

# *The Sin of Gossip*

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## *Preface*

I believe it would be safe to say that at some point in life and in some way or another, everyone has been touched or hurt by spoken and written words from another person. Sometimes even our own words unintentionally hurt others. What people today don't seem to realize is that this hurt is often caused by what we commonly call "gossip." In this busy world filled with modern technology, so much is being said publicly these days that used to be kept to oneself or not tolerated. Much of what is discussed openly today would have been considered bad manners "back in the day." With our lives being "on camera" every minute of every day and social media becoming such a free-for-all, we don't always recognize when we or someone else are gossiping. The lines between conversation and gossiping have become very blurred. It makes one want to ask if people can even answer the question anymore: **what exactly is gossip?**

With a little digging and study, it can be easier to explain than many will think. The real definition may come as a total shock. Gossip is no different today than it was in "old times". In fact, it was defined thousands of years ago for us in books like Leviticus, Proverbs & Psalms. Even the apostles during Jesus time had counsel that teaches about what we commonly call gossip today. The difference between the "age old" definition and ours today is that we see it as nothing more than harmless conversation, while God used words which are translated more accurately into the English language as slander, tale bearing, being a scandal monger, whisperer, murmurer and backbiter. Ouch.

When dealing with the act itself and the person committing it, those who recorded God's counsel used two main words in the Hebrew writings and in the Greek. What are those words? How would they be translated into our modern language so that we have a better understanding? Can we use this new understanding to correct a wrong when we need to, whether it is our own behavior or someone else's? Yahweh (God) gives many examples through the scriptures to warn us against spreading tales and to even provide us with the consequences should we commit the act, participate in it with others, or when we don't stop others from doing it. Those words are there for us if we will just take the time to read, study, understand and pray.

In this brief study, we hope to bring to light the true meanings of the terms and the counsel that God (Yahweh) set forth for all mankind. We hope to help create a clearer understanding of what can be done to change these habits if they are in your home, neighborhood, workplace or even in yourself.

May you be blessed with clarity and understanding as you study it out, and may Yahweh guide you through the challenge of undoing the Sin of Tale-bearing.

***Ephesians 4:29 "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as the need may be, that it may give grace to those who hear." (WEB)***

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## **Section 1**

### ***A Brief History of the Origins of the Word Gossip***

It might be interesting to learn that the word "gossip" didn't originate as a negative word and in fact, has a very sweet start.

Looking at the history of the word, it comes from around the 1050's and was originally an Old English term "*godsibb*", which is a compound word made from the words "*god*" and "*sibb*". It was an endearing term for godparent, godmother or godfather. The root word "*god*" stood for God, of course, and "*sibb*" meant "sibling" or "relative". The literal meaning of *godsibb* was the person who was your baptismal sponsor, someone who shared in your spiritual training and your relationship with God.

How then did it come to mean something so hurtful as the act that it portrays today? That is an interesting story.

In Middle English, the word transitioned from a "god-relative" to meaning a close friend or relative with whom you would talk in confidence. Often these conversations between loved ones were considered awfully close and detailed, sometimes whispered to keep an air of privacy. You could "gossip" your deepest secrets to someone close to you who should guide you back to your spiritual path and to follow the commandments. Gossip (the verb) was not something that was done in malice but was merely sharing a confidence with someone trusted.

Somewhere around the 1500's, as has happened to a lot of words, "gossip" became a word with a negative connotation as it evolved because of the behavior of women who often got together and talked not just about themselves or their own confidences anymore, but shared details about others. As a result, it sadly became a word that meant a woman or women who delight in idle talk, or the act of committing that idle talk. This led to the word being interchangeable with words such as slanderer, tale-bearer, or liar.

When we look the word up in a dictionary today, gossip is both a noun and a verb, depending on its use, and is definitely a negative word. It always involves casual conversations about people, businesses, or organizations.

These conversations usually involve details and stories that are difficult to verify or have not been confirmed as being true. At times, according to descriptions and explanations, these conversations are based on lies, suppositions, rumors, or insinuations that may contain some truth, little truth or no truth at all.

When researching synonyms for the word gossip, the word is now interchangeable with words like hearsay, defamation, slander, libel, scandal, "dirty laundry", meddling, murmur, & rumor. It is obvious that the term gossip no longer has any positive connection to its origins and is certainly something that is designed and done for harm. It is not for the benefit of mankind, and whether it is done in any spirit of LOVE is very much in question.

