

GAWKING AT GOSSIP**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

Why do you suppose people are so interested in the mistakes of others? I remember on one occasion driving in horrible traffic due to an accident. When I finally got up to the point where the accident had occurred, I was surprised and angered to see that it was not even on my side of the road! The traffic delayed me almost an hour and people who were going my direction were slowing down to 10 miles an hour to see what had happened! Those emotions filled my mind as these people held up my progress... yet when it came my turn to pass the accident, a strange and morbid curiosity came over me. I wanted to see how bad it was. I looked at emergency crews everywhere, with police and ambulance lights flashing; this wreck was, as my grandmother would say, “a doozy.”

It was not until after my surprise and anger wore off that I realized the blunder I had made. I was *also* guilty of holding up traffic to gawk unabashedly; to “rubber-neck,” to see someone who just had some very bad things happen to them. I felt almost hypnotically drawn to it, as if I had no power or will of my own to look away!

Why do you suppose we are so interested in the mistakes of others? Gossip in the church is much like those masses gawking at that accident and slowing down people from what they should be doing. Someone knows something juicy about somebody else that they “simply must” take the time to inspect and repeat to someone else! Solomon said, “*An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire*” (Proverbs 16:26 NKJV). Gossip is a messenger and a fruit of ungodliness (Romans 1:29-32).

Notice that when people tell things about others in gossip, it is never praise for something. If someone is running to tell something, it is usually a vice or a sin that someone has committed. Soon, the work of the church is at a standstill because of many people stopping what they are doing to get an earful of what some person did wrong. It is easy to be drawn to that. Gossip never seeks to help anyone, only to destroy and spread the news. If Christians engage in gossip and backbiting, we are not seeking to help a person by “pulling them out of the fire” (Jude 23) or by “restoring such a one” (Galatians 6:1). Instead, without lifting a finger, we are eagerly watching secondhand a debilitating “accident” of someone who obviously needs our help!

Did you know that almost half of the references to the word “idle” in the Bible have to do with how we use our words? Jesus spoke God’s truth of the matter in Matthew 12:36, “*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give an account for it in the day of judgment.*” The word “idle” carries the idea of being lazy or unemployed and doing something without purpose. Each of our words has power either for good or for evil (James 3:1-12). If we speak something without purpose, we are accountable to God for what we have spoken. By our words, the work of the church can be furthered or it can be hindered. “*In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty*” (Proverbs 14:23).

Gossip is everyone’s problem. Everywhere there are TV shows, magazines, internet sites, etc., devoted to the public shaming of celebrities and exploiting juicy pieces of gossip. It is hard not to let this dangerous sin into our lives and into our Christian work. We can, first, repent and pray for forgiveness if we have been guilty of gossiping. Resolve not to be a part of talking about people with no interest or intention of helping them. Secondly, we can live the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). The Golden Rule is powerful because it forces us to walk in someone else’s shoes. “If it were me being talked about, what would I want someone to do for me?” Then do it! Pray for strength and courage to go to the source and help that person with their sin or problem.

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

**JUST BY ONE LITTLE WORD**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. Stir up \_\_\_\_\_

Verses:

II. Wound the \_\_\_\_\_

Verses:

III. Hinder one's \_\_\_\_\_

Verses:

IV. Uplift the \_\_\_\_\_

Verses:

V. Open \_\_\_\_\_

Verses:

**THE LAST THING HE DID**

When I was growing up at the Lincoln congregation in Huntsville, Alabama, one of the elders was a man named Roy Jacks. He was a good Christian man who served the Lord throughout his lifetime. He and Lucille were married for 77 years and they brought up their children in the Lord.

Brother Jacks died last week at the age of 99 after suffering two heart attacks. Living to the age of 99 and being married for 77 years are both remarkable feats in life, but I want to tell you something that was noteworthy about his death.

When it became obvious that his health was deteriorating, his wife and children were called to his bedside. While they were all together, they had prayer. The amazing thing is that Brother Jacks led the prayer himself! He knew the power of prayer (I John 5:14-15; James 5:13-16; Matthew 7:7-8), and prayed often. Shortly after that prayer, he went into a comatose state and six hours later he passed from this life. The last thing he did was lead his family in prayer!

What will be the last thing we do with our families? It will likely be what we have done with them all along. "The family that prays together, stays together." Think about it.

How quickly traffic would move if only there were more capable people willing to help in such an accident instead of just calamity-curious onlookers! May God bless us with wisdom that the words of our mouths would always be pleasing in His sight (Psalm 19:14) so that we are not holding up the cause of Christ by our "Gawking at gossip."

