

## ONE MORE THING

**T**here is one “kid-sitting” job I will never forget. I’ve never forgotten this story because I was directly involved and because I saw how it turned out. Let’s just say there are some kinds of looming disasters that don’t cause shipwrecks or foundation collapses; some disasters are lying in wait to shatter the soul. Why should we be surprised when we know “the whole world is in control of the Evil One.” (John 5:19)

I was about twenty-five years old when I learned this lesson about the absolute need to confess all sins—*especially* those we would rather keep covered, deep inside us. At a time and place I never expected, I learned the wisdom of James 5:16: *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.”*

The story begins on a very relaxed weekend around the time of spring break. A major part of my job as a Youth leader was to be ready to be a guide and mentor to any kid who needed it, no matter what the circumstances. In this case, the parents of a high school sophomore asked if I would stay with their son while they began the family’s spring vacation. As soon as school let out, about a week later, my job was to get their son on a plane so he could join them.

Jared was a great kid, so I was looking forward to being his “sitter” for a week. He was easy to be with—he was immersed in sports

and was always on the go. That meant all I really had to do was come up with dinners for a ravenous kid and be ready in the evening for the challenging questions that teens love to throw at you—questions about life, sports, girls, his future, and everything he was learning from the Lord.

Jared had his head on straight. He was an all-around super young man from a good family, the kind of teenager that's easy to interact with. I didn't see an uptight bone in his body. He called me Sco (like everybody did), and I felt I knew him well enough to get on his back a little if he was slacking off chores. If I said something like, "Hey, Jared, get off the couch and help me feed the dishwasher!" he'd grin and jump right up. He was *that* kind of kid. So, if I ever was wary of spending an entire week with a teenager I didn't know that well (after all, I was only in my mid-twenties), that hesitancy vanished by the end of the first day. I was sorry to see the week come to an end.

As we drove to the airport, our conversations continued. It got even more intense, probably because our time together was winding down. Jared was still pounding me with questions—good questions. I guess you could say they all were about living a moral life in this crazy world. I was challenging him back, too, asking him about his goals for the summer, and deeper questions—how did he intend to follow the Lord, especially as he got older and was more involved with worldly jobs and meeting kids he didn't know? "What do you feel that God wants you to do in your life?" I asked, and later, I challenged him with this: "Is there anything that God's whispering to you that you're not doing yet?"

Our communication was fast and easy, kind of like a good tennis match. A few times, between the banter and friendly back-and-forths,

Jared fell silent and stared out the window. I respected that. Kids need space to think and consider things.

Then, suddenly, we were at PDX, Portland International Airport. We got the car parked, hoisted Jared's gear on our shoulders, and headed for the gate. (This was in the easy days before security lines and TSA guards.) As we strolled to the gate, I reflected on the important week we had. I felt Jared had grown a lot in his understanding of God, and I felt I had done my part, too, by showing him ways to be a young man of integrity in this uncertain world. And I can't deny that I was looking forward to heading home and catching up on my own life, too.

Finally, it was time for the awkward airport goodbye. "So long, Jared, have a good trip, and say hi to your folks," I said. Jared thanked me for my hospitality, and we shook hands. For a moment, it seemed like he might have something else to ask me, so I prodded him a little, "Everything okay?" "Oh yeah, everything's good," Jared said. Then he shot one last grin at me and turned to walk up the boarding ramp.

Mission accomplished! I felt good about everything, and just to be sure—I didn't tell Jared—but I was going to hang around the airport until his plane took off, just so I knew he was safely on his way. I started sauntering down the concourse, relieved and happy the week had gone so well, and maybe a little glad I was free of the responsibilities at last.

What I remembered next, I remember as though it were happening all over again. Suddenly, I hear a shout behind me. By that time, I'm two gates past where I left Jared off. I realize that shout was my name.

“Sco! Sco!”

“I turn and see Jared running down the concourse toward me at a full clip. As he reaches me, he gasps, **“There’s one more thing!”**”

I said, “Yeah? What’s the one more thing? How can I help?”

Where was the easy-going kid I had said goodbye to just three minutes before? He had vanished. This young man’s face was twisted up with pain and embarrassment. He blurted out his next words fast, like he couldn’t wait to get rid of them.