One thing that is obvious is that today it is much easier to gossip, or tale-bear than it was centuries ago. Thanks to modern technology, we have texting, messaging, uploading of videos, photos, and audios and this makes everything instantaneous. Gossip has become as common place as just opening your mouth and speaking. What with social media, email, and live feeds the lines are blurred beyond imagination. Everything is said so quickly that it is often believed to be truth without any research or verification. It is spread so quickly that undoing what is done is near impossible. Gossip, or tale-bearing, has become the new "normal" and appears to be on its way "out" as a sin, at least according to the world's view. It is more common now to just believe the saying, "It must be true because I read it on the internet".

So, what would Abba say? He would tell us that the act of tale-bearing has been around since the beginning of time and that he addressed it in His Word.

***"Thou Shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" - Exodus 20:16 KJV***

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## ***Section 2***

### ***Do Unto Others***

Throughout scriptures we are told to "Do unto others. . ." As followers of Yeshua (Jesus), we are frequently held to a very high standard on this subject by those who watch our every move for flaw or fault. Often we are cornered by others who use this counsel to condemn us for how they may perceive we treat the people around us. Have you ever been told that you are not treating someone correctly, or are not being "Christian" in your actions? When someone does speak to you about it, this might be a good time to give yourself a check-up and see if maybe the person is pointing out something that needs a little work. Just in case. It is all too easy to fall into the trap of not being Christ-like in this technological age when we talk of others. Especially with the lines so blurred between when it is appropriate to repeat a story and not to repeat one. It seems that today what used to be called "gossip" has turned into nothing more than "conversation," and spreads too quickly to control.

With so much in question, where can we turn for clarity and to find a true definition of gossip for our modern age? Is it different today than what it was 100, 1000, or 2000 years ago? The best place to look is where it all began.

Gossip, also known as tale-bearing or murmuring, is an age-old problem that was addressed many times throughout the bible. God didn't want for us to fall into this sin. He warned us about it by telling us what he thought of it, why we do it, what are the consequences for doing it (the negatives) or for not doing it (the positives). He also made sure it was recorded how best we can avoid falling into the habit and trap.

Before getting into properly defining gossip or covering all the different aspects of it, maybe we should take a quick look at what He made clear about how we are to "Do unto others" and how to follow this philosophy more carefully. These words of wisdom and questions may help you better understand your own behaviours and how you speak of others.

1) In **Matthew 7:12 WEB** we are told: ***"Therefore whatever you desire for men to do to you, you shall also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets."*** When you are in conversation with friends and relatives, do you speak of others as you wished they would speak of you?

2) **John 13:34 WEB** is where Christ tells mankind to ***"love one another: just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another"***. Would the Messiah consider murmuring about another person as loving them as he loves us? How would he compare our behaviours to his? How would you compare your behavior to his?

3) **1 John 3:18 WEB** we are told ***"let us not love in word or talk but in DEED and IN TRUTH"***. Is what we are saying TRUTH and is our heart pure while we speak? What are the motives behind what we are doing?

4) **James 4:11 WEB** rebukes us ***"Don't speak against one another, brothers. He who speaks against a brother and judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law."***

5) **Leviticus 19:18 WEB** ***"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people; but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh."***

Is what you are about to say done so you can "get even" with someone or to carry a grudge forward? Remember that Yahweh claims vengeance as His. It is not ours. **(Deuteronomy 32:35)**

When asked which commandment was the greatest, Jesus' answer to the Pharisee was, ***"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*** **Matthew 22:37-40 KJV**

By this simple explanation, we can see that everything we are told to do in the bible should be based on loving God and loving our neighbor, our fellow man, that would also include how we speak of others. Sounds pretty easy to do, so what is the problem? Isn't it loving when we tell all the other neighbors what is happening in so-and-so's house or family? After all, we are just "concerned" and want to keep up on things as they happen, "just in case".

Isn't it loving to make sure everyone in the church is aware that someone is sinning that way we can all pray for them? Isn't it loving to warn everyone about that business in town that has a reputation of ruining

everything they touch? We are just watching out for the welfare of others, aren't we? For these answers let's see what Yahweh says in the sections that follow. . . .

