

GOSSIP - "A VICTIM OF or A VICTOR OVER?"

According to Webster's dictionary, gossip is ... "revealing personal facts about others or disclosing intimate information about others". Another definition: "Sharing private information about others with those that are not part of the problem or part of the solution" (Bill Gothard). According to Scripture, gossip is telling the truth about someone, either secretly or openly, without that other person's absolute best interest in mind.

PSTHURIZO, the Greek word translated "gossips" in Rom.1:29, literally means "to whisper". It is equivalent to the idea of the Israelites murmuring or whispering in their tents about Moses (Deut.1:27).

KATALELEO, the Greek word translated "slanderers" in Rom.1:30, literally means "to downspoke." It is similar to our term "to put someone down". The word implies more openness and intensity of the gossip. It is equivalent to the idea of the Corinthian Church openly and intensely talking about their leaders (I Cor.1:11).

According to the Bible, slander is telling a lie about someone, without that other person's absolute best interest in mind, or "telling the truth with the express design to hurt." (Prov.17:9) - Bill Gothard.

DIABOLOS is a Greek word which is translated devil, Satan, or father of lies. It is the same word used by Paul in I Tim.3:11, referring to the qualifications of a deaconess; namely that she not be a "slanderer".

(The above Greek word study was compiled from Jim Dethmer and Walt Russell).

Gossip, therefore, takes in idle talk about the affairs of others, tale-bearing, "whispering", back-biting (Gal.5:15-16), busybodies, meddlers, rumors, tearing down others behind their backs, malicious or deliberate intent to hurt.

No one is a stranger to these battlegrounds of the tongue! We are all involved, not only by listening, but by spreading gossip at some time, or we ourselves have been the victim of it!

It is amazing that while maturing as Christians we wouldn't be focusing on "the biggies" such as: lying, stealing, adultery, drinking, murder, drugs, and fornication. But yet, we do not hesitate to assassinate another brother or sister in Christ with our words. Even harmlessly at times, our conversations involve other people and then, very subtly, judgments, criticisms, rumors, and hearsay become malicious, hurtful, and destructive! Why? What good could ever come out of gossip and slander? (Think that question through). Since nothing good can come from it, why do "nice" Christian people still "bite and devour one another"? (Gal.5:15-16). I'd like to submit at least 3 reasons:

- (1) Because of the spiritual condition of the sinful nature (Rom.3:10-18). (Also see Matt.12:33-37).
- (2) Because of the universal problem of the tongue (Js.3:1-12). Note at least 20 characteristics.
- (3) Because of not experiencing the Spirit-controlled life (Eph.5:18-20).

CONSEQUENCES OF GOSSIP AND SLANDER

1. Many people are wounded and hurt deeply and may never recover (Prov.18:6-8).
2. It will only spread and get worse and cause more problems. It won't just go away without being resolved. (Prov.26:17-28).
3. It always breeds deep rooted bitternesses (Prov.18:6-8).
4. Others will pick up reproaches or take up an offense - they will begin to hold something against someone who has never done anything to them.

5. Many people are defiled by an infectious report (Prov.26: 17-28).
6. Its potential destruction affects people, businesses, companies, neighbors, fellowship groups, and churches. (Prov.11:9; 17:9).
7. Character assassination/destroying someone's name and reputation may never be undone!
8. It only sows discord and divisiveness among friends (Prov.17:9; 6:19; 16:28).
9. It plants poisonous seeds in the Body of Christ which stunt spiritual growth (1 Pet.2:1-2)
10. It grieves God to the point of serious action (Ps.101:5)!

"Whoever slanders his neighbor I will destroy!" - Jehovah our Lord and God.

#### SCRIPTURAL MOTIVATIONS

Study and make further observations regarding God's viewpoint on gossip.

Lev.19:16	Prov.17:9
Ps.15:1-3	Prov.17:20
Ps.101:5	Prov.18:8
Prov.6:19	Prov.26:21
Prov.8:13	Prov.26:22
Prov.10:18	<u>Busybodies or Meddlers</u>
Prov.11:9	I Tim.5:13
Prov.11:13	II Thess.3:11-12
Prov.16:27	I Pet.4:15
Prov.16:28	
Prov.17:4	

Now write in your own words what God says about slander.

Ps.15:1-3  
Ps.52:2  
Prov.10:18  
Prov.11:9  
Prov.16:27-28  
Prov.20:19  
Prov.26:17-18  
Prov.30:10  
Titus 3:2  
I Pet.2:1-2  
Eph.4:29-32

In Romans 1:29-32, God lists these along with all sins guilty of death; God doesn't take any sin lightly! Look back over these verses again and observe specifically what is revealed about gossip, the gossiper, the consequences and result of gossiping.

I trust that by this time your spiritual awareness has been so increased that God's Spirit has the freedom to convict of past involvement in gossip and future temptations in that area.

NOW, WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?

The only way to ever change is not to just stop the evil, sinful, negative behavior but to replace it! (Eph.4:20-32 "put off - put on"), (see "Biblical Change" study). Romans 12:21 says we will only overcome evil with good. Observe the following commands, giving specific, positive instruction in this area.

Js.4:11

Prov.17:4

Prov.20:19

Eph.4:29-32

I Pet.3:9-11

Col.3:16

Col.3:17

Ps.19:14

Ps.141:3

PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Seek forgiveness if you have sinned against someone in this way.

Separate yourself from a compulsive gossip.

Stop someone in the middle of their conversation if you perceive gossip.

(Don't even listen to it! - Prov.17:4; 21:28 - you're just as guilty - Rom.1:29-32)!

Say, "Are you telling this so we can confront that person and resolve the matter?"

Suggest they go and be reconciled to the person, rather than spreading it anymore.

Say no more to anyone else (unless "authorities" need to resolve potentially destructive gossip).

Survey your own motives and words before speaking about others.

Speak only what is good to the use of building up, not breaking down.

You must prepare to win this battle.

Your spiritual life and others' may depend on it!!

For further beneficial studies on how to be constructive and restorative, see:

"Biblical Confrontation"

"Peacemaker"

"Proverbs on Communication"

"Why Control the Tongue, James?"

"The Battlegrounds for the Tongue"

"How to Handle Criticisms Constructively" (Bill Gothard)

"Discernment vs. Judgment"(Bill Gothard)