



SECRET GOODNESS

Covert Operations

November 5, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 6:2-4 (NIV) • “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Psalms 139:1-3 (NIV) • “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.”

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV) • “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Amos 4:4, 5 (NLT) • “Go ahead and offer sacrifices to the idols at Bethel. Keep on disobeying at Gilgal. Offer sacrifices each morning, and bring your tithes every three days. Present your bread made with yeast as an offering of thanksgiving. Then give your extra voluntary offerings so you can brag about it everywhere!”

Colossians 3:12 (NIV) • “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Hosea 11:4 (NIV) • “I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them.”

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “SECRET GOODNESS”

The primary goal of secret goodness isn’t to remain anonymous but to bring kindness to someone with no strings attached. It is also important to remember that the exercise of kindness should be motivated by your appreciation of the Father and empowered by His Spirit. It is considered a discipline because it deepens our loyalty to God and the ways of His kingdom in spite of what others say or don’t say. Many are motivated by the positive accolades of others. Sometimes the expectations of others will move us to do good deeds. But the exercise of secret goodness takes practice because it tends to run against the grain of our sinful, human nature. We all want to be recognized. Jesus said about our kindness, “But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” The secrecy ensures that your goodness is coming from a heart that simply wants to please God. The immediate reward

comes from knowing this was a gift for God and others and not motivated by selfish ambition. We will receive the ultimate reward when Christ comes again. For some, this is the discipline that strengthens their relationship with God the most because it is something that is experienced only between the one who gives and God. As a result of doing this exercise we become more aware of others and less preoccupied with self.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "SECRET GOODNESS"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Deepen their sense of value for the power of kindness in God's kingdom.
2. Activate a plan to practice secret acts of kindness as an experiment.
3. Foster the value of doing what's good and right when no one is going to know.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) a volunteer, glass of water; (Activity B) goodies or treats supplied by anonymous donors.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Applying • Paper, pens or pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word. At some point you should distribute or call their attention to their student lesson for this week.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • The following game is designed to get students to consider what motivates people to be kind to others. The object is to get the students to motivate a volunteer to do something (hand a glass of water to the teacher).

Get set • First, ask a volunteer to leave the room so the class can receive their instructions. Then, to the class, **say: We need to prompt the volunteer to give the glass of water to the teacher. It is our responsibility.** They are to motivate the volunteer by clapping and cheering without explaining in words what needs to be done.

As you bring the volunteer in, explain that without words they are going to be asked to do something. They'll need to pay attention to the feedback and learn what to do based upon the group's response. The class will clap and cheer when the volunteer is close to the glass of water and will stop if they move away. The same reaction is continued and heightened until the water is given to the teacher.

Go • As you begin, you may want to help the students by clapping with them when they are warm and slowing down when they are cold.

Debriefing • Ask: In what areas of life do we do certain things only for the applause or recognition of others? (the way we dress; sports; what we say in public; who we spend time with; music.)

Explain to the students that community service projects and missionary outreach activities should never be done because “people are watching us.”

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Invite some church members to anonymously prepare a few treats* for the class. Make sure there is no way the goodies can be traced to their origin. (Be sure there are enough for unexpected visitors.)

Get set • Say: These gifts were given to this class. There is no one to thank but God alone. While they didn’t fall like manna from heaven, those who prepared these for you chose to remain anonymous.

Go • As you hand out the treats ask the students to respond to the debriefing questions.

Debriefing • Ask: How would this experience be different for you (the class) if you knew who made this for you? (Might be thinking about what a nice person they were, feeling a need to thank them). What do you think the reward is for the one who secretly made these for you? What benefit do they get from this? (Knowing they’ve done something nice; knowing you’ll enjoy it.)

*Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

It’s not that Andrew is wealthy, he just has a big heart for people. Not only is he generous, he

is downright sneaky. If he is at a restaurant he will scan the place for a candidate to bless with a bit of kindness, secretly. One time it was dessert for a couple that seemed to be exhausted at the end of a busy week. Another time it was sending cookies to a table where a big family gathered for a birthday celebration. He always puts as much care into being anonymous as he puts into the sacrifice it costs him. One day, as Andrew was filling his car with gas, he watched an apparently single mom trying to fill her tank and keep her kids in line all at the same time. He finished well before she did and paid for both his fuel and hers, without the struggling mom knowing. He pulled away from the gas station with an irrepressible smile on his face. He couldn’t help himself! Andrew often struggles financially himself. But he seems to hear a different voice than others do. He has eyes for people who could use some help, and the reward he receives is a childlike joy and a reason to smile to himself. But God is certainly smiling too. Maybe Andrew is more wealthy than we first thought.

