

By Grace Tom-Lawyer



On the 4th of July 2014, the nation of France was left in shock as a teacher was stabbed to death by the mother of one of her pupils in front of her class. The end of school's results had been released but her daughter's performance was below par. When she was apprehended by the police, she shouted repeatedly, "I am not a thief". (A member of the regional health and safety committee for the Education Ministry, said that the mother thought the teacher had called her daughter a thief, and that misperception might have played a role in the attack.)

Gossip hurts. As extreme as mother's reaction was, every time we engage in the sin of gossip (Romans 1:29-30) and slander (Leviticus 19:16) it leads to character assassination and robs people of the beauty of being known on first hand basis, rather than what we have heard about them. Gossip puts a lid on our relationships (1 Samuel 24:9), causes strife and spreads discord which God hates (Proverbs 6:16, 19; 20:26). Rather than bringing knowledge (Malachi 2:6-7), our lips serve as tools in the hand of the enemy.

GUILTY AS CHARGED!

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With so many ill-effects why do we still engage in this vice? First of all, it is pleasurable. Something about the human nature wants to know all that is not well with the Joneses. This may be linked to jealousy. Resentment and unforgiveness often serve as baits for gossip. It may also be a method of vindictiveness as a result of malice. Idleness (1 Timothy 5:13) may be the breeding ground for gossip coupled with the fact that it is harder to pray than to gossip. Moreover we may be reluctant to participate in the drudgery of working out our relationships (James 3:18 MSG) and resort to verbal bullying .

The temptation to engage in gossip is real and varies for different individuals. Women being more relational tend to be more prone although the menfolk are not immune. Regular cross examination of our hearts and motives is a priority if we must gain the upper hand. We can consciously also remove ourselves from situations that lead to gossip and avoid being alone with known gossips. To prevent idle talk, phone calls should be purposeful and our visitations strategic. The insatiable need to know everything possible about everyone should be stifled. Rather we should make it our business to be involved intimately only with those we truly care about. As a rule, if we are not part of the problem or solution, then we might as well keep our mouths shut.

Gossip need not be false to cause harm. Listening to gossip is as much evil as spreading it. Our words about others is a reflection of honor and should be incubated in enough love to cover their weaknesses with the knowledge that we still have our own struggles which we would prefer hidden. Let us also honor God always knowing he listens to our every conversation (Malachi 3:16a).

Grace Tom-Lawyer is a writer who lives in the United Kingdom and loves to share a message that brings dignity to the lives of people with a passion for the practical application of Biblical truths in everyday living.

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