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### **Section 3**

#### ***What We Call Gossip, The Bible Calls Slander***

It appears that over time the word used to describe the act of speaking about another has been softened a bit by calling it "gossip" (aka "godsibb"). It doesn't appear to be all that harmful because it is nothing more than chit-chat, sharing information, or updating others about the latest news around town, right? Often, the person saying the "tale" appears to be legitimately concerned for the one of whom they are speaking, and much of what they repeat appears to be true. Yet, in spite of this appearance of kindness from the person spreading the word, Yahweh is very blunt about what "it" is and how He feels about "gossip".

The Old Testament has two words that are most often used for gossip and when studied they may have clearer translations into English:

Strong's 7400 rakil (raw-keel') noun

Hebrew: רָכִיל

Greek: **συκοφάντης** sykofántis

English: slanderer, talebearer, scandal monger, liar, slander (as in the spoken word or statement, the subject), false witness, lie

Strong's 5372 nirgan (neer-gawn') verb

Hebrew: נִרְגַּן

Greek: **συκοφαντία** sykofantía Slander (English)

**μυρμούρισμα** mourmórisma Murmur (English)

"Nirgan" does not appear to translate from Hebrew into Greek and thus these two Greek words are used interchangeably where "nirgan" appears. Another word written in Greek as **διεγογγύζετε** is also used, yet it does not easily translate into English.

English: tale bearing, whispering, mumuring, slandering (the actual act of the spoken word or words), bearing false witness, lying

Two of the Greek words used in translations have an interesting origin: sykofantis and sykofantia. They appear to originate in Classical Athens during a time when there were not any "officers" to act as police in conflicts and too many cases between citizens were brought before the courts by individuals for litigation. Often times, these cases were not serious enough to have been brought up, and the legal system became perverted with overuse. The actual origin is somewhat debatable but appears to give a very bad light to the person who was the unjustified accuser in the case.

Slander or tale-bearing implies that an untruth or half-truth is being spread and I can already hear someone asking, "How can you call it "slander" when often times the words that are spread are the truth? Or at least partially true?" Slander is defined in the Webster's Dictionary 1828<sup>1</sup> as "A false tale or report maliciously uttered and tending to injure the reputation of another by lessening him in the esteem of his fellow citizens. . ." Doesn't this definition eliminate things believed to be spoken in truth because it says, "a false tale"? No, it does not eliminate them because it also includes a "report" that may "injure the reputation of another by lessening him in the esteem of his fellow citizens."

There is a reason why we often refer back to older versions of the Dictionary. As we have already shown, modern language and modern times can distort, or completely change the meaning of a word from its original intent or definition. Using an older version helps to bring the definition back into a more accurate, stronger, less watered-down version of the word than our modern version. [www.1828.com](http://www.1828.com/) [www.1828.com](http://www.1828.com/)

Using this principle, let's take it a step further for those who might still be insistent that slander is not clear enough. There are additional terms from earlier English which are used to define the word slander or gossip.

Now we can see that the Bible, whether Hebrew or Greek, does not use a word as benign or "harmless" as gossip, but uses harsher words like slander and scandal monger. Neither of these sounds the least bit uplifting or flattering, and it gives a much different impression of the things that we might say or share about others.

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## **Section 4**

### ***How does Yahweh feel about Slander and Slanderers?***

It's an abomination. This is the point which causes a lot of conflict and where most of the discussion happens. Many have heard this word before in relation to what they believe to be "actual" sins, but will balk at the idea of talking about others as being an actual sin. Many are not willing to put "simply talking about others" into the category of "abomination," yet it is that simple.

Let's explore what is meant by abomination. Maybe it would be clearer if explained like this: Yahweh feels that gossip, or tale-bearing, is unclean, physically repugnant, loathsome, and detestable. These are all synonyms used in exchange for the word abomination. I think that puts a different spin on things, doesn't it? There may be some who are still upset at this point because they refuse to put gossip in the sin category, but where would Yahweh put it? The Bible also says that even if you merely approve of or don't correct others in these

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<sup>1</sup> { 1. A false tale or report maliciously uttered. and tending to injure the reputation of another by lessening him in the esteem of his fellow citizens, by exposing him to impeachment and punishment, or by impairing his means of lining; defamation. slander that worst of poisons, ever finds an easy entrance to ignoble minds. 2 Disgrace; reproach; disreputation; ill name. SLA'NDER, verb transitive To defame; to injure by maliciously uttering a false report respecting one; to tarnish or impair the reputation of one by false tales, maliciously told or propagated.} from 1828 dict.

practices it is a punishable sin. When it is studied out, though, the Bible clearly puts gossiping in the same category as shedding innocent blood & sexual immorality.

