



A Lesson in Gossip

Women of Virtue Potluck

Proverbs 21:23

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

Proverbs 20:19

A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.

Objectives:

1. TLW understand the Biblical definition of gossip.
2. TLW understand types of gossip: backbiting, slander, whispering, and idle talk.
3. TLW examine God’s perspective on gossip and its types.
4. TLW discuss why people gossip.
5. TLW identify the roles in gossip.
6. TLW understand the consequences of gossip.
7. TLW develop strategies to avoid gossip.
8. TLW judge gossip scenarios.

I. Biblical Definition:

The word “gossip” does not appear in the King James Version (KJV), but is found in later versions, i.e. New International Version (NIV). Usually “talebearer” (Prov. 11:13; 18:8), “backbiters” (Rom. 1:30) “whispering” (2 Cor.12:20) in the KJV is translated as gossip in the NIV.

Gossip is the sharing of personal or private information about someone else.¹ **Note:** This definition is not based on whether the information is factual or “good.”

II. Types of Gossip:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Example</u>
Backbiting	Rom. 1:30	To speak evil against	She is so foolish...
Slander	I Tim.3:11, 2 Tim. 3:3, Pro. 10:18	To make false accusation or criticize behavior of others openly	She never cleans the building right...
Whisper	2 Cor. 12:20	Secret slander	I always smell alcohol on her.
Idle talk	I Tim. 5:13	Worthless or ineffective	Celebrity talk
Tattlers	I Tim. 5:13	Foolish or meaningless talk	Let me tell you who I saw...
Talebearer	Lev.19:16	Grumbling or gossiping	Do you know what she said to him?
Busybody/meddler	2 Thes. 3:11	Intrude w/o invitation/Nosey	How much do you make to afford that?

¹ Random House Dictionary, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/gossip?qsrc=2888>

III. What does God say about gossip?:

1. The tongue **must** be controlled (James 1:26)
2. God **hates** false accusers, which is another word for a type of gossip-slander (Pro. 6:16 & 18). Gossips rarely have the “truth” or all sides to a situation, and usually misrepresent situations. A gossip easily can become another abominable thing to God- a liar (Pro. 6:19)
3. A gossip **betrays** (Pro. 20:19)
4. **Avoid** a person that talks too much (Pro. 20:19)
5. In Rom. 1:30, gossipers (whisper, backbiters) are worthy of **death**.

IV. Why do we gossip?²

- To gain “friends”?
- For attention?
- For superiority?
- Out of boredom?

V. Roles:

In gossip, the bearer/talker and receiver/hearer are in sin. The gossip will have to give an account for every idle word (Matt. 12:34-37). The hearer will have to give an account for not reproving when faced with gossip and being wicked (Pro. 17:4).

TITLE	ROLE	OUTCOME
The Gossiper/Bearer/Talker	Provides information	Soul in trouble
The Receiver/Hearer	Active or passive listener	Opinion shaped/Future gossip/Soul in trouble
Person in Discussion	N/A	Reputation affected

VI. Consequences of Gossip:

1. Secrets are revealed (Pro. 11:13; Pro. 20:19)
2. A **whisperer** separates friends (Pro. 16:28)
3. A gossips soul is in **trouble** (Pro. 21:23)
4. Creates **strife** (Pro. 26:20; Gal. 5:20; Jam. 3:16)
5. Words are as **wounds** (Pro. 26:22)

VII. Strategies to avoid gossip:

1. Have godly motives for each conversation, no matter the subject (Psa. 19:14)
2. Seek out information from the primary source.
3. Only entertain firsthand information.

² Pegues, Deborah S. 30 Days to Taming your Tongue, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005.

4. If a situation does not involve you, don't comment on it. Direct person away (Matt. 12:34-36).
5. If approached with gossip or within the company of gossip, **reprove** and **remove** yourself immediately (2 Tim. 3:16; I Thes. 5:22; James 4:7).
6. Do not share info about a person, if he/she is not there or has not given you permission to share (Rom.1:29).
7. Do not listen to info about another person.
8. Information that you are privy to as a witness is NOT privy to anyone, regardless of the relationship, i.e. husband, mother, best friend, minister etc. Otherwise, you may be in danger of being a false witness, which is an abomination to God (Prov. 6:16-18).
9. If your thought does not edify, then do not say it (Eph. 4:29).
10. If you have an issue with someone, go to that person alone (Matt. 18:15-17). Do not share it with **anyone** else.
11. If you need spiritual advice regarding another person, consult God in prayer and study (Matt. 7:7, I Peter 5:7).
12. Remove the phrase "I heard", "she/he said" from your vocabulary. More than likely it is gossip (Matt. 5:37; Jam. 5:12)
13. If there are long pauses, silence, or you are not busy, the conversation is likely to drift into **vain** or **idle** talk (I Tim. 5:13). Do not talk simply "to chat."
14. Be quiet and mind your own business (I Thes. 4:11)
15. Pray that God will tame your tongue (Jam. 3:8)

Sources:

The Holy Bible, King James Version and New International Versions

Strong's Concordance

Vine's Dictionary

www.crosswalk.com