

concerned with spreading lies and casting doubts on characters and actions. David Guzik said, “Those who spend much time talking about other people’s lives need to get a life of their own.”

Busybodies stop putting their noses in peoples’ business when they close their mouths. Quietness combats meddling (2 Thessalonians 3:12). In fact, God likes quiet people (1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 3:4) because they mind their own business and keep their heads down (1 Thessalonians 4:11). While gossip is surely included, the Thessalonians’ talk may have also been mere subjects in which they had no part. We are not required to know everything, be told anything, and say something. One leader told his team “feel free to have no opinion about that.”[7] Busybodies relish in lazy hands and overactive mouths.

There is no honor in a wondering nose that leads to a gossipy mouth. We would do well to cover our mouths (Proverbs 30:32). Herodotus said “It becomes a man to give heed to those things only which concern himself.” Keep your nose and mouth out of other people’s business.

1 Peter 4:15—Busybodies Love Control.

Before Jesus ascended, He had a talk with Peter. Some call this conversation “Peter’s Restoration.” Jesus ended it with a prophecy about Peter’s death. The apostle did not pry more into this, but decided to concern himself with John’s death, asking “what shall this man do?” (John 21:21). Jesus’ response was simple: “what is that to thee?” (John 21:22). The busybodying behavior did not stop here as this “gossip” spread (John 21:23).[8] Peter was involved in busybodying; thankfully later, he learned (1 Peter 4:15).

The word Peter used is different than Paul’s. The word is a compound word (allotriepiskopos). The word allotrios means not one’s own and episkopos is oversight. Thayer describes it as a person “who takes the supervision of affairs pertaining to others and in no wise to himself.” The last word episkopos may mean that Peter is specifically prohibiting church leaders from

usurping authority in other places. Overall, the word describes a person who takes control in matters of which he has no business. What controlling attributes may they manifest?

- They cross boundaries.[9] Busybodies break informational, personal, and authoritative walls. It is sinful to peep over a wall that God Himself has erected.
- They enforce opinions. To busybodies, their thoughts should be etched in permanent ink. They seek to control of others by making others think their thoughts are unchangeable. “Their way or the highway” is the game they play.
- They are manipulative. Busybodies usher in their control through means of manipulative techniques either subtly or blatantly.

Diotrephes is the Bible’s illustrative busybody (3 John 9-10). He wanted control (“preeminence”) over the brethren. Busybodies are not good but evil (3 John 11). They like Diotrephes are sowers of discord (Proverbs 6:19), whispering sneaks, and manipulative controllers. Controlling others is Gentile-like, not Christ-like (Luke 22:24-26).[10]

Where is your nose taking you? If it is in other people’s business, you might want to get it checked out.

Endnotes

- [1]<https://www.etymonline.com/word/busybody>
[2]Victor Eskew:
https://oceansidechurchofchrist.net/Articles/2022/2022-03-27A_The_Sin_of_Being_A_Busybody.html
[3]Clerical Library cited in Biblical Illustrator.
[4]Clerical Library cited in Biblical Illustrator
[5]Matthew Henry
[6]Again the word “busybodies” periergos is translated “curious” in Acts 19:19.
[7]<https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/everyday-christianity/>
[8]We wonder who spread this saying. Was it Peter?
[9]Victor Eskew:
https://oceansidechurchofchrist.net/Articles/2022/2022-03-27A_The_Sin_of_Being_A_Busybody.html
[10]<https://newbostoncoc.org/kevins-korner/the-folly-of-trying-to-control-others/>

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A WONDERING

Nose

NOAH OLSON



The nose is important; it travels with us everywhere we go. But there is one place where it is never meant to go—in someone else’s business. We are naturally curious (cf. Acts 17:21). We want to “be in the know” and it concerns us if we are left out of something important. Yet, our curiosity can be damaging if that curiosity leads to trifles about unimportant matters, lazy behavior, or usurping authority in areas in which we have no jurisdiction.

The word “busybody” and “busybodies” occur only three times in the Bible (2 Thessalonians 3:11; 1 Timothy 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15). We call these people, busybodies. Its etymology finds its roots in the 1520s where the word meant a “meddlesome person”...in the otherwise-obsolete sense ‘prying, meddlesome’ + body ‘person.’”[1] Merriam Webster adds that these people are inquisitive and the Cambridge Dictionary states that are “too interested in things that do not involve them.”

