

# GOSSIP

## (A BIG KILLER OF CHURCH UNITY)

**Humor:** Four churchgoers met for a friendly gathering and made confessions.

**What is Gossip?** To speak unkindly of others' weaknesses and failures in their absence.

**Jerry Bridges:** Gossip is the spreading of unfavorable (negative, unhelpful) information about someone else, even if that information is true.

**GotQuestions:** The Hebrew word translated "gossip" in the Old Testament is defined as "one who reveals secrets, one who goes about as a talebearer (spreads gossip/secrets) or scandal-monger."

- ❖ **Leviticus 19:16**, "Do not go about spreading slander among your people." **NLT**, "Do not spread slanderous gossip among your people."

### Three characteristics of Gossip:

- i. **Intent:** To make others look bad (spoiling people's image)
- ii. **Content:** Negative speech (false or true) about others
- iii. **Object:** Talking negatively about others to people who have no business knowing it

### Gossip is a sinful practice of unbelievers:

- ❖ **Romans 1:29-30**, "They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. **They are gossips**, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

### Gossip is a natural tendency of worldly people. Do Christians also gossip?

- ❖ **2 Cor. 12:20**, "For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, **gossip**, conceit, and disorder."

**Observation:** I seldom come across a Christian who neither gossips nor listens to gossip. SHAMEFULLY, CHRISTIANS CAN GOSSIP JUST LIKE UNBELIEVERS.

**Saying:** Where two are gathered there is the devil usually present to tempt them to talk evil about the third person.

## I. REASONS FOR GOSSIP [WHY DO PEOPLE GOSSIP?]

### I) Sinful Nature:

**Matthew 15:19-20**, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, **slander (Gossip)**. These are what defile a person."

## 2) Personal Offense:

People who are hurt by others generally tend to talk about the hurt with others. An offensive heart seeks comfort by gossiping about the offensive one. They want others to feel sorry for them.

## 3) To idle away time:

About such people, the Holy Bible says, “Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not” (1 Tim. 5:13).

## 2. CONSEQUENCES OF GOSSIP

We are free to gossip but we are not free from the consequences of gossip.

**The Gossiper:** *A woman repeated a story (gossip) about a neighbor. Within a few days everyone in the community knew the story. The person she talked about heard what had been said about her and she was very sad. Later, the woman who had spread the story learned that it was not true. She was very sorry and went to a wise rabbi and asked what she could do to repair the damage.*

*After giving this some thought, the rabbi said to her, “Go home, get one of your feather pillows, and bring it back to me.” Surprised by the rabbi’s response, the woman followed his advice and went home to get a feather pillow and brought it to the rabbi.*

*“Now,” said the rabbi, “open the pillow and pull out all the feathers.” Confused, the woman did what she was told to do.*

*After a few minutes, the rabbi said, “Now, I want you to find every one of the feathers and put them back into the pillow.”*

*“That’s impossible,” said the woman, almost in tears. “The window is open and the wind has scattered them all over the room and blown many feathers outside. I can’t possibly find them all.”*

*“Yes,” said the rabbi. “And that is what happens when you gossip or tell a story about someone else. Once you talk about someone, the words fly from one person’s mouth to another, just like these feathers flew in the wind. Once you say them, you can never take them back.”*

### 1) A gossip betrays trust.

**Pro. 11:13, NIV**, “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret”.

- Do you trust a person who gossips?

**Psalm 41:6, David says (NLT)**, “They visit me as if they were my friends, but all the while they gather gossip, and when they leave, they spread it everywhere.”

### 2) A gossip ruins relationships.

**Pro. 16:28, NIV**, “A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends”.

- Gossip releases bitterness from one's heart into the heart of others.

### 3) A gossip stirs up anger.

**Pro. 25:23, ESV**, “The north wind brings forth rain, and a **backbiting tongue, angry looks**”.

- What happens when a person knows that he is gossiped? Anger

### 4) A gossip breeds quarrel in relationships.

**Pro. 26:20, NIV**, “Without wood a fire goes out; **without gossip a quarrel dies down**”.

**Note:** No matter how nice a person seems, gossip shows real immaturity and ungodliness.

## 3. OVERCOMING GOSSIP

### 1) View gossip and acknowledge it as a detestable sin in God's sight

**Pro. 6: 16**, “There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: [17] haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, [18] a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, [19] a false witness who breathes out lies, and **one who sows discord among brothers.**”

### 2) Talk your offense with the person who is responsible for it

**Matthew 18:15**, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.”

**Note:** Don't speak behind the butts; have the guts to speak before the face.

**Exception:** If necessary, with a concerned attitude, discuss with trustworthy and mature people to deal with the problem.

### 3) Avoid Listening to Gossip and Rebuke the One Who Gossips

To avoid gossiping, you must learn to avoid listening to gossip and rebuke him who gossips.

**Jack Wellman:** Gossip is not gossip without someone to listen to it, so the person who listens to it is just as guilty as the one who is doing it.

**Saying:** “He who listens to gossip will most likely gossip.” And “Whoever gossips to you will gossip of you.”

**Pro. 20:19**, “A gossip betrays a confidence; **so avoid a man who talks too much**”.

**Jim Cymbala:** *About 20 years ago, I said something impromptu to the new members standing in a row across the front of the church, “And now, I charge you that if you ever hear another member speak an unkind word of criticism or slander against anyone—myself, an usher, a choir member, or anyone else—that you stop that person in mid-sentence and say, ‘Excuse me—who hurt you? Who ignored you? Who slighted you? Was it Pastor Cymbala? Let's go to his office right now. He'll apologize to you, and then we'll pray together so God can restore peace to this body. But we won't let you talk critically about people who aren't present to defend themselves.’*

*To this day, every time we receive new members, I say much the same thing. That's because I know what most easily destroys churches. It's not crack cocaine, government oppression, or even lack of funds. Rather it's gossip and slander that grieves the Holy Spirit.*

**Jonathan Leeman:** If a member of the church is given to gossip or slander, another member should correct the sin so that the gossip will stop gossiping and speak words of love instead.

#### 4) Follow the Golden Rule

**Matthew 7:12**, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

On the opposite: “Whatever you do not wish others would do to you, do not also do to them.”

**Will Rogers:** "The only time people don't like gossip is when the gossip is about them."

#### 5) Accept Church Discipline

**I Corinthians 5:11**, “But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer (reviler, ESV, gossip is a part of it), a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.”

- First, in person; second in small group; third church.

#### 6) Fear the Judgment of God

**Matthew 12:34-37**, “[34] You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. [35] The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. [36] I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, [37] for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

#### 7) Determine to be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker

The one who gossips is a troublemaker, not a peacemaker.

**Matthew 5:9**, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God”.

**Ephesians 4:29**, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Alan Redpath suggested that before we speak - **THINK:**

- **T—Is it TRUE?** (Assumptions? Hearsay? Verified?)
- **H—Is it HELPFUL?** (Does what you speak help you and the listener? Does it break the trust? Does what you speak disrepute someone’s image before the listener?)

- **I—Is it INSPIRING?** (Is it encouraging to the hearer? How are you benefiting the listener by what you speak?)
- **N—Is it NECESSARY?** (Is the hearer a part of the problem or solution? Is he mature, loving, and a peacemaker? Why do you speak what you want to speak?)
- **K—Is it KIND?** (Have you prayed? Do you speak with care? Are you concerned for restoration?)

**Gospel:** Christ Jesus died for our sins. He didn't gossip about our sins. He made a difference in our lives. Let's imitate Christ Jesus. Let's be different. Let's make a difference.