

The purpose of the first paragraph is to reveal stats and quotes from mainstream sources about the growing struggles teens may have regarding each topic. The purpose of the second paragraph is to reveal God's perspective by seeing what the Bible says regarding each topic and how we can receive help and guidance in our life's purpose through a relationship with Jesus.

GOSSIP

Gossip is defined by Google as casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true. It mostly happens to the socially vulnerable because of their race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression, or other reasons. It can lead to abuse and/or bullying and cause depression, self-harm, decline in self-confidence, suicide, eating disorders, anxiety and more¹²¹. It is easily and negatively enhanced now more than ever through texting, social media and/or other online forms. According to psychologist Marion Underwood (PhD), gossip negatively affects both the giver and the receiver¹¹⁹.

The Bible says gossip is a sin (Rom. 1:29-32) that hurts people deeply (Prov. 18:6-8) and separates close friends (Prov. 16:28). The tongue is powerful (Prov. 18:21) and small but able to do big damage (James 3:5-8). We shouldn't slander (Lev. 19:16) or lie about others (Ex. 23:1, Ps. 34:13) but only talk to build others up (Eph. 4:29). True Christians should be very careful with their words (James 1:26) and only speak what's pleasing to God (Ps. 19:14).

BIBLE VERSES TO CONSIDER

Romans 1:29-32 "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

Proverbs 18:6-8 "The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating. The mouths of fools are their undoing, and their lips are a snare to their very lives. The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts."

Proverbs 16:28 "A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends."

Proverbs 18:21 "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

James 3:5-8 "Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

Leviticus 19:16 "Do not go about spreading slander among your people."

Exodus 23:1 "Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness."

Psalms 34:13 "keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies."

Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

James 1:26 "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless."

Psalms 19:14 "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

2 Corinthians 12:20 "For I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder."

James 4:11 "Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it."

Proverbs 10:18 "Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool."

Proverbs 10:19 "Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongue."

Proverbs 11:9 "With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors."

Proverbs 11:13 "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret."

Proverbs 17:9 "Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."

Proverbs 26:20 "Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down."

Psalm 141:3 "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."

1 Timothy 5:13 "Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also busybodies who talk nonsense, saying things they ought not to."

1 Timothy 3:11 "In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything."

Titus 3:1-2 "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone."

Matthew 12:36 "But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken."

Luke 6:31 "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

1 Peter 3:16 "keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

2 Timothy 2:16 "Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly."

STATS & QUOTES TO CONSIDER

Gossip gone bad can be devastating to its targets.

This form of social aggression, according to psychologist Marion Underwood, PhD, hurts the giver and the taker.

Gossip is the invisible force that controls people's behavior and reinforces the dynamics that allow us to dehumanize each other.

Gossip isn't equal opportunity. It sticks to people who are already socially vulnerable because of their race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or gender expression. It "sticks" because our stereotypes about those identities reinforce the believability of the gossip. We see the target of the gossip less as a person in a particular circumstance and more as a reflection of the bias we already have.

For those who are impacted, gossip can be downright painful and almost impossible to ignore – especially if social media is being used to spread it.

Gossip and rumors can destroy a person's self-confidence and affect their self-esteem. It also can lead to depression, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, anxiety and a host of other issues.

When you say mean things, tell stories that you're not sure are true, or reveal information you know is supposed to remain private, you're spreading gossip.

Gossip becomes emotional bullying when teens intentionally use it to socially isolate a fellow student, leaving them alone and often depressed about being excluded. This can be difficult for teens to cope with, as they are particularly sensitive to what their peers think of them. The simple act of eating lunch alone can become a traumatic event when a teen is aware that others are discussing and intentionally excluding them.

With increasing use of cell phone texting and social media websites, gossip among teens has taken on a darker, more sinister aspect. Online social media gossip can quickly turn into cyber bullying as teens post insulting comments, humiliating stories and even nude photos of other teens. Negative personal or sexual rumors are particularly damaging to a teen's feelings of self-worth. Gossip as cyber bullying has led to depression for many teens and in some cases, suicide, says Bullying Statistics.