

Devotional Guide for week July 13-19
On Not Taking Up Offenses

Monday

Proverbs 31:8 - 9

An evil report invites us to stick our nose into somebody else's business, which is not a good idea. However, there is a kind of "somebody else's business" that is our responsibility— the rights of the unfortunate, afflicted, and needed.

Think about it: Am I willing to let my heart be broken with the things that break God's heart? In what ways do I stand up for the rights of the unfortunate, afflicted, and needy?

Prayer: For a tender heart towards those who are truly victims.

Tuesday

Genesis 37:2; Numbers 13:32; 2 Samuel 15:1 - 3

The passages for today are examples of evil reports. An evil report has as its object to cause the hearer to have a bad opinion about the object of the report. The information may or may not be true. Sometimes the hearer has no need to know the information.

Think about it: Are there other examples in the Bible of evil reports? Was the information true or false in the examples for today? How was the information received by the hearers? What are some examples of evil reports in today's world?

Prayer: For the desire and power to avoid either giving or listening to evil reports.

Wednesday

James 3:1 - 12

Evil reports are a symptom of an uncontrollable tongue. Unfortunately "tongue disease" is endemic in the entire human race.

Think about it: Have I ever given an evil report? What were my motivations? What were the results?

Prayer: For forgiveness for damage caused by my words; for strength to guard my speech.

Thursday

Matthew 15:15 - 20

According to Jesus, the uncontrollable tongue is itself a symptom of a deeper problem, namely the evil in the human heart.

Think about it: What is the bearer of an evil report revealing about himself? Can I use this truth as a motivation to watch what I say about others?

Prayer: for a clean heart full of God's Holy Spirit; for speech that reflects the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Friday

James 3:6, Haggai 2:11 - 14; Proverbs 26:22; Proverbs 16:28

Evil reports result in defilement and destruction.

Think about it: Do those who give evil reports usually identify their goal as defilement and destruction? What motives and goals do people usually claim for such reports?

Prayer: For discernment in determining the true motives and goals of evil reports that reach my ears.

Saturday

Matthew 18:15 - 20; Galatians 6:1

God has given us both the motivation and the method to deal with any sins we detect in others, as is clear in the Scripture for today. One way of characterizing the procedure Jesus gives in Matthew 18 is to keep the circle of people who know about the problem as small as possible in order to effect restoration.

Think about it: If I discover sin in someone else, what is my responsibility? Have I ever had to do this? Has anyone ever had to do this for me?

Prayer: For the courage to confront sin and the grace to offer restoration to the fallen.

Sunday

Proverbs 14:15; Psalm 101:5; Romans 16:17

Evil reports can be squelched. We do not need to hear about offenses unless we are going to be involved in confronting the offender and bringing about restoration. We do not have to believe everything we hear. We can put the bearer of evil reports on notice that everything they say will be attributed to them and that we hold them accountable for the factuality of their statements.

Think about it: Have I ever wanted to listen to juicy gossip about someone else? What were my motivations? What did I intend to do with the information I got? Were these motives worthy of a Christian?

Prayer: Commit myself to squelch evil reports; to speak only the truth in love.