

## A MOST OFTEN COMMITTED SIN

### James 4:11

**Introduction:** Perhaps this sin is committed more often by more people than any other sin. It is a sin committed with the tongue - gossip. It is wrong to speak badly of another and even more so when we don't know all the details. It is wrong to speak in such a way when we do not tell the "entire" truth and it is just as wrong to speak in this way even when we feel sure that what we are saying is the truth. There are those who feel that they must "speak their peace" regardless of who gets hurt. Some even clarify what they say by stating that they don't want to be know as a "hypocrite" and that they want all the facts clearly understood. There is such a thing as telling the truth but not telling it exactly as it is. We tend to want to "color" the truth with our own "version." There is a time to speak the truth and there is a time to be quiet, to not speak.

### I. "JUDGE NOT, THAT YOU BE NOT JUDGED..." (*Matthew 7:1-5*)

1. Most repeated things and criticism are based on "hear-say" and rumor that you have heard.
  - Our criticism is usually based on half-truths or something started long ago.
  - Remember the priest Eli who saw a drunk woman in church one day?
  - Remember how the disciples were accused of being drunk on the Day of Pentecost?
2. "Well, I saw it with my own eyes," or "heard it with my own hears..."
  - The priest Eli saw the woman with his own eyes.
  - The disciples were not drunk, although they "appeared" to be to those who saw them.
  - Eye witnesses do not always agree on what they think they saw.
    - Witnesses of accidents do not agree on the color of the vehicle or about the driver of the other vehicle.
    - Witnesses in the court room swear to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Yet two people who witnessed the very same thing have different stories.
3. Who among us are qualified to criticize or judge others? No one.
  - Wonder what kind of gossip floated around about David and Bathsheba? About Peter denying that he ever knew Jesus?
  - Remember when Jesus spoke about destroying the temple and raising it up in three days? He was talking about His body, but nobody thought of that did they?
  - Gossip is a story stretched. You can form a group of people into a circle and whisper a simple, short sentence to one person and then have that person whisper it to the person next to him/her and so on around the line. When the last person in line whispers it back to you, what you originally stated to the first person will not be the same thing you hear for it will be changed in some ways, maybe not anywhere close to what you said.

### II. "JUDGE NOT THAT YOU BE NOT JUDGED WITH THE SAME KIND OF JUDGMENT"

1. We are warned not to judge because God says it is wrong and our "judgment" is usually far from being correct.

2. We are warned that we will be judged with the same kind of judgment we have judged with.
  - If we want our friends to be honest with us, then we must be honest with them.
  - If we don't want to be accused of gossip, then we must not accuse anyone of gossip.
  - If we want kindness from others, then we must give kindness to everyone.
  - If we want others to overlook our faults and mistakes, then we must overlook the faults and mistakes of others.
  - We must forgive if we want to be forgiven.
  - We must have mercy if we want to be given mercy.
  
3. Remember the tiny speck (splinter) in the eye of others we make so much of? True there are things wrong with those around us, but WE are also included in having things wrong.
  - Before we start criticizing and talking about the things wrong with those around us, we must first take care of the BIG things wrong with our own selves. Jesus compared it to splinters in the eyes of others and a beam in our own eyes.
  - That person you criticized the other day, are you sure you love God more than that person?
  - That person you passed on gossip about, are you sure that your "record" with God is cleaner than the one you talked about?
  - Those you criticize, if you were in their place, under the same situation, conditions, temptations, are you sure that you wouldn't be doing the same thing?
  - If you do not sin in the same way as those you criticize, don't you sin in some other way?
  - Who are you or we to criticize a child of God anyhow?
  - Remember the woman caught in the act of adultery and was brought to Jesus by the crowd. Did they have a right to condemn her? Even though they may have not committed adultery, they had committed other sins and all sin is the same in God's eyes.
  - ***"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which be spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted..."***

### III. WHAT HARM CAN COME FROM CRITICISM AND SIMPLE GOSSIP ANYHOW?

1. It often ruins the life of the one being criticized and gossiped about.
  - After hearing the gossip, slander, and criticism, that person might just give up.
  - Many Christians have left the church because after falling into sin, there never was a helping hand or kind word, just criticism and gossip.
  - Pastors have quit the ministry because of gossip and untruths spread by unspiritual and worldly minded church members.
  - Gossip and criticism have even caused people to take their own lives. Gossip and criticism have broken homes, separated families, and divided churches.
  
2. Immature young in the Lord Christians have often stumbled and been misled by hearing other church members criticizing others in their church.
  - Children lose interest in the pastor because they heard someone criticize him.
  
3. Evil speaking, gossip, criticism gives Christianity a bad name with the non christian world.
  - Ever wonder what non church members think when they hear you criticize your church?
  - Even the most hardened unbeliever knows that LOVE is supposed to prevail in the church.

## CONCLUSION:

1. If the gossip or criticism is about you, then go directly to that person or people and in a kind way confront him/her or them. (*Matthew 18:15-17*)
2. If somebody you know has sinned, but not against you personally, don't gossip, don't talk about it, don't criticize, don't judge. Remember, you are capable of the very same thing. Go to that person in Christian love.
3. Remember to pray for those who are guilty of gossip, criticism, slander and doing verbal harm to others as you would want them to pray for you.
4. Forgive, restore those who have done you verbal harm by gossip, criticism, slander, don't avoid them, they need your love, they need a true friend. Do not do like they have done by gossiping or slandering them.
5. *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you..."*