

**AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Study Series: The Deadly Sin of Gossip
Part 1: Understanding Gossip and its Dangers

Wednesday, August 21, 2024
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What is your understanding of the word gossip?

Proverbs 6:16-19 “These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.” NKJV

2 Corinthians 12:20 “For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.” (NIV)

James 4:11 “Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.” (NIV)

What Is Gossip?

The Bible has a lot to say about gossip and its dangers, even though it does not actually give us a clear definition of gossip in one location. Instead, in many places the Bible describes gossip in action and mostly connects gossip to the character of the people participating in this tantalizing sin. Overall, the Bible condemns gossip as a sin. It paints gossip as tantalizing, dangerous, hurtful to people and destroying relationships. It is so dangerous that the bible says it is detestable to God. In the New Testament, believers are warned to avoid gossip and gossipers.

Romans 1:29 “They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips” (NIV)

2 Corinthians 12:20 “For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.” (NIV)

Three Elements of Gossip:

In understanding gossip, there are usually three key elements of what constitute gossip:

1. Gossip is always about bad news - One of the easiest ways to identify gossip is that it is always bad news. In fact, it is not gossip except it is bad news about someone.

- It could be bad news because it is negative information (even if true) about someone else that is being shared for no reason or for the wrong reason.
- It could be bad news because it is juicy hearsay, rumors, exaggeration, or half-truth.
- **Proverbs 20:19** “One who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with a gossip.” (NASB)

2. Gossip is done behind the person’s back: Gossip occurs only when the subject of the story is not present. It is much easier and more interesting to discuss others when they are not around.

- In every case, the gossiper has not, cannot, or does not want the victim to be aware that he or she is sharing this information.
- **Psalms 101:4-5** “The perverse of heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with what is evil. 5 Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate.”

3. Gossip is done out of a wrong motive: In most cases gossip is based on revenge, malice, or a desire to destroy a relationship or the church.

- There are instances of less wicked motives like just being a busybody who is too interested in other peoples’ business or wanting to win favor in the wrong way.

To summarize the Bible's teaching on this topic is to say that the sin of gossip is bearing bad news behind someone's back out of a bad motive. This definition considers the action itself, the content of the communication, the situation in which it occurs, and perhaps the motivations of the people involved.

Types of Gossip

Gossip comes in various forms and understanding these forms will help us from falling into this deadly sin. Let's look at various synonyms used in the bible to describe gossip in order to gain a deeper understanding of it.

1. The Slanderers: Intentionally harm another person's reputation by making false statements about them.
 - Proverbs 11:13 "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret." (NIV)
 - Proverbs 11:13 "Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered." (ESV)
2. The Whisperers: Murmur about someone else to others; shying away from open complaints about the person.
 - Proverbs 26:20 "Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down." (NIV)
 - Proverbs 26:20 "For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases." (ESV)
3. The Backstabbers: Gossip that overflows from a revengeful heart. The backstabber wants to hurt you and typically spreads lies or distorted truths.
 - Proverbs 10:18 "Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool." (NIV)
 - Proverbs 10:18 "The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool." (ESV)
4. The Chameleon - The chameleon is usually a person who participates in gossip to fit into the crowd. He or she is motivated by fear and is afraid of what others will think, say, or do if she doesn't join in.
5. The Busybody - The busybody meddles in other peoples' business. He or she gossips for personal pleasure and to live vicariously through the stories of others. 1 Timothy 5:13-16

Dangers of Gossip

1. Gossip can destroy others. By "others," I mean those who listen to the gossip—particularly, those who find themselves participating in sin. There could also be cases where the individual who receives gossip has to deal with bitterness and forgiveness.
2. Gossip ruins relationships. Gossip separates intimate friendships. Godly friends are vital for one's emotional and spiritual growth. Gossip can ruin friendships by instilling a lack of trust and provoking misunderstandings. Proverbs 16:28; Proverbs 17:9, Proverbs 26:20.
3. Gossip destroys reputation: People's reputation, especially church leaders' reputation has been destroyed by gossip.
4. Gossip ruins the church: People leave churches when they believe gossip. People leave churches when they have been wounded by gossip. Churches have split over gossip started by a single person.

If gossip is this dangerous, why then do people gossip?

Are there instances of talking about others that are not gossip?

Sometimes believers struggle in situations where they are unsure if a certain conversation is gossip or not. First, we must know that it will be too simplistic to say every instance of talking about another person's fault is gossip. Remember, gossip is when a person, without an objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them, usually with a wrong motive. This implies there are times when we may have a valid reason to talk about another person's failings. Let's look at some of those instances.

- Sharing information about someone with another believer to warn them of an impending danger. Eph. 5:11
- Being a whistleblower against evil. Examples are people who expose abuse in the church. Calling out those who are wolves in sheep's clothing is not gossip, but actually an honorable calling in Christ.
- Seeking counsel from a godly leader about a matter that involves another believer.