

*Inspirational Stories*

*to*

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# They Were all Winners

Author; Unknown

A few years ago at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash. At the sound of the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. They all turned around and went back. Every one of them. One girl with Down's Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." All nine linked arms and walked across the finish line together.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What truly matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course.





## Mrs. Thompson

Jean Thompson stood in front of her fifth-grade class on the very first day of school in the fall and told the children a lie. Like most teachers. She looked at her pupils and said that she loved them all the same, that she would treat them all alike. That was impossible because there in front of her, slumped in his seat on the third row, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard. Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were unkept and that he constantly needed a bath. Teddy was unpleasant. It got to the point during the first few months that she would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then marking the F at the top of the paper biggest of all.

Because Teddy was a sullen little boy, no one else seemed to enjoy him, either. At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's records and put Teddy's off until last. When she opened his file, she was in for a surprise. His first-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is bright, inquisitive child with a ready laugh." "He does his work neatly and has good manners... he is a joy to be around." His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle." His third grade teacher wrote, "Teddy continues to work hard, but his mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken." Teddy's fourth-grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class. He is tardy and could become a problem."

By now Mrs. Thompson realized the problem, but Christmas was coming fast. It was all she could do, with the school play and all, until the day before the holidays began and she was suddenly forced to focus on Teddy Stoddard. Her children brought her presents, all in beautiful ribbon and bright paper, except for Teddy's, which was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper of a scissored grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one quarter full of cologne. She stifled the children's laughter, when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume behind the other wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed behind just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my mom used to." After the children left she cried for at least an hour.

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing, and speaking. Instead, she began to teach children. Jean Thompson paid particular attention to one they called "Teddy". As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded.

On days where there would be an important test, Mrs. Thompson would remember that cologne. By the end of the year he had become one of the smartest children in the class and ...well, he had also become the "pet" of the teacher who had once vowed to love all her children the same. A year later she found a note from Teddy, telling her that of all the teachers he'd had in elementary school, she was his favorite. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, had stuck with it, and would graduate with the highest of honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson she was still his favorite teacher of all time.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would graduate from college with the highest honors. He assured Mrs. Thompson she was still his favorite teacher. Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that she was still his favorite teacher, but now his name was a little longer. The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, M.D.

The story doesn't end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he'd met this girl and was to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering.. well, if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the pew usually reserved for the mother of the groom. And guess what, she wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing and I bet that on that special day, Jean Thompson smelled just like ... well, just like the way Teddy remembered his mother smelling on their last Christmas together.

**The Moral:** You never can tell what type of impact you may make on another's life by your actions or lack of action. Consider this fact as you teach your children each day.

[www.actofkindness.org](http://www.actofkindness.org)





# The Cover up

by

Rhonda Rhea

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Something was wrong at school. Very wrong. It was only the bravery of Andrew that finally brought resolution. Of course, he was that same person who actually caused the situation in the first place. Nevertheless, he snapped into action, mustered up no small amount of courage and, yes, he **CLEANED OUT HIS LOCKER!**

People teared up as they walked by. It wasn't emotion over his bravery. It was some sort of gray fog that was looming over the locker. The stench was causing the paint to peel.

The cleaning process was an adventure- maybe it was more of an excavation. No, excavation isn't a strong enough word either. It was more like a hostile confrontation. He might have been better prepared for the battle if it were a military school locker. Still, I think we'd all be pretty amazed, if not thoroughly grossed out, at the spoils of war a 9th grader can acquire when he resolves to clean his locker. "So there's that Government report." "Hey, I remember when these shoes fit!"

Andrew continued the onslaught on his locker until he finally sniffed out the enemy. He found it sandwiched between a couple of stiff, brown socks. (Hey, wait a minute! I only buy him white socks). It was one of those frozen pocket sandwiches. Needless to say, it was no longer frozen. It's safe to say that it was no longer a sandwich either. It was green and purple and slimy- the part that was still there, that is. Half of it was gone-even though he hadn't ever eaten any of it.

