

DEVOTIONAL

Hollywood Prayer Network

THE PAIN OF GOSSIP

Gossip. It permeates every part of every society across the globe. Human beings love to talk about other people. But God is saddened by gossip. This week the focus is on the temptations to gossip, the dangers of gossip, and how to make our words wholesome and encouraging, building people up, and leading people to Jesus. Find out how changing your words can change others' lives!

DAY 1

GOSSIPS, GOD-HATERS AND MURDERERS

“NOTHING IS A GREATER, OR MORE FEARFUL, SACRILEGE THAN TO PROSTITUTE THE GREAT NAME OF GOD TO THE PETULANCY OF AN IDLE TONGUE.”

-JEREMY TAYLOR

New International Version

Romans 1:29-32

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

DAY 1

PRAY: Dear Lord, I have become filled with every kind of wickedness and I ask that You clean out my heart, my mind, and my soul right now. I want to be washed as white as snow so that no gossip comes out of my mouth and no evil thoughts go into my head. I know Your righteous decree so I don't want to continue to do these evil things that displease You. Please allow me to start fresh today with a pure and contrite heart. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

REFLECT: In Romans 1:29, Paul tells us we're filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. And he includes GOSSIP, along with God-haters, infidelity, and having no love. People often wrongly prioritize sins according to what we think is better or worse. We know turning against God is bad but seeing that Paul put gossip in the same list as God-haters is humbling and thought-provoking. Do you talk about or against others? Although you know God's righteous decree, why don't you stop doing such things that deserve death?

DAY 1

ACT: Read this verse out loud and notice the variety of sins that Paul defines as evil and wicked. Go through them again and ask the Lord to take each one away from you. And learn the dictionary meaning of Gossip: "someone who likes to talk about someone else's private or personal business." It's not just mean words, but also private issues. God can reveal to you when you've gossiped and help you hold your tongue when you're tempted. It takes commitment to break the habit.

DAY 2

GOSSIP IS A HABITUAL SIN

"SOME SAY OUR NATIONAL PASTIME IS
BASEBALL. NOT ME. IT'S GOSSIP."

-ERMA BOMBECK

New International Version

1 Timothy 5:13

Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.

DAY 2

PRAY: Father, I'm sure I have lots of bad habits I don't even think about. But I ask You now to help me see if I have a habit of gossiping. Or maybe I am idle, which makes me become a gossip. I don't ever want to talk nonsense or say things that I shouldn't. I want to have pure thoughts and say only words that bless, encourage, and honor other people. May this be the week that I break all gossip and I refocus and recommit to You and Your ways. Thank You for allowing me to start fresh every day. I love You, my heavenly Father. Amen.

REFLECT: Reflect on this insightful progression of sins that Timothy warns us about. If we get in the habit of being idle, then we become busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things we ought not to. Wow, look how that creeps up on us. So, first of all, we can't become idle. We have to be wise, resourceful, and purposeful with our time, giving every moment to the Lord, for His glory, so that we don't waste our lives, bother other people around us, or gossip. Gossip can make you feel powerful by talking about people behind their backs, or it could be because you are not using your time purposefully for God's glory and for the good of others. How do you spend your time? And are you talking about others during your day?

DAY 2

ACT: Think about your days this week. Have you been purposeful in using them to the best of your ability, to be productive and contemplative, and to serve God and others around you? Think through your conversations: Have you talked about people? Or have you talked about ideas, experiences, concepts, and Godly wisdom? How do you spend your time? Maybe today is the day to evaluate your days and start to break habits of being idle or of gossiping. There is no better time than the present. Recommit right now to become more Christ-like in all that you do and say.

DAY 3

THE POWER OF WORDS

"FEW FRIENDSHIPS WOULD SURVIVE IF EACH ONE KNEW WHAT HIS FRIEND SAYS OF HIM BEHIND HIS BACK."

-BLAISE PASCAL

New International Version

Proverbs 11:13 & 18:8

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.

DAY 3

PRAY: Dear God, I want to understand the power of words and how I can choose my words to avoid betraying the confidence of others. I want to be a trustworthy person who can keep a secret, instead of a perverse person, stirring up conflict. Lord, You tell me that a gossip separates close friends. I never want to do that. I want to be known for stopping quarrels and building closer friendships, not gossiping and fueling fires. Please help me to only speak words of love, kindness, encouragement, and integrity. Thank You, God! Amen.

