



Date: _____

Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

God's Top Ten Series, Lesson 41

Lesson Title: Never Gossip

Take Home Point: Never gossip.

Warm-Up:

When Napoleon was deposed as the emperor of France, he was exiled to the island of Corsica until his death. He died under somewhat mysterious circumstances, and a number of theories have been advanced over the years as to what was the cause of his death. One of the more intriguing is that he was slowly poisoned to death by the addition of arsenic to his food. As small amounts of arsenic accumulated in his body, the effect was eventually deadly. How like the poison of gossip this is! It is a rare case that one instance of gossip destroys the reputation of a person or results in a completely wrong view of truth. It is the cumulative effect of repeated speculation, opinion, and verbal attack that eventually ruins reputation and credibility. "Death by a thousand cuts" is a terrible thing to do to a person.

Read: Exodus 20:16; Matthew 18:15; Ephesians 4:29; James 3:5-10

Observation (What happened?):

What kind of talk are we to have?

What is one of the great dangers of our speech, or of gossiping, to ourselves?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What is gossiping? Why are we commanded not to do it?

How can our tongue poison our whole person?

Insight:

Just like stealing, adultery, and murder, gossip comes in many flavors, not all of which are obvious. It doesn't have to be a direct verbal statement; often the real damage of gossip is done by comparison. A good example is Absalom, son of King David. In 2 Samuel 15, he repeatedly told the people of Jerusalem, "If only I were appointed judge!" Which was the same as saying, "King David doesn't care about you as I do!" Deadly gossip. It tore the family and the nation apart. Just as there is the legal situation of accessory to murder, by a willingness to listen or even keep silent we become an accessory to gossip. To not discourage is to encourage. It is also possible to be absolutely truthful but still gossip. If the truth being told violates a confidence, implies a negative view of a person, or damages a reputation, it's still wrong. God wants us to be very careful how we talk about his creation. As Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-2: *"Do not judge, or you, too, will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged. . ."* (NIV)

Application (What does it mean to me?):

How can you discourage others from gossiping? How do you resist the temptation?

Think of family members or friends you know that need encouragement. Speak kindly to them this week.