*-Andy Baker*

**THE NEW SCHOOL PRAYER**

Now I sit me down in school  
Where praying is against the rule  
For this great nation under God  
Finds mention of Him very odd.

If Scripture now the class recites,  
It violates the Bill of Rights.  
And anytime my head I bow  
Becomes a Federal matter now.

Our hair can be purple, orange, or green,  
That's no offense; it's a freedom scene.  
The law is specific, the law is precise.  
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.

For praying in a public hall  
Might offend someone with no faith at all  
In silence alone we must meditate,  
God's name is prohibited by the state.

We're allowed to cuss and dress like freaks,  
And pierce our noses, tongues, and cheeks.  
They've outlawed guns, but FIRST the Bible.  
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.

We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen,  
And the 'unwed daddy,' our Senior King.  
It's "inappropriate" to teach right from wrong,  
We're taught that such "judgments" do not belong.

We can get out condoms and birth controls,  
Study witchcraft, vampires, and totem poles.  
But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,  
No word of God must reach this crowd.

It's scary here I must confess,  
When chaos reigns the school's a mess.  
So, Lord, this silent plea I make:  
Should I be shot; My soul please take!

Amen.

## THE HOPE OF THE HOME

Watching, reading, and listening to the news, it is not hard to see that there are many things wrong with society at large. It is in fact quite disheartening at times to think about where the world might be in another fifty years. Some have even gone to the extent of wondering how humane it is to bring children into the world knowing what they will have to face. While these many problems can be attributed to a number of trouble areas, it is absolutely true that most of them start in the home. When the home fails then society fails because society is the outgrowth of the home. This does not necessarily mean that all unruly adults are the product of unfit parents, but reality determines that in general this tends to be the case. Lack of respect as children is not often corrected as an adult. Loveless homes usually do not produce children who themselves will be loving parents. It appears as though the world is in the midst of a vicious cycle that will not be easily stopped. The pessimist then would ask the question, "What hope is there for the home?"

Easily answered, the resounding hope is Jesus Christ. He is the cure for what ails us, if only we, as families, would submit to a regular dosage. Even among Christians there may not be a spiritual lacking individually, but how often are spiritual things made family matters? If Christ would be injected into more homes, hope for the future would optimistically be restored. What, though, can be accomplished by adhering to this prescription?

First, **happiness** will avail. One of the greatest problems the home faces is inward struggles. And while it is certainly true that no family is completely immune to squabbles, too often they are left unresolved thereby leaving the family set at odds. By keeping the Lord first in the home, just as much as individually, the Psalmist said that satisfaction will result. "*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*" (Psalm 127:1). In reference to faithful children, he went on to say that "*Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate*" (Psalm 127:5). And especially regarding the blessing of a loving wife, Solomon remarked, "*She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her*" (Proverbs 3:18). Thus, by keeping Christ first in the home it will be happy because the relationships in it are strong.

Second, **order** will succeed. The liberally minded of America simply do not think the traditional order of the home is fitting for this post-modern age. Women simply are too superior to submit to their husbands and children are maturing quicker so there is really no need for them to be held back by ignorant parents. The scriptures, though, state otherwise. By allowing Christ to reenter the home, the structure God demands will succeed and thrive. Men have the responsibility to lead the home as wives and children submit to them (Titus 2:5; Ephesians 6:2). Parents must take control of their children and nurture their growth both physically and spiritually so as to produce not only upstanding citizens but faithful Christians. And children must submit to their parents (Ephesians 6:1) realizing that their experience and wisdom is beneficial to them rather than only restrictive. God's plan for the home will work, and its success will be seen in society as well.

Third, **peace** will reign. Too often the home is viewed as a place of contention rather than a place of calm. A house of altercation instead of a place of accord. The home has, in many places, become a place to avoid rather than a place to hurry back to after a long day of work. This is the home without Christ. A home where Christ is included is filled with love and warmth toward each other because of a common love for Him. As much as I John 4:7,8 applies to brotherly love in the church, it can also apply to the home: "*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*" Include God in the home and His love will become contagious.

Finally, **eternity** will be sweeter. There is absolutely nothing that can take away from the joy that the saved soul will have in heaven. But imagine what will be added to that joy upon seeing one's spouse and children also encircling the Heavenly throne. Even if nothing else of significance was accomplished in life, enjoying salvation with those you loved dearest on earth will make heaven that much better. All the tears shed, emotion felt, and pain suffered will have been worth it and more. And to what can that be attributed? A return to Christ.

In a time that hope for the home seems to be just beyond one's reach, we can be thankful to God that it is not. The spiritual troubles a family faces are just as easily overcome as those of an individual (I Corinthians 10:13). God has provided the means of escape. Jesus Christ, the hope of the home.

-Andy Brewer