

ought to concern us. A brother or sister who is burdened with struggles should be encouraged by our support (Galatians 6:1-2,5).

Speaking from the heart requires accountability (James 5:20; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 5:16).

Speaking from the heart requires intervention seeking to bring realization and repentance follows the “love test” of 1 Corinthians 13.

### Pruning the Grapevine

The devilish morsels of gossip are available to all to distribute. Gossip continues to do its destructive damage. Gossip continues savagely to slice and dice as it seeks self-promotion at the expense of victims. We can prune that evil grapevine. We are biblically bound to confront and remove that evil. How can we accomplish this?

- ◆ Honor the individual (Romans 12:10)
- ◆ Identify the source.
- ◆ Guard the confidential.
- ◆ Resist the temptation to pry.
- ◆ Strive to silence Gossip (Proverbs 26:20)
- ◆ Busy yourself serving (1 Timothy 5:13)

The more we work and are involved, the less time we have to listen to speaking that is careless, irresponsible, unloving and selfish.

A behavioral study concluded that when a group is speaking positively, that is a proactive maneuver that prevents gossip. But if the group is speaking negatively, the conversation devolves further. One of the amazing points from this study was that when a group is consumed with negativism, IF a person takes a strong positive position, then the negativism decreases and vanishes! This is a biblical principle.

“But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus at Damascus” (Acts 9:27).



## Lesson Four: The Gossip Grapevine

### Dalraida Church of Christ

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*“A gossiping tongue brings an angry face” (Proverbs 25:23).*

This lesson discusses a great evil—the gossip grapevine (Proverbs 18:8). “Dainty morsels” are greedily swallowed. These go into the “innermost parts of the body.” You cannot “unspeak” gossip. You cannot “unhear” slanderous innuendos. The Christian must have a “no-tolerance” policy toward gossip!

The etymology is interesting. Its origin is in the Old English word godsibb which was originally used to denote a “sponsor or godparent.” It denoted an association of trusting confidence and well-being. Eventually, any association with sincere trust and concern was removed and all that remained was the action of disclosing intimate details of a person. The word that was once used to refer to a close and intimate associate became a term used to describe the vilest of betrayals. So, the biblical Hebrew and Greek terms used to describe this treachery was translated with “gossip.” Evil had corrupted a godly term.

Biblically the English “gossip” refers to evil actions, attitudes, and intentions (1 Timothy 3:11). The “gossip” in the Greek is **διαβόλους**. *Diábolos* is the root of the English word, “Devil.”

*A Busybody/Tattler* is a nosey news monger (2 Thessalonians 3:11).

*A Whisperer* breaks confidence and reveals secrets about others (Proverbs 11:13).

*A Slanderer is the deadliest evil.*

There is an insatiable appetite for some secret insight into another's life. Gossip has fueled anger and bitterness. Gossip has ruined lives, marred reputations, and destroyed careers. Gossip plants a seed of suspicion in another's thoughts and there is no way the victim can ever erase that suspicion! "Marking" those who are contrary to God's commands is not the evil of gossip (Romans 16:17-18). Some attempt to use the Bible's warnings of gossip to evade the Bible's requirements of exclusivity. Why do you NEED to know the information you are pursuing?

### **The Rapidity of the Gossip Grapevine**

Grapevines exhibit a distinct annual growth cycle. The speed with which the grapevines grow is amazing. The Grapevine Gossip grows faster than any other form of human communication. Gossip travels at the speed of light—especially with today's social media!

Gossip's motivations have been identified by behavioralists. Their studies are enlightening in our age of technology. The gossip is a "socially, addicted, obsessed person." Why does gossip quickly spread?

- ◆ The human desire for social connection and belonging.
- ◆ The emotional charge it carries.

Today's social media platforms are yesterday's gossip grapevines! I am amazed that such are embraced so strongly and defended so passionately by Christians (Matthew 12:36-37). They bolster pride, seek and further rumors, and instantly spread news that cannot be validated. The Christian is controlled by these platforms (1 Corinthians 6:12; James 3:5).

Gossip cannot be controlled. Gossip's target cannot defend against the evil barbs and suspicions of character assassination. Gossip is "back-biting"—a lethal attack from the rear!

### **The Irreparable Damage**

Gossip is a great evil and is the product of a "depraved mind" (Romans 1:28-32). This depravity...

- ◆ Destroys our relationships
- ◆ Destroys our reputation (Proverbs 22:1)
- ◆ Inflicts deep, emotional pain (Job 5:21; Psalm 31:20; Jeremiah 18:18)

### **The Diabolical Motivation**

God did not place other people on this earth for our entertainment. God expects His People to show respect to ALL. Respect eliminates belittling, bitterness, selfish using, and any other abusive behavior.

Gossip is abuse. It is initiated by a spirit seeking to disrespect, belittle and treat savagely others. The base motive is that gossip seeks to tear down others and to build up Self! Gossip is motivated by...

- ◆ The love of darkness (John 3:19). Remember Proverbs 18:8 the next time someone wants to "share" a snack of "tasty morsels."
- ◆ Pride (3 John 9-10)

### **The Gossip is...**

Selfish. Gossip is a powerful tool for discrediting the competition. Satan has deceived many with this misdirected management ploy: "Lowering another's reputation will lift your reputation and advancement potential."

Proud. Gossip feeds pride because the Gossip is "in the know" about secret facts (Luke 18:9-14).

A discomforting query: Do you find it more comfortable to see what others do wrong than to admit what you do wrong? Do you feel the burden of the Lord's words? (Matthew 7:1-4, "Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!").

Guilty. Gossip is used to compromise another so the Gossiper does not feel guilty in being compromised. By announcing the sins of others, we gloss over our personal sins and that makes us feel the sorrow of sin less. Compared to a murderer or a fornicator, our anger and self-righteousness do not seem nearly as serious. In fact, we can congratulate ourselves! (Galatians 6:3-5)

Deceived. Some are so deluded they think their conversations are NEVER wrong (Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Corinthians 10:12).

### **Gossip Fails the Love Test**

Authentic Christianity requires confrontation. A brother or sister who is sinning