**Proverbs 6:16-19 WEB** *There are six things which Yahweh hates; yes, seven which are an abomination to him: **haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers.***

The interesting conclusion when you read these verse in Proverbs is that most of the acts mentioned in these verses are committed while talking about others. Only one, shedding innocent blood, is rarely involved in gossiping, unless you are causing someone's reputation to "bleed" by what you say.

That leaves:

- **haughty eyes:** arrogance, setting oneself above others, or running down another to make them appear inferior to your group
- **lying tongue:** speaking half-truths, deceptions, or lies about others, misleading others with words or stories
- **heart devising wicked schemes:** speculating about details that you don't have; purposefully spreading rumors to ruin another's reputation;
- **feet running swiftly to mischief:** can't wait for the next get together so you can run in and get the conversation going with the latest juicy details.
- **false witness who utters lies:** you know things are not true, but say them anyway
- **he who sows discord among brothers:** what you say ends up causing disharmony amongst friends, family, neighbors

If there is any question about the seriousness of tale-bearing, we only have to look to the New Testament where it is reinforced in:

**Romans 1:28-32 WEB** *"Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil habits, secret slanderers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them."*

Here we see how God puts slanderers and backbiters into the same category as the sexually immoral, murderers, those who hate God, and covenant breakers. It is a sin, just as these other actions are also sin. It is commanded against as highly as these other sins are commanded against. He then says that even those who approve or support those practices are reprobate. This makes it a serious issue to not only speak ill,

slander, and spread tales about another person, but also if we sit there and do nothing while others gossip. When faced with a gossip situation, what can you do?

***Proverbs 31:8 NIV "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, . . ."***

When God puts it into this light for us, it should make a much stronger impression upon us. We should make a conscious effort to make changes in our behavior and in our words. I pray it will make you want to pay closer attention to the comments that come out from the mouth.

Abba doesn't just advise us not to gossip, he doesn't just tell us how wicked it is, He **COMMANDS** us not to slander others, making it extremely important to our sanctification.

***Exodus 23:1 WEB "You shall not spread a false report. Don't join your hand with the wicked to be a malicious witness."*** Here we see again that he tells us not to do it ourselves, plus goes the extra mile by commanding us to not take part in slandering others.

***Leviticus 13:16 WEB "You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people."*** Yahweh is very blunt in Leviticus by telling us not to wander around spreading rumors and murmuring against another.

***Exodus 20:16-17 WEB "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."***

Multiple times it is being commanded that we are not to slander our neighbor, and in addition He adds that we should not covet anything that is theirs – this would include their reputation *and* their position at work or in an organization. What is meant by this? When someone speaks against another, frequently the motive is to make the speaker appear better than the one of whom they are speaking. They have attempted to elevate themselves above the person they are speaking against. This results in their "position" rising above the other person in the ears of the hearers as the other person becomes questionable, less desirable.

Should you decide that it is still worth taking a chance on speaking gossip or tale-bearing about another, it would be wise to take into consideration what we are told in ***Proverbs 19:5 WEB "A false witness shall not be unpunished. He who pours out lies shall not go free."*** God has laid it out for us that if we choose to follow the low road and spread stories about another person we will not go unpunished. What punishment? Remember that it is ranked with sins such as murder and breaking covenant.

***1 John 3:4 WEB Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness.***

Yeshua (Jesus) did suffer, bleed and die for us that we may live, yet there are repeated warnings that sin will not go unpunished or unjudged. One example of warning is found in ***Hebrews 10:26-29 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which will devour the adversaries. A man who disregards Moses' law dies without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will he be judged worthy of, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has***

**counted the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?**

We would be wise to heed the words in Matthew when we think about opening our mouth to speak about another, because one day that act may be used to correct or judge us. **Matthew 7:1-5 WEB** *“Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. For with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but don't consider the beam that is in your own eye?”* It is easier at times to see the other person's flaws than to see our own, especially when we use our imaginations to fill in the blanks.

