



*Encouragers  
of Young Women  
Lesson 05*

*Not Malicious Gossips*

by Jan Patterson

*Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;  
Keep watch over the door of my lips.*

Psalm 141:3

*Introduction*

Gossip is the **ART** of confessing  
other people's sins.

Matthew Henry

We are in desperate need of the Holy Spirit to **convict us**,  
to **open our eyes**, and to **strengthen us** in our battle  
against this sin.

Old age will not "cure the heart of any evil propensity.  
If our sinful passions are not crucified and mortified by  
the grace of God, they will never die of themselves . . ."

Matthew Henry

# I. *The word and its meaning*

- A. This translation of the Greek word is found in our New Testament three times – I Timothy 3:11, II Timothy 3:3, and Titus 2:3. The word is “diabolos” and is translated every other time in the NT as “*the devil!*” (as in Matthew 4)
- B. We are the devil’s tool when we commit this sin. We may not intend evil, but that is the effect.
- C. Some descriptions of the devil
- full of subtlety and mischief . . . enemy of all righteousness
  - the adversary of God's people
  - a murderer who hates the truth
  - oppressive
  - has the power of death
  - everlasting fire is prepared for him
- D. Some dictionary meanings and synonyms
1. Slander – false information about a person.
  2. Gossip – “talk of a personal, sensational or intimate nature.”
  3. To accuse – “charge with a shortcoming or error.”
  4. Synonyms include “defame, vilify, blacken, libel.”
  5. “Those who promote quarrels that they may gain from them.” Gossip feeds the flesh, whether through pride or “letting off steam,” etc.
  6. For our purposes – “to injure the reputation of another.”

- E. Something in our fallen nature wants to hear or speak of things of a “personal, sensational or intimate nature.” This is gossip, whether or not we feel malicious in it.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*  
Jeremiah 17:9

## *II. Prone to be “malicious gossips”*

- A. The Scripture’s only actual command against this is to women, and Christian women at that, and actually to Christian women leaders, in two of the three passages (Titus 2:3 and I Timothy 3:11).
- B. Quotes from various commentators
1. Barnes: “. . . Mingling as they would with the church, and having an **opportunity** to claim acquaintance with many, it would be in their power, if they chose, to do great injury to the character of others.”
  2. Barnes: “For **in their gossip** many women like to tell others anything bad they have found out, and . . . **they get widely around.**”
  3. Taylor: “The precept is especially directed to women, because of the **inclination** of their sex hereunto.”
  4. Taylor: “Age not only gives greater access to **opportunity**, but also the ‘right’ to speak, more than younger women.”

“Talkativeness is a disease of women,  
and it is increased by old age.”

John Calvin

- C. Consider these ways of being a “malicious gossip”
1. Intimation or putting a “favorable construction” on our words, giving negative information in a positive way.
  2. Prayer Requests

“Mentioning the faults of absent persons, be it ever so mild and soft a tone, or with ever such professions of kindness . . .”

Joseph Benson

3. Changing the truth, even a little, or adding to it
4. Telling secret infirmities

*Love covers . . . (I Peter 4:8). A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter (Proverbs 11:13).*

5. Assigning motives. **We do not know the hearts of others.**
6. Silence!
7. Partial silence – omitting the reason for something negative can change the whole picture.
8. Repeating a matter – details often and easily get changed
9. Encouraging gossip in others

### III. *Effects of “malicious gossip”*

- A. Ruin the good name of another person
- B. Blaspheme the Word of God (Titus 2:5)
- C. We multiply ourselves by our behavior and speech.
- D. From the book of Proverbs, speaking of a lying or slanderous tongue, a talebearer:
  - 1. God hates it, 6:17 and 12:22
  - 2. Stirs up strife, 10:12 and 18
  - 3. Reveals secrets instead of, in love, concealing them, 11:13
  - 4. It *breathes out* lies (i.e., common), 14:5
  - 5. Not becoming, or fitting, 17:7
  - 6. Separates friends, 16:28 and 17:9
  - 7. Hates its “victims,” 26:28
  - 8. Words are deep wounds, 18:8 and 26:22
  - 9. Shall not be unpunished, shall not escape, 19:5
- E. “The Devil’s gunpowder to blow up a whole world of wickedness.” (Taylor); James 3:6, the tongue *is set on fire by hell.*)

“No man can tame the tongue without Divine grace and assistance. . . . facts prove that more [believers] succeed in bridling their senses and appetites, than in restraining their tongues.”

Matthew Henry

## *IV. How to avoid being a “malicious gossip”*

- A. Awareness – notice the conversation of yourself and others, beware of idle chatter or ill feelings
- B. Repentance – name it, denounce it, turn from it, hate it. I Peter 2:1, Colossians 3:8 – “put aside”
- C. Prayer – Psalm 141:3 *Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.*
- D. Inward principle and habit of Holiness
  - 1. Matthew 15:19 *Out of the heart come . . . slanders;* Matthew 12:34 *The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.*
  - 2. Note the other sins associated with slander:
    - Envy, pride, covetousness (Matthew 7:22)
    - Anger, malice, abusive speech (Colossians 3:8)
    - Deceit, hypocrisy (I Peter 2:1)
    - Greed, strife, arrogance (Romans 1:29-30)
    - Jealousy, angry temper, disputes (II Corinthians 12:20)
    - BITTERNESS (Ephesians 4:31)



“Backbitings, whisperings, detractions, hurting another's character by innuendos, false charges, and evil surmises; which is not acting like men that are made new creatures, and are partakers of the divine nature, nor like brethren, or as Christ's little ones, and who are of God . . .”

John Gill

On the other hand . . .

“It is a fine exhibition of Christian **love** and **contentment** when [older women] can rise above [this tendency] even though there may be many things in their circumstances fitted to nourish it.”

Patrick Fairbairn

## V. *Practical Helps*

- A. Sometimes it is necessary to discuss negative situations in ministry. Some helps when talking:
- Speak to others who can help you assess, or who are also involved.
  - It's helpful in balancing your thinking and being able to give biblical response/counsel.
  - Sometimes it's more helpful not to know too much—how to use or relate information can be touchy.
  - Discuss in an uncritical way—examine **your** heart first.
- B. Silence is a skill to develop – it can be safer! Be aware of your feminine frailty.

- C. We **must** be able to keep confidences. We **must** be trustworthy.
- D. Be careful of allowing a critical or complaining spirit. Our work is to help the younger women to respond rightly / biblically to their difficult situations.



*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*

(Proverbs 18:21)

May ours tend daily to *life*

## *Sources Consulted*

*The American Heritage College Dictionary*

*Exposition of Titus, Thomas Taylor*

*Notes on the New Testament, Albert Barnes*

*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*

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