

**The Infectious Sin of Gossip**  
Psalm 15:1-3 / Matthew 18:21-35  
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**Speaking about others instead of speaking to them is sin.**

**What is Gossip?**

**Gossip** (Heb. rakiyl, *raw-keel'*): a tale bearer, informer, or scandal-monger.

**Gossip** (Gr. n. psithuristes, *psith-oo-ris-tace'*: psithurismos, *psith-oo-ris-mos'*) a whispering, i.e. secret slandering; of the magical murmuring of a snake charmer; a detractor

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, slanderers (Romans 1:29-30a)

You must not go about as a slanderer (tale-bearer KJV) among your people. (Leviticus 19:16a)

**Slander** is the act of uttering false charges or misrepresentations that defame and damage another's reputation.

I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. (2 Corinthians 12:20b)

LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent?

Who may live on your holy mountain?

The one whose walk is blameless,  
who does what is righteous,  
who speaks the truth from their heart;  
whose tongue utters no slander,  
who does no wrong to a neighbor,  
and casts no slur on others; (Psalm 15:1-3)

**Why do people gossip?**

**1. It is a propensity of the sin nature.**

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts. (Proverbs 26:22)

**2. It is a way to elevate one's own status.**

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:29-30)  
Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?” they asked. “Hasn’t he also spoken through us?” And the LORD heard this. (Numbers 12:1-2)

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

**Gossip will damage relationships and destroy Church unity.**

Like a north wind that brings unexpected rain  
is a sly tongue—which provokes a horrified look. (Proverbs 25:23)

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

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

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

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

All my enemies whisper together against me;  
they imagine the worst for me, saying,  
“A vile disease has afflicted him;  
he will never get up from the place where he lies.”  
Even my close friend,  
someone I trusted,  
one who shared my bread,  
has turned against me. (Psalm 41:7-9)

Those who guard their mouths and their tongues  
keep themselves from calamity. (Proverbs 21:23)

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. (James 3:6-10)

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. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? (James 4:11-12)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

“A fool’s mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts. (Proverbs 18:7-8)

**God has promised to judge gossips.**

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)

But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:36-37)

**How do I discern if I should share something?**

1. Do I **KNOW** what I am relaying is **true**?
2. Am I **ascribing motivations**?
3. Are my words conveying **care** or **condemnation**?
4. What is my **motivation** for sharing?
5. Do I have **permission** to **share**?
6. Does the person I’m telling **need** to **know**?
7. Is my sharing likely to help **heal** or **worsen** the situation?

**What should I do if someone begins to gossip to me?**

1. “Did Frank **tell you** this?”
2. “No—then how do **know** it is **true**?”
3. “Yes—then did he tell you to **let other people know** and ask them to pray for him?”
4. **Nip** gossip in the **bud**.

## 5. Gossip heard is NOT to be repeated.

We need to keep short accounts with one another so that no root of bitterness springs up between us.

### THE PROPER PROCEDURE:

#### Step 0: Decide if this is an offense that can be overlooked.

Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends. (Proverbs 17:9)

A man's wisdom gives him patience;  
it is to his glory to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11)

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

#### Step One: Prayerfully and gently address the matter one-on-one. (Matthew 18:15)

" ... instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. [forgiveness should be extended] in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:7-11)

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

#### Step Two: Go to them again with a witness or witnesses.

One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Deuteronomy 19:15)

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)

#### Step Three: The church is to be informed of the problem.

#### Step Four: Treat the rebel as you would an unbeliever (v. 17b)

" ... have been put out of your fellowship." (1 Corinthians 5:2)

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer,

a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

... we command you brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us" and "If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15)

...hold on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. (1 Timothy 1:19-20)

Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. (2 Timothy 4:14-15)

**Is this a sin of willful ongoing rebellion or one of weakness, ignorance or immaturity?**

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, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. (1 Corinthians 5:11)