Once he peeled away the socks, the stench moved the battle into more of a chemical warfare mode. Even after Andrew hauled off the slime pocket, the stench didn't seem to understand that its instigator was gone. The gray fog still loomed. So Andrew fought the chemical battle the way most 9th grade guys fight the battle- something like Mold-zilla meets High Karate Kid.



Isn't that how we treat sin sometimes? We ignore it until it just won't be ignored anymore. And then we try to cover it over by "over-cologning" it. We excuse it as a little boo-boo, an error in judgment, or "just part of my personality." What we really need to do is recognize that stench for what it is: sin. Then we need to hose out the locker of our lives and start fresh.

Jesus is the only one who can clean up the stench. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) Yes, HE can purify even the stuff we've left growing all semester.

Covering over our sin gets us nowhere. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." He finds mercy. In some analogies, he may even find a science project.





## Out of Harm's Way

There we were fifty 10-year-old boys in the Minnesota mid-winter cold, packed on a school bus headed for the downtown YMCA to go swimming. I can still sense the excitement, the “can hardly wait” anticipation. These were the days of owning the world.

We soon arrived at the YMCA. Out of the bus, we ran through the cold, keeping up with each other’s speed, into the sounds and wet warmth of the building. We could smell the pool. We could hear it echo to us as we tore off our parkas, our boots, shirts and pants.

I can still feel it. The event we had been waiting for, since Mrs. Elmquist announced it, five weeks ago. All there was to do now was run. And run we did. We actually flew into the water. I guess we never heard the commands to slow down, to wait for the teacher in charge, or to walk around to the other end of the pool where the depth was a reasonable three feet.

I couldn’t swim and was instantly under the heaviness of water at the deep end of the pool. I knew I was drowning. I had heard that one would surface three times. After the third gasp above water, down I would go, never to surface again.

Boy, was I scared. I surfaced for the first time. It was bright and noisy. I thought of yelling for help, but could not. Something inside stopped me. I sank again and resurfaced. Once more I thought it wise to yell “HELP”, but could not. They also say that on the third time under, you will see your life pass before your eyes and indeed I felt like mine did. My short life, only 10 years old, did not take long to pass. It didn’t have too much to say. I committed to yell for help, on this the third rising.

All of the sudden, I felt a curved hooking devise around my belly, lifting me clear out of the water and very gently placing me on the side of the pool. I never had a chance to meet my resolve and to finally ask for help. Still now, after 45 years of life, I have needed the help of others often and asked for it seldom.

And yet I know that the hand of God surely curves around me, holds me strongly, and gently and places me on the side, out of harm's way.

- Dave Jass

Courtesy of Inspirational Christian Stories & Poems





## The Never Ending Call

The boy walked along the ocean shore trying not to stray.  
He looked up to his Father saying, "Dad I want to play."  
His Father looked upon him, with love showing in his eyes.  
"Do what you want to, my son but do not leave my side."  
"I would never leave you daddy, I love you way too much."  
But the boy took a step away, out of his father's range of touch.  
He walked through the surf, the waves tickling one toe.  
"If I take one more step in," he thought; "Father will never know."  
His father called out to him, "Son, to me remain true."  
The boy thought with glee at the moment; "I don't need you."  
His Father felt sadness, but he held his tongue.  
Sometimes lessons need to be learned even when so young.  
The boy stepped out a little further, the water covering his waist.  
His Father spoke with urgency. His Father spoke with haste.  
"My son come back to me," he said, "The day is almost done."  
"Not yet, Dad," the boy yelled, "I'm having too much fun!"  
But the Boy did not have his Father's sight... So he could not tell...  
The Tide was coming in fast... There would be no time to yell.  
"Father!", he tried to scream as the water covered his head.  
"I need you now Daddy!", was what the boy had said.  
And in a single instant his father was by his side.  
"I thought you left me Daddy. I thought you went to hide."  
The Father looked upon his son; a tear streaming down his cheek.  
The boy looked upon his Father and cried the sobs of the meek.  
"I would never leave you son. For I love you just the same."  
"I was only waiting... for you to call upon my name."

-Author Unknown

- Courtesy of Inspirational Christian Stories & Poems





# Where Are the Lamps?



In a certain mountain village in Europe several centuries ago (so the story goes), a nobleman wondered what legacy to leave his townspeople. At last he decided to build them a church.

