



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Priests Wives

April 2022

Gossip and Its Victims

My Dearest Sister in Christ,

Have you ever noticed how gossip never has the effect we think it will? How, instead of making us feel superior or relieved or somehow better, it makes us feel unclean and debased?

Recently I discovered that gossip has three victims: the one who is gossiping, the subject of the gossip, and the listener.

THE EFFECT ON YOU

It is said that the tenth plague of Egypt was all the more painful because there was no one to provide comfort to the others. Every household had lost its firstborn, and every household had its own offspring to bury.

When you go to gossip about someone else, I heard recently, it's like leaving the body that's at your house to go dwell on the body at someone else's.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) — none of us is without sin. We should be each worrying about our own dead body, our own sin, the plank in our own eye, rather than talking about someone else's sin.

Sometimes we think that by gossiping we release ourselves from the feelings that we have—we're just venting, we assume. But has that ever been the case for you? For me, more often I have found that by gossiping, the grudge gains more momentum, is more engrained in my mind and scars my heart. It has the opposite effect than healing us!

Instead, let's keep other people's business out of our mouths, and let's truly heal by tending to our own business.

Also, let's not forget that scripture says we are justified by our words—or condemned by them (Matthew 12:37).

THE EFFECT ON YOUR SUBJECT

It's also said that for every idle word we speak, we "will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). Have you ever wondered why that is?

Usually, when people think of the harmful effects of gossip, they think of the harm to the reputation of the subject of gossip. Or maybe that person overhears you or finds out and is hurt.

The problem may be even deeper than that, which is why idle words are so troubling to God.

Words have power. We worship the God who brought all into existence with His Word. As we are made in His image, our words, too, have power. It's for this reason we will give an accounting of every idle word.

Elder Thaddeus in his book **Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives** states that "God's energy and life is in us, but we do not realize it. Neither do we realize we greatly influence others with our thoughts. We can be very good or very evil, depending on the kind of thoughts and desires we breed... When we breed negative thoughts, that is a great evil. When there is evil in us, we radiate it among our family members and wherever we go."

Let's not radiate a negative energy about a fellow human being and fill the world with it.

THE EFFECT ON YOUR LISTENER

Finally, and this may be the most surprising, the third victim of gossip is the person you are gossiping to.

When you gossip, the person listening is infected with your negative opinions of someone else. The feelings you are having towards the subject are spread like poison into the person who is listening.

Sometimes we also forget that the listener is not an empty vessel. This too is a person with troubles and weights and current life situation we may not be fully aware of.

For example. it could be that this person is very heavy-laden with a serious situation in her own life. When we gossip and dump that bile on our listener, they must then try to balance our foul words with their own heavy burdens.

Why would we choose to cause this stress or pressure to someone else?

Gossip hurts everyone.

It hurts us, cements our grudges, and brings us into judgment.

It hurts the subject of our gossip, putting out malicious energy in the form of words, which have power in the world.

It hurts the listener, whose own troubles are already enough to bear.

It's not harmless entertainment. It's cancerous, and we need to guard our lips against it.

Your sister in Christ,

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