

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**  
610 North Fifth Avenue  
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235-2108



**FIRST THINGS**

**MARCH 2013** (PUBLISHED 2/2013)

From Pastor Cory: *Among the blogs and newsletters I receive in my e-mail, Justin Taylor's "Between Two Worlds" comes almost every day, and almost every day he includes something very helpful. Here's a piece he linked his readers to on February 12, 2013. It's written by a man named Dan Phillips for the "Pyromaniacs" blog.*

## **How to shut down gossip and its nasty kin**

**For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.**

**As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.**

**The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.**

**Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart.**

Proverbs 26:20-23

Gossip *kills* churches. I don't want your church to be killed! So here's what you do.

**First**, understand what gossip is. **Gossip** is spreading harmful information in an ungodly manner — without love, and thus to no positive end. Its bastard stepchildren are the triplets: Strife, Dissension, Division. Once again, my focus is the life of the local church.

**Second**, do any or all of the following steps, as needed. Some of them help identify whether you're actually hearing gossip or not. All of them will stop it dead. But none will work... unless used.

1. **Ask**, "**Why are you telling me this?**" Often, that in itself is such a focusing question that it can bring an end to the whole unpleasant chapter. It has the added benefit that it can help a person whose intentions are as good as his/her judgment is bad.
2. **Ask**, "**What's the difference between what you're telling me and gossip?**" See above; same effect, same potential benefits.
3. **Ask**, "**How is your telling me that thought, that complaint, that information going to help you and me love God and our brothers better, and knit us closer together as a church in Christ's love?**" Isn't that the goal we should share, every one of us? Won't it take the working of each individual member (Ephesians 4:16) Isn't the watch-out for harmful influences an every-member ministry (Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:24; 13:12-15)?
4. **Ask**, "**Now that you've told me about that, what are you going to do about it?**" While the previous two are subjective, this is not. If neither of the previous two questions succeeded in identifying gossip/whispering/sowing-dissension for what they are, the answer to this question will do so. *Tip*: if the answer is "Pray," a good response might be "Then why didn't you do that and leave it there in the first place?"
5. **Say**, "**Now that you've told me about that, you've morally obligated me to make sure you talk to \_\_\_\_ about it. How long do you think you need, so I can know when this becomes a sin that I will need to confront in you?**" The least that this will accomplish is that you'll fall of the list of gossips'/whisperers' favorite venting-spots. The most is that you may head off a church split, division, harmed souls, sidelined Gospel ministry, and waylaid discipleship. Isn't that worth it?