



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

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Ungodly Communication: Gossip and Discord

In our last article we focused on healthy communication principles. In this article, we will focus on

Gossip and Discord.

1. We are called to be pure from the practice of gossip.

Our communication can serve to build up others or tear them down. Maintaining confidentiality is not an option according to Scripture. Perhaps the most deadly kind of ungodly communication is gossip. Just because you know something about someone does not give you the right to share that information even if you know it to be true. The motivation to gossip and to share the secrets of others does not come from the Holy Spirit but rather from the carnal nature of man with the desire to elevate self by exposing the difficulties of others.

Part of tale-bearing or gossip is the failure to understand either the person or situation being gossiped about or the consequences that gossiping may cause. The phrase “*that his heart may discover itself*” indicates that a fool, having no desire to understand others but rather finds satisfaction in spreading information inappropriately, will ultimately look foolish and his or her heart’s motives will be discovered. We are also reminded that out of a pure fountain one cannot draw both sweet and bitter water. Therefore, if we claim to be living as Christ would have us to, there can be no gossip in our communication.

Proverbs 11:13, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.”

Proverbs 18:2 “A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.”

James 3:11-12, “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”

2. Gossip leads to deep wounds.

The old adage, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me,” is false. Words do hurt and they do so terribly with great and lasting consequences. Scripture indicates that words can cause wounds to the very core of who we are. In fact, the phrase “words of a talebearer” means that they may appear to be dainty at first blush but are, in fact, shrouded in deceit and poison which would be discerned at the heart level. The Bible says they “go down into the innermost parts of the belly” which means the very depths of the soul and being of an individual. The wounds

suffered through gossip are not easily healed and they can lead to great discouragement and emotional damage. A sincere apology is a start but as the scattered feathers of a pillow cannot be retrieved, neither can the words of gossip.

Proverbs 18:8, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

3. Continued gossip can lead to discord, a thing God hates.

How does continued gossip lead to discord? Besides being deeply hurtful, gossip creates discord in the brotherhood through the promotion of falsehoods and the comparison among brethren. The Bible calls it evil surmisings, back-biting, and whispering. Gossip leads to discontent and a deterioration of respect and trust. This distrust serves to divide rather than unite and the fabric of brotherhood is compromised. It can scarcely be stressed enough how much God hates discord and those things that create it.

The Bible is very clear that whisperings and falsehoods separate even the best of friends. However, even accurate information shared in the spirit of gossip is as divisive as inaccuracies and should not be a part of our communication.

Proverbs 6:16-19, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

Proverbs 12:18, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health."

Proverbs 16:28, "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends."

4. We are called to love our neighbor as ourself.

The practice of gossip violates one of the core principles of Scripture. God is love and He calls us to love one another in like manner. As much as we dislike hearing rumors and gossip about us so ought we also have an abhorrence and distaste for gossip about others. Gossipers cannot be trusted and a key element of love is trust and respect. Where the love of God reigns among His children, gossip should not be present nor once be named among them.

Mark 12:31, "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Romans 13:10, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

5. Gossip can end with you!

So, what is the good news of this subject? We do not have to participate in gossip. The Bible makes it clear that all idle and unnecessary words will require accountability. That fact alone should cause us to monitor our communications very carefully. Another area in which to exercise caution is curiosity. In Acts 17:21 we read about the Athenians and how they spent their time in little else except *“to tell or to hear of some new thing.”* We are naturally curious which can quickly take us in a wrong, ungodly direction. Gossip is also less likely when we keep our words few and think before we speak. The Bible says it this way, *“Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.” Ecclesiastes 5:2.*

Titus 3:2, “To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.”

Proverbs 26:20-21, “He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he. The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.”

Matthew 12:36, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

Proverbs 17:27-28 “He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.”

Perhaps one final area of consideration in ungodly communication is the “silent treatment.” Even though we are reminded in God’s Word to weigh our words and to make them as few as possible, deliberately not speaking sends a message louder than words many times. Communication includes actions and behaviors as well as the spoken or printed word. Being silent sends a message of control that devalues others. Even though the words aren’t spoken, the message says, “You are not worth speaking to!” or “I have better things to do than talk to you!” Inappropriate, deliberate silence is as deeply hurtful as the spoken word and perhaps more so because, in the absence of real words, imagined ones may be even worse. We tend to tell ourselves stories according to the body language of others and those stories, though likely not completely factual, feel very real and cause us to react in ways that further deteriorate communication and destroy relationships.

Next month, we will look at scenarios where we find basic principles of conflict resolution.



For several years, ACCFS has offered Mentor Training programs to assist churches and individuals to learn the principles of mentoring. Mentoring is a key component of healthy church relationships and can provide accountability, instruction, and encouragement as we learn from each other as members of the Body of Christ

through “*speaking the truth in love*” Eph. 4:15. Several resources to assist in the mentoring process are available on our website at www.accounseling.org/mentoring.