

How To Stop Gossip At Church

by Dan Kleinlein

Gossip is a sin **WE** have **ALL** participated in. We see and hear it everyday. Gossip magazines line the check-out registers at most stores. The *National Enquirer* and other gossip magazines have made a fortune sharing gossip about many celebrities. What they sell is not news. They are designed to bring down celebrities and make them look "normal" or "worse than us."

One definition of gossip is idle chatter or rumor. That definition may not seem to be very harmful, but it can cause a lot of damage. Paul warns in 1 Timothy 5:13 about idle young widows that wander about from house to house, and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. In Matthew 12:36, Christ is more direct to the Pharisees. *"But I say to you, that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the judgment day."* In verse 35, Christ states that out of a good man, with a good heart, comes good things, but out of an evil man comes evil things. Do not think that God accepts **SOME** idle chatter!

The more commonly accepted definition of gossip is malicious talk or rumor. Romans 1:29-31 gives us one of the more exhaustive lists of sins that we are to abstain from. In that list are included *maliciousness, envy, strife, deceit, whispering, backbiters*. All are part of gossiping. One of the task of elders in Titus 1:10-16 is to stop idle talkers and deceivers in the church. Not only for the soul of the member that is spreading the gossip but, also, for the influence and damage it can do the other members as well as the entire church. By listening to gossip, you are participating in sin and may receive its consequences. In 3 John 9-11, Diotrephes was damaging the whole church with the malicious words that he was speaking.

Everyone has heard the old saying, "If you cannot say anything nice, don't say anything at all!" In Proverbs 26:20-22, God puts it, *"Where there is no talebearer, strife ceases."* The best way to stop a rumor is to be silent with both your ears as well as your mouth.

Gossip reveals a lack of love for our fellow Christians. Can we honestly tear someone down and yet, say we love them, at the same time? Matt 18:15-18 tells us to go to our brother **ALONE**. Nowhere does it say to tell several before we have tried that first. Only if that does not work, we are then to take two or three witnesses. The purpose is to gain your brother, not tear him down. If you see sin, or believe you see sin in my life, or a fellow Christian, show your love and come to me, or that Christian.

1 John 3:14-15 states, *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother, abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."* He who loves his brother does not speak evil of him.

Our "job," as a Christian, is to save ourself and to help others save themselves. Keep in mind, though, that when we love what we do, it is no longer a "job."

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