

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 12

Gossip

Gossip

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To continue studying what God teaches us about our speech by focusing on the dangers of both being a gossip and listening to gossip.

Key Verses

Proverbs 11:13

Proverbs 20:19

Proverbs 18:8 (26:22)

Proverbs 16:27-28

Leviticus 19:16

1 Peter 4:8

Memory Verse - Proverbs 11:13

"A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Proverbs 12:22.

Have something written down that you can whisper into a student's ear. Have that student whisper it to the next student and so on until what you said makes its way around the room. When it gets to the last student, have that student say out loud what they heard, and compare it to the original phrase that you have written down.

Just like a message can get distorted when it passes from person to person, when gossip spreads, it tends to get further and further from the truth. Today, we will look at gossip and slander and learn about the dangers of being, and even listening to, people who gossip.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

We've spent the past couple of weeks exploring what Proverbs has to say about the power of speech. We learned that our words can be harmful or healthy, bring life or death, speak truth or tell lies. Among the many verses that talk about our speech in Proverbs, we find a dangerous character show up again and again: the Talebearer, also known as a "whisperer" or "gossip." The gossip loves digging into a person's life (especially their private life, 16:27) for the sake of being able to tell other people all about it, thereby causing embarrassment, starting arguments, ruining relationships (16:28), and a number of other harmful things. The gossip both loves to talk and is not trustworthy, a dangerous combination. They tell everyone your secrets and the things you want kept private (11:13). They also love to spread slander (10:18), which are things people say about you that aren't even true for the sole purpose of hurting you. Proverbs clearly tells us that spreading gossip and slandering others is foolish and wicked.

God warns us repeatedly about people who gossip. And rightfully so! Romans 1:29 lists gossips/talebearers among the people who have become filled with every kind of wickedness. God warns us about gossip because all of us have been guilty of gossip at one time or another, whether by spreading gossip ourselves, or even just by listening to it. The Bible makes it clear that while being a gossip is foolish and wicked, listening to gossip is just as bad. Just like a fire needs more wood to keep burning, gossip needs ears to listen and mouths to repeat information to keep gossip alive. If people refuse to listen, gossip and all the arguments and fights that come with it die out, like a fire with no more wood being added (Proverbs 26:22).

Proverbs also says that words of gossip are like tasty treats ("choice morsels") that go into the deepest parts of who we are. The wise person may be tempted to listen to gossip, but knows how destructive it can be and refuses to listen. So the wise person avoids anyone who talks too much (20:19) and is themselves trustworthy to keep a secret when listening to the things other people are saying (11:13). Like we have talked about before, there is a time to speak and a time not to speak. But as we learn about gossip, our understanding grows to realize that there is also a time to listen, and a time not to listen. Think before you speak, but also be thinking as you listen.

LOOK

"If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all!" Has your mom ever told you that? That's been repeated advice to children for generations. It's not a Bible verse, but it does agree with many of the things we read in the book of Proverbs. Gossip is big business today.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

People make a living by digging up and uncovering people's secrets. Imagine every secret you've ever told or every wrong thing you have ever done posted on the internet for all to see. Doesn't that sound terrible? God hates gossip! He hates it so much that when he gave Moses the Law for the nation of Israel, He made gossip illegal (Leviticus 19:16).

Proverbs warns us that some things should remain hidden. The wise man covers up other people's wrongdoings (17:9). This isn't in the sense that he lets people get away with sin, but he doesn't go telling everybody whenever someone messes up. Love covers and conceals. Think of God's love for us! Psalm 32:1 tells us, "Blessed is he whose... sin is covered." The fool, on the other hand, reveals and repeats, uncovering sins and secrets for all to see. Not everything is appropriate to be shared. Not everything you hear should be told to others, especially because the things we hear have probably changed a lot since the original story was told (like in our whisper down the lane game at the beginning). But even if the gossip being spread was true, it would still be wicked. Just because something is true doesn't mean it's worth repeating or telling others.

So if gossip is so harmful, why is it that most of us, if not all of us, love to listen in when we see a crowd gathered listening to a story, or when we hear someone say, "Hey, did you hear about...?" Each of us has a sin nature in us that finds gossip appealing, like a tasty treat. The juicier the secret, the better! God knows this about us and warns us. Being the teller of stories and secrets is a dangerous game. The gossip soon becomes hated and targeted by all the people they have hurt and wronged, bringing ruin and grief upon themselves. Beware! Once you hear gossip, you'll be tempted to repeat it to somebody else! Why do you think that is? Maybe because people who gossip tend to be the center of everyone's attention, and our sinful nature loves being the center of attention.

