

Gossip and Slander

June 11, 2023

Good morning CrossWinds. If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. I usually teach on the Spirit Lake campus, but Pastor Jordan and I are switching between campuses for a few weeks. That will allow him to know the Spirit Lake Campus better, and it will give me the privilege of spending time with you.

There is a lot going on at CrossWinds. Last week, we took in over \$7,000 for Kevin and Tara Brown to send them overseas for missions. This makes a total of \$12,669 that was taken in to fund their travel expenses. Our goal was \$10,000, so we surpassed that goal. At CrossWinds, our mission is to reach people with Jesus. That is something we do in our local community, but it is also something we do beyond our community with our missionaries.

When Pastor Jordan and I talked this past week, we remembered that one of our unstated goals a few years ago was to send a missionary couple from CrossWinds to reach people with Jesus on the other side of the world. Kevin and Tara are a realization of that goal. While we hadn't publicly shared that goal, God was gracious and honored that goal anyway.

Dave Smidt, the chairman of the elder board, shared that the elders are launching a small capital campaign to help us continue our focus on reaching people with Jesus. About a decade ago, Spirit Lake began an update process to help us better reach our community. We put in a new stage, then stopped renovations. At that point, we sensed God called us to open the Spencer Campus. For the last ten years, the focus has been launching the Spencer

Campus and obtaining a permanent home for that campus. Now that we have achieved that goal, the plan is to return to the renovations plans we put on home a decade ago. Most of the capital campaign is the Spirit Lake campus catching up to the Spencer Campus. It is moving from chairs to pews, chairs similar to the ones you are sitting in today. It is repainting the facility. Most of the new color will be the same agreeable grey used in Spencer. It is moving from old lighting to modern LED lighting, just like the Spencer Campus uses. It is a garage for some storage space, just like the Spencer campus has. Of course, there are a few odds-and-ends projects in Spencer that we will complete in that campaign, such as finishing the Spencer kitchen. As God leads you to give, we ask for you to give generously as we continue in our mission to reach people with Jesus in the Spencer, Spirit Lake, and Windom, MN communities and ultimately around the world with our missionaries, like Kevin and Tara Brown.

Last week, we began a new series. It is called Taming the Tongue. We are taking a few weeks to look at what the Bible says about our speech, the way we use our words. Last week we kicked off the series and looked at James 3. That chapter looks at the power of words and how words can hurt or heal. This morning, as we continue this series, we look at gossip and slander.

Gossip is everywhere. Check Facebook. Flip on the television, especially daytime talk shows. Check out any news station. They don't just report the news. Many news reports spread gossip and slander. Look at the magazine rack at the checkout counter in the grocery store. The headlines designed to catch your attention so you purchase the magazines are invitations to learn gossip about a

celebrity's life. Listen closely to the conversations around you at work, school, and in the neighborhood. How often are people speaking negatively about others? Gossip is everywhere. When we hear it, we are hooked and drawn in.

More devastating than idle gossip is intentional gossip intended to hurt people. As I was preparing this study, I ran across this true story. The 13-year-old daughter of a woman that worked in a Florida hospital printed out her mother's list of patients with their phone numbers. She called them and told them they tested positive for the AIDS virus. The girl said it was just a prank, but one of the patients, a 60-year-old woman, was in the process of planning her suicide after she was told that devastating news. Thankfully those slanderous words were exposed as a sham before she took her life.

Gossip, whether done in idle chatter or intentional malice, whether true or false, is devastating. One of the reasons gossipy words are so destructive is that the information we share is irretrievable and uncontrollable. You may have heard the story of the man who regretted gossiping about a friend. He asked his priest what he should do. The priest told him to go to the center of town and tear open a pillow. He did that and returned to the priest to ask how tearing open a pillow helped with his gossip. The priest told him to retrieve every feather from the pillow, feathers that were now blown all over the town. The man said it would be impossible to get the feathers back. The priest said, "In the same way, there is no way to retrieve the words and undo the damage of the gossipy words you shared."

