

Empowering God's Children®

Lesson 4 – Secrets, Surprises, & Promises

Name: _____

Date: _____




**Ethics & Integrity
in Ministry**

Preventing Abuse and Providing Healing



Lesson 4 for Grades 9—12

Secrets, Surprises and Promises



Secrets are never meant to be shared. They can exclude or put people at risk.

Surprises are meant to be shared. They are meant to show our appreciation towards other people.

It can be difficult to delineate whether a promise is safe or unsafe. Promises communicate that we will stick to our word to carry out an action. When making promises it is important that we consider whether they are harmful to ourselves or others before agreeing to them. You never have to keep a promise that is unsafe for you or others.

Case Study Activity & Discussion



Activity - Secrets, Grooming, & Online Case Studies

Instructions: Break into small groups and divide the following case studies as evenly as possible among the groups. Discuss the assigned case studies and answer the questions among your small group. At the end of the activity, one or two individuals in each group should present the case study(ies) they discussed and the group's answers.

Online Case Study, Scenario 1: Emily is friends with a lot of people online. She's constantly posting to try and get more friends added to her social media accounts and loves it when people "like" her posts or comment on them—even if she doesn't know them. She's assured her family that she never posts any super personal information, but as her friend, you've noticed that her posts are becoming less guarded, and she's sharing a lot about her life and feelings regarding specific big life changes that have been occurring at home. She's also posting images that identify who she is, where she lives and where she hangs out. For example, she's posting pictures and videos that she has taken in front of your school, with the school mascot and in front of her home and tagged people who don't have any privacy settings on their accounts. When you talked to her about it and warned her to stop "oversharing," she became very defensive and told you that it's none of your business, and to keep your thoughts to yourself and no one else. It's ironic because you were recently together at the mall and had someone approach you and ask personal questions and Emily quickly shut down the conversation and moved on, yet she seems to be unable to limit giving the same type of information when online. You don't like the fact that she's constantly posting images of you on her account with so many people following whom you don't know. You also know that she has had some people troll her accounts and post bullying messages to her, but she doesn't want to block them or report them because she's fearful of losing her online friends.

- a) What's problematic about this scenario?
- b) What is causing or increasing vulnerability? What's the issue (or, what are the issues) with what Emily is doing?
- c) Is this a safe situation? What could go wrong?
- d) Should you keep this information a secret? Why / why not? Can you do anything to help?
- e) What should be done now?

Online Case Study, Scenario 2: Joseph was sexually abused by a man at his church, and turned to drugs and can't stop. Joseph always used to receive special privileges from the man and enjoyed the attention—until the man started behaving inappropriately with him. Joseph didn't realize that the man was taking advantage of him at first, but over time, it became abundantly clear. Joseph worries that people will be able to suspect that he was abused by a man and worries what people will think and say about Joseph as a result. He can't stop with the drugs because it's the only way he feels better, but he's terrified that people will figure out his two major secrets.

- a) What's problematic about this scenario?
- b) What could happen to Joseph as a result of his past abuse and current drug use? What is causing or increasing his vulnerability?
- c) What should he do now and moving forward?

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Online Case Study, Scenario 3: Jose is into gaming. He's really good at it and has lots of different accounts online with alias names. Gaming is a way for him to relax with a tough school load. His alias names are usually very similar, and typically involve some variation of his name and interests. He also uses the same password for everything to make it easier to quickly access his accounts. He has an online friend whom he games with often, and they talk frequently through the gaming apps. The friend says that he's the same age as Jose and has shown Jose pictures of himself and a girlfriend. The online friend has started to share personal information, like issues that are happening with his parents, and girlfriend, etc. Jose is beginning to feel safe with telling him personal and private information, too. They ended up sharing phone numbers so they could message even when they weren't gaming. In a new game, Jose's friend offered to help him win a level, but Jose would need to give him the password for the account. Jose knows his friend is the better gamer and really wants to win. He doesn't know if he should share his password or not.

- a) What's problematic about this scenario?
- b) What information about the "friend" in this scenario can you absolutely, 100% know to be true?
- c) What could happen? What is causing or increasing vulnerability? What's the issue (or, what are the issues) with what Jose is doing?
- d) What should he do now and moving forward?

