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### Is it Really that Bad to Gossip?

**Proverbs 11:13:** (NASB) *He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.*

Gossip is an integral part of our society and has been a constant in the history of humanity since the beginning of recorded history. If gossip is such a staple to society, doesn't it seem reasonable that there must be something redeemable about it? By the way, did you hear what happened to...Aw, c'mon, did you really think I was gonna go there? Gossip - what is it? How does it work? Is there ever a time or place when gossip is a good thing? Stay with us...this is gonna be juicy!

#### What is gossip?

 **Gossip is good, *The Sociology of Gossip*, Lainey Lui, TED Talk**

- *I studied the celebrity ecosystem to understand social culture, to understand social behavior, to understand humanity, to understand ourselves. That is the function of gossip. Gossip then is good. Gossip is knowledge. Gossip is immortal. Gossip is historical.*

#### So, what is the difference between gossip and slander?

**Romans 1:28-32:** (NRSV) <sup>28</sup>And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. <sup>29</sup>They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are **gossips <5588>**, <sup>30</sup>**slanderers <2637>**, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, <sup>31</sup>foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die yet they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

**Gossips/Whisperer:** Strongs #5588 qiyuristhv psithuristes psith-oo-ris-tace  
a whisperer, secret slanderer, detractor

**Slanderers:** Strongs #2637 katalalos (kat-al'-al-os); talkative against, i.e. a slanderer: KJV-- backbiter.

Gossip is slander done quietly. **Proverbs 20:19** **Proverbs 21:23**

We have to determine how we talk about others in a non-gossipy way. What, why and how are we saying what we say? **James 3:7-16:** Sinful human nature is not easily set on the course of godliness. One of the greatest tools of carnality (earthly thinking) and of godliness is communication - through this tool comes the highest praises to our Father in heaven and the lowest insults to those around us. Our greatest strength of communication is our greatest weakness! We have to be careful about what we are saying, why we are saying it and how we are saying it. If what we are saying is derogatory, we best not say it. This contradiction ought not to be if we were to be focused on the most important thing! Christians are not exempt from evil thoughts and deeds. Gossip often comes from bitterness, envy and selfish ambition.

**Philippians 3:13-14:** If we do find ourselves gossiping, have the strength and integrity to correct it. **James 3:7-16:** Gossip is full of partiality and hypocrisy!

What about celebrities? They live a public life. What they do in private is their own business. Why do we think that we can talk about them? We can talk about their public performances only. Is what we say about others true? Needful? Kind?

**Ephesians 4:14-16:** Speak the truth in love! Weigh our words carefully so that what we speak is of benefit and not idle talk or damaging to others.

**How many of these seven things can be tied into gossip and slander? Proverbs 6:16-19**

 **Fun, but not kind, *Stop Gossiping*, Gretchen Ruth**

- *The thing about gossiping is that it is fun. It is fun to gossip. And I didn't realize how much I did gossip until I really tried to stop. Now researchers will tell us that gossiping actually serves a very important social function. Gossip is the way that we enforce social norms and find out what are the norms of our community. So, if somebody does something like take credit for something that they weren't responsible for, by gossiping everybody exposes this and says this is not right and the person finds consequences for the action that they've done. And just as a matter of fact, it's*



*interesting that both men and women gossip the same amount, but both men and women prefer to gossip to women because women make a better audience. But although gossip serves an important social function and it is fun, it is not kind.*

But is society really that noble where our enforcement of social norms lifts people up?

Do we like to have our own lives misrepresented? So why would we think to do this to another person? We have all fallen into the trap of gossip, but what do we do to avoid it? **Compare and choose!** Proverbs 10:17-23: Gossip is like a social sport that causes hurt.

