

On Privacy

- I. “A mistake is to assume wrongdoing on the part of an individual because they prefer their privacy. The idea that many people have, ‘if you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to worry about’, is nonsense and presents the dangerous belief that one is guilty until proven innocent. I do have something to hide: my life, which is nobody's business but my God's. The right to privacy is a God given right. We demand privacy all the time, such as when going to the bathroom or taking a shower. No wrongdoing going on there. Other than God, my life is nobody's business.”
(John Kishishian)
- II. Scripture sternly warns against being busybodies in other men's matters. **2TH 3:11; 1TI 5:13; 1PE 4:15.**
- A. busybody: An officious or meddlesome person; one who is improperly busy in other people's affairs.
1. officious: 1. Doing or ready to do kind offices; eager to serve or please; attentive, obliging, kind. 3. Unduly forward in proffering services or taking business upon oneself; doing, or prone to do, more than is asked or required; interfering with what is not one's concern; meddlesome.
 2. meddlesome: Given to meddling or interfering.
 3. meddle: To mix, mingle; to combine, blend, intersperse; To concern or busy oneself. Now always expressive of disapprobation, to concern oneself or take part interferingly.
- B. The busybodies of **1TI 5:11-15** have waxed wanton against Christ, have cast off their first faith, and are turned aside after Satan.
- C. **1PE 4:15** classes busybodies with murderers, thieves and evildoers.
- D. Beware the notion of “noble meddling” where one presumes to involve himself in struggles which are not directly his business. **2CH 35:20-24; PRO 3:30; 25:8.**
1. Strife is encouraged by meddling. **PRO 17:14; 20:3.**
 2. (**PRO 26:17**) He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.
 - a. He cannot let the strife go without being injured and it completely occupies him if he tries to hold on to it.
 - b. If you pass people engaged in a quarrel, do not concern yourself with it unless there is a clear, present danger at hand.
- E. Beware of “white knight meddling” where one is (per the definition above) “unduly forward in...taking business upon oneself” because of a perceived danger or injustice.
1. We are living in times when people are prone to rat out their neighbor on something as trivial as a missing face-mask out of some deluded notion that in so doing they are working salvation for innocent folks.
 2. There are too many “nosy-parkers” who are quick to report things to overly eager authorities on the basis of limited information. **PRO 19:2 c/w JER 20:10.**
 3. Beware of assuming dirt or guilt concerning someone's decisions or actions based on superficial details and then moving upon that person peremptorily (precluding debate, discussion or opposition). **JOH 7:24, 51.**
- F. Beware the man who is too inquisitive about your personal business. **PSA 41:6-7.**
1. Inquiring minds don't always need to know everything. **JDG 13:18; COL 2:18.**
 2. The wicked gather intelligence, not for public discourse or good, but for a weapon. **PSA 64:6 c/w MAT 2:7-8.**
 3. Such inquirers may be laying a snare for their mark. **MAR 12:13-15.**

4. Such inquirers may be laying a snare for their mark's associates. **JOH 18:19-21.**
5. Such inquirers may be building a dossier on someone to be used against him and make him an offender for a slight inconsistency or slip of memory. **ISA 29:20-21.**
6. In this depraved culture of information overload, one can vacuum the internet for all kinds of personal information and build a formidable dossier on someone.
 - a. Why, in the absence of clear, present danger or legitimate inquisition (c/w **DEU 17:2-4**) would you think of doing this to a brother or sister?
 - b. Such "intelligence gathering" of a brother or sister is unnecessary, contrary to the second great commandment, and could cause your loss of inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.
 - c. NOTE: There is a big difference between investigation generated because of genuine suspicion of wrong-doing and investigation to generate a snare or case against someone.
7. You are not obliged to answer every inquiry. **MAT 15:23; JOH 19:9; PSA 39:1.**