Nobody saw the complete plans until the church was finished. When the people gathered, they marveled at its marvelous beauty. But one person noticed an incompleteness. "Where are the lamps?", he asked. "How will the church be lighted?"

The nobleman smiled. Then he gave each family a lamp. "Each time you're here, the area in which you sit will be lighted. But when you're not here, some part of God's house will be dark." Some clever nobleman that was. Don't you think?

Today we live in a world of darkness, a darkness in which even our secular problem-solvers are beginning to stumble. In spite of our social conscience, all around us is evidence of ignorance, illiteracy, and dark imaginings. Romans 2:19 tells us that we, as Christians, "are a light for those who are in the dark."

"But the world is so big," you might say; "and our lamp is so small." Yes, but I believe we can still light up some small part each day. After all, look at the star-struck heavens. Have you ever noticed how small each star looks in the distance. Yet, put together those tiny jewels can light the darkest night. Not one of those little lights of heaven is ever missing or else the heavens would be less bright. I believe each of us is like a star (or a lamp if you will). And Yes, I am convinced that we can make this world a better place. It all begins with the desire expressed in Michelangelo's prayer: "God, grant me the desire always to desire to be more than I can ever accomplish."

This day I encourage you to let God light your lamps with "his fire"- the Holy Spirit and to allow him to send you in a new direction today. Perhaps you might meet someone who needs you today. Put on a bright face whether you feel it or not. I guarantee you that gladness will come.

Do you remember at the beginning of the story, what the nobleman said to the congregation? You too, have a great opportunity to let your light shine for Christ. When each of you choose to be actively involved in your school and in your church, your school and church will shine the brightest. May each of you shine your brightest during this school year.

Author Unknown

# TOP 15 THINGS GOD WON'T ASK

*But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philip-  
pians 4:19.*

1. God won't ask what kind of car you drove, but will ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.
2. God won't ask the square footage of your house, **but will ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.**
3. God won't ask about the fancy clothes you had in your closet, but will ask how many of those clothes helped the needy.
4. God won't ask about your social statues, but will ask what kind of class you display.
5. God won't ask how many material possessions you had, but will ask if they dictated your life.
6. God won't ask what your highest salary was, but will ask if you compromised your character to obtain salary.
7. God won't ask how much overtime you worked, but will ask if you worked overtime for your family and loved ones.
8. God won't ask how many promotions you received, but will ask how you promoted others.
9. God won't ask what your job title was, but will ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.
10. God won't ask what you did to help yourself, but will ask what you did to help others.
11. God won't ask how many friends you had, but will ask how many people to whom you were a true friend.
12. God won't ask what you did to protect your rights, but will ask what you did to protect the rights of others.
13. God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived, but will ask how you treated your neighbors.
14. God won't ask about the color of your skin, but will ask about the content of your character.
15. God won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words, but will ask how many times it didn't.



# THE GIRL NO ONE TALKED TO

By Jennifer Leigh Youngs

Last year there was a girl at our school who hardly anyone talked to. I think it was because she seldom showered, and she kind of smelled bad. Her name was Cindy Lindburg. I didn't know exactly where she lived, but it must have been somewhere in the neighborhood because we always got on the school bus at the same bus stop.

Cindy Lindburg didn't have many friends. She always came to the lunch room alone and she left alone. On the bus, no one offered her a seat, and she never asked because she was sort of a shy person. She seemed like a nice girl -- who had an odor problem.

One day, I was walking up to the bus stop and I saw Carl Littleton making fun of her. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but I saw the way he was laughing and rolling his eyes in his typical poking-fun-at-you way. I also saw how sad it made Cindy. Clutching her notebook to her chest like a shield, she stared at the ground and moved as far away from him as possible without leaving the bus stop entirely. As soon as I got close enough, I glared at Carl to make him stop laughing--even though I knew he probably wouldn't. He didn't. So I walked over and stood closer to Cindy so she wouldn't feel quite so bad. It was just one of those times when you just knew someone needed someone to be a friend.

