

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

**Study Series: The Deadly Sin of Gossip
Part 2: How to Eliminate Gossip**

**Wednesday, August 28, 2024
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The danger of gossip is that many people who engage in it don't really think they are doing something seriously bad and hurtful. This is partly because they don't really know what gossip is or the danger of it. In their mind, they are doing something that feels good to them (their flesh) and is harmless. Some may even think they are doing someone a favor. In order to stop gossip, we must learn to identify it.

How to know you are engaging in gossip

- Gossip is intentionally negative or derogatory. The gossiper frames the information in a way that makes the third person look bad or worse than they are. Gossip's goal is to tarnish reputation.
- Gossip contains unverified information: Gossip engages in vague or ambiguous language that lacks specific details. Gossip often centers around unverified information or rumors about someone's personal life or actions. Gossipers don't verify their sources.
- There is discomfort or an unwillingness to have the conversation in front of the person being discussed.
- Gossip contains a request for secrecy or a warning not to repeat what is being said.

Why Do People Gossip?

- Gossip is very easy to do – it's just talking which we do all the time.
- Gossip is very appealing: people enjoy talking about others. *Proverbs 18:8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.*
- Gossip is one of the easiest ways to hurt other people.

How to Eliminate Gossip

Gossip is very dangerous; it destroys the unity of the church and hinders the flow of the Holy Spirit, and hence, the blessing of God. If we allow gossip to run rampant, we all lose. Hence, we all have roles to play in eliminating gossip from our church. To eliminate gossip all of us must do two things: 1) Stop gossiping and, 2) Stop the gossipers.

How to Stop Gossiping

1. Study How the Bible Describes a Gossip: Identifying what is and isn't gossip can be difficult. As mentioned, most people participate in gossip because they do not understand what gossip is, its danger, and how God feels about it. When you have a working definition of gossip, it removes the mystery. By being ignorant, you give a place to the enemy and risk being on the wrong side of God by doing what He hates.

Hosea 4:6 "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...."

2. Keep Quiet: One way to avoid gossip is to learn to keep quiet. That is why the Bible tells us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. One of the names given to gossipers is busybodies. People who learn to bridle their tongues are unlikely to fall for the sin of gossip.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 *"and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you,"*

James 1:26 *"Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless." (NIV)*

James 3:2 *"For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." (NKJV)*

1 Peter 3:10 *"For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. (NKJV)*

3. Practice praying for people: While gossip is a way to express our dislike for people, prayer is a way to express our love for them. As believers, we are commanded to love and pray for one another (James 5:16). In fact, loving one another is the debt we owe each other (Romans 13:8). When we pray for people, we develop a heart of love for them, which makes it difficult to gossip about them.

How to Stop the Gossiper

1. Refuse to engage or redirect the Conversation: This means, at the minimum, don't be a chameleon by playing along. If you can't confront, don't play along. This is useful in situations where the gossiper is someone you respect. Do their heart and your church a favor by refusing to engage. Another way to refuse engagement is to find ways to redirect the conversation. When you're in a conversation turning into gossip or speaking evil about another person who's not present, be confident enough to change the topic matter altogether. When you entertain gossip under the banner of supporting a fellow member, you become a party to the sin and enter the slaughterhouse alongside them.

2. Call It Out: If you're in a conversation with someone and it begins to move toward gossip about someone else, be willing to stop the conversation and name it for what it really is: "This is gossip, and I don't think it honors God." Of course, it can get awkward, but the point gets communicated.

3. Tell the person they need to go to the person they are gossiping about, or you will: This is the best response to a gossiper. Of course, you will not be winning any popularity contests for this approach, but you will be pleasing Christ and doing the right thing. Yes, it is hard, but doing the right thing will be easy.

What to do When the Gossip is About You

Many (perhaps all) of us will be victims of gossip at some point in our lives. It is important to know how to respond as a child of God if you ever find yourself in this situation. Before we talk about what to do, let's first talk about what you should not do:

- i. The first thing is to refrain from doing anything rash like getting into an ugly fight, shouting match etc. This is likely going to make things worse and increase the gossip.
- ii. Don't leave the church out of anger – leaving might be a way to let the enemy win by getting you out of the place God planted you in which is your place of blessing.
- iii. Be calm – staying calm is one of the ways you can dispel an untrue rumor.

1. If you know the source, confront the person in a godly way: Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

2. If you don't know the source ignore it: Ignore the gossip as best you can and continue with your usual routine. Remember that gossip says more about the other person than it does about you. Every rumor has a lifetime. Every gossip fades away just like the gossip spreaders. You don't have to spend your life with them. You have a life. So, give it time; they will find something else and something. Remember that the gossiper is on the wrong side of God, and you are on the right side. God will always defend and vindicate the victims of gossip.