Debriefing • Ask: In what way is Andrew wealthy? When have you had the chance to be a blessing to someone else without being recognized for your kindness? Describe how you felt. What do you think is more important for the Christian—doing the act of kindness or not taking credit for it so God gets the glory? Explain.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

In God’s kingdom there are a couple truths that seem to surface again and again. One is that God’s grace to people is beyond our ability to deserve or repay. Any attempt to earn it by doing what has already been accomplished through

Christ will only frustrate the work of grace in your life. Rest in a grace that accepts you as a child right where you are today.

Another truth is that the King expects His children to live as grace-givers. If you are grateful for the good things God has done for you, then it is completely reasonable that you will want to live with the same attitude as your Father has—selfless service to others.

Ask: Can you think of some people in Scripture that could be considered service-oriented people? (Have students share.) Why did you choose the ones you did?

Say: Some have attempted to do good things so that God will take notice. Others do their acts of kindness so that others will notice them. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between the two. Have the students find and read **Matthew 6:2-4**. Then read from the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5:3-12**.

Ask: What does “don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” mean? What is the reward Jesus is referring to? Why do you think Jesus wanted the disciples to hear this message? How do you think this message affected the religious leaders in Jesus’ time?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Say: Sometimes our deeds of kindness give people a sense of value and dignity. Sometimes good deeds, when not done in secret, can embarrass or make others feel as if they “owe you one.”

Ask: Are there people in your life that don’t feel valued? What can you do secretly to remind them that they matter?

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

A Sabbath School class of 10 teens decided to practice secret goodness throughout the week. The teens were to practice kindness in a secret way each day and on Sabbath they could not tell anyone what they had done. But, they agreed that if God had blessed them during the week through their service to others, they could let their joy be known by singing with enthusiasm.

Ask: What do you think was the response? Imagine if 10 teens were to commit to practicing one secret act of kindness a day for a week. What do you think would be the impact? How many people would be touched with kindness? How would that compare to an average week?

Write the following questions on a white/chalkboard. Ask the students to divide into groups of two or three, scan through the student activities for this week’s lesson, look at the Bible verses, and answer the questions you have written out.

1. If you were to choose one verse from the Student Lesson that gives the strongest command to keep your good deeds secret, which would it be? Why does it speak so profoundly to you?
2. If you were to choose from the student lesson one verse that portrays what acts of goodness can accomplish, which verse would you choose?
3. If you were to choose one verse from this section that “if taken to heart” would cause the greatest change in your own spiritual life, which verse would you choose? Why?

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Say: The exercise of secret goodness may seem more interesting or exciting than others (i.e., Bible study, prayer) because of the mystery, but it requires a workout as much as the others. It really takes extra time and extra work to give secretly to someone else.

Have the students, in small groups, brainstorm three or four ways they can be kind and caring this week. Tell them that they can use the criteria listed in the APPLYING section of the student lesson as a guide for their brainstorming.

The criteria:

1. Who is someone who has a need?
2. What can you do to help them with no strings attached?
3. How can you eliminate being recognized as the source of help?

After their brainstorming, ask them to consider doing something, even if it is as simple as writing a note to someone who could use some encouragement.

Say: As you develop your plans, keep in mind the secrecy part. See if it is possible to do this in such a way that you won't be recognized.

