

## **BYOB (Bring Your Own Brain)**

### **What about Gossip?**

August 28, 2011

A Pentecost 11

Romans 12:9-21

Children's Sermon story:

Mary broke her kite while playing with Sara but her Dad said he could fix it.

Sarah told Jim that Mary broke her kite but that it couldn't be fixed.

Jim told Mark that Mary broke Sarah's kite.

Mark told Daniel that Mary broke Sarah's kite on purpose!

Daniel told Susan that Mary broke Sarah's kite on purpose because Sara was really mean to Mary.

Susan said to Daniel and Mark and Jim and Mary that Sarah was a mean girl.

Daniel, Mark, Jim and Mary said that they should not ever play with Sarah again.

And Sara wondered why no one would play with her at recess. Talk about the story with the kids.  
(Mine)

Four clergymen were on the way home from a conference. The conversation was casual, but became serious when one of them proposed that they should start confessing their sins to each other.

The first one admitted, *"My sin is gambling. It's almost an obsession."*

The second confessed, *"Well, my problem is alcohol. I'm really addicted to it."*

The third sighed, *"I'll have to admit that I exaggerated on my income taxes. My sin is greed."*

The fourth clergyman was silent.

The others urged him to stand by their agreement to come clean and confess.

*"Well, my friends,"* he said, *"I might as well tell you. My sin is that of gossiping and tale-bearing, and when we get home, I'm going to have a ball!"* (Story found on HOMILETIC Online)

Today's request for our Bring Your Own Brain series reads as follows:

*I would like to hear a sermon on Gossip. Is it always bad? Is it okay to listen to gossip? I need to hear this sermon because I was hurt by but survived some gossip many years ago.*

This is a heartfelt question.

How many of us have been the victim of gossip?

I would bet every one of our grade schooler and confirmation students already knows what it feels like to be talked about. School halls are filled with “the latest rumor.”

Of course so are neighborhoods, workplaces, family reunions, even churches can be the perfect setting for gossip and rumors to grow and multiply until the truth is unrecognizable and someone inevitably gets hurt.

It’s been said, a gossip is someone who can give you all the details without knowing any of the facts

So, what is so tempting about gossip anyway?

All I would have to say is “Pssst have you heard the latest about...and all heads lean forward.”

I think, there is something about wanting to be “in the know” or to have “information to share” that is irresistible. Some gossip may be relatively harmless, idle talk. However, more than not, it can deeply hurt. Experts are beginning to recognize gossip as a form of bullying.

Gossip is not a cultural or modern issue.

It has been a problem from the beginning of time and is spoken about at least 50 times in the Bible. (*I’ve set out, on the teaching table in the gathering area, a list of passages you may want to look at.*)

There is even a commandment about it—Thou shalt not bear false witness. But did you know that more than once, the Bible places gossip in the same category as murder.

God takes gossip very seriously and warns against it, speaking it and listening to it, because gossip has the power to break the bonds of relationship and to divide the community.

Furthermore gossip undermines hope and trust.

What I’ve been talking about so far is gossip that hurts another person—bad gossip.

But is gossip always bad?

It may surprise you but the answer is no. Not all gossip is bad.

The word "gossip" has an interesting etymology. Originally it came from the Anglo-Saxon word "god" "sib," (*Sib like sibling*) which meant "God relative" and originally referred to a person who shared good news about relatives with family and friends, especially news about the birth of a child. A sponsor at a baptism was called also called a "godsib."

Originally a Gossip was someone who told good news about the family. So, if gossip is good news, then it might be good gossip.

Another way to decide if it is "good gossip" is to ask ourselves if the subject of the story would be comfortable with what's being shared. If not, then it is not "good gossip." (internet)

And then there is the "Three-filter test" that some say dates all the way back to Socrates. (Homiletic online)

- The first filter is Truth: Are you absolutely sure the statement is true?
- The second filter is Goodness: Does the statement say something good about another person or situation?
- The third filter is Usefulness: Is the statement useful in some way?

If it passes all three filters, then you can be pretty sure it is good gossip.

There is a new study by the [British Psychological Society](#) which shows chatting about others can make you happier. But there's a catch: It has to be nice gossip.

The research shows that, after saying good things about a person, positive emotions were raised three percent, while self-esteem rose by five percent. Furthermore, good gossip can give people a greater sense of social support. So, it's good for you to talk about someone's good fortune: Getting engaged. Getting married. Having babies. Getting a new promotion or good grades in school. Happy occasions.

Bottom line is that if its good news then it is probably worth sharing.

Which brings me to my final point, Why are we so willing to share all sorts of news, good or bad, about every private detail of our lives and about the lives of others: Mistakes made, indiscretions, our finances, what our kids have done...

...but we are so hesitant, almost secretive, about the best news of all:  
That Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God.

We call that good news the gospel.  
What the gospel means for us is that

- ❑ God loves us,
- ❑ God provides for us
- ❑ God forgives us,
- ❑ Jesus died so that we might live, ...
- ❑ We are saved by grace through faith.

And all of this great news of the gospel is worth sharing.

So go ahead and be a gossip, or in old Anglo-Saxon, a “God Sib.”  
Reclaim that early meaning and be a member of God’s family that has great  
news to share with other family members and with friends.

Leave this place, knowing that you have heard some great news about the faith,  
and Gossip, tell every one you know, that Jesus, indeed, loves them.  
Because this is the Good News of the Gospel.  
Amen