This morning, as we take a more in-depth look at the topic of gossip, we will look at it under various headings. First, we will look at what motivates us to gossip. Second, we will look at the different kinds of gossip, then see what the Bible says about them. Third, we will look at the myths about gossip, that is how to we mistakenly try to justify our gossip even when we know it is wrong. Fourth, we will look at what to do when we hear gossip. Lastly, we will examine what to do when people gossip about us. We have a lot to cover on this practical topic, so let's dive in.

Why do we gossip?

Malicious speech comes from the central source of most of our sin, which ultimately is the promotion of ourselves.

1. Gossip comes from loving ourselves more than other people.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14 (ESV)

If what we say about someone else or to someone else is not something we would want someone to say about us, we have crossed the line. We are a gossip who loves ourselves more than other people. If we would not like someone to speak about us behind our backs, then we shouldn't speak about someone else behind their back. Ultimately gossip comes from us loving ourselves and not caring about the way our words run down another person's life.

2. Gossip comes from idleness.

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 Timothy 5:13 (ESV)

Paul says that people with too much time on their hands are prone to be involved in gossip. In this verse, Paul talks about certain widows who learned to be idlers. In the Greek, an idler is a person who doesn't work much. They are not productive. An idler is a person who doesn't work, not because they can't work but because they have chosen not to work. They have chosen not to be actively engaged in helping and serving other people. Paul says that these kinds of people, with too much time on their hands, are prone to waste their time talking about other people when they should be working hard helping and serving other people.

Paul says they don't just gossip, but they become busybodies. A busybody in Greek is someone who fusses over and concerns themselves with other people's lives instead of their own. Have you met a busybody? All of us have met these kinds of people.

Paul also says these kinds of people, the idlers with too much time on their hands because they need a job, go house to house spreading gossip. Modern idlers have it even easier than these people. Today people don't even need to walk from house to house to spread gossip. All they need to do is pick up the phone and make a call. They can text the gossip. With only a few swipes of their fingers, they can spread gossip for all to see on social media. Today it is easier to spread gossip than it has ever been before.

3. Gossip comes from the desire to be the center of attention. Let's face it. Sometimes people gossip simply because they like it when other people pay attention to them and listen to what they have to say. When we share devastating

insider information about others, people lean in and naturally want to listen. The gossip becomes the center of attention. They are in control. They have an audience. That is what they want.

4. Gossip comes from a desire to pull ourselves up by pushing others

down. If I can share something derogatory about other people, I feel better about myself. This is what happens when we watch the news and hear about a thief or a murderer. Subconsciously we look down on them and tell ourselves, I am better than they are. I would never do such a thing. We pull our egos up by looking down on others. When my children were in school, and other children would say hurtful things to them or them, I often told my children that the reason other children were so mean to them was that those kids felt inferior. Many of them came from unhappy homes. To help themselves feel better, they were picking on my children, pushing them down, in an attempt to pull themselves and their unhappy life up.

5. Gossip comes from bitterness. When someone hurts us and we refuse to forgive them, that develops bitterness in our hearts. Unforgiveness, which turns to bitterness, transforms us into nasty, vengeful people. When that happens, we will subconsciously begin using gossip and slander as a tool to get even with the person who hurt us. We will speak the worst about people who hurt us and then assume the worst about them too. Our unresolved bitterness leaks out of us. We start using our words, even our side comments about people, as a way to hurt their reputation and get even. Even worse is those we have not forgiven, and the heart bitterness that comes with holding onto those hurts, will be transferred to

other situations and other people. Any time we run across another situation or person who hurts us, all of that stored-up anger and pain we have from the first person who hurt us gets vomited up on the next person who hurts us, even if the offense is minor. We find ourselves overreacting with hurtful and slanderous words that come from the bitterness of an old wound we are still nursing.

How does the Bible describe gossip?

In the Bible, there are different Greek and Hebrew words used to describe gossip and slander. For the purpose of our study, I will group them into two categories. The first category is simple gossip.