Debriefing • Ask: How is it still secret goodness if you are working with a partner? What Bible passage would suggest that what is important is to not do things for others "to be seen" so that they will think highly of you? How do you balance the secrecy with the need to do the right thing for another person? Is there ever a way to do these acts of kindness discreetly (judiciously, with regard to maintaining silence about something of a delicate nature), instead of secretly? What is the difference? How can you find the balance?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are obstacles that seem to get in the way of secret goodness?
2. What do you think the long-term impact of secret acts of grace are?
3. Who do you know that has the gift of seeing people in need? Ask them for help or advice in learning to see the needs as they do.
4. What do you think would happen to your church if all together the members practiced secret goodness for a week?
5. Why do you think Jesus gave the command to practice secret goodness?
6. In what way is this an exercise/training? What spiritual muscles does it strengthen?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

One of the most difficult things to admit is that we like it when people notice us. Students may say, "We don't care what others think of us," while in reality, all of us do. Humans crave affirmation, recognition, and appreciation. Being able to reach out to others who will never thank you or appreciate you personally or publicly is as close to agape (Godlike love) giving as you can get. You never really understand the life-changing power of secret kindness until you try giving it away. It's one of those experiences you need to do before you have much to say about it.



STUDENT LESSON

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November 5, 2022

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matthew 6:2-4, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 12, The Church:** “The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures. The church is God’s family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 80-83

COVERT OPERATIONS

The artist named Herkomer was born in the Black Forest in Europe. While Herkomer was a gifted artist, his father was only a simple woodchopper. As Herkomer’s fame spread he moved to London and continued to work. And he soon sent for his father

to join him. His father was so proud of the gifted artist his son had become. Jokingly he would often attribute his son’s success to a genetic trait.

The old man would try to make artifacts out of clay, and while they were often quite good, they were not the quality of his son’s work. Still, the father and son worked together and made a good living as artisans in the London area. As time went on, the old man’s abilities decreased, and the quality of his work diminished. Sometimes it was clear on his face how disappointed he was in himself and in the quality of his work.

Herkomer felt sad about his aged father’s condition and would often notice the flaws in his handiwork and want to do something to help him. So when his father would go upstairs to bed, Herkomer would stay up late and begin his covert operations. He would shape and fashion the artifacts that had defects until they were perfect. He would then smile as he retired, knowing that the next day his father would hear the people remark about the quality of his work. And when people did comment, the unsuspecting old man would beam with a sense of value. Herkomer knew that his father’s dignity and pride were all that he had in his old age, and he wouldn’t allow those to be taken away.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Acts 2:44, 45.
- » Brenda secretly made a plate of cookies for a man who lived on her street. He seemed old and lonely; she thought that knowing someone cared might cheer him up. She left the plate on his doorstep with a note of encouragement and left quietly. The next day she received a small loaf of freshly baked bread on her porch with a note. She thought, *He must have seen me leave the cookies, and now he knows it was me.* Then she read the bottom of the note, which said, "PS: I saw how kind you were to that man and just wanted you to know that it made an impact on me. But I'm not telling you who I am either." The secrecy continued around the neighborhood.
- » Which is more important, the secrecy or the act of kindness? Which part of the experience has an impact on the giver? Which has an impact on the receiver? What is the kindest thing someone has done for you as a secret? How did it make you feel not knowing who it was?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE CHURCH

- » Read Acts 2:44-47; 5:23-26; Colossians 1:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:9.
- » One of the distinguishing marks of the church is Christian service to the needs of the community. We are to minister in loving service to those around us, taking care of their physical and spiritual needs.
- » "Sincerity of purpose, real kindness of heart, is the motive that Heaven values. The soul that is sincere in its love, wholehearted in its devotion, God regards as more precious than the golden

wedge of Ophir. We are not to think of reward, but of service; yet kindness shown in this spirit will not fail of its recompense" (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 81).

- » Read Psalm 139:1-3 in different versions of the Bible (go to Biblegateway.com) and write down your favorite.



See activity at the end of this lesson.

TUESDAY REFLECTING

- » Read Matthew 10:8.
- » "Christ has linked His interest with that of humanity, and He asks us to become one with Him for the saving of humanity" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 504).
- » Treating others with kindness, with no strings attached, is what God wants us to do for others.
- » Give secret kindness a chance to shape the way you live each day.
- » Those who want to run a marathon have to train. Training in the spiritual life is not much different. God does not claim that this disciplined way of life is easy. But He promises that it is full. He guarantees that your life will be exciting. But it does take exercise. So take the tiny steps today to follow through on an act of kindness, and see for yourself how rewarding it is to live for Jesus as you serve others. You will be back for more.

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS



See activity at the end of this lesson.

