

It's Too Bad That Bad News Sells

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

It's a human inclination to pay attention to bad news or unfounded rumors. That's because we too often think that things going on around us can't be as bad as they're being portrayed publicly. And if we examine ourselves, it's tempting to believe that inside we're more decent or kinder or more generous than other folks are out there in the world. But comparisons are dangerous. It's a sinister trap when you try to feel better about yourself by receiving and passing along rumors — bad news — about other people.

Mike: During my first deployment to Vietnam I made a special request of the Executive Officer of the ship to which our helicopter detachment was assigned. I asked for the collateral duty of Morale Officer. Our ship spent long periods at sea off the coast of Vietnam, and keeping up morale among ship personnel was something I thought I could help with. I realized immediately that *false rumors* chipped way at morale and devastated the crew's spirit.

I put into action a decisive plan to thwart rumors. Whenever I heard about a rumor being passed around the ship, I'd follow the trail back to the individual who'd started it. Then I'd bring that person before the Executive Officer to deal with the man appropriately. It didn't take long for those who were in the habit of starting rumors to realize that I'd pursue them on behalf of the well-being of everyone onboard. Soon afterward the rumors stopped and morale was restored.

Years later I began to read the Bible for the first time. I recognized that the process I'd used on that ship came directly from God's Word. If troublemakers are trying to lead people astray, then "*you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly*" (Deuteronomy 13:13,14). In fact, the need to thoroughly investigate a matter also appears elsewhere in Scripture (for example, Deuteronomy 17:4; Ezra 10:16; Ecclesiastes 7:25).

Both of us have been saddened by a particular phenomenon over the course of our 44 years of following Jesus as Lord of our lives. We've met very, very few people who, when they hear something bad spoken about another person, inquire and investigate the matter thoroughly. Most listen to the bad mouthing or lies they're told like "choice morsels" going down. Then with the satisfaction of knowing something that someone else may not know, they pass along this "insider information" as slander and gossip (see Proverbs 18:8).

"The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him" (Proverbs 18:17).

The legal system of justice in this nation requires that a person be cross-examined so that what they speak can be verified. Sadly, this foundational aspect of our judicial system has been ignored throughout our society at large. Refusing to confirm information that's shared has fed the fires of suspicion and disunity in this land. In particular, listening to gossip and slander without verifying what's being said (or Twittered) makes a person susceptible to believing conspiracies. And conspiracies lead to distrust, mobs and violence. The truth of a matter becomes irrelevant.

A person who follows Jesus as Lord of his or her life *listens* to the Spirit of truth, *discerns* truth through the Spirit and God's Word, and *takes action* by the Spirit to verify truth. If you purpose to act justly when negative information is being shared with you, you must probe by closely examining what has been divulged. The isolation of so many people because of the pandemic has profoundly magnified the dissemination of conspiracy theories through social media. And we who follow our Lord Jesus must do all we can to *not* be entrapped in these lies. God's Word warns us that those who don't love and serve Him can readily conspire with others to plot and enact evil:

“Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from the plots of evildoers” (Psalms 64:2).

“Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it” (Isaiah 8:12).

“Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire — they all conspire together” (Micah 7:3).

Like the “rumor mongers” who busied themselves onboard the ship, there are those in society whose hearts are wickedly inclined to peddle conspiracies. And through the widespread use of social media and dependance on it by so many, few test any of the supposed conspiracies for truth. People just blindly forward them to others. That’s because it’s far easier to share lies than to verify truth.

Maybe you’re not aware of a specific sin you’re enacting when you pass along unverified information. It’s called “**a conspiracy of silence.**” This is when you pass along information that you haven’t confirmed to be true, and/or when you know something is a lie and still pass it along (see Jeremiah 9:5). Please don’t be one of these people.

If you find that you *are* susceptible to passing along negative information, then examine your heart motive. Those who start gossip, slander or conspiracies — or pass it along — are often plagued by fear and insecurity, or by delusions of persecution, by unwarranted jealousy, or by exaggerated self-importance. Be aware that involving yourself in deceit of any kind has its own painful emotional consequences.

(For further insight into the evil of using your mouth in ways that Jesus wouldn't, please read:

•Prophetic Insight: *Disengaging From Blind Loyalty To A Common Darkness* <https://restorationministries.org/download/29.fleeing_blind_loyalty.pdf>.

•Prophetic Insight: *Besmirchers Murder With Their Mouths* <[https://restorationministries.org/download/39.besmirching_mouths_murder%20\(1\).pdf](https://restorationministries.org/download/39.besmirching_mouths_murder%20(1).pdf)>.

•July 2000 Newsletter: *Lashon hara—Bad Mouthing* <[https://restorationministries.org/download/200007badmouthing%20\(1\).pdf](https://restorationministries.org/download/200007badmouthing%20(1).pdf)>.

Take to heart what we're sharing. Deceit of any type, including gossip, slander and conspiracy, have no place in the life of a follower of Jesus.

Mike & Sue

P.S. We want to share with you an email in response to “*Our Heavenly Father Knows What We Don't—Setbacks Always Have A Divine Purpose.*” If you're going through a setback in your own life, be encouraged by this testimony.

“Both times I was out of work it was for 13 months. A tough stretch. We had three children. BOTH times He forced me to spend down every penny that I had saved before He provided the next job. In fact one time was the first time we needed a second car for the new job. The car was \$2,600—the exact amount remaining in my/our life savings. We did not get either job until I needed them.

And the lesson — up until then, I was clinging onto our life savings — was trusting in my ability to save rather than His ability/willingness/desire to provide. Anyway — that is a big Amen to your story. Both unemployment stretches were WOW moments with God. I literally hit \$000.00 in life savings both times. It has helped me not to worry about financial setbacks. God is Good—Always—even when we don't see it.”