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### Section 5

#### **Why Do We Gossip?**

**Proverbs 18:8 WEB** *“The words of a gossip are like dainty morsels: they go down into a person's innermost parts.”* This tantalizing description is repeated in Proverbs 26:22.

Imagine this for just a moment, your words being considered “dainty morsels”. When you study the Hebrew words that make up this verse, it paints an even better picture: *The words of a tale-bearer are swallowed greedily down to a deep chamber in the body.* Picture someone sitting down to a feast, filling their plate to overflowing, and devouring it in a glutinous fashion, gulping, barely chewing and swallowing hard. This is the ambience that tends to be present when a well-known gossip enters a room. People are accustomed to their stories and will seek them out to hear more and more. As the crowd devours the feast of words and stories, they travel deep inside where it may be difficult to remove their flavor and effect.

Another example would be to think for a moment of the most delicious, dainty pastries you have seen. They were irresistible, weren't they? You just had to have one, didn't you? Your self-control went right out the window. Then, as you chewed every morsel it melted in your mouth and filled your taste buds with such pleasant flavor. You almost started to feel a sadness as it slid over your tongue, down your throat into your belly, and it even caused you to crave more, didn't it? So, you indulged in another, and another, and before you knew it you ate the whole box. You may have even felt a little guilty, promising yourself that you would try harder to resist next time.

Now put that perspective on the words you speak about another person, or what happens when you sit and listen to the gossip someone shares with you. Someone mentions one thing and suddenly you are partaking of the entire batch of tasty tidbits of gossip; you can't seem to stop yourself from indulging. Afterward you feel a little remorse and promise yourself to guard your tongue better next time. We are warned that slander, or gossip, is just like those pastries, dainty morsels and they slide down into the innermost parts of us. It would be prudent if, the next time we are sitting with the same friends, we remember the words in **Proverbs 18 Verse 4** where we are warned about how words flow, *“The words of a man's mouth are like deep waters. The*

***fountain of wisdom is like a flowing brook.***” These deep waters can be either positive or negative. They can either refresh and encourage growth, or be a torrent and tear down and destroy.

The reasons why people gossip are many and they include things like rivalry, envy, and jealousy.

***Philippians 2:3-4 KJV “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”***

***James 3:14-16 KJV “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.***

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## Section 6

### ***What are the Consequences of Gossiping?***

When we hear the word “consequences” we often go right to what bad things will happen if we do something that is forbidden, but there are also good consequences for obeying or following the right path. As with any decision, we can choose path A and enjoy great blessings and treasures beyond measure, OR we can take path B and endure a bumpy road filled with potholes. Yahweh informs us either way of what we will get. Gossip and slander are no different than other commands, and we can choose which direction we would like our consequences to go – bad or good.

***James 3:5-13 WEB*** is very clear of both good and bad consequences that are brought on by what comes out of our mouths. Our tongues can either bring blessing or cursing based on what form of wisdom we choose to use.

***“So the tongue is also a little member, and boasts great things. See how a small fire can spread to a large forest! And the tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire by Gehenna. For every kind of animal, bird, creeping thing, and thing in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed by mankind. But nobody can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send out from the same opening fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, yield olives, or a vine figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh water. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good conduct that his deeds are done in gentleness of wisdom.”***

As you can see, these verses agree with the verses from Proverbs that talk is capable of affecting the whole body and, in fact defiles it. The word used in James 3:6 for “defile” is a Greek word that can also be translated into English to mean stain or pollute. We have all seen a stained shirt. Whether you pulled it fresh from the

closet or stained it while you were out, once you notice the stain you become self-conscious, aware, and you do not want to wear it because of concern for the impression it will make. A polluted river or lake often brings a bigger reaction because we wouldn't want to swim in it, drink it, or bathe in it. After all, it might make us sick, or worse. We even recognize the effect that pollution will have on everything around that river, how it will taint the soil, kill off animals and trees. It becomes horribly toxic. Yet we don't think of our words as being the same as the soiled shirt or filthy waterway.

