

Gossip's Destructive Nature

We sometimes hear little jokes about gossip, like this one:

Two people were talking and one said, "I can't tell you anymore. I've already told you more than I heard."

In that line is much of the tragedy of gossip, which can, and often has, destroyed a person's reputation. Gossip always damages relationships, specifically with the person you are gossiping about.

For example, once you have said something unkind about that person, you will feel uncomfortable around him or her, and your relationship with that individual will suffer.



The late Dr. Adrian Rogers, longtime pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, and three-time president of the Southern Baptist Convention, had some advice that is timely today. Before we disseminate information that might be considered gossip, he said we should carefully ponder three questions:

1. Is it truth? If it fails this test, then it is not repeatable.
2. Even if it is the truth, do you really need to share it? Will it help anyone? Will it hurt anyone? Would it be better left unsaid? If there are no benefits to anyone, then what possible purpose could repeating it serve?
3. Is it kind? In our world so full of cynicism and skepticism, will repeating the story be kind? Would it be better left unsaid? Would you really be better off repeating this information?

When you analyze it this way, your chances of being a gossip are dramatically reduced.

The benefits of stopping gossip in its tracks are actually substantial.

First, you do not damage yourself, which means that your reputation and esteem are untarnished. That's good.

Second, you won't harm someone else's reputation. This means that your circle of friends will be larger. Since most of us do not have any friends we would like to lose, that's good!

The Bible strongly cautions against gossip.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29 ESV).