



Don't Listen

A wicked person listens to malicious talk; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue. ~ Proverbs 17:4

Discover the Context Proverbs 17

 When gossip begins to spread at camp, there are some things you can do to stop it.

- ▶ Walk away.
- ▶ Refuse to listen (Proverbs 26:20).
- ▶ Distance yourself from the gossip. If they continue to spread gossip, you may need to stop hanging out.
- ▶ Rebuke the gossip. Gently and graciously point out the danger of their gossip.
- ▶ Seek reconciliation. Encourage and even facilitate a meeting with the people involved so that a stop can be made to the gossip.
- ▶ Pray for all involved, for truth to prevail and unity to be maintained.

 “Notice, we never pray for folks we gossip about, and we never gossip about the folk for whom we pray! Prayer is a great deterrent.”
~ Leonard Ravenhill
(1907-1994)

Staff unity is so important to a successful summer. A healthy camp culture allows everyone to serve well, plus campers and parents notice the spirit of joy and peace that permeates a unified camp.

One of the major causes of disunity is when people start listening to gossip or the whining that can happen as summer progresses. Because your staff is made up of people who still struggle with sin, it is inevitable that conflict will arise. There will be times when your director says something you don't like or calls you out for something you did wrong. You might be tempted to express anger to someone else on staff. As you grow tired, those habits of your co-counselor may lead you to complain to other staff members. We can often find comfort by venting and commiserating to anyone who will listen and agree with us.

Today's proverb focuses, not on the sin of the gossip or the complaining, but on the one who listens. Yes, for certain gossip is wrong, and so is any talk that puts down another person who is created in God's image. However, today's proverb teaches us that listening to that is also wrong. When you listen to the rumors, even if you don't repeat them, you are giving those rumors extended life—especially if you know it is false. When you give ear to the whining and complaints of another, you validate their complaints and permit that person to stay in sin.

In those moments when you are confronted with another staff person expressing unhealthy thoughts, pray for wisdom and courage to confront it and stop it. Don't listen to it. For the honor of Christ and for the sake of unity, address the problem. Encourage the person to talk directly with the one they are frustrated with. Gently point out that their words are not beneficial. Let that person know you aren't interested in listening to their complaints. As they say, it takes two to gossip—one to speak and one to listen.

Listen to the voice of Jesus, but don't be the one who listens to the destructive tongue. (BHK)