

The book of Proverbs tells us, “**Rumors** are dainty morsels that sink deep into one's heart.” (Proverbs 18:8 NLT)

It also tells us, “**Wrongdoers** eagerly listen to **gossip**; **liars** pay close attention to **slander**.” (Proverbs 17:4 NLT)

Meanwhile, Paul's letter to Titus instructs us with these words. “Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. They must not **slander** anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.” (Titus 3:1-2 NLT)

Gossip. It's something that destroys what God is doing in a church. It's something that can destroy what God is doing in our church.

A simple definition for gossip is “casual or unconstrained conversation about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true.”

It's where you talk **about** someone instead of talk **to** someone. And this behavior is unbecoming of a follower of Christ. We justify our gossip as “seeking out wisdom or opinions from others” or sometimes we justify our gossip under the guise of “sharing a prayer request,” but the Bible is clear: To gossip is to **sin** and it causes **division** in the **body of Christ**.

And gossip is inevitable. Even in a church. Even in our church.

So what do we do? What can we do? What should you do?

First, the best way to stop gossip is that instead of sharing your thoughts on the matter being gossiped to you, immediately tell the person to go to whomever they are talking about. That ends the gossip with you and puts it on the responsibility of the gossiper. But if you share your thoughts with the person who is spreading gossip, you participate in the gossiping and are responsible for the disunity and divisiveness that it brings into our church body.

So let's be people who end gossip by directing the person directly to whomever they are wanting to gossip about. Let's be people who choose to not listen to gossip.

Second, there's something else we all should consider in regards to gossip. And that is this: How often do people come to you with gossip? How often do people come to you to talk about other people in a negative way, maybe questioning their motives, or seeking “advice” on something they are in disagreement with?

All of us should be aware of how comfortable people are in coming to us to share gossip. For that probably says as much about us as it does the gossiper. None of us should desire to have a reputation of "someone who listens to gossip." What a terrible reputation for a Christian to have.

And here's a third thing about gossip. Gossip always gets back to the person being gossiped about. Now "always" may be too strong of a word, but more often than not, the person you are gossiping about finds out about it.

Now you're probably wondering "What gossip is Josh trying to refer to here? What's going on? Maybe, what's going on that I haven't heard about?" And there's nothing in particular that I'm referring to. Your pastors feel that reminders about things like this are important at all times, not just when gossip is being spread.

In the past we've received reports of gossip of all sorts. As one elder put it, "Most of it isn't worth the brain power it takes to think about it" because of the silliness and pettiness of the gossip. One example would be the guy at McDonalds who saw my wife praying with someone and asked her what church she went to. My wife didn't tell her that she was married to the pastor, she simply said, "I attend Perrow Church." And I kid you not, the man replied, "I've heard about that church. The pastor there doesn't want any single people attending his church. He only wants married people there."

And as ridiculous as that is, so is 99% of the gossip that is spread. And the one percent that isn't ridiculous still causes division in the church because that's what gossip does. It divides. It destroys churches. Gossip is a delight to the Devil.

So when someone comes to you to talk about someone else, make the choice to not participate in gossip. Ask them if they've already spoken to the person they're gossiping about. If they haven't tell them that's what they should do and that you don't want to discuss the situation any more with them until that takes place. For it's the "wrongdoers who eagerly listen to gossip" whose hearts delight in "rumors like they are dainty morsels." And our desire is that we would be a church that is growing in our unity with one another instead of spreading disunity through our gossip.

Pastor Josh