I didn't think she'd say anything, but she did. Her eyes peeked up from staring at the ground and as though she thought I'd be embarrassed if anyone heard her speak to me, she whispered, "Hi."

"Hi," I said. Then as loudly as I could, I said, "Don't pay any attention to Carl. His parents have been unsuccessful in teaching him some manners."

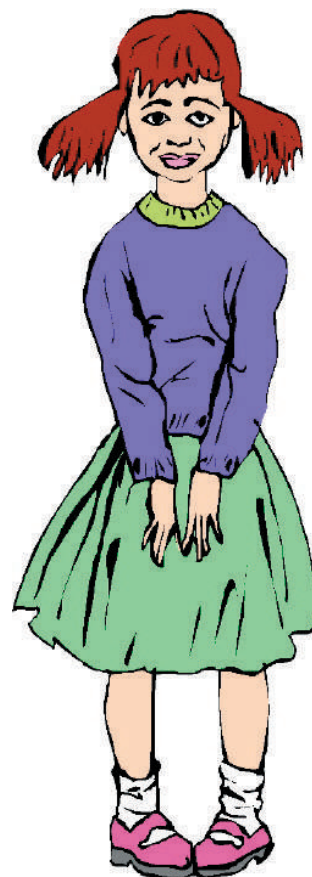
Some of the kids standing there laughed. The comment didn't even rouse a smile out of Cindy. By now everyone there was talking with a friend. Quietly, and with a serious look on her face, Cindy said, "I don't know why everyone hates me."

I was surprised at her words. "No one hates you," I told her.

"Then why don't I have any friends?" she asked.

Her question took me by surprise. I thought for a moment. "Well," I began, wondering if I could tell her that maybe it was because she smelled so awful, "I think you're smart and all, and you dress okay, and..."

"So then, what is it?" she blurted.



"Well," I hedged and then figured it's now or never. "Maybe it's because you...." I paused because I almost said "stink" but instead, "don't smell so good."

She looked up, studying my face as if checking to see if I was making fun of her or being mean. I guess she decided I wasn't. She nodded, like she believed what I said was true. Since she seemed to take this well, I added, "I think you'd probably make more friends if you took more baths." She looked away and, worried that I might have gone too far, I shrugged and added, "It's just a thought." (My mom says that sometimes when she gives me advice.)

Turning back to face me, Cindy took a deep breath and said, "Thank you." I was so relieved, and the next moment the bus arrived, and all the kids started piling on.

"If I save a seat for you on the bus tomorrow," she asked, "will you sit with me?"

"Sure," I said.

I'm happy to report that Cindy did take more baths from that day on. And it wasn't too long before she started to make friends at school. I was one of them.

I made a difference for the better in Cindy's life. And got a new friend to boot!

Courtesy of *Taste Berries for Teens*, Health Communications, Inc., Deerfield Beach, FL, 1999.



# BEING POLITE TO GOD

By Vesta J. Farnsworth

Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:30.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Hebrews 13:8.

We would feel greatly honored if a king should visit our town, and we were invited to come before him and speak to him.

But if we were told that besides coming to him we might ask for anything we wanted most, and that he would grant our request, how we would study in order to know what to ask!

We would think of what we should wear, and just what to say when in his presence. We would be very anxious to do nothing that would displease him. When before him, we would be thinking of him and of his goodness in being so kind to us.

But really and truly we have the privilege of coming before the King of kings, the greatest Monarch that ever lived. He has invited you and me to come to Him just as often as we wish. If there is anything we want, He has sent us word, "Ask and it shall be given you." If we do not understand just what would be best, He will not give what we ask, but instead, will give something better, and we shall know that it comes because we asked Him.

Earthly kings are only men, like other men. They could not help us if we were dying, for they themselves must die. But this great King, of whom we are talking now, will never die. He has power to do anything, and still more than that, He wants us to come before Him and ask for what we need, and to believe that He loves us.

Yes, the King is Jesus. And when we come to Him for favors we call it praying. You know just how careful we would be if we were to appear before the king of England or any other great man, but isn't it strange that some people, when they are before this greatest of all kings, seem to forget, or not care very much how they act in His presence? Have you ever thought about it this way?

