



The first syllable is “gos.” What a difference the second syllable makes. One word is good news — the best news. The other word is bad news. We need more of one, and we need less of the other. In a game of scrabble, “gospel” should earn a higher score than “gossip.”

One should be easy to talk about, and the other should be easy to avoid. And yet, the opposite seems apparent among many Baptists today. Paul said in Romans 7:19, “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do,” KJV. This seems to be true of gossip and gospel. Obviously, we should share the gospel. I do mean the real gospel in I Corinthians 15:3-4, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures,” KJV. I am not talking about the “social justice gospel,” but the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Now, how do we respond to the other word — gossip? Number one —

“SIP” to “PEL”

Don’t repeat it. Never, never add to the problem. Exodus 20:16 says, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,” KJV. Even the truth can be gossip, if there is no need to repeat it for the wrong reason. Number two — Don’t believe it. Many don’t repeat gossip, but they believe it. The accused has no opportunity to answer the allegations. What happened to “innocent until proven guilty”? Smoke does not mean fire — check out dry ice. Number three — Don’t listen to it. We should not listen to a dirty joke. We should not listen to irreverent talk or crude language. We should not listen to gossip. Philippians 4:8 says, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,

think on these things,” KJV. Number four — Stop it. Intervene in a Christian, courteous way. If I hear gossip on someone I love, I will not just walk away. I will intervene.

When someone tries to share with me gossip on another person, I make the following request. When can I get the three of us together? Mediation requires three parties. “Two’s company, three’s a crowd,” may be true in courtship, but is useless in meaningful mediation.

Some gossipers claim, “I would say this, even if they were here.” Well, let’s get both parties together. Let’s get them here.

On a few occasions, (and I do mean very few), I was able to get both parties together, in the same room, at the same table — good things happened. On one occasion, a lawsuit disappeared.

But on most occasions, the one shar-

ing the info rejects my offer. I then tell them that if I hear the rumor again from anyone, I will go to the accused and let them know the source of the gossip. It’s amazing how quickly gossip dries up.

You may say, “Kenny, no one will confide in you.” Well, if I can’t do something constructive with the information, I don’t want confidential info.

Give it a try. “When can I get the three of us together?” This strategy served me well for over 18 years in Alcorn Baptist Association. It has served me well for three years at the Christian Action Commission. I highly recommend it — a simple question.

When we change from “sip” to “pel” — from gossip to gospel, the same simple question still applies. Whether shunning gossip or sharing the gospel, three parties must come together — the witness, the lost soul, and Jesus. When can I get the three of us together?

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