

Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit Gossip – A proverbial approach

Hey did you hear about Tom? Wife's leaving him. Apparently he had a little secretary on the side. Guess the wife of his finally caught on. But here is the best part, you wouldn't believe . . .

This is when you stop the conversation saying that nothing being told to you is uplifting to the people involved. You know Tom pretty well so imagining him having an affair seems really out of character. So you ask the person telling you if they have talked to Tom or his wife. To which they reply no, but I have heard . . .

Once again you stop your story telling friend and ask why they are telling you this. To which they reply with some cryptic statement about thinking you should know about your friend. But is that really what they are doing? Are they really telling you something about Tom to help Tom OR is there another reason?

How often do you listen to someone telling you about Tom and don't stop them. Instead you continue to listen. Before long you believe everything you are being told and even go so far as to share it with others. Eventually you have told so many people that the story is now coming back to you. There is only one problem, it isn't true.

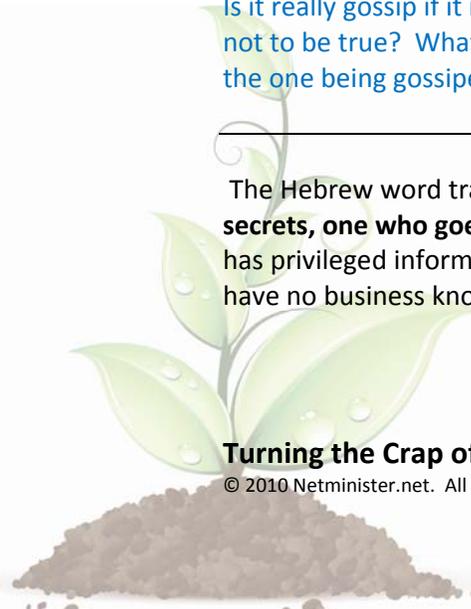
Gossip has been described as taking a pillow full of feathers to the tallest building in town and tearing the pillow open. Dealing with it is like trying to find all those feathers again. Pretty difficult if not impossible just like dealing with the results of gossip. So how do you handle it in a Christ-like way? And how do you stop your friend when they are telling you the most delicious gossip in the world?!

LIFE QUESTIONS

Have you ever stopped someone from telling you gossip? If so, what was their response?

Is it really gossip if it is the truth? Have you ever been told something as gossip that turned out not to be true? What did you do about it? Did you confront the gossiper? Did you apologize to the one being gossiped upon?

The Hebrew word translated "gossip" in the Old Testament is defined as "**one who reveals secrets, one who goes about as a talebearer or scandal-monger.**" A gossiper is a person who has privileged information about people and proceeds to reveal that information to those who have no business knowing it. Gossip is distinguished from sharing information in two ways:



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1. Intent. Gossipers often have the goal of building themselves up by making others look bad and exalting themselves as some kind of repositories of knowledge.
2. The type of information shared. Gossipers speak of the faults and failings of others, or reveal potentially embarrassing or shameful details regarding the lives of others without their knowledge or approval. Even if they mean no harm, it is still gossip.

So how does one go about with a Christ-like effect on gossip?

1. Tell the truth, quickly, even if it is embarrassing

Proverbs 12:17

17 He who speaks truth declares righteousness, But a false witness, deceit.

Proverbs 12:16

16 A fool's wrath is known at once, But a prudent man covers shame.

Far too often a rumor, which is gossip, starts because the truth is really embarrassing or someone is hiding something going on in his or her life. Once that knowledge is found by the wrong person or for the matter any person that isn't going to deal with it appropriately – i.e., going to the person in question about the information to determine how to help him or her. By telling the truth quickly you may have to deal with shame or embarrassment, but you will be following God's Word.

Be fast to confront the truth. Deal with it and seek out those that can help you, not spread your problems out for the world to see. Seek honest men and women to surround you daily. Don't just dump on them – avoid using people as a waste depository for your negative emotions or past failing. But when you screw up, or do it on purpose, you need to have people around you to help you address the truth fast.

