**Man Have I Got Something to Tell You!**

Lord, here I am again...in yet another church that doesn't seem to care that I am single. Sure, they take my tithes, ask me to help watch the zillion kids in childcare, but they mostly ignore me. I just hate it. I hate being forgotten. I hate that my pastor never addresses singleness from the pulpit. I am not even sure if he knows who I am, much less that I am single. And our deacons, are you sure they are even breathing? What about the committees of this church? It seems like you can't change a light bulb without a committee to decide when to change it. And another thing....

You know, this single sounds a lot like I use to sound when I was much younger. But it also sounds like a lot of people I know that are married, too. Bottom line, we all go to churches where there are things we do not like. Maybe it's the pastor’s last sermon, how they voted to elect an elder, how they spend the missions money, or how they involved you. But maybe it's more than just your church. Maybe you also have some complaints about your job. Maybe your boss drives you nuts. He or she keeps you overtime without any concern that you might have a life. Or maybe it's a neighbor who constantly plays loud music or never cuts the grass. Or maybe it's a friend who constantly dates the wrong girl/guy and never seems to get it.

So how do most people handle their complaints? They tell someone. You know the old saying, if you love something like a restaurant or where you bought your shoes you might tell 2 or 3 but if you are unhappy, you tell an army. The problem with telling an army is what may be a simple complaint or a time of venting becomes gossip. And this gossip can not only spread, it can cause pain to others, even broken relationships. It can also cause damage to a person's reputation, church or workplace.

**So what is the difference between gossip and venting?**

Venting allows us to hear our own voice, hear the problem, and even work it out. Venting allows us to process the stress. People who vent may or may not be looking for a solution. Sometimes they know God has placed them in a specific situation: amongst those aggravating people at work, on a committee at church, next door that a particular neighbor. They know that God has placed them there and is using them to reach those people.

Gossip can sometimes appear as "sharing for prayer" or "venting" when in reality a part of your heart is hoping that what you are saying will make you look better and another person look worse. You say these things to not only feel better about who you are, but also to feel better about what you do.

You are not really concerned with the outcome. You ask people to maybe not say anything but you know down inside, they might. Gossip is very self-focused. Gossip is also something I find people do when they struggle with self-esteem, and with being a people pleaser.

***Proverbs 11: 13 NIV A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.***

So how do you know when you are venting or gossiping? When you start to tell someone about your church, your pastor, your boss, or your friend - what type of things are you sharing and why? Are you sharing a character flaw? Are you sharing a sin? Are you sharing something they did wrong to you? What is your ultimate goal in talking about them behind their backs? And to whom are you talking about them? Are you really sharing because they need prayer?

Remember, just treat people (and what we say about them) like we want to be treated. I promise you, your relationships will not only be stronger but you just might handle all of life’s problems better.

***Luke 6:31 NIV Do to others as you would have them do to you.***

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