Remember, Proverbs described how gossip goes into a deep chamber of our body. Just like the river of fresh water can nourish or kill, the words we use can either nourish or destroy. Words of iniquity will defile the whole body as they go deep into the chambers. Will you be a spring that brings forth "bitter water" which curses men and women, or will you choose to be a spring which brings forth fresh, clean water that refreshes and blesses all you come in contact with? Our tongues ARE restless, and they CAN be filled with "deadly poison." The tongue can also bring shouts of joy (**Psalms 126:2**), knowledge (**Proverbs 15:2**), and it also turns away wrath (**Proverbs 15:1**). A tongue is nothing more than a mere PART of our physical body, and a small one at that. It is restless and we should do everything we can to walk in a manner worthy of our calling by being lowly, humble and not allowing it to get out of control, spreading gossip. Our tongues need to be examples of patience, love, and be eager to speak words that will keep unity amongst people, not tear the body of Christ apart with wicked tales and strife. (**Ephesians 4:1-3 WEB**)

Yahweh is pretty clear about the effects of an unbridled tongue. These effects will also bring results that you may not have planned on:

**James 1:26 WEB** tells us that when we do not control the words we speak, our devotion to God is vain, useless, futile. ***"If anyone among you thinks himself to be religious while he doesn't bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this man's religion is worthless."*** A worthless belief system is a bad example, especially to those who are still struggling with their faith. It demonstrates hypocrisy and lies instead of truth and goodness.

In **Proverbs 18, verses 6 and 7** we are forewarned what can happen if we can't get temptations of the tongue in check, ***"A fool's lips come into strife, and his mouth invites beatings. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are a snare to his soul."*** I think that is a pretty clear statement of what our lips and tongues are capable of bringing upon us – strife, destruction, and even beatings. Then the book of Proverbs continues to warn us in other verses as well:

**Proverbs 26:27 WEB** ***"Whoever digs a pit shall fall into it. Whoever rolls a stone, it will come back on him."*** Here we have a warning that whatever we say can come back to affect us. As above, our tongues can bring blessings or curses.

**Proverbs 11:13 WEB** ***"One who brings gossip betrays a confidence, but one who is of a trustworthy spirit is one who keeps a secret."*** We violate trust and make it difficult for someone to love us or to rely on us when we betray them.

**Proverbs 26:28 WEB** ***"A lying tongue hates those it hurts; and a flattering mouth works ruin."***

You may ask why a flattering tongue brings ruin. The word used here is interpreted as “flattering”, yet it also means smooth tongued or slick tongued. Suddenly you see a different picture of what is being said. Someone with a slick tongue, a smooth operator, works ruin, or destruction and collapse by luring others into believing the lies or distortions that they are speaking. It is bad enough to speak ill of another or tell a story that may ruin their reputation, but to lure others into it as well goes an extra step. Is this something your heart would truly wish to do to another person or their reputation?

**Proverbs 16:28 WEB** *“A perverse man stirs up strife. A whisperer separates close friends.”* The word “perverse” used here is not translated into our modern English definition, which means someone with a sexual issue. In fact, “perverse” simply means someone who is rejecting what is good, someone who is corrupt. Many families, groups of friends, work settings, or organizations have been broken apart and damaged by a corrupt person who rejects what is good, a “whisperer”.

Still more warnings can be found throughout the scriptures in verses like:

**Proverbs 10:18 WEB** *“He who hides hatred has lying lips. He who utters a slander is a fool.”*

**Psalms 101:4-5 WEB** *“A perverse heart will be far from me. I will have nothing to do with evil. I will silence whoever secretly slanders his neighbor. I won't tolerate one who is haughty and conceited.”*

**Proverbs 25:9-10 WEB** *“Debate your case with your neighbor, and don't betray the confidence of another; lest one who hears it put you to shame, and your bad reputation never depart.”*

Is it truly your desire to be someone who is corrupt, a whisperer, filled with hatred, and a fool? Do you see more clearly now the effects on others and yourself when you don't watch what you say about others? A worse consequence than just having this reputation is that you would be considered someone who is far from Yahweh as he will have “nothing to do with evil”. No matter how well-meaning a person may believe their words to be, no matter what they claim they are trying to accomplish, protect or prevent by gossiping, if what is said fits within Yahweh's scriptural definitions, it will bring nothing good or godly to a relationship.

In addition, we can bring upon ourselves physical beatings or destruction – physically and spiritually falling into a “pit” where the words actually roll back on us, and we suffer the consequences of a tarnished reputation or worse. To others we can bring strife, destruction, betrayal, lack of trust, hurt, ruin, and we can separate close friends or family. I am sure this is not the initial intent when someone sits down to have coffee with friends, yet we should take it seriously as a warning of consequences if we are not able to control our conversations.

