

RESISTING RUNAWAY CONVERSATIONS

SELECTED SCRIPTURES

Last week we looked at the problem of gossip; what it looks like and how we can recognize it. While recognizing these conversations is a significant part of the battle, there is more to it. In this dark world of errant conversations there must be a conscious effort to change the way speak, listen, and deal with this difficult temptation.¹

I. What we saw last week

A. A three-part definition of sinful gossip

1. Bearing bad news whether true or false
2. Behind someone's back
3. Out of a bad heart

B. The gallery of gossips

1. The spy – gathers and spreads secrets
2. The grumbler – pointlessly complaining
3. The backstabber – they don't get mad, they get even

¹ Primary source material and organization for this series is from *Resisting Gossip: Winning the War of the Wagging Tongue*, by Matthew Mitchell, an Evangelical Free Church Pastor from Lanse, PA

4. The chameleon – they conform
5. The busybody – they meddle in others' lives

II. How to live when gossip comes your way (Prov. 17:4)

A. Avoid evil listening

1. Leaning in

¹⁹ A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.
Proverbs 20:19 (NIV)

1. When listening isn't evil

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,
James 1:19 (NIV)

B. Avoid persistent gossips

¹⁹ A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.
Proverbs 20:19 (NIV)

³³ Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 1 Cor. 15:33–34

C. Don't encourage them

1. Provide cover for the victims where possible

2. Presume the best

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (NIV)

III. But what happens when you are the target?

A. One of the most hurtful, dangerous moments

B. Love my WHAT?

⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, Matthew 5:44 (NIV)

C. Pray for smart love

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Philippians 1:9–10 (NIV)

D. Know when to overlook the fault

1. Not every offense is a hill to die on

¹¹ A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19:11 (NIV)

2. Special caution for the "Peace-at-any-pricers"

E. Confront when necessary

1. But do it carefully

a) Watch the motive

But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ **keeping a clear conscience**, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1 Peter 3:15–16 (NIV)

b) Watch the method

Watch the Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Galatians 6:1 (NIV)

c) A special word to the fighters

F. Repay evil with good

⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 1 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

G. Putting it all in perspective