

## GUARDING AGAINST THE DEFILEMENT OF LISTENING TO AN EVIL REPORT



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED...

1. What causes conflicts in families, churches or organizations to flare out of control and split entire groups?
2. What causes close friendships to be broken when neither party offended the other?
3. Why attempts to restore a fallen Christian brother or sister are often met with defeat?
4. A major reason is the damage caused when an offended person brings others into their offense. *This is called the defilement of an evil report.*

THE CLASSIC EXAMPLE FROM 2 SAMUEL 15

1. During a dark period in the life of King David's family, Amnon raped Tamar, Absalom's sister. When Amnon was confronted by David, the consequences were not as severe as the act required. This caused such hatred in Absalom, who loved his sister, that he had Amnon murdered.
2. Absalom had never fully forgiven his father for not taking more drastic action against Amnon. This unforgiveness became a way of life and years later he found the opportunity to rebel against the authority of his father, King David.
3. It is obvious that his offense was justified in his own eyes, and that Israel was swept up in the same deceitful offense, who felt Absalom was right and actually doing the work of God! Here are the steps Absalom took...
  - Absalom gathered and organized a group who would be loyal to him, rather than to the one whom they served: his father, King David.
  - He made himself available to the people and was sympathetic to those who had grievances.
  - He deceived the people by appearing to have a personal interest in them.
  - In time Absalom alienated the people from their authority. He offered to be the representative to make sure things were done right and would use his new position to increase his loyal following.
  - He sought acceptance and recognition as well as authority.
  - He carried out a tragic take-over of the nation with the help of those who were defiled and infected.
  - However, Absalom's end was very tragic! (2 Samuel 18)

## THE BIBLE'S ADMONITION CONCERNING DEFILEMENT

1. Jesus stated in Luke 17:1 that offenses would come: *Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come,..."*
2. One of the greatest harms that occurs with people involved in someone else's offense is the defilement of evil speaking or an evil report. So destructive is this practice that life-long friendships can be destroyed!
  - Proverbs 16:28 *A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.*
3. We are to be aware of and guard against bitterness defiling other people who are not directly involved in the offense.
4. To defile someone with an evil report means to stain that person with (many times) unresearched information so that they begin to take sides against that person.
  - The consequence of defilement is the stain left on people, the suspicions and doubts about character and motives. (Hebrews 12:14-15)

## TO DEFILE SOMEONE MEANS TO STAIN

Hebrews 12:14-15 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

1. "Defile" means to stain with color. Satan knows that if he can get us to listen to evil or suggestive words about someone, he can insert a stained impression of that person to us. This tactic is especially effective toward spiritual authorities. Many pastors and ministers have found their effectiveness destroyed by slander. This is Satan's purpose in planting the stain -- he wants people under their care to be suspicious and hesitant to follow their leadership, or to tear down respect for the leader.
2. Why does this subtle device work so effectively? Simply because many people are ignorant of the devil's devices! (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11)
3. The damage that is caused when an offended person brings others into their offense is likened here to being infected with a disease!



### STEP 1 - IGNORANCE

Ignorance is not being aware of the destructive power of untrue or distorted words.  
(2 Corinthians 2:10-11)

## WHO GIVES AN EVIL REPORT?

1. A whisperer - A person who privately passes on evil reports to others (Psalm 41:7).
2. A gossip - One who magnifies rumors or partial information (Proverbs 16:28; 18:4).

3. A slanderer - One who seeks to destroy another's credibility or reputation with damaging facts, distortion of facts, or evil suspicions (Numbers 14:36).
4. A busybody - One who digs up evil reports and makes it his/her business to spread them by means of gossip, slander, or whispering. Such an action is as great a sin as murder or stealing. (1 Peter 4:15)

#### WHAT MOTIVATES AN EVIL REPORT? (James 3:14-18)

1. Bitterness - Reacting out of personal unresolved hurts.
2. Rebellion - Justifying an independent spirit.
3. Deception - Believing that evil reports are right to give.
4. Pride - Wanting to exalt self.
5. Guilt - Justifying past action or attitudes.
6. Envy - Desiring what another has.

#### SATAN USES EVIL REPORTS...

1. To discredit spiritual leadership.
2. To cause Christian to close their spirit to each other.
3. To multiply conflicts and produce more ungodliness.
4. To prompt non-Christians to mock Christianity and reject Christ.



#### **STEP 2 - EXPOSURE**

Exposure is entering into conversation with a carrier or an evil report. (1 Timothy 5:13)

#### HOW TO DETECT A CARRIER OF AN EVIL REPORT...

1. A carrier will usually test your spirit before giving you the evil report. Any evidence of a compatible spirit in you will encourage him to give you the report.
2. A carrier will usually check your acceptance of his report before giving it to you. He may do this by asking your opinion about the person or dropping a negative comment and observing your response to it.
3. A carrier will often get you to ask for the evil report by creating curiosity for it. Some starters are, "Have you heard about (name)?" "Wait till I tell you about (name)!" "Can we pray about (name)?"

