

Speaking to the soul



Gossip

Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander. Proverbs 17:4

The book of Proverbs was written more than 2,500 years ago, but the issues that it tackles are so up to date that you could easily imagine it was written yesterday! Today's verse reminds us that there have always been gossips. There are

many references to gossips in Proverbs and it is clear that the writer is deeply disturbed about their power to destroy relationships and make life miserable.

Of course, everyone understands the magnetic power of a juicy bit of gossip. In Proverbs 18:8 (NIV) we read: “The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.” The gossip may draw you in by telling you that they haven’t told anyone else this piece of information; it’s because of your special relationship that they are giving you this privileged insight. The gossip then shares their news in as dramatic a way as possible, and you are hooked. It’s a dangerous process, but the reality is that life today is just the same as in the ancient world. Gossip is as destructive as it has always been.

Every community is fertile ground for gossip, and churches are no exception. The love and care that binds a church together means that there is a constant flow of information, and so there is a continual danger that it could amount to no more than gossip. We are wise to check ourselves when we pass on information about other people. The mnemonic T-H-I-N-K is helpful. Ask yourself: is it true, helpful, inspiring, necessary and kind? If it doesn’t pass those tests, keep quiet instead.

Concern about gossip is found in both the Old and the New Testaments. The apostle Paul often spoke about its dangers and urged his readers only to share what was “good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them” (Ephesians 4:29). We must listen carefully to his words and respond to any gossip that we hear with decisiveness and love.

QUESTION

What is your response when someone shares gossip with you?

PRAYER

Lord God, help me to do everything possible not to pass on gossip. Give me your strength and wisdom so that I will always speak in a way that brings encouragement and help to others. Amen

