

### **Distinguishing Between Sharing and Gossiping**

**I. If we are going to develop in effective communication we need to learn the danger of being careless with our words when talking about other people. Carelessness in our words can lead to speaking lies about someone unintentionally and sometimes intentionally. (Proverbs 12:22, 15:7, 28)**

- A. When you do not speak the truth you tend to give *misinformation*- presenting information about something or someone that is partially the truth or information that is completely wrong.
- B. When you do not speak the truth you tend to give *misrepresentations*- presenting information about something or someone it as if it were true; not presenting them properly, carefully or truthfully.
- C. When you do not speak the truth you tend to give *exaggerations*- presenting information about something or someone by describing something larger, better, or worse than it really is.
- D. When you do not speak the truth you tend to make *allegations*- making unfounded assertions; implying something is fact without proof.

**(Adapted from the book Friendly Fire by Jim Morris)**

**II. Before we begin to have a discussion about a person there are some factors that need be considered. (Proverbs 10:14, 19, 11:13)**

- A. We need to guard our *tongues* so that we do not bring unnecessary trouble to our lives as a result of the words spoken about another person that should not have been said from the beginning. (Proverbs 21:23, 18:6-7)
- B. We need to make sure that we are communicating what is *appropriate* when speaking about another person. (Proverbs 10:32)
- C. We need to make sure that we are communicating what is *helpful* not *hurtful* when speaking about another person. (Proverbs 16:24)

D. In essence, we need to restrain ourselves from saying too much about a person and from speaking mess or garbage about a person. (Proverbs 12:23)

**III. Before we begin to have a discussion about someone, we need to determine if we are about to gossip. (Proverbs 20:19, 10:18, 16:28, 26:20-22)**

- A. Gossip is when information about another individual or set of individuals is shared that is supposed to be kept confidential. (Proverbs 20:19)
- B. Gossip is when negative or confidential information about another individual or set of individuals whether true or false is shared about them, not to them, with the intent to put down, criticize, embarrass, ruin reputations, or bring unwarranted/ unproven accusations against the person. (Proverbs 10:18)
- C. Gossip is when negative or confidential information about another individual or set of individuals whether true or false is shared about them, not to them, with the intent to bring unwarranted division between people. (Proverbs 16:28)
- D. Gossip is when negative or confidential information about another individual or set of individuals whether true or false is shared about them, not to them, with intent to create mess and conflict between people. (Proverbs 26:20-22)

**IV. It is not considered gossip when negative or confidential information that is proven to be true is shared with the proper leadership in order for that leadership to do what is right as prescribed by God in His Word to bring order, peace, reconciliation, church discipline or whatever is needed to the Glory of God, the good of the individual(s) involved and the good of the church.**

- A. Sharing the faults of others is permitted when proven credible facts/ truth, not perceptions or preferences whether negative or confidential about another individual or set of individuals is reported to leadership in relation to unresolved disunity among the brethren within the congregation so that leadership can address it biblically. (Philippians 4:2-3)
- B. Sharing the faults of others is permitted when proven credible facts/truth, not perceptions or preferences, whether negative or confidential about another individual or a set of individuals is reported to leadership in relation to unrepentant sexual immorality within the congregation so that leadership can address it biblically. (1Corinthians 5:1-3)

- C. Sharing the faults of others is permitted when proven credible facts/truth not perceptions or preferences, whether negative or confidential about another individual or a set of individuals is reported to **leadership** in relation to **division being spread** among the congregation so that leadership can address it biblically. (1Corinthians 1:10-11)
  
- D. Sharing the faults others is permitted when proven credible facts/truth not perceptions or preferences, whether negative or confidential about another individual or a set of individuals is reported to **leadership** in relation to **unrepentant sin** so that leadership can address it biblically. (Matthew 18:15-17)
  
- V. What are some ways I can talk to someone about my problem with someone else, without gossiping or condemning the person with whom I have a problem?**
  - A. Share your concerns with wise counsel without being **malicious** towards the person with whom you have the problem. (1Peter 3:8-12)
  
  - B. Share your concerns with wise counsel without **vilifying** the person with whom you have a problem but seeking to gain knowledge in the matter. (Proverbs 11:9)
  
  - C. Share your concerns with wise counsel without making yourself the **hero** or the **victim** in the matter knowing that there is always two sides to every story. (Proverbs 18:17, 10:32)
  
  - D. Share your concerns with wise counsel with the intent of learning how to be at **peace** with others. (Romans 12:17-18)
  
  - E. Share your concerns with wise counsel with the intent of learning what you can do to **change yourself** within your role and responsibility, instead of sharing your concerns with the intent of trying to figure out what you can do to fix or change the other person. (Matthew 7:1-5)

**What Should We Do When Al talks negatively to Betty about Carl?  
(See Ephesians 4:29)**

**A. If You are Al You Should:**

1. Confess your unloving attitude and action to God as sin. Approach Carl about Carl's fault at the appropriate time (See 1 John 1:9 and Proverbs 27:6).
2. At the appropriate time acknowledge your wrong to Betty for having spoken of Carl's fault—and even share that you have spoken to Carl about it without giving the details of the conversation (See James 5:16).

