean

The Value of Honest Disclosure & Faithful Living

By Dr. Dave Currie

When I was young, say ages 4-8, my mother would warn me – actually more like threaten me (add mom's cross tone of voice) – *"Don't you dare lie to me! I will always find out!"* I remember feeling a very serious check in my spirit that guided my choices because I had this eerie dread that she had some kind of 6th sense that 'just knew' when I was lying. Maybe you can relate.

I remember later in life learning in Sunday School – **"BE SURE YOUR SINS WILL FIND YOU OUT!"** This reinforced that whatever I did secretly in hope that I would not get caught, would still eventually surface. The truth would ultimately come out.

What I was taught early is a very solid reflection of what Scripture says. Wise Solomon says, *"He who covers His sin will not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13). Don't try to hide your sin and selfishness. Living with secrets will hurt you. It is always better to "Come Clean".

Jesus states this truth even more directly and likely the verse behind the phrase, "Be sure your sins will find you out." He said, *"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs"* (Luke 12:2,3). The truth is...what's done or said in secret will be exposed. Count on it.

We'd be wise not to mess with any of God's principles for life. This one is very clear and it's not just for our children. For all of us – the mandate is undeniable. Don't lie. No half-truths, no misleading, no minimizing and no withholding! **Telling the truth to people in the first place and then coming clean when you don't is clearly God's plan.** The arrogant cannot stand comfortably in His presence. He hates all who do wrong; He destroys those who tell lies (Psalm 5:5,6). He calls us to *"keep our tongue from evil and our lips from telling lies"* (Psalm 34:13). Truth-speaking is one of the ten commandments.

In spite of God's strong directive, we recognize something VERY different in our culture. We hear "What they don't know won't hurt them" or "It's okay as long as I don't get caught!" Maybe the most famous dismissal of trust and truth is "what happens in Vegas – stays in Vegas". People argue that it's ok if others don't find out. So they compromise, cheat, spend, flirt, drink, gamble, indulge and a host of other moral and relational failures, selfishly maintaining they can get away with it. They feel they can lie their way through it.

Others prefer to reason that by not telling the truth to those closest to us – especially our spouse - we are doing the loving thing. We don't want to hurt them. We say we don't want to wreck the relationship. That's a ton of self-deception! You forget that our actions and words already have violated the trust – you have already really hurt them.

I hear this type of thinking a lot – especially when it comes to serious breaches of trust in a marriage – like affairs, private porn use, flirting or spending money secretly. This view of withholding is foolish thinking. Through over 45 years of people helping and calling people to greatness in surrender to Jesus Christ, ***the importance of truth and trust rings out.***

GROW UP. SHOW UP. SPEAK UP. OWN UP. MAKE UP. CLEAN UP. KEEP IT UP moving forward.

Now, nearly every day I'm in the trenches with hurting people working through a myriad of life mistakes and the lies connected to them. We shouldn't be surprised that my experience on what ends up working best for a person is what God has said all along. ***Simply put - don't lie. Tell the truth.*** When you mislead – come clean and be honest for the good of all and as soon as possible.

Why Come Clean

The benefits of coming clean are extensive. Here are a few of the more significant reasons to move quickly into full confession and honesty:

- **To Re-Establish Your Spiritual Walk.** Our sin separates us from God. Our confession honours the Lord. His forgiveness creates a sense of well being with our Maker. We feel humbled but free again to approach Him. Coming clean brings freedom with God and allows us to move forward in our faith journey. And coming clean with God but not coming clean with the people you are hurt doesn't work.
- **To Discontinue Spousal Betrayal.** Your lies traumatize your mate. Trust is the foundation of any great relationship. Your withholding hurts your spouse and your lying and the denial creates a cavern between you. Stopping the lies will stop the perpetual wounding over and over again and the beginning of healing is possible.
- **To Break the Lying Cycle.** Lying has become easier and easier. It's how you operate. But the ongoing masterminding of deceit is exhausting. It becomes a non-stop hamster-wheel. More lies have to be created to cover previous lies. It's taxing to have to keep track of what you have said before. Speaking the truth is freeing.
- **To Lift the Burden of Deception.** Lying crushes you. You bear the inner pain of your hypocrisy. Your conscience is constantly and necessarily squashed. This emptiness and guilt over your misrepresenting of the truth is a massive weight. Then add the fear of the other person finding out. I have seen the huge relief after a person has come clean through the use of a polygraph. Come clean and enjoy the freedom from the weight of your lies and your two-facedness in life.

