

# The Old Paths

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## “Avoid Gossip And Slander” (#2)

Jarrod Jacobs

Last week, we began a study of gossip and slander. In the last issue, we defined the words “gossip” and “slander.” We also noted God’s warnings against gossip and slander. This week, we conclude the study.

### *Perpetuating Gossip And Slander*

Sadly, rather than avoiding gossip and slander, we are often witnesses to folks *perpetuating* gossip and slander! How does this happen? This happens not only as someone speaks things he/she ought not, it also occurs when folks are *listening* when they ought not! In other words, when it comes to gossip and slander, not only are “loose lips” necessary for one to be guilty of sin, but a “listening ear” can also produce sin! If you do not believe this, return to Numbers 13:31-14:1 and remember that the “evil report” the spies brought back was only half of the equation! Had the nation of Israel told those spies to shut their mouths, and then listened to Caleb and Joshua, that generation of people would have enjoyed the Promised Land as God had intended! If these folks had rallied around Caleb and Joshua, rather than trying to kill them (Num. 14:10), we would have read an entirely different outcome! Sadly, since the people listened to the slander, and rebelled against God, that generation died without entering the Promised Land!

Later on in history, there were

folks who spread the rumors that Christ had a devil, or that He was a sinner (Matt. 12:24; Jn. 9:16, 24, 10:20-21). Some spoke of Christ being a deceiver, etc. (Jn. 7:12). These were slanderous statements, and statements which needed a receptive hearer in order for them to spread. Unfortunately, there were those who believed the statements, and they rejected our Lord because of it!

Moving forward in history, we read of occasions when the apostles and early preachers were in a town, and the people were “stirred up” by different ones (Paul experienced this often, Acts 13:45, 17:5, 13-14, 18:6a, 19:9, 24-32). How were they “stirred up”? They were “stirred up” because they listened to the gossip and slander that were being spread by the enemies of the Lord! Some, rather than giving Paul and the others a fair hearing (as they did in Berea, Acts 17:11-12), listened to the liars and persecuted Paul and the other apostles and preachers. Sadly, the enemies came to Berea, and Paul had to escape from there as well (Acts 17:13-14).

Gossip and slander are a two-way street! You have to have someone willing to talk, and then someone willing to listen for them to be successful. Sadly, we see all too often the “success” of gossip and slander among brethren. Gossip and slander are perpetuated daily as a result of folks giving the liars their “listening ears.”

### *Ways To Avoid Gossip And Slander*

Having learned God’s attitude toward these sinful practices, and how

such sins are perpetuated, let us learn to avoid gossip and slander. One who would please God ought to have nothing to do with such sins. Unfortunately, gossip and slander are but symptoms of bigger problems. Therefore, if we are going to avoid gossip and slander, we need to address the root problems behind these sins of the tongue. In order to avoid gossip and slander ....

1) **Let us have a heart of humility.** The humble of heart, the one who thinks less of himself than others (Rom. 12:3), will not make it a practice to talk about others in a slanderous way. The humble of heart who puts God first, others second, and himself last could not very well speak slanderously against God’s creation (Jas. 3:9)! The Bible records the events of many great men and women so that we can see how these heroes of the faith conducted themselves while upon this earth. Many of these people are great examples of humility. May we follow the examples of such worthies as Christ, Moses, Daniel, Timothy, and others, who humbly served God, and guarded their tongue from speaking in proud, boastful ways. When humility is absent in folks, gossip and slander are soon to follow. This is because the proud person often belittles, or “digs up dirt” on others, in order to make himself look better.

2) **Let us avoid hatred of others.** David said the ones gossiping about him were those who hated him (Ps. 41:7). Isn’t this still true today? Generally, we do not gossip about our friends, do we? Yet, we may try to spread some “whoppers” about those whom we do not like! Yes, hatred is a strong motivator for gossip and slander. Often, such sins of the tongue occur because a person hates the one he/she is talking about, and wishes them harm. We need to remember the words of Christ who told us to love our enemies and pray for them

(Matt. 5:44). Have we been doing this? It is too easy to allow emotions and wrongs done (real or imagined) to cloud our judgment. Don't act like that!

3) **Let us keep the words we speak to a minimum!** How many times have people got into trouble for "engaging their mouth before their brain was in gear"? Let us not be hasty to speak. Rather, let us heed to words of Solomon who said, *"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.... Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin..."* (Ecc. 5:2, 6). Solomon taught us, *"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise"* (Prov. 10:19). I know of folks who have spread gossip about fellow Christians (including preachers), whom they have never met, nor have even heard them speak (on tape, "live," etc.). Friends, how can one in good conscience speak negatively about folks when they have never even heard them? Would such actions be following what was expressed by Solomon so long ago? Isn't it amazing what some folks will do? How wise were the words of Solomon that remind us to keep our words to a minimum! May we echo in our lives the words of David who said, *"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips"* (Ps. 141:3).

4) **Let us reserve our ears for listening to the truth.** As we learned earlier, gossip and slander are perpetuated by the "listening ear." Since this statement is true, the reverse is also true! Specifically, gossip and slander are rendered impotent and useless when folks refuse to listen! Let us keep our ears open to the truth, and let us not give any ground for gossip

and slander. Our minds need to be filled with that which is lovely, pure, truthful, virtuous, praise-worthy, etc. (Phil. 4:8). The sins of gossip and slander are nothing like that. Let us avoid them!

If this is not enough to convince us to avoid slander and gossip, please read Romans 1:32 again. Remember, if we providing a listening ear to those who gossip and slander, God will not find us guiltless! We should not be slanderers, nor gossips, and we ought not waste time listening to this garbage! Just imagine how gossip and slander would be severely diminished if the "listeners" just stopped listening!

### Conclusion

Slander and gossip are insidious problems we face. Therefore, let us avoid these sins with all we have! As James says, *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"* (Jas. 1:19). If we are going to please God in **word** as well as in deed, gossip and slander must never cross our lips! Let us hear the truth from the Bible concerning these things. Let us put into practice the rules we have learned for avoiding gossip and slander so that we will be the kind of people God would have us to be – pure in thought, word, and deed! Be warned: *"He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool"* (Prov. 10:18).

## "Following The Pattern"

Jarrold Jacobs

Recently, we studied about the Tabernacle in the Bible class. At the time, I showed the class some pictures of a "modern-day" Tabernacle someone made ([http://www.biblicalisraelstours.com/full\\_scale\\_model\\_of\\_the\\_old\\_test.htm](http://www.biblicalisraelstours.com/full_scale_model_of_the_old_test.htm)). As I was looking at these pictures, the thought hit me, "How is it possible that the man who made this "Tabernacle" could honestly tell folks that what he made was an accurate representation of the Tabernacle that was made by the Israelites (Ex. 36-40)? As I thought about this, the answer hit me. The reason he could say that the "Tabernacle" he made was like the original Tabernacle is because he had FOLLOWED THE PATTERN God gave; just like Moses followed God's pattern (Ex. 25:9, 40, 26:30; Heb. 8:5)!!

What has this to do with us? Consider the fact that several years ago, folks in this country became interested in establishing the Lord's church here. Even today there are folks interested in teaching others and establishing churches all over the world. How can we be sure that folks have, and are currently, reproducing the church we read about in the Bible? We know it happens when they FOLLOW THE PATTERN God gave! When men are satisfied to follow the Lord's pattern for salvation, for worship, for the work of the church, etc., they will produce a church of Christ in that area! ***Think about it!!***

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Don't forget the call-in radio program on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-9246 (WBIO)** with your Bible question.

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