



Do I Have to Tell My Wife?

By Jeff and Rose Colón

“Do I really need to tell my wife? Why can’t I just repent to God? It will destroy her,” the counselee exclaims. “If you were truly worried about that, you wouldn’t have done it in the first place,” is my unswerving answer.

I am well aware that many pastors counsel men to confess their sin to another man or leader in the church, but that he doesn’t need to tell his wife. I believe this is bad counsel and not according to the precepts of God’s Word.

When a man and woman enter into marriage, they vow to be faithful to one another until death. They enter into a covenant before God and man. When one of them breaks that vow by committing a sin against his or her partner, a restoration of the relationship needs to take place.

The Scriptures tell us that, “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” (1Corinthians 7:4) When we take our body, which belongs to our spouse, and give it to someone else or use it for unlawful sexual desires, we sin against God and our spouse.

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13) The man who doesn’t come clean about his sin with his wife will ultimately derail what needs to happen not only in his marriage but also in his relationship with God.

We have assurance in God’s Word that, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1John 1:9), and that it is right to “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” (James 5:16)

Repentance, confession, and forgiveness are required before healing and restoration can occur. How can a husband and wife walk in unity when there is an unresolved sin issue between them? The repentance process requires that we make it right with the person against whom we have sinned. Why would this not apply to the most important of all earthly relationships, the one we share with our spouse?

Now to the tougher question: How much should a husband share with his wife?

First let me address this from the wife’s perspective. On the one extreme, there are women who are not satisfied until they know every detail, including a thorough physical description of the other women and a vivid account of what was done. There are wives who demand to see the

pornography that their husbands were viewing only to find themselves struggling later with the same images.

We have seen the enemy use these details countless times to wreak havoc in the wife's mind and drive a deeper wedge between her and her husband. Many of these wives now regret having too much information and the mental torment with which they are now dealing.

On the other hand, the wife does need to know the scope of her husband's actions and certain details. For instance, when a husband has been sexually involved with another person, especially a prostitute, she needs to know so she can get herself checked for possible STD's. It would also be important for her to know if it was someone they both know, or a person at work, so that situation can be avoided in the future. She should know how long the relationship has been going on so she understands the degree of her husband's problem.

If pornography has been a struggle, she should know what kind. Has her husband been viewing child porn? If so, she has a responsibility to find out if he struggles with or has acted out with children in or outside of their family. If this turns out to be the case, she should confer immediately with the pastor or counselor at her church.

A husband must be determined to get his sin into the light. He must be willing to bear his wife's questions while remaining cautious about bombarding her with too many details which would only cause more unnecessary pain. For example, if he has masturbated, she doesn't need to know what he was thinking about. If he has been chatting online, she doesn't need to know the graphic sexual details of the conversation.

Many men struggle with how their spouse will react. First of all, let me say to you that the Lord is faithful to bring the sin of His children into the light, eventually, one way or the other. "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known." (Luke 12:2). It would be far worse for the wife to find out from another source.

No one can predict how each spouse will react, but I do know from personal experience that unconfessed sin always brings with it guilt, and a need to lie and constantly cover up. The weight of unconfessed sin will continue to bear down on a man's soul until it is properly brought into the light. By all means, the husband should seek godly counsel from a leader in the church, but, in the end, he has no choice but to trust the Lord for the outcome with his wife.

In my experience most men who resist coming totally clean with their wives have not been truly broken over their sin. Godly sorrow produces repentance and the fruits thereof. "For observe this very thing that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, *what clearing of yourselves*, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter." (2 Cor 7:11) True repentance leads to a willingness to do whatever it takes to make things right again with God and with others.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1John 1:6-7) How can we expect to have fellowship with God and others, in this case our spouse, if we choose to walk in darkness?

In my own marriage it wasn't until I became vulnerable, open and honest with the Lord and my wife about everything, that He was able to restore trust and unity back into my marriage.

And today, our marriage is better than if it had never happened.

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