

## Must You Tell Everything You Know?

Joe Slater

Perhaps you've read "Anne of Green Gables" (or seen the videos, or both). "Tales of Avonlea" is a follow-up series of made-for-television programs featuring some of the same characters in the same quaint little town of Avonlea on Prince Edward Island about a century ago.

One of the many recurring themes in both the books and the television shows is the propensity of people to gossip. What someone said or did decades ago is hashed and rehashed. Who was seen with whom, and what it might mean, becomes grist for the rumor mill, replete with speculation, arguments, exaggeration, and an abundance of jumping to conclusions. Ironically, not even church diminishes the desire to dredge up dirt. No sooner have services concluded than the backbiting begins anew in their Sunday best! Of course, the author presents it in such a way that we say, "Shame on them! I would never do that!" But is that always true?

*"A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter"* (Proverbs 11:13). Someone protests, "But everything I said is true!" Let's suppose that's true. The question is, "Must you tell everything you know?" Even if something is true, you might do better to keep it quiet. What if some salacious scrap of scandal surfaced about you? Would you want anyone who learns of it to broadcast it to the world?

Someone smarter than I recommended three tests before speaking: 1) Is it true? 2) Is it kind? 3) Is it necessary? I have a hunch that heeding those three tests would result in far less gossip.

*"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases"* (Proverbs 26:20).

You really don't have to tell everything you know!

## Help Where You Can

We were met with many a welcoming smile on our first Sunday back. The most precious smile for me was that of a seven-year-old boy rescued about a year ago. He had been forced to beg so that his grandmother did not have to work. He had also been trafficked to homosexuals. It takes time to overcome abuse like that. For nearly a year after being rescued, he never really smiled. But he is smiling now.

There is so much wickedness in our world today, and that wickedness is so often promoted by the very people who ought to be punishing it (Romans 13). But there are those who do what they can. The family who rescued this little boy is poor. They do not have clout with the government. But they saw a boy they could help, and they helped.

Yes, we should cast our votes for the moral candidate (if there is a moral candidate), but more importantly, we should do what we can to help someone near us. The solution to the world's ills is not in the hands of governments. The living Christ, working through His earthly body, is the solution to the world's problems. Politics is, to a large extent, a distraction from the work that really needs to be done.

--Thayer Salisbury (Eswatini, Africa. after a visit to the USA)



### ***In Defense of Martha***

I believe Martha's gotten a bad rap as far as Bible characters go. The most quoted reference about Martha is where Jesus gently admonishes her concerning this good woman's frustration at not receiving help from her sister, Mary, in serving their guests. This story recorded in Luke 10:40-41 has become, for many, the defining image of this woman, a worrier, a person consumed with tasks, and a

disciple not attuned to spiritual things like her sister, Mary.

Martha was probably the older of the two because she is always mentioned first when referring to the sisters and Luke says that Martha welcomed Jesus into "her" house - a note identifying her as the woman of that home (a likelihood that her mother was dead and she had charge of the house in caring for her brother, Lazarus, sister, Mary, and possibly her father, Simon (Mark 14:3-9). In addition to this John said that Jesus loved Martha and her sister (John 11:5); the community shared in her sorrow (John 11:19); she was the first to approach Jesus concerning her brother (John 11:20); confessed that she believed Jesus was the Messiah (John 11:27); and was at her usual place serving guests when Jesus and the resurrected Lazarus ate at her house (John 12:1-2).

I mention all of this to show that Martha was a valuable and beloved disciple within Jesus' circle of ministry despite her failure at times to grasp what was truly important. We have many "Martha" types in this congregation - godly people who serve quietly in so many ways. They prepare and serve food at funerals and keep the building functioning, they teach children, balance the books, visit the sick, greet the visitors, prepare communion, mail our Bibles, lock the doors, send cards, and find the time to organize activities all the while maintaining families and careers. They rarely receive accolades or recognition, but without the Marthas, this congregation would sputter to a stop.

So thank you, Martha. Thank you for all you do in all your quiet ways. Maybe you get a little stressed at times and miss out on what's important because you're focused on what is urgent; but as the Bible says, "Jesus loved Martha," ...and we do, too.

--Mike Mazzalongo (via Krum, TX)