For the wise person, Jesus is the center of our attention. The wise person knows that what they say matters to God. The wise person understands that gossip is so displeasing to God and so destructive to others that it's to be avoided at all cost. Gossiping may not be against the law here in the US, but it is against God's law, and God's commands are always for our benefit. So when someone shares a secret with us, we keep it secret, as a faithful friend. And when someone sins against us or is struggling with sin, we don't expose them by telling everyone about it. Instead, we cover it in love (1 Peter 4:8) because we love God and our neighbors. And when someone tries to gossip to a wise person, the wise person walks away and doesn't listen, or tells the fool to stop spreading harmful gossip, thereby keeping the fire from spreading and causing more damage.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize Proverbs 11:13.

If there's time, consider sharing about a time in your own life when you learned someone was gossiping about you, how you responded, etc., or even a time when you were gossiping, and realized how damaging it could be.

Pray: Ask the Lord to set a guard on your mouth and ears. Pray for help and self-control not to be a gossip. Ask for wisdom to know how to respond when you hear someone start to gossip.

Parent Question: How is gossip like a fire? How do you keep gossip from spreading?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on select Proverbs by David Guzik

[Proverbs 11:13](#)

**A talebearer reveals secrets,
But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.**

a. **A talebearer reveals secrets:** The unfaithful gossip, the uncontrolled talker (**a talebearer**) loves the power and intrigue of revealing **secrets**. For them, such **secrets** are a form of power that they use for their own advancement.

i. **A talebearer:** “Or, *he that goeth about* (from one place or person to another, as the manner of such is) *telling tales*, making it his business to scatter reports, revealeth secrets.” (Poole)

ii. “It is not safe to be close to this cruel man who trifles with the happiness of his fellow creatures. For as readily as he betrays a confidence about a neighbor to us, so he will betray a confidence about us to someone else.” (Bridges)

b. **He who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter:** The man or woman of wisdom—those **of a faithful spirit**—knows there is an appropriate time to conceal **a matter**. There are times when love and wisdom guide to privacy.

[Proverbs 20:19](#)

**He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets;
Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.**

a. **He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets:** The man or woman who is a **talebearer** or gossip loves to reveal things that should more properly be concealed. There are certainly some things that should be revealed ([Ephesians 5:11](#)), but many things should be concealed out of love ([1 Peter 4:8](#)). Wisdom will know which is approach is appropriate in each situation.

b. **Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips:** The person who **flatters with his lips** will often speak *against* you as quickly as they speak *for* you. It is better to stay clear of such people (**do not associate**).

i. “The idea of ‘opens his lips’ is that such a one is always ready to talk; and if he is willing to talk to you about others, he will be willing to talk to others about you.” (Ross)

[Proverbs 18:8](#)

**The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles,
And they go down into the inmost body.**

a. **The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles:** The gossip and evil reports brought by the **talebearer** are almost impossible to resist. Those who should know better find it difficult to tell the **talebearer** to stop talking. The importance of this proverb is expressed in its repetition, being repeated in [Proverbs 26:22](#).

i. Yet the *damage* the **talebearer** brings is great. “He that takes away a man’s good name kills him alive, and ruins him and his posterity; being herein worse than Cain, for he, in killing his brother, made him live for ever, and eternalised his name.” (Trapp)

ii. “Unlike the fool’s insolent speech that hurts himself in hurting others, gossip destroys the relationship of others, even the closest friends.” (Waltke)

iii. “The words of a gossip [**talebearer**] in an unguarded moment may inflict irreparable injury. This evil may be welcomed in certain circles that thrive on scandal. But that does not alter the real character of a gossip, who is detested by both God and man.” (Bridges)

b. **They go down into the inmost body:** When we receive the **words of a talebearer**, they normally have an effect on us. The words **go down into** us and often change the way we think and feel about people, even if what the **talebearer** says isn’t true or isn’t confirmed. God gave a strong word regarding the confirmation of testimony ([Deuteronomy 19:15](#), [2 Corinthians 13:1](#), [1 Timothy 5:19](#)).

i. Once we start eating these **tasty trifles**, it is hard to stop. “When such tasty bits are taken into the innermost being, they stimulate the desire for more.” (Ross)

ii. Instead of eating the **tasty trifles** of the **talebearer**, “Jeremiah sets a better model: he ate God’s word and delighted in it ([Jeremiah 15:16](#); cf. [Colossians 3:12-20](#)).” (Waltke)

3. ([Pro 26:20-22](#)) The dangerous words of the talebearer.

