

The Danger of Idle Talk

Proverbs 12:13-22

Proverbs 12:13-22 (NASB)

¹³“An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, But the righteous will escape from trouble.

¹⁴ A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, And the deeds of a man’s hands will return to him.

¹⁵ The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

¹⁶ A fool’s anger is known at once, But a prudent man conceals dishonor.

¹⁷ He who speaks truth tells what is right, But a false witness, deceit.

¹⁸ There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing.

¹⁹ Truthful lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue is only for a moment.

²⁰ Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, But counselors of peace have joy.

²¹ No harm befalls the righteous, But the wicked are filled with trouble.

²² Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.”

Ask a group of people to define gossip, and most will mention something about spreading rumors about others. That is correct, but it’s not the whole truth. Gossip includes any idle or malicious talk that harms someone else. In other words, damaging speech is a universal sin—one that we all are guilty of at some point in life.

For example, did you ever comment negatively on how a person was dressed? Or suggest to a friend that someone you both know is in the wrong job or involved in unsuitable hobbies? Or tell an acquaintance about another man or woman’s personal life? Let me ask you a final question: Did you feel a check in your spirit while you were speaking? All of these can be examples of gossip—words that do damage and hurt others despite sounding innocent.

Idle comments are often delivered in a way that makes them seem unlike the traditional definition of gossip. People mask gossip in several ways, such as speaking in jest, offering others’ personal details “**as an example**,” and disguising the spread of information as a prayer request. Of course, not every tease or illustration is gossip. And the body of Christ is certainly called upon to pray for those facing hard times. Therefore, we must be able to distinguish between worthless chatter and wise speech.

What matters is the heart’s motivation ([Psalm 19:14](#)).

Psalm 19:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.”

When the intention is to mar a reputation or create instant camaraderie with another person, lips move loosely—this often happens while discussing someone else’s misfortune. But a desire to please God and reflect His grace prompts us to speak only that which builds others up ([Ephesians 4:29](#)).

Ephesians 4:29 (NASB)

²⁹“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of *the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”