

“Gossip vs. Legitimate Church Communication”

There are basically three possibilities for communications within the church, as described in the New Testament: 1) gossip, 2) malicious gossip, and 3) legitimate, necessary, and productive, church communication.

Often-times our Adversary seeks to confuse the issues of gossip, which is sin, and legitimate church communication. Necessary church communications are often stifled, as people fear they may be gossiping, which slows or even prevents, at times, the church's forward progress. In other cases, gossip or even malicious gossip continues under the guise of legitimate church communication.

To overcome this confusion, first we will define gossip, malicious gossip, and legitimate church communication. Then examples from Scripture of legitimate church communication will be given.

1. Gossip--I Timothy 5:13 teaches against gossip and associates gossip with those who are “busybodies.” This verse states, *“At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.”* Gossip occurs when Party A talks (communicates) to Party B about Party C (who is not present) when neither Party A, nor Party B are in a position to help Party C. Gossip may also occur if Party A or Party B are in a position to help Party C, but are predisposed not to actively help Party C. As such, talking about Party C is just for conversational purposes.

2. Malicious gossip--Both I Timothy 3:11 and Titus 2:3 forbid malicious gossip. I Timothy 3:11 instructs, *“Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.”* Titus 2:3 says, *“Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good.”* Malicious is the adjective form of the noun “malice”. Malice is defined as “a desire to harm others or see others suffer”. Malicious gossip occurs when Party A talks (communicates) with Party B about Party C (who is not present) with deliberate intent to hurt, defame, or destroy Party C. Malicious gossip may or may not contain truth, but usually exhibits various shades of deceit. Malicious gossip is a very evil, destructive form of sin.

3. Legitimate church communication--Legitimate church communications occur when Party A talks (communicates) with Party B about Party C (who is not present) when Party A and/or Party B are in a position to assist, help, or counsel Party C, and actively plan to do so in a timely manner. Also, legitimate church communication would include Party A warning Party B about Party C; if sufficient danger or harm exists for Party B, if he does not have pertinent information. (i.e. II Timothy 4:14-15, III John 9-10)

Examples in Scripture of legitimate Church communications are given on the attached page.

Scriptural Examples of Legitimate Church Communication

1. Romans 16:17-18. Although Paul does not name names here, he urges the church to “keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances.” Many such warnings are issued by Paul in the New Testament.

2. I Corinthians 1:11. “Chloe’s people” informed Paul about quarrels in the church.

3. I Corinthians 5:1-5. Someone reported to Paul that a younger man had his father’s wife.

4. I Corinthians 11:18. Paul had heard that there was division at the Lord’s Supper assembly in Corinth.

5. Ephesians 6:21-22. Paul sent Tychicus to “make everything known to you”, (Christians at Ephesus), “so you may know about us.”

6. Colossians 4:7-8. Paul sent Tychicus to “bring you (Christians at Colossae) information”, . . . “I sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances.”

7. Colossians 4:17. Paul speaks to Archippus through this public letter to the Christians at Colossae, in order to make him accountable.

8. II Timothy 4. In verse 10, Paul shared that Demas had “deserted” him, because he “loved this present world”. In verses 14 and 15, Paul warned Timothy about Alexander the coppersmith, stating, “(He) did me much harm,” and, “Be on guard against him yourself. . . .” In verse 20, Paul informed Timothy about the present location and situation of Erastus and Trophimus.

9. Philemon 5,10, and 11. Obviously Paul and Onesimus had discussed Philemon and his situation at length before Paul wrote this “appeal” (verse 10). Note Paul also includes Archippus in his greeting as leverage, if need be, for Philemon to “do more than what I (Paul) say.”

10. III John 9-10. John warns Gaius about Diotrephes: his pride, deeds, accusations “with wicked words”, and putting brethren “out of the church.”

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