

Lake Cities Community Church  
September 12, 2010  
Pastor Craig Schill  
Community Sunday

## **Four Wrongs Make a Right**

*A Reminder about Biblical Community*

When a mom says to her son, “Johnny I saw that - DO NOT hit your sister again!  
And Jonny says in response, “But she threw my lego ship on the ground and broke into 100 pieces!” The mother is then obligated to say in solidarity with Mothers of all ages: “Johnny, that may be the case, but **two wrongs do not make a right!**” That is a great statement isn’t it? Mothers are like Jedi Masters – full of wisdom and common sense!

The title of my sermon this morning is “Four wrongs make a right.” Not that increased sin helps in any way -- but rather I want us to consider four negative commands in Scripture and their impact on community. Four commands where Moses, Jesus Paul and others are saying, “This is the wrong way to do it – and if you pay attention to that – you will find the right way.

This morning at LCCC, we are celebrating the relaunching of our Sunday School program, small groups ministry and key outreach ministries in the community. And so I felt it was an appropriate time to remind us of the right way to go about doing this thing called the church. And the right way is often found out of the wrong ways.

### **FIRST TWO NEGATIVES**

We will handle the four wrong-way, negative commands in pairs. The first two are “Do not grumble” and “Do not gossip.” Grumbling and gossip have at least three things in

common. First, they both begin in a private setting. One author said, "Some people will believe anything if it is whispered." Second, they both in the moment don't seem like sins. In fact, they can appear to be very helpful as you point out our apparent wrongs and share "valuable" information. Yet, third, we will see they they both are destructive to community. They are the *wrong way*! Let's look now at each in more detail.

### **Do Not Grumble -**

Grumbling comes out of a place of frustration or anger. In the NT, the word comes from the Greek word: *gaguzo* meaning, "to express one's discontent or complaint in low tones of condemnation. To murmur. (*BDAG, L&N*). Out of frustration or anger leadership, with a decision, often quietly in an e-mail or phone call we grumble. *Gaguzo* makes God gag!

Grumbling is not the right way to handle our frustration Paul said, [Phil. 2:14](#) **Do all things without grumbling or disputing.**

In the Old Testament the people of Israel were famous for their grumbling: **So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And in the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. Exodus 15:24, 16:2. They said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" If we had only died in Egypt or in the dessert! - Ex 17:3, Numbers 14:2.**

Their grumbling was ultimately was a sin against the Lord. **You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD. - Ex 16:8** And God is not a big fan of grumbling. [Num. 11:1](#) **and when the LORD heard (*their complaints*), His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them.** And so we are told again today [1Cor. 10:10](#) **And do not grumble,**

as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel.” God hates grumbling as it ultimately reflects a lack of trust in Him.

“There’s a family that nobody likes to meet. They live, it is said, on Complaining Street, in the city of Never-are-Satisfied, the river of discontent beside. They growl at that and they growl at this; Whatever comes there is something amiss. And whether their station be high or humble, they are known only by the name of Grumble. Nothing goes right with the folks you meet, down on that gloomy Complaining Street. They moan at the rain and scoff at the sun. In fact their complaining is never done. And if everything pleased them, there isn’t a doubt, they’d complain that they’d nothing to grumble about!” (anon.)

### **Do Not Gossip -**

The first negative command is “do not grumble.” Let’s now look in more detail at our second prohibition - Do not gossip. The ancient sage said [Prov. 20:19](#) **He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.** The word gossip here is very interesting in the Hebrew it literally means one with an open lips. We could translate this verse: **“Do not associate with a person who always has their mouth open.”** It is a picture of indiscretion, lack of self control - revealing other people’s secrets. Like the WWII saying, “Loose lips sink ships,” gossip produces destructive results.

Now gossip is different from grumbling in that the person who grumbles does so out of frustration, but the gossip shares (often) out of excitement – they have a juicy piece of information to share and are not willing to practice self-control. This is a sin that women particularly need to pay attention to. Paul said, [Titus 2:3](#) **Older women likewise are to be**

reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips. In another place he told widows to not to be gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.<sup>1</sup> Tim 5:13

But it is something for all of us to pay attention to. You may have heard about the gathering of four preachers and their meeting as an accountability group for one another. The first confessed, "Brothers, I struggle with the use of alcohol, especially after difficult board meetings." The second, encouraged by the vulnerability of the first said, "Pray for me, my wife and I are in serious conflict and we need help." The third pastor said, "Brothers, I have a temper with my children that few would guess. I need your prayers. When it came to the fourth one, he wouldn't confess. The others pressed him saying, "Come now, we confessed ours. What is your secret or vice?" Finally he answered, "Brother's my weakness is gossiping and I can hardly wait to get out of here."

