APPLIED FAITH: TONGUE CONTROL

Matthew 12:30-37 (pg. 690) and miscellaneous texts

**Two ears and one mouth:** Proverbs 10:19. When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. Prov.18:13.Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.

**Be a wise listener:** Prov. 18:17 The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him. Prov. 25: 12 Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man’s rebuke to a listening ear.

**Self-esteem problems and the mouth:** Prov.18:2 Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions. Prov. 27.2 Let someone else praise you, not your own mouth—a stranger, not your own lips.

**The perverse power of Gossip:** Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissention, and a gossip separates close friends. Proverbs 26:20 Without wood a fire goes out; and without gossip a quarrel dies down.

**You won’t get away with it:** Eccl. 10:20 …a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say. Prov. 6:19 There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him…a man who stirs up dissention among brothers.

**Oh Lighten up:** Eccl. 7:21-22 Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant curse you—for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

**The Trouble with Arguing:** Prov. 23:9. Do not speak to fools, for they will scorn your prudent words. Prov. 26:4.Don’t answer the foolish arguments of fools,  or you will become as foolish as they are.

**The healing power of words:** Prov.12:18. Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Prov.16:25. An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.

**Understanding Gossip**

**Talking about people** is natural and normal and even healthy in the right circumstances. For example, church historians have coined the expression "gossiping the gospel" to describe how the Gospel spread so far and wide in the first century. True community and true family requires that we know what's going on in each other's lives. In fact, healthy teamwork in any context requires a high degree of familiarity with those we're working with and their present needs.

**Gossip,** on the other hand, is defined as spreading information about others that is neither necessary nor helpful to them or their reputations. This is not the same as slander, which is the deliberate publishing or verbalizing of damaging information about another person when you know it is false—or should have known. The facts in gossip may or may not be true, but once they're spread, it doesn't much matter—the damage is done.

**The motives** for gossip, like any sin, are varied. The sense of power to make or break someone's reputation can be addictive and self-aggrandizing. Or gossip may be so much a part of a person's habits that they don't even think of it as wrong. Some people find it a means of acceptance into certain groups they strive for. Others use it as a means of hurting someone they're angry with. But like all sins and addictions, the long-term guilt and lack of trust from others cancel out the short-term feeling of acceptance or power.

**Stopping gossip** is everyone's responsibly. If you enjoy it, be forewarned that God puts it in the category or immorality (Romans 1:29) and like most sins, it takes two to tango.

* Don't believe accusations unless you have information from both sides.
* Don't use prayer or prayer requests to gossip in the name of Jesus.
* Be careful who you share your frustrations with—especially if they involve other people.
* Get new friends if the glue of a group or relationship is gossiping about other people.
* Practice "gossiping" some good news about other people.
* Ask God for genuine love for others and for your own attitude.