



“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” Exodus 20:16

Have you ever noticed that the one who says, “Now, I don’t like to gossip,” usually says it right before he or she does it? We disguise the sin by the declaration that we don’t, then we do. It is a way to criticize without being criticized, I suppose.

We start with a self-declared virtue. Then we do the deadly deed.

“Listen, I’d never say this if it weren’t true, but – “

“You know I only want the best for him – “

“I’m the last one to believe a rumor – “

The other thing we do is to use some pious line to prove that our motive for the gossip is pure and good.

“She is a sweet person – “

“I really feel sorry for him. He – “

“Bless her heart. She tries so hard but – “



Look out for “Bless her heart.” The person who says it is usually about to relocate that heart to the trash heap.

Among religious people it seems that the more self-righteous a person is, the more they tend to gossip. I guess such people figure that not sinning the “serious sins” gives one the right to talk about those who do. But who gets to decide what is “serious” and what is not?

Thou shalt not give false testimony against your neighbor. This is NOT toward the end of the ten commandments because it is not as “serious” a sin as adultery or murder. There is no ranking system among the commandments and breaking any is deadly.

Actually, gossip is verbal slaughter, killing with a word. But it is so sneaky the victim doesn’t even see it coming. They are accused, condemned and sentenced without a trial. They know not the accuser, or the charge. Quickly the person is dispatched, reputation tarnished, blame assigned. Perhaps the person who does it may not even know how poisonous the venom is which comes forth from the lips. “I only passed on what I was told,” they will say.

But the victim of gossip isn’t the only one who is hurt. If one must build up one’s self by tearing another down; if one can only prove one’s goodness by contrasting it to the badness of another; if one can only feel righteous by holding forth the unrighteousness of another – then that person also is unrighteous at heart. Gossip kills the one who tells it.

Our righteousness comes from God. The sin of others is not our salvation. No one ever got to heaven on the wrongs of others. Yet if we try, we kill those we speak wrongly of, as well as ourselves. To delight in sin (in anyone’s sin) is to feed on carrion. Gossips become scavengers. They are the second victim in gossip’s slaughter.

Worst of all, gossip turns trust into personal vulnerability. It trades honor for suspicion, it makes friendship a mask and replaces love with cunning deceit. Therefore, gossip kills community. Love keeps a community strong. Trust allows growth and goodness to occur. Honor in community gives it stability. Gossip is none of these things. It is a worm at the core of community, soft as a whisper, hidden and deadly. Such worms are found in churches as well as in taverns and coffee shops. Who is next? Will it be me? We begin to look at our neighbor with suspicion.

It was in love that God spoke this command. God said it to keep us from killing with the tongue, to keep us from dying ourselves. Hush the uneasy word. Swallow it down. Don’t speak it. Do it for your own sake, and for your neighbor’s sake. For the good of all, the whole community, do it. For Christ’s sake, do.

Author: Randy Gibbs, Pastor Emeritus-article originally written and published in the Western Kansas World in 2005

The Prairie Faith Parish Nurse Ministry invites your input and participation in several areas of ministry for our Prairie Faith congregations and surrounding community:

♥ ***Community Comfort Meals.*** Sometimes people are in a situation where they lack support after the death of a family member or close friend, or when they are going through a difficult time for other reasons. Maybe their family lives far away and isn't really involved in their day-to-day personal life, or perhaps they have no family, or they don't have much in the way of social support--they go *unnoticed* somehow by others. ***Community Comfort Meals*** are gift cards to a local restaurant and are a substitute for a homecooked meal that is traditionally taken to a person several weeks following the death of a family member or close friend, or to someone who is going through a difficult time for another reason. "Eligibility" for a comfort meal does not have anything to do with someone's personal financial situation. It does not involve being a member of any church congregation. There may be various situations that suggest to you that someone might benefit from receiving a restaurant or grocery gift card as a sign of CARE from someone in the community, in this case from a faith-based group. ***Please contact us if you know of someone!***

♥ A prayer shawl is a tangible gift representing the many and continuing prayers for comfort, caring, healing and love offered for an individual experiencing serious illness, grief, loss, emotional trials or spiritual upheaval in their lives. ***If you know of someone in the community who might be comforted by receiving a prayer shawl, please contact Nancy.*** New prayer shawls will be blessed Sunday, October 27, 2024 at the Reformation Day combined worship service at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. ***Many thanks to those of you who have shared your gifts and talents to comfort others by making prayer shawls!***



♥ Several volunteers from the general community have been active the past several months providing rides to medical appointments when the general public transportation van ("out of town van") was not able to accommodate their request due to scheduling conflicts. The parish nurse ministry reimburses mileage to the volunteers. ***Some volunteers from the Prairie Faith congregations would be welcomed!***



♥ The prayer partner-pen pal ministry continues; if you know of someone in the community who would benefit from receiving regular letters/cards, please let me know and we can add their names, or if you know of someone who would enjoy sending letters/cards to others, we would love to have more helpers.



Forgive me, Lord Jesus, for the things I have done that make me feel uncomfortable in Thy presence.
All the front that I polish so carefully for men to see, does not deceive Thee.

For Thou knowest every thought that has left its shadow on my memory. Thou hast marked every motive that curdled something sweet within me.

I acknowledge, with sorrow and true repentance, that:

- I have desired that which I should not have;
- I have toyed with what I knew was not for me;
- I have been preoccupied with self-interest;
- I have invited unclean thoughts into my mind and entertained them as honored guests;
- My ears have often been deaf to Thy whisper;
- My eyes have been often blind to the signs of Thy guidance.



Make me willing to be changed, even though it requires surgery of the soul, and the therapy of discipline.

Make my heart warm and soft, that I may receive and accept now the blessings of Thy forgiveness, the benediction of Thy "Depart in peace...and sin no more." In Jesus' name, Amen *Prayer by Peter Marshall (1902-1949)*



Feel free to call or email me to: schedule a confidential appointment to discuss your health/wellness questions, schedule transportation to a medical/dental/counseling appointment if you need a ride, request a prayer shawl for someone in the community going through a difficult time, request a comfort meal gift card for a friend or neighbor, locate community health resources, request other parish nurse work, or discuss your ideas for the health ministry!

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785-743-2005 (leave a message, please)