

# Lutheran Women in Mission

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## Sticks and Stones by Joyce Stork

### Opening

Sing or read "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (*LW 295, TLH 464, LBW 370*).

"Sticks and Stones might break my bones, but words can never hurt me!" The old playground chant was supposed to be a way to fend off bullies and name-callers, but it was never really true. Words do hurt. They hurt feelings, ruin reputations and injure relationships. No one escapes their poison-not the bully, nor the bully's friends, and certainly not the victim.



### A Gossip or a Bully?

Look up the following verses. What characteristics are described? Would they apply to a gossip, a bully or both?

**Proverbs 11:12-13**

**Proverbs 16:27-29**

**Proverbs 26:18-21**

**Proverbs 26:24-25**

**Proverbs 26:28**

What characteristics do bullies and gossips have in common?

What do you think are the differences? Is one worse than the other?

### Words as Weapons!

Think of your relationships with other people at home, at church and at work. How might words be used to bully in these relationships? How might gossip be used? What would be the purpose of such behavior? How could you use words in a more positive way?

How does **Proverbs 26:22** describe gossip? What do you think would make gossip seem so pleasant?

What one situation in **2 Thessalonians 3:11-12** does Paul warn is most likely to lead to gossiping? Is this true for you?

Read the 8th Commandment and its meaning (*LW page 300 or Luther's Small Catechism*). Can

sharing news about someone else be God-pleasing? When does it become sinful?

What does Luther mean when he uses the phrase "put the best construction on everything"? What is the danger in guessing about situations?

How might the 8th Commandment apply to reading, watching and discussing celebrity gossip items in the news?

### **In Whom Should I Trust?**

Read **Jeremiah 9:23-24**. We are not to boast of three things. What are they?

In what way might a gossip or bully be depending on these temporal things rather than trusting in God?

What does the prophet say we may boast about?

Why might a woman keep a friend who is a bully and a gossip? What are the dangers in such a friendship?

How might you avoid temptations to gossip? How might you respond when faced with the opportunity to gossip? (Hint: read the meaning of the 8th Commandment again.)

In Jesus Christ, we live securely as forgiven sinners because of God's kindness, justice and righteousness. Christians need not be concerned about whether they are as rich, smart or strong as others. Rather we are free to see the world through our Lord's eyes. What do the following verses recommend to us?

**John 13:34-35**

**Romans 12:9-21**

**Philippians 4:8-9**

**Colossians 3:1-4**

### **Closing**

Even though we may have pointed the accusing finger of gossip at others, Jesus refuses to accuse us. Instead, by His death on the cross, He forgives us all of our sins, including those of gossip. Empowered by that mercy, we are enabled to speak a better word of love and kindness to those around us!

Pray or Sing Together the following verses of "Take My Life, O Lord, Renew" (*LW 404*).

Take my life, O Lord, renew, consecrate my heart to you.  
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.  
Take my voice and let me sing, praises to my Savior King.  
Take my lips and keep them true, filled with messages from you.

In Jesus name, Amen.

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