



Why Full Disclosure is Important

“Speak the truth to each other.” (Zec.8:16).

At Faithful & True, we encourage truth-telling. We encourage being authentic. We work with many couples for whom there has been lying and covering up of sexual and emotional betrayal. For couples who seek to heal these hurts, we know that there needs to be a new foundation built from telling the truth—the whole truth. We call this process *full disclosure*.

I (Debbie) work with wives and partners of men who struggle with being relationally faithful. Behaviors include masturbation, fantasizing, pornography, flirting, prostitution, massage parlors, sexual affairs, emotional affairs & other acts of infidelity. The lies and deception used by husbands to keep these behaviors hidden can create many emotional and physical symptoms for their wives. When wives' internal world of perceptions and intuition does not match up with their external world of what they are seeing and being told, they can develop feelings of being “crazy.” That is often the result of internal and external worlds not seeming to match up. When these wives are offered the truth it finally allows them to feel sane. It is not only a gift from their husbands, it is really (in our opinion) a moral imperative. No wonder the Bible instructs us to speak truth to each other.

I know that as couples seek to heal and transform from the hurts of infidelity, full disclosure is an important part of trust-building. Often a wife learns about unfaithful behaviors through her own accidental discovery or through more intentional detective work. Either might lead her to ask many questions that sometimes her husband may or may not be willing to answer.

Truthful answers allow for more of the “puzzle pieces” to take shape. However, trust is only really built from someone who is willing to offer the truth, the whole truth, without being asked. The problem with questioning is that a betrayed woman may wonder if she has not asked just the right question, or enough questions, so her mind will continue to obsess about what she has missed. And the problem is no different with looking for information—there is always the possibility that something was hidden too well. Volunteering information is a

process of owning one's faults and sinful behaviors. It allows for brokenness and repentance. It also begins the long journey of trust-building.

When we lead a couple through full disclosure, the husband (or unfaithful partner), creates a time-line of his entire sexual history, starting from birth. In five-year increments, he builds the story of how his sexuality developed. In the early years, many husbands have rather "normal" experiences of sexual experimenting which contribute to the shaping of sexual identity and development. He may also have experienced various forms of abuse or abandonment. These also effect his identity and development. As he age-progresses himself through his story, it becomes clearer and clearer how his sexual sin developed and progressed. Understanding these facts—and the dynamic that hurt people can go on to hurt people—can help a wife build empathy and can also help her to depersonalize his behaviors. She can hopefully hear in his story that these behaviors are not really about her, they are about much older and deeper pain. This is not an excuse for sinning; it is an opportunity to grow through pain.

We recommend that full-disclosure be witnessed by a professional. As in all steps of healing, it is important that there is safety for everyone. Doing the right thing does not mean that it doesn't hurt, but with adequate support and love, hurt can lead to great transformation. It has been our research experience that virtually all of the couples we have worked with who go through disclosure will not only survive but thrive as a result. It is our prayer for all of you who are stuck because truth has not been completely shared, that God will lead you to professionals who can support your full-disclosure. The truth will set you free.

Mark Laaser, M.Div., Ph.D.
Debbie Laaser, MA,LMFT

Faithful & True
15798 Venture Lane
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

952-746-3880

faithfulandtrue.com