REFLECT: Contemplate the power of words expressed in Proverbs. They are completely contradictory to the old adage, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." How did that phrase ever become popular? Kids say it to one another and actually believe it. But words are like choice morsels. They go down to the inmost parts of our soul and stay there to either flourish or fester. Words can be a weapon, gossip, or a salve, depending on what we choose to say. We can either bless or hurt people in one sentence. How can we become more aware of the words we use, especially when we're joking or being flippant? Don't let your words come out so quickly that it's too late to take them back.

DAY 3

ACT: Today's assignment is to be focused and aware of every word you say. You can either make a mental note or write down all of your questionable jokes, conversations, comments, and responses. Watch what you say and how you say it. And notice if you're saying anything that you wouldn't say if you were writing a letter or talking to your mother. Try to heighten your awareness of your words and see if you're pleased or surprised at how you use them. Most people don't think about their words and cause more damage than they mean to. Start to evaluate everything you say. How are you doing?

DAY 4

GOSSIP COMES OUT OF THE HEART

“FEW FRIENDSHIPS WOULD SURVIVE IF
EACH ONE KNEW WHAT HIS FRIEND SAYS
OF HIM BEHIND HIS BACK.”

-BLAISE PASCAL

New International Version

Matthew 15:19

For out of the heart come evil thoughts,
murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft,
false testimony, slander.

DAY 4

PRAY: Heavenly Father, I understand that we can only know our true selves by examining our hearts, for out of the heart comes the evil thoughts listed in Matthew. Today I want to give You my heart so that I won't gossip, slander or think awful thoughts. Sometimes I can be so mad, so silly, or so carefree that I say things I don't mean. To help me avoid gossip, would Your Holy Spirit purify my heart? Thank You for giving me the strength to control everything that comes out of my mouth because I want to have a clean heart. Amen.

REFLECT: This verse in Matthew calls out our hearts as the problem causing us to sin. "Out of the HEART come evil thoughts" Our body is a temple, and we are in charge of that Temple, so if it is left unkempt, it can attract all kinds of sin. And if our heart is dirty, then it is free to spew out evil. It's our responsibility to protect our heart, so we must ask God to purify us so that we don't break His commandments. Our deceitful hearts love sin, but our souls long for goodness, purity, and love. Surrender control of ALL of your heart and let the Holy Spirit take control and transform your thoughts, words and actions.

DAY 4

ACT: Whatever time it is in your day right now, since you got up this morning, have you had any evil, mean, selfish, or gossipy thoughts? Have you said any harmful words? If not, praise God and keep going, trying to keep your heart pure for the rest of the day. If you have already slipped, then ask forgiveness and pray to start fresh, believing that as of the moment your prayer ends, you are as white as snow and ready to begin again. Do this as many times as you need to before the end of today. And as you lie down to sleep, either thank the Lord for a successful day, or ask Him to help you again tomorrow, and the next day, until you have broken the habit of gossip and you are transformed!

DAY 5

GOSSIP AND SLANDER AGAINST YOU

"THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH SLANDER IS TO PRAY ABOUT IT: GOD WILL EITHER REMOVE IT, OR REMOVE THE STING FROM IT. OUR OWN ATTEMPTS AT CLEARING OURSELVES ARE USUALLY FAILURES; WE ARE LIKE THE BOY WHO WISHED TO REMOVE THE BLOT FROM HIS COPY, AND BY HIS BUNGLING MADE IT TEN TIMES WORSE."
-CHARLES SPURGEON

New International Version

Psalms 119:23

Though rulers sit together and slander me,
your servant will meditate on your decrees.

1 Peter 3:16

Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

DAY 5

PRAY: Lord, today I pray for our political leaders, and for the leaders and decision-makers in Hollywood who don't know You and don't understand the sins of gossip and slander. Many of them see nothing wrong with speaking maliciously against other people and against You. As I meditate on Your decrees, I ask the Holy Spirit to convict me and those who speak maliciously and make all of us ashamed of our slander and gossip. Help me not judge our country's political and cultural "rulers," but to pray for them to find You. Amen.

