

Church of God

Sunday School



THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP #8 – GOSSIP

DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Gossips are whisperers (Psalm 41:7; Proverbs 16:28; Romans 1:21, 28-32).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Gossips are talebearers (Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 18:8; Proverbs 26:20).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Gossips are called busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:11; 1 Timothy 5:13; 1 Peter 4:15).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Gossiping is damaging and hurtful (Proverbs 11:9; Proverbs 17:9; Proverbs 26:22).
- ❑ **Friday:** Gossips carry tales both ways (Psalm 41:5-6; Proverbs 11:13).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Avoid listening to gossip or passing it on (Exodus 23:1; Psalm 34:13; Proverbs 20:19).

MEMORY VERSE: *"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."*
 – Proverbs 26:20

The Triple Filter Test

A story has often been told of a famous philosopher who lived hundreds of years ago. One day a young man asked if he wanted to hear news about an old friend. His answer was to ask if this news passed what he called The Triple Filter Test. "What is that?" the young man asked. The philosopher said: "Is it absolutely true? Is it good or kind? Is it useful or necessary for me to know?" The answer to these questions was: "I'm not sure if it is completely true; no, it is not kind; and there is actually no reason for you to know." The philosopher then asked, "If you're going to tell me something that is possibly not true, not good, and not necessary for me to know, then why tell me at all?" Filtering the information through those three questions is a good way yet today to prevent gossip from occurring.

Winston Churchill said, "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to put its pants on." What is it about gossip that we often feel compelled to listen to it? Why is it so easy to believe the worst about people? Why do we feel tempted to repeat gossip to others? This tool of the devil is not always easily recognizable, often hiding itself in seemingly innocent conversations. However, gossip is very powerful. It has hurt many feelings, broken friendships, and ruined reputations.

What Is Gossip?

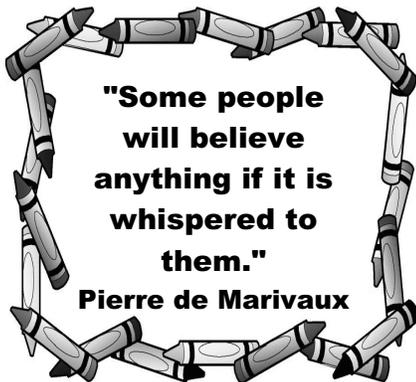
Gossip Often Begins With:

"Don't tell anyone, but I heard . . ."
 "I shouldn't be telling you, but . . ."
 "It's none of my business, but . . ."
 "I'm just sharing a prayer burden."
 "I'm concerned about . . ."
 "I don't mean to gossip, but . . ."
 "Have you heard the latest?"
 "I just need to vent to someone."

Gossip is defined as "idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal and private affairs of others" (*Dictionary.com*). Gossip can include things that are true, things that are partially true, and things that are completely untrue. Gossip is sharing negative personal information with other people who do not need to know and cannot do anything to make the situation better. Gossip is often called "spreading dirt," "having a chat," or "getting the scoop." Gossip is not interested in *solving* problems as much as *sharing* them.

Many newspapers and magazines have made room for entire columns, which are plainly called "Gossip Columns." It is not unusual for these columns to have false information. Some websites proudly state, "Check back for the most up-to-date

gossip." A famous song says: "You'll never hear one of us repeating gossip. So, you'd better be sure and listen close the first time." Social media has proved to be a faster way to share gossip and rumors. In a matter of hours, gossip can "go viral" (spreading rapidly).



What Does the Bible Say?

The word *gossip* is not found in the Bible (KJV). However, there are many other words that let us know what God thinks of this topic. The word *whisperer* is used to describe gossip. (Have you ever noticed that gossip is often shared by whispering? Why do you think that is?) David wrote, "All that hate me whisper together against me" (Psalm 41:7). Solomon wrote that "a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Proverbs 16:28). Look at the list of words included with *whisperers* and *whisperings* in Romans 1:29 and 2 Corinthians 12:20 to get a better understanding of how seriously God looks at gossiping.

Other terms used in the Bible to describe gossip include "slander" (Proverbs 10:18), "repeateth a matter" (Proverbs 17:9), and "meddleth" (Proverbs 26:17). People who gossip are called "a talebearer" (Proverbs 20:19), "a busybody" (1 Peter 4:15), "tattlers" (1 Timothy 5:13), "a prating fool" (Proverbs 10:8), and "a babbler" (Ecclesiastes 10:11). God warned His people in Leviticus 19:16 to "not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." When there is no "talebearer" (or gossip) to spread stories, Proverbs 26:20 says that "the strife ceaseth."

Gossip Takes Many Forms

Everybody loves to hear a good story, and people enjoy being the first to tell others something new. However, gossip is much more than just sharing stories. Gossip rarely comes with a warning label, and it can be very addictive. For some, having knowledge is powerful, and they can use that information to influence others to act (avoid someone, pass the story on to others, or make hurtful comments). Some people enjoy telling or hearing that things are not going well for others. It causes feelings of "I'm better than them" or "At least I didn't do that." When people have been hurt by someone, gossip is often a common method of getting revenge. Still others will gossip because of jealousy. And lastly, some people gossip because it is fun. It has become a form of entertainment for them.

Gossip often has just enough truth in it to be believable, but most of the time that truth is distorted and exaggerated. Gossip and secrets often go hand in hand. Gossip often brings approval and acceptance from others. Some people excuse their gossip by saying, "I was just kidding" or "I didn't know that wasn't true" or "I didn't mean to hurt anyone." Gossips often say they are truly concerned about others, but do their words work to solve the problem?

What Should You Do About Gossip?