Online Case Study, Scenario 4: Olivia sent Casey a naked picture of herself. She asked Casey to keep it a secret, but his friends convinced him to text the image to them. His friends then ended up sending the image to others, too. One of the guys who received the photo was from a different school in another city. He searched for Olivia on the Internet, found her on social media and told her that if she didn't send him more naked photos, he would distribute the one he has all over the Internet and to everyone at the school. The girl didn't know what to do, so she eventually sent him more, and found out that he put them on his blog. He then told her she had to send him videos, too, or he would send her photo to a pornography site for millions of people to see and ruin her reputation completely. Olivia thought briefly about calling the police but didn't feel like it would make a difference—especially because she was the one who sent the first naked photo. Plus, it seems easier to deal with the shame and embarrassment rather than getting into trouble with her parents and the police. She asked herself, "what could the cops really do to help anyway?" Even so, she doesn't know what to do and is becoming depressed and feeling completely alone. She's considering sending the videos and "being done with it."

- a) What's problematic about this scenario?
- b) What is causing or increasing vulnerability? What's the issue (or, issues) with what either Olivia or Casey are doing?
- c) Is this a safe situation? What could go wrong?
- d) If you had received the image, what should have happened?
- e) Should you keep this information a secret? Why / why not? Can you do anything to help? Should you intervene? How?
- f) What should be done now?

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Online Case Study, Scenario 5: Mackenzie began to spend more time online after a family member died. Through her social media accounts and pages that she visited to learn more about grief, she started talking with a new friend, John, who said he was “just a couple of years older.” John said he also was also going through a death in the family when Mackenzie opened up, and had lots of good advice about how to cope. Mackenzie felt like she didn’t know what she would have done without John’s help and support, and truly felt like she had found someone who understood her and supported her better than her own family. Mackenzie and John started to call each other boyfriend and girlfriend and have said they love each other, even though they have never met. Mackenzie told you that the only thing that bothered her is that John would become very upset when Mackenzie didn’t answer his texts right away. And, he also got jealous when she hung out with friends—but then she said, “oh that’s normal, all guys do that!” Mackenzie quickly deletes the messages from John in case her mom looks on her phone, because she told you her mom “wouldn’t understand her feelings.” And, she hides her phone from you, too, when John texts. John now wants Mackenzie to sneak out and meet him at his house for some “fun”. Mackenzie wants him to know how she really feels and has agreed to meet up with him at his house for the first time by herself.

- a) What’s problematic about this scenario? Is this a safe situation?
- b) What is causing or increasing vulnerability? What’s the issue (or, issues) with what Mackenzie is doing? What could go wrong?
- c) What information about the “John” in this scenario can you absolutely, 100% know to be true?
- d) Should you keep this information a secret? Why / why not? Can you do anything to help? Should you intervene? How?
- e) What should be done now?

Online Case Study, Scenario 6: Sky’s dad’s best friend comes over and asks her to hand him his phone that clearly displays pornography, and then asks if he can touch her private parts just like in the video. He told her that the things they do in the video are fun, and that she should let him because it will be educational and important for Sky to learn! When she refuses, he said that her dad will believe him over her, and that Sky “doesn’t want to know what will happen to you when you tell.” Now she’s scared to say anything. Sky used to think he was one of her safe adults, and now she doesn’t know who to trust, and definitely doesn’t want to tell her dad because it’s his best friend. She thinks, “maybe everyone is better off not knowing?”

- a) What’s problematic about this scenario?
- b) What is causing or increasing vulnerability?
- c) What should Sky do if she tells another safe adult and they don’t believe her?

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for making each of us unique and special in your image. Thank you for also giving us similarities, like our right to dignity and worthiness of respect. Help me to live in peace in times of confusion. Help me to remember to respect myself and others, as I would like others to respect me. Help me keep strong boundaries, and thank you for placing trusted adults in my life. Please give me the courage and confidence to speak up for myself and others if I see anything that does not seem right. Amen.

