

Rumors & Gossip — The Catastrophic Cousins

The Bible has much to say about the power of our words. Every word that comes out of your mouth has *power*. **Proverbs 18:21** says, “Death and life are in the *power* of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Three harmful forms of speech are: **RUMORS**, **GOSSIP**, and **SLANDER**. Tonight the focus will be on rumors and gossip. Next week we’ll discuss slander.

A rumor is a story or statement in general circulation *without* confirmation or certainty as to facts. Gossip is idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others. "Gossip is a rumor that goes in one ear and out many mouths." –unknown

I. WHY RUMORS ARE HARMFUL:

1. They are often perceived as only being **TRUE**.
2. They often distort the **FACTS**.
3. They spread **QUICKLY**.
4. They are **IRRETRIEVABLE**.

II. WHY WE GOSSIP:

Harmful speech comes from the central source of all sin—the **promotion of self**. Here are six reasons or motivations behind why we might participate in gossip.

1. It appeals to our natural **CURIOSITY.** Our appetite for "news" is insatiable. Why? Because we love gossip! "The only time people dislike gossip is when you gossip about them." - Will Rogers

Proverbs 18:8: The words of a talebearer *are* like **tasty trifles**, And they go down into the inmost body. (NKJV)

- “Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deep into one’s heart.” (NLT)
- “Listening to gossip is like eating cheap candy; do you really want junk like that in your belly?” (MSG)

2. It occupies us during times of **IDLENESS.** People with time on their hands are prone to speak harmful words. **1Timothy 5:13:** “And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.” (NKJV)

3. It satisfies a desire to be the center of **ATTENTION.** It's an ego stroke to have everyone listening intently when we speak, so we learn the right phrases to captivate others: "Did you hear?", "Well, I really shouldn't say this, but ...", "Can you keep a secret?"

4. It creates an opportunity to **ELEVATE ourselves over others.** If I can say something derogatory about you, I feel better about myself (or at least I can hope to influence the person I'm talking to). "To speak ill of others is a dishonest way of praising ourselves." – Will Durant

5. It gives us a chance to 'vent out' our **BITTERNESS**. Unresolved conflict with a person often motivates us to speak harmful words about them.

6. It **SOOTHES** our own anxieties. Bad news is more popular than good news because good news about others heightens our anxieties about our own problems.

III. WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS ABOUT GOSSIP:

1. We should **AVOID** it.

- 2nd Timothy 2:16-17: "Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior. ¹⁷ This kind of talk spreads like cancer, as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus." (NLT)

2. We should not **ASSOCIATE** with people who gossip.

- Proverbs 20:19: "He who goes about *as* a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips." The NASB says, "He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore ***do not associate with a gossip.***"

Hearing gossip often results in telling. "Gossip in" soon becomes "gossip out."

3. Those who gossip cause **STRIFE**.

- Proverbs 26:20: Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. (NKJV)

Gossips have a great ability to cause division and strife by sharing bits of information that are difficult to ignore or forget (Remember: They're tasty!). The "juicy morsels" stay with us, permanently staining our perception of those whom they're talking about.

4. Those who gossip are **UNTRUSTWORTHY**.

- Proverbs 11:13: A talebearer *reveals secrets*, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.

The rule of thumb about those who gossip is this: If they talk to you about others, then they talk to others about you!

5. Those that gossip can separate close **FRIENDS**.

- Proverbs 16:28: A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends. (NKJV)

6. Those who gossip **FORFEIT** fellowship with God.

- Psalm 15:1-3: "Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? ²Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts. ³Those who ***refuse to gossip*** or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends." (NLT)

