

Loving Confrontation
Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.*

First: God Lives in Perfect Community as the Model for Us

a) The Trinity is the basis for all reality.

One aspect of that is our lives in community.

Genesis 1:1 - *In the beginning, God created*

'God' = Elohim = plural

b) Christianity/Salvation is entirely relational

John 14:6 – *I am the way, the truth, and the life*

Exodus 19:4 – *I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.*

c) The church is supposed to present God's life to the world

One of Matthew's big points is '*the kingdom of heaven/God.*' As we see in the Sermon on the Mount, God is creating a kingdom whose ethic is counter to the prevailing culture.

Second: Each of us is created in God's image

Genesis 1:26-27 - *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

God's image in each of us; believer and unbeliever, creates dignity, worth, and meaning.

We are called to treat each other with respect to God's image.

One of Adam's great sins is that he did not properly care for Eve by confronting her about her sin.

This idea of loving confrontation is the discussion in Matthew 18 and I bring this up because it is a natural continuation of Matthew 7 and Jesus's commitment to relationships

Transition: Among other things, gossip is a serious detriment to community.

The point: If you or I have an issue with someone, let's talk to them, and not others, about it. Otherwise, it become gossip, tends to divide, rather than unite us and this is detrimental to God's work in the world.

Third: Let's Define Gossip

Proverbs 6:16-19 - *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

IMP: Gossip is more than 'a lying tongue.' It is any word or action that 'sows discord.'

From Genesis to Revelation God is reconciling all things to himself. Gossip divides. It contradicts the nature of God and his Trinitarian mission in the world.

ILL – Even at his most stressful moment, Jesus refused to be 'divided' from the Father – “*not my will but yours...*” (Luke 22:42)

The hardest thing about identifying gossip is that it doesn't come with a warning label and is often disguised as something else

The English word 'gossip' occurs only a few times in the Bible but each time it is in a negative context.

*The sin of gossip is bearing bad news
behind someone's back out of a bad heart*

Gossip is never neutral

Proverbs 10:19-21 - *When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent. ²⁰ The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth. ²¹ The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.*

Proverbs 18:8 & 26:22 – *The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.*

At the moment we realize an issue between us and someone else, we are faced with a choice

Gossip is

a) Choice

Proverbs 18:8 - *The words of a talebearer are as wounds...*

KJV = *wounds = halam = hammer*

ESV = *choice = laham = savory, delicious*

In Solomon's day, a choice morsel wasn't chocolate or French fries but nuts, raisings or figs mixed with honey. It could be a piece of meat with fat on it – Gentile bacon.

Gossip is attractive but not healthy

b) Talking

James 3:2-6 - *For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,^[a] and set on fire by hell.*

Fourth: Gossip is Bearing Bad News

a) Bad information

Proverbs 11:13 – *Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.*

Tattling is gossip, even if it is said to someone in authority, if the motive is to cause trouble

b) Bad news for someone

Psalm 41:5-8 - *My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die, and his name perish?" ⁶ And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. ⁷ All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me*

David's friends said, "Poor you," and then spread the bad news that he is going to die.

"He's going to lose his job."

"She's going to get kicked out of school."

"Her husband is going to leave her."

Fifth: About Someone

Proverbs 18:8 & 26:22 use 'whisperer' instead of 'gossip' or 'talebearer.'

- The Bible is not saying we should never talk about people who are not present.
- We can say good things about people.
- We can seek counsel that ends up in Matthew 18

Sixth: Behind Their Back

Proverbs 11:11-13 - *By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.* ¹² *Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent.* ¹³ *Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.*

Seventh: Out of a Bad Heart

Matthew 12:34b – *...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*

Your heart is the real you.

Proverbs 4:23 – *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*

- Why am I saying this?
- Why am I listening to this?

Proverbs 20:19b - *do not associate with a simple babbler*

Your first and second response to gossip should be,

- 1 - "Have you spoken to _____ about this?"
- 2 - "If you counsel with me and I counsel you to talk to _____, will you?"

- Why am I attracted to bad news?

Proverbs 17:4 - *An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.*

Listening to gossip says as much about me as it does the gossip

*The sin of gossip is bearing bad news
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Eighth: God's Plan for Handling Talk about Others

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We must love each other enough to confront one another

Proverbs 12:18 - *There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

Note the process:

If you think someone that sinned against you or sinned and you know it –

1 – Understand ‘sin’

Sin = hamartano = miss the mark, wander from the path

This may be the most important part:

- a) Know the difference between preference and wrong
- b) Don’t pick up every offence
- c) Is the issue “sin” or “against you”?

“Against you” can be direct or indirect.

Galatians 5:9 – *A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

Should I go to my brother over any offense or irritation?

Proverbs 10:12 – *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.*

Proverbs 19:11 – *Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.*

The condition might be: Any matter that diminishes love for someone.

Last week: Matthew 7:1 – “Don’t judge.” = hyper-criticism

2 – Go and tell him his fault

Galatians 6:1-3 - *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

“restore” (Matt 4:21/Mark 1:19) mending nets / to equip for its purpose. The military use is outfitting a ship for its voyage or equipping a soldier

Fault = convict or refute

Alone = in private

2 – The point is to “*gain your brother*” = “to win something, as in a valuable treasure”

Don’t do anything that moves away from or contrary to reconciliation

3 – If he does not listen – understand or perceive / agree

4 – Take one or two others along with you

These are impartial witnesses who do not know the situation

Your point is not to win the argument but win the friend

Ninth: There is Hope

Gossip is not the Borg from Star Trek. “Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated.”

1 Corinthians 10:13 – *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Tenth: Let’s Return to the Trinity

Psalm 133 - *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ² It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! ³ It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.*

Oil = holiness

Dew = refreshing

Mount Hermon is a mountain range rising 9,200 feet above sea level and extending for twenty miles

Mount Zion, on the other hand is a small hill only 2,500 feet above sea level.

Imagine Hermon being poured onto Zion with its life-giving deluge of water. How green and fertile Zion would be if Hermon drenched it in dew.

Unity is like an air-conditioned home in the summer of Arizona

God, who lives in eternal, happy community, hates dissension. The whole redemptive project is about reconciliation.

Contrarily, gossip saps the unity/life out of us.

Proverbs 16:28 – *A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.*

Gossip is such an important issue that it is the leader's job to address the subject.

2 Corinthians 12:20 – *For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.*

- Elders must be self-controlled (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 18)
- Deacons must be sincere (1 Tim 3:8)
- Women must not be gossips (1 Tim 3:11)
- Older women must not be gossips either (Titus 2:3)
- The church is encouraged to 'bear' with each other and not 'bite' each other (Col 3:13; Gal 5:13-15)

Ephesians 4:1b-3 - *...walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*