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Review the memory text.
- » “Acts of kindness performed in secret will bind hearts together, and will draw them closer to the heart of Him from whom every generous impulse springs” (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 82).
- » God has many gifts to give you—love of family members, success, even a few moments of sadness to remind you of a better world coming. When we give gifts of unselfish service to others, we get a “sneak peek” into how God must feel when He gives to us. Selflessness is God’s outstanding characteristic, and it draws others to Christ. But how can anyone get a glimpse of God’s selflessness other than through us, His children? Think about it.
- » No, actually, most people have already thought about it. Go beyond thinking about it. Try it.
- » Think about your answers to these questions:
 1. Name some of the gifts God has given you.
 2. What are some ways you could show kindness to others? (What’s your plan?)
 3. When you’re trying to show kindness to someone, what is most important to remember: to keep it a secret, or just do good for someone? Explain.
 4. Why is it suggested that we “do good” in secret?

Friday APPLYING

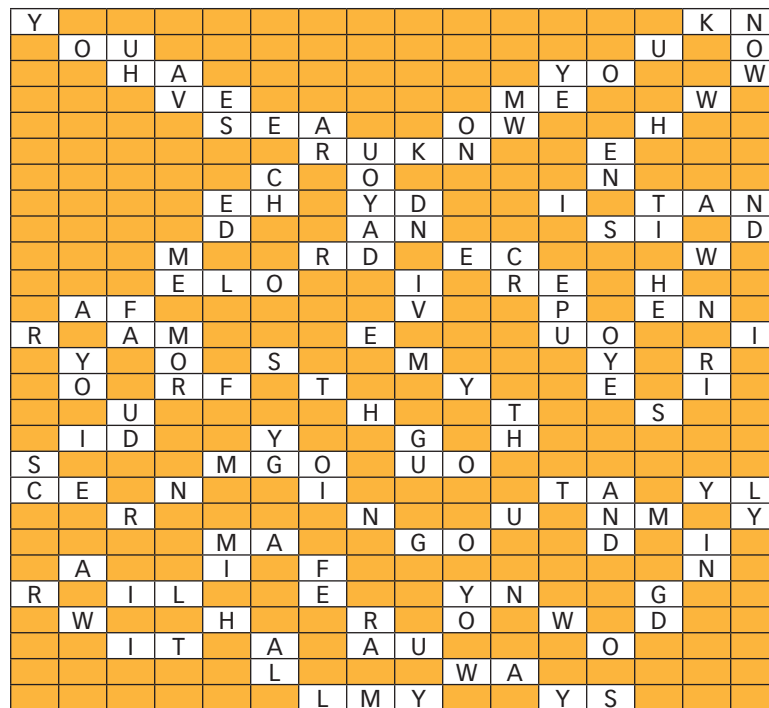
- » Read Romans 12:9-13.
- » It is essential to plan acts of kindness thoughtfully. Start with one or two that are manageable. It is also extremely important to be open to spontaneous opportunities that spring up around you.
- » The checkpoints for planned kindness are the same ones to use for more spontaneous acts of kindness.
- » Below is a series of questions to help you. Reflect and write out your experiences this week.
- » The criteria:
 - Who is someone who has a need?
 - What can you do to respond to that need with no strings attached?
 - How can you avoid being recognized as the source of help?

Planned

Spontaneous

Monday activity

Find the Bible text in the maze below. You may go up, down, forward, backward, and diagonal. The last letter of the word touches the first letter of the next word. It is one of the three texts listed here: James 2:14-17; Matthew 6:2-4; Psalm 139:1-3.



Wednesday activity

Fill in the blanks.

Look up the following texts and fill in the blanks. When you have finished this activity, choose a text to share with your class and explain what it means to you. Texts are from the New International Version.

1. "I the Lord _____ the heart and _____ the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their _____ deserve" (Jeremiah 17:10).
2. "A _____ given in _____ soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak _____ great wrath" (Proverbs 21:14).
3. " _____ you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the _____, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ _____ are _____" (Colossians 3:23, 24).
4. "All the believers were _____ and had _____ in common. They sold _____ and _____ to _____ to anyone who had _____" (Acts 2:44, 45).
5. "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have _____ but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is _____ clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; _____ warm and _____ fed,' but does _____ about their _____ needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by _____, is dead" (James 2:14-17).