- **To Break Down Walls of Isolation.** Manipulating a person makes us feel shallow. We know we are hurting them so we pull back from those we lie to. Through maintaining relational distance for fear of discovery, we cannot help but withholding closeness. If married, the connection is superficial at best. You cannot be spinning lies to your spouse and be growing closer. You know your undisclosed life – those words and actions - would hurt them so you keep your distance emotionally.
- **To Destroy the Enemy's Foothold.** Satan clearly gets a foothold in your life through the relational breakdowns caused by lying and anger (Ephesians 4: 25-27). Seriously, his power over you grows in the secrets you keep. Break the silence to break the power and fully come clean. Don't believe his lies that you can get away with it – that you won't get caught. You will. Your ongoing misrepresenting of the truth is destroying you and your most important relationships.

When Should I Come Clean & Stay Clean

Whether it is after first discovery of your addiction or a relapse, come clean sooner than later and the sooner, the better. When asked by a person trapped in an extra-marital affair, "should I tell my wife (or husband)?" my usual response is, "What time today should we meet to tell them?" I so deeply believe that a person is foolish to push against God's clear design for honesty in relationships. Come clean. Honour God. Remove the wedge. Begin the changes needed. Begin the healing.

How Should I Come Clean & Stay Clean

1. **Set Up a Time to Come Clean.** Be sure that you both have a significant amount of time alone together to work through the initial hurt and painful reactions. Don't choose to disclose just before one of you are leaving to be somewhere else. Respect the need for process time.
2. **Initiate the Confession.** Choose to come clean before getting caught. Take the first step of integrity by volunteering your mistakes and your lies. Don't leave your spouse wondering if your behaviour would still be going on if it hadn't been discovered.
3. **Admit Your Wrongs.** Own your sin and selfishness. Disclose all secret behaviour. Start speaking truthfully. No more half-truths. No minimizing. No explaining, justifying or clarifying. Excuses are to be avoided. Face your wrongs openly. I am so committed to helping people with full disclosure that I use polygraphs in my counselling practice.
4. **Avoid Progressive Disclosure.** Don't believe that not telling the person everything will be better. Don't slowly tell more of the story to see how she will take it. Those confessing often only share part of their failure as if it is all of it. They sometimes even say, "No, that's everything" only to admit more of the story in the days ahead. Progressive Disclosure is a relational killer! A half-hearted or incomplete

attempt to come clean will cause greater doubt and pain. Remember: Come fully clean.

5. **Apologize with Sincerity.** Confess your failures. Own your mistakes. Start your journey toward looking at life through your spouse's eyes. It will not be easy to show empathy toward the pain you have caused. Your selfishness is so deep. Apologize fully for your failure and betrayal. Ask for forgiveness giving them time to process where they are at in the journey of recovery.
6. **Surrender Your Digital World.** Come clean by giving all your passwords to your devices and your social interaction programs – all forms of instant messaging and emailing. Better still – get off all social media! Let them have access to your phone and any other devices as part of your coming clean.
7. **Cut Off Access to the Distraction.** Whether it's an affair, hiding spending, porn use or other moral or relational failure, completely block all opportunity for ongoing temptation to continue with the inappropriate behaviour. Talk out a viable game plan to cut off all access to troublesome temptations.
8. **Be Willing to Be Accountable.** Volunteer your actions, your schedule and your whereabouts. Check in often. Answer all questions openly and honestly. Take calls. Account for all time willingly. Agree to be accountable to someone beyond your spouse. Find someone your spouse trusts – someone with “teeth”. Telling the truth needs to be your mandate moving forward. Fight the habit of withholding. Speak the truth, period!
9. **Seek Outside Help.** To rebuild after a difficult disclosure may be rather hard. Often it is wise to have a pastor or counsellor mediate initially and guide you in the rebuilding of trust. An objective and caring sounding board is usually best if the betrayal has been significant. Make sure your spouse has ready access Godly, caring support. It won't come from you.
10. **Reconnect Spiritually.** Take the steps to get your life on track. Go to God for His forgiveness and strength to live right. Get back to church to have your faith reinforced. Seek the Lord daily in prayer and Bible reading to anchor your recovery.

James 5:16 may be the best summary. *“Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”*

Come clean. Live clean. Support others in their desire to be clean. You will never regret the step to start living an authentic life.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Are you being honest with your fiancé or spouse? Are you withholding things for fear of rejection? Are you carrying shame and guilt for choices made? CHOOSE

NOW. Determine to come clean on everything. No secrets. They need to be able to love you for who you are not for who you portray to be.

2. Commit to follow through on the "Coming Clean" steps given here.
3. Agree on a time to share all your relational and sexual history that you haven't disclosed – the failures and unfaithfulness – both privately and publicly. Include your pornography story without lying or minimizing about it.