4. A carrier may communicate an evil report by asking us for counsel or by sharing a “concern” for the person involved. “Can I talk to you about (name)?”
5. A carrier may use evil reports to get you to admire him or her because of being on the inside and having access to privileged information.
6. A carrier is usually one who evokes vivid details of evil and will even search them out. God condemns such “detectives of darkness” whose tongues are like sharp words. (Psalm 57:4)

#### FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK A CARRIER...

1. “What is your reason for telling me?” Widening the circle of gossip only compounds the problem.
2. “Where did you get your information?” Refusal to identify the source of information is a sure signal of an evil report.
3. “Have you gone to those directly involved?” Spirituality is not measured by how well we expose an offender, but by how effectively we restore an offender. (Galatians 6:1-2)
4. “Have you personally checked out all the facts?” Even “facts” become distorted when not balanced with other facts (out of context) or when given with negative motives.
5. “Can I quote you if I check this out?” Those who give evil reports often claim that they are “misquoted.” This is because their words and overriding impressions are reported.



#### **STEP 3 - DEFILEMENT**

Defilement is receiving an evil report from another person and believing it is true without proper research to see if the facts are true.

1. In the same way that touching a diseased person will defile one’s hands, listening to an evil report will defile one’s mind. It is a reality which must be dealt with!



#### **STEP 4 - INFECTION**

Infection is responding to an evil report with human reasoning and emotions rather than with spiritual understanding and genuine love. (Proverbs 17:4, 26:21)

#### YOU ARE INFECTED BY AN EVIL REPORT WHEN YOU...

1. Believe that the evil report or opinion is true without personal research.
2. Form your own negative opinions based upon the report.

3. Focus on the negative aspects of the accused person's character or motive.
4. Interpret that person's words and actions as "supporting evidence."
5. Judge that person's motives based upon the evil report.
6. Back away from that person in your spirit.
7. Tell the evil report or the opinions (received from someone else) to others.



### **STEP 5 - DISEASED**

Disease is being mentally and emotionally controlled by the evil report and by the destructive spirit of the one who gave it. (Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 26:24-26)

The diseased Christian has grieved and quenched the Holy Spirit by taking up the offenses of others, making them his/her own, and adding to them.

#### **YOU ARE DISEASED WHEN YOU...**

1. Develop bitterness and/or rebellion in you own heart, even though you are not involved.
2. Set yourself up as a judge in matters which are God's responsibility, and recruiting others to "your side".
3. Search out the evil reports and use them to give they worst possible impression.
4. Believe that your actions are actually accomplishing God's will rather than realizing that others are given the occasion to blaspheme God's Name because of a lack of genuine love. (1 Corinthians 6:5-8)

#### **CLEANSING FROM THE DEFILEMENT OF SOMEONE'S EVIL REPORT**

Attempts to restore a Christian who has been overtaken in a fault/sin will usually fail, unless the defilement caused by listening to evil reports is first cleansed and then replaced with the spirit of Christ's love, humility and forgiveness.

1. Ask God to cleanse your mind from the defilement of an evil report about a person.
2. Pray for God to give you genuine love for each one involved in the evil report.
3. Cleanse your mind with appropriate Scripture.
  - Have I accepted the evil report as true? (Proverbs 14:15)



- Has the evil report affected how I feel toward the person involved? (Romans 2:1)
  - Do I have an urge to tell someone else the evil report? (Proverbs 17:9)
4. We are admonished to bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us and pray for those who use and persecute us. (Matthew 5:11, 44)
  5. We must “counteract” the evil by overcoming it with an opposite action such as prayer or protection. (Romans 12:14-21)

#### YOU KNOW YOU HAVE CLEANSED YOUR HEART...

1. When you lose your urge to tell someone else the report.
2. When you grieve over the fact that an evil report was given.
3. When you have genuine love toward the person involved in the report.
4. When you are prompt to examine your own life for failures.



#### ACTION

1. Accountability -- Contact the one who gave you the evil report and confront in order to bring this to light. (John 17:20-26; Philippians 2:1-4)
2. Restoration -- Contact the person involved in the situation and to help restore that person in the spirit of meekness. (Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1)
3. Contact those who are spiritually responsible for the situation itself. Once they have been informed, the responsibility rests upon them.
4. Our entire motive is to restore the person with the fault, destroy the secret work of the enemy to defile a person and to help bring the offended parties to a point of reconciliation. We MUST be aggressive in this and overcome the powerful tactic of the devil in bringing disunity in the Body of Christ. As we learn to overcome this powerfully destructive force with knowledge and understanding we will have conquered a tremendous strategy of the enemy to cripple the church and, instead, will see a greater degree of the Presence of God.

*“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!... For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.” Psalm 133*

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Suggested reading: “A Tale of Three Kings” by Gene Edwards