

# How Can I Stop Gossiping?

There are many fine Christians who serve Jesus well in all areas of their lives except they have trouble with gossip. They repent each time they catch themselves doing it. They tell themselves they will not do it anymore. But somehow when they get together with others the tales start coming forward.

Gossip is not lying. We could be telling tales we believe to be true or that really are true, and we are still guilty of gossip. The sin involves telling information that is sensational, interesting, and tantalizing. We call it "Juicy Gossip". The information is not shared to solicit help or to enlighten a person who needs to know (like a parent). It is usually shared so that we can join in the conversation and be the center of attention for a moment or two.

Four things we should do to help us stop gossiping. They all come from the word of God. They are all there to help us to stop sinning and start living properly.

**1. Before Opening Your Mouth Engage Your Mind.** James 1:19 *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: If we slow down our speech we will have time to ask ourselves some important questions: "Do I know this is true? Is it helpful? Is it kind? Or is it gossip?"*

A person who speaks without thinking is foolish. The gossip says all he knows without considering if what he is revealing is proper. Prov 29:11 *A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.*

If you try to instruct a fool about his speech he will not listen. Prov 12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.* The wise man waits long enough to hear counsel and consider it before talking.

Prov 17:28 *Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.* We may not actually be wise, but we will appear

to be if we slow down our speech. Who knows, in time we may even become wise by less speaking and more pondering.

**2. Love One Another.** Much of our gossip is done because we do not care about the person we are talking about. We guard our tongues more carefully when we talk about those we love. But God wants us to love everyone. Think about your attitude toward the person before you start talking about him.

Matt 18:15 says, *"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."* This man who sinned against us is not a candidate for gossip. We love him. We want him to be forgiven by God. We want to gain our brother. Others are not brought into the discussion unless the brother fails to repent (16-17). Even then the goal is not to share the sensational sin with others. The aim is to gain thy brother.

**3. Spend More Time Working.** There is a reason we call it "idle gossip". We chatter because we do not have anything else to do. If we were busy doing the Lord's work we would have less time to share stories about the Lord's people.

The members in Thessalonica seemed to have some trouble with gossip. It is suggested in both letters. 1 Thess 4:11 *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to **work** with your own hands, as we commanded you.* 2 Thess 3:11-12 says, *"For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, **working** not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."*

A warning about younger widows is found in 1 Tim 5:13 *And withal they learn to be **idle**, wandering about from house to house; and not only **idle**, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.*

Inactivity goes hand in hand with overusing the tongue. We must get busy doing good. Remember the old saying, *"Idle hands are the devil's workshop."*

#### **4. Look Beyond The Moment To See The Damage Done By**

**The Unrestrained Tongue.** We gossip so that we can be the center of attention for a moment, but what happens after that moment is gone? What will happen with the information we have released? Will it be repeated and embellished? Will it be attributed to us? Will the subject of our gossip learn we were the source of the story?

The gossip stirs up the flames of contention. Prov 26:20-21 *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.*

Prov 26:22 *The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.* The gossip hurts the subject of his gossip. His words cut deep wounds.

He also damages others. Friendships are destroyed by his unbridled tongue. Prov 17:9 *He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.* The true faithful friend will not air out our dirty laundry before others. Prov 11:13 *A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.* The gossip pretends to be our friend in order to learn the secrets that he will then share with others. Prov 20:19 *He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.*

Gossip hurts the subject, the hearers, and also the person doing the gossiping. Once the person is known to be a revealer of secrets he will no longer be trusted or liked. He will be shunned by everyone else. His wicked tongue will come back to burn him. Prov 26:27 *Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.*

We have so many good things we can do with our voices and our ears (preaching, praying, praising, singing, learning, listening to truth...). Do not hurt yourself and others by telling or listening to gossip.