Consider the Hurt: an old English proverb says, "A dog that will fetch a bone will carry a bone." Ask yourself how you would feel if negative information is being told about you or the people you care about. Is it different when the gossip is about someone you do not care for? Consider the warning of another proverb: "He who gossips with you will gossip of you."

Consider Your Heart: do you enjoy hearing or sharing gossip? This indicates a spiritual heart problem. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34).

Consider the Source: is this someone who is known for gossiping? Proverbs 20:19 (AMP) warns about spending time with people who gossip (reveal secrets).

Consider the Truth: it has been said that there are three sides to every story—his side, her side, and the truth. Keep in mind that you are only getting part of the story.

Refuse Gossip: let it be known ahead of time that you do not want to hear gossip. If gossip starts, use the Triple Filter test, change the subject, or just walk away.

Be a Peacemaker: admit that we all have faults and this person might have been having a bad day. Offer to go with the gossip to the one being talked about and work it out.

Bible Quiz



1. What are the three parts of The Triple Filter Test?

2. What is one of the definitions of the word *gossip*?

3. What are some of the words used in the Bible to describe people who gossip?

4. According to Proverbs 26:20, how can you stop gossip?

5. What are some reasons people like to gossip?

6. How is gossiping different from just telling stories?

7. What are some excuses given for gossiping?

8. What does the proverb "A dog that will carry a bone will fetch a bone" mean?

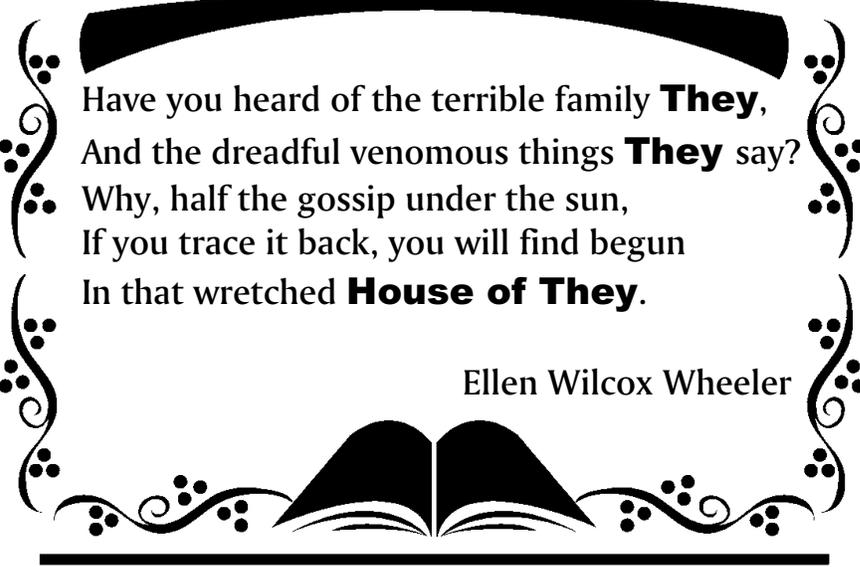
9. When it comes to gossip, what four things should you consider?

10. What are some ways you can stop gossip from happening in your hearing?

Poems About Gossip

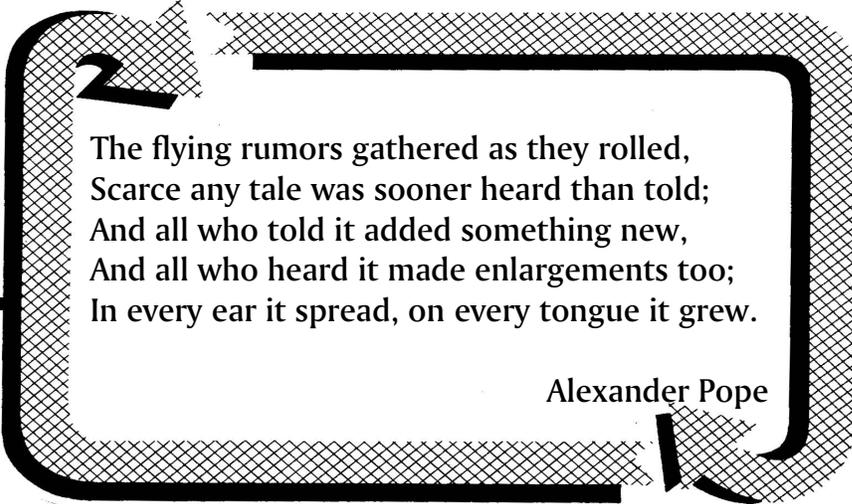
In the course of your
conversation
Each and every day,
Think twice, try to be careful
Of what you have to say;
Your remarks may be picked up
By someone's listening ear,
You may be surprised at what
Some people think they hear.
Things that you innocently say,
Or try to portray,
Can be changed and greatly
Exaggerated along the way;
Many stories change for the
worse
As they are retold.
So try to keep any questionable
remarks
"On hold."
May I give all of you
Some very sound advice?
When you speak of others,
Say something nice;
Try to say good things,
Regardless of who is around,
If you have nothing good to say,
Don't utter a sound.
You may find that an innocent
remark,
In the end,
May lose you a close
And valued friend.

Henry Lesser



Have you heard of the terrible family **They**,
And the dreadful venomous things **They** say?
Why, half the gossip under the sun,
If you trace it back, you will find begun
In that wretched **House of They**.

Ellen Wilcox Wheeler



The flying rumors gathered as they rolled,
Scarce any tale was sooner heard than told;
And all who told it added something new,
And all who heard it made enlargements too;
In every ear it spread, on every tongue it grew.

Alexander Pope