

Gossip - Cont.

der exemption clause or husband-wife gossip confidentiality privilege anywhere in the Scriptures. God will punish those who scheme evil in secret (Ps. 64:5-7).

The Enemy License

"But he did me wrong." Some brethren think the rules concerning gossip don't apply to their enemies. No matter what someone has done to you Jehovah commands you to "repay no one evil for evil . . . but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17, 21; 1 Thess. 5:15). Though others may speak evil of you, you are "to speak evil of no one" (Tit. 3:2). God has not given you a license to slander your enemies. "But you don't understand what he did to me!" Jesus understands. Follow his example, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return" (1 Pet. 2:23). This same one who was crucified by his enemies says, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45).

The Counselor Privilege

"I was just seeking counsel." The Scriptures teach that the wise man will seek counsel. "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14; 24:6; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20). It is a blessing to be able to go to a respected brother for advice about a difficult situation. But be extremely careful not to turn your counseling session into a gossip session. Don't be guilty of people bashing, evil surmising and revealing secrets

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under the cloak of "seeking counsel."

Conclusion

Are you guilty of using any of these excuses to justify your gossip? If so, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts" (Luke 16:15; 10:29). Repent and refuse to participate in any form of gossip. "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

- Kevin Maxey -

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Guest Article: I Don't Mean to Gossip, But...

Have you ever said this? You know you shouldn't gossip, but you make a quick disclaimer and do it anyway. Though God clearly condemns the talebearer (Lev. 19:16), the busybody (2 Thess. 3:11), the backbiter (Rom. 1:30), the slanderer (Prov. 10:18), the whisperer (2 Cor. 12: 20), the evil surmiser (1 Tim. 6:4), the secret revealer (Prov. 20:19), and the gossip (1 Tim. 5:13), do you still try to figure out a way to justify your piercing arrows of verbal poison? You may quickly agree that gossip is a sin, but are you guilty of redefining terms, making excuses and calling your evil words good (cf. Isa. 5:20)? Here are eight common reasons people use to falsely justify gossip.

The Blatant Denial

"I don't mean to gossip, but. . ." Putting a disclaimer in front of something sinful does not make it acceptable. The thief is not exempt from guilt just by saying, "I don't mean to steal, but. . ." The murderer is not absolved of blame by explaining, "I don't mean to kill, but. . ." Saying, "I don't mean to gossip, but. . ." does not pardon you from the sin you are about to commit. Slanderers make this excuse because they know they are "saying things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13). God charged Israel with slandering him, but they denied it. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against you?'" (Mal. 3:13-15). Though the Israelites denied their sinful speech, God still held them accountable. Denial does not change the truth.

The Secret Pact

"Promise not to tell anyone. . . . Can you keep a secret?" Just because something sinful

is kept secret does not make it right. God condemns "whisperers" (Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:20). Do not underestimate the damage of the cowardly whisperer, for a "whisperer separates the best of friends" (Prov. 16:28). Saying, "You didn't hear this from me" does not magically free you from accountability. If you don't want people to know you said it, why are you saying it in the first place? The slanderer will pull you off into a corner and check to make sure no one else is around before he sows his discord. The whisperer does his work in secret because he knows he is doing something shameful and wrong (John 3:19-20). No human whisper is so low that God cannot hear (Ps. 90:8; Jer. 23:23-24).

The Truth Excuse

"But what I am saying is true. . ." The sin of gossip is not isolated to the spreading of misinformation. While gossip can refer to spreading lies and rumors, it also includes circulating "intimate or private . . . facts" (American Heritage Dictionary 569). Just because the juicy tidbit you wish to reveal is true does not mean it is fair game for public conversation. Some love to dig up the past and say, "Did you know that she used to . . ?" Paul told the brethren at Corinth not to dwell on the past sins of the restored brother. "This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that on the contrary, you ought to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow" (2 Cor. 2:6-7). Even if the information is true there is no justification for using it to tear someone down, cast evil suspicion, or revel in one's personal problems. Some matters, even if true, are to be kept private. "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone" (Matt.

18:15). Don't go spread it to the church. Deal with it privately.

The Praise Diversion

"He's a nice guy, but did you know. . . ." Do you try to offset your gossip by throwing in some nice compliment to go along with it? "I can't stand her, but she sure is a good cook." "He is an excellent Bible student, but did you hear about the problems he's having with his wife?" Do not think that throwing in a few words of flattery will diffuse your arrows of slander. How many times have you seen people just tear someone to shreds and then to ease their conscience they tack on one good comment at the end, as if that excuses their sharp tongue. The damage has been done. "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore, do not associate with one who flatters with his lips" (Prov. 20:19). "They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips" (Ps. 12:2-3). You can't sugarcoat the poison of gossip with empty praise.

The Partner-in-Crime

"I only gossip with my best friend." Some contend, "Now, I don't share these things with everyone. I only talk this way with my mother." When does practicing sin become acceptable if you agree to do it with only one person? "Now wait a minute, I know stealing is wrong, but I only do it with my husband. I don't do it with anyone else!" Agreeing to practice evil with a secret partner does not make it right; it makes it a conspiracy. There is no mother-daughter slan-