

How to Protect Yourself From Gossip

“[The Lord] will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:9-12, NIV).

Gossip is a negligent scattering of ungrounded accusations and misrepresentations. As Christ's body, gossip should be far from our lips. What is not our concern is not ours to discuss.

Gossip is not to be taken lightly. It is not just the sharing of information; it is two or more people standing in agreement with the lies of the devil. Even if you were an eyewitness and have correct information about a situation, you should not repeat it. If we choose to speak of what we saw or heard someone do wrong, we ultimately seek to hold them in the chains of their sin. If God has forgiven and forgotten something, why would we have any right to repeat it?

Many subtle influences can arise in our hearts and lead us into speaking things we should not. One reason gossip manifests is jealousy. From competition to covetousness, jealousy can take many forms. We might think someone else is receiving a blessing that we needed more, so we decide to tell someone about it: “They weren't even praying for that, and I've been praying for months!” Yet just because God shows favor toward someone else does not mean He is withholding from you. Even when He is generous, He is not unfair. His resources are without limit.

By harboring jealousy, we say we do not believe God is just. We choose to believe that He plays favorites. This is

absolutely untrue. God honors faith and obedience. Anything we receive is by grace and faith in His goodness.

“The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Prov. 12:18).

Gossip also occurs when we seek to protect or defend ourselves. A person may come to you appearing to seek counsel when they really just want you to agree with them. Be careful who you listen to. Listening to the gossip of others, even without actively participating in it, can cause us to take offense toward an acquaintance, close friend, leader, or even a spouse. Even when we don't add to gossip by our words, when we choose to hear it, we are guilty by association.

Gossip is rooted in unbelief and watered by fear. It is ultimately the overflow of a heart condition. In order to get rid of gossip's fruits and heal its wounds, we must answer it with words of wisdom that promote reconciliation.

“Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends” (Prov. 17:9).

Just as God's love covers all our offenses, so we ought to cover others in love. The way we respond to gossip could help change the speaker's view of the situation.

To safeguard yourself from gossip, ask these questions:

- Why are they telling me this?
- Are they confessing their reaction to their offenses or just repeating what happened so they can influence me?
- Have they gone to the individual who offended them?
- Are they asking me to go with them so restoration can take place?
- Am I in a position to help?

If the person sharing has no valid reason to be talking to you about the situation, they should instead speak with the person

who offended them.

Have you been deceived into “innocently” talking about someone who has offended you or received something you wanted? Have you used gossip to make yourself look better than someone else? Repent and ask the Holy Spirit to address the issue at its roots.

:Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11).

*Adapted from Out of Control and Loving It! (Charisma House, 2006) by **Lisa Bevere**.*