



GOSSIP AND GRACE

Sticks and Stones and . . . Words?

August 27, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

2 Corinthians 8:7 (NKJV) • “But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.”

Ephesians 4:29 (NKJV) • “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV) • “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV) • “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

Proverbs 12:18, 19 (NIV) • “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.”

Psalms 15:2, 3 (NCV) • “Only those who are innocent and who do what is right. Such people speak the truth from their hearts and do not tell lies about others. They do no wrong to their neighbors and do not gossip.”

Colossians 3:16 (NKJV) • “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Colossians 4:6 (NKJV) • “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

James 3:6 (NLT) • “The tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.”

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “GOSSIP AND GRACE”

Gossip destroys lives. And teenagers are not exempt from its venom and pain. Actually, during this emotionally charged time in their lives, teens seem to be more vulnerable to gossip's sting. Not only are they susceptible to gossip's sting, but, many times, they are the ones who issue the bite.

Words have so much power that students must realize that the words they carelessly share cannot be taken back. It is virtually impossible to undo the damage that our mouths do. Furthermore, the damage compounds itself as more people join in.

Gossip has been defined as the habitual sharing of facts of a personal, sensational, or intimate nature. This definition doesn't even concern itself with whether the information is

true or not. People often think it is OK to share intimate or personal information as long as they know it is true. But it isn't our truth to tell. And we don't know how much harm our interference may cause. We, as Christians, must show grace toward all people. That grace will be evident in the information we share, and the information we encourage others not to share with us.

The Bible is clear that the only way we will be successful in this endeavor to curb gossip is if we give God control of our tongue and our lives. We are called to step out, sometimes by ourselves, and not get soiled with dirt sharing.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "GOSSIP AND GRACE"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand the power and permanence that our words have.
2. Learn and apply principles with which to weigh information to determine whether or not it is gossip.
3. Commit to not sharing gossip (true or false) that would hurt someone.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) a picture, four poster boards (or newsprint paper), markers; (Activity B) Bible, paper, pens.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • White/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

2 BRIDGING

A. THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.

3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Choose four volunteers.

Get set • Have three leave the room, and show the remaining student a picture.

Go • That volunteer must copy it as best they can onto a piece of paper or poster board. When they have finished, allow one of the volunteers to come back in. Using only the first person's picture as a guide, person two must copy it as best they can. The next person must copy the second person's picture, and the last person copies the third person's picture. When they have all finished, show the original picture and the last person's drawing.

Debriefing • **Ask:** In what ways are these two pictures similar? In what ways are they different? How was this process similar to the way information is passed along? Compare the results of both gossip and this activity. How are they similar? How are they different?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • This game is like the old gossip game, except the students will be using Bible verses.

Get set • Have the students sit in small circles or short rows (five to seven people). Give everyone paper.

Go • The first person should copy **1 Chronicles 2:18, 19** (or another difficult or not-so-familiar verse) from the Bible and pass the verse and the pen to the next person. That person reads the verse, destroys the original, and rewrites it from memory. That copy, along with the pen, is then passed to the next person, and each person follows the same procedure until the pen has reached the end of the line. At the end of the activity, read the verse from the Bible and then the last person's version of that verse.

Debriefing • Ask: In what ways are these two passages similar? In what ways are they different? What do you think might be some of the consequences if the story was told the way the last person wrote it instead of the truth? (People might start a rumor about who someone was married to, or who their mother was, etc.) How does this game relate to gossip?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Shana felt terrible. She had started a rumor about a girl she did not like in her school. Now, the two of them were friends, and she felt bad about what she did earlier. She racked her brain trying to think of a way to take back her words. She had to stop this rumor. She knew she was way in over her head, so she decided to get some advice from the wisest person she knew, her grandmother.

"Grandma, you have got to help me," Shana declared. "You're my only hope! I've made a terrible mistake. I started a rumor, and now everyone believes it. Please! You have to help me undo my rumor."

"Rumors are nasty things," Grandma an-

swered. "However, if you do as I tell you, the rumor will be erased from everyone's mind."