III. Totalitarian governments are busybodies.

- A. Governments that usurp the place of God must strive to become omniscient and omnipresent. **PSA 139:1-10.**
 1. Total knowledge is necessary to total control.
 2. "Every tyranny in history followed the path of becoming increasingly invasive and seeking to eliminate individual privacy. The government and their private benefactors want to know everything about everybody because they won't allow any opposition and dissent to their evil plans. Only God, who has infinite understanding and is omniscient, knows everything about everybody and everything. When various authorities in positions of power strive to eliminate individual privacy, they are in essence trying to usurp the role of God." (John Kishishian)
 3. God is the only Person Who can have total knowledge of men without it corrupting Him. Can you imagine sinful man with the power of **HEB 4:12-13**?
- B. The reign of the beast denies the right of private commerce thus controlling the business of men. **REV 13:16-17.**
- C. Participation in discussion groups is a means of getting people to reveal their thoughts.
 1. "...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (**MAT 12:34**).
 2. By this means a person's weaknesses can be discovered, thus paving the way to exploit and manipulate that person.
 3. Even without the government factor, the wisdom of advertising one's personal details in a public forum is questionable.
 4. A silent fool is better than a knowledgeable person without discretion. **PRO 17:28; 26:12.**
- D. We have all likely sacrificed our privacy on the altar of convenience.
 1. "Privacy, freedom and liberty, are not always convenient or easy. Going along with the latest privacy invading technology is often done by many because of convenience. In this country, our hard fought freedoms and liberties are being given away cheaply by several generations of people who value convenience more than liberty." (John Kishishian)
 2. In the past, we gathered information via one-way channels: books, magazines, newspapers, over-the-air broadcasts, etc. But every internet "click" is a two-way system which tells someone else what interests you, motivates you, enrages you, etc. We have exposed ourselves to both private and governmental control to the

point that some algorithm knows more about us than we can even remember about ourselves. We are living **MIC 7:3-7**.

3. Wicked rats thrive on convenience for their own ends. **1KI 12:27-28; MAR 14:11.**
- E. Too much group activity can result in one becoming unable to function without the group.
 1. The individual thus yields to the group the control of his thoughts and life.
 2. The mind of the group becomes the ultimate law rather than the truth of God.
 3. Divisiveness thus becomes the ultimate crime and unity the ultimate virtue.
 4. Never sacrifice the right or responsibility to judge for yourself. **1CO 10:15.**
 5. "...Let every man be fully persuaded IN HIS OWN MIND" (**ROM 14:5**).

IV. Some things should be kept secret rather than openly broadcast. **PRO 12:23; 25:9.**

- A. The ability to keep a secret is an act of faithfulness. **PRO 11:13.**
- B. Be wary of a man that cannot keep a secret.
- C. Your closest friends with whom you share the most should be people you can trust. **PSA 41:9.**
 1. The breach of such trust is a grievous thing: betrayal.
 2. Betrayal is something that is done only where trust and closeness existed.
 3. One of the most piercing, telling statements our Lord ever made was to Judas who came to betray Him: "...Friend, wherefore art thou come?..." (**MAT 26:50**).
- D. It is wisdom to cautiously consider the motives of someone who suddenly wants to get close to you. **1CH 12:16-17.**

V. We are commanded not to be talebearers. **LEV 19:16-17.**

- A. talebearer: One who officiously carries reports of private matters to gratify malice or idle curiosity.
- B. Talebearers reveal secrets. **PRO 20:19.**
- C. Talebearers flatter people. **PRO 20:19.**
 1. This is how they collect their tales and gain their hearers.
 2. They are to be left alone rather than meddled with!
- D. Talebearers are injurious people who cause strife. **PRO 26:20-28.**
 1. They are guilty of hatred and deceit.
 2. They are NOT to be believed.
- E. Talebearing is carrying reports of *private* matters, not *public* matters as in **1CO 1:11; 5:1; 11:18; 2TI 1:15; 2:17-18.**
- F. Consider the damage to a relationship or reputation and the potential for strife among otherwise peacefully coexisting people that could be generated by betraying a brother who had in confidence confessed a fault to you, per **JAM 5:16.**
 1. This might be a fault against you that a brother is confessing he was wrong about.
 2. This might be a personal fault (sin or deficiency) that a brother is struggling with.
 3. Either way, it is a confidence that should be honored as much as possible.
- G. (**PRO 11:13**) A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.
- H. If possible, it is best to cover a person's faults rather than spread them abroad. **PRO 10:12; 17:9; 19:11.**
 1. People who unnecessarily broadcast the faults of others have a hatred problem.
 2. Pride plays a role in such fault-spreading. The spreader is actually exalting himself by the diminishing of another man.
 3. Charity "...vaunteth not itself...seeketh not her own..." (**1CO 13:4-5**).
 4. Don't spread dirt so you can sow discord. **PRO 6:19.**

- I. There are obviously times when something said in secret should be exposed to others, such as when a grave danger exists. **EST 2:21-23; ACT 23:12-16.**
 1. There is a difference between ratting out weakness and ratting out wickedness.
 2. The former destroys a good person, the latter saves one.

