

THE DOMINO EFFECT

Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.

—Proverbs 26:20

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard the saying “Fight fire with fire”? It comes from the way firefighters use controlled fires to battle a raging forest fire. They light these controlled fires in front of the forest fire, along an open space such as a road, a river, or an area that’s been cleared by bulldozers. The controlled fires travel toward the approaching forest fire, burning all the trees and brush between the forest fire and the open space. That way, there’s no more fuel for the forest fire! Well, arguments between people in a group, such as a school, church, or neighborhood, are a lot like forest fires. They keep raging on as long as they have fuel. What’s one good way to stop them? Take away their fuel—which in many cases is gossip!

Today’s devotion is based on Proverbs 26:20, which says, “Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.” The devotion is called “The Domino Effect,” and it offers another helpful way to look at the issue of arguments and gossip.

DEVOTION

Chaz and his sister were building a huge domino display in their basement. At least they started with dominoes. Then they used their little brother’s building blocks. Now they were using anything they could find.

“Wait’ll Mom and Dad see this,” Chaz said as he set up some books.

Lila nodded. “Yeah. They’re gonna flip out!”

Chaz reached for another book.

“I’ll bet they—oh no!” His elbow had knocked over the last book, and the others had started tumbling. Before he could grab them, they’d all fallen over, knocking down the DVD boxes. Next the CD cases began toppling. Quickly Lila put her finger on one that was still standing. Holding it upright, she stopped the damage from spreading any farther.

Gossip can travel quickly around your school, church, or neighborhood. When it does, it causes lots of damage. People argue, feelings get hurt, and relationships get broken. Don’t be like other kids who fall for the temptation to pass along rumors. When gossip hits you, ask the Holy Spirit to help you stand tall and keep it to yourself. That’ll stop the harmful domino effect that gossip creates!

QUESTIONS

1. Can you remember a time when gossip was going around your school, church, or neighborhood like a wildfire or a bunch of falling dominos? What did you do when you heard it? Did your actions make things better or worse?
2. Were you ever the subject of an ugly rumor that was going around? How did you feel when it started?
3. Did anyone have the character to stand up for you by refusing to pass along the gossip they heard and perhaps even by saying positive things about you? How did that make you feel? If no one did, how do you think you would have felt if they had?
4. What do you think is the reason why people spread gossip about others? If you have ever done that, why did you do it? How could you stop yourself from spreading gossip the next time you hear some?
5. If you learn that someone your age is involved in something serious, like shoplifting or taking drugs, what should you do instead of gossiping about it with your friends?

One answer would be: talk to your parents or someone in authority, such as a teacher or principal.

Do the "Live It!" activity together as a group, or read the instructions to children and suggest that they try the activity at home.

LIVE IT!

Make a domino display. Before you push over the first one, put your finger on the tenth. See how easy it is to stop the domino effect? Now have fun and knock down your entire display!