

"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." Proverbs 26:20 KJV



We often associate the word “talebearer” with lying, but that’s not exactly what it means. While a talebearer will always embellish, they generally just go around passing on everybody’s private matters to whoever will listen. We know them better as “gossips.” Mark it down, if there is strife or “bad vibes” in any given group, there is a talebearer amongst them. Someone is “feeding the fire.” It’s usually accompanied with a lowered voice and a whispered confidence. Christians have amongst them some of the worst talebearers in society! Men are among the worst offenders often missed, because their gossip is often disguised as a “prayer request.” Scores of families and churches have been destroyed by the wagging tongue of a gossip. A “prayer request” lets gossips pretend genuine concern while they “spill the beans” with relish. Private matters are meant to stay private. God’s Word says that the king shouldn’t eavesdrop. *“Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee.”* We need to stop private matters from being made public. *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* I’m not talking about concealing sin. I’m talking about repeating confidences and things you may inadvertently overhear that are none of yours or anyone else’s business. Some things, if made common knowledge, will embarrass or humiliate for no good reason. I believe if a person is guilty of a crime, the punishment should be public. The murder rate compounds at the departure of capital punishment. Public punishment is a crime deterrent, but gossip destroys lives and character for no good reason. I have never known a gossip to resist a little embellishment to try and sway the listener’s opinion. In scouting we learned that a root fire can burn underground several hours after the campfire is put out and surface much later to ignite a dangerous forest fire. Gossips usually go unnoticed as the cause of great conflagrations. *“The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”* We need to be cautious about the kind of conversations in which we engage. If speech is tearing down another person’s good character, walk away. I’m not talking about outing corruption in public office, but document and verify the facts before *“speaking evil of dignitaries.”*

The fire needs wood to brightly burn,
The strife to tales will surely turn,
If there’s no wood, no fire’s about,
If all tales cease, the strife goes out. ~CGP

Mom gave us three rules of speech. “Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?” If what you say can’t pass all three tests, it’s better left unsaid. Never repeat anything without sure verification and the three rule test. Pastors, however, are commanded to rebuke sin publicly. *“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”* Names are not needed, because if someone is living openly in sin, everyone will know who they are. The only ones worried about a “tattletale” are evildoers. If you witness evil, report it. Achan and his family were stoned to death, because evil was concealed. Don’t be intimidated, but like Mom always said, “Mind your manners.” Act as Christ’s ambassador and never hinder the Gospel! Speak the Truth or be silent. Never lie!

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Colossians 4:6 KJV