

Proverbs 25:23, “The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.”



The word ‘gossip’ is not a word used in the KJV Bible, but other words are used to express this sin: backbiting, slander, murmur, talebearer and whisperer.

Numbers 14:36, “And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,”

Psalms 31:13, “For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.”

Leviticus 19:16, “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: I am the LORD.”

Job 19:2, “How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?”

Psalms 41:7, “All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.”

Deuteronomy 32:20, “And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.”

Romans 1:28-32, “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; **whisperers, Backbiters**, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

This verse implies a distinction between a whisperer and a backbiter. A whisperer is a tattler; one who tells secrets. A backbiter is one who slanders. Both can slander others; a whisperer slanders in secret while the backbiter slanders publicly – open malicious slander.

Notice that both fall under the umbrella of gossip. In Romans chapter one verses 28-32 these sins are listed alongside the serious sins of murder, adultery, fornication and homosexuality. Any of the sins listed can lead to divine abandonment: 'God gave them over to a reprobate mind'. So how serious is this sin of gossip in God's eyes? Do we view this sin as He sees it?

Pride can prevent us from seeing ourselves the way God sees us. Therefore, we must use the Bible as our guideline when examining our actions. The Bible outlines several 'red flags' which help us identify the sin of gossip.



A gossip reveals secrets. Many times people will share secrets with me. They need someone to listen, relate to their pain, help them find comfort in God's Word and pray for them. I may ask permission to share their prayer request with my husband so he may also pray for them. A gossip will not only reveal a secret, they may go as far as to put the secret on the church prayer list making sure everyone knows.

Proverbs 11:13, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."

Proverbs 20:19, "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets..."



A gossip will leave a trail of wounded people behind them. I remember one woman who stated to me that she simply "tells it like it is" when approached about her words concerning someone else. She also stated, "I'm not afraid to pull out my guns" meaning that she was proud of her courage to say whatever she thinks should be said about anyone at any time. The sad thing is that she considered herself a leader but didn't understand why she had so few followers. What she didn't realize is that all those she thought would follow her lead had been shot down with her words. She left a trail of wounded people behind her.

Proverbs 18:8, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."



A gossip will flatter with their lips. The word flatter means enticing words, words that pump up your pride and have no true heart behind them. I find it a little humorous that if you drop the “l” in flatter, the word becomes “fatter”. If the “l” stands for their LIES, then their lies will make your pride fatter!

Proverbs 20:19, “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”



A gossip will cause strife. If you sense strife in a person or in the people around them, beware they are most likely a gossip.

Proverbs 26:22, “As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.”

Proverbs 16:28, “A froward man soweth strife: and whisperer separateth chief friends.”

Meaning of froward: Perverse, that is, turning from, with aversion or reluctance; not willing to yield or comply with what is required; unyielding; ungovernable; refractory; disobedient; peevish; as a froward child.



They commit one or all of the seven abominations listed in Proverbs. Proverbs 26:17-28, “He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, Am not I in sport? Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him; When he speaketh fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.”

The seven abominations mentioned in verse 28 are listed in Proverbs 6.

Proverbs 6:16-19, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked

imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

- 1) PRIDE – A gossip will be so full of pride that they refuse to accept that they are gossiping. They most likely believe that they are NOT a gossip.
- 2) LYING TONGUE – If you don't know that something is 100% true, should you repeat it? Often we embellish or leave out details making our statements untrue.
- 3) HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD – Most think of this as murder, but this refers also to false worship. When a person brought an animal sacrifice for their sins yet they were not repentant, then they shed innocent blood without remorse. God called this false worship abominable. When we come to church and pretend, isn't that false worship? When we pray for the forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ, innocent blood, yet we are not repentant aren't we committing this sin? An active gossip is a pretender, practicing false worship.
- 4) HEART THAT DEVISETH WICKED IMAGINATIONS – A gossip will focus on a piece of information and judge the heart of others. Almost always that judgment of the heart is false. They may also twist a truth in such a manner that it implies wickedness. Be careful not to make judgments concerning someone's heart intent. Remember that you almost never know ALL the information to make a right judgment. Plus, isn't it God's place to make the judgment and not our own? Isn't that what we would want to happen if we were in their shoes? We would want God to judge us, not anyone else. Only He knows all the details and the true heart intent.
- 5) FEET SWIFT IN RUNNING TO MISCHIEF – If you find yourself thinking you can hardly wait to tell some new bit of information, then the red flag is waving. A gossip is quick to reveal information: quick to stir the pot. A gossip enjoys revealing information about other people, usually because it gives them a false sense of feeling like a better person.
- 6) FALSE WITNESS THAT SPEAKETH LIES – The devil is constantly bombarding us with false information. The best sugar coating to cover a lie and make it easier to swallow is truth. We tend to believe what we hear mostly if it sounds as if it is true. Especially when it is from someone we trust. But what if they were fooled into believing a falsehood or half-truth? We are all human and even the best of us can easily make mistakes. If the information is about a person, don't repeat it. It could be a false witness, a lie. Even if it seems to be truth, it may be a half-truth. If you are concerned about the person, take it to the Lord in prayer.
- 7) SOWETH DISCORD AMONG THE BRETHREN – The heart intent of a gossip is discord – they enjoy stirring up trouble, mostly with those they do not like. When you share information, always double check your intent. Are you happy about stirring up discord, happy you got an opportunity to 'get them back' or 'make them pay'?



