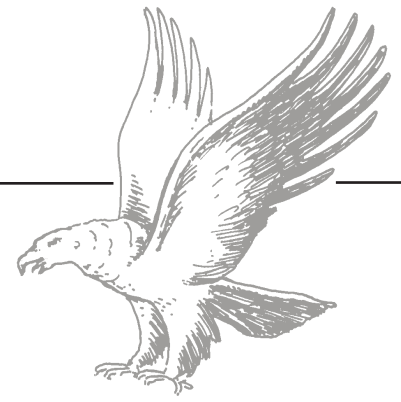


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



March 6, 2016

Gossip

Circulating dirt about others may provide a momentary thrill, but the long-term effects are destructive for all involved. Gossip is a serious sin, not an innocent pastime.

“A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Prov. 11:13).

“Things which are not fitting . . . whisperers, backbiters” (Rom. 1:28-30).

“Love . . . does not rejoice in iniquity” (1 Cor. 13:6).



Our word “gossip” comes from an Old English word *godsibb*, meaning “God relative (or sibling).” The original word described a close friend, someone with whom we can share intimate secrets. Over time, the meaning of the word shifted from *the friend* (noun) to *the talking* (verb) that friends engage in; hence, our modern definition of gossip.

The Bible uses a number of expressions that equate to our concept of gossip. “Talebearer” describes the activity of spreading unflattering information about others, while “whisperer,” and “backbiter” emphasize the secretive nature of this talk. Whichever word we prefer to use, we’re describing a well-known behavior: The spreading of defamatory details about someone behind their back. Whether those details

are true or false is irrelevant. It is the act of repeating this information about someone without their knowledge that makes gossip so despicable.

The universality of gossip speaks to the influence of pride on the human race. It is an easy way of promoting ourselves as superior to others. The more dirt we can dig up on others, the better we look—or so we think.

The Bible condemns gossip in the strongest language. If you’ve ever been the victim of gossip, you know why. It’s terribly destructive. The information being circulated is almost always distorted, exaggerated, or filtered, making the victim look worse than he really is. By definition gossip is a form of injustice; it condemns someone as guilty based on flimsy evidence, without the victim having an opportunity to rebut the charges against him. It is a cancer that ravages the well-being of any social circle in which it is found.

How should we deal with gossip? For starters, don’t do it! If we are privy to scurrilous information about someone, we have two options: we can con-

front the perpetrator directly, privately and with a view to resolving the problem with a minimum of fallout; or, if it’s someone with whom we do not have a relationship, just ignore the matter. We know so little of the facts involved that we would only make matters worse—and it’s none of our business anyway.

One more thing: For gossip to flourish, two parties must be involved: someone to tell the gossip, and someone to listen. If someone comes to us with a juicy tidbit on a third party, we should decline to hear it. The one who gossips to us about others, will gossip to others about us. He has demonstrated that he is not above spreading ugly details of others’ lives, and someday it may be details of *our* life that he is spreading. That person is not our friend. If more of us would politely but firmly refuse to listen to the whisperings of the talebearer, gossip would lose its appeal.

“Love does not rejoice in evil”—which is another way of saying, if we love our fellow man, we will not engage in gossip. Integrity demands that we rise above this shameful behavior.

— David King