

## Guarding Against Gossip : Guidelines

*“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.” (Titus 3:1-3)*

### **Guard Against Gossip—Not Confidentiality or Anonymity**

Trusting others and being trustworthy for others are basic requirements for honest, in-depth sharing in groups. God’s word encourages us to be known by bringing our sin and struggles into the light among believers (John 3:19-21), to seek biblical counsel and support as we move forward in dealing with sin (Hebrews 10:24-25), and to refrain from gossip (2 Corinthians 12:20). Information should not be repeated outside of the *re:generation* group unless there is a biblical reason, and sharing only involves people who are part of the problem or solution. When possible, avoid taking away a person’s privilege to share his or her own story. Guarding against gossip creates a safe group for all to share authentically.

Yet, contrary to common practice in many recovery circles, *the Bible does not prescribe confidentiality or anonymity*. Though there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1), often sin has worldly consequences, and the individual who sinned a need for further shepherding beyond simply sharing and confessing. *Re:generation* is not a safe harbor to confess guilt while still protecting sin, but rather a safe place to bring sin into the light in order to deal with it biblically. So, *never promise to keep a secret*. Pledge that you will not gossip, and commit to counsel the participant according to Scripture with those who are a part of the problem or a part of the solution for the purpose of healing (James 5:16).

What is shared in the group (including the inventory) will only go outside the group if additional steps are needed per biblical commands. (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 John 1:7). If someone believes it biblical, wise, and necessary to communicate information about a participant outside of the group, ministry leaders and mentors should be involved to help navigate difficult situations in alignment with Scripture. In most cases, a participant should be given the opportunity to share his own story when he is willing and able to share. If the participant is unable or unwilling to share necessary information outside of the group, instructions in Matthew 18:15-17\* should be followed with great care, patience, and love with the goal of seeing the participant repent and restored to health within the church.

\*note: in v. 17 we interpret “the church” to be Christians who personally know the individual and are committed to seeing the one in sin reconciled to God. Also, Christians are called to treat “Gentiles” and “tax collectors” with love, but not include them as a part of the faithful.