

# **The Weight of Our Words: Measuring the Impact of What We Say**

Maliciously Speaking: Gossip and Slander



**Gossip**

**Slander**

**Rumors**

# The Self Centered Six

- Gossip and slander feed off of our natural flesh programming in the following six ways:
  - 1) Curiosity
  - 2) Idleness
  - 3) A Desire to be the Center of Attention
  - 4) An Opportunity to Elevate Ourselves Over Others
  - 5) Bitterness
  - 6) Soothes Our Own Anxieties

# Two Types of Malicious Speaking

- Idle Chatter/Gossip—speech that is demeaning to another’s integrity and reputation.
  - I Timothy 5:13, 6:30—vain babblings = empty discussion, discussion of vain and useless matters
  - II Timothy 2:16
- This type of speech is not always malicious in its intent, but it is always damaging. The words associated with this type of speech are frequently translated as whisper or talebearer.
  - Psalm 41:7
  - Proverbs 20:19
- Slander—this category includes the intention, malicious communication of bad reports. The words associated with this type of speech are normally translated as slander.
  - Psalm 31:13
  - Jeremiah 9:2

# Gossip

- In the Old Testament there are two different Hebrew words used to describe what we commonly call gossip.
- Proverbs 11:13—the word talebearer in this verse is a translation of a compound Hebrew word.
  - The first word literally means to walk about
  - The second word literally means one who carries tales. It is also translated as slander in some verses.
- The *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* offers the following definition of talebearer: “A person who officiously tells tales; one who impertinently communicates intelligence or anecdotes, and makes mischief in society by his officiousness.”

# Gossip

- Leviticus 19:16
- Proverbs 11:13—God’s word teaches that a person who gossips is untrustworthy and cannot keep a secret.
- Proverbs 20:19—A person who gossips is to be avoided. Hearing gossip adds unneeded information to our mental notebooks. These negative thoughts give Satan a foothold in our lives.
- Proverbs 16:28—a second Hebrew word presents the concept of whispering that is damaging.
  - This Hebrew word is also translated talebearer elsewhere in the Old Testament.

# Gossip

- Proverbs 16:28--separates the closest of friends.
- Proverbs 26:20—gossip adds fuel to the fire created by the tongue.
- II Corinthians 12:20
- Romans 1:28-30—whispering and gossip are the products of a reprobate mind.

# Slander

- While gossip is often done in the context of idle, careless chatter, slander is the open intentional sharing of damaging information.
- Genesis 37:2—the word “report” at the end of the verse means whispering, defamation, evil report, a) whispering, b) defamation, defaming, c) evil report, unfavorable saying.
  - Numbers 13:32, 14:36-37
  - Psalm 31:13
  - Jeremiah 20:10

# Slander

- Psalm 50:20—here the word slander comes from a Hebrew word which means to blemish or to fault.
- II Samuel 19:27—here the word slander means to go on foot, spy out, foot it, go about, walk along, move the feet. This definition depicts someone actively seeking out damaging information to share with others.
- James 4:11—in the New Testament, the word for slander is comprise of two words, one meaning “against” and the other meaning “to speak.”
  - I Peter 2:1
  - I Peter 3:16
- I Timothy 3:11—the word devilish or diabolic is translated in this verse as slander and 35 other times as devil.

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# Slander

- Combining these various definitions we discover that slander is characterized by bad reports that blemish or defame a person's reputation. Slander characterizes a wicked, godless heart (Psalm 50:16-23, Romans 1:28-30) and is a direct violation of God's Law (Leviticus 19:16).
- Psalm 101:5
- Psalm 31:13—David said that fear, conspiracy, and plotting are the destructive bedfellows of slander.
- Proverbs 25:9-10—if we slander someone, we run the risk of being branded as a slandered for the rest of our lives, for bad reputations.

# Four Myths About Gossip and Slander

- Myth 1: Gossip and slander are women's sins.
  - I Timothy 3:11, 5:13—while the Bible does twice attribute these sins specifically to women nowhere does the Bible promote the notion that men are not equally guilty.
- Myth 2: If information is true it's okay to tell it.
  - Romans 14:19
  - Ephesians 4:29—while truth is important so are confidentiality and potential harm
- Myth 3: Sharing prayer concerns justifies the exchange of sensitive information.

# **Four Myths About Gossip and Slander**

- Myth 4: The people I tell certainly won't tell someone else.

# Conclusion

- What should we do with damaging information?
  - Pray and leave the matter with God—Philippians 4:6
  - Go directly to the persons involved in a spirit of meekness and restoration—Galatians 6:1
  - Seek to protect the victim of the slander—Proverbs 10:12
- Galatians 5:13-15--If we don't eliminate gossip and slander for our conversations, we become like social cannibals who devour one another.
- Before we speak we need to ask ourselves one simple question. Does what I am about to say **minister grace? Just Grace It!!!**