

Did You Hear? (GOSSIP)

R4G

Various Scripture

R4G @ Grace Bible Church

May 30, 2019

I. WHAT IS GOSSIP AND WHY DO WE DO IT??

- Key Biblical Passages
 - Proverbs 16:28, 11:13, 18:8, 26:20-22; Romans 1:28-32; 2 Cor 12:20
- What exactly IS Gossip? A few definitions ...
 1. “Sinful gossip is bearing bad news behind someone’s back out of a bad heart” (Matthew Mitchell, *Resisting Gossip*)
 2. “Gossip is speaking about someone in a way that defames, dishonors, or otherwise hurts their character” (Erik Raymond, *How To Shut Down Gossip*)
 3. “Gossip is speaking harmful information in an ungodly manner — without love, and thus to no positive end” (Dan Phillips, *How to Shut Down Gossip and its Nasty Kin*)
- QUOTE: “*Gossip is a shadowy sin, blurry around the edges*” (Stephen Witmer, *Questions to Ask Before We Gossip*)
- A few things that seem to mark what gossiping is (Taken from John Piper, *What Is Gossip?*)
 1. **A negative spirit that is more bent on hurting than helping** (*Psalms 50:19-20*)
 2. **An excessive interest in affairs that belong to others**
 - Explanation of “delicious morsels” from Prov 18:8 and 26:22
 - ILL — Dozen Krispy Kreme donuts
 - QUOTE: “*Gossip tastes great going down, but it has lasting and poisonous effects on our hearts*” (Matthew Mitchell, *Resisting Gossip*)
 3. **A kind of pride and jealousy**
 - QUOTE “*The lie of gossip isn’t, ‘I’m going to falsify a story about this person,’ but the unspoken and assumed, ‘I have the right to talk about anything I want with whomever I want in whatever way I want’*” (Paul Maxwell, *What Gossip Says about God*)

- 8 Diagnostic Questions to ask to discern whether or not you are gossiping (Taken from Stephen Witmer, *Questions to Ask Before We Gossip*)
 1. If you're involved in conflict with another person, **are you talking to others only about that person's sin and never about your own?** If so, it's probably gossip.
 2. Is your conversation with friends **about** this other person **intended to prepare you for a productive conversation with the person?** If not, it's probably gossip.
 3. If you're **seeking counsel** from others about how to deal wisely with this person, **do you keep the person's identity secret except when necessary?** If not, it's probably gossip.
 4. Do you **enjoy** sharing this information with your friends? If so, it's probably gossip. Seeking counsel in a broken, difficult situation is good, but it is painful, not enjoyable.
 5. **What's the tone of your voice and the tenor of your heart?** Are you meek, humble, and broken-hearted when you share this other person's sin, or do you feel angry and righteous by comparison? If the latter, it's probably gossip.
 6. **Are you talking to God about this person** as much as you're talking to your friends? If not, it's probably gossip.
 7. **Are you limiting the number of friends you speak to?** If not, it's probably gossip. Gossip seeks to spread communication widely, but Jesus seeks to restrict certain delicate communications narrowly (Matthew 18:15– 17).
 8. Do you think of those with whom you're sharing sensitive information as **passive recipients or involved participants?** Jesus's goal for us in speaking to others is never merely to vent. Those who receive information must be prepared to go with us to the person we need to speak to, in order to serve as witnesses (Matthew 18:16). If you don't understand your hearers as having this active, participatory role, it's probably gossip.

II. WHY IS IT SUCH A SERIOUS SIN?

- QUOTE: *'Every time someone gossips they injure at least 3 people: the one speaking, the one hearing, and the one being gossiped about ... Gossip is the Devil's Ponzi scheme for getting rich on disunity and providing quick returns to those seeking to gratify the flesh'* (Erik Raymond, *How To Shut Down Gossip*)
 1. **Gossip destroys relationships** (*Prov 16:28*)
 2. **Gossip destroys individuals** (*Prov 12:18*)
 3. **Gossip is serious in God's eyes** (*Prov 19:5; Rom 1:28-32*)

- QUOTE “Gossip leaves a wide trail of devastation wherever and however it goes ... it erodes trust and destroys morale. It creates a social environment of suspicion where everyone must wonder what is being said behind their backs and whether appearances of friendship are sincere ... ***It makes the Body of Christ look like the Body of Antichrist — destroyers rather than healers***” (Ray Ortlund, *Gossip*)
- Article - Paul Maxwell - *What gossip Says about God* on how gossip relates a certain theology of God, the Word, eschatology, and ecclesiology.
 - QUOTE from the article ... “The difference between a practical theology that refrains from gossip, and one that endorses indulgence in gossip, is which person is at the center of the theology. One is Christ. The other is Satan. One is the scarred, slain, risen Lamb. The other is the accuser. One is “Our Father, who is in heaven.” The other is “the father of lies””
- Gospel presentation in light of the seriousness of Gossip ...

III. WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS TO OVERCOMING GOSSIP

- The remedy for **speaking** gossip = LOVE

1. Love for the person

- Matthew 7:12
- Perhaps you do not have ill intent, but just aren't quite sure whether you should or should not share this information. 6 helpful questions to ask yourself before sharing information about someone (From *Six Questions to Diagnose Subtle Gossip* by Paula Marsteller)
 1. Has my friend given me **permission** to share this “prayer request” with others? Am I considering my friend before myself (Philippians 2:3)?
 2. How much **time** has passed between the time I learned of this need and the time I'm sharing it with others? Am I sharing it impulsively?
 3. If very little time has passed, am I sharing this in a **panic**? Am I trusting in the Lord to act (Psalm 37:5), or trusting in myself to be the savior?
 4. How seriously have I **prayed** about this issue myself before reaching out to others? Have I knelt in prayer? Have I prayed at all?
 5. Do I believe that the earnest prayer of a **single** righteous person avails much (James 5:16)? Or do I think my prayers are not enough to move the heart of God?

6. Could I, at some point, be **embarrassed** that I sent this text or email about this issue?

2. Love for the church and her unity

- Central importance in New Testament. 1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:11-13; John 17:21; 1 Peter 3:8; Eph 4:3; Romans 12:16; Gal 3:26-28; 1 Cor 12:12-13

3. Love for Jesus

- Colossians 3:1-17 — Love for Jesus and setting our hearts and minds on Him enables our putting off and putting on
- How to shut down Gossip (Erik Raymond, *How To Shut Down Gossip*)

1. Refuse it

- **ILL** - Dikembe Mutombo GEICO commercial ... “No, No, No! Not in my house!”
- How we we refuse it? 5 helpful questions (from Dan Phillips, *How To Shut Down Gossips and Its Nasty Kin*)

1. Ask, “Why are you telling me this?”
2. Ask, “What’s the difference between what you’re telling me and gossip?”
3. Ask, “How is your telling me that thought, that complaint, that information going to help you and me love God and our brothers better, and knit us closer together as a church in Christ’s love?”
4. Ask, “Now that you’ve told me about that, what are you going to do about it?”
 - Tip: If the answer is “Pray,” a good response might be, “Then why didn’t you do that and leave it there in the first place?”
5. Say, “Now that you’ve told me about that, you’ve morally obligated me to make sure you talk to so-and-so about it. How long do you think you need, so I can know when this becomes a sin that I will need to confront in you?”

2. Rebuke it

- **QUOTE:** *“We must be prepared to identify the first signs of fire and to take swift action against it. The only way to do this is to interject and ask questions. ‘Before you continue ...’ or ‘Let me just ask a quick question....’ These questions may feel uncomfortable, but they guard against adding fuel to a great [fire]. They may be awkward, but Jesus never promised holiness would come without awkwardness. It’s better to blush than to sin.”* (Tim Challies, *It Takes Two*)

- Proverbs 26:20
- QUOTE: *“If there were no listening ears there would be no talebearing tongues.”* (Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students*, 328)

3. **Redirect it**

- First, to Christ (repentance, forgiveness)
- Second, to the person they’ve gossiped about
- Third, to the people to whom they’ve gossiped

IV. CONCLUSION

- I pray that none of us would be able to leave this room this evening without recognizing the evils and destructiveness of gossip and its counterparts.
- Let us resolve together, as God’s people representing several churches in this county, to be men and women of God that are going to commit ourselves to be vigilant in our fight against this destructive sin, both in our refusal to speak gossip as well as our refusal to listen to gossip.
- I firmly believe that as we commit ourselves to doing so, that the Lord will greatly bless our congregations, our relationships, and our walk with Him as He continues to sanctify us individually and corporately, and as He continues to use our love for one another as a beacon to the onlooking world of the truth and transformation of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.