Gossip is idle chatter that undermines another's integrity and reputation. This is not necessarily malicious in nature. It is more general in nature. It is talking with another friend and babbling information about other people that should not be shared. Here are some verses that describe this kind of gossip.

But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 2 Timothy 2:16 (ESV)

Babble is senseless and pointless conversation. These are conversations that are not helpful. They are not building anyone up. This talks about *irreverent* babble. These are the kind of pointless conversations that do not honor God. They are not helpful in molding someone's character. They are fruitless words that end up bringing people down. What does irreverent babble look like?

Do you know people who have a political hobby horse? Every conversation with them goes this way. I am not saying we can't have political convictions. I am not saying we shouldn't share our thoughts in this area but we don't become a one-trick pony where everything we say drags people into the

police gutter. We don't want to constantly be griping about things that we are not in a position to change. It ends up being a waste of words that bring other people down and does not lead anyone to Jesus. Irreverent babble is also the off-color jokes people like to share. Yes, we will get a laugh. Yes, it is funny, but it sticks in someone's head and doesn't build people up. It actually leads people to think less of you instead of higher of you. What good will that do for anyone? Sometimes we have to ask ourselves, is what I am saying just a bunch of pointless babble that isn't building anyone up? Is what I am saying confidential information that I should never speak?

Another term in the Bible for this kind of casual and unhelpful gossip is a whisperer. A whisperer is a person who shares juicy bits of information about people behind their backs. It is salacious information that deflates someone's respect in the eyes of others.

All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. Psalm 41:7 (ESV)

There is a second category of gossip that is not just idle chatter about others that isn't helpful. It is intentionally sharing true or false information about others with the purpose of undermining their life or destroying their character.

This is called slander.

Let everyone beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother, for every brother is a deceiver, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. Jeremiah 9:4 (ESV)

The Bible speaks very strongly against slander. Intentionally speaking negative things about others to ruin their reputation or damage their life is never to be part of a Christian's character.

Let's explore idle gossip and intentional slander in greater detail by working our way through some of the verses in the Bible that talk about them.

Before we do that, you need to know something that I found a little confusing in our English Bibles as I studied this topic. As I mentioned, there are a number of Hebrew and Greek words for slander and gossip. Those words convey different ranges of intentionality regarding the gossipy words that are spoken. In our English Bible, casual gossip should be translated using the word gossip. Intentional gossip to destroy another should be translated as the word slander.

As I studied, I noticed the ESV translation, which we often use, typically translates these Hebrew and Greek words using the English word slander. I think the NIV translates these words into English with more of an even balance, using the terms gossip and slander in a more even-handed way. Remember, gossip and slander are not synonyms. They reflect different intentionalities in the speaker's heart. Gossip is more unintentional and general, while slander is intentional and malicious. This morning, I will sometimes use the NIV translation because I think it more accurately captures this subtle difference than the ESV, which we often use.

What does the Bible say about gossip?

RJ LeTourneau was a designer who built bulldozers, excavators, and large earth scrapers. One particular earth scraper his company was famous for was known as the Model G. Someone asked him why he called it the Model G. He said it was because his scraper worked like gossip. It moved a lot of dirt, and it moved it fast.

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret. Proverbs 11:13 (NIV)

If you share anything with a person given to gossip, it won't be long until they share that information with other people. They can't help themselves. They start talking about your business with other people. Instead of being a safe place to share information, a gossip is like a manure spreader. They take your dirt and throw it everywhere over everyone. When I was on one of my first mission trips in high school, I shared with my tent buddy some things I was struggling with. The next week, he told everybody on the mission team what I shared with him. I still remember that as a high school student, I was filled with shame. I didn't even want to show up to dinner to eat with my team I was so embarrassed. He was an uncontrollable gossip, and as a 16-year-old, I learned about a gossip the hard way.

