

THE EFFECTS OF GOSSIPING

Proverbs 18:6-8

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INTRODUCTION: An old proverb relates the story of a person who repeated gossip – some rumor about a neighbor. Soon, the whole community had heard the rumor. Later, the person who spread the gossip learned that the rumor was untrue. The person was very sorry and went to an elder in the community who had a reputation for great wisdom to seek advice. The elder told the person, “Go to your home and take a feather pillow outside. Rip it open and scatter the feathers, then return to me tomorrow.” The person did as the elder had instructed. The next day, the person visited the elder. The elder said, “Go and collect the feathers you scattered yesterday and bring them back to me.” The person went home and searched for the feathers, but the wind had carried them all away. The person returned to the elder and said, “I could find none of the feathers I scattered yesterday.” “You see,” said the elder, “it’s easy to scatter the feathers but impossible to get them back.” So it is with gossip; it doesn’t take much to spread hurtful words, but once you do, you can never completely undo the damage.

The dictionary defines the word *gossip* as a rumor or report of intimate nature. When applied to describe a person, the word means one who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about others. Gossip is one of those areas of the Christian life that is so important for us to work to restrain – because of the potential damage it causes – but so difficult for many of us to get under control. It is easy for us – within the Christian community – to gossip about others, often within our own community of faith, because we do so under the banner of “*sharing*”. We “*share*” with others about a friend’s “*problem*” because we want others to pray for them. Wink. Wink. The reality is, however, that it is just plain gossip. Gossip feels good. It feels good to know something about someone else and to share same with another. Yet, even under the best of motives, “*sharing*” easily turns into “*gossip*” and we do damage that we can’t completely undo.

Here are some of the most common effects of gossip:

1. It Damage Relationships. When we learn that a friend has passed on a rumor about us which is true or false, but confidential information – it always does damage to the relationship. In (Proverbs 16:28) we read: *“A perverse man stirs up dissension and a gossip separate close friends.”* Gossip damages the reputation of the person being gossiped about, and to a lesser degree, damages the reputation of the person who spreads it. Gossip can be entertaining when it passes along positive and interesting information but is dangerous when it demeans or endangers another person's character. Once you develop a reputation as a gossip within your company or social circle, those in positions of leadership will avoid giving you sensitive, confidential, and timely information, and you will be shunned by those in circles of power and influence.

2. Trust is destroyed. If you trust a friend as a colleague and tell him about a personal problem for some years. Some days later, you got a call from a mutual friend wanting to help with the problem. How will you feel about the colleague you told you the issue initially? Though you can still be friend but that would be the last time you ever trust him with personal problems that you did not want open broad. We find this warning in (**Proverbs 11:13**), *“A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.”*

3. Our spiritual life suffers. All sin separates us from intimate fellowship with God. Gossip is no different. God holds us accountable for our careless words. In the Gospel of Matthew we read (**Matt.12:36-37**): *“But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned.”*

4. Gossiping often spread lies. So often, our gossip consists of sharing unproven rumors about others – that turns out to be untrue. This is dangerous in a number of ways. First, the person the rumor is about has no opportunity to respond as the rumor spreads. Second, people often make incorrect judgments about people based on rumors that proves untrue. This does an untold amount of damage to the person the rumor is about. Third, we participate in spreading what amounts to lies. This does harm to our own integrity and reputation. We read in (Proverbs 15:4), *“The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.”*

Nothing is more deadly to relationships than spreading false rumors and gossip. The wise person keeps their tongue in check. The next time you are tempted to gossip, remember the proverb of the feathers – and how your words, once they do damage, may never be completely undone. Ask God to give you the wisdom and strength you need to resist the urge to gossip.

5. A rule to follow to avoid effects of gossiping:

A good rule to follow when tempted to repeat a juicy gossip might be to ask yourself a few pertinent questions:

- a) Do I know this to be a fact?
- b) Will I be willing to put it down in writing and sign my name to it?
- c) Will those to whom I tell it be made better by this knowledge? If we cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, let us refrain from the temptation to gossip and tell lies. If someone approaches with a bit of slander, ask him to submit to this test. If he or she back pedals, consider the source of that which you have heard false. And you have doused cold water on a fire of contention. (**Prov. 26: 20-22**)

CONCLUSION: People gossip about others because they think that having information and passing along hot news gives them some sort of power only known to insiders. Little do they realize that gossipers have no class. Let us show some class as Children of God. Don't gossip. (2 Cor. 5:10). We must all appear be the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it is good or bad.

Thanks and God bless you all in Jesus name. Amen