

ARE YOU SERIOUS

Stop It: Part 2

What happens when gossip is about me?

November 19, 2023

INTRO.: If you are new here this morning, I want to welcome you here. It is a privilege to worship together! My name is Pastor Dawes and I serve as one of the pastors at First Baptist. We might as well begin with dealing with the elephant in the room. A week ago, Saturday, I had an accident that landed me in the ER, and I had surgery on my hand. I did tell the doctor as they were bandaging me up, "I guess this ruins my boxing career." This is why I am sitting on a stool with my arm in a sling. We are winding up our series on forgiveness, **ARE YOU SERIOUS** with the message this morning and next Sunday. The last three messages we have been looking at the *FRUITS OF UNFORGIVENESS*. One of the possible fruits of unforgiveness is gossip which is incredibly destructive and painful. Most of us have heard this said, "*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.*" Nothing could be further from the truth. Our first message on gossip concentrated on:

THE WARNINGS IN SCRIPTURE

THE WHAT IT IS

THE WHAT IT IS NOT

THE WHY WE DO IT

The second message on gossip we looked at how to stop gossip from others and from ourselves. I need to be willing to live like a follower of the Lord Jesus, expose gossip for what it is when it comes to me, and admit and repent of gossip when I am the one guilty of gossiping.

This morning we want to look at how do I deal with gossip when it is about me? What should I do and what shouldn't I do? This is not a complete list, but I am going to share 5 things to do and 3 things I would say do not do.

DO:

***PRAY**

-For God to work

Do you and I believe God can do anything? In Genesis 15 the Word of the Lord came to Abram (later to be called Abraham) in a vision to tell him that he would have a son. Two chapters later (Genesis 17) the Lord appears to Abraham to tell him that his wife, Sarah, shall have a son. Then, in the very next chapter, three visitors (angels) appear to Abraham to tell him that in a year Sarah shall have a son. Sarah is in the tent nearby overhearing this conversation and she laughs to herself.

Genesis 18:13–14 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

As we approach the Christmas season, we are reminded of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary to tell her she was going to have a Son, the Lord Jesus. Mary asks a very logical question, "How can this be since I am a virgin?" Gabriel's response:

Luke 1:35–37 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God."

Do you believe we serve that same God today? Last weekend two of our missionary families serving with Word of Life Canada (Kelley's and Ward's), held a big evangelistic outreach for young people. They were anticipating 600 and over 750 showed up. Over 40 responded to the gospel!

Last month we held our Fall Fest outreach event with all kinds of things happening as well as giving away Bibles, tracts, and devotional materials. There were hundreds here.

Do you believe God is at work? Many of you are living and sharing your faith at school, your work, neighborhood, and family. Do you believe God is at work? We need to pray for God to work and:

- For wisdom

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

None of us has the necessary wisdom in and of ourselves. We all need the insight of God and His guidance.

- For my heart attitude

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Psalm 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

- For those gossiping

Matthew 5:43–44 (NKJV) — **43** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44** But I say to you, 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,

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
These are all present tense participles!

We need to pray and we need to:

***EXAMINE**

Even though gossip is wrong we need to be willing to examine what it said to see if there is any truth in it. Maybe there's something that we can learn and something that we can correct. The following verses are our prayer emphasis this morning and a prayer that we could pray every day.

Psalm 139:23–24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. **24** See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

We need to pray, examine our heart and:

***GO**

If at all possible (sometimes we don't know the source) we should go and approach the person directly. Ask God for wisdom before going and you may want to seek godly before going. You can ask for counsel in general terms and we should remember to keep the circle small. Gossip sometimes begins in the form of a prayer request. We need to be careful and watch our attitude, going in humility because we are far from perfect and will need to have others approach us when we fail.

Matthew 5:23–24 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 18:15–16 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. **16** But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

Galatians 6:1–2 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

We need to pray, examine our heart, go and:

***TRUST**

We get concerned about our reputation but can God can take care of that? We should desire to have a good reputation but sometimes things are beyond our control. We need to be reminded that things are NEVER beyond the control of God!

