

Teach the Everlasting Gossip Stopper

Everywhere I go I teach church attendees a method for dramatically decreasing the amount of gossip that goes on in a congregation. You can teach this to your church in a few minutes, though you will likely need to do it *repeatedly*, and here's why.

I've discovered that teaching God's people – "*telling*" *actually, if we're honest* – that they should stop gossiping is not enough. Church leaders can wear themselves out telling people to stop gossiping, but when we teach people the Everlasting Gossip Stopper and *actually practice it with them*, it has a profound affect on the culture of a church.



I should say that the teaching of the *method* needs to be accompanied by a good *definition* of gossip itself. I have found that the old "If I'm not part of the problem or part of the solution, then it's gossip" to be an inadequate definition. It's just too easy to tell ourselves that everybody we talk to is part of the solution because we're asking them to *pray* about brother So And So.

A more understandable (and I think, Biblical) alternative is "gossip is negative information about a person which the hearer does not need to hear." Sometimes we do need to hear negative information about another person; most of the time, we don't. (My book, *Heaven Help Our Church!* also contains a top ten list of the most common excuses we make to justify our gossip.)

So here's the Everlasting Gossip Stopper. Your friend begins to gossip. You raise both of your hands to the level of your chest and move them forward slightly while saying, "Whoa," like you're trying to stop your friend from heading down a path where you do not want him to go.

Then, while moving your hands back and forth – like you're erasing a chalk board with two erasers – you say, "Wait a minute." Then, perhaps while pointing to your gossiping friend you say, "You need to talk to _____ (name of the person being gossiped about) about this."

An option at this juncture is to point in the general vicinity of the individual being gossiped about (or his office). This should be done very gently with the young believer in Christ and much more vigorously with the veteran Christian whom you have reason to believe knows better.

To see the technique in action, punch my name or the term Everlasting Gossip Stopper into Google or You Tube.

The beauty of the technique is that everybody laughs when we teach it and make them go through the hand motions, but many people actually put it into practice within a few hours. If they remember to smile, it has a disarming, but powerful affect. When it becomes well known in a church it can actually become the "normal" way of stopping gossip before it starts.

Redevelopment Transitional Pastor, Brian A Thorstad
Oak Park Community Church, Blaine, MN