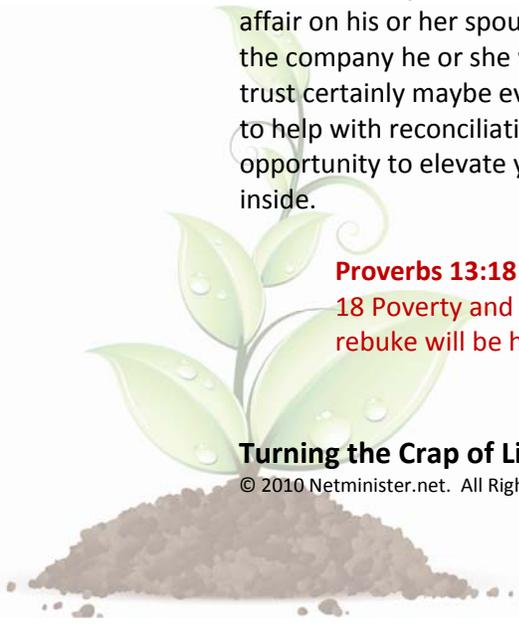
And when confronted with someone who has done something wrong, be quick to listen and help that person cover their shame. Not for the purpose of helping them get away with it, but in the sense of helping them deal with the consequences. A true friend does love at all times, even when the story is true and the failure is real. How would you handle your best friend having an affair on his or her spouse? What about finding out your family member has been stealing from the company he or she works for? Each decision will lead to consequences, divorce, broken trust certainly maybe even jail time. Your place isn't to judge or take joy in their problems, but to help with reconciliation of their life, their family and their relationships. Don't give it as an opportunity to elevate yourself because you have some special knowledge from being on the inside.

Proverbs 13:18

18 Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, But he who regards a rebuke will be honored.

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One of the reasons we are shameful or embarrassed is because we have done something wrong. Dealing with it quickly means we will have to deal with correction. Sometimes we are the ones that need to confront someone about their need for correction and sometimes we are the ones needing correcting. Whatever the case, we need to be prepared to react quickly. Like wildfires, gossip spreads much like the feathers from the tower, all over the place.

But what about when we haven't done anything wrong but talking about the situation is just plain embarrassing? You still have to seek out wise people to help you through it. Maybe you didn't have the affair, but in your mind you let it be something you thought about and now that the rumor is out you are confronted with the thoughts. The shame is there because you have given it a thought, but you must not let that be between anyone but you, God and a person(s) you consider to be wise counsel. Remember, God ain't no blabbermouth. So feel free to take your problems and situations to Him first, because He does care for you. And He can help you find a solution to even the most pressing and embarrassing problem.

2. Seek Godly council, not blabbermouths – expect confrontation

Sometimes we aren't meaning to gossip as much as we are meaning to find wisdom from someone else. The word for Counsel is guidance or a plan. When we are dealing with a particularly difficult situation, we are not always equipped to help someone out. In that case it isn't gossip as much as it is counsel we are seeking. The important thing is to never confuse the two. Wise counsel

Proverbs 1:5

5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,

Proverbs 20:19

19 He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.

Proverbs 11:13-14

13 A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.

14 Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

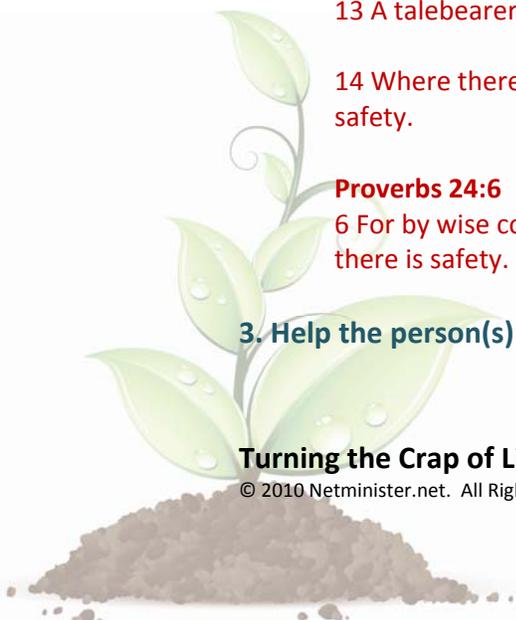
Proverbs 24:6

6 For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety.

3. Help the person(s) involved both in the gossip and as the subject of the gossip

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Proverbs 16:28

8 A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

Proverbs 18:8

8 The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body.

There is some gossip that is so good, so delicious, so alluring that it is like porn. You cannot get enough. We all know the person who is perfect to get it from. Sometimes at the office we refer to this person as the "one who knows." The problem is the one who knows isn't helping the situation, only advancing his or her position at the expense of the subject of the gossip.

