

In this series, we are declaring that **Together We Stand** (or Divided We Fall!)

There are some traps, or pitfalls that will cause a division among any group of people. So, the best that we can do is educate ourselves, find out what can cause division, and avoid those divisive traps.

Last week we educated ourselves so that we can be alert and have a unified front against Three Opposing Spirits that hinder unity in a church. The Spirit of JEZEBEL, The Spirit of ABSALOM, and The Spirit of SIMON. These spirits are not currently active in Believers Church.

As a matter of fact, we are currently walking in peace and unity, but we do want to reach what Jesus prayed for us to have, that is, perfect and complete unity. To do that we have to have what you might call a “Gossip Free Zone” here at Believers Church. Why the unity?

- Psalms 133:1-3 teaches us that living together in Unity is Good and Pleasant.
- The Results of living in unity was Great Power and Great Grace *Acts 4:33*
- Paul tells us in *Ephesians 4:3*, Paul states that we should *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*
- And Jesus prayed that we live in unity. *John 17:21 that all of them may be one...* So that the world will believe in Jesus as savior!

***Next Life Transformation Step – Today I will begin to agree with Jesus and start praying for Believers Church and all Believers to be one, just like Father God and Christ Jesus are one.***

### **What is Gossip?**

Melody Green defined gossip this way *“Sharing anything about someone, when the act of sharing it, is not part of the solution of that person’s problem.”* Gossip can be a lie, but gossip can also be the truth. Truth telling with the wrong motives is also gossip.

### **God’s Feelings About Gossip**

When we accept Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we give up the big sins like drinking, cheating, drugs, and fornication. But the Bible also puts gossip in the “Big Sin” category.

*Proverbs 8:13 “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.”* (A perverted mouth.)

God commanded His people not to gossip. *Leviticus 19:16 “Do not go about spreading slander among your people. “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the Lord.*

*Proverbs 6:16-19 There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: <sup>17</sup> haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>18</sup> a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, <sup>19</sup> a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community. (NKJ one who sows discord among brethren)*

### **The Results of Gossip**

*Proverbs 11:13 A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.*

*Proverbs 16:28 A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.*

*Proverbs 18:8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.*

*Proverbs 26:20 Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.*

*Romans 1:28-32 (People that God gives over to a depraved mind are also gossips.) Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup> they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. <sup>32</sup> Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

*Psalms 101:5 5 Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate.*

### **An Age-Old Problem**

Paul had to deal with gossip too. *2 Corinthians 12:20 For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.*

## Who Do You Go to When You've Been Offended?

*Matthew 18:15-17* "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. <sup>16</sup> But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' <sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

If someone is in sin, what good does it do to tell someone else? What can they do about it?

If we start telling others of the "awful thing" we see in someone else's life and ask if they have noticed it or if they have seen it too, we are causing them to form judgments against the one we are talking about.

This talking will actually be a form of "speaking curses over that person's life." It brings no benefit to the one in sin.

*Galatians 6:1* 1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

**Restoration is always the goal!** Instead of tearing down a fallen believer try to restore the one in sin to fellowship with God.

- They may have blind spots in certain areas of their lives.
- Your confronting them may be exactly what they need to awaken them to their problem so that they can be set free.

REMEMBER WE ARE A LIFE-GIVING CHURCH. We are not looking to tear down and destroy, but like our Lord Jesus, we are in the restoration business.

## Taking Up the Offense of Another

Sharing your hurts and bitterness with your friends is another area that leads to problems.

Your friends will tend to "take up the offense."

Later you may be restored with the one who hurt you, God gives both of you grace for that situation,

*"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* (James 4:6),

but your friends are still bitter. Now you have hurt your friends.

When we are hurt by someone and you can't work it out with them, the only person we have a right to go to with that hurt is God. He is the only one that can do anything about it.

- If you are really at a loss and don't know what to do, then you should take your problem to a counselor not "your favorite person to talk to."

