

New Vision Leader Guide

My Big Fat Mouth • Small Talk • Proverbs 18:21; Proverbs 25:9-10 • 03/25/2018

Main Point

Gossip can destroy our relationships with others, tear apart the Church, and ultimately those guilty of it.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Like we saw on the Andy Griffith clip, a small truth can become hot gossip in a matter of hours. Share about a time where gossip was spread about you from your middle school or high school days.

Proverbs 10:19

It is inevitable that when you are checking out at the supermarket you'll see a large selection of gossip magazines. Why do you think these magazines seem to fly off the shelves? What is the pleasure in gossip?

Proverbs 18:8

Gossip is one of the most detrimental sins within the church because of its capacity to tear communities apart and because there are few people who exercise the courage to stand against it. In this study, we will look at some of the specific dangers of gossip and what the Bible says about those who gossip—as well as those who listen to it.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Proverbs 18:21.

Why do you think the author used such strong language to describe the tongue? How can you bring life through your words? Conversely, how can you bring death in your relationships through your words?

We would all agree that spreading gossip is wrong, but if we listen to another sharing gossip are we as guilty as the person spreading it? Talk it over.

Proverbs 17:4

Matthew 12:36-37

In the court of law a person's testimony could either condemn or free that person. A person's testimony speaks to their character. Share about a time when a person's gossip has hurt your testimony / witness or damaged your character.

James 4:1-12

Matthew 18:15

Proverbs 25:9-10

In the church we are all too guilty of "sharing a prayer request," or "expressing our concerns about someone else." When do these practices turn into gossip?

Gossip typically arises from a selfish desire to promote ourselves as someone "in the know," to make ourselves look better or important, or to make someone else look bad. Sometimes gossip occurs because we feel the need to fill the silence in conversation and can't think of anything else to talk about. Unfortunately, Christians often disguise gossip in the form of "sharing concerns" about someone or even in the form of prayer requests. As this verse implies, however, gossipers will eventually reap the fruit of being an untrustworthy person and perhaps find themselves in direct conflict with those about whom they have gossiped.

During the message Pastor Brady said "When we gossip we are uncovering what Christ has covered." Noah's sons walked backwards and covered their father's nakedness to protect him. In what ways can we help to keep others covered?

Genesis 9:18-28

Proverbs 25:9-10

If we are in relationship with Christ, each one of us has a story. Our story is our testimony. What are the things that God has used in your life to bring glory to himself?

Revelations 12:11

If we want to avoid gossip, there are a few things to consider before we speak: Do I have permission to share this information? Would I share this if the person I'm talking about was in the room? Am I speaking to people who actually need to know and/or can help? What is my motivation for sharing this information now? Exceptions to these considerations would be cases of immediate danger or abuse, and then you should only speak with appropriate people or authorities who can help.

| Have a volunteer read Proverbs 25:9-10.

How would you put these two verses in your own words?

What does it say about people who unnecessarily reveal other people's secrets?

Even though this verse is specifically talking about a court scenario, the truth behind it is universal. If you are a person who unnecessarily reveals other people's secrets, you will likely have few people take your side when conflict arises. When we gossip, particularly to gain some advantage or to make someone else look bad (as in this verse), we reveal ourselves to be as guilty and as sinful as the person about whom we are gossiping.

| Have a volunteer read Proverbs 16:28.

How have you seen gossip separate close friends or a community?

Have there been instances where you have lost friends due to gossip?

Gossip breeds distrust and conflict, ruins reputations, and may bring shame on those who are being gossiped about—whether the details are true or false. In this way, gossip attacks the most necessary elements of strong relationships and community—trust, respect, unity, and love. If “a friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity” (Proverbs 17:17), then a gossip cannot be a true friend.

| Have a volunteer read Proverbs 17:4.

Why is listening to gossip just as bad as speaking it?

What does this verse say about those who listen to gossip?

What are some practical and polite ways of refusing to listen to gossip?

The Bible is clear that anyone who gossips reveals a problem within themselves that needs to be addressed. Some helpful ways to combat gossip in our communities are: as a community, commit to neither spread gossip nor listen to it; encourage anyone tempted to gossip to go address the issue directly with the person they are tempted to gossip about; avoid people who talk about others too much (see Proverbs 20:19).

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Reflect on the kinds of words you speak throughout the day. How often are you speaking life? How often are you speaking death? Ask God to make you into a person who speaks life to others.

How often do you find yourself sharing personal information about other people without their permission? Is there someone you've spoken about or spoken to whom you need to apologize to?

How can we implement a strategy to remove gossip from our church or our spheres of influence?

Pray

Repent for any gossip you've participated in recently. Ask the Father to help you tame your tongue, to think before you speak, and to consider how your words impact others. Ask God to give you the help to remain silent, even when it's hard. Pray that the Holy Spirit would help you develop the integrity not to listen to gossip, and to only speak life to others.

Commentary

| Proverbs 18:21

18:21 The tongue is powerful (Jms 3:1-12). Those who love the tongue and eat its fruit are those who choose to live or die under its power, like those who live by the sword (Gen 27:40; Mt 26:52), by the law (Neh 9:29; Ezek 20:11; Rm 10:5; Gal 3:12), or by faith (Hab 2:4; Rm 1:17; Gal 3:11). Prudent speech brings life (v. 20; 12:14; 13:2; 21:23), and wicked or excessive speech brings death (13:3; Mt 15:18-19).

| Proverbs 25:9-10

25:8-10 Frivolous litigation and divulging confidences will ruin one's reputation. You'll never live it down is literally "a bad report will not return"—that is, the person who disgraces you will not have to eat his words. On afterward, see "at the end" in note at 5:11.

| Proverbs 16:28

16:28 A contrary man is one who distorts speech, who turns things upside down, who "says perverse things." It may be that he speaks his own lies or that he subverts others' speech by the way he spins it. A gossip is someone who grumbles (Dt 1:27; Ps 106:25; Isa 29:24) or finds fault but avoids open discussion or confrontation.

Proverbs 17:4

17:4 A wicked... liar makes his situation worse by listening to more of the same.