In the medical profession, there are HIPPA laws that bar people from sharing medical information with people who don't need to know. This is to cut down on medical gossip. As Christians, we should follow the HIPPA laws. If other people don't need to know, we have no right to share.

A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends. Proverbs 16:28 (NIV)

When we share information about other people, we think it will bring us closer because we let people in on something that is personal to us. It doesn't work that way for a gossip. A gossip shares our information with other people, and instead of drawing people together, that lack of confidentiality tears relationships apart, separating even the closest of friends.

This is especially true in the church. In the church, when people talk to one another about life, and a gossip starts making private things public things, it tears apart the fabric of a church. People feel betrayed. They don't trust people in the church. They want nothing to do with the church because they feel emotionally and relationally violated by the gossips in a church. Gossips are the reasons many churches stay small. Gossip is the tool used by key people in churches to maintain power and control.

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.
Proverbs 18:8 (NIV)

Choice morsels are what we call snack foods. It is like a bag of potato chips. One bite is good, but one bite is never enough. This is similar to gossip. Once we start listening, it is hard to stop listening, just like eating a bag of potato chips.

Gossip is deadly not just because we love to hear it, but just like overindulging on snack food leaves us sick, chowing down on gossip leaves our relationships with other people sick.

Gossip stains people. Once we hear gossip about other people, it is hard to look at them the same. Sometimes it is hard to verify or deny the gossip we hear. Is it true that man was flirting with another woman? Is it true that mom slapped her child in Walmart? Now, every time we see those people, that gossip colors our relationships with people, tearing apart the relational fabric. The problem is, we don't even know if any of it was true or just a vicious rumor. That is how gossip works.

Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down. Proverbs 26:20 (NIV)

When you have quarrels, division, bickering, and a lack of unity in any organization, especially the church, it is because you have some people that are skilled in gossip who keep throwing logs on the fire to keep the conflict going.

Many times these gossips do not want a solution to a problem. They just want to gossip because gossip makes them the center of attention. It leaves them in control, which is what they want. Instead of assuming the best about people, gossips will always assume the worst.

I have fond memories of gossips over the years. People who have come into my office to tell me things they didn't like about my sermon, or the coffee, or the temperature of the air conditioning. When I ask them who are the people with the problems, they say, "I can't tell you, but you need to know people are talking." When I get that kind of an answer, I know a gossip is at work. They don't want me to change the temperature of the air conditioning, they just want something to gripe about that they can talk to their friends about, so they are in control of a group of people. Sometimes I agree with the Apostle Paul that these people gossip because they have too much idle time on their hands. If they don't like the coffee, why don't they try volunteering to come in extra early on Sunday morning to make the coffee? Trust me, they won't. They just want something to complain about. That is the way they work.

[A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much. Proverbs 20:19 \(NIV\)](#)

If you are looking for a great memory verse for the week, this is it. Just tell your friend that you can't spend time with them. When they ask why, quote this verse and tell them they talk too much. It is wiser to avoid you and not let you

gossip than to spend time with you and encourage your gossip. We all know people who talk too much. The Bible is so practical in this area.

Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander.
Proverbs 17:4 (NLT)

This is a very revealing verse about the true nature of our hearts. The nature of our hearts is revealed by how we respond to gossip and slander when we hear it. If we are drawn into listening to gossip and slander about others, and we want to hear those kinds of things, it reveals the evil state of our hearts.

Recently someone started sharing with me some of the crazy and difficult things that happened at the executive level of a local non-profit. I didn't ask this person for the information. There is nothing I can do with the information. I left feeling terrible for hearing the information. What was shared with me will hang like a cloud over the reputations of the people in that ministry and cannot help but color how I interact with them in the future. I wasn't part of those meetings so I have no idea about the accuracy of the information I was given.

If I had been quicker and was preaching about gossip sooner, I should have stopped this person as they were sharing and told them what they were saying appeared to be gossip. There was nothing helpful or restorative that could come from it. Telling me about it didn't help anyone or anything. All it encourages me to do was think less of fellow Christians.

