

Gossip kills friendships

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By Lenny Cacchio

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—An old Irish proverb says, "Who gossips with you will gossip of you." How monstrously true that is!

Back in my schooldays I learned the truth of that little aphorism. I used to hang out with a "friend" whose favorite pastime was not baseball (he was terrible at the game) but watching for people with personal quirks or habits (chinks in their armor, as it were) that he could exploit for laughs and other unkind, cruel behavior.

It was great fun when he would sidle over and nudge his elbow into my side just before making some demeaning remark. It was only later that I realized that when I wasn't around it was someone else getting the nudge in the side, with me at the other end of the laugh equation.

At the time I didn't log that he was at heart an insecure soul and that this mimicry of a henhouse pecking order was his way of attempting to inflate a badly bruised ego. Worse, it became almost an addiction, and certainly was a bad habit.

That old Irish proverb hits it about right, as does the biblical book of Proverbs.

"A gossip betrays a confidence, so avoid anyone who talks too much" (Proverbs 20:19).

"Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

"A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends" (Proverbs 16:28).

"The words of a gossip are like choice morsels. They go down to the innermost parts" (Proverbs 26:22).

Remember that those prone to gossip are often struggling with their own insecurities. That means you shouldn't hate them. But it also means you shouldn't confide in them.