Shana's grandmother handed her a heavy bowl of bread pieces. "Take this bread and spread it on the path to town. Then tomorrow morning, go back to the path and pick up each and every piece. When the last piece is in the bowl, the rumor will have vanished," Grandma promised.

Shana struggled to carry the bowl. She took it to the path and dropped all the bread, piece by piece. When she was finished, she crawled home exhausted.

As the sun set, a bird flew through the sky looking for food. When it saw the bread on the path, the bird greedily gulped down every bite of bread and waddled home—too fat to fly.

Shana awoke in the morning and ran to the path to pick up the bread, but when she got there, the bread was gone. Shana knelt on the bare ground and cried.

That's where Grandma found her. She knelt beside Shana and gently said: "There is no way to stop a rumor. Once it has started, it can spread everywhere. The only way to stop a rumor is not to start it."

Debriefing • Ask: In what ways do you agree with Shana's grandmother? What "damage control" can one do to deflate a rumor? Whom do our words hurt? Share a time when you wished something could be taken back.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: As special agents of the kingdom of God, you must do some investigating before you start communicating. Whereas some kingdoms guard their gates or their treasures, our King has asked us to guard our mouths. He has issued a decree to give us counsel and guidelines on how to do this. Let's find out what those rules are. Have a volunteer find and read **Philippians 4:8**.

Say: Give an example of when and how you can use these rules in your kingdom communications. (When someone tells me something, I ask if this is of “good report.” If it is not, I don’t want to hear it. If the information is not true or pure, I don’t listen to it and I would tell the person who is trying to share it with me that I don’t want to hear it.)

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Ask: What does this story reveal about the effects of gossip and rumors? (If left unchecked, rumors and gossip can spread like wildfire. People can be so interested in juicy gossip, the truth is ignored.) **Do you think something like this could happen to you? Why or Why not?** (Yes, because people still lie and make up stuff. People still get caught up in rumors and accusing people with no grounds. It can ruin someone’s reputation so badly that they lose everything.)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

The school bully is being rushed to the hospital. After all these years of picking on people, he finally met his match. A group of students got together and played a trick on him that resulted in a broken arm. His parents are angry and want all who were involved to be expelled.

The problem is that nobody is talking. Up until now, the teachers didn’t even know all this was going on. You are called to the principal’s office. She tries to get information from you about the prank and about everything else that went on. “What have you heard?” she asks. What do you do?

Debriefing • Give students time to share their first reactions and then **ask** the following: **What was the principal asking for?** (She asked what you heard, not necessarily what happened or

what was true. She was, in essence, asking for gossip.) **When is it right to gossip?** (never) **What is the difference between gossip and sharing information?** (It has to do with your intentions and the context in which you share the information. If you have bad intentions or if you are sharing information at an inappropriate time or to people who have no business with the information, it’s gossip.) **When is the right time to share information and when is it inappropriate?** (It is appropriate to share information when someone is in danger or when someone who is in a position to help the person needs the information to do so. It is inappropriate to share personal and private information just to satisfy one’s curiosity.) **What kingdom rule(s) (taken from Philippians 4:8) would you use in this situation, to decide what to share with the principal?** (Whatever things are true—sharing not just hearsay but what you know to have really happened. Whatever things are just—you can share information to bring about justice.) **Does God give us any additional help in what to do in a sticky situation like this?**

Have students find and read the following texts: **Exodus 23:1; Psalm 34:13; Colossians 4:6; James 4:11.** Have them share what principle each verse gives about gossip. (Don’t be a false witness, tell the truth, let your answers be graceful, don’t judge or speak evil of one another.) **Say:** **Not only does God give us principles to live by but He also gives us His strength to depend on to help bridle our tongues and to give us wisdom on when to speak and what to say when we do.**

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Get ready • On a white/chalkboard create four columns. Over the first two columns put a label consisting of a large plus sign. Over the second two columns place a label consisting of a large minus sign. Then, under those labels, label the four individual columns “Me,” “Someone else,” “Me,” “Someone else.”

Get set • Have two or three volunteers at a time come up and write one thing in one of the columns—either something positive toward others they have said or something they have heard someone else say, or something negative toward others they have said or heard someone else say.

