

A Bad Career Move That Lasted all of 5 Seconds!

A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much (Prov 20:19)

Michelle Rhee, Korean-American who was the former head of Washington, D.C., schools and featured on the cover of the Time magazine (December 2009), certainly has inspired many Asian American females. But long before her, Connie Chung, Chinese-American born in the US, was even a greater inspiration since she reached the apex of the national media, co-anchoring the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather. (This is when people actually got their news from television or newspapers.) Unfortunately, her meteoric rise in journalism swiftly came to a halt, coincidentally not long after an interview she had conducted with Kathleen Gingrich, the mother of then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich who is currently a Republican U.S. presidential contender. Whatever she did, it scared a lot of public figures from talking to her. The former President George W. Bush once told his mother Barbara Bush, “Pray for me. Don’t brag. And don’t talk to Connie Chung.”

So what happened? During the interview, Chung asked about her son’s opinion of then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton who is currently the Secretary of the State. After being assured that her comment would be “just between you and me,” a relieved Mrs. Gingrich proceeded to inform Chung that her son thought that Hillary Clinton was a “b_____.” So, what did Chung do with that piece of information? Why, she quickly relayed the off-the-record comment to the viewers of her prime time TV show. Thanks to much publicity generated regarding the sordid comment before her show aired, it did receive a high rating which Chung sought. However, what little gain she made for herself that night was quickly offset when the CBS news dropped Chung as its co-anchor not long after the incident. While a lower rating of the nightly news contributed heavily toward her dismissal, the highly publicized affair that undermined her trustworthiness as a serious journalist certainly abetted it. Adding insult to injury, CBS later canned her own show as well.

There is a lesson to be learned for all of us. While talent and hard work may help some to reach the top, character is what will keep them there. Notwithstanding the naiveté of Kathleen Gingrich, the duplicity of Chung, stooping down to the level of a tabloid reporter, was a blow from which her career as a respectable journalist could not quickly recover. Some journalists risk going to jail in order to protect their source; Chung, on the other hand, exploited hers. What she thought would be a boost to her already successful career became a snare that started her downward spiral. Perhaps, had Chung studied the book of Proverbs, she might have thought twice before doing what she did. Proverbs 11:13 and 20:19^b state, “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret . . . so avoid a man who talks too much.” No wonder Mr. Bush told her mother, “Don’t talk to Connie Chung.”

So what is that we want from life? Proverbs 22:1 puts it like this: “A good name is more

desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.” As believers, we are not merely interested in people respecting us because we don’t gossip, betray their confidence, or live a selfless life. The ultimate reason is so that people can see Christ in us, “for without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14^b). We want people to seek after Christ, after having seen the changes that the Lord has wrought in our character.

One way to define character is found in 1 Corinthians 4:17^b where Paul says, “My way of life in Christ Jesus . . . agrees with what I teach everywhere in the church.” Accordingly, a person of character is someone whose private life corresponds to the public declaration of his values and beliefs. It is due to the breach of our expressed values in the private sphere that Christ is dishonored, or in the political arena presidential candidates must cease their campaign (Cain is merely the latest example). As we approach the New Year, let’s ask the Lord to work on our character so that those around us will want Him instead of disdain Him.

Further Reflection

1. James 3:1-2 has an interesting take on taming the tongue. Read about it and apply to your life.
2. The following passages address the matter of character formation. Please note them:
Romans 12:2, 1 Cor. 6:1-8, Eph. 6:5-8.

Bible Reading

Friday:	Proverbs 5 & Judges 5
Saturday:	Proverbs 6 & Judges 6
Sunday:	Proverbs 7 & Judges 7