

Gossip Free Campaign Focuses on Social Networking

While many know the negative impact gossip can have, few have stood up and tried to do something about it. Starting Monday, pastor Kevin Hester is challenging people around the world to go "Gossip Free" for eight days.

Hester, pastor at the Sanctuary Baptist Church in Watervliet, Mich., originally started the initiative on Aug. 8, 2008. This year the focus is on social networking—the source of a lot of hurtful gossip, especially for young people.

"There is no doubt that this issue is deeply impacting our young people and I am sure it is having a measurable impact on adults in family settings and in the work place as well," Hester wrote Charisma News in an email.

While social media can be beneficial, Hester has experienced destruction caused by gossip that people have texted, tweeted, typed and posted.

"When we refrain from gossip we do gain in various positive ways, but the ones who gain the most are the ones we didn't gossip about," Hester said. "I believe we gain maturity when we do finally learn to control what comes out of our mouths. Our relationships can be more enriched and fulfilling because with trust comes deeper sharing."

On his website, , Hester encourages everyone to PAUSE before posting anything online or via text message and ask if the message is private, attacking, upright, sensitive and exaggerated. "If it is, then change it or simply don't say it," the site encourages.

Although Hester hopes this will be a positive experience, he encourages people to make it a way of life rather than just

staying gossip-free for eight days.

“What do we gain from eight days gossip-free? Not much unless we continue to live that way. My campaign challenging people to go eight days gossip-free is meant to be a jumping off point,” he explained.

Although Hester knows not everyone is successful in their attempt to refrain from gossip, he believes it still has a positive impact.

“I know that it is not something that will be completely eradicated by this campaign and those who’ve taken the challenge haven’t necessarily completed the eight days without gossiping ... but they’ve gossiped less,” he said. “That means that fewer people have been harmed by gossip and that maybe the destruction that has been caused in our failure has even been lessened.

“The one benefit I would hope for is an awareness of the malicious motive behind gossip and the destruction that it causes, because most people will be motivated to change if they truly see it for what it is.”

Hester is encouraging everyone to join him in this eight-day challenge as he attempts to make social networking a safer way to connect and share information. He has also written a couple of small books on gossip and has bracelets and Gossip Free Cards available for those who want to take a stand against this destructive behavior. More information about Kevin’s Gossip Free campaign can be found [here](#).