***A counselor is someone who is mature in the Lord, exhorts you to godliness and reconciliation, points out your sin in the situation, will not repeat the matter or be stumbled by it, and is seeking God's will first and foremost-not yours.***

(A person like this is usually in a leadership role in your local church or a professional counselor.) This definition rules out most of the people we normally run to, looking for someone to take sides with us.

## How to Live in A Gossip Free Zone

### 1. Stop talking about people and let's start talking to people.

*Ephesians 4:29* Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Don't miss the last part of that verse, "*Building others up,*"..."*According to their needs.*"

"What are this person's needs?"

- What is it that is going on in their life right now?
- What is their hurt, pain, joy, their passion?
- What happened this morning at work before they even got here?
- What's their DNA? How has God created them? Are they more extraverted or introverted?
- Are they more of a feeler, or are they more of a thinker?

Ask these questions. Who are they? And how has God designed them?

- Then we can ***intentionally begin to craft our words*** to speak into their life words that will build them up and not tear them down.

**What God is saying is, let's stop talking about people and let's start talking to people.**

### 2. Stop Listening to Gossip. I'm Just Concerned and Listening to Gossip, Not Spreading It.

*Proverbs 17:4* A wicked person listens to deceitful lips; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.

In 1 Samuel 24:9 When Saul was needlessly trying to hunt down and kill David. *“...David said to Saul: “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Indeed David seeks harm?’”*

Good question for us today? “Why do you listen?”

If people are always coming to you with the latest gossip you may be part of the problem!

*Proverbs 20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.*

Break the chain by refusing to listen to gossip.

*1 Corinthians 13:6-7 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (NIV)*

Are you walking in love towards your brother or sister when you allow someone to speak evil of them?

When someone brings gossip to you why don't you say gently but firmly,

- ***“I’m sorry, but you’re telling me something I really don’t think I should be listening to. You need to take this to the Lord, and to those involved...not me.”***
- ***“Have you spoken to this person you are talking about concerning this situation? If you haven’t then you don’t need to be telling me.”***
- ***“If you have talked to them already are you willing for the three of us to sit down and talk this situation over together and resolve this problem?”***

### **3. Clean up the destruction by asking forgiveness.**

*Matthew 5:23-24 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

What this verse is saying is, because of you or someone else not watching their mouth, you have created a relational chasm between you and somebody else, Jesus says, **“Go to them and fix it.”**

- Jesus says, “Because of your gossip, not being able to control your tongue, if it’s created conflict with somebody, go and fix it.”
- Jesus says, “Because of your complaining you have driven people away, go and fix it.”
- Jesus says, “Because of your criticizing, with the words of your mouth, you have created an awkward work environment ... if it’s caused a relational breakdown, leave. Go fix it.”
- Jesus says, “If you have spoken a curse rather than a blessing on yourself or others... Go fix it.”

The greatest part about this story is Jesus is talking about it within the context of worship and He’s saying:

- “If you are worshiping Me,” maybe you are driving down the road listening in your car, and suddenly, you remember, “I’ve got conflicts here because of something that I said to someone.” He’s saying, “Turn the music off. I’m not interested in your worship. Turn your car around and go to that person, and once you begin to talk to them and bring reconciliation to the relationship, He says, “Come back and worship Me.”
- You are sitting in a worship service. You are worshiping, right? You are seeing it rain down. God’s moving. He’s challenging you. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit begins to press in and brings this name to your mind. “Who is that person that you need to reconcile with?” Jesus is saying, “Leave. Go and Fix It.”

If you want to begin to clean up the destruction, you can start by talking to people instead of about people and when damage has been done asking forgiveness.

***Next Life Transformation Step – Today I will ask myself, “Who have you left in your path of destruction? Who must you ask for forgiveness?” I will take action to fix it today!***

***Next Life Transformation Step – I resolve today to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit here at Believers Church.***

### **Life App Group and Family Devotional Application**

1. As you have agreed with Jesus this week and prayed for our church to walk together in unity, how has that affected your view and personal desire for unity?
2. What is the definition of Gossip? Do you agree or disagree?
3. Discuss the three points of “How to Live in A Gossip Free Zone.”
4. Who do you need to fix things with today?
5. What are you doing to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit at Believers Church?