

Lead Us Not Into Gossip

The first step to understanding why we do what we don't want to do begins with probing the root cause of the behavior.

Most of us exercise regular opportunities to repent from spreading a story we heard about a friend, neighbor or colleague. As we toss and turn in bed, trying to understand why our tongue betrayed us, answers evade us, and we pray for strength to do better tomorrow.

Mark Travers reported in *Psychology Today* that the average person gossips 52 minutes per day. Travers cited research that concludes "sanctions against gossip may be futile and underscores the importance of understanding gossip at a descriptive level."

Researchers define three categories of gossip:

- Positive: flattery oriented.
- Neutral: neutral observations about others.
- Negative: malicious commentary.

The researchers concluded that 75% of all gossip fits the category of nonevaluative or neutral.

In a recent episode of the *Greenelines* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network with author Susannah B. Lewis, we discussed many topics from her book, *How May I Offend You Today?* Lewis offers "rants and revelations from a not-so-proper Southern lady," and opines with great clarity about "nipping gossip in the bud."

Lewis said, "Nipping the gossip bud is so hard to do, especially in these small Southern towns. I've been caught up in some of the juiciest gossip while sitting on the bleachers at a ballfield. Then, I always ask myself, 'What? What just

happened?'"

The answer to Lewis' question always comes from the Holy Spirit. Psychologists describe and categorize, but the Spirit of God brings conviction.

"I will tell you that I have conviction every time I run my mouth," Lewis said. "I thank God for His conviction—for that nudge to repent. Without that, I would be a mess. We all hear so many things, and we have this desire to run and tell everyone what we know. I say to the Lord, 'I can't spread this; it must stop with me.' I want to be more conscious of the words I share. I know we crave that juicy talk and love the excitement to share goodies with others. I don't want to be a person who causes more harm than good."

As we all pray to the Lord to help us "let no corrupt communication proceed out of [our] mouth" (Eph. 4:29a, KJV) we must pray in the Spirit to defeat the flesh.

"For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no gossip, quarreling quiets down" (Prov. 26:20, NASB).

For more wisdom about taming the gossip monster from author Susannah B. Lewis, listen to the entire episode of *Greenelines* [here](#). {eoa}