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Daily Devotional, Thursday, May 11, 2017 - Telling It Like It is

MAY 11TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 126

People love inspiring stories. Biographies of the down-and-out who make great use of a second chance tend to top best-seller lists. But few people have a life of such drama—most of us are quite ordinary. Sadly, some believers think that being a “regular Joe” makes their testimony unexciting and therefore less valuable. Nothing could be further from the truth. What the Lord has done for any of us is just as extraordinary as what He did by redeeming those with a past of more noticeable sin.

A personal testimony is a way of expressing what God has done and is doing in one’s life. It is a powerful tool for getting an unbeliever interested in spiritual matters. No matter how commonplace our words may sound compared to someone else’s, the Lord will see to it that they impact the hearers who need them.

Let me give you an example. Suppose a 6-year-old girl named Tina receives salvation. When she is 18, she will be able to tell her friends of God’s greatness. She can explain that He makes the gospel clear to a child and yet reveals something new to her every day. When Tina is 80, she will have a lifetime of service opportunities to share. Her testimony may not be exciting according to the world’s criteria, but it is spiritual gold.

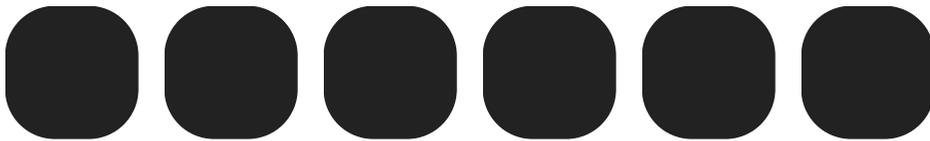
You have no idea how far-reaching your testimony can be. God says that His words will not return to Him without completing the work He sent them to do ([Isa. 55:11](#)). When

believers share their faith, they are carrying His gospel to a needy world. And the story of Jesus' saving grace is always inspiring.

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, May 10, 2017 - Genuine Awareness

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[Daily Devotional, Wednesday, May 10, 2017 - Genuine Awareness](#)

[2 Kings 6:15-17](#)

If someone were to ask whether you're aware of God, you would no doubt exclaim, "Of course I am! I go to church, read my Bible, and pray all the time. I'm quite aware of God." Now, let's take it one crucial step further: *Are you aware of God's presence and*

activity in your daily life?

This second question makes it a bit more personal, doesn't it? *In my daily life? Right here, all the time?* We would like to have that constant awareness of God's presence, but it is difficult. When hardships and trials strike out of nowhere, we often feel bewildered and wonder why the Lord has left us alone.

During times of difficulty, we might pray even harder and longer. We plead for help but see little result. We cry, "Help *me!* Give *me* strength!" Or perhaps, "*I* believe this" or "*I* can do that." Do you notice the common factor there? The focus is all on *me, me, me, I, I, I*. Even during prayer, we may be aware only of ourselves, leaving the Lord out of the matter entirely.

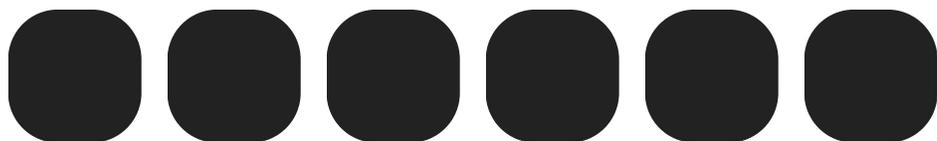
At that point, we may find we're not really talking to the Father at all; we are talking to ourselves. Perhaps we are focusing on the *problem* and actually wishing for the ability to handle it on our own. We can, in effect, become completely blind to how God may be working.

2 Kings 6:15-17 gives us a wonderful picture of what can happen when we remove our self-centered blinders and truly see God's hand at work. Open your eyes. Like Elisha's servant, you may be shocked to discover the help that God has already sent your way.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, May 9, 2017 - Ending Gossip in Our Life

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[Ephesians 4:29-32](#)

Spreading rumors about other people exposes little about their true nature but reveals quite a lot about the speaker's own character. Such behavior shows a willingness to sin against the Lord by causing harm to someone else. Until a gossiping believer confronts his sin, he can't progress toward becoming the person God wants him to be.

Confession is the first step in dealing with sinful speech. This should be followed by repentance—the pledge to turn away from opportunities to talk about others. A useful scripture for a redeemed gossip to pray daily is [Psalm 141:3](#): “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”

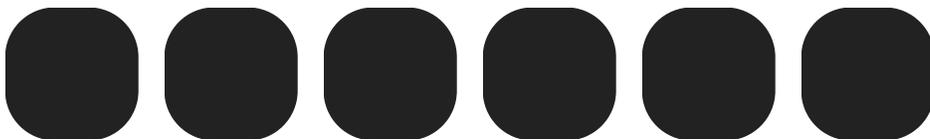
Next, be on guard against temptation. Believers have a responsibility to set themselves apart from gossip in order to keep their thoughts and words pleasing to God. Being in the presence of one who spreads stories can tempt us to participate. In a situation where rumors are being shared, the best course of action is to speak out against the practice and then leave.

