

## Gossip

April 11, 2010

### 1. What is gossip?

Secretive, negative statements made by one person to another about a third person, for the purpose of hurting his image/reputation.

These statements do not have to be false to be gossip (i.e., a person can gossip without lying).

The intent to damage another person is the key to gossip.

Other words/phrases associated with gossip are “slander,” “tale-bearing,” “a bad report”, and “whispering.”

Gossip is often connected with murder in Scripture because it is the social equivalent of murder.

*Lev 19:16—“You shall not go about as a **slanderer** among your people, and you are not to **act against the life** of your neighbor; I am the LORD.”*

*Psa 31:13—“I have heard the **slander** of many, Terror is on every side; While they took counsel together against me, They schemed to **take away my life.**”*

Gossips are murderous haters who confine their love for destroying others to damaging their reputations and social standing.

They are social cannibals who feed their fleshly/egoistic nature on the corpses of other people’s reputations which they have ruined.

### 2. Why do people do it?

Because we are born sinners, and the more our depravity goes unrestrained by God’s Word, the more we commit sins such as gossip.

*Rom 1:28-31—“Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a **depraved mind**, to do those things which are not proper, / being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are **gossips**, / **slanderers**, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, / without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful.”*

### 3. What characteristics of a person are revealed by his gossip?

Hypocrisy—*Jer 20:10—“I have heard the **whispering** of many, ‘Terror on every side! Denounce him; yes, let us denounce him!’ All **my trusted friends**, Watching for my fall, say: ‘Perhaps he will be deceived, so that we may prevail against him And take our revenge on him.’”*

Cowardice—Gossip is shooting someone in the back on a social level, the kind of cowardice about which Rev 21:8 says, “*For the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*”

Carnality—In Rom 1:29 says of the carnal Corinthians, “*I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.*”

Prov 18:8—“*The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.*”

Sinful flesh has an insatiable appetite for juicy gossip.

Untrustworthiness—Prov 11:13—“*He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.*”

Foolishness—Prov 10:18—“*He who spreads slander is a fool.*”

#### 4. What real damage can be done by gossip?

- \* Trust between friends is undermined.
- \* People's reputations are laid open to suspicion, if not ruin.
- \* Justice is violated because the person gossiped about is given no opportunity to respond to the allegations made against him.
- \* Tension/animosity/suspicion/guilt spoil social interaction.
- \* The unity of a church is destroyed.
- \* Strife proliferates.

Prov 16:28—“*A perverse man spreads strife, And a slanderer separates intimate friends.*”

#### 5. How does God feel about gossip?

Prov 6:16-19 contains a list of sins that are an abomination to the Lord.

The last 2 are listed in verse 19—“*A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers*” (i.e., a gossip).

#### 6. Who is most prone to engage in gossip?

Those who have too much time on their hands, and too little to do.

I Tim 5:13—“*They also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.*”

#### 7. How can I keep myself from gossiping?

- \* The obvious answer is to fill your mind with God's Word and obey it, so that your life exudes the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, / gentleness, self-control), not the deeds of the flesh (immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery,

enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, / envying, drunkenness, carousing).

- \* If you have ill feelings towards someone, go to him/her in private and humbly talk them out, not discussing it with anyone else at all (not even as a prayer request, and not even your husband/wife).  
Prov 25:9—“*Argue your case with your neighbor, And do not reveal the secret of another*” (i.e., don’t act like a cowardly gossip).
- \* Before you say anything about someone else, ask yourself, “Would I say this if he were standing here? If so, would he feel hurt because of it?”  
Prov 11:13—“*He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.*”
- \* Before you say anything about another person, ask yourself as honestly as possible, “Why do I feel I need to say this? Is it possible that I am motivated by negative feelings toward this person?”  
In Titus 3:2, Paul tells Pastor Titus to remind his congregation to “**malign no one.**”  
In the KJV this is translated, “***Speak evil of no man.***”  
“No one” means “no one.”

## 8. What do I do when others want to tell me gossip?

Don’t let them. Stop them (mid-sentence if necessary).

Prov 26:20—“*For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.*”

If you refuse to listen to a whisperer, he can’t whisper.

If someone persists in trying to tell you gossip, confront him/her with the fact that this behavior is so sinful, God views it as an abomination.

You might even take him through this material yourself.

If none of that stops the attempts to gossip, tell an elder about the problem.

## 9. What should the church do about a gossip?

Discipline the person in accordance with Matt 18:15-17.

In II Cor 12:20 Paul told the Corinthians he was afraid that when he came to visit their church, he would find them embroiled in gossip and a variety of other sins.

Three verses later he wrote, “*I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone*” (2 Cor 13:2).

Paul was ready to discipline sinners in the church, including gossips. The elders in every church need to be ready to follow Paul’s example.

## 10. How should I react when others gossip about me?

You could try to track down every individual who has been involved in the gossip, find out exactly what was said, and set the record straight.

Unfortunately, because gossips are cowards, you will never get them to tell you the truth, and this won't accomplish anything.

The best solution is found in Jer 20:10-11—*"For I have heard the whispering of many, 'Terror on every side! Denounce him; yes, let us denounce him!' All my trusted friends, Watching for my fall, say: 'Perhaps he will be deceived, so that we may prevail against him And take our revenge on him.' / But the LORD is with me like a dread champion; Therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will be utterly ashamed, because they have failed, With an everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten."*

Let God deal with those who gossip about you.

He knows what you can never find out—who said what to whom, and what their motive was in doing so.

And He will hold them accountable for what they've said.

Meanwhile, you can freely take Psa 37:7-11 to heart—*"Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. / Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret, it leads only to evildoing. / For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. / Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; And you will look carefully for his place, and he will not be there. / But the humble will inherit the land, And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity."*