There are good consequences as well for when we follow Christ's example, and they are known as promises and blessings. As stated previously in James 3 at the start of this chapter, our words can bring curses or BLESSINGS:

**Psalms 1:1-3 WEB** *“Blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in Yahweh's law. On his law he meditates day and*

**night. He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither. Whatever he does shall prosper."**

When we don't follow someone else's lead by speaking ill of others or gossiping along with them, we will bring forth good fruit. What does this mean? We will thrive in our callings, be given greater responsibilities, more anointings and blessings to share with the body of Christ. We will be a blessing to those who trust us and seek our counsel. We will build up our families and friends instead of tearing them down and apart. Whatever we do in His name will prosper, a much better outcome for everyone involved than what was mentioned earlier.

**Proverbs 16:23-24 WEB "The heart of the wise instructs his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."** If you take the time to listen to the spirit when you are speaking about others, it will tell you when you are crossing the line. Pay attention, don't ignore that feeling in your heart. Let it instruct your spirit and your mouth. Then you will learn great lessons to share with family, friends and co-workers that will help them correct things in their lives as well and bring blessings to so many more.

Imagine the joy that will now be in friendships when **"She opens her mouth with wisdom. Faithful instruction is on her tongue."** **Proverbs 31:26 WEB**

Imagine the blessings that will flow as described in the verses below:

**Proverbs 10:21 "The lips of the righteous feed many. . ."**

**Proverbs 15:4 "A gentle tongue is a tree of life . . ."**

**Proverbs 25:11 "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."**

**Luke 6:45 "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings out that which is good, . . ."**

**Ephesians 4:29 "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as the need may be, that it may give grace to those who hear."**

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## Section 7

### **Can We Prevent or Stop Gossip?**

Someone will eventually ask, "Scripture says that nobody can tame the tongue, so what can we do?" Scripture also tells us that we will never be able to get control of the tongue, doesn't it? (**James 3:8**) **In Romans 8:11-13** it says if the same power that rose Jesus from the grave lives in us, we may not be able to tame the tongue, but the power of Abba (father) is in us and the Holy Spirit CAN teach us to guard our tongues. Our spirit will listen, wants to listen and when the soul and body catch up to what the spirit is saying, we will, again, be

blessed: ***“But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”***

The responsibility lies in our choices and who we will choose this day to serve – the flesh or Yahweh. Some suggestions that might help each of us to follow Yahweh are found throughout the scriptures.

Suggestions such as:

- 1) Change our thoughts so that the words that roll across our tongues are of Him, and not of the world. ***Colossians 3:2 “Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth.”*** Remember also that we are told in scripture that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. If you change what is in your heart and mind to those things of Yahweh (God), and purge out all the negative thoughts and feelings, you will find what rolls off your tongue is much more pleasing to Yahweh. It will also change your attitude and that of those around you.
- 2) Pay attention to the words that we speak of others, and around others, as well as what we say in our homes. ***Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as the need may be, that it may give grace to those who hear.*** If we speak kindly of others rather than gossiping, you will see your family change eventually as well. They will follow your example by repeating negative things about others and will start to see others from a different perspective.
- 3) When we pay more attention to what the Spirit is telling us about our words, our soul will be more in tune with Yahweh as well, and will not be troubled with nonsense from others or from the adversary. Then we will truly be working toward being one with Him in mind and purpose.

***Proverbs 21:23 Whoever guards his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles.***

4) This one should be obvious, don't lie! Simple, isn't it? So before you say something, is it truthful? The less obvious is this: is it PARTLY true or is it told out of context giving the impression of untruth? ***Psalms 34:13-14 Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking lies. Depart from evil, and do good. seek peace, and pursue it.***

5) Remember #4, speak only the truth, but carry it a few steps further. Now this one gets tricky because many will say, “It's not gossip because all I did was tell the TRUTH.” Ask yourself or this person, was it honorable to share the information? Was it just? Pure? Lovely? Of Good report? Any Praise? We are supposed to seek after those things because those are the things that we see in Jesus, after whom we should model ourselves. If we are willing to choose more wisely the words we speak, God will be with us as promised in Philippians 4. In this section, we aren't just told to seek truth, but also to seek and DO that which is pure, virtuous, of good report and praiseworthy.

