

A perverse person
stirs up conflict,
and a gossip separates
close friends.

Proverbs 16:28



The Quiet Sin That Tears Us Apart

Scripture speaks plainly about the destructive power of gossip. Proverbs 18:6–8 warns, “A fool’s lips lead to strife. . . . A gossip’s words are like choice food.” Proverbs 16:28 adds, “A gossip separates close friends.” These verses are not exaggerations. Many friendships, families, and congregations have been damaged because someone repeated words that should never have been spoken.

Every one of us has been the target of gossip at some point. We know the sting. Words spread quickly, often twisted and enlarged. And once they spread, they are nearly impossible to pull back. This is why the Bible strongly condemns gossip. Scripture calls the gossiper a talebearer, whisperer, busybody, or slanderer. The New Testament tells Christians to put away falsehood (Ephesians 4:25). Sin does not travel alone, and gossip often walks beside strife, jealousy, and malice (2 Corinthians 12:20; Romans 1:29–30).

What Gossip Does

Gossip wounds people deeply. Psalm 41:7 describes how enemies whisper together, plotting harm against the one they talk about. Gossip may sound casual, but it is often intended to hurt. Psalm 56:5 says the thoughts behind such words are evil; they aim to damage another’s reputation, peace, or relationships.

Gossip also finds eager listeners. Proverbs says gossip is like “choice food”—tasty, tempting, and easy to swallow. The problem is not only with those who speak it, but also with those who crave it. Many enjoy hearing “some new thing,” especially when it concerns someone else’s trouble. We must guard our hearts. Delight in gossip is a sign of spiritual immaturity.

Gossip separates friends. Proverbs 17:9 teaches that love covers offenses, but gossip exposes them. Many relationships have been ruined by needless talk. Sometimes the wisest thing a person can do is say nothing. Gossip sows strife. Proverbs 16:27 describes someone who “digs up evil,” a person who uncovers or exaggerates faults to stir trouble. Their words scorch and burn. They create problems with their tongues, and others pay the price.

Gossipers also fail to keep confidence. Proverbs 20:19 warns that a gossip reveals secrets. If someone says, “I’m telling you this in confidence. . . .” they have already broken trust. If they repeat someone else’s secret to you, they will repeat yours to someone else. Worst of all, gossip destroys the soul of the one who spreads it. Proverbs 18:7 says a fool’s mouth becomes his own ruin. The very words meant to hurt others become the means of his own condemnation.

What Gossip Is Not

Not all conversations about others are sinful. We talk about people because we care, and many good works depend on sharing information. But talk becomes gossip when it becomes harsh, exaggerated, or careless—when we assume motives, enlarge details, or spice up information to make it more dramatic. Even truth can become sinful when used to harm.

Practical Help

Before repeating anything, stop and ask: *Is it true? And what good will come from saying it?* Will it help someone grow? Lead someone to repentance? Warn someone of danger? Allow someone to help? If the answer is no, the conversation should end with you.

A Better Way

Proverbs 26:20 reminds us that “without wood, fire goes out; without a gossip, conflict dies down.” Jesus warns that we will answer for every careless word (Matthew 12:36). Let’s make sure our words heal rather than harm—and let gossip die at our feet, not spread from our lips.

~ Matthew Allen