

WHAT CONSTITUTES GOSSIP?

By Keith Greer

“A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.” {Proverbs 18:6-8} Nothing hinders and hurts the work of a local church more than GOSSIP. What is it that constitutes, and can clearly be labeled as, gossip? Gossip is telling/listening to an evil report about another person:

For entertainment. *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” {Galatians 6:1,2}* When one gives or listens to an evil report simply for the sake of enjoying another person's sins, it is gossip. Paul told the Romans to *“Weep with them that weep and rejoice with those who rejoice,” {Romans 12:15}*. When I enjoy listening to and telling about the faults of others, instead of praying for them and seeking their restoration, I am gossiping and listening to gossip!

To build up one's ego. *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” {Philippians 2:3-5}* Some people seem to become absolutely giddy over the mistakes of others. I've heard some make comments such as, “I sure hope they suffer and nobody feels sorry for them.” How can such people claim to truly love their brethren, yet be happy when they commit sin? One who tears down another in hope of making himself look good has a serious problem with God!

Because of envy. *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” {Ephesians 4:31,32}* How does God's love dwell within a person whose heart fills with envy when he hears about another Christian's good fortune? Envy is a work of the flesh and a destroyer of the soul {Galatians 5:21}.

For revenge. *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” {Romans 12:19-21}* God's faithful child would never seek to get even with those who sin against him. We need to remember the example Jesus set before those who were murdering Him {1 Peter 2:21-23}.

To alienate friends. *“An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.” {Proverbs 16:27,28}* Some gossip in an effort to break up friendships among others. They do this because of personal vengeance and envy. Such conduct will cost them their souls on Judgment Day.

Just to have something to say. *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” {Colossians 4:6}* Truth be known, some people just love to talk – about others! Is it necessary to tell everything we know? Do we have to hurt others needlessly in order to have input to the discussion?

Truthfully speaking, the spirit of Christ will eliminate hurtful gossip! How? Each Christian who loves his brethren, like Christ loves us, will never be guilty of talking about them. Brethren, can you say you truly love your brother by how you speak about them? ***