Others may accuse you of gossip, and you will never regain your good reputation. Proverbs 25:10 (NLT)

This is a super helpful verse. When we gossip, we will eventually become known as a gossip. When that happens, it is almost impossible to shake that bad reputation and gain a good reputation. Gossips carry the reputation of being

a gossip for life. A well-known gossip has a lonely life. People will avoid them and won't share personal things with them. Gossips have little respect in the eyes of others.

As the Bible says, a good name is better than riches. Those who gossip lose a good name and may never regain it.

As surely as a north wind brings rain, so a gossiping tongue causes anger!
Proverbs 25:23 (NLT)

Does anyone like it when people are angry at them? Does anyone like it when people are mad at them or disappointed in them? None of us like it when we let someone down. We will do just about anything to restore a broken relationship when someone is deeply disappointed in us. When we gossip, when we share information about others that does not need to be shared and that doesn't protect the confidentiality of other people, the Bible guarantees that people will be angry at us. One way or another when we are chatting about other people's business, which is none of our business, it is guaranteed to get people angry.

Who may worship in your sanctuary, Lord? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. Those who refuse to gossip or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends. Psalm 15:1-3 (NLT)

David wrote about the kind of people that are close to God. Who are the kind of people that God draws near to and reveals himself to? One of the qualities of someone that God is close to is a person who refuses to gossip or speak evil of their friends. This means the converse is also true. Anyone who keeps chattering about other people's business can not claim to have a close relationship with Jesus. Those who are in a healthy relationship with God through

Jesus will be convicted of their gossip and slander and want to repent of it. They will fight against participating in it.

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, Romans 1:29 (NIV)

Gossip about other people is one of the qualities of a life far from God. In this verse, Paul gives a brief description of what a life far from God looks like. It has some terrible qualities, like murder. Gossip is on the same list. It is a serious thing.

What does the Bible say about slander?

Let's remember our definitions. Gossip and slander are similar but different in their intentionality. Gossip is more casual. It may not have any ill intent. It is idle talk, babbling, or whispering.

Slander is different. It is intentionally using our words like a weapon to hurt someone else. It is intentionally sharing harmful information about someone with others to make them look bad.

One of the Greek words for slander is *diabolos*. This is the Greek word from which we get our English word, the devil. The devil loves to slander people. He loves to intentionally speak bad about us. When we intentionally use our words to undermine the life of another, we are acting more like Satan than Jesus.

You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. Psalm 50:20 (ESV)

The Hebrew word for slander in this verse means to create a moral blemish, stain, or disfigurement. The idea is to speak either true or untrue things

about another person with the intent of destroying their reputation. The Psalmist says, “How can you do this to your own family member, your own brother?”

I have thought about this a bit. You may not agree with me on this one, but I think we should consider this application. The Magazine *Christianity Today* appears to me to enjoy slandering fellow Christians. You will remember when CT dug up a bunch of dirt on Ravi Zacharias, which was unfortunately true. They published it as the cover article of their magazine, circulating the sins and failures of his life worldwide to destroy what was left of his life and reputation. They did the same thing to Mark Driscoll with an extensive audio podcast of interviews of disgruntled former Mars Hill Church staff. CT claims they do these things so other people will learn. There is some truth to that, but the truth is they are manure spreaders throwing the dirt and sins of one person’s life on everyone else. This kind of slander is clickbait. As David said, news about the misfortunes and sins of others are like tasty morsels that once people start to hear, it is hard to stop hearing. I am not saying I give any approval of the sins that took place in Ravi Zacharias’s ministry or at Mars Hill. What I do know is God takes care of justice. It is not our job to slander people to try and destroy their lives and reputations.

We saw this in 1 Samuel. David did not need to slander Saul or take him out physically or verbally. God took care of that for him. Even when Saul was trying to kill David, David refused to lift his hand against Saul. He refused to speak evil of Saul and slander his name. He left justice in God’s hands. I think Christianity Today could learn a thing or two from 1 and 2 Samuel about leaving justice in God’s hands.