***Phillipians 4:8-9 Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is***

***any virtue, and if there is any praise, think about these things. The things which you learned, received, heard, and saw in me: do these things, and the God of peace will be with you."***

6) Many will call the Holy Spirit that is in us our "conscience" because He warns us about things, gives us good feelings when needed, confirms spiritual matters for us, and will buoy us up when needed. When we speak through anger, when vengeance is present, or we say something that would damage another's reputation, the Holy Spirit is grieved and suffers great sorrow over what we have done. Instead we should want for him to be pleased in our being kind, not bitter.

***Ephesians 4:30-32 "Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, outcry, and slander, be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God also in Christ forgave you."***

***Psalms 64:2-4 "Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from the noisy crowd of the ones doing evil; who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and aim their arrows, deadly words, to shoot innocent men from ambushes. They shoot at him suddenly and fearlessly."***

7) We should be an example to others. By getting ourselves in check spiritually, others will see the change.

***Titus 3:2 "to speak evil of no one, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all humility toward all men."***

***Proverbs 11:13 "By the blessing of the upright, the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. One who despises his neighbor is void of wisdom, but a man of understanding holds his peace. One who brings gossip betrays a confidence, but one who is of a trustworthy spirit is one who keeps a secret."***

***James 3:13 "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good conduct that his deeds are done in gentleness of wisdom."***

***Proverbs 10:19 YLT "In the abundance of words transgression ceaseth not, And whoso is restraining his lips [is] wise."***

Finally, we should try to encourage others to stop as well. We can't actually stop them ourselves because they need to have a change of heart and a renewal of mind, but if we are being good examples it is a start in the right direction. It may take a little time, but it is also alright to walk away from a situation or a person who is unable to change. It is our responsibility to help them understand how Yahweh feels about gossip, what the consequences are by sharing what we have learned from our own scripture study. We need to encourage others to not fuel the flames of tale-bearing by spreading stories they have heard.

***Proverbs 26: 20-21 WEB "For lack of wood a fire goes out. Without gossip, a quarrel dies down. As coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindling strife."***

As we go forward through this journey toward sanctification we need to always keep in mind that there may come a time when we have to do what is best for ourselves, the community, our other friends or the Body of Christ. This will be the difficult thing to do because you will get pressure from others claiming that you are not

being a “Good Believer in Christ”, but sometimes you just have to walk away. You may need to not spend as much time with the tale-bearer, or even cut them out of your life completely, at least for a time. If someone does not stop or is unable to learn from our example and from Yahweh. We may have to avoid contact with them so that we don’t get involved in their rumor-mongering and placing ourselves in spiritual peril.

**2 Timothy 2:16 KJV** *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”*

**Proverbs 20:19 WEB** *“He who goes about as a tale-bearer reveals secrets; therefore don't keep company with him who opens wide his lips.”*

It may be difficult at first if the person is a smooth talker and has easily convinced people in the past of all their good intentions in gossiping, but Yahweh warns us of the consequences if we don’t stay away or if we continue to listen:

**Proverbs 26:25 WEB** *“When his speech is charming, don't believe him; for there are seven abominations in his heart.”*

**Proverbs 17:4 WEB** *“An evildoer heeds wicked lips. A liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.”*

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### **Conclusion**

A part of our calling in His Kingdom is to share with others the full Word of the Lord so that they will accept Yeshua (Jesus) as their savior and be sanctified. It is our responsibility to do all that we can to make ourselves spotless before the Lord and therefore be a good example to those around us. So many people are watching people of faith today as the world changes so rapidly. We are under a huge microscope and judged moment by moment for our every action. If we know Abba’s teachings, have them in our hearts, AND live them as examples of our faith, we can better avoid the appearance of hypocrisy.

**“They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.” Titus 1:16 WEB**

Choose to be known for your good works rather than your works that deny Yeshua and Yahweh (Jesus and God).

**Matthew 23:27-28 WEB** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitened tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”*

We can choose which person we want to be and as we choose, we should be influenced by Jesus’ words when he said in **Matthew 25:40** “. . . **Most certainly I tell you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.**”

Which would you choose to do unto the Messiah & Our Father – speak good words which uplift and bring joy?  
Or evil words which bring ruin?

Remembering always that we are warned of the consequences in **Matthew 12:36-37**:

***“I tell you that every idle word that men speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”***

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