Isn't it too bad that some boys and girls will even laugh and whisper when others are talking to the King, or may look about the room, or may be thinking of other things and caring nothing at all for what is said? Though He has invited them to ask whatever they please, they are so careless they will not even think what they need most.

Let us remember that God is greatly to be feared. No man can look at His face and love. When Moses was told to come near and talk with Him, he said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." It made him tremble to come near to God. Although we do not see Him we should never dare treat Him with disrespect in His house or when we kneel in prayer.

Though the Lord is so great yet He knows us tenderly, He calls us His children and delights to give us good things. He hears the prayer of the weakest child if it comes from a sincere heart.





Please read this little poem and learn to repeat it. Perhaps it will help you to be more polite to God.

### Reverence

"If before an earthly king  
We were called to stand,  
Humbly would we bow the head,  
Humbly fold the hand.

"Had we done some sinful thing,  
And defied his laws,  
Gladly would we welcome one  
Who would plead our cause.

"Should we look about and laugh,  
He would think that we  
Did not care if all our crimes  
Should forgiven be.

"Thus when to the King of kings  
One shall lead in prayer,  
Humbly let our listening hearts  
The petition share.

"Foreheads bowed and hands at rest  
Should our posture be,  
While from wandering thoughts and plans  
Heart and mind are free."

*Our Little Friend*



# "GOSSIPITIS"

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:1, 12

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Exodus 20:16.

Gossiping is a common fault. Perhaps it is because we are all so much interested in each other that we like to talk about one another. How wonderful it would be if every time we did that we said kindly things. What if we praised the virtues of people we know instead of dwelling upon their faults? No one, perhaps, is so faultless that his life and actions are above criticism. But there seems to be a particular wicked pleasure many people get in discussing the weaknesses or unfortunate aspects of other people's character. Some people are so given to this bad habit that they might be said to have "gossipitis."



It is a sort of contagious disease too, for it spreads very rapidly. It has been known to infect a whole community in a few short weeks. When it reaches an epidemic stage it usually amounts to a community scandal. There are very few, if any, of us who have escaped some of its symptoms at some time or other. No matter how we may despise and loathe it in others, seldom do we recognize it in ourselves.

The progression of this social disease goes something like this. A startling bit of unexpected news is heard, and we run to the phone or next door in order to ask the exciting question, "Did you hear?" The person to whom the news is relayed then thoughtlessly repeats the tale to someone else, possibly not getting the facts just straight. Unintentionally the story is garbled and changed as it is passed from one to another, so that by the time it has spread to the edge of town it is in what the moving-picture industry calls technicolor.

This aspect of the disease is not nearly so bad, however, as the malignant type, in which someone's character is assailed and his reputation injured. The source of this type of "gossipitis" is usually in the mind of someone who has conceived a dislike for another, or who thinks he has been injured by another. In order to "get even" he picks flaws in the person who has won his ill-will, stressing trivial acts and ascribing selfish or unworthy motives to them. The story is picked up even by parties who have only a casual interest in the matter and passed on as the very truth. What untold harm has been done to perfectly innocent people in this way!

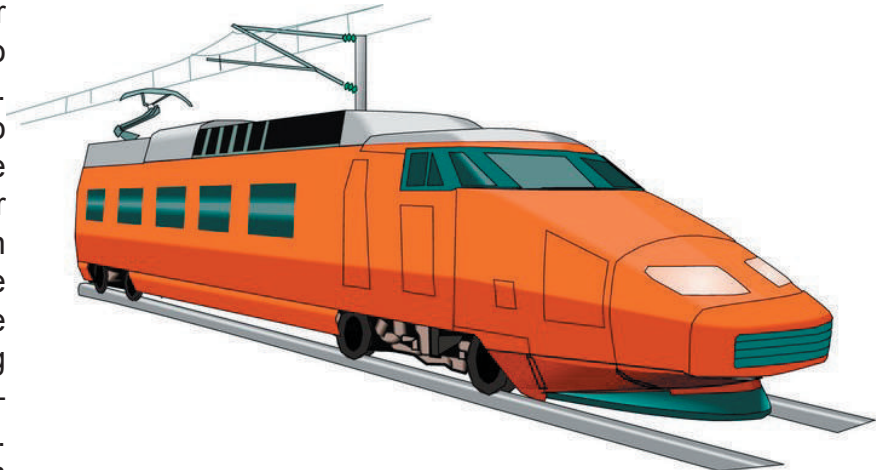
Before we pass on such stories about another, would it not be a good plan to put ourselves in his place and judge whether or not we would like such a thing to be said about us? But you say, if it is true, what harm is there in repeating it? Well, certainly, it is all the more important that we do not repeat a story of evil if it is true, and it is all the more to our credit if we put a curb on our desire to spread it. For if there is no foundation to a story, though it may inconvenience the one

about whom it is told for a time, when the truth is known such a person is vindicated. But for the poor fellow who has made a serious mistake and needs help, such a story of his failure might blast all hopes for his recovery to the esteem of his friends.

One of the ancient philosophers said, "No man is my friend who will either permit my name to be rudely handled in his presence, or so handle it himself; and if he repeats gossip while disbelieving it himself, then he is ten times my enemy."

If we hear some surprising bit of news about another that shocks us, would it not be the kind thing, if we knew him well enough, to go to him and ask whether the report is true? If it should be true, then we should plead with him to take whatever steps are necessary to set his reputation right before his fellows. Perhaps things are not as they seem, or there may be circumstances which he would reveal to us that would make us sympathetic with him and desirous of helping him. Usually there are angles to every tale about another, which, if known, would change the whole judgment of the public in regard to the person or people involved.

Let us think of a few examples of how this terrible disease of "gossipitis" works. A prominent church pastor wanted to present some educational films to his church young people. A local motion-picture manager was agent for these films. It was necessary to go to the theater office to select them. The pastor and his son went to the theater and were shown to the projection room. Some member of his church saw him and his son entering the theater entrance. He spread the story around that the pastor made a practice of taking his boy to picture shows. The pastor was distressed at the gossip. He found it necessary to make a public explanation.



In a crowded club car of a railroad train, a Christian young woman was sitting alone until at one station an older woman got on and found the empty seat beside this girl. In an hour or two, the older woman signaled to the porter to bring her a drink from the club car. He came back with a bottle of beer. She asked the young lady whether she would hold the bottle until she could find her money in her handbag. The girl, wanting to be courteous, did so, although with much reluctance. Somebody passing in the aisle just then recognized her, and spread the story to her friends that she was seen drinking beer on a train. If it had not been for the high character of the young woman involved, many might have believed the story, and her reputation would have been much damaged. Fortunately, she was such a refined and spiritually-minded person that no one would believe the story.

Such stories only prove how wicked reports are made out of innocent circumstances. Of course, it also shows how careful we should be not to give anyone a chance to spread such stories about us. The Bible tells us to avoid the very appearance of evil. Our reputation is what we make it,

and we cannot be too careful that we are not caught in situations or circumstances that cannot be explained. There is a wholesome sermon in this poem by Benton P. Stebbins:

'They say'-ah, well, suppose they do:  
But can they prove the story true?  
Suspicion may arise from naught  
But malice, envy, want of thought;  
Why count yourself among the 'they'  
Who whisper what they dare not say?

'They say'-but why the tale rehearse,  
And help to make the matter worse?  
No good can possibly accrue  
From telling what may be untrue;  
And is it not a nobler plan  
To speak of all the best you can?

'They say'-well, if it should be so,  
Why need you tell the tale of woe?  
Will it the bitter wrong redress,  
Or make one pang of sorrow less?  
Will it erring one restore,  
Henceforth to go and sin no more?

'They say'-oh, pause and look within;  
See how your heart inclines to sin.  
Watch! Lest in dark temptation's hour  
You too should sink beneath its power.  
Pity the frail-weep o'er their fall;  
But speak of good or not at all."

"Gossipitis" is a disease—a disease of the heart and mind and will. Perhaps its best antidote is given to us by Jesus, our perfect example: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." When we obey that command we shall be showing kindness in its most noble form.

*The Youth's Instructor. Adapted.*