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. James 4:11 (NIV)

James says that when we speak words against a fellow Christian that we know will tear down their reputation in the eyes of others, we are not just speaking against them, but we are speaking against God's laws and sitting in judgment over God's laws. God said we are never to slander a brother or sister. When we decide we have a right to speak against them and tear their reputation down, we disagree with God, who gave us the law. That is a scary place to go. Let's look at the law from the Old Testament that James refers back to.

“Do not go about spreading slander among your people. “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:16 (NIV)

God's law forbids us to use our words in any way that tears down another person's reputation, especially that of a brother or sister in Christ. The law reminds us never to do anything that endangers our neighbor's life. This means that if we don't have anything positive to say, it is best for us not to say anything at all. If gossip separates close friends, slander is far worse. God's law reminds us that slander is never to cross our life.

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:18 (NIV)

Don't try to get revenge or hold a grudge against anyone. We are to be as forgiving as possible. We are to go out of our way to love our neighbor the way we would like to be loved. Even if people have hurt us, if they have repeatedly disappointed us, we still go out of our way to show love to them. We don't hold a grudge against them.

What about people, such as our own family, who repeatedly fail us? What I like to say is that we just adjust our expectations. We don't speak ill of them to others. That would be slander. We keep an olive branch of peace and love extended to them, but our expectation is that they will continue to let us down, so we are not surprised when that happens. We just hope and pray it won't happen.

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 1 Peter 2:1 (ESV)

Peter gives us five things that must not be part of the Christian life.

Slander is one of those them.

Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate. Psalm 101:5 (NIV)

The Psalmist writes about those whom God sets his hand against. He writes about those whom God disciplines. God disciplines those who intentionally speak evil about others behind their back. None of us want God fighting against us. I think about the way God took out all of King Saul's family in 1 and 2 Samuel. God wiped out Saul, all four of his sons, and Abner — the commander of his army. All that was left in Saul's family line was Mephibosheth, a crippled grandson. David didn't have to do anything to eliminate Saul and his family. He didn't have to speak evil of Saul. God heard all the evil things Saul spoke about David and put him to silence. This is a sobering thought and a reminder about the importance of using our words in a positive way to build up others and their lives.

Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool. Proverbs 10:18 (NIV)

I love this verse. If you have a problem with someone, and they ask you if things are ok, then you lie to them by saying things are fine, but then turn around and continue speaking evil about them behind their back, you are a fool. You had the chance to talk out a difficulty. You had the chance to work through the problem, but you were a coward and a liar. Things will not end well. It won't take people long to figure out your true colors and that you are acting like a fool.

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. Titus 3:1–2 (ESV)

As Paul finishes his letter to Titus, he summarizes how Christians should live. We are to be known for being submissive to rulers, even the ones we don't agree with. We are to be known as being eager for good works and to speak evil of no one. That is the Greek word for slander. Christians are to be known as people who refuse to use their words to wound the lives of others.

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Colossians 3:8 (ESV)

In Titus, Paul talked about the good qualities that should be present in a Christian's life, including a refusal to slander others. In Colossians, Paul talks about the other side of the equation, which are the qualities that should be absent in a Christian. Once again, he turns to the topic of slander. Christians should never, ever, ever use their words to assassinate the lives and character of others. This is completely different from the world around us. It is part of what helps Christians to stand out in this world.

What are the myths of gossip and slander?

The evidence is abundantly clear. Gossip and slander are serious violations of God's laws. Engaging in them is far more serious than we realize. While we know idle gossip and intentionally slanderous words are wrong, we try to find ways to continue in them anyway. Let's look at some of the bad excuses we give to continue these sins.

