

Sunday, May 12, 2019—Body Building: Corrupt Communication, Part 6 (Slander)

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.
- Thus far, we have considered the following categories of corrupt communication and evil speaking.
 - 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.”
 - *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.
- 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.
- Last week under the category of malicious speech we began looking at the catastrophic cousins of gossip and slander. In doing so, we looked at the following six ways that gossip and slander appeal to our natural flesh brain programming.
 - *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
- *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
- Lastly, recall the Bible's use of the following words when it comes to gossiping.
 - *Talebearer*—Proverbs 11:13
 - “A person who officiously tells tales; one who impertinently communicates intelligence or anecdotes and makes mischief in society by his officiousness.”
 - *Whisperer*—Proverbs 16:28
 - The word “whispering” denotes confidential communication, non-public information, exclusivism, secretive behavior, and shame. In the Bible whispering becomes a figurative expression for the sin of gossip,

Slander

- While gossip is often done in the context of idle, careless chatter, slander is the open intentional sharing of damaging information.
- Like we saw with Gossip there are multiple words that are translated slander in our King James Bibles. The first implies the idea of just general bad reports.

- Genesis 37:2—the word “report” at the end of the verse means whispering, defamation, evil report, a) whispering, b) defamation, defaming, c) evil report, unfavourable saying.
 - Numbers 13:32, 14:36-37
 - Psalm 31:13
 - Jeremiah 20:10
- Psalm 50:20—here the word slander come from a Hebrew word which means to blemish or to fault.
- II Samuel 19:27—here the word slander means to go on foot, spy out, foot it, go about, walk along, move the feet. This definition depicts someone actively seeking out damaging information to share with others.
- James 4:11—in the New Testament, the word for slander is comprise of two words, one meaning “against” and the other meaning “to speak.”
 - I Peter 2:1
 - I Peter 3:16
- I Timothy 3:11—the word devilish or diabolic is translated in this verse as slander and 35 other times as devil.
- Romans 3:8—people were slandering the apostle Paul and saying things about him that weren’t true.
- Combining these various definitions, we discover that slander is characterized by bad reports that blemish or defame a person’s reputation. Slander characterizes a wicked, godless heart (Psalm 50:16-23, Romans 1:28-30) and is a direct violation of God’s Law (Leviticus 19:16).
- Psalm 101:5
- Proverbs 25:9-10—if we slander someone, we run the risk of being branded as a slandered for the rest of our lives, for bad reputations.

Four Myths About Gossip and Slander

- Myth 1: Gossip and slander are women’s sins.
 - I Timothy 3:11, 5:13—while the Bible does twice attribute these sins specifically to women nowhere does the Bible promote the notion that men are not equally guilty.
- Myth 2: If information is true it’s okay to tell it.
 - Romans 14:19

- Ephesians 4:29—while truth is important so are confidentiality and potential harm
- Myth 3: Sharing prayer concerns justifies the exchange of sensitive information.
- Myth 4: The people I tell certainly won't tell someone else.

Conclusion

- What should we do with damaging information?
 - Pray and leave the matter with God—Philippians 4:6
 - Go directly to the persons involved in a spirit of meekness and restoration—Galatians 6:1
 - Seek to protect the victim of the slander—Proverbs 10:12
- Galatians 5:13-15—if we don't eliminate gossip and slander for our conversations, we become like social cannibals who devour one another.
- The choice is clear. We can chomp down on every bit of gossip that come along and participate in all the backbiting that is involved with slander. Or we can cleanse our palate with love and practice the genuine freedom that is available only through God's grace.
- Before we speak, we need to ask ourselves one simple question. Does what I am about to say minister grace.