

### A Mouth that Talks to People, Not About People

A graced person thinks “never worthy, always loved; never desiring, always chosen, never perfect, always embraced; never seeking, always pursued; and never finishing, always completed.” Now we move to the mouth of grace. The mouth is tied to the mind like a thermometer is tied to temperature; it measures. Jesus said, *“For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks”* (Matthew 12:34). He later said something similar, *“The things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart”* (Matthew 15:18). In this portion of the series, we’ll take a close look at our mouths to see if there’s grace within our hearts. Our text is just one verse, really one word, from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ toward the religious.

“And Jesus also told this parable **to** people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and viewed others with contempt” (Lk. 18:9).

#### I. Living graciously isn’t cheap or easy; it’s valuable and hard.

It is much easier talk *about* people; either those who don’t like you (like the Pharisees and Jesus), or about those you don’t like. When you are talking *about* people, they can’t ask questions about what you’re saying. If you talk to people about a problem, it can be very painful. That’s why it feels safer to talk *about* people and not *to* people. But Jesus never calls us to make safe choices. He calls us to make loving choices for the good of others. That’s grace. In the short run, love is often more painful than self-protecting conflict-avoidance. But in the long run, our graced mind convicts us for taking the easy path because we’re doing little for the good of others and focusing on what is easy for us. *“Admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all”* (I Thess. 5:14).

#### II. Talking about people rather than to people is called gossip.

In the early church there was a system of caring for widows that is unfamiliar to us today. Widows with no family (including nephews or uncles) were called “widows indeed” and were enrolled in a program through which all financial and material needs were met by the church. In I Timothy 5:13, Paul instructs Timothy not to enroll young widows (*under 60*, vs. 9, vs. 11), because they could remarry. Further, young widows aren’t to be enrolled in the program because of the sin of gossip.

“They learn (*to be*) idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*” (I Timothy 5:13).

##### A. The source of gossip – “they learn (*to be*) idle” as they go around from house to house.”

The old saying “idle hands are the devil’s workshop” comes from this very verse. When there is no purpose for or identity in life, idleness falls and gossip rises. Gossip flows from empty hearts.

##### B. The sensation of gossip – “not merely idle, but gossips and busybodies, talking about things.”

The word “gossip” (translated ‘tattler’ KJV) is an interesting word used only this once in the New Testament. Its root is “to boil up” or to “bubble up” like soap bubbles bob to the surface. It gives the idea gossip as addictive and an idle person gets busy finding more and more; like a drug.

##### C. The sorrow of gossip – “talking about things not proper to mention.”

Why are these things not proper to mention? Because they are words spoken about – not to.

#### III. Talking *to* someone about a problem is the most valuable gift you can give.

There are two kinds of speech: (1). Aptly spoken words are like **apples of gold** (Proverbs 25:11), and (2). Reckless words are like **pierces of swords** (Prov. 12:18). Our speech brings life or death to others.

*“The man who with the breath lent him by heaven, speaks words that soil the whiteness of a*

*life; is but murder, for death is given, as surely by the tongue as by the knife!"* (Jean Blewett)