1. **Gossip and slander are women's sins.** It is true that Bible mentions these sins, and specifically applies them to women. Those references are found in 1 Timothy 3:11, 5:13. While the Bible says some women are notoriously guilty of gossip and slander, that doesn't mean men can't be guilty of gossip and slander. Men, we can speak against people with our words just as well as women. Guys, these sins are our problems, not just women's problems.
2. **If something is true, it is ok to repeat it.** Truth is not the only standard we need to consider. Sometimes a thing is true, but it is not helpful to repeat it. Not everyone needs to know about the sins and failures of others. Something may be true, but it shouldn't be repeated because it doesn't build people up. It tears people down and ruins their lives, which is a very unhelpful thing to do. It doesn't encourage forgiveness and restoration.

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.
Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

3. **Prayer concerns justify sharing sensitive information.** A lot of gossip and slander is shared between Christians under the umbrella of prayer. Many times, we do not need to share the gory details of our prayer concerns with

others, or if we share them, we should share them confidentially, not in a gossipy or slanderous fashion.

What should I do when I hear gossip?

1. Identify gossip as gossip to the one who is speaking. This can be uncomfortable, but if it is done gently, it is very effective. When someone is sharing information that should not be shared and you don't need to know it, just stop them as they are talking and tell them their words appear gossipy and unhelpful. Then share a verse or two about gossip from the Bible. Of course, the person will deny they are gossiping, but it will cut off the flow of information in the conversation and help them to better consider their words in the future.

2. Go to the one about whom we heard the gossip in a spirit of restoration.

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.
Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

When we hear gossip about someone, what gives gossip life is secrecy. It is people whispering about other people but nobody actually talks to the person who is the subject of the gossip to find out the truth and to heal hurts or broken relationships. When we hear gossip about someone, one of the fastest ways to shut it down is to just go to the person who is the subject of the gossip. Gently tell them what you heard. Tell them you care about them and if what was said isn't true, you want to put a stop to it. If what was said, is true, you want to help them and restore them.

3. Protect the victim of gossip and slander. When we hear gossip or slander about others, we do not want to repeat it. We want to protect people's reputations, just like we would want someone to protect our reputation.

What should I do when people gossip about me?

1. Pray and leave the matter with God.

...casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)

Remember that gossip and slander, especially on the Internet, is like letting feathers out of a pillow. There is almost nothing we can do to retrieve the damaging words that were said about us. Sometimes the only thing we can do is pour our frustrations out to God and leave our reputation in God's hands. In 1 and 2 Samuel, this is what David did with all the slanderous words and hurtful actions Saul took against him, and God handled it well.

2. Ignore it.

Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. Ecclesiastes 7:21–22 (ESV)

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. Proverbs 19:11 (ESV)

Sometimes the best thing to do with people who speak against us behind our backs is to ignore them and not get worked up over it. I like to say, "The truth and time go hand in hand." The truth about your character will become evident to all over time. The truth of the gossip's character will also be known to everyone over time. If you ignore gossip and don't let it phase you, people will quickly realize there is no truth to it, and they will ignore it as well.

3. Go to the one who is gossiping about you in a spirit of restoration.

...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
Ephesians 4:3 (ESV)

If you are fortunate enough to know the source of the gossip, this is a great opportunity to step forward in spiritual maturity. Schedule a time to meet with them, and talk with them in a respectful way about what you heard they said about you. They will probably deny their words, but even if they deny them, the courage you have to talk with them will make a strong impression. In these kinds of conversations, it is easy to be passionate and get worked up. I recommend that you talk to a gossip calmly with compassion for them trying to turn them from this sin in their lives. If we are tactful enough with them and the Holy Spirit is working in their heart, repentance from the habit of gossip can happen in their life.

Conclusion

As we wrap up this message, a few things are abundantly clear. First is that gossip and slander are not to be part of our lives. The problem is that each of us has engaged in them, and we are easily drawn into them. If the Holy Spirit is convicting your heart in this area, as we close, turn your heart and prayers to Jesus, asking for his forgiveness for the sins of our mouth. Thank Jesus for the Word of God helping us see the sins of gossip and slander with greater clarity and sharper conviction, a conviction that is intended to lead us to repentance. Repentance leads us to Jesus, which is the only hope and help we have for our sins.



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