**Where *there is no wood*, the fire goes out;
And where *there is no talebearer*, strife ceases.
As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire,
So is a contentious man to kindle strife.
The words of a talebearer *are* like tasty trifles,
And they go down into the inmost body.**

a. **Where there is no talebearer, strife ceases:** Just as **wood** fuels a **fire**, so the **talebearer** or gossip fuels **strife**. The fire won’t continue to burn without the wood, and the strife won’t continue when the **talebearer** stops their work. James described the power of words to set a destructive fire ([James 3:6](#)).

i. “As long as there is an ear to receive, and a tongue to pass on, some piece of malicious slander will continue to circulate. But directly it reaches a hearer who will not whisper it forward, in that direction at least its progress is arrested.” (Meyer)

ii. “The tale-receiver and the tale-bearer are the agents of discord. If none received the slander in the *first* instance, it could not be propagated. Hence our proverb, ‘The receiver is as bad as the thief.’ And our *laws* treat them equally; for the *receiver* of stolen goods, knowing them to be stolen, is *hanged*, as well as *he who stole them*.” (Clarke)

b. **So is a contentious man to kindle strife: Strife** doesn’t create itself. It has a maker, and it is the gossip, the **talebearer**, the **contentious man**.

i. “In the absence of such a person, old hurts can be set aside, and discord can die a natural death. Even so, we

often find a juicy tidbit of defamation irresistible.” (Garrett)

c. **The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles:** This proverb, repeated from 18:8, explains that the gossip and evil reports brought by the **talebearer** are almost impossible to resist. Those who should know better find it difficult to tell the **talebearer** to stop talking.

i. “The words of a gossip [**talebearer**] in an unguarded moment may inflict irreparable injury. This evil may be welcomed in certain circles that thrive on scandal. But that does not alter the real character of a gossip, who is detested by both God and man.” (Bridges)

d. **They go down into the inmost body:** When we receive the **words of a talebearer**, they normally have an effect on us. The words **go down into** us and often change the way we think and feel about people, even if what the **talebearer** says isn’t true or isn’t confirmed. God gave a strong word regarding the confirmation of testimony ([Deuteronomy 19:15](#), [2 Corinthians 13:1](#), [1 Timothy 5:19](#)).

i. Once we start eating these **tasty trifles**, it is hard to stop. “When such tasty bits are taken into the innermost being, they stimulate the desire for more.” (Ross)

ii. “This was delivered before, [Proverbs 18:8](#), and is here repeated, as being a point of great concernment to the peace and welfare of all societies, and fit to be oft and earnestly pressed upon the consciences of men, because of their great and general proneness to this sin.” (Poole)

[Proverbs 16:27](#)

**An ungodly man digs up evil,
And it is on his lips like a burning fire.**

a. **An ungodly man digs up evil:** The sense is that for the **ungodly man**, the evil he casually finds isn’t enough to satisfy his desire. He **digs up evil**, finding the effort to pursue evil.

i. **Digs up evil:** “A wicked man labours as much to bring about an evil purpose, as the *quarryman* does to dig up stones.” (Clarke)

ii. John Trapp relates how the enemies of both Augustine and Beza dug up their old sins and tried to discredit them on account of those sins.

b. **It is on his lips like a burning fire:** When an **ungodly man digs up evil**, he can’t keep it to himself. He has to spread it to others, so he casts it from **his lips** as if it were **a burning fire**.

i. “What he finds he spreads; his speech is like scorching fire—the simile speaks of the devastating effect of his words.” (Ross)

[Proverbs 16:28](#)

**A perverse man sows strife,
And a whisperer separates the best of friends.**

a. **A perverse man sows strife:** Twisted, **perverse** people love to sow **strife** the way a farmer sows seeds. When there is much strife, there is some **perverse** person sowing the strife.

i. **Sows:** “It is, appropriately, the word used of the release of flaming foxes in the Philistines’ corn, [Judges 15:5](#).” (Kidner)

b. **A whisperer separates the best of friends:** This is one way that the **perverse man sows strife**—by whispering gossipy words. The strife they sow is so powerful that it can separate **the best of friends**. Often, such people show they are **perverse** because they count it a victory and an accomplishment to sow such strife and to separate even **the best of friends**.

i. **Whisperer:** “denotes a malicious gossip who misrepresents a situation and by his calumny aims to besmirch and to defame others behind their backs. In [Pro 17:9](#) the talebearer also implicitly repeats a matter without confronting the wrong doer directly.” (Waltke)