



Slander

Small Group Work Sheet
September 18, 2011

Part 1 - Ice Breaker

- What is a piece of hurtful and unhelpful information that was shared about someone in the news this past week?

Part 2 - Sermon Review

- Before this message, did you know the sin of slander has nothing to do with the truth of what is said?
- Before this message, did you consider grumbling sinful?
- What is the difference between grumbling and slander?
- Explain why slander is sourced in an inflated ego.
- Because slandering is acting as if we are above God's law, how serious is it in God's eyes?
- Why are the slanderous words we speak against others actually an insult to God? (*What would Cindy, my wife, chase you with if you said her children were ugly?*)
- In our slander, how do we assume a role only God can play?
- Matthew 7:1 says "Judge not, that you be not judged." What is this verse commonly misunderstood to mean? What does it mean? Why can we be confident it is not ruling out the use of good judgment?
- What are steps we can take to overcome a slandering tongue and a grumbling heart?
- The hardest time not to slander is when others say things about us that are not true. How should we respond in those times? Who is the model for us to follow?

Part 3 - Digging Deeper

Here are some guidelines to help make good judgments.

- **Humility, not superiority.**

The Pharisees were too anxious to judge. They had a critical spirit and wanted to believe the worst about others. They were looking for faults in others and were pleased when they found them. To them Jesus gave the humorous illustration of Matthew 7:3-4. Take the plank out of your own eye before you try to take the speck of sawdust out of someone else's. You and I have met the kind of person Jesus describes as having a "plank" in his eye. He is usually a church member who claims that he is interested in truth; he tells you he is concerned about the health of the body of Christ. So he is anxious to remove the piece of sawdust from your eye

and also the eyes of others. But the better you get to know him, you realize that he is not interested in truth after all. If he were, he would take the plank out of his own eye first! He would be as particular about himself as he is of others.

As Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it, "If a man claims that his only interest is in righteousness and truth, and not at all in personalities, then he will be as critical of himself as he is of other people."

The more humble we are, the more mercy we will show to others. Those who have been given mercy should exercise mercy; those who have stood in great need of grace should invite others to accept great grace.

- **Facts, not perceptions**

If we are quick to judge, we will not need much evidence to form our judgments. Fragments of information will be sufficient. Some people think they have a right to "connect-the-dots" and draw conclusions based on their own intuitions, hunches and prior desires. As human beings, we are always limited in knowledge. It is impossible for us to know everything about anything; therefore we must admit that our judgments might be wrong.

We must learn that sometimes we must withhold judgments. Where we lack information, we must be cautious. Facts, not presumptions, must guide us.

- **Words and actions, not motives**

Only God knows the motives of the heart. I might see a TV preacher urging people to send him money and think he is greedy. He might be, but I do not know him well enough to make those judgments. We are commanded to critique a man's (or woman's) doctrine, methods, and lifestyle. But we are not qualified to judge the secrets of his soul.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 1 Corinthians 4:3 (ESV)

Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. 1 Corinthians 4:5 (ESV)

We are commanded to judge teachings and conduct; we are commanded to judge sinful behavior and attitudes; but motives belong to God and are beyond the realm of our knowledge and jurisdiction. But the fact that we do not know the motives of others should not stop us from assessing our own motives.

- **Biblical issues, not preferences**

Some things are always right. We should always love one another; we should always abhor that which is evil; we should always do good to all men. On the other hand, some things are always wrong. It is always wrong to hate. It is always wrong to love evil, commit adultery or engage in sex outside of marriage. But there are some things that fall in between these two clearly defined spheres. Some matters become good or evil depending on the context, our motives, and who is affected by what we do.

We have no right to judge others in matters of conscience where there is latitude of conduct or belief. When we judge, we should be able to point to a verse of Scripture or a scriptural principle that undergirds our opinion. Ultimately, we are to be concerned with what God has revealed, not preferences and personal convictions.