REFLECT: God has told us to pray for our leaders, whether we agree with them or not, and ask Him to renew, transform and guide them. You may pray for your political leaders, but will you pray for your cultural leaders? The leaders in Hollywood who are creating our world's media and entertainment need prayer. Many of them slander others, gossip, lie, and hurt others without thinking. It's our job to pray for them to discover and embrace the healing and transforming love of Jesus that can change their hearts and tongues.

DAY 5

ACT: Think of two Hollywood leaders who don't yet know Jesus and might be known for slander. Whether they are decision-makers or celebrities, they are impacting our culture through their lives, projects, and even their words. Instead of gossiping about them, stop right now and pray for the Holy Spirit to come in and change their hearts, words, and actions. This keeps your conscience clear and leads these leaders closer to Jesus. That's a Win/Win!

DAY 6

HOLD YOUR TONGUE

“GOSSIP NEEDN’T BE FALSE TO BE EVIL—
THERE’S A LOT OF TRUTH THAT SHOULDN’T
BE PASSED AROUND.”

-FRANK A. CLARK

New International Version

Proverbs 20:19 & 17:28

Gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a
man who talks too much.

Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps
silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.

DAY 6

PRAY: Oh Lord, help me to be wise. Make me a trusted person of integrity. Help me to hold my tongue and listen more than talk. I never want to be a gossip or to betray anyone's confidence. Help me to choose my words and not over-talk. Give me self-discipline, regardless of the circumstances. Thank You for helping me, guiding me, and molding me into the person whom You've created me to be. I need You desperately, every moment, Lord, and I know that with wisdom comes silence. I pray this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

REFLECT: There is a lot to unpack in these two Proverbs. We learn that a gossip betrays a confidence, which is why we have to be so careful not to talk against anyone. As believers, we should be people whom others can turn to and trust. Those traits are rare commodities, so we must hold our tongues. "Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent." We can choose to act wisely just by holding our tongues. That's a start. But we also need the Holy Spirit to give us guidance on what to say, whom to say it to, and what to keep to ourselves. Holding our tongues is an important discipline for Christians and makes us wise and discerning.

DAY 6

ACT: Let's step out in faith and do something radical, just like Jesus. Choose someone close to you whom you have gossiped about. Did you tell too much information or reveal some secret that you should have kept silent about? Whatever form of gossip you are guilty of, now is the time to make amends. Meet with that person or call them on the phone and apologize for talking too much, even if it wasn't a serious offense – just a slip of the tongue. Let them know that you're working on controlling your words and you want to start by apologizing for this particular mistake. Taking this first step in breaking any possible habit of gossip, with wisdom and discernment, will make your heart feel so good! And it will blow other people's minds.

DAY 7

BUILD UP OTHERS WITH YOUR WORDS

"I RESOLVE TO SPEAK ILL OF NO MAN
WHATEVER, NOT EVEN IN A MATTER OF
TRUTH; BUT RATHER BY SOME MEANS
EXCUSE THE FAULTS I HEAR CHARGED
UPON OTHERS, AND UPON PROPER
OCCASIONS SPEAK ALL THE GOOD I KNOW
OF EVERYBODY."

-BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

New International Version

Ephesians 4:29 & 31

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... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

DAY 7

PRAY: Thank You, Lord, that I am ending my week on Gossip with Paul's mandate to only talk about what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, only what benefits those who listen. I want to keep my eyes on You, and control my tongue, so that I can stop all unwholesome talk and only benefit others and lead non-believers to You. Lord, thank You that You never give up on me, and that I can always turn to You for help, strength and wisdom. Lord, direct my words and let me make an eternal difference in this world. Amen!

REFLECT: We often focus on what we should do, act upon, or accomplish to be great Christians. But Paul tells us to focus on what we say. Embrace His words and be empowered to make an eternal difference by the words that you say. Do you only use words that are helpful for building others up according to their needs and benefit those who listen – encouraging them and not saying anything unwholesome – including gossip? People might even be inspired to follow your example, noticing that you're encouraging and not angry or slanderous. What a great way to share your faith, offer others hope and benefit those who listen!

DAY 7

ACT: Ready for a new commitment to end your week? Say something nice, kind, encouraging, helpful, uplifting, or loving to one person EVERY DAY. Call a friend just to tell them you love them, or tell someone you don't know that you'd like to meet them! Start practicing wholesome talk, so you won't be tempted to get idle and gossip. You'll have so much fun that you'll notice when you miss a day. Go make the world a better place!