Proverbs 3:5–6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; **6** in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Romans 8:28–29 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. **29** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

We need to pray, examine our heart, go, trust God with our reputation and circumstances and:

***LOVE**

We are told to even love our enemies! Anybody can love those who love them but through Jesus Christ we can even love those who mistreat us, even those who mistreat us on purpose!

Romans 12:9–10 (NIV84) — **9** Love must be sincere. *Hate* what is evil; *cling* to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. *Honor* one another above yourselves.

These are also all present tense participles!

So, when being gossiped about **DO**:

***PRAY** (for God to work, wisdom, my heart attitude, those who are gossiping)

***EXAMINE** (ask God to show me where I need to change)

***GO** (if possible)

***TRUST** (trust God with my reputation and the circumstances)

***LOVE** (we are instructed to love even our enemies)

DO NOT:

***SEEK REVENGE**

Revenge NEVER accomplishes what we hope it will. When seeking revenge, I want that person or persons punished for what they said. They gossiped about me so I'm going to gossip about them.

Having trouble sleeping? Try forgiving someone.

One-third of Americans say they lie awake at least a few nights a week. You can try meditation or medication, but according to a study published in the *Journal of Psychology and Health*, there's another practice you could consider instead: forgiveness.

Researchers asked 1,423 American adults to rate themselves on how likely they were to forgive themselves for the things they did wrong and forgive others for hurting them. They also answered questions about how they had slept in the past 30 days.

The results suggest people who were more forgiving were more likely to sleep better and for longer, and, in turn, have better physical health. Forgiveness may help individuals leave the day's regrets and offenses in the past and promote sound sleep. Otherwise, as many troubled sleepers have experienced, we might have too much on our minds to get any rest.

People who don't forgive, researchers explain, tend to linger on unpleasant thoughts and feelings, such as anger, blame, and regret. This can involve painful rumination—repetitive thoughts about distress. That resentment or bitterness could be detracting from sleep quality and well-being, the study suggests.

Source: Sophie McMullen, "Having trouble sleeping? Try forgiving someone," *The Washington Post* (10-21-19)

Romans 12:18–19 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

***BECOME ISOLATED**

With things being said about us it becomes easy to retreat back into isolation from people, but we NEED one another!! It has been found that loneliness can shave years off our lives.

Hebrews 10:23–25 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. **25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The small groups we have are essential in our lives. We need one another for encouragement, comfort, and to press on in life. It does not come without risk, but I need to tell you it is worth the risk. Recently, I have been reminded of the value of these groups for people going through health challenges, loss of a loved one, and other trials: men's groups, women's groups, home groups, Sunday Bible School, ministry groups, and so on.

***BECOME SPIRITUALLY PARALYZED**

When there is gossip out there it is not only easy to isolate ourselves but also to become spiritually paralyzed and become ineffective for the Lord. This is where Satan would want us to be, putting ourselves on the shelf. Paul reminds us of what God is doing.

Philippians 1:3–6 (NIV84) — **3** I thank my God every time I remember you. **4** In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, **6** being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

God will never abandon His children and He is not done with you or me yet. He will use even the most difficult circumstances for His glory and our good. Don't allow Satan to have the victory in your life.

DO NOT:

***Seek revenge**

***Become isolated**

***Become spiritually paralyzed**

SO WHAT???

When we began this series, I asked how many had ever been affected by gossip. Let me see if that number has changed. Raise your hand if you have been affected by gossip.

Matthew Mitchell in his book on gossip (*Resisting Gossip*) says, "You will be gossiped about. If it has not happened yet, get ready, because someday you will find yourself in the crosshairs of the sin of gossip."

Are you and I going to be part of the problem or part of the solution?

***Admit we can all be attracted to gossip**

***Am I willing to pray these Scriptures?**

Psalm 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Psalm 139:23–24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. **24** See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

***Am I willing to lovingly confront gossip?**

***Am I willing to be held accountable for what I say about people to others?**

***Memorize Romans 12:9-21**

Going Deeper: What instruction is there in Romans 12:9-21 to help provide direction when others gossip about me? Why is it important to seek God first when faced with gossip? How do the following verses help me? James 1:2-5; Proverbs 4:18-27; Proverbs 3:1-6; Psalm 139:23-24; and Philippians 4:4-9