

The team destroyer that is...
GOSSIP!

Pippa Peppiatt challenges us to
control our tongues

It's often at work that we face our biggest challenges, especially in the area of our talk and interactions with others. We don't choose who we work with, and some individuals have the capacity to rile everyone with whom they have dealings.

Many workplace conversations are filled with gossip, grumbling, or sarcasm. Over the years I've found this to be especially true (sadly) in hospital environments and in particular, in the nursing culture. It's all too easy to join in when others are gossiping about a co-worker or a difficult patient. I know for me personally, I am much too quick to say something negative when I'm frustrated with something at work.

Instead of gossip, grumbling, or any kind of talk that tears people down, if we are to reflect Christ, we need to

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follow Ephesians 4:29 — to say what is helpful and benefits others. God wants us to be different from the world around us, and how we talk is certainly one way to show the uniqueness of what being a Christian means in your workplace, where unwholesome talk may be the norm.

The apostle James knew the real struggle we have to control our speech when he wrote in James 3 about the power of the tongue and our difficulty to control it. He writes in verses 9-10: *'With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.'*

As Christians who praise God, we're reminded here of our high call: to view each work colleague (however difficult) and every patient (however demanding) as made in the image of God.

If our own identity is firmly rooted in God, if we're connected to him and find our chief security in him, we are less likely to want to gossip and speak negatively of others. One of the **primary** reasons people gossip is to put down the other and (even if subconsciously) to elevate themselves.

So, next time you feel tempted to gossip about someone, pause a moment and take **'The Gossip Test'**.

Ask yourself three questions about the thing you're tempted to say about someone:

- 1 **Is it truthful?**
- 2 **Is it edifying?**
- 3 **Is it useful to know?**

And if the answer to these questions is no, then simply **ZIP IT!**

It's a simple but effective check to help us stop talking negatively about our colleagues.

The next stage in creating a countercultural positive work environment is to replace gossip with affirmative talk. Thank people more. Praise them as they go about their tasks. You'll be amazed at the difference it makes.

Go on, give it a try and see. 🍷

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