

## Using God's Words

When God talks, people listen. However, when Satan talks, people listen too. Satan is hard at work in a Christian congregation. He doesn't want Christians to act like Christians. He wants short-cuts and division. He does not want peace and harmony.

One of the chief ways Satan does this is through half-truths gossip, and lies. You already know that almost anything you say can be twisted to sound differently. Maybe you have had an argument with your spouse and the words that are thrown back at you are said in a way you never intended, or even dreamed they would be taken. How much more so with God's Word?

God directs us in his Word how Christians should deal with one another, and the world. Nowhere does our God say that gossip, half-truths, lies, or anonymous notes are the way we are to deal with one another. If we lower ourselves to speak Satan's language, then we have fallen into sin ourselves and are in danger of taking others with us. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:29 **“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”**

It was passages like this that prompted Martin Luther to write in the explanation to the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment: We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him and take his words and actions and in the kindest possible way.

God directs us in his Word that we are to do as he has done. We are to defend, speak well, of and take words and actions in the kindest way possible. We do this by not listening to the words of someone else or coming to a conclusion about a situation without all the facts, instead we are to go and talk with people one on one in order that: if there is sin, it can be repented of; if it is a misunderstanding, we can apologize; if it is our sin we can ask for forgiveness; if it is a misunderstanding of God's Word we can be instructed in the truth. Isn't this the absolute least that that we want to do in order to avoid sinning ourselves?

Matthew 18:15 -17

<sup>15</sup> **“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup> But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.**

While Matthew 15 is primarily about someone who has sinned against us, it also shows us a process of conflict resolution. We don't beat around the bush, we don't group up and talk about it, we go to a person to allow them to speak for themselves.

In closing, Paul has given us further guidance. **Colossians 3: 13. “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”**

God should be praised that there are many who fight against the temptation to fall into the sins of Satan speaking through us. We also thank God that if we have fallen into sin, we have the opportunity to repent and be forgiven.

Go to the source of the issue, be Christian enough to sit down and talk over differences in the manner in which God has instructed us, do not take second-hand stories and gossip as the truth of the manner. (We know it often isn't.) This is not the way of the world, but it is the way of God's people who love their Savior.