

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 is 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](#).