Go • If two or three are working at a time there will not be quite as much attention drawn to what an individual writes. For the same reason, keep people coming up and going back to their seats rather quickly.

Debriefing • When you have quite a few things written on the chart, discuss.

Ask: Was it easier to remember the positive things or negative things? Which type of comment stayed in your memory longer? Did you tend to remember more negative things other people had said, or you had said? What about the positive things? What does this exercise tell us about the power of words? What changes might we want to make as a result of what we've observed here?

Say: It is often the negative things that people say to us and about us that stay with us. The same effect negative words have on us, they have on other people. As agents of the kingdom of God, we are called to a higher code of behavior. We must encourage and build one another up and tear down Satan's kingdom, not other people.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the kingdom principles God gives us concerning gossip?
2. How can we show others grace in the things we say?
3. How do your words have power?
4. How can your words build up the kingdom of God?
5. How can you determine the difference between gossip and information?

6. What are some things you could say to stop someone from sharing gossip with you?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

As agents in God's kingdom, we cannot operate as everybody else does. While everyone else is reveling in lies, rumors, and the private business of others, we are to keep our minds focused on those things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. We must recognize that our words have power, and we must use that power to build people up and to stop others from tearing people down. If we do that, we will not live a life of regrets, yearning to take back words that have already done their damage. We know that this is a challenge, but we also know we do not have to work at this alone. God promises, through His Holy Spirit, to help us in all our efforts of living for Him.

Close by repeating **Psalm 141:3** together: "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips" (NIV).



STUDENT LESSON

GOSSIP AND GRACE

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Sabbath

FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge” (James 4:11, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 4, The Son:** “God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ . . . He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 27, 28

STICKS AND STONES AND . . . WORDS?

A student shares his experiences at the beginning of a school year:

“I was nervous my first day, and the tension continued to build as we all sat waiting for the professor to arrive. It was deathly silent, and I watched the clock in front of the room a little

disappointed that the professor was already five minutes late.

“Then one brave student spoke up, commenting that . . . we could leave after waiting for only 15 minutes. This sounded good to me. It seemed that this broke the tension, and a conversation took off from there. Another student asked if anyone knew anything about the teacher, and there were numerous answers. Someone said that he was a hard grader; another commented that he was strict; one girl said that she heard he gave an overabundance of homework. There were numerous comments after that, and most were not very complimentary. There were a lot of jokes at the teacher’s expense.

“Finally, the ‘student’ who had spoken up first and seemed to know the rules stood up and said, ‘Well, it has been 15 minutes, but I’m not going to leave. In fact, I think I will stay and begin today’s class.’”

APPLICATION

Be careful what you say. God is always present, and He is listening.

“The mouths of fools are their undoing, and their lips are a snare to their very lives” (Proverbs 18:7, NIV).

—Chris Horton, www.illustrationexchange.com

Sunday

RESPONDING

- » Read Psalm 141:3, NKJV.

- » David and Rachel had a big fight at lunch in the cafeteria right at your table. There were not many people around because lunch had just started. You, however, were there, and you heard and saw everything. It was the biggest shock because everyone thought they would be friends forever. Throughout the day both seemed to be near tears, but they were not talking—to each other or anyone else. You are the only one who really knows what happened, so everyone rushes to you to find out the truth.
- » How do you decide what information, if any, to share? Whom would you share it with? What effect will your actions have on the situation?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON BEING LIKE THE SON

- » Read Psalm 106:3; Philippians 4:8; Ephesians 5:1, 2.
- » Christ is our example, and we should do as He did. He never spoke to anyone in an unkind or uncaring way. He always put others first, speaking a kind word, smiling at them, or just reaching out to touch them with kindness and healing.
- » What are you doing to be like Jesus and make sure your words and actions are always kind and caring?

- » Unscramble the missing words and put them in the correct verses below. All verses are from the New King James Version. After putting the words where they belong, write what each verse means to you on the lines provided.

sediba	sbrevorP	selppa	deklaw
stseretni	thguo	sgnittes	nhoJ

hcae	yltif	snaippilihP	srehto
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"A word _____ spoken is like _____ of gold in _____ of silver" (_____ 25:11).

