

# 20 Days of Trouble

## Topic #12 – Gossip

### **Textbook Def:**

Idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others.\*

### **Real-Life Look:**

“Oh my gosh, did you see what she was wearing today? Definitely not business casual. More like bar casual. Clearly our boss doesn’t have much of a problem with her attire.” Elena knew she shouldn’t talk about Anna to their fellow co-workers but she couldn’t help herself. Anna annoyed her so much and she hated that she was getting away with breaking the dress code just because the boss was enjoying her cute, little figure.

Megan was helping her son’s teacher by grading papers. She was astonished to see how poorly her friend’s daughter, Faith, was doing. Later when Megan went to lunch with her gal pals, the first topic of conversation she brought up was an overview of Faith’s failing grades.

Danny walked over to inspect his neighbor’s 27 foot Cobalt Day Cruiser. Boy was it a beauty. No doubt Tom had paid over \$100K for the boat. Well, paid for it or *will* pay for it, eventually. Danny was absolutely certain Tom overextended himself financially. Later that evening when on a walk with his wife, they bumped into some other neighbors. Danny didn’t hold back, sharing in detail how Tom was in debt up to his eyeballs and had no business buying such an expensive toy.

The women were huddled around a table in the church coffee shop. The barista could hear the ladies talking, but she couldn’t believe what was coming out of their mouths. Apparently they had a problem, actually lots of problems, with some of the divorcees at church. Are divorcees not supposed to go to church? Not supposed to smile? Or socialize. Not have their children in activities? Their conversation was disheartening, rude, disrespectful, and didn’t represent anything close to a Christian heart or walk.

No doubt Jamie had some ‘work’ done. Lots of people do, and it’s really not a big deal, but it was pretty obvious and Jamie hadn’t said anything. This gave the ladies in the office a lot to talk and speculate about!

## **Sword of the Spirit:**

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”*

Ephesians 4:29

*“A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.”* Proverbs 16:28

*“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it...”* James 4:11

## **Breaking It Down:**

This is NOT a ‘Trouble Topic’ I looked forward to covering. I’ve got a fair amount of conviction in this area and exposing truth can be irritating and unsettling. As much as I try to do right and live an upstanding life, I’m far from perfect. And I don’t always do well with correction.

The problem? I’m just as guilty of gossiping as the next gal (or guy), maybe even more so, and sometimes rather enjoy getting a little dirty. A validating or shocking tidbit of gossip can be quite intoxicating, and sometimes I just can’t help myself but to listen and discuss and share. When someone else has an interesting morsel, they’ll be more likely to keep me in the know by returning the favor.

Sounds horribly un-Christian doesn’t it? I know...I know...

I justify my gossiping in several ways:

A. I DON’T tell secrets. EVER. If I have given my word to keep something quiet, there’s nothing you can do to get me to go against my promise. I am loyal and faithful.

B. I wouldn’t share something that I’m unwilling to say to someone’s face. I might not WANT to say it, and it might be slightly awkward, but if I speak it out loud, I would speak it to anyone.

C. I share facts. Well, at least to the best of my ability. Sure, I throw in some opinions here and there, but I’m careful to distinguish opinion from fact so there is no mistake.

So you might think with these redeeming principles in place, I’m excused from my words being considered gossip, right?

Wrong.

*Gossip is gossip EVEN if it's not a secret, EVEN if I'd be willing to share it with the person I'm talking about, and EVEN if I'm speaking truth.*

Boy, am I in BIG trouble.

If you consider all that might qualify as gossip, seems we'd never be able to speak without sinning. *So how do we keep ALL talk coming from our mouths clean and free from gossip?*

**Two tips:**

We must try by making a legitimate effort to avoid all slanderous and impure chatter.

AND

We must consider the consequences.

***Gossip can:***

- Damage someone's reputation – Whether truth or not, it's not your place to speak about someone else's personal business.
- Cause heartache and hurt feelings – Most of us have been on the receiving end of gossip and know just how hurtful it can be.
- Promote dishonesty - Lying about what you've said and embellishing comes easily when gossiping.
- Start trouble – Exposing information or secrets that aren't yours to share can cause conflict, ill-feelings, and irreparable damage.
- Spark continued gossip through retaliation

***For the offender, gossip can:***

- Compromise character and integrity
- Breach trust
- Encourage meddling and nosiness
- Betray relationships
- Cause deep regret

**The Benefit in Decluttering Trouble:**

Narrowing down which bible verses to choose for today's 'Trouble Topic' was pretty darn tough because there was so much to pick from. The message in this?

Understanding the importance of avoiding this destructive behavior is extremely important to God. And if it's important to God, it should be important to us as well.

The benefit of decluttering gossip certainly includes walking in obedience to Christ, but there's more.

Beyond that, you'll gain the respect of your peers when they experience that you are a person of restraint and discipline. Removing yourself from compromising positions and remaining neutral during unsavory conversations speaks volumes. Speaking against gossip sends an even louder message.

Taking the high road may not always be easy, but it's always right. Be a family member, friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc. of honor, respect, and care. Guard your words carefully and refrain from gossip on every level. Protect relationships, eliminate regret, and maintain your self-respect.

We all know how easy it is to join in on conversations or share our opinions, but the consequences can be devastating. Forego on gossip and preserve your integrity and self-respect.

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