

Gossip -- Why?

Gossip -- Definition: 1. talk, rumor, or speculation about other people, esp. about their personal affairs. Related words: whispering, slander, dirt, rumor, hearsay, backbiting 2. someone who frequently participates in the telling of gossip. Related words: tattler, telltale, scandalmonger, blab, blabbermouth, busybody, snoop, meddler, prier. 3. any kind of light, frivolous talk; chatter. Related words: chatter, chitchat, prattle, jabber, tattle, babble.

Slander -- Definition: 1. a false statement or statements intended to injure someone's reputation or well-being, or the act of making such statements; defamation. Related Words: defamation, smear

Gossip is often described as anything we would say behind a person's back that we would not say if they were present in the conversation.

Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?

People will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that. (2 Timothy)

Jesus added "It is the thought-life that defiles you. For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God." (Mark 7)

God says, "I will not tolerate people who slander their neighbors. I will not endure conceit and pride." (Psalm 101)

The practice of gossip is extremely destructive to the process of recovery. Not only does it breed discouragement among the people being talked about, but it also keeps us from examining our own life as we should. Instead of taking inventory of our own life, we focus on the lives of others. As Christians we are encouraged to set things straight and to live in the

power of God. If we don't, our gossiping lifestyle will cause us to shrink away from our own recovery while also discouraging others.

"Do not spread slanderous gossip among your people. "Do not try to get ahead at the cost of your neighbor's life, for I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19)

To hide hatred is to be a liar; to slander is to be a fool. Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow! The words of the godly are like sterling silver; the heart of a fool is worthless. A gossip goes around revealing secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence. A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends. A gossip tells secrets, so don't hang around with someone who talks too much. Fire goes out for lack of fuel, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops. (Proverbs 10, 11, 16, 20,26)

Many of us have come to realize that we often communicate with others for selfish reasons. When we compliment people, we are looking for something in return rather than trying to build them up. When we criticize others, we are seeking to destroy rather than correct. As we take our moral inventory, we need to be aware of our tendency to use others for our own ends.

God commands us, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior." (Ephesians 4)

But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. (Colossians 3)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What is gossip?
2. When I find myself telling gossip to another person, why am I doing it?
3. What attitude do I often carry about the person I am gossiping about?
4. Where does gossip come from?
5. What other kinds of attitudes and behaviours tend to accompany gossip?
6. What effect does gossip have on relationships?
7. What effect does gossip have on the one who tells it?
8. What is God's view of gossip and the one who slanders?
9. Why are we invited, as Christians, to avoid gossip and slander?
10. What do we do when we are in a conversation that is bringing out gossip?