Finally, instead of talking about someone, it's wise to pray for that person. Getting into this habit will help train the mind to replace sinful patterns with God-pleasing ways. The Bible teaches us to encourage and comfort each other, and prayer is a good way to obey that instruction ([1 Thess. 5:11](#), [1 Thess. 5:14](#)).

A gossiping Christian dishonors God's name—and his own. Instead of using words that disparage and injure, choose to speak well of everyone. In so doing, you will bring glory to the Lord.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, May 8, 2017 - The Character of Gossip

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[Daily Devotional, Monday, May 8, 2017 - The Character of Gossip](#)

[Romans 1:28-31](#)

God hates gossip. He wants our speech to be pleasing to Him—and He certainly does not consider idle talk or mean-spirited words pleasant ([Col. 3:8](#)). Sadly, gossip is practiced so freely that even some believers participate and try to justify their chatter. But hearsay has no place in a Christian’s life.

Romans 1 contains one of the Bible’s lists of sins. The book’s author—the apostle Paul—is reminding believers that God has revealed Himself to all mankind. Those who reject Him and chase after idols are turned over to their evil worship and the immoral practices that go with serving self ([Romans 1:24-25](#)). Gossip appears in the middle of the list; God despises it because malicious talk destroys lives whether the stories are true or

false. The person who is targeted by the rumor often loses the respect of those who listen to it. Hurt feelings may not be the only negative effect; a job or relationship could be lost as well.

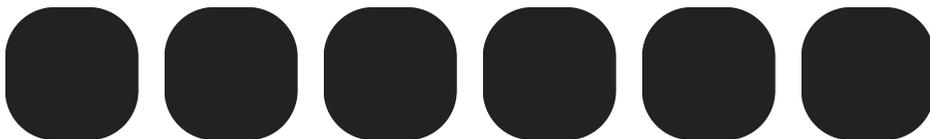
Those spreading tales also face destructive consequences. People who refuse to control the tongue reveal evil motives or, at the very least, a lack of discipline. As a result, believers and unbelievers alike will often avoid such untrustworthy individuals. For a Christian who spreads rumors, there's potential for even worse damage. Not only can the credibility of one's witness be compromised, but fellowship with the Lord might also be harmed—animosity toward another person and intimacy with God can't coexist in the same heart.

Gossip achieves no good in anyone's life, which is why the Lord warns against it. Instead, our words should build up, comfort, and encourage others.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, May 5, 2017 - Choosing

Love Over Rights

MAY 05TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Matthew 5:38-48

We talk a lot about rights these days. Yet the attention given to human entitlements hasn't brought about corporate or personal freedom. Instead, most people are prisoners of jealousy (*You have greater rights than I do!*), greed (*I deserve more!*), or bitterness (*My rights have been violated!*).

In lieu of focusing on what is due them, Christians should follow Christ's command to love enemies and forgive persecutors ([Matt. 5:44](#)). Believers lay down their rights so they can take up the cause of a holy kingdom. That doesn't mean we let people trample on us. Rather, we offer a proper response according to biblical principles. In short, we should be more concerned about showing God's love to those who wrong us than insisting on privileges we assume are rightfully ours.

Perhaps you're thinking that I don't know how you've been mistreated. Indeed I don't. But I do know how Jesus reacted to terrible abuse. He was betrayed by His friends, persecuted by His people, condemned by His peers, and crucified for our sins. Yet He said, "Father, forgive them" ([Luke 23:34](#)).

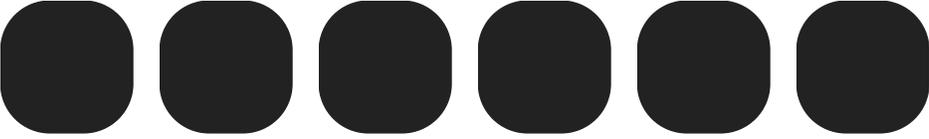
Before assuming that Jesus' capacity for forgiveness and love is out of reach for mere human beings, remember: His Spirit dwells in believers. We can choose to give away our rights and let God's love work through us.

[Luke 6:29](#) says to turn the other cheek and give up more than is asked because expressing love outweighs exerting our rights. You can't lose when you show others the boundless care of the Lord. You gain His blessing, and what's more, someone could be saved because of your example.

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