"Let _____ of you look out not only for his own _____, but also for the interests of _____" (_____ 2:4).

"He who says he _____ in Him _____ himself also walk just as He _____" (1 _____ 2:6).

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read Proverbs 26:22, KJV.
- » Have you ever stepped on an open tube of toothpaste and had its contents squirt all over the floor? If you have, you know what a mess you had on your hands. This is a lot like squirting gossip all over the place. Just as you can't get the toothpaste back in the tube, you can't take words back. Many times the damage is irreversible.
- » Whether we own up to it or not, our words have power. Unfortunately, many times we use this power to hurt others. We have all been hurt by things people have said about us. We also know that it doesn't have to be a lie to be hurtful. In many cases, sharing the truth in the wrong situation can hurt just as much or more.
- » James talks about the daunting task of controlling our tongues. It takes both strength and courage. It takes strength to keep our mouth shut and courage to tell others to shut their mouths when they come bearing juicy gossip. Just think about it. If a

classmate wanted to talk about someone, and you suggested you not talk about that person behind their back, you are setting yourself apart as someone of integrity who can be trusted.

- » This, however, is not a task you can handle by yourself. You will need help from God. You are going to have to ask Him continually to guard your tongue and keep your mouth full of grace.

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Fill in the missing words using the Bible versions given below. If you do not have some of these Bible versions, you can visit Biblegateway.com to find them.
 1. "Set a guard, O Lord, over my _____; keep watch over the door of my _____" (Psalm 141:3, NKJV).
 2. "Listening to _____ is like eating cheap _____; do you want _____ like that in your _____?" (Proverbs 26:22, *The Message*).
 3. "You shall not circulate a _____ report. Do not put your hand with the _____ to be an unrighteous _____" (Exodus 23:1, NKJV).
 4. "_____ can't keep _____, so never confide in _____" (Proverbs 20:19, *The Message*).
 5. "An evil man sows _____; _____ separates the best of friends" (Proverbs 16:28, TLB).
 6. "Whoever of you loves _____ and desires to see many good _____, keep your tongue from _____ and your lips from telling _____" (Psalm 34:12, 13, NIV).

7. "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are _____, whatever things are _____, whatever things are of _____, if there is any _____ and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8, NKJV).

8. "Though some tongues just love the taste of _____, those who follow Jesus have better uses for language than that. Don't talk _____ or _____. That kind of talk doesn't fit our style. Thanksgiving is our dialect" (Ephesians 5:4, *The Message*).

9. "Don't bad-mouth each other, friends. It's God's Word, his _____, his _____, that takes a beating in that kind of talk. You're supposed to be honoring the _____, not writing _____ all over it" (James 4:11, *The Message*).

Thursday

CONNECTING

- » Read Proverbs 20:19, NCV.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Why all this talk on gossip and words? Because some people are well into adulthood before they realize or understand the power that is found in words. During this time of exploration and discovery of who you really are, you will find it will be a whole lot easier if you do not get caught up in talk that will hurt others and can also backfire and hurt you too.
- » Every school, church, and town has a person who is a big mouth. People do not feel comfortable around them, because they do not want to be the next one talked about. As agents in God's kingdom, we should be

people others feel comfortable and at ease around. If they are in need of help, advice, or encouragement, they should know they can get a Christian perspective from us and not have to worry about everyone else knowing their troubles. Trust, grace, and love in these matters are great tools to recruit others to the kingdom!

Friday APPLYING

- » Read Psalm 34:12, 13, NLT.
- » Think of a time someone said something to or about you that made you feel bad. Now, think of a time someone said something nice about you—something that made you feel good. Write about the encouraging things people said about you that helped you to become a better person. Explore (1) how those words built your confidence in God and your sense of worth, (2) how they helped you to be nice to others in turn, (3) how long they have stuck in your memory, and/or (4) any other positive results they may have had.

- » After you have explored your memory, commit your thoughts and words to God by finding and repeating aloud **Psalm 141:3** and then **Psalm 19:14**.

