

CREW Bible Study

Message – LOVE/HATE Week 1

- **BOTTOM LINE:** Let love be what you're all about.
- **GOAL:** To help students understand that avoiding gossip is less about correcting a bad habit and more about cultivating a reputation for love and not hate.
- **SCRIPTURE:** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29*

MESSAGE

Have you ever noticed that we live in a world where we use the terms "love" and "hate" pretty loosely. For example....

- You might say you LOVE Chick-fil-a waffle fries, but you HATE Justin Bieber.
- You might say you LOVE to watch The Office, but you HATE cats.

We throw those words around a lot – love or hate.

Love is a big deal for us, whether we realize it or not. Most movies that earn the largest revenue have some kind of a love story included in the plot. Many of the most popular songs trending in the Top 40 each week are about love and relationships. We spend over 20 billion dollars each year on Valentine's Day! And in the church, love is the center focus of what we are called to do – to love God and to love others.

On the other hand, we also live in a culture that loves to hate on people and ideas. We make fun of celebrities and reality shows. We rag on YouTubers and TikTok stars. We hate on politicians - and the people that follow them – who take a view other than our own. We bash on sports stars who didn't make the play – well, when we could watch sports! We even hate on people in our own lives. We may not say it out loud, but most of us have opinions on *everything* and *everyone* and sometimes our opinions are very strong.

But if love is such a big deal, why does hate – specifically hating on people – seem to be so common and so mainstream?

There's a LOT we could say about the different ways people hate on people. But today we're going to focus on one way....gossip.

The truth is, gossip is hard to resist. It's incredibly tempting. But why? With all of the things we could do with our time, why spend it talking about other people? Why is there such a draw sometimes to trash talk or spill the tea about people? Well, there are a few reasons.....

If we point out what's wrong with other people, it helps to cover up what we might feel is wrong with ourselves. Or if we want to gain a competitive edge, we might casually mention how not-so-great someone else is just to show how much better we are.

And gossip makes it easier to bond with people sometimes. Sharing a bit of key information on someone can be an easy way to get "in" with a group of people. Being the one with the breaking news makes you the center of attention. That popularity can feel good.

The thing to remember, though, is that gossip is not just a middle school or a high school thing. Or a guy/girl thing. It's a people thing. Gossip can start as early as preschool or Kindergarten and it keeps on tempting us through our adult lives. It's everywhere. There are shows, podcasts, and YouTube channels dedicated to gossiping and hating on other people. And social media makes it easier than ever to share and retweet that shocking or embarrassing or hilarious bit of news. Gossip is tempting.

But dig deep down and answer this question: Although gossip seems to be a naturally accepted part of our culture, isn't there something inside of you that knows it's not good?

If you've ever been the one gossiped about, then you know just how terrible it feels. It's not fun to be the subject of other people's conversations. Especially when they don't have all of the details or even really know you. Everyone knows gossip is bad when it's about them. But in a culture that loves to hate on people and ideas, how is it possible to stop?

Interestingly, someone who lived a couple thousand years ago might have written some of the best advice for us today. His name was Paul, and he was one of the most famous Christians to ever live. His life was dedicated to starting churches and telling people about Jesus. He would often write letters to the churches he had planted. Eventually, some of those letters became books in the New Testament of the Bible.

One of those letters is now called the book of Ephesians. It was written to a group of people in Ephesus, which was a busy port city full of culture, and diversity, including many religions. Honestly, similar to our area of Hampton Roads, but in an ancient sort of way!

This setting was perfect fuel for gossip. There was plenty to talk about, plenty to disagree with, and plenty to judge. So in his letter to encourage the people, Paul says this.....

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths. (Ephesians 4:29)

In this one sentence, Paul makes it clear that "unwholesome talk" is not supposed to be a part of their lives as followers of Jesus. But here's something interesting –

this letter was originally written in Greek. And if you look at the original word for “unwholesome” in Greek, one of its meanings is *rotten*. And that is a great word to describe what gossip is. Talk that rots.

Then Paul goes on to say this....

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

In other words, think about that person before you speak about them. If you choose to build others up, choose to care about their needs, and choose to help them, you’ll choose words that benefit them instead of words that bash them.

Yes, that’s so much easier said than done. But it’s also one of the best decisions you can make. Because what you say about others says a lot about you.

Do you want to be known as someone who trashes people? Or someone who builds them up? Do you want to be known for sharing critical hate or encouraging love?

What do you want to be all about?

If you want to make a shift, it starts way before the words come out of your mouth or you start to type the letters. Here’s three things to ask yourself:

1. Do I know that this story or information is even true? Rumors can cause major damage. Do I want to be the one contributing to that?
2. What’s my motivation? By sharing this story or information, am I trying to look cool or look smart or to be funny? Am I trying to impress someone? And why does that matter to me?
3. Is this helpful? If I share this story or information will it really be helpful and benefit someone? Will it build others up in a way that is needed and make life better?

Think of these three things as a filter. A filter from thousands of years ago that’s just as useful today. Now, imagine that filter enabling you to impact your circle of friends. Because by using this filter, you refuse to judge or to hate or to gossip. And instead, you focus on speaking what is true and helpful, to build others up.

Imagine the impact you can make if you let love be what you’re all about.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Name a character on a TV show or a movie that is known for hating on others? Would you want that person in your circle of friends? Why or why not?
2. When does gossip, or hating on others, feel like a big deal? When does it not?

3. Talk about a time when you participated in gossip and you regretted it. How did it affect your friendship with the person you gossiped about?
4. Read Ephesians 4:29. How would you define "unwholesome talk"?
5. How is trust impacted and influenced by gossip? Does gossip help to build trust in certain situations?
6. What kind of person do you want to be known for in your friend group, at school, on your team or in your club? Is there something you need to change in order to become that person?
7. Do you know of someone who only "gossips" with good news about other people? Is this type of sharing good or bad?
8. Who or what tempts you to engage in gossip the most? What steps can you take this week to make a shift to choose love over hate?