

Sunday, May 5, 2019—Body Building: Corrupt Communication, Part 5 (Tattling, Talebearing & Whispering)

Introduction

- Romans 14:19—the second segment of this series is devoted to looking at things that make for peace among the brethren and edify the body of Christ.
- Ephesians 4:29-31—evil speaking does not make for peace among the saints. Evil speaking takes away peace and doesn't edify.
- Ephesians 4:25—within the context of Ephesians 4 Paul deals with lying and truth telling. Lying is to be “put away” whereas speaking the truth is to be “put on.” The reason we should speak the truth is that “we are members one of another.”
- Why is truth so important to God?
 - *Reason 1: Truth Aligns Us with God*
 - *Reason 2: We are Redeemed to reflect God's Character*
 - *Reason 3: Truth-telling is a Matter of Submission to God's Will*
- Last week we studied four types of corrupt communication/evil speaking related to lying and telling the truth. None of the following make for peace or edify the body of Christ.
 - *Beguilement*—disseminating information gleaned from false conclusions.
 - *Deceit*—the willful manipulation and distortion of facts.
 - *Lying*—the direct communication of untruth most often for selfish reasons.
 - *False Witness*—willful false testimony spoken against someone else.
- This morning we are going to turn our attention to another problem we face regarding the corrupt communication/evil speaking, the catastrophic cousins of gossip and slander.
- Have you ever heard a rumor? Have you ever spread a rumor? Rumors are the vehicles that turn life into a demolition derby, and gossip and slander are the tracks on which they travel.
- The tracks of gossip and slander are littered with careless, idle chatter, as well as malicious, and intentional bad mouthing. Rumors, whether true or false, are devastating for many reasons—one being that they are irretrievable.

- Ephesians 4:30—malicious speech comes from the central source of all sin—the promotion of self. According to Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* the word “malice” means:
 - Extreme enmity of heart, or malevolence; a disposition to injure others without cause, from mere personal gratification or from a spirit of revenge; unprovoked malignity or spite.

- Gossip and slander feed off our natural flesh brain wiring in the following six ways:
 - *Curiosity*—when our curiosity includes seeking, bearing, and disseminating harmful information, then we have moved into the destructive aspect of curiosity.
 - I Timothy 5:13—notice how this links gossip (tattlers) with curiosity (busybodies).
 - *Tattler*—of persons uttering or doing silly things, garrulous, babbling
 - *Busybodies*—busy about trifles and neglectful of important matters, busy about other folks' affairs, a busybody
 - Acts 19:19—same word is used to describe them who practice the curious arts.
 - *Idleness*—Paul explains how people with time on their hands may be prone to malicious speech.
 - *A Desire to be the Center of Attention*—it’s an ego stroke to have everyone listening intently when we speak, so we learn the right phrases to captivate others:
 - “Did you hear?”
 - “Well, I really shouldn’t say this, but. . .?”
 - “Can you keep a secret?”
 - *An Opportunity to Elevate Ourselves over Others*—“To speak ill of others is a dishonest way of praising ourselves.” Will Durant
 - *Bitterness*—selfishly withholding forgiveness opens the door to a vengeful spirit, and slander is a tool of revenge.
 - Ephesians 4:31—notice the connection between bitterness and evil speaking.
 - *Soothes Our Own Anxieties*—misery still loves company

Two Types of Malicious Speaking

- Idle Chatter/Gossip—speech that is demeaning to another’s integrity and reputation.
 - I Timothy 5:13, 6:30—vain babblings = empty discussion, discussion of vain and useless matters
 - II Timothy 2:16
- This type of speech is not always malicious in its intent, but it is always damaging. The words associated with this type of speech are frequently translated as whisper or talebearer.
 - Psalm 41:7
 - Proverbs 20:19
- Slander—this category includes the intention, malicious communication of bad reports. The words associated with this type of speech are normally translated as slander.
 - Psalm 31:13
 - Jeremiah 9:2

Gossip

- In the Old Testament there are two different Hebrew words used to describe what we commonly call gossip.
- Proverbs 11:13—the word talebearer in this verse is a translation of a compound Hebrew word.
 - The first word literally means to walk about
 - The second word literally means one who carries tales. It is also translated as slander in some verses.
 - The *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* offers the following definition of “talebearer:”
 - “A person who officiously tells tales; one who impertinently communicates intelligence or anecdotes and makes mischief in society by his officiousness.”
 - Leviticus 19:16
 - Proverbs 11:13—God’s word teaches that a person who gossips is untrustworthy and cannot keep a secret.

- Proverbs 20:19—a person who gossips is to be avoided. Hearing gossip adds unneeded information to our mental notebooks. These negative thoughts give Satan a foothold in our lives.
- Proverbs 16:28—a second Hebrew word presents the concept of whispering that is damaging. Whispering is in a negative context. The word denotes confidential communication, non-public information, exclusivism, secretive behavior, and shame. In the Bible whispering becomes a figurative expression for the sin of gossip, which unfortunately is not always done in a whisper
 - This Hebrew word is also translated talebearer elsewhere in the Old Testament.
 - Proverbs 16:28--separates the closest of friends.
 - Proverbs 26:20—gossip adds fuel to the fire created by the tongue.
 - II Corinthians 12:20
- Romans 1:28-30—whispering and gossip are the products of a reprobate mind.