While we rarely use the word today, the concept and practice is evidently common. What does a busybody look like? Victor Eskew wrote

This individual has to have his hands in the affairs of everyone else’s business. He makes suggestions constantly. He is forever a critic of the works of others. If he has a chance, he will take over another’s responsibilities. This person often believes his way is the only way. If not the only way, he definitely believes his way is the best way. The busybody doesn’t just get involved in the affairs of one person. He gets into everybody’s business. The individual becomes a pest. In time, very few people want to work with him. Too, he causes a lot of individuals to develop hard feelings toward him because he just cannot let them do their work. He feels like he must become their supervisor.[2]

He is a king in a country of which he is not a citizen, he is an officer in a district that doesn’t exist, he is an instructor in a class he has not passed, he is a manager in a store that banned him from entrance, and he is an owner of a company for which he has never bought. Busybodies stir trouble, usurp authority, and harm the church. They are mischievous meddlers (Proverbs 20:3; 26:17). One woman came to a king and said “‘Your majesty... my husband treats me badly.’ ‘That is no my business,’ replied the king. ‘But he speaks ill of you.’

‘That,’ rejoined he, ‘is none of your business.’”[3]

The truth of the matter is—we like to be in each other’s business and will go to great lengths for it to happen. God made the nose and it belongs to Him (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), so He is specific on where it goes. Let us learn a little bit about what makes a busybody have a wandering nose and how we can cease from being one.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15—Busybodies Have Slow Hands.

Idleness is the busybody’s first sin. Laziness breeds busybody behavior. Paradoxically, one might find this doubtful, seeing the word “busy” is in the word; however, it is an unwillingness to obey the commands of God that leads to this meddling. Thessalonian brethren stuck their noses in places they should not have. They were defying a direct command (2 Thessalonians 3:6) and apostolic example (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). Paul charged them with disorderly walking (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 7), which means to walk out of rank. But their walk was preceded by sitting, as they chose to remain idle.

Idle hands are the devil’s tools and but lazy hands oppose labor (Proverbs 6:10; 10:4; 19:24; 21:25; 24:33; 26:15). Inactive hands lead to mal-active minds. The Thessalonians chose not to use their hands to labor, but to involve themselves in things unimportant for them. People love to dig deep to find even the smallest droplet of news in another scandal, case, or story (Proverbs 16:27). They don’t want to work, but only to weigh-in on the current talk, the table gossip, and the newest drama, and they will work harder to do this than the job that matters. Paul used a word play, for in telling these brethren they were not working at all, he said they were rather “working all around” (pereigazomai), but in busybody behavior. In God’s dictionary, unhelpful and unimportant labor is called laziness.

Rather, busy yourself in labor and you will have no time to read other people’s newspapers. Solomon wrote “In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury” (Proverbs 14:23). “A man who

had become rich by his own exertions was asked by a friend the secret of his success. ‘I have accumulated,’ replied he, ‘about one half of my property by minding my own business, and the other half by letting other people’s alone’”[4]

1 Timothy 5:13—Busybodies Have Quick Feet and Loud Mouths.

Apparently, Ephesus had a nose problem too. To Timothy, Paul wrote to warn the young widows to refrain from intermeddling with things that did not concern them. He described them as going from house to house and speaking of things they ought not. People who put their nose in other matters, find themselves using their feet to run to hear messages, while continuously employing their mouths to speak lies, rumours, and slanders. Idle busybodies are employed by the devil[5] because of how much sin revolves around this action.

Busybodies are the spiritual Athenians; they want to hear something new (Acts 17:21). They relish in opportunities to travel between houses to hear about a brother’s sin, a sister’s conundrum, or a friend’s mistake. They grow excited to hear these things and will walk miles to just obtain the smallest of information. They are subscribers to the church newspaper, the number one fan on the woman’s gossip group, and the highest contributor in publishing the latest story on a person they have never met. But they travel under the cover of night, never sign their name, and may even justify their actions, lest they be condemned for their meddling behavior. They don’t visit to console, listen to encourage, and arrive to support. They visit to know so they can tell. They are curious indeed.[6]

Not only are busybodies loud people, but their loudness is also specific. They are loud in gossip or tattling. They cannot wait to be the bearer of bad news for the target about whom they just spent hours conversing. The word “tattlers” is phluaros and literally, it means overflowing. Thayer says they utter or do silly things. Their talk is senseless, slander, and sinful. Their speech manifests their heart which only is