

Messages to smokers on the perils of "Secret Smoking"

- Keeping your smoking a secret not only harms you but it harms those around you -- your family and friends -- because it does not give your family and friends the opportunity to help you quit. Lying about smoking can leave loved ones feeling guilty and helpless if you get sick - - believing they should have known you were still smoking and done more to get you to stop.
- You may think that because secret smoking keeps you from smoking as many cigarettes as you did before, you'll be healthier. but any amount of smoking harms your health. Cutting back your smoking is not enough. You must quit entirely to save your life and health.
- As a secret smoker, who do you think you are hiding your smoking from? It certainly is not hidden from God and your are not hiding it from yourself. The only ones you may think you are fooling are your friends and family members, and some of them may already know but not want to confront you on the issue.
- No matter how you try to rationalize it, smoking in secret is a form of lying to others and God's word says that lying is a sin. Deceiving others is never OK, even if you think you are telling untruths as a way to protect someone else from the pain of the truth. Lying to family members and friends about anything poisons relationships.

Instead of hiding your smoking, take your problem of nicotine addiction to the altar. Go to the Lord in prayer. Humble yourself and accept help in quitting from God and from God's family -- the members of your church congregation -- and from smoking cessation programs in the community.

Emerged from the Pittsburgh discussion with Rev. Sharon Washington on July 20, 2004.