This is when we are called to be brave to act boldly because it is the right thing to do. Understand this is really where the men are separated from the boys. How many people do you know that are willing to confront you about something embarrassing that is gossip? How do you react to them? Are you that person? Are you brave enough to risk ridicule, scorn and possibly being ostracized because of confronting someone as opposed to continuing the gossip? Are you willing to stand before a friend, a family member or a coworker and confront the behavior that is causing the gossip? If not, why? God provides the strength we need to deal with any situation. Why aren't you using it? What is stopping you?

So what, do you know Tom? He is a jerk. He is getting exactly what is coming to him. Why the way he treats people is sickening. There is no way I would ever help him. Do you know what he did with his last secretary . . . opps I am gossiping. But even so, he doesn't deserve my help. He has never helped me. Why if it was me, he would be all over this gossip. As a matter of fact in the past he has been the one gossiping.

Be careful, when you get to this point you are really entering into what Jesus could say of us. He could easily say look at the mess you have made, the stories I could tell wow would cause the hair on the back of your neck to stand up and then fall out. But He doesn't, as a matter of fact the bible says that He makes intercession for us.

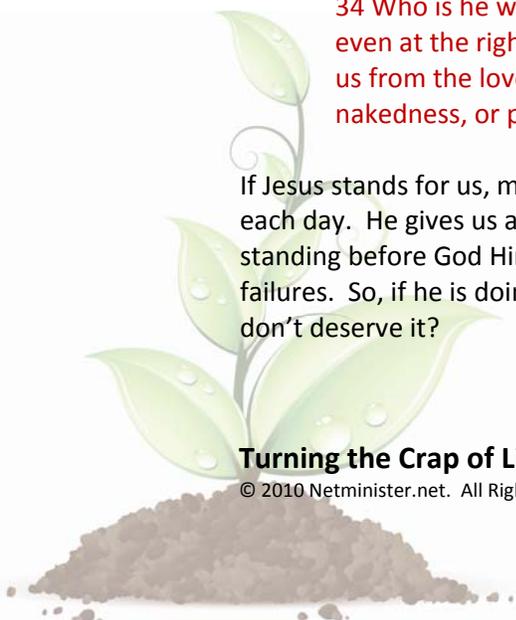
Romans 8:34-35

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

If Jesus stands for us, making intercession, literally meaning he deals with the problems we have each day. He gives us a second, third and sometimes a millionth chance. Again and again standing before God Himself, dealing with our misfortunes, mistakes and downright purposed failures. So, if he is doing that, shouldn't we be seeking to help those we can, especially if they don't deserve it?

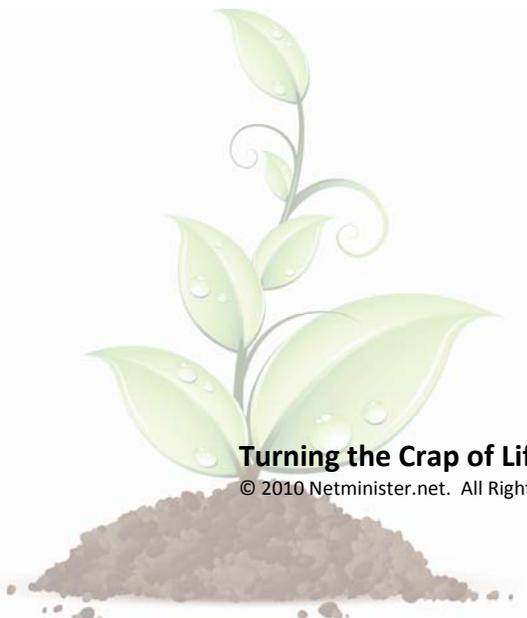
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Final Analysis: You want to get people's attention, see how they respond to your response to gossip. When you refuse to listen or take part in bashing someone, you will be people's attention. Sometimes it will cost you respect or being a part of the gang, but God's gang is far more important to be a part of than the one at work, social or family situations.

Are you ready to be the one that dams up the river of gossip by refusing to spread it? Are you willing to confront the situation and deal with the consequences? And are you willing to help the subject of the gossip? Guess what, Jesus is doing that for you this very moment. Think about it.



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