

Gossip's Corrupt Fruit

"GOSSIP" is idle talk or rumors about others. The word can also be applied to the person who initiates or repeats such idle talk.

Many jokes are made about gossip. Some seem to view gossip as a harmless exercise – an annoyance or nuisance at worst.

Christians should realize that gossip (slander, tale bearing, being a busy body) is sinful and carries with it the potential of much heartache and devastation. The sinfulness and seriousness of gossip is clearly illustrated by its effects which are listed in a number of scriptures.

1. Gossip makes a fool of the one who practices it. "...he that uttereth a slander is a fool", Proverbs 10:18.

2. Gossip causes deep wounds. "The words of a tale bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly", Proverbs 26:22.

3. Gossip will separate close friends. "A forward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends", Proverbs 16:28.

4. Gossip brings shame upon the tale bearer. "Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and disclose not a secret to another: lest he that heareth it put thee to shame and thine infamy turn not away", Proverbs 25:9-10.

If you are tempted to gossip, work on purifying your heart (because evil speech proceeds from the heart, Matthew 15:18-20), increase your love for others, and learn to use your speech "to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers", Ephesians 4:29.

- by Tom Moody

What Are We Expecting From Our Prayers?

We pray because prayer works! James writes: "The effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (5:16). If God never listened, or if God never answered our prayers "Yes," then why pray? There would be no motive to pray. We would say, "it just doesn't do any good." But we know better. All of us can be thankful for the numerous prayers answered in our lives. Prayer works! God is moved by the prayers of His people.

But, what are we expecting from our prayers? The simple answer would be, "We are expecting God to answer them." Thus, we pray in faith that He will respond.

Sometimes, however, I feel that some look at prayer as the "magical fix all" to our problems. We make a mess of our marriage and then in desperation pray about our home and think God will now make it right. We mess up our health by poor eating habits and a lack of exercise and then lay in a hospital bed praying for our health to return. We think the church will grow just because "we have prayed for that."

It seems that in all of this, we are expecting God to right all the wrongs, fix all the mistakes, and make everything fine simply because we have prayed about it. Now this is not questioning the power of God but it is essential that we understand our roles and responsibilities and our need to work with Him.

We Find Ourselves In A Mess Financially: -- because we spend instead of saving. It will take more than words to right the wrongs of unwise decisions.

We Find Ourselves In A Troubled Marriage: -- because of gossiping, nagging, dishonesty, and negativity. A change of hearts and a renewed dedication are essential to turning that relationship around. God will not "fix it" without the cooperation of those "in it."

We Find Ourselves In A Stagnant Church: -- because of indifference. Such a church cannot grow by the members merely saying a prayer and then waiting with arms folded for something to happen. Obviously, God expects cooperation from us.

Whether financial or familial, are we to expect that all one has to do to fix the mess is pray and everything will be fine? Absolutely not! There are consequences to our choices and responsibilities that rest upon our shoulders. God will do His part but... we must do ours!

- by Roger Shouse

Spending Time with the Word

"There are times when solitude is better than society, and silence is wiser than speech. We should be better Christians if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering through meditation on His Word spiritual strength for labor in his service. We ought to muse upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them . . . Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons, make but slow advances in the godly living? Because they neglect their closets, and do not thoughtfully meditate on God's Word. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it; they would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it; the water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord. . . ."

- **Charles H. Spurgeon**

'Beholding the Evil and the Good'

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3)

For a long time we have used this verse and others in the Bible to emphasize that no evil deed is missed by God. He sees. He Knows. Do not think that you can act in violation of His law without being observed and noted. *"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"* (Hebrews 4: 13).

But this verse from Proverbs states another truth that we often ignore. It promises that God is watching what we do that is good, too. He perceives every good deed, every noble effort, and each act of faithful service. Do we believe it? Apparently not. Instead, we often feel compelled to boast of everything we do. We have to tell others, and explain all of the details. We're tempted to brag about our level of knowledge or special skills.

Jesus dealt with this problem in His famous Sermon on the Mount. He warned that if we do what we do "to be seen of men" then we "have our reward", and we can expect "no reward from your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1-8).

The attitude that we need is this: *"When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"* (Luke 17:10).

So, Christian, don't feel that you need to point out all of your good deeds. God knows and will reward you. *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"*(2 Corinthians 5:10).

- **by Greg Gwin**