

QUESTIONS TO KEEP ME FROM GOSSIPING

Introduction

- A. Text: **Prov. 16:27,28**.
- B. Failure to control the tongue is a difficult problem — and a nearly universal one. Cf. **Jas. 3:1-12**.
- C. But, as with all other sins, there is always a “way of escape” (**1 Cor. 10:13**) when we are tempted to say something we should not.
- D. One sin we should be especially careful to guard against is gossip, or talebearing.
 - 1. Gossip sows strife - **Prov. 16:27,28**.
 - 2. Those who walk “in a disorderly manner” and are “busybodies” (**2 Thess. 3:11**) are often guilty of this sin.
 - 3. Gossips and busybodies are guilty of “saying things which they ought not” (**1 Tim. 5:13**).
- E. Below are some questions that can help keep us from gossip. Before we speak about another person, we would do well to ask:

I. HOW DO I KNOW IT IS TRUE?

- A. Lying, or even careless “misrepresentation” of another, has no place in the life of the Christian - **Eph. 4:25**. Cf. **Prov. 12:17-22**.
 - 1. Great damage can be done by passing along, even inadvertently, information that turns out to be incorrect.
 - 2. We cannot afford to “assume” the accuracy of everything we hear — we need to double check and “validate the input.” Are you SURE? Cf. **Deut. 13:12-14; 17:4**; etc.
- B. It is a rare person who, on close examination, does not have room for improvement in his commitment to truth.
- C. We need to be scrupulous about not passing on incorrect information about others.

II. DO I HAVE TO VIOLATE A CONFIDENCE TO TELL IT?

- A. If we wish to be thought of as “trustworthy,” then *worthy* of trust is what we are going to have to be. Cf. **Rom. 1:31**.
- B. In this sense, we need to be people who are “faithful” (**Prov. 11:13**). Cf. **Prov. 25:13**.
- C. Confidence-breaking is “treachery.” Cf. **Jdg. 16:1-22**.
- D. We should think twice before we decide to pass along information that has been entrusted to us in confidence.

III. WHAT GOOD NEED DOES MY LISTENER HAVE FOR THE INFORMATION?

- A. It is wrong to “reveal secrets” to those who have no constructive need to know the information - **Prov. 11:13**. Cf. **18:8; 20:19**.

- B. We need to avoid idle talk — and strive rather to speak that which is “good for necessary edification” (**Eph. 4:29**).

IV. AM I THE ONE WHO SHOULD CONVEY THE INFORMATION?

- A. The “busybody” is wrongfully concerned about “other people’s matters” (**1 Pt. 4:15**).
- B. It often takes wisdom to discern whether the responsibility of saying something is ours or somebody else’s.
- C. Before involving ourselves in someone else’s problem, it is good to ask whether we have earned the right to be involved by the active love we have shown this person previously. “He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help” (Abraham Lincoln).

V. WHAT ARE MY MOTIVES FOR TELLING IT?

- A. More often than we are normally willing to admit, our real intent in speaking is to hurt.
1. “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health” (**Prov. 12:18**).
 2. The intent to hurt may be so slight or subtle that we ourselves do not recognize that what we are doing is striking defensively, getting even, pulling down someone who has an advantage over us, having fun at someone else’s expense, etc.
- B. With our words (as with many other things in life), it is extremely helpful, before speaking, to ask ourselves: *What’s the point? What are my real reasons for saying this?*
- C. It takes a person of more than average honesty to answer those questions *with no hint of self-deception*.
- D. Whatever truth needs to be spoken needs to be spoken for the right reason: “in love” (**Eph. 4:15**).

Conclusion

- A. Another question we might ask ourselves is this: *Is it kind?* Cf. **Prov. 12:18**.
- B. We will give account of “every idle word” (**Mt. 12:33-37**).
- C. Gossip is more than a slightly bad habit — it is a serious sin.
1. Gossip is responsible for much of the strife in the world - **Prov. 26:20-22**.
 2. Gossip harms both the gossiper and others whose relationships are damaged by the gossip.
 3. We are exhorted to stay away from talebearers - **Prov. 20:19**. Cf. **1 Cor. 5:11**; **2 Thess. 3:11-15**.
- D. We are exhorted to mind our own business - **1 Thess. 4:11**.
- E. Most of us could afford to simply speak fewer words than we do - **Prov. 10:19**. Cf. **Jas. 1:19**.
- F. In all our speaking, we need to strive for the graciousness that typified the Lord’s words - **Lk. 4:22**.
- G. “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (**Eph. 4:29**).