



## Have YOU HEARD THE LATEST RUMOR?

Rumors are a part of the real world. Some media outlets stay in business by initiating or spreading rumors. Two popular female singers of two generations, Reba McIntire and

Adele, both had a hit song entitled "Rumor Has It" (I am not giving an endorsement of either singer or song, simply pointing out that singing about rumors has helped make some people rich and famous).

We hear rumors about governmental officials, politicians, businesses, entertainers, athletes, colleagues, classmates, and families. And, yes, some members of the church or other congregations. "Have you heard the latest rumor about so and so?" Maybe I have and maybe I have not, but what are you doing spreading rumors?!

What is a rumor, anyway? Here are some standard definitions:  
general talk not based on definite knowledge; mere gossip or hearsay;  
and unconfirmed report, story, or statement in general circulation;  
a piece of unverified information of uncertain origin usually

spread by word of mouth

[Taken from [www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com) on 16 Aug 2012.].

So, a rumor is something that is hearsay or gossip – it is information that is unconfirmed or unverified. Actually, one aspect of the final definition cited above needs to be updated, the part about rumors usually being spread “by word of mouth.” While that is likely still the most common vehicle for the communication of rumors, it is also the case that they are spread widely today via e-mail, web sites, Facebook, and other social media.

You and I do not have to go searching for rumors; they seem to come looking for us, as they abound in so many settings. It is sad that people of the world speak irresponsibly and tell things which are not based on verifiable proof, but we expect such from the children of darkness. How much sadder it is when those who are called to be the children of light (Ephesians 5:8) join in the rumor-spreading business. Surely this is one area of life where we can apply the words of our Lord: “Come out from among them and be separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Brothers and sisters, let us be careful, extremely careful, in spreading information about others. Some rumors may be

innocent in that they have no serious bearing on a person's reputation. One might pass along what he heard about a certain sister, that she is now driving a car of that color. The rumor was false. No real damage done to the sister's reputation in this case. But what about mine? If I hear something and just repeat it as if it were confirmed truth, and it turns out that what I said was not true at all, what have I done? Well, for one thing I have demonstrated that not everything you hear from me is accurate. Ouch. You might be thinking to yourself that the color of a car is a trivial matter. And, you would be correct. But my credibility is not a small matter! Remember what Jesus said: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

In view of "the Golden Rule," God's children should not be guilty of spreading rumors. The Master said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them..." (Matthew 7:12). I do not enjoy it when others spread unverified information about me, and out of respect for them, their family, and their reputation, I should not be passing on rumors about them.

Saints of God are not supposed to speak words of corruption, "but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart

grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29). Our speech should be for the building up, or edifying, of others, not those things which have the potential to do them harm.

The Bible says that love "thinks no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5). When we hear unfounded information about others, our love for them should cause us to respond in these three things: (1) We will not listen willfully to rumors – if people will stop giving an ear to the rumor-spreaders, then they will not have an audience; (2) Without evidence, we will not assume that what we heard is true, and thus we will not think badly of anyone because of any unproven charges; (3) We will not pass on to others any unverified matters. A true friend "loves at all times" and "sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24). Do you believe rumors about a person that involve inappropriate conduct on his part? Do you spread such rumors about him? Not if you are his friend. Friends stick with friends and stand up for them. They certainly do not accept or pass along unverified information. The same goes for brothers and sisters in the Lord that really care for one another and each other's reputation.

In her day, it was no secret that my grandmother was a rumor-machine. She spent a great deal of her time spreading unconfirmed messages. Sorry, but I have no desire to carry on

her tradition. Rumors are no laughing matter. Jesus' followers should have no part in spreading them. For those who do so in the past and have failed to settle the matter with the Lord, it is high time for them to repent. Would you and I be among those who need to do such?

-Roger D. Campbell