 **Low self-esteem, Why Do We Love to Gossip, Davis Essel**

- *The biggest reason that you or I would gossip about anyone, a celebrity, a lover, a next-door neighbor, a co-worker is because we have very low self-esteem. You see when we have very low self-esteem, we feel that is one of the quickest ways that we can boost our self-esteem, and it's an illusion. But one of the quickest ways we think we can boost it is by putting someone else down. So, when we judge other people and talk about them and say how my former partner is such an idiot because he hasn't kept up with child support or he hasn't kept up with alimony or whatever it might be and we're letting all of our friends know this, it gives us this illusion that we're on top of the world because we're putting someone else down. In actuality the opposite happens. People that gossip on a regular basis feel pretty crappy about themselves and that doesn't change until they stop gossiping.*

**We have a choice as to what we feed to those around us:** Proverbs 26:18-23: (NRSV) <sup>18</sup>Like a maniac who shoots deadly firebrands and arrows, <sup>19</sup>so is one who deceives a neighbor and says, I am only joking! <sup>20</sup>For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. <sup>21</sup>As charcoal is to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife. <sup>22</sup>The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body. <sup>23</sup>Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are smooth lips with an evil heart.

If you do not feed the fire of gossip by listening, the fire will go out. The words we speak should be beneficial and not tear someone down.

Proverbs 20:19: Do we want to stay away from those who tear others down with words, or are we drawn in?

 **Gossip's definition, Dealing with Gossips, Joseph Tan**


- *Gossip is sharing detrimental information with those who are not part of the problem or part of the solution. So, gossip is spreading stories and even sometimes telling information that is true, but it's the audience of the information that is in question here. You are telling it to people who are not part of the problem, or part of the solution and they really can do nothing about it.*

If we say we are Christians, we are bound by the guidelines in the Scriptures. Exodus 20:16:

**The following is a scathing consequence of misrepresenting another:** Deuteronomy 19:15-21: One of the biggest problems with gossip is that it is based on hearsay and not fact. Gossip is inherently a misrepresentation and an exercise of distortion. It is like the old **telephone game**. The last person receives distorted information.

Leviticus 19:16: Thou shalt not go up and down as a **talebearer <7400>** among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

**Talebearer:** Strongs #7400 rakiyl (raw-keel'); a scandal-monger (as traveling about): KJV-- slander, carry tales, talebearer.

 **Helps maintain social order, Can Gossiping Be Good, CalTV Berkeley**

- *Aside from personal benefits, Feinberg's discovery suggests that gossiping also helps to maintain social order, as a threat of being talked about negatively motivates individuals to act virtuously. Often times it has been a bad thing and it can be maliciously motivating and serve a malicious purpose. If there's a way to differentiate, that would be useful but hopefully this research will at least get people to recognize that not all gossip has to be that bad. So, the next time you decide to*



*engage in gossip, recognize that you may actually be doing something good for your health as well as society.*

What a crock! Since when does our society ever preach negative reinforcement? We don't discipline children for fear of damaging self-esteem; we don't even keep score in kids' games so no one will lose! As adults our speech must be politically correct lest we offend another - and we think that gossip is good?? We are afraid of negative reinforcement!

Proverbs 11:12-13: (KJV) <sup>12</sup>He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace. <sup>13</sup>A **talebearer <7400>** revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

So, even in the justice-based system of the Old Testament, the clear instruction was - no gossip! Exodus 23:1-3: We need to watch our own heart, thoughts and mind. Justice should be blind. Violation of this commandment of bearing false witness against your neighbor indicates a deep lack of respect for truth and your neighbor. To achieve a level of not bearing false witness can be a monumental task, for the terrain one must trek is not only slippery but very deceptive as well.

### **Gossip and karma, Why Do We Love to Gossip, David Essel**

- You know there are many reasons why people gossip in life, but I'll tell you this - one of the reasons that I did this segment right now is because of what we know as karma. When we talk about someone, when we think about someone in a derogatory way, it's coming back to us, because the definition of karma is that every thought, every word and every action goes out into the universe and returns in kind. So if we're talking poorly about Lindsay Lohan or Tim Tebow, or anyone else in this world, or your next-door neighbor, or it could be your partner even, it's going to come back to us and we're going to receive the same thing in kind at some point in the future.*

But is "karma" a Christian principle as well?