**B. If You are Betty You Should:**

1. At the appropriate time encourage Al to speak to Carl while you give Carl the benefit of the doubt (See Ephesians 4:15 and 1 Corinthians 13:7).
2. Not mention the conversation to Carl because in so doing you will be talking about Al behind Al's back and exposing Al's sin at the same time (See Proverbs 17:9).
3. Give Al a time frame by which he should speak with Carl and hold him accountable to do it (See Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:24 and Galatians 6:1-2).

**C. If You are Carl You Should:**

1. Speak with Al to resolve the matter (See Matthew 5:23-24).
2. As much as it depends on you seek peace with Al (See Romans 12:18).
3. Bring in others into the matter if it cannot be resolved with you and Al (See Matthew 18:15-21 and Proverbs 17:9).

### **III. The Process to Practice: How does this Apply in a Counseling Situation?**

**(See Proverbs 18:15, 17, Luke 17:3-4, Proverbs 20:5, Galatians 6:1-2.)**

- A. Remember to counsel the person who is there not the person who is not there. That is, your counsel should be directed at helping the person who is in your presence not the person who hurt him. You do not have all the details because the other person is not there (See Proverbs 18:15, 17 and Ephesians 4:29).
- B. Stop the counselee from talking about or exposing the character flaws of the person that hurt them because that person is not there to defend their point of view (See Luke 17:3-4 and Proverbs 18:17).
- C. Ask the counselee if they have discussed this issue with the person that has hurt them (See Matthew 18:15-17 and Proverbs 27:6).
- D. Help the counselee determine if the hurt was based on a personal preference issue, expectation issue or clear sin issue that has taken place against them by the other person (See Proverbs 20:5).
- E. If it is determined that the counselee is dealing with a personal preference issue or expectation issue help them to take responsibility for their own feelings, desires, expectations, disappointments in the matter. Help them to identify how they are reacting in thoughts, words, actions, or relationship patterns to the one that has hurt them. Help the counselee to identify, confess and repent of all unloving, thoughts, words, and actions in response to the hurt (See Proverbs 20:5, Proverbs 28:13, and Galatians 6:1-2).
- F. If it is determined that the counselee is dealing with a clear sin issue help them to take responsibility for their own feelings, desires, expectations, disappointments in the matter. Help the counselee to identify how he is reacting in thoughts, words, actions, or relationship patterns to the one that has sinned against him. Help the counselee to identify, confess and repent of all unloving, thoughts, words, and actions in response to the hurt (See Proverbs 20:5, Proverbs 28:13, and Galatians 6:1-2).

- G. In either case help the counselee focus on thanking God for the grief, pain, and disappointment God has allowed knowing God will use it to build him up (See James 1:1-8, 1Thessalonians 5:18, and Romans 5:1-5).
  
- H. Help the counselee identify how he consistently relates to those with whom he is having the most difficulty. Help him identify his loving and unloving patterns of relating (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
  
- I. If it is determined that the counselee is dealing with a personal preference issue or expectation issue instruct the counselee to go to that person and share their grief as a result of the hurt ,if sharing will be helpful and not an avenue for manipulation (See Ephesians 4:29).
  
- J. If it is determined that the counselee is dealing with a clear sin:
  - 1. The counselee must be instructed to confront the person about clear sin with the intent to restore them not with the intent to destroy them (See Luke 17:3-4, Galatians 6:1-2, Proverbs 27:6a, and 1Thessalonians 5:15).
  
  - 2. The counselor must explain to the counselee that:
    - A. If the person confesses and repents of the sin forgive them (See Luke 17:3-4).
  
    - B. If the person confesses and repents of the sin, dismiss it and never bring it up again (See Luke 17:3, 1 Peter 4:8).
  
    - C. If the person refuses to confess and repent of the sin bring witnesses to address it (See Matthew 18:15-17).
  
    - D. If the person refuses to confess and repent of the sin with witnesses take it to the leadership of the Church so that they can address it (See Matthew 18:15-17).

- E. No matter what the reaction of the other person or the outcome of the situation one should be an open channel of love to the person; one should pray and do good to the person (See Luke 6:27-36, Romans 12:14,20-21, and 1Peter 3:9). **(Insights adapted from Rich Thomson)**