- VI. Sin need be confessed only as narrowly as the offense extends.
 - A. The procedure of **MAT 18:15-18** is obviously designed to keep the offense contained, if possible.
 1. Mind that **MAT 18:15-18** is instruction for handling a matter of private offense between two brethren; others are only brought into the picture as necessary.
 2. **MAT 18:15-18** is not an order for dealing with publicly known sin problems as in the case of the commonly reported fornicator in **1CO 5:1**.
 3. **MAT 18:15-18** is not even an order for exposing a sin that would merit exclusion from the church. It is a process to settle grievances between brethren, which when a determination has been made, the conflicting brothers must abide by the terms. c/w **1CO 6:1-2**.
 - B. The one to whom we confess is the one we have wronged and who can, therefore, forgive us. **LUK 17:3-4; COL 3:13**.
 - C. If a sin (such as heart adultery, **MAT 5:28**) does no injury to one's fellow man, then the sin need be confessed only to God.
 - D. Note that the confession of **JAM 5:16** is one to another rather than to everyone and need only to be made so far as to promote healing.
 - E. Public confession of excludable offenses would cause the offense to be commonly reported and thus warrant exclusion from the church. **1CO 5; EPH 5:3**.
 - F. This counters much of what passes for "sensitivity training" which encourages group confession to people who were not sinned against by the confessor.

- VII. The following are preventatives to becoming busybodies.
 - A. Keep busy with your own work. **1TH 4:11; 2TH 3:12; 1TI 5:14**.
 - B. Work out your own salvation, first. **ROM 2:21; PHIL 2:12**.
 - C. Do not wear out your welcome when visiting others. **PRO 25:17**.
 - D. Avoid *evil surmisings*, the unnecessary framing of conjectures, suspicions. **1TI 6:4**.
 1. Reserve judgment when you lack sufficient evidence. **1CO 4:5**.
 2. Beware of engaging in slander, which is "the utterance or dissemination of false statements or reports concerning a person, or malicious misrepresentation of his actions, in order to defame or injure him." **PRO 10:18; PSA 101:5; 2TI 3:3**.
 - E. Do not watch for iniquity in others. **ISA 29:20-21; PSA 64:1-7**.
 - F. Respect the right of private property. **MAT 20:15**.
 1. One has a right to do what he will with his own.
 2. The circumstances of **ACT 2:44-45; 4:32** were unique to the Jerusalem church.
 - a. Even in this situation the right of private property was respected. **ACT 5:4**.
 - b. In view of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, it made sense to sell the property.
 - c. Such communal living is never commanded in Scripture.
 - d. Paul did not tell the rich to sell everything but rather to be "...ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (**1TI 6:18**).
 3. Paul plainly instructed us to eat our "OWN bread" (**2TH 3:12**).
 4. A word to all and especially to children: do not assume that something which belongs to another is yours to handle, use, enter, etc., without permission from the

- owner.
5. “A man’s home is his castle” is a long-standing article of Western Civilization:
 “The poorest man may, in his cottage, bid defiance to all the forces of the Crown. It may be frail, its roof may shake; the wind may blow through it; the storm may enter; the rain may enter; but the King of England may not enter; all his force dares not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement.”
 (William Pitt, 19th C. British MP and Prime Minister)
- G. Respect the right of private judgment in areas of liberty. **ROM 14.**
1. “...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (**ROM 14:5**).
 2. We are perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment when we respect each other's choices in matters of liberty and do not try to force our opinions on others. **1CO 1:10.**
- H. Let every man bear his own burden. **GAL 6:5.**
1. Each will be held responsible for his own work.
1CO 3:8; EZE 18:1-4, 20; JOH 21:21-22.
 2. Therefore, every man must prove his OWN work. **GAL 6:4.**
 3. Let every man do his OWN business. **1TH 4:11.**
 4. Let parents train their OWN children. **MAL 4:6; 1TI 3:4-5, 12.**
 5. Let each husband rule his OWN wife and let that wife submit to her OWN husband.
EPH 5:22-24.
 6. Let each man provide for his OWN that the church not be charged. **1TI 5:8, 16.**