**Is it possible to slander another by accident?** Matthew 12:33-36: (KJV) <sup>33</sup>Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. <sup>34</sup>O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. <sup>35</sup>A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. <sup>36</sup>But I say unto you, that every **idle <692>** word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

There's your karma! There is an accounting for every idle word we speak.

**Idle**: Strongs # 692 argos (ar-gos'); inactive, i.e. unemployed; (by implication) lazy, useless: 1) free from labour, at leisure 2) lazy, shunning the labour which one ought to perform

So then, idle words then are not thought out or planned as they should be. Instead, they are mainly reactionary, lazy and not meant for building one another up. They are words that come far too easily to one's mind and without a filter, they are tools of destruction! Our words should be for a beneficial purpose. If we are our brother's keeper, how do we stay away from gossip when trying to help our brother? Don't talk to everyone and discuss the issue. Have a one-on-one discussion. If asking someone else to help and give you advice to help your brother, speak in generalities only. Seek counsel with the broadest approach possible so that no reputation is brought down. Don't bring down your brother's reputation.

### **Four reasons for gossip, What's Good About Gossip, Shimul Melwanim, TED Talk**

- And so overall they propose that in terms of society, or groups, or large communities, gossip has four main functions. It allows people to gather and disseminate information about each other; it allows people or groups to establish norms. So, if somebody doesn't follow the norm, you can actually hurt them by discussing and hurting their reputation. By sharing these norms and agreeing upon what's good behavior, we also establish group solidarity. And then finally, it's just kind of fun and as a relief in the monotony of daily life.*



Let's more closely examine those statements above about gossip serving four important functions:

1. To "disseminate information," really meaning to spread unverified rumors! Which of these two are more natural: Which are more likely?
2. Mob mentality and purposefully hurting is now the order of the day - all based on unverified rumors! Instead, we are to approach the person face-to-face. Speak the truth to the person with whom you have the issue.
3. We establish group solidarity - meaning we as a mob decide acceptability. That's what gangs do! Gossip crumbles when confronted with reason.
4. Is it fun to verbally beat others down based on rumor? How bad must our self-esteem be for this to be fun.

Here is Jesus' firm statement on proper treatment of one another: Matthew 5:21-24

1 Timothy 5:11-13

### How do we break the gossip habit?

**Important Point #1:** You really can't get away with gossip! Galatians 6:7-10

**Important Point #2:** Proclaim your loyalty to God outwardly! Spend your time praising God and you won't have time to gossip. Replace the habit! Psalms 101:1

**Important Point #3:** Study only righteousness and walk with integrity. Psalms 101:2: Instead of reading a tabloid, read the Scriptures! Think replacement! Fill your heart and mind with good things because what you put in will reflect what comes out.

**Important Point #4:** Decide to only look upon those things that uplift. Do not look at things that absorb your time or those things that are not wholesome. This may be nearly impossible, so we have to battle it constantly. Psalms 101:3

**Important Point #5:** Purge out evil and deceit from your heart - hear it not and speak it not! Monitor your words daily. Make it your homework. Psalms 101:4

**Important Point #6:** Personally confront that which damages in your circle of influence. Have courage to stand up against someone when they are slandering someone else. Psalms 101:5

**Important Point #7:** Seek out those who stand for righteousness and mercy! Gather around others who do not gossip. Put yourself in a good environment where you just build up others. Psalms 101:6

**Important Point #8:** Remove yourself from an environment of lies and deceit. Get rid of those influences. Gossip degrades those who were *also* created in the image of God.

Psalms 101:7: (NRSV) *No one who practices deceit shall remain in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue in my presence.*

**Important Point #9:** Exodus 20:16: (KJV) *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.* We can bear false witness (which is a form of stealing) by: Assigning credit for a task to the wrong place, ruining someone's reputation, or misrepresenting someone or something (slander or libel)

Gossip is a devious little habit that permeates throughout all of our society. We must face gossip for what it is - nothing valuable or that we should want to be a part of. We need to learn how to properly speak about one another.

**So, is it really that bad to gossip?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,  
Think about it...!**