“When you get back to my house, I want you to go downstairs to my bedroom and open the closet. There are three boxes on the top shelf. The box on the bottom—pull that out and open it up.”

“Sure, Jared ...”

“I mean it, Sco, open it up and pull everything out of it!” The kid was in real pain. I could tell it cost him a lot to tell me this. I could see the next part was especially hard: “There’s a fake bottom in the box. Pull that out, too. Everything you see—would you throw it all away?”

Even as the last words came out of his mouth, I watched his face start to relax. He had done something hard, and he was glad he had done it.

“Jared, I would be happy to do this for you,” I said the words slowly because I wanted to impress on his mind that his request—his plea, really—was safe with me. I would do exactly what he asked. I wanted to reassure him because I could see it cost him a lot to open up to me. Without saying a word, he gave me a hug and, clearly with a lighter step, bounced back toward his gate.

When I got to his house, I did what he asked. I couldn’t help but see what was in the fake bottom of the box because everything was

tossed in there openly, as if Jared believed his secret would be safe forever.

Let's just say Jared had the kind of secrets that make us all go, "Wow, I never would have guessed." No wonder it was so hard for him to tell me.

At the bottom of the box was a stash of marijuana and a collection of pornography magazines. I got a garbage bag and wrapped everything so securely that no one would bother to check what was inside. As soon as I left his house, I discarded the mess in a public trash bin.

We all create fake bottoms in our box—the box that's our *life*. We want people to see just the outside of the box—or the top half of it—which is our best side, our most admirable qualities, the parts that make people go, "What a great person!" But we all have things stuffed away. I have learned this over and over. We all cover up. We even create plans to hide what we don't want others to see.

The Lord was working on Jared's heart, and he was willing to respond to the Lord by confessing his sins to a fellow believer. It's as if the Lord is saying, "*Jared, you know there's one more thing. Just get rid of it.*"

Driving home after I had thrown Jared's "hidden life" in the trash, I felt so happy for that kid! Aloud, I said, "When you come home from your trip, Jared, it's gonna be gone, all gone from your life!" Even before that, I knew when he got on that plane, his backpack was lighter.

At a young age, Jared was blessed to learn the truth about the hidden rocks in his life. *We all have them*. These rocks are the unconfessed sins that can throw us off course, like a beautiful yacht that's shipwrecked on a beach, or they can crush us in a disaster that can

last a lifetime, like a failed marriage, or alcoholism, or even prison. Whether the rocks are big or small, we can be stopped cold from living the life God intends us to live.

And sometimes unconfessed sins just wear us away, year after year, like the house Peder's dad built. These hidden sins are buried so deep that we don't even realize that our foundation—our integrity as a person—is being eroded year after year by sins that have drawn us away from God. These are the sins that isolate us, little by little, from the people we love. Our foundation has become just a shell.

Jared was blessed. He recognized the *“one more thing”* that could mess up his life forever. He did something about it.

Have you?

### FLIGHT PLANS

What's your “One more thing?”

**ACTION PLAN:** Find a quiet place where you have the time and serenity to review your life. If you can spare a weekend, visit a retreat house, or take a road trip to an inspiring location where you can empty your mind of the daily grind, which will give you the freedom to reflect.

Establish the foundation of your time away by inviting the Lord to be there with you:

*“Lord, help me acknowledge my unconfessed sins and hidden life. I know you want the best for me and my family, and these sins are holding me back from being the person you called me to be.*

*With your help, Lord, I confess these sins to you ...*

*Now, Lord, guide me to the trustworthy person on earth who will hear my sins confidentially, a person who will support and encourage me to create a new life of integrity.”*

**ASK YOURSELF:**

- Who would you feel comfortable confessing to?
- How has your unconfessed, hidden life affected your family?
- Has hidden life made you less “present” to your family, friends, and colleagues than before?
- Have you become distant or short-tempered because of a hidden life?
- In what ways have you seen having a hidden life creating financial hardships?
- Can you see where a hidden life could create larger issues?
- How would your life be more free, more unburdened if you put the hidden life behind you?