

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 38, **No.34, August 21, 2012** / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)**

[This article is edited from one I have kept in my files from years back. It addresses some very important issues. **However**, the issue is not whether or not you agree with the article. **The issue is only this: IS IT BIBLICAL?** If not, where does it miss the mark of Biblical truth? That is a sincere and honest question! You got sincere questions and/or some 'Biblical light'? — please share!]

COUNSELING, Friends and "The words of a Talebearer..." Proverbs 18:8

What do people usually talk about when they go to a Counselor or Psychiatrist/Psychologist or to their friends for counsel or advice? They talk about themselves, their feelings, their relationships, their problems, and other people in their lives— often the 'other people' are people WHO ARE NOT PRESENT! The counselor or 'therapist' will generally ask questions about present circumstances, past circumstances, and related feelings. The counselor will try to understand the person and his problems according to various theoretical frameworks. The counselor will also guide the counselee (their term) towards viewing life according to the counseling framework being used.

While there may be no intentional lying, the story will be told from the counselee's perspective, with details chosen from the counselee's memory. REALITY: Because of PERSONAL BIAS and the nature of memory, it is very unlikely that the story will be an exact replica of the events. It may be grossly wrong. In fact, it often turns into **a tale that places the counselee in a better light than the others being talked about!** Surprised? We should not be: Prov. 20:6; 21:2! **Moreover**, the counselee is often looking for sympathy and/or justification to take some course of action and not a Biblical solution!

HERE IS WHAT IS EXCEEDINGLY UNCOMMON among professing Christians: A person goes for counsel and says, "Such and such is my situation. Such and such is what I am facing from the behavior of my spouse, co-worker or whoever. **NOW, ABOVE ALL ELSE I AM looking for WISDOM AND GRACE to walk in the steps of Jesus SO I CAN BE God's agent for miracles and healing! My chief**

concern is that my attitudes, actions and reactions please the LORD!”

Sadly, for a number of years the usual counseling way of dealing with problems of living has been to talk about problems, feelings, circumstances, and **the sins of others behind their backs. Why?** Because the counselee wants to blame them for their own carnal behavior.

Indeed, some counselors use regression, which encourages the counselee to remember and even re-experience the past. Since recall is never accurate, but rather is full of gaps that must be filled in, the memory inevitably becomes altered and enhanced. The further back the memory, the greater chance for imagination to take over and the greater the opportunity for talebearing that is far from accurate. As these tales unfold and are emotionally experienced, **they take on a life of their own and become newly created memories**— tales of parents [or a spouse] doing things they never did or failing to do what they actually did.

However, one cannot limit talebearing to regressive counseling. MOST counseling or therapy that exposes sins, secrets, or private matters **of others not present** can rightly be considered talebearing. EXAMPLES:

If ‘behind his back’ a woman complains about her husband in counseling or elsewhere, she is very possibly revealing private matters, **exposing perceived or actual faults, and/or making him seem worse than he really is**— that is talebearing.

If ‘behind her back’ a husband complains about his wife in counseling, or elsewhere, he is very possibly revealing private matters, **exposing perceived or actual faults, and/or making her seem worse than she really is**— that is talebearing. Talebearing is destructive and can be a main reason marriage counseling so often leads to divorce.

IMPORTANT NOTE: When we warn about gossip and talebearing **we do not condone covering up actual serious sin that may have been committed**— but such would have to be verified, not just talked about in counseling. **ALSO, if an actual crime has been committed**, the person needs to report the crime to the proper authorities, not just talk about it in counseling. (In recent communication with a young adult, the young adult openly accused an adult family member of a serious crime. I responded that he should go directly to the police. I immediately consulted with the DA’s office.) **REALITY:** Too often the TRASHING of a person who is not present is a SMOKESCREEN to hide or deflect attention away from dealing with one’s own sin; **and/or is but venom from one who has believed an evil report and has taken up an offense for a friend or family member!** Lying talebearing is so vile and effective that there are proven cases to where the INNOCENT have spent years in prisons... and others executed before truth was found!

What the Bible Says

The Bible warns us about the evil of talebearing: "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (**Proverbs 18:8; 26:22**); "He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (**Proverbs 20:19**); "Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (**Proverbs 26:20**). Moreover, the Lord commands His people not to act as talebearers: "Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people" (**Leviticus 19:16**).

Complaining about people WHO ARE NOT PRESENT during counseling will generally give a very biased view. As the friend or counselor hears the complaints, he cannot help but form an impression of the person being complained about— even though he has never met the person and **only has hear-say information** that would not be of value in a court of law. In such cases, the friend or counselor is hearing only one side of the story and would FOOLISHLY tend to see the situation from that deceptive perspective. (Prov. 18:13)

[REALITY: It is rare but possible — and necessary — for a friend or counselor to withhold judgment until all the facts are gathered from all sides; and then give the 'counselee' the directions and responses called for from the Word of God.]

This sort of thing is not just a problem for counselors; it is a common problem for friends. Suzie tells Sally all the problems she is having with husband Sam. But Suzie does not tell Sally about her own wrongs and failures. NOR does Suzie ask for counsel or help in dealing with her own failures! If the counselor or the friend is not VALIENT FOR THE TRUTH, they will take up an offense for Suzie and join Suzie in condemning Sam.

Reality: In ministry, it seems almost impossible to avoid all situations of 'just hearing one side.' But if I hear ONE SIDE— I know that all I have heard is ONE SIDE. If I then hear the OTHER SIDE— I know that all I have heard is the other side. Moreover, I STILL VERY LIKELY DO NOT HAVE ALL THE TRUTH. Thus, my focus is never to take sides. My focus is to look for where and HOW BIBLICAL TRUTH applies to each and to both.

When talebearing includes false information about another person, it becomes bearing false witness. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exodus 20:16; see also Deut. 5:20; Ps. 101:5; Prov. 24:28). Bearing false witness in counseling can [AND DOES] happen as a person describes situations from a hurt and biased perspective.

Sometimes a person is covering his/her own sin by exaggerating the sins of others. Tainted tales about other people are grievous. Proverbs 25:18 says, "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow."

QUESTION: How many counselors [And how many friends!?] actually check

out the details of the stories they have been told? Sadly, very few, if any.

In fact, recovered memory counselors contend that it is their duty to believe and support the counselee, even though research has demonstrated not only that memory is faulty, but also that counselees lie to their counselors! Many counselees deceive by telling only part of the story and thereby turn it into talebearing. **The Bible advises getting the facts before believing tales: "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him" (Prov. 18:17; 20:6).**

BEWARE: The mentality that considers talking about problems and about other people **BEHIND THEIR BACKS as being necessary** is pandemic in our culture. Gossip is as old as the Fall and talebearing gets lots of attention for the flesh.

Indeed, people love to gossip and to tell tales. **Not only do they get lots of attention, but when they tell their tales from their own perspective, they may get lots of sympathy and support.** Yes, indeed, the flesh will feel better. In fact, people often feel relieved to "get it off their chest," but the feeling of relief does not make it right or even helpful to the situation. Even so, the very process of [MOST] counseling encourages people to talk about other people **BEHIND THEIR BACKS**.

Those who claim to be Biblical counselors (or genuine friends!) who encourage people to talk about others **BEHIND THEIR BACKS AND WHO COME TO JUDGMENTS WITHOUT EVEN GETTING THE WHOLE STORY cannot be performing a biblically-sound service.**

RELATED DANGER: The 'friend' is in a precarious position: If he/she listens to and basically affirms the tales of the talebearer— the friendship is kept active and 'tighter' than ever! **Such a 'friend' will now be trusted to help build a support team around the gossip.** However, if the 'friend' dares to exhort the talebearer... or says, "I am going directly to the party you have accused to get the other side!" (Prov. 18:17), — the friendship will likely be 'killed.'

IN A SIMILAR FASHION, THE COUNSELOR is in a precarious position: He/she would **likely lose any future, nice paychecks!** He/she might even be fired or sued— for he/she has promised total confidentiality! Thus, they will most often be giving counsel based only on a one-sided report! **REALITY:** The friend, the counselor, the pastor who takes the side of and tells a troubled soul what they want to hear will be highly esteemed by the troubled soul! The friend, counselor or pastor who speaks the truth in love to the troubled soul will **OFTEN** be rejected and demonized. **However, HEALING only comes when friends, counselors and/or pastors are genuinely TRUTHFUL as Nathan was to David, in the Old Testament!**

Tales Spread Far and Wide

But, [INDEED!] some may insist that this kind of [behind the back] talk is absolutely necessary and that all such information is confidential. **First of all**, the talebearing,

gossiping, or even bearing false witness has often already happened in the counseling office. **Second**, the word "confidential" does not mean that no one else will know.

Counselors often keep written records of their sessions and much private information is recorded. Depending on the environment, this information may spread further than one might suppose. If counseling is associated with a counseling clinic, these notes will be included in the files. **In addition, counselors often consult with one another and thereby share the tales they have heard in the counseling room.** [By the way, this entire 'model' for helping people with life problems is foreign to the New Testament!]

"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Prov. 11:13). Most offenses are small, and for these, love should cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:6). **However, what if there is a serious offense of one person against another, of one spouse against another, of one family member against another? How can that be resolved?** Certainly not by talebearing! Proverbs 25:9 says, "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another" (Prov. 25:9).

Jesus gives clear guidelines to follow: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. 18:15-17)

Those who love one another will not share private matters about another person [behind their backs] with others, including psychological or biblical counselors. A husband who loves his wife as Christ loved the church would not expose her private life, conversations, actions, and faults with others, including a counselor. A wife who honors her husband would not expose his private life, conversations, actions, and faults with others, including a counselor. **NOTE: When your passion is to deal with your own sin— it is not necessary to focus on the failings of others!**

[NOTE AGAIN!] When we warn about gossip, **we do not condone covering up actual serious sins that may have been committed**, but those would have to be verified, not just talked about in counseling. **[ALSO] If an actual crime has been committed**, the person needs to report the crime to the authorities, not just talk about it in counseling.

Is Behind-the-back Talebearing Talk Necessary?

This not only happens in [most modern] counseling; it is encouraged! Even Christians who write so-called case studies that may be composites of more than one case include details about relationships that they should have no business knowing, but which are expected and encouraged in counseling. For years people

have been told that it is good to talk about their problems and to share personal details about others.

Somehow talking about these things has been promoted as necessary for mental-emotional healing, **even though there is research that reveals the contrary—that people often feel worse because the problems NOW appear bigger after discussing and analyzing them.**

Once a person describes a spouse in negative terms it is difficult to see the positive qualities, because positive qualities might undermine what has been said to the therapist.

Rather than the attitude about the situation improving, there is a strong possibility that the attitude may become strongly attached to the description given to the counselor. A felt need to justify one's complaints may solidify the negative report given to the counselor and lead to further deterioration in the marital relationship.

[BEWARE: Such 'talebearing talk' in counseling sessions or to friends which exaggerates the real or imagined faults of the person not present and EXCUSES the faults of the accuser is nothing short of a lying spirit. Have we read what the Bible warns about lying??]

Is it possible to help people **without the sins of others not present** being exposed? Is it possible to help people without talebearing? Is it possible to help people without focusing on the problems, real or imagined, of others? After all, people may temporarily feel better after they have talked with a sympathetic listener (counselor) about problem people in their lives. **But, this feeling of unburdening oneself is short-lived and, in itself, does not solve the problems. In fact, problems often get worse, because, when people spend emotional energy thinking and talking about what bothers them about their circumstances and others' involvement, the problems draw so much attention that what is good and right fades into the background.** Even if a person does feel better knowing that someone else has heard and cared, can counseling that encourages or even allows talebearing be the right way to help someone when talebearing can be harmful and is forbidden in Scripture?

Other Ways to Help People: We contend that there are other ways to help people. As we have seen, Matthew 18:15-18 sets forth a path to follow. Paul spoke of the foolishness of preaching. Yes, preaching is important for salvation, but what about afterwards?

Paul would still opt for preaching and teaching, for he declared in Galatians 3:1-3:

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in

the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Problems of living are to be dealt with by the hearing of faith and responding in faith. Yes, personal ministry is possible, but it should be geared to "the hearing of faith." One can seek what God wants to do in one's life without revealing the sins or secrets of others. **First, one can pray and pour out one's heart to God**, who is the only One who understands anyway. One can study the Bible and seek the Lord's wisdom from His word. One can grow in endurance, knowing that the trial of one's faith is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" (1 Peter 1:7). It has been demonstrated again and again that "suffering makes strong believers," but it is not the suffering itself, **but whether the sufferers turn to the Lord and strengthen their faith in Him through the suffering.**

OVERLOOKED REALITY: Life and relationship transformation does not come by TRASHING another person— deserved or not— behind their back! **Such miracle changes only begin to happen when I look at my own behavior, attitudes and responses and begin to get them in line with the Word of God!** (1 Peter 2:20-25; 3:1-18)

If a believer needs support and encouragement, a fellow believer can draw alongside for support and encouragement without knowing the details, especially since the direction one must always be pursuing is **one's own obedience and spiritual growth** rather than depending on someone else to change to make life more tolerable. If information is needed for the purpose of biblical instruction and possible application, the situation can be stated without lurid details.

MOREOVER, such needed info can and must be shared not to expose 'them' and excuse 'me'— but so that I MAY BE TRANSFORMED by dealing with MY own failures and then walking in the steps of Jesus! (Galatians 5:19-23; Romans 12:14-21) All problems of living can be used as reminders to draw close to the Lord, know Him more deeply, trust Him more fully, and seek to walk pleasing to Him through great trials, as well as through the ordinary challenges of life. The Lord IS involved in the life of every one of His children. He is the potter; we are the clay. And, He is forming a glorious bride without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

Christians have hope beyond anything that can be gained through counseling that encourages gossip and talebearing. They have a hope that should carry them through the trials of life right into the presence of the Lord.

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through

manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls." (1 Peter 1:3-9)

Grace will abound when we sit at the feet of JESUS, THE COUNSELOR! James Bell

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

- 1. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM!**
- 2. YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm** @ Adam and Bethany's home.
- 2. Thursdays @ 6:30pm:** OUTREACH VISITATION
- 3. EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am: Men's** Fellowship and Bible Study

AUGUST 26— SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSIONS CELEBRATION! We will have a Missionary during the Sunday School hour, during the morning worship, and during the early afternoon service. [We WILL have our normal Fellowship Covered-Dish Lunch]

- 1. 9:30am- Sunday School: Robin Reeves,** North American Mission Board, Kentucky.
- 2. 10:45am- A.M. Worship, - Bill Wardlaw,** International Mission Board, Africa Note: Bill Wardlaw and our Director of Missions, Mike Pennington, will have LUNCH with us!
- 3. 1:00pm- Afternoon service: Mike McClanahan,** North American Mission Board (Soon to serve in New York

Southside Christian School, (SCS). <http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>