KEEPING SECRETS

Ciona D. Rouse

“In the Habit” session for use with devozine meditations for September 16–22, 2013.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

“I am a PK—a preacher’s kid. Privacy is one of the first words children in ministerial families learn, and privacy is really a euphemism for ‘keeping secrets.’ We are often masters of secret-keeping. My family kept secrets not because we were trying to be deceptive or to cover up terribly dark secrets, but people’s expectations of us were high, and—let’s be realistic—everybody and his or her grandma would have an opinion if we put all our business on the streets. While I don’t think telling everybody everything is necessary or even healthy, I do value vulnerability and wonder how my family would have been different if we had talked more honestly about our brokenness with our congregation, small group Bible study, or prayer partners. I now know the power of vulnerability and being real with other people.” —Ciona

MEET THE WRITER

Ciona D. Rouse is a writer based in Nashville, Tennessee. She recently launched a website encouraging people to tap into their inner strength and to live into their deepest passions; find “Do the Crazy Thing” at www.thecrazything.com.

STUFF YOU WILL NEED

- copies of postcards from PostSecret.com (samples available at the end of this session)
- Bibles
- slips of paper
- pens

PLUGGED IN

+ PostSecret.com (www.postsecret.com) is an online art project. People send in homemade postcards on which they have written secrets. Some of these may not be appropriate for your teens; use discretion.

CHECKING IN
Invite group members to sit in a circle. Ask each person to answer these questions:

When were you first caught telling another person’s secret?
How did the person feel when he or she discovered you had told the secret?

If the person answering the question has been a good secret-keeper, ask this additional question:

How did you feel the first time someone told your secret?

(NOTE: Most of these first secrets will be from elementary school, so group member should feel far enough removed from the experience to feel comfortable participating in the discussion.)

EXPLORING THE WORD
Scripture: Psalm 139:1–6

Read aloud Psalm 139:1–6. Then read or say in your own words the following information:

“God knows us. God knows our innermost beings. We cannot hide anything from God, but nothing makes God love us less.

‘Even when we seek deeper relationships with other people, we keep secrets from them. God is our greatest example of love, yet we try to develop deep human relationships by keeping secret whatever makes us feel ashamed. We even applaud secret keeping. We are relieved when we make new friends who don’t know what we did back in the third grade or when we date someone who doesn’t know how we used to look or what we did wrong in a previous relationship.

‘Keeping secrets is sometimes appropriate. When someone who is beginning to trust us asks us not to tell, we should keep his or her secret—unless keeping the secret puts that person or us in physical or emotional danger. Then we must tell an adult we trust and ask for help.

‘But we don’t need to feel ashamed about events in our own lives or keep secrets and live secret lives because we are afraid of what people will think of us. In fact, talking about these things and getting them out of our hearts and minds is important. We can find power in vulnerability and in releasing our secrets.”

Pass out the postcards from PostSecret.com (see samples at the end of session). Invite people to look at them and to respond to them. Explain that “PostSecret” is a website where people send anonymous postcards telling their secrets—which they don’t tell the other people in their lives.

Why do people submit their secrets to PostSecret.com?
Why do you think it is important for them to tell their secrets in this way?
Is the church a place where secrets can be shared? Why? Why not?

God loves us, knows us completely, and doesn’t judge us. How can we, the body of Christ, let people know that they can be vulnerable and real in the community of faith?
SHARING IN PRAYER
Invite group members to sit in a circle. Ask each person to write or draw on a small slip of paper one word or symbol that represents a secret he or she has been keeping about himself or herself. Ask everyone to fold up the slip of paper and to hold it in his or her right hand. Then for the closing prayer, invite people to join hands so that they will all be holding one another’s secrets.

(NOTE: The words people write should be vague anyway; but after the prayer, group members may feel safer if you collect the papers and cut them up.) Also encourage them to practice feeling less ashamed of their secrets and to find someone they trust to talk with about their secrets.

TAKING IT FURTHER
• Spend twenty minutes listening to Brené Brown talk about shame and vulnerability. The Ted Talk “Listening to Shame” is well worth your time. (http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.html)
• Consider starting a book group for youth workers to talk about one of Brené Brown’s books: http://www.brenebrown.com/books.
• Take a look at “PostSecret and Youth Ministry” at the Rethinking Youth Ministry website (http://www.rethinkingyouthministry.com/2010/08/post-secret-youth-ministry.html). Then consider leading a PostSecret confessing activity with your youth group.

— from devozine In the Habit (September/October 2013). Copyright © 2013 by The Upper Room®. All rights reserved.
Like and Unlike Terms

A straight fence (see fig. 11) is made of 5 hurdles, each 9 feet long.

\[ g' + g' + g' + g' + g' \]

Fig. 11.

Its total length = \((9 + 9 + 9 + 9 + 9) \text{ feet} = 9 \text{ feet} \times 5 = (5 \times 9) \text{ feet}\).

If a straight fence AB (see fig. 12) is made of 5 hurdles, each \( x \) feet long, the length of AB = \((x + x + x + x + x) \text{ feet} = x \text{ feet} \times 5 = 5x \text{ feet}\).

\[ x' + x' + x' + x' + x' \]

Fig. 12.

Thus \[ x + x + x + x + x = x \times 5 = 5x. \]

Now add 3 more hurdles of the same length to the fence AB to form the fence ABC as in fig. 13.

\[ x' + x' + x' + x' + x' \]

Fig. 13.

The lengths of AB and BC are 5x feet and 3x feet. But there are in all \((5 + 3) \text{ hurdles} = 8 \text{ hurdles}. \quad \therefore \text{ the length of ABC is } x \text{ feet } \times 8, \text{ or } 8x \text{ feet}\).

Thus \[ 5x + 3x = 8x. \]

This is simply a short-hand statement:

\[ 5x = x + x + x + x + x \quad \text{ and } \quad 3x = x + x + x. \]

\[ \therefore 5x + 3x = x + x + x + x + x + x + x + x = 8x. \]

\[ x' + x' + x' + x' + x' \]

Fig. 14.

If, however, each of the 3 hurdles added to the fence AB is \( y \) feet long (see fig. 14), the length of AB is 5x feet and the length of BC is 3y feet. \( \therefore \text{ the length of ABC is } (5x + 3y) \text{ feet}. \)
These are my favorite movies because I don't know who I am either.

I play with the hope of being able to afford medication and therapy.
I AM 32 AND I STILL PICK MY NOSE AND EAT IT

I've been volunteering at hospice for the past year hoping that, out of necessity, I will learn to believe in God.
I am most looking forward to college so that I don't have to eat... and no one will notice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Private Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cause of death</td>
<td>Brain Damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External cause of death</td>
<td>Gunshot Wound</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is to certify that this is a true and correct reproduction or abstract of the official record filed with the Registrar of Vital Statistics of the State of Virginia.