## **SECOND TWO NEGATIVES**

The first two negative commands are "Do not grumble and do not gossip." The second two negative commands are, "Do not divide and do not give up." The reason I picked these four is that if the first two lessons are not learned, the second two will occur. If a community is characterized by grumbling and gossip – it will lead to division, church splits, breaks in fellowship, or it will lead to people just giving up and dropping out of the ministry or the faith altogether. Let's look now briefly at the negative prohibitions against division and giving up.

## Do Not Divide

Paul said to the church at Rome: [Rom. 14:20](#) Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. To the church at Corinth he said, [1Cor. 8:13](#) Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again.... One big issue in the early church was people preferences for food, and it was tearing the churches apart. I'm sure it led to much gossip and grumbling! Paul said – that is the wrong way to go.

On November 17, 2007 Daleside Baptist Church, a 287 member congregation split according to the Southern Baptist Convention. A dejected and discouraged Pastor Honus Johnson said, “We used to get along so well.” The division centered around which version of Roberts Rules of Order was used to govern their business meetings. The new younger generation argued that a newer edition needed to be adopted. “The old edition just doesn’t make sense in so many ways,” said Mr. Lane Steve Jr. “That’s why the *Contitution and Bylaws Revision Committee* brought the suggested change before the church. But change did not come easily. Mr. Dale Williams, the Head Deacon said: “We have been using *Robert’s Rules of Order, Revised, 4th Edition* since this church was founded in 1916. I have NEVER and will NEVER belong to a church that does not adhere to these old doctrinal truths! I will stand on these promises! Give me *Robert’s Rules of Order, Revised, 4th Edition*, or give me death!”

Churches split over all kinds of issues – carpet color, worship style, minor doctrinal positions. Paul said to his generation and to all generations. Do not split the church over issues of preference. I know they seem important to you. And they are important. But unity is MORE important. Do not divide the church.

## Do not Give Up

Do not grumble. Do not gossip. Do not Divide and now our fourth “wrong way” prohibition, Do not give-up. If people grumble and gossip and division occurs in the church, many people will just quit the church. They will leave the church for another one, or drop out of the faith altogether. William Hendricks wrote a book called *Exit Interviews*, a book about why people leave church said, “There’s no getting around the fact that the church is just a collection of imperfect and actually sinful people – like you and me. It may be that some of those sinners saved by grace have thoroughly abused you misled you, or rejected you, such that you now will have nothing to do with a church.” (Exit, 300)

But giving up when injured in the church, dropping out is the wrong way to go. The writer to the Hebrews wrote: [Heb. 10:25](#) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Paul said, [2Cor. 4:16](#) Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. And [1Cor. 15:58](#) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

## Application

Do not grumble, do not gossip, do not divide and to not give-up. Let me leave you with four application questions

**(1) If grumbling is not the right way of handling anger and frustration what is the right way?** My challenge is for all of us to again be *students of biblical peacemaking*. Specifically I challenge all of you to pull our church's Relational Commitments that provide the right path for us: Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31). • We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5). • We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11). • We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29). If we have a problem with others, we will talk *to* them, not *about* them. • We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7). • When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1). Grumbling is the wrong way to handle conflict – and Scripture provides us the right way, throughout the Old and New Testaments.

**(2) How can we prevent gossip, especially in our small groups this year?** In our small groups we encourage intimate sharing even and confession of sin. In your small group you will be surprised about what each of us struggles with. And therefore, it is in the context of small groups that gossip can be the most damaging. How can we prevent gossip. I want to challenge each small group leader to spend time at their first meeting talking about confidentiality and again having each person commit themselves to God and one another in the area of trust and self-control, so that gossip might be discouraged.

**(3) What issues threaten to divide us at LCCC?** This may seem like a dangerous question, but I'd much rather see the issue coming up front, than to be surprised by them sneaking up from behind. That is why we did the survey and gathered your input on your preferences between the cafeteria or gym for our worship service. And we had very passionate responses on both options. People who felt strongly that the gym was an essential move for us, and those who felt the gym was an irresponsible move for us. It is a perfect example of how we need to now set aside our preferences and seek unity for the sake of the gospel, and continue to work in every area for unity with one another.

(4) Finally, **"Who do you know that may be considering 'giving up.'** Giving up on the church, or just really discouraged. Think of people in our church who have gone through hardship and difficulty. Consider those with the weight of responsibility and leadership of their shoulders – the many leaders in our church. How can you encourage those people? Spur them onto love and good works?

### **Conclusion:**

This morning we have seen that four wrongs make a right way. By identifying the wrong way of community – grumbling, gossiping, dividing and giving-up – we see more clearly the way we should go. And so as we enter into Sunday School classes, as we join lives in small group settings, and as we reach out to a broken and dysfunctional community, we have been reminded from the wrong ways – the right way to care for one another and to live in the community of the church. To the glory of Christ. Amen.