A gossip will lose friends; no one wants to be their friend. They may be jealous of a close friendship you have with someone else. They may use gossip as a means of separating you from that friend through discord.

Proverbs 16:28, "A froward man soweth strife: and whisperer separateth chief friends."



A gossip is hiding hatred or jealousy towards the person they are gossiping about.

Proverbs 10:18, "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool."

SO WHEN SOMEONE AROUND ME IS GOSSIPING, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO RESPOND?

Proverbs 25:23, "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."

Gossip should produce a righteous anger within us. Gossip should be reprimanded in order to drive it away. Allow your righteous anger to urge you to act in courage and obey the Lord. God placed you in this situation for a reason, don't run from it! Proverbs 28:1, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion."

If you decide to flee, to keep quiet and not say anything when God is calling you to do something, how will God judge your disobedience? The foolish will always find it easier to say nothing and later pass judgment. They may even commit the sin of gossip once the person leaves the room saying, "I can't believe they just gossiped about her!"

How should one reprimand in a way that is pleasing to the Lord?

2 Corinthians 12:19-21, "Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? We speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, **strifes, backbitings, whisperings**, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed."

- 1) Reprimand with a heart of love; verse 19, "dearly beloved". We should have righteous anger towards the sin, but love towards the sinner. Remember we can easily fall into the same shoes and commit the same offense.
- 2) The purpose of the reprimand should be to edify, to lovingly instruct; verse 19, "for your edifying". We all commit sins of ignorance or sins of blindness due to pride. Until we face the truth of how God sees a particular sin, we will never be honest about addressing our heart problem. Be sensitive to how embarrassing it is to reveal the failures of one's heart. Try to instruct them in private and not in public. A public embarrassment can build a wall of contention. Proverbs 18:19, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." But there are times when a private reprimand is not possible. If God calls you to reprimand publically, do it with the right heart.
- 3) We should be brokenhearted about the sin; verse 21 "I shall bewail". Bewail means to lament (weep), to mourn (sorrow for sin or for condoning it), especially for the dead (when our hearts

become dead to our sinful ways, we no longer judge ourselves properly or make the needed changes). Remember that a 'dead' Christian is living a very dangerous life; one that can be snuffed out at any moment. Be sorrowful over their sin. If you are called upon to instruct, a broken humble heart is the best soothing medicine to help correction make a lasting impact on the offender. Much like a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down. When they see you are broken over their sin, it may be just what they need to remove any blinders or coldness of their heart and prevent future offenses.

- 4) The devil wants us to view gossip as not so bad, everyone gossips. But as you have read in these verses, how does God view gossip?

Drawing the Line – When is it Gossip? A few guidelines I use:

- 1) If it is a secret, don't repeat it. If it is a secret not about themselves but about someone else, then it is most definitely GOSSIP.
- 2) If it is hearsay (2nd hand information), don't repeat and don't take it as 100% truth. All hearsay should be treated as GOSSIP. As a general rule, I try not to put stock into any information passed to me unless it is given directly by the 1st source. There are times when I am presented with information that is just so "juicy" that I have to be constantly fighting with myself to throw it out into the garbage before it rots in my mind! Don't dwell on any 2nd hand information; it most likely is not true.
- 3) If your thoughts are implying some wickedness based upon the information heard, be quiet and take your heart to the doctor for a tune up. Don't allow wicked thoughts to breed in your mind.
- 4) If you thought to yourself after hearing something, "I can't wait to tell..." or if immediately (or possibly later) you think of someone who would want to know. Mostly likely, the devil is provoking you to gossip. Determine not to be played by the devil.
- 5) If someone shares information about themselves, don't repeat it and take it to the Lord in prayer. If they want others to know, let them tell it themselves. I once disappointed a dear friend who shared their burden with me but did not tell me to keep it secret nor put it on the church prayer list. I unintentionally hurt them. My policy now is if I am not given permission to share or asked to share, I keep it quiet.
- 6) Thumper Theology (Rabbit from the movie Bambi) – "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." Just think of all the discord we could prevent if we followed these words given to Thumper by his mother.
- 7) Think about what you are saying, do you KNOW it is 100% true? A lying tongue is one that tells out and out lies. A false witness is someone who repeats something heard but takes away or adds information. If it is not gossip, but you are not sure it is 100% true then the best advice is to keep quiet.
- 8) Sometimes a friend will come to me and share something that happened between them and someone else. They do not want to gossip about the person, they just want advice as to how to handle the situation according to God's Word. In those cases, my rule is simple: don't